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A Tale of Two Statues: Memorializing Queen Victoria in London and Calcutta

John Plunkett

The Victoria Memorial in London and the Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta are the two most substantial and enduring commemorative schemes built following the death of Queen Victoria on 23 January 1901. Both memorials remain heritage icons, immediately recognizable parts of the urban fabric of London and Calcutta. The original schemes are nonetheless notable for the imperial myth-making and the way they place Victoria as the focal point of British rule. Moreover, both schemes foreground the question of the nature of Victoria's agency and fashioning in relation to commemoration and hero worship. The statues of Victoria by Thomas Brock at the heart of both memorials are part of much grander and elaborate reshapings of the political and urban landscape, but the commemoration of Victoria in Britain and India reveals some of the frictions and instability around her legacy.

Outside Buckingham Palace, Thomas Brock's statue of a mature, substantial, and dignified Queen Victoria looks down the Mall, the centrepiece of the national Victoria Memorial (*Fig. 1*). Five thousand miles away, in Calcutta (now Kolkata), another statue of Victoria by Brock, this time of the youthful Queen in her coronation robes, stands at the heart of the shimmering and bombastic Victoria Memorial Hall, built as the All India commemoration of the Queen-Empress (*Fig. 2*). Both statues now spend most of their days being passed by thousands of tourists (the Victoria Memorial Hall museum and gardens attract around 3.5 million visitors a year and it claims to be the most visited museum in India).[1] In their original conception though, both statues were part of schemes that situate Victoria as the maternal heart of the British Empire. She is made to carry the ideological weight of being the charismatic focal point of British rule. From Calcutta to Cape Town, Victoria's motherly concern for all of her subjects was used to emphasize the existence of an imperial family and to soften the imposition of British rule. In his work on Queen Victoria and India, Miles Taylor describes the second half of the century as 'the heyday of viceregal rule; that is to say, a system of government in which the apparatus of European monarchy was applied to remote colonies and dependencies'.[2] David Cannadine has likewise noted that, to the degree there was a coherent imperial project, 'it was the effort to fashion and to tie together the empire abroad in the vernacular image of the domestic, ranked social hierarchy.'[3] Both memorial schemes foreground Victoria as a familial and familiar presence, an important part of the way that British Empire modelled itself at home and abroad.

22 January 1901: Victoria died at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. It was the worst of times, it was the best of times. The Queen who had reigned for over sixty-three years was dead, but her achievements (and those of the Victorian age) would continue. The question soon turned to how best to commemorate her. Hundreds of memorial schemes were launched across Britain and the empire, but this article analyses the two largest national schemes, whose outcomes still dominate Calcutta and London.[4] It argues that these schemes' insistent imperial myth-making reveals some of the broader instabilities and dynamics in fashioning Victoria. Both schemes are notable for

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[1] *Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, Annual Report 2017–18* <https://www.victoriamemorial-cal.org/uploads/annualreport/English.pdf> [accessed 21 October 2021] (pp. 5, 41).

[2] Miles Taylor, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 7.

[3] David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. xix.

[4] On the memorialization of Victoria, see *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention*, ed. by Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Mark Stocker, '"A token of their love": Queen Victoria Memorials in New Zealand', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 22 (2016) <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.724>; Philip James Sheldrick, 'From Flesh and Bone to Bronze and Stone' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Australian National University, 2013); and Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

Fig. 1: Thomas Brock, Queen Victoria Statue, Victoria Memorial, *Illustrated London News*, 20 May 1911, p. 719. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

Fig. 2: Thomas Brock, Statue of Queen Victoria, Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata. Photograph by Michael Janich (2004) CC BY-SA 3.0.

their scale, such that Brock's statues form only a small component. Such supplemental architectonics typify the way Victoria was appropriated into a grand imperial vision. And this brings into focus Victoria's own agency or lack of it in her fashioning. Memorial schemes sought to honour her, to be 'representative' of her, but what did this mean? Schemes were also invariably 'representative' of the group or communities directing them. Moreover, Victoria's commemoration was complicated by her unique reign and character. Would the most suitable memorial be practical and philanthropic? Or would some monumental scheme — typically used to commemorate great men — better reflect her place in the affective lives of her subjects? To be sure, these questions were common for memorial projects of the period; however, these two national memorial schemes demonstrate the way her legacy was shaped by an imperial overdetermination.

The Victoria Memorial outside Buckingham Palace sought to renovate that area of London into a grand imperial theatre — the scheme encompassed Brock's statuary group, the architectural remodelling of the surrounding area, the creation of a grand processional road down the Mall, and the refronting of the drab and uninspiring Buckingham Palace. Imperial symbolism runs through Brock's design, celebrating Victoria atop a seafaring island empire founded on a maritime supremacy that began in Elizabethan times. One of the most affecting parts of her funeral was the sea journey that took her cortège from Cowes to Portsmouth, with minute guns being fired by the attendant naval fleet. The hagiography around Sir Francis Drake, the Armada, and English sea power was at its height in these decades, as exemplified by the 1888 tercentenary celebrations; poems such as Henry Newbolt's 'Drake's Drum' (1896) and Alfred Noyes's epic 'Drake' (1906–08); and histories such as J. A. Froude's *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century* (1895).[5] The national memorial scheme was equally influenced by ideas of 'Greater Britain' and imperial federation with the settler colonies of Australia, Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand.[6] On 10 June 1901 Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent a circular to the dominions and colonial governments inviting subscriptions. At the 1902 Colonial Conference in London, attendees agreed to contribute to the cost of the memorial; they eventually donated £115,295, nearly a third of the overall cost.[7] Settler colonies contributed the bulk of this with £30,000 from Canada, £10,000 from Natal, £20,000 from Cape Colony, and £20,000 from Australia. Smaller sums were given by the Transvaal (£1000), Gambia, and Jamaica (£500). Tori Smith has rightly argued that the extent of their contribution

[5] See Bruce Wathen, *Sir Francis Drake: The Construction of a Hero* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009).

[6] See Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[7] Steven Brindle, 'Buckingham Palace and the Victoria Memorial, 1901–14', *Court Historian*, 11 (2006), 43–58 (p. 51).

is not fully recognized in the completed scheme, attenuated by cost and the more than two decades it took to complete.[8] Nonetheless, the initial plans — both the chosen design and those which were unsuccessful — exemplify a high point in the desire to create an imperial urban space for a British audience.

There was one obvious absence from the colonial contributors to the London Victoria Memorial. Lord Curzon and Indian maharajahs and communities politely but firmly declined to contribute to a scheme that was thousands of miles away. The gleaming white marble of the Victoria Memorial Hall (*Fig. 3*), the brainchild of the viceroy, Lord Curzon, seemingly embodies the self-confidence of the British Raj. However, this should not efface the turbulence that afflicted the scheme.[9] It should also not be taken

Fig. 3: Queen Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata. Photograph by Soumenmenon (2018) CC BY-SA 4.0.

[8] Tori Smith, '"A grand work of noble conception": The Victoria Memorial and Imperial London', in *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*, ed. by Felix Driver and David Gilbert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 21–39 (p. 22).

[9] The only dedicated collection to date on the Victoria Memorial Hall is *The Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta: Conception, Collections, Conservation*, ed. by Philippa Vaughan (Mumbai: Marg, 1997).

as shorthand for the overall commemoration of Victoria in India, marginalizing the way that her legacy was curated and contested. The Victoria Memorial Hall was the exception rather than the rule; its colonial triumphalism has cast into the shade the many regional, district, and local memorial schemes that — contrary to the wishes of British provincial governors and elites — sought to avoid Curzon's high-handed scheme as well as colonial statuary and everything it stood for. Instead, Indian communities aligned Victoria with a wealth of educational, philanthropic, and welfare initiatives. The question is perhaps not why there were so many statues of Victoria in India but rather why there were so few, considering the size of the country and its status. Given recent debates about colonial-era statues and their continued political resonance, perhaps the most effective opposition is to make sure that they are never erected in the first place. Queen Victoria's statue in Bombay (now Mumbai) — the first erected in India after the rebellion of 1857 — had already been subject to an attack. In 1895 it was covered with a large bucket of tar and had a pair of old sandals draped around her neck (showing the sole of your shoe being a particularly disrespectful insult).[10] Propelled by the emergence of Indian nationalism, the political frictions around Victoria's commemoration in 1901 demonstrate that her legacy was already contested, long before postcolonial debates in the aftermath of independence.

