Chapter Two