There were two key fault lines in the commemoration of Victoria in India, which foreground the question of who Victoria belonged to, and of the competing agency between colonial elites and local populations in her curation. The first fault line was that between Curzon's plan for an All India memorial in Calcutta and the desire by regions and cities to have their own local memorials. The second was the choice of memorial itself, whether to commemorate through a statue or some other monument, or through a philanthropic scheme that would, arguably, create more tangible benefits. These were not unprecedented tensions in that, as Taylor notes, 'the memorials of 1887 and ten years later tell us more about civic patriotism than they do about an unqualified loyalty to Britain' (p. 233). However, in both fault lines, Indian communities generally favoured the latter, the British Raj the former. Victoria's memorialization was fashioned through the complex and conflicting interplay of colonial ideology and local politics. As Maria Nugent and Sarah Carter have argued in their work on indigenous communities and Queen Victoria, 'symbolic vocabularies and vernaculars of monarchy, empire, sovereignty, and the Crown (among other things) were produced — or at the very least

[10] 'Insult to Queen Victoria', *South Wales Daily News*, 19 October 1896, p. 5. See also Taylor, p. 245. The perpetrator was Damodar Chapekar, who would go on to help assassinate Charles Walter Rand, chair of the Special Plague Committee of Poona, in 1897.

co-produced — by colonised communities and constituencies.'[11] While the Victoria Memorial Hall was a top-down effort led by Curzon, Victoria's broader commemoration in India is an example of a more complex co-production of her figure.

Victoria Memorial, London

Only a few days after Victoria's public funeral on 2 February, following a consultation between the Lord Mayor of London and King Edward VII, a committee was formed to erect a national memorial. Its first meeting took place on 19 February 1901; a further meeting of the committee on 19 March clarified the brief, and summarized it thus:

> This is to be an architectonic scheme, involving a modification of the Mall in order to centre the avenue of trees with the proposed Monument and Buckingham Palace, giving an opportunity for adorning the Avenue with sculptural groups in consonance with a Memorial to the Queen.[12]

On 26 March a large public meeting was held at the Mansion House to reveal detailed plans. Arthur Balfour spoke at the meeting on behalf of the committee. He announced that it was planned to effect 'something more than a mere monument to the Queen — some great architectural and scenic change in that part of London'.[13] It was also announced that King Edward had donated 1000 guineas to the subscription fund. Daily subscription lists were published in *The Times.* Some efforts were made to ensure that the memorial was a truly national affair. On 24 May, Queen Victoria's birthday, collections for the memorial fund took place at church services across the country. Unlike the Albert Memorial, no money was initially granted by the government, with subscriptions reaching £25,000 by 30 March and £133,000 by August 1901.

On 5 April the national committee announced that it had decided to approach the sculptor Thomas Brock along with five selected architects to prepare designs for the memorial. The architects chosen were Aston Webb ARA, Sir Thomas Drew, Ernest George, Thomas Jackson RA, and Dr Robert Rowand Anderson RA. Their brief was to prepare a setting for Brock's statue and subsidiary groups outside Buckingham Palace, with an appropriately modified entrance at the eastern end of the Mall by Spring Gardens. Their designs were also to include 'an architectonic rearrangement of the Mall with

[11] Maria Nugent and Sarah Carter, 'Introduction: Indigenous Histories, Settler Colonies and Queen Victoria', in *Mistress of Everything: Queen Victoria in Indigenous Worlds*, ed. by Sarah Carter and Maria Nugent (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 1–21 (p. 10).

[12] Kew, The National Archives (TNA), Queen Victoria Memorial: Erection of monument, WORK 20/20, contains a long, printed memorandum dated March 1911, which describes the evolution of the project.

[13] 'Queen Victoria Memorial', *St James's Gazette*, 27 March 1901, p. 10.

groups of sculpture at intervals, the whole forming a processional road'.[14] The closed selection of sculptor and architects aroused considerable protest. It provoked several letters and an editorial in *The Times*, the latter supporting the chosen method because it argued that the best artists often declined to enter open competition.[15] Nonetheless, an extraordinary general meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects was held on 30 April to protest against the selection process.[16]

The grand brief of the Victoria Memorial scheme was part of the reconstruction of London in the late nineteenth century to match its status as an imperial capital. Whitehall had already been transformed by a new series of government buildings. The urban pomp of the Alliance Assurance Offices, Selfridges, and the Ritz Hotel were among a series of grandiose Edwardian buildings that embodied the heyday of British economic and imperial confidence. The intention to design a processional road and architectural entrance at the east of the Mall as part of the Victoria Memorial was in keeping with pomp of the Golden and Diamond Jubilees, as well as the increasing frequency of royal and imperial ceremonies taking place under the auspices of Viscount Esher and King Edward.

The executive committee surveyed the plans put forward by the architects as well as an initial model by Brock on 30 June.[17] They all deployed an excess of statuary and features of the Edwardian baroque style then being used to reshape London as a grand imperial centre.[18] At the Mansion House meeting Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, had spoken on the need for it to be 'an Imperial and not just local tribute', and the architects' designs all seemed intent on enshrining Victoria's triumphal position as an imperial figurehead.[19] Robert Rowand Anderson's plan was notable for the series of statuary additions he proposed to place on semicircular parapets outside Buckingham Palace. These would also stretch down the Mall such that, at intervals, there were to be statues of the principal heroes, monarchs, and patron saints of the nation: a public pantheon constructing a mythic version of national history. Queen Elizabeth — oft compared to Victoria in terms of the imperial success of her reign — was to be given an elaborate memorial, a statue of the Virgin Queen surrounded by the principal men of

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[14] 'Queen Victoria Memorial', *The Times*, 5 April 1901, p. 7.

[15] Editorial, *The Times*, 20 March 1901, p. 9.

[16] 'The Late Queen', *Buckingham Express*, 4 April 1901, p. 7.

[17] Brock had already completed at least one prominent statue of Queen Victoria unveiled at Hove in February 1901, only a few days after her death. He would be responsible for no less than ten statues of the Queen at sites as widely dispersed as Carlisle, Worcester, Cawnpore, Agra, and Brisbane. On Brock, see John Anthony Sankey, 'Thomas Brock and his Critics — An Examination of Brock's Place in the New Sculpture Movement' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, 2002).

[18] See M. H. Port, *Imperial London: Civil Government Building in London 1851–1915* (London: Paul Mellon Press, 1985).

[19] 'The Memorial to Queen Victoria', *London Evening Standard*, 27 March 1901, p. 5.

her age. At the eastern end of the Mall would be a single triumphal archway with a lofty equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington (*Fig. 4*).[20]

The main element of Sir Thomas Drew's design was his complete refronting of Buckingham Palace. Drew's heavily decorated neoclassical style sought to create a grandiose imperial palace (*Fig. 5*). Two new pushed-forward wings to the palace are matched by the resplendence of a new central entrance complete with ornamented columns and portico. As Drew's proposal noted, 'the front I would remodel — accepting the present floor levels and window spacing — by applying a Corinthian order elevated on a rusticated or coursed basement, as an improvement of the present lowest story' ('Queen Victoria Memorial Designs', p. 378). Two pedestals, each carrying a statue, enclosed by ornamental railings in front of the palace, completed the transformation of Edward Blore's much disliked existing east front in order to provide a suitably dignified backdrop.

The designs by Ernest George and Thomas Jackson each concentrated on surrounding Brock's statuary with a dignified Roman colonnade. George altered Brock's memorial somewhat by arranging his fountains north and south of the central memorial rather than east and west as Brock conceived. Due to the changed axis, the statue of Victoria, which George surrounded with two lines of trees, is enclosed with a semicircular screen that was a double colonnade with domes and pavilions at intervals. At the other end of the Mall at Spring Gardens, George placed an enormous triumphal arch with the main passageway, adorned with statuary on the top, flanked by two small archways on each side (*Fig. 6*). Jackson's plan similarly used a colonnade to fully enclose and sanctify the memorial space (*Fig. 7*). The internal memorial space was set out as a kind of ornamental parterre, including pavilions and fountains. The parterres would each have marble statuary groups symbolizing South Africa, Canada, India, and Australasia. Unlike other schemes there would be no vehicular traffic around the memorial. At least one triumphal arch was to be situated along the Mall itself with another at its eastern end, turning it into a grand processional road complete with statues at intervals. Statues representing Britannia ruling the waves were to be set atop the four corners of the main arch with a frieze beneath and another two statues at each end of the two smaller flanking arches.

After considering the designs put forward by the architects, the executive committee announced that Aston Webb's plans were to be executed for the memorial. Webb, like the other architects, originally intended to use a Roman colonnade to surround the memorial, his in the form of a semicircular peristyle with several domed gateways (*Fig. 8*).

[20] On the merits of different plans, see 'The Queen Victoria Memorial Designs', *Builder*, 2 November 1901, pp. 377–78.

Fig. 4: Design for arch at the east end of the Mall by Rowand Anderson for the Victoria Memorial Competition, *Graphic*, 19 November 1901, p. 615. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

Webb also added several ornamental lakes and the whole area outside Buckingham Palace was to be altered with new entrances from Constitution Hill and Buckingham Palace Road intended to provide excellent approaches. A stone arcade twenty-five feet high in front of the palace was to form the backdrop to the memorial. The palace itself

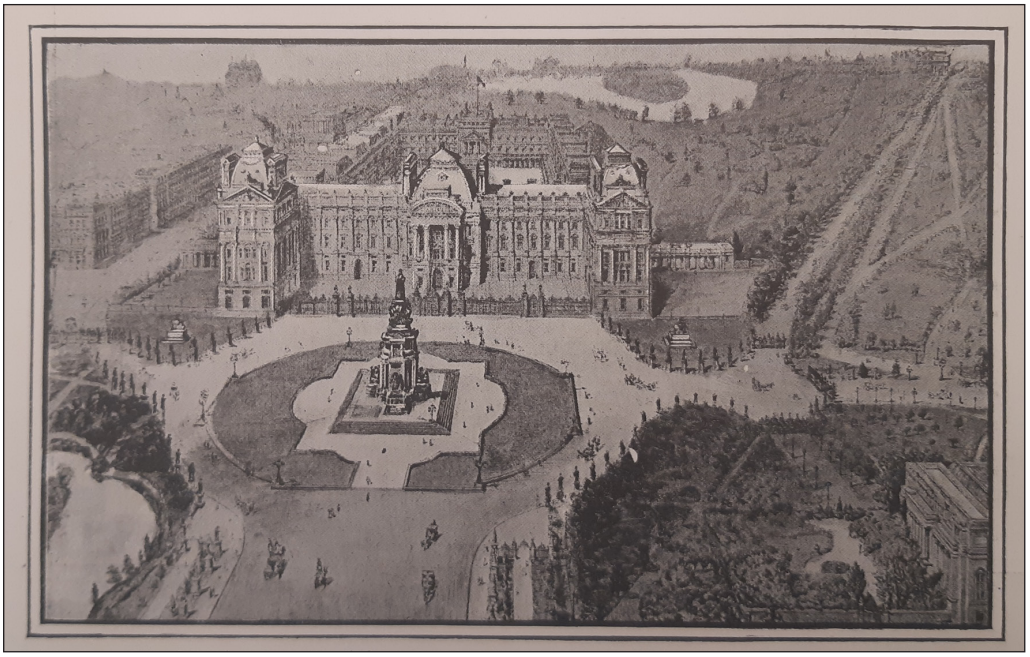

Fig. 5: Design submitted by Sir Thomas Drew for the Victoria Memorial Competition, *Graphic*, 19 November 1901, p. 615. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

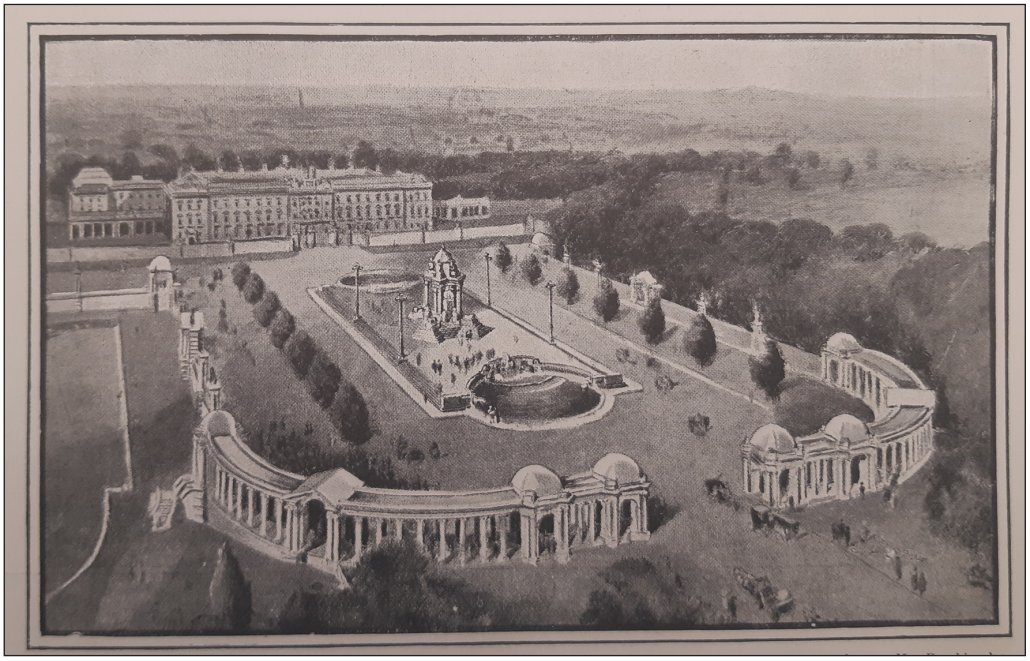

Fig. 6: Design for gateway at Spring Gardens by Ernest George for the Victoria Memorial Competition, *Graphic*, 19 November 1901, p. 615. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

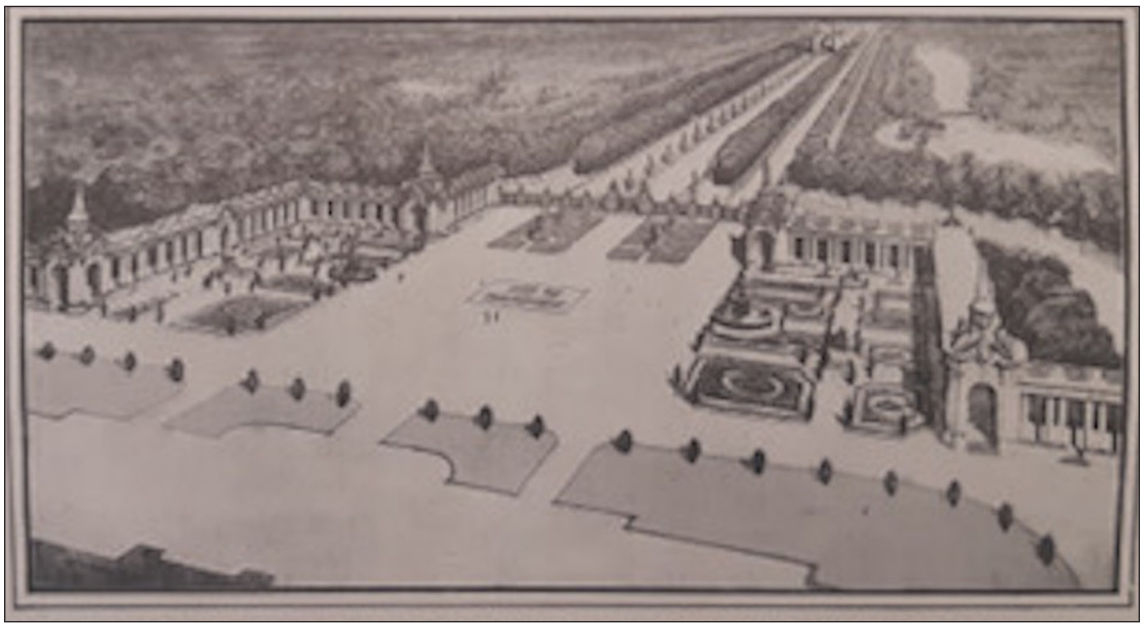

Fig. 7: Design submitted by Thomas Jackson for the Victoria Memorial Competition, *Illustrated London News*, 9 November 1901, p. 705. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

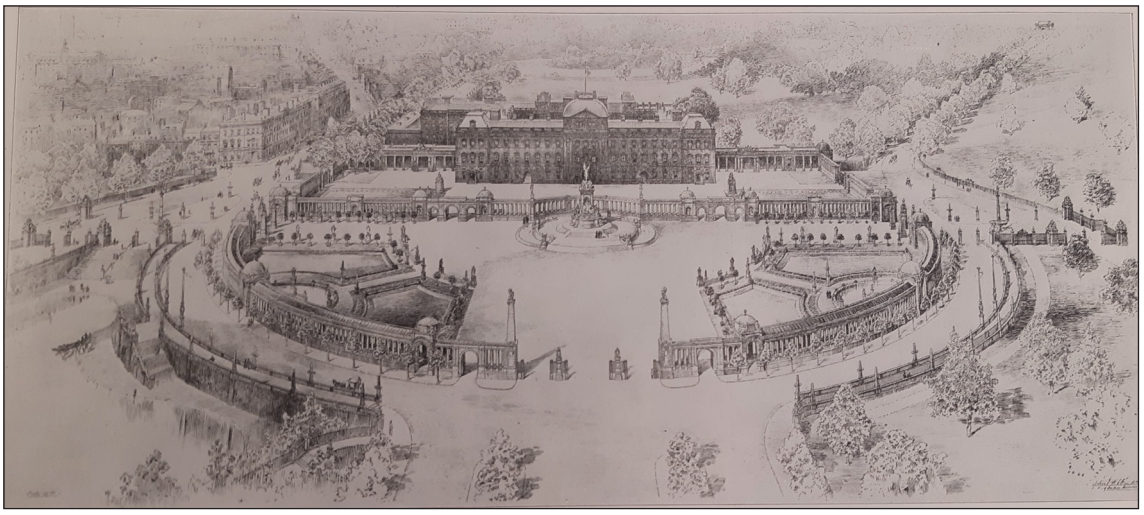

Fig. 8: Aston Webb's design for the Victoria Memorial Competition, *Illustrated London News*, 2 November 1901, p. 646. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

was also to be altered, although not with the same extravagance proposed by Drew. Above the central entrance was to be added a domed roof, a prominent feature of the Edwardian baroque style, which was to be complemented by a similar elevation of the east and west corners of the frontage. The Mall was to be widened into a grand

processional road with a double row of trees stretching to a *rond pont* at its eastern end (*Fig. 9*). A curved triumphal arch was to create a vista looking from Charing Cross up the Mall to Brock's imposing statue. This feature of Webb's design was widely praised for masking the irregularity of the angle where the Mall met Whitehall. The Mall itself was to be made into an homage to imperial expansion with allegorical statues representing Britain's colonies, including India, situated at points along the Mall. The *Builder* praised the scheme, although it restressed the need to include the refronting of Buckingham Palace as part of the memorial: 'Give the Palace a new front, or the whole thing is lame and incomplete.'[21]

Despite the grand conception of Webb's design, the committee initially decided not to proceed with the alterations at the east end of the Mall until the full amount of subscriptions was known. Several features of Webb's original design would later be changed, most notably the decision not to build his colonnade and the repositioning of the statues of the colonies. A number of indistinct free-standing statues originally envisaged within Webb's semicircular area were similarly never built. Nevertheless, the subsequent alterations reflect artistic rather than financial considerations, as the eventual amount subscribed was £323,609, a substantial amount in the light of the sums raised by the competing local memorial schemes. Parliament would later grant another £100,000 towards the cost of Webb's triumphal arch as it was to form part of an extension to the Admiralty offices.

As a setting for Brock's statue, Marion Spielmann observed that Webb's design would 'greatly heighten the general effect and help to produce a moment of Imperial significance and Imperial importance'.[22] Brock's memorial was to be an elevated circular

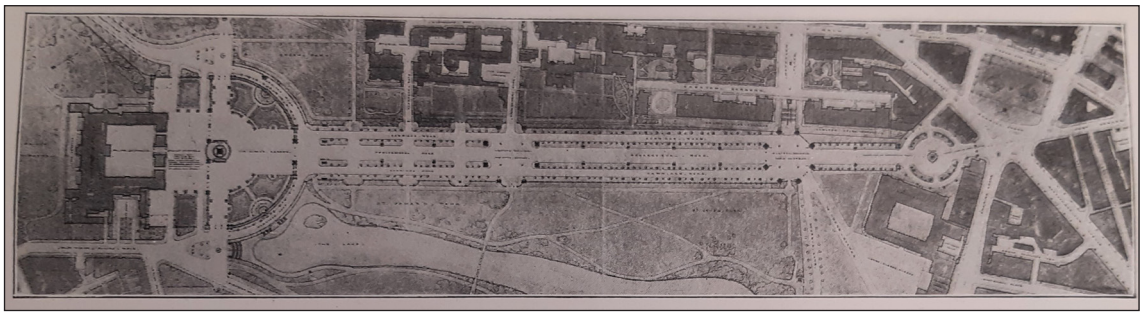

Fig. 9: Plan of Aston Webb's design showing the conversion of the Mall and approach to the memorial from Charing Cross, *Illustrated London News*, 2 November 1901, p. 646. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

[21] 'The Victoria Memorial', *Builder*, 3 August 1901, pp. 95–96 (p. 96).

[22] M. H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of To-Day* (London: Cassell, 1901), p. 28.

pediment which would have a statue of an enthroned Victoria rising from its centre. It was to be surrounded by two semicircular marble fountain basins with statuary groups: two atop the fountain walls and four at its angles. Brock's design is conceived of as a paean both to British imperial identity and the populist reinvention of the monarchy. In his allegory of the social hierarchy, Victoria's position derives from the best qualities of the British public:

> I conceived the idea of making a great base, placing upon it figures symbolising Peace and Progress, Courage and Patriotism, Labour, and other attributes of the British people, on which the Throne has from early times been built up and still rests; then to surround the whole with fountain basins with water flowing down cascades into them, as an allegory of the sea which encompasses our island.[23]

Around the outer walls of the fountain Brock wished to place 'subjects representing the sea power of the nation' (Cundall, p. 848). Originally, he intended them to take the form of a series of friezes representing the 'Navy and Army in a series of more or less realistic designs' (p. 848). However, because of spatial limitations, he was forced to depict in low relief a series of ideal figures in marble accompanied by bronze figures in deep relief (*Fig. 10*). Consisting of mermaids, tritons, sea nymphs, and dolphins, the figures were all intended, in his words, to represent the 'maritime power of the Empire' (p. 848). Brock extended this maritime iconography throughout the Victoria Memorial as at each corner of the base of the pedestal protrudes the prow of a ship. Along the Mall, the cast-iron lamp posts are decorated atop with a miniature galleon in full sail. Marble, iron, water, and bronze celebrate an empire founded on maritime power, the politics made more highly charged by the naval arms race then taking place between Britain and Germany.

The statuary groups at the edge of the marble base, which Brock claimed symbolized the national qualities upon which the throne rests, embody a political imaginary that is seemingly much more about the progressive virtues of Victorianism than about Victoria herself. Over the fountains on the south side, to embody Courage, Brock chose figures representing the Army and the Navy. On the north side, to represent Intelligence, a female figure with a palette and a male figure with a dynamo symbolize Art and Science, respectively. At the angles of the fountain, Brock placed standing lions (originally intended to be winged), representing Power; standing alongside them were further bronze sculptures of Peace, Progress, Agriculture, and Labour.

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[23] H. M. Cundall, 'The Memorial to the Great Queen: The Story of Its Making Told by Its Maker, Thomas Brock, R.A.', *Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1911, pp. 844–57 (p. 848).

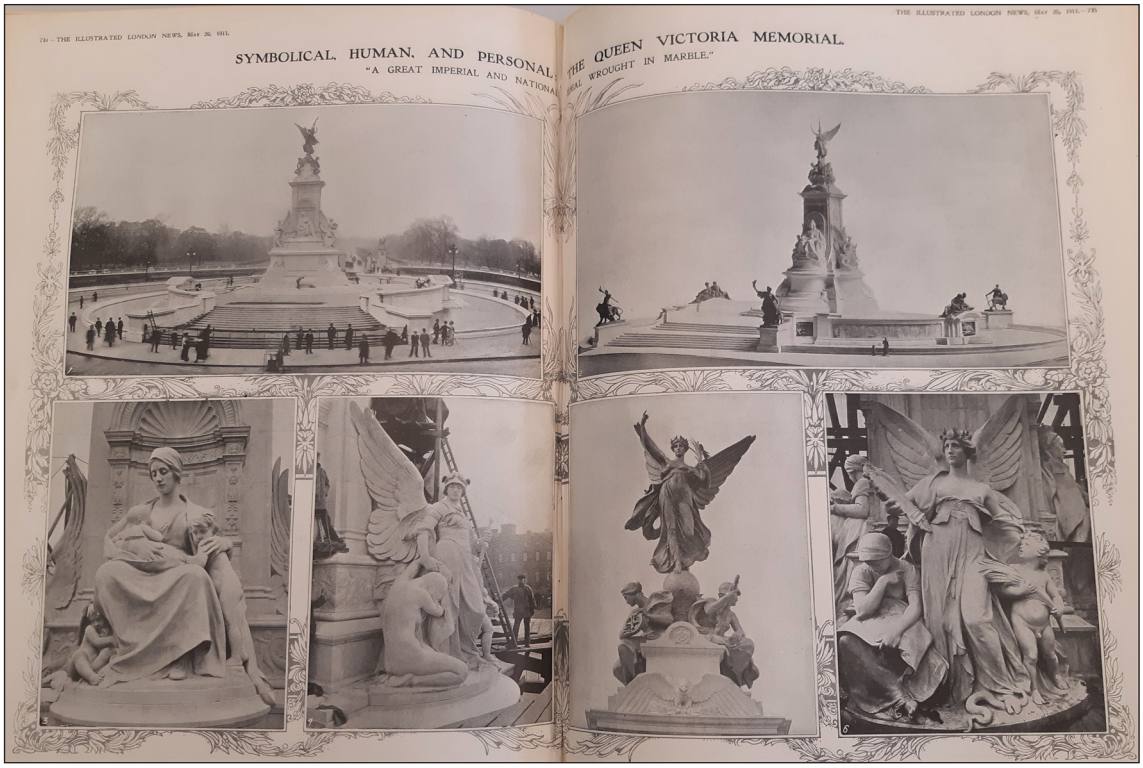

Fig. 10: 'Symbolical, Human, and Personal: The Queen Victoria Memorial', *Illustrated London News*, 20 May 1911, pp. 734–35. Reproduced courtesy of University of Exeter Special Collections.

Brock's statue at the centre of the memorial introduced more symbolism, in that figures of Truth, Justice, and Motherhood were grouped around Victoria. As Brock noted, 'I devoted entirely to those qualities which made our Queen so great and so beloved.'[24] The central arrangement was topped with two sculpted eagles (which, according to Brock, 'since the time of the Romans have been symbols of "Empire"') and a gilded figure of Victory (Cundall, p. 848). Susan Beattie has argued that the commemorative sculpture produced by the New Movement was distinctive for its 'joyful public celebration of private themes'; indeed, the whole scheme is notable for its attempt to create a monumental allegory that fuses Victoria's personal virtues with the collective national achievements of her reign, creating a physical space in which an idealized political hierarchy can be played out through processions and other ritual events.[25] The different layers of symbolism in the scheme are an allegory of the paradox of Victoria's fashioning, celebrating her role as overseer of her reign and her personal character in enabling its many achievements. At the same time though, the

[24] 'Statement by Mr Brock', *Evening Mail*, 15 May 1911, p. 6.

[25] Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 6.

memorial exemplifies how she was so often subsumed and assimilated into narratives of nationhood and imperialism.

Despite the large sums contributed by the colonies, Webb's plan for additional statues representing the colonies was not executed and this element of the scheme was pared back. The creation of a stridently imperial monument was overridden by the demands of creating a space for a national audience. Steven Brindle has noted that Webb produced a revised version of his plan in 1904 showing the central space encircled by great piers and urns bearing the arms of the dominions and to colonies; however, the Colonial Office was unhappy with this idea, and instead suggested 'statues on pedestals' (p. 51). Ultimately, colonial contributions were recognized through the Australia Gate, Canada Gate, and South and West Africa Gate; on top of the respective gateposts, amorini displaying shields and chosen emblems symbolized each colony. The nearby gates mark entranceways to the memorial space, but this symbolism of imperial federation is not integrated into the scheme in the way the initial plans aspired to. Indeed, not all colonies were completely happy with their generous contributions: Australia had still not approved its contribution in 1905, in part because of fears it would receive objections if brought before the parliament; the Queensland government objected to contributing its share of £5000. When the motion finally passed in October 1905, it did so despite strong opposition from the Federal Labour Party and was anything but unanimous (a proposed amendment suggested spending the money on a memorial hospital instead).[26]

In a manner akin to Webb's planned statues, while the Mall was certainly recreated into an expansive processional way, his design for Admiralty Arch was generally criticized for being too utilitarian. Webb claimed the arch created an imposing vista towards the memorial and that it shut out 'the view of the commercial buildings and advertisements at present still seen from the Mall'.[27] However, the *Architectural Review* labelled it 'another pitiable example of National parsimony in Art'.[28] Instead of the triumphal arch originally planned, Webb had been forced to incorporate offices and an official residence for the First Sea Lord as part of his plan. Nevertheless, the *Architectural Review* declared that 'no archway can soar to grandiloquence when crushed under a row of offices' (p. 224). Spielmann also protested about the arch, noting that this aspect of

[26] 'Queen Victoria Memorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 18 October 1905, p. 4; 'Queen Victoria Memorial', *Barrier Miner*, 19 April 1905, p. 2; 'Queen Victoria Memorial', *Colac Herald*, 18 October 1905, p. 2; and 'Queen Victoria Memorial', *Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide), 11 October 1905, p. 4.

[27] Quoted in Alastair Service, *London 1900* (London: Rizzoli, 1979), p. 243.

[28] 'Notes of the Month', *Architectural Review*, November 1909, pp. 223–30 (p. 224).

the scheme had 'been unsatisfactory from first to last'.[29] The diminution of the most grandiose aspects of the memorial scheme suggests the fleetingness of this high point of imperial ambition in the first years of the twentieth century.

It is telling that the most significant recent artistic and political response to the Victoria Memorial, Kara Walker's *Fons Americanus* (2019), is notable for a similarly jumbled and overloaded excess of symbolism, references, and allegories (*Fig. 11*). Exhibited in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern from October 2019 to April 2020, Walker's large installation responded to both the appearance and colonial politics of the Victoria Memorial. Mimicking the shape of Brock's memorial, Walker's fountains evoke not Britannia ruling the waves but the transatlantic middle passage that carried so many slaves. As Walker herself notes, 'the *Fons Americanus* is an allegory of the Black Atlantic and really all global waters which disastrously connect Africa to America, Europe and

Fig. 11: Kara Walker, *Fons Americanus*, February 2020, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern. Photograph by Ardfern (2020) CC BY-SA 4.0.

[29] M. H. Spielmann, 'The Arch: Triumphal and Utilitarian', *Graphic*, 6 May 1911, p. 658.

economic prosperity.'[30] Atop the monument is not the figure of Victory, but a female, whose slit throat and bare breasts spurt water into the basins that include the head of a shark erupting from the waters, referencing the dangers faced by slaves as well as paintings like J. M. W. Turner's *The Slave Ship* (1840). Kanye West and Winslow Homer's *The Gulf Stream* (1899) are referenced through an African American male depicted in a rowing boat with the name 'K. West' on the prow. Around the pedestal are the figures of Queen Vicky and the Captain, as well as a bare tree with a hangman's lynching noose; Victoria herself is portrayed as a kind of joyful 'Mother Africa' figure, holding a coconut to her breast; at her feet, almost in her open skirts, is the crouching personification of Melancholy. Walker's monument is a rare critique of the colonialism embedded in the Victoria Memorial, mimicking its design but in a way that instead subversively foregrounds the exploitation of slavery and global maritime trade routes. It does not directly respond to the specific imperial symbolism of Brock's memorial or even Victoria's political role. But this is perhaps beside the point given that the memorial capaciously conflates Victoria with her age and all its achievements; and Walker — who describes herself as an 'unreliable narrator' — responds by creating her alternative monument to the maritime links between Africa, America, and Europe, off the back of which so much nineteenth-century 'progress' was achieved.

Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta

Lord Curzon's announcement that India would build its own grand memorial forestalled involvement in the London scheme. Indeed, Indian communities preferred to concentrate their efforts and monies on building their own series of memorials. In the aftermath of Victoria's death, there was a number of controversies in India concerning how best to commemorate her. The disagreements were threefold in the way they played out: within the British Raj; between the British Raj and Indian communities; and also between competing Indian provinces and cities. These controversies all stemmed from a desire to own the curation of Victoria, to fashion her in a way that each distinct group felt it most appropriate to both suit their own agendas and commemorate her personal character as wife and mother.

In addition to detailing the depth and longevity of Victoria's personal interest in India, Taylor has demonstrated the frequent celebration of Victoria as a mother figure within the country (pp. 191–208). This iconography came to the fore at the same time as the emergence of the native counterpart of 'Mother India' (known as 'Bhārat Mātā' in

[30] Tate, 'Kara Walker's Fons Americanus' <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/kara-walker-2674/kara-walkers-fons-americanus> [accessed 22 October 2021].

Hindi); the convergence and crossover between these two idealized maternal figures is not surprising in that Sumathi Ramaswamy has argued that the advent of Mother India is akin to the use of overdetermined feminized figures — such as Britannia, Columbia, Marianne, Erin or Hibernia, and Mother Iran — to embody the nineteenth-century nation state.[31] As such, Ramaswamy notes that 'we simultaneously encounter Bharat Mata as divine and human; as "Indian" but also reminiscent of female figurations of the nation from other parts of the world, especially the imperial West' (p. 75). Just as Mother India was 'a tangled product of charged encounters between the new and the old', Victoria's maternal-national iconography in India similarly tangled together British and Indian tropes and had an open cultural avenue for its impact (Ramaswamy, p. 2). Examples of this can be seen in late nineteenth-century Bengal, where Samita Ghosh has argued that 'nationalist literature strongly endorsed the deification of the Queen and examples of loyalty shown to the conflated image of Bharat Mata and Mother Victoria occur in several songs and poems composed during this time'.[32]

Despite the potent myth-making around Victoria that had been in process since the declaration of Crown rule over India in 1858, the intensity of Indian reaction to her death seems to have taken even colonial officials by surprise. Lord Curzon was struck by the weight of Indian discourse reiterating maternal homage. He noted that

> in score after score of the communications that I am getting from Native Societies, or individuals, the word recurs. They truly loved her as a mother even more than they revered her as a Queen. Strange freaks of phraseology sometimes find their way into these telegrams.[33]

On 24 January Curzon wrote to Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, on the importance of Victoria's matriarchy to promoting loyalist feeling:

> No one who has not been to this country can well realise the extent to which the British Government, the monarchy, and the Empire, were summed up and symbolised in the mind of the Oriental in the personality of the Queen. Nowhere throughout the empire did loyalty assume a more personal, and therefore, a more passionate form [...]. The virtues of the Queen, her domestic character, her homeliness, the old

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[31] Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 76.

[32] Samita Ghosh, '"Bharat Mata" and "Ma Victoria": Forms of Divine Motherhood in Colonial Bengal', *Indian Historical Review*, 47 (2020), 296–312 (p. 302).

[33] London, British Library, Papers of Lord George Hamilton (HP), Private Correspondence India, Curzon to Hamilton, vol. XIX (3 January 1901–12 April 1901), 31 January 1901, F MSS Eur D510/7.

> fashioned simplicity of her sentiments and sayings, the fact that she was equally revered as Mother, Wife and Queen, have all combined to produce an overpowering effect upon the imagination of the Asiatic.[34]

Curzon's orientalist belief in the susceptibility of Indians to the potent charisma of Victoria is uncannily akin to Walter Bagehot's conception of the Crown's *dignified* role dazzling the populace: the naivety of Indians required British rule to be concentrated in a charismatic figure. Interestingly, Hamilton wrote back expressing his surprise at Curzon's comments: 'I had no idea that the deference and homage given to her were of so personal a character.'[35] The surprise of Hamilton and Curzon suggests that, while the Raj certainly made the most of Victoria, they were certainly not fully controlling or orchestrating the symbolism invested in the Mother-Empress.

Addresses from Indian societies and newspaper editorials in the wake of Victoria's death do reiterate, or at least reflect back to the British Raj, the pervasive matriarchal discourse. The *Oudh Times* declared that the people

> knew it was the Maharani who was the mistress of their destinies. Who has fed the famished — the Maharani. Who protects their life and property — the Maharani. Who protects their religion — the Maharani. They have never cast their eyes upon that Maharani, but all the same they sang her praise.[36]

Expressions of loyalty by native and indigenous communities obviously need to be treated with caution, however. Nugent and Carter argue that '"affective" modes of speaking and of expressing relationships to a distant queen were a medium for hardnosed and clear-eyed political agendas, or for extending the terms of engagement between Indigenous people and settlers, or indeed among Indigenous people themselves' (p. 7). Taylor has likewise argued that Indian proclamations of reverence for Queen Victoria were complex and multifaceted; they often encompassed 'clientelism', particularly on the part of Indian princes and mercantile elites, but personal fealty towards Victoria was also a means of using a loyalist standpoint to critique British rule. Taylor claims that such loyalism 'was not just incidental to nineteenth-century Indian nationalism, a polite addition for the sake of form — it was central to its ideology' (p. 6).

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[34] HP, Private Correspondence India, Curzon to Hamilton, vol. XIX, 24 January 1901, F MSS Eur D510/7.

[35] HP, Private Correspondence India, Hamilton to Curzon, vol. III, 14 February 1901, MSS Eur C126/3.

[36] 'The Oudh Times', *Madras Mail*, 30 January 1901, p. 8. The *Oudh Times* column was reprinted by the *Madras Mail*, a typical practice but one that emphasizes how depictions of Victoria could circulate and be amplified.

The politics of Victoria's commemoration fit within the patterns identified by Taylor, and Nugent and Carter, in that schemes demonstrating Indian loyalism were used to facilitate all manner of local civic projects. Desired local schemes to improve educational and welfare infrastructure could be readily allied with Victoria's name, demonstrating fealty while securing practical benefits. A long article in the *Bengalee* following Victoria's death shows that it was already the case that popular affect towards Victoria could be reclaimed against the masculine and martial values of British imperialism. The *Bengalee*, published in Calcutta between 1863 and 1931, was the highest circulating Indian weekly in the late nineteenth century. It was also an important voice of the Indian nationalist movement, and this is reflected in its complex verdict upon Victoria:

> To our people she was not a mere abstraction, but an incarnation in the very flesh and blood of the lofty womanhood which they have adored through the ages in a Sita or a Savitri [...]. And the personality of the Queen was the property of every Indian home. She was not to us the Queen who rides in the thick of the battle with blood on her sword-blade and blood on her spur and her bridle rein, not the Queen described in Kipling's verse, not the Queen of the hard-hearted, iron-heeled, pitiless Neo-Imperialism which at present is the master passion of England, but the Queen who was the emblem of an exalted widowhood, of a sacred and all embracing maternity [...]. And at the same time we knew that although she could not do much to influence our destinies, her mother's heart yearned with an equal affection for all her subjects, irrespective of colour and of creed [...]. They had never seen her in their midst, it is true. But her gentle virtues and the riches of her love had made her a holy presence among them. And the Hindoo knew her as the Bhagavati of his Pantheon, the sacred well of infinite Power and of infinite Beneficence.[37]

The *Bengalee* fashions an Indianized Victoria, a figure akin to a revered Hindu deity. Such comparisons were not uncommon and Taylor has noted that she was also 'likened to Muslim women rulers — Bilqis and Qaidafa — and to Persian kings such as Nausherwan, renowned for their justice' (p. 184). The *Bengalee*'s clear-eyed refashioning of Victoria and her matriarchal agency is the antithesis of the homogeneous blanket of Curzon's orientalism.

The *Bengalee* suggests that the potency of the personality cult around the Queen-Empress was not its totalizing dominion but its mutability. Its refashioning of Victoria fed into the tension in her memorializing, between commemorations that were a statue

[37] 'The Native Papers', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 18 February 1901, p. 7.

or some other decorative scheme and those which had a more practical impetus and which could be argued to honour her personal interest in her Indian subjects. The All India Victoria Memorial was the brainchild of Lord Curzon, first announced by him at a public meeting in Calcutta on 6 February 1901, only four days after the funeral. Taking up an idea that Curzon had already well developed, even apparently to the extent of preparing designs, he used Victoria's commemoration to propose a museum to celebrate Anglo-Indian history, one that would act as an inspiration and example to all Indians.[38] At the heart of the building would nonetheless be an homage to an affective personality of Victoria as both fount and foundation of imperial unity:

> Let us, therefore, have a building, stately, spacious, monumental, and grand, to which every new-comer in Calcutta will turn, to which all the resident population, European and Native, will flock, where all classes will learn the lessons of history, and see revived before their eyes the marvels of the past; and where father shall say to son and mother and daughter — 'This Statue and this great Hall were erected in memory of the greatest and best Sovereign whom India has ever known. She lived far away over the seas, but her heart was with her subjects in India, both of her own race, and of all others. She loved them both the same. In her time, and before it, great men lived, and great deeds were done. Here are their memorials. This is her monument.' (*Speeches*, p. 424)

This was to be history as homage and the hero worship of great men, rather jarringly yoked together with reverence for Victoria the Good. The magnificent central hall was to be a kind of shrine, containing a statue of Victoria with portraits, personal artefacts, and large frescoes of scenes of her life. This would be the commission undertaken by Brock for Calcutta. Curzon deliberately intended the central chamber to be sixty-four feet in diameter in order to be slightly larger than the Taj Mahal. He also suggested that on the walls might be inscribed in golden letters Victoria's proclamation of 1858. Around the interior walls of the rotunda of the memorial are a series of twelve canvas lunettes by Frank Salisbury celebrating key moments in Victoria's life, such as her first Privy Council — moments already mythologized in countless other biographies, prints, and paintings.

The Victoria Memorial Hall would, however, actually end up with two statues of Victoria rather than one. George Frampton had already been commissioned to produce a

[38] Curzon spoke about his existing idea in a second speech given to the Asiatic Society of Bengal on 26 February 1901. See *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1898–1901* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1901), p. 434.

statue for Calcutta to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee. Monumental and regal, it was cast in bronze and depicts an enthroned and aged Victoria, looking down on her world while wearing the robes of the Star of India and holding the orb and sceptre (*Fig. 12*). It arrived in Calcutta in 1902 and was unveiled in a special ceremony on the maidan by Lord Curzon. However, while initially intended for the entrance, Curzon seems to have become dissatisfied with Frampton's statue. In January 1914 he commissioned Brock to produce a statue of Victoria in her coronation robes that would be the keynote of the central hall. Brock's maidenly figure less obviously carries the weight of empire, and its white marble is in greater harmony with the central hall; Frampton's Victoria was instead located in the gardens of the memorial hall. While the two Victorias capture the beginning and end of her reign, their contrast equally gestures towards the difficulty of *which* version of Victoria to commemorate as imperial figurehead.

Fig. 12: George Frampton's statue of Queen Victoria outside Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata. Photograph by Karthik Nanda (2012) CC BY-SA 4.0.

In contrast to Curzon's imperial Valhalla, Indian communities sought to attach Victoria's name to more practical schemes. Just as the London scheme was regarded as too far away to be meaningful, Calcutta was seen as too distant from other major cities and provinces to get a broader buy-in, encouraging communities to devise their own memorial schemes where the benefits would at least be tangible. Even Curzon spent a good part of his first public speech justifying the selection of Calcutta, admitting that while it was 'not the gate of India [...] neither is Washington the gate of America' (*Speeches*, p. 426). Curzon fiercely promoted his plan: 40,000 copies of his public speeches delivered on 6 and 26 February were printed, in English and Bengali, and circulated by the executive committee to encourage support. Curzon's choice of Calcutta nonetheless provoked much dissent. The usually supportive *Civil and Military Gazette* noted that his proposal 'will be received coldly everywhere outside Bengal'; it suggested Delhi would be more suitable given its great associations with the rule of the British in India.[39] The *Bengalee* noted that 'we are distinctly in favour of local memorials which would preserve the Queen's memory in the daily lives of the people by ministering to their daily wants or removing their daily grievances', and that more money would be raised and more good done if memorials followed this pattern.[40] The *Bombay Samachar* (the oldest continuously published newspaper in Asia), criticized Curzon's plan for its exclusiveness: 'such a memorial will neither be very attractive nor of an impressive character to all classes of the native community' ('Native Papers', p. 7). Curzon's later choice of the maidan in Calcutta was another subsequent cause of public dissent, due to the loss of green space. In 1903 the *Indian Daily News* was still pouring cold water on the whole scheme, remarking that 'the interest felt by the public in the Victoria Memorial Hall has been of the slightest and most lukewarm description'.[41]

Curzon's plans gave additional impetus to a disparate plethora of local, provincial, and special interest schemes. This included town halls, female hospitals, cottage hospitals, hotels for students, technical institutes, technical scholarships, endowments for midwives, waterworks, agricultural banks, charitable dispensaries, the Dufferin Fund, Famine Relief Fund, eidgahs, poor houses, public parks, libraries, as well as statues and busts. Geographical rivalry meant that the memorial schemes soon descended into competitive acrimony, with Curzon writing in exasperation to Hamilton:

> Bombay has denounced Calcutta, and Madras has poked fun at Bombay, and while the other and smaller provinces have each been trying to vindicate their claim to an

[39] 'A Protest from Lahore', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 25 February 1901, p. 7.

[40] 'Native Papers', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 25 February 1901, p. 7.

[41] 'The Invasion of the Maidan', *Indian Daily News*, 26 February 1903, p. 8.

> independent memorial, upon one point this great mass of heterogeneous opinion has been absolutely united, namely, that Indian money shall be spent not in England but in India.[42]

The plethora of competing memorial schemes exemplifies the complex political dynamics of curating Victoria's legacy. The more Curzon's high-handed scheme fashioned a Victoria in the image of the British Raj, the more he undercut his own collectivist rhetoric of the memorial belonging to all Indians. It encouraged other groups and communities to create their own philanthropic memorials that could legitimately claim to better honour her maternal character. Even other provincial governors were lukewarm towards Curzon's scheme, knowing that the regions they had responsibility for would be less than enthused. John Woodburn, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, wrote to Walter Lawrence, Curzon's private secretary, that 'I confess I have considerable doubt whether it would equally appeal to the natives of India'. While he believed Indians would contribute to a personal memorial to Victoria, 'it is quite possible that they would say that the Gallery is a Memorial, not of the Queen, but of her more distinguished servants in India.'[43] Henry Northcote, Governor of Bombay, reported back that 'I am sorry to say I can get your proposal no support'.[44] Curzon's plan too overtly hijacked Victoria for his Anglo-Imperial ambitions.

Writing at the end of February 1901, Curzon complained to Hamilton that Victoria's name had been commandeered by Indian politicians and communities for their own schemes:

> It is most interesting to note that, while the responsible British authorities have almost uniformly been in favour of a personal or structural memorial, they have almost in every case been swept off their legs by the extreme native party who have under their control the entire resources of press and public agitation in this country, and who have practically dictated to the various provinces that the money to be received in honour of the Queen should be devoted to the foundation of a number of technical institutes. I regard this as using the Queen's name for an altogether improper and illegitimate purpose; and I predict that, with the utmost confidence, that the majority of these institutes, for which we are not ready in this country, will be still-born.[45]

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[42] HP, Private Correspondence India, Curzon to Hamilton, vol. XIX, 14 February 1901, F MSS Eur D510/7.

[43] London, British Library, Papers of the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Letters and telegrams received and despatched on the subject of the Victoria Memorial Hall, vol. I, 30 January 1901, MSS Eur F111/454.

[44] Curzon Papers, Northcote to Curzon, 14 February 1901, MSS Eur F111/123, p. 49.

[45] HP, Private Correspondence India, Curzon to Hamilton, vol. XIX, 14 February 1901, F MSS Eur D510/7.

Curzon reported that the British provincial governors were being comprehensively outmanoeuvred in that 'Madras, entirely against the sentiments of Ampthill, is going strong for a technical institute', while in Bombay 'the Native party, led by Mehta, have completely outwitted Northcote, and have captured the Local Fund for the Research University started by our old friend Tata'.[46]

Local memorials were supplemented by several distinct women's tributes to Victoria that, again, preferred subscriptions that provided practical benefits. Lady Curzon launched her own memorial scheme that was rather different to that of her husband — a scholarship fund for training Indian midwives in local hospitals in what was an extension of the Dufferin Fund. One hundred women from leading families met in Bangalore on 4 March, for example, to organize fundraising.[47] There was also a separate Indian Women's Memorial Fund, distinct from Lady Curzon's due to being led by Indian women, as well as a Bombay Women's Memorial Fund and a Madras Women's Memorial Fund.[48] Such efforts betoken a desire for a uniquely feminine legacy to honour Victoria. However, a more sardonic note by Ampthill, Governor of Madras, on his wife, suggests social expectations also played a part:

> Margaret has been forced by the ladies of Madras into getting up a Madras women's memorial. The curious thing is that they did so against their real inclination and better judgement. People here are sick of being badgered for subscriptions and they really cannot afford any more, and the women's subscriptions must come in the end from their husbands' pockets. The Ladies of Madras, however were not to be out-done by Calcutta and Bombay, and so they have gone in for this for which, I greatly regret to say, there is no real enthusiasm.[49]

The ladies of Madras used their scheme to create extra beds at the Royal Victoria Caste and Gosha Hospital in the city. Ampthill's complaint regarding the excess of philanthropic schemes asking for subscriptions does, however, cut to the chase of needing funds to achieve results and, here again, Victoria's commemoration is revealing for the gap between the inclusive rhetoric of the All India scheme and where and how particular groups decided to donate their monies.

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[46] HP, Curzon to Hamilton, 28 February 1901, F MSS Eur D510/7.

[47] 'Meeting at Bangalore', *Indian Daily News*, 7 March 1901, p. 20.

[48] 'Bombay Women's Memorial', *Englishman's Overland Mail*, 21 February 1901, p. 6; 'H. E. Lady Ampthill', *Englishman's Overland Mail*, 21 February 1901, p. 5; and 'The Indian Women's Victoria Memorial Fund', *Madras Weekly Mail*, 15 August 1901, p. 15.

[49] HP, Letters from Lord Ampthill, Governor of Madras (1900–1901), 21 March 1901, MSS EUR F123/96, p. 83.

In May 1901 it was estimated that fifty lakhs of rupees were needed for the Victoria Memorial Hall. Donations at that time were thirty-four lakhs, but Europeans of Calcutta had donated three lakhs (300,000 rupees) compared to only 30,000 rupees by the local population, a disproportionate degree of voting with their feet regarding engagement with the memorial. Clientelism drove large donations from Indian elites. Sir William Mackworth-Young, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, noted that 'for the sake of viceregal favour, individuals and states have subscribed'.[50] Provincial memorial funds paid faux homage to Curzon's scheme by giving a small proportion of their donations to the national fund while keeping the lion's share for themselves.[51] The North-West Provinces Queen Victoria Memorial Fund was typical in giving only 10 per cent to the All India Fund, with most going to local memorials for Cawnpore, Bulandshahr, Moradabad, and Farrukhabad. In Baluchistan, again, only 10 per cent of monies was given to the All India Fund, with 5 per cent to the Lady Curzon Memorial Fund; the rest was used to fund a town hall and other local institutions.[52] Curzon was hugely irritated with Antony MacDonnell, Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, who refused to allow any of his local areas to give to the national memorial in order to ensure the success of their own schemes.

Disagreements over what the final memorial should be forestalled the success of several local schemes. That of Bombay's was beset with wrangling and was only decided in May 1902. The governor bemoaned that the final decision was forced by two constraints:

> The first, which many of us did not anticipate, is the disappointingly small sum at our disposal; the second, more easily explicable, is the fact that after 12 months' endeavour no proposal commanding universal acquiescence has been, or is likely to be, devised.[53]

The Bombay memorial was finally decided to be a home for the blind as this was the only project on which any consensus could be found. It was the same in Madras. In August 1901 the *Madras Mail* noted that it observed 'no evidence of widespread enthusiasm in the movement and the response to the appeals can be described as poor'.[54] When subscriptions were closed, the committee was left with only 60,000 rupees for the local memorial and 23,103 rupees for the All India Fund. The *Voice of India* noted that such

[50] Curzon Papers, Telegram to Curzon from Sir William Mackworth-Young, MSS Eur F111/203, p. 134.

[51] 'The Queen Victoria Memorial Fund', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 26 August 1901, p. 17.

[52] 'Victoria Memorial Fund', *Indian Daily News*, 23 May 1901, p. 10.

[53] 'Bombay', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 10 March 1902, p. 11.

[54] 'Madras', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 19 August 1901, p. 10.

monies 'cannot be regarded as much of a success'.[55] Subscriptions were held back due to a split between the Indian community wanting a practical memorial and Europeans wanting something monumental. The Madras fund had to be amalgamated with that of the Jubilee Technical Institute because the sums donated were not enough to fund another hoped for technical institute. At Hyderabad the nizam showed where his priorities lay: he gave a donation of two-and-a-half lakhs to Curzon's scheme. But for Hyderabad's own scheme of a combined orphanage and training school, he gave over a building that had been commenced as a new palace for himself, while the Hyderabad government used ten lakhs from the memorial fund to create a permanent endowment of 50,000 rupees a year. One thousand children were to be trained when the school was fully operational.[56]

Many inaugurations of statues of Victoria took place across the British Empire in the years following her jubilees, and these were often significant public events laden with imperial symbolism. As Martina Droth and Michael Hatt have argued, 'these statues and their unveilings are perhaps the most potent instances of the dream of imperial coherence, with spaces and subjects around the globe all under the watchful gaze of empress and queen.'[57] The Victoria Memorial Hall certainly fits this pattern with the foundation stone being laid by the Prince of Wales, the future George V, in 1906 in a large ceremony; it was finally opened in December 1921 by the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII. The event, however, was not a straightforward celebration. India had gone in a different direction to Curzon's imperial vision. Not only had the capital been moved from Calcutta to Delhi in December 1911, in part because the latter was more central, the Indian nationalist movement had led to imperial monuments becoming more politicized. Victoria's statue in Chittagong had been tarred in April 1906; the crown of her statue in Delhi was struck off during riots in 1907; while in late 1908, her statue in Maharaj Bagh, one of the public gardens in Nagpur, was vandalized, as was another at Benares in early 1909.[58] No longer the Great White Queen, the Nagpur statue had been covered with tar, the nose pulled off, and the sceptre broken.[59]

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[55] Editorial, *Voice of India*, 7 September 1901, p. 5. See also, 'Madras Memorial Fund', *Indian Daily News*, 1 August 1901, p. 32.

[56] 'Hyderabad', *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 11 March 1905, p. 8.

[57] Martina Droth and Michael Hatt, 'Sculpture and Ceremonial', in *Sculpture Victorious*, ed. by Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, pp. 102–47 (pp. 102–09).

[58] 'Reported Outrage on the Statue of Queen Victoria', *East Anglian Daily Times*, 15 May 1907, p. 10; and 'Chittagong', *Indian Daily News*, 10 May 1906, p. 30. On the Benares attack, see 'Editorial Notes', *Voice of India*, 6 February 1909, p. 1.

[59] For this crime, a student at the agricultural college at Nagpur was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and an overseer at a government farm, to one year's imprisonment. See 'Desecration of Queen Victoria's Statue', *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 29 January 1909, p. 5.

When it came to the ceremonial opening of the Victoria Memorial Hall, the event was subject to a boycott of the prince's tour by the Indian National Congress as part of its non-cooperation policy.[60] The *Englishman's Overland Mail* was all too aware of the symbolism of the event, opining that the crowds were 'symptomatic of their determination to have nothing to do with a GANDHI Raj, or even with a *goonda* Raj, but rather to place their trust in the great Power' under whom they had flourished.[61] A final sting in the tail was that the executive committee of the memorial found that there was a lack of funds to complete the building — eleven lakhs in total — and they had to make another call on the generosity of Indian princes in May 1921, noting that the princes had been 'largely instrumental' in funding the memorial and hoping that they would, 'in spite of many altered circumstances, not fail to give generously again'.[62] The princes did indeed give generously in Victoria's name, albeit through gritted teeth.

Conclusion

The imperial myth-making of the Victoria memorials in London and Calcutta has faded over time, or perhaps the enduring success of these schemes is precisely that they have been accepted into the urban everyday. Sumangala Bhattacharya has argued that 'through the commodification of its Raj heritage as commercialized tourism, the VMH can be celebrated as an asset to postcolonial Kolkata rather than decried as a monument binding the city to a painful colonial past'.[63] In a similar vein, Tapati Guha-Thakurta has drawn attention to the way that the meaning and space of the memorial hall has evolved in tandem with the changing political identity of Calcutta. In 1921 its gardens became a receptacle for other colonial-era statues moved from their original locations in response to the shifting politics of the city, making the gardens part Valhalla, part public exhibition, part storage facility.[64] Thus a statue of Lord Cornwallis in the guise of a Roman emperor, which was transported to Calcutta in 1803, was placed in the gardens in 1921, as was that of Sir Richard Westmacott's statue of Lord William Bentinck (initially erected outside the Town Hall in Calcutta). Other statues were moved there as

[60] 'Prince in Calcutta', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 30 December 1921, p. 5; and 'Stirring Scenes on Red Road', *Englishman's Overland Mail*, 5 January 1922, p. 10.

[61] 'The Prince and the People', *Englishman's Overland Mail*, 5 January 1922, p. 1.

[62] Letter from Ganga Singh, Maharajah of Bikaner to Maharajah of Gondol, in 'The Construction of the Great Queen Victoria Memorial in Calcutta, Symbol of an Empire: The Archive of a Maharaja', Raab Collection <https://www.raabcollection.com/foreign-figures-history/victoria-memorial> [accessed 22 October 2021].

[63] Sumangala Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj: Appropriating the Colonial Legacy of Kolkata's Victoria Memorial Hall', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 41 (2019), 521–41 (p. 538).

[64] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, 'Why Statues Matter: The Changing Landscape of Calcutta's Colonial and Postcolonial Statuary', lecture given at Victoria Memorial Hall in November 2019 <https://criticalcollective.in/Pdf/Why_Statues_Matter.pdf> [accessed 22 October 2021].

part of the post-independence nationalist removal of many colonial-era statues. John Henry Foley's equestrian statue of General James Outram (initially erected 1874) was moved from Park Street in 1958, while a statue of Lord Curzon, the most imperious of viceroys, which was formerly in front of the north gate, was replaced in 1975 by one of the Indian nationalist and spiritual leader Sri Aurobindo. The short piece in this issue of *19* by Jayanta Sengupta of the Victoria Memorial Hall is testimony to how curators and artists, among others, are still working to decolonize, evolve, or critique a space that is both a memorial and a living museum.

The Victoria Memorial in London has largely fulfilled its rubric to create the setting for numerous events of national cultural memory. Thus, George V and Queen Mary appeared on the Buckingham Palace balcony at the end of World War I in front of large crowds around the memorial and there were many similar and subsequent iconic appearances on the balcony by the royal family: on VE Day in 1945; the procession down the Mall in 2005 marking the sixtieth anniversary of VE Day; the flowers left and mourning scenes outside Buckingham Palace following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1997; the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II, with large crowds around the memorial; and, more recently, an enormous street party for 10,000 people on the Mall as part of the Queen's ninetieth birthday celebrations in 2016, attended by members of the charities of which she is patron.[65] Victoria's fashioning of herself continues to shape the institution of monarchy and the nation as a whole through the ongoing legacy and political work of her memorial.

Paradoxically, the toning down of parts of the imperial mythos of the initial plans of the Victoria Memorial may have contributed to the fact that it has not been threatened with the fate suffered by many other statues of Queen Victoria, which have been moved, defaced, or pulled down due to nationalist and anti-colonialism movements across the twentieth century.[66] Most of this has not taken place on British shores, so it is telling that the Black Lives Matter protests in June 2020 saw 'racist', 'coloniser', 'murderer', and 'slave owner' graffitied onto the pedestal of Victoria's statue in Leeds, erected in 1905 as one of her many memorials.[67] During the final writing of this article, Queen

[65] On the iconic development of the Buckingham Palace balcony, see Ed Owens, 'Buckingham Palace's Balcony: A Focal Point for National Celebration', *History Extra*, June 2016 <https://www.historyextra.com/period/20th-century/buckingham-palaces-balcony-a-focal-point-for-national-celebration/> [accessed 22 October 2021].

[66] On the fate of Victoria's statues, see Droth and Hatt, pp. 132–37, 144–47; and Paul M. McGarr, '"The Viceroys Are Disappearing from the Roundabouts in Delhi": British Symbols of Power in Post-Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 49 (2015), 787–831.

[67] Joe Cooper, 'Queen Victoria Statue in Leeds Defaced with Black Lives Matter Graffiti', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 9 June 2020 <https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/politics/queen-victoria-statue-leeds-defaced-black-lives-matter-graffiti-2879116> [accessed 22 October 2021].

Victoria's statue in Winnipeg was pulled down on 1 July 2021 (Canada Day), as part of protests against the deaths of indigenous children in Canadian residential schools.[68] As both the Victoria Memorial Hall and the Victoria Memorial in London exemplify, Victoria's personal figure was supplemented and overdetermined. While she was buried beside Albert at the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore according to her personal instructions, her symbolism and fashioning often conflated her with both Victorianism and colonialism, and this remains an inextricable part of her legacy. The national and All India schemes contribute to this through being part of the nineteenth-century culture of hero worship that enhances, idealizes, shrouds, and complicates the agency of those who are made to be the heroes of their own lives. Both memorials were also an end point in that there were no such schemes for Edward VII. Before the opening of the Victoria Memorial Hall in December 1921, and before the last of Brock's bronze statues were finally put into position in 1924, the bloodshed of World War I had created a new wave of democratic memorials across Britain.

[68] '2 Statues of Queens Toppled at Manitoba Legislature', CBC, 1 July 2021 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/queen-victoria-statue-winnipeg-1.6087684> [accessed 22 October 2021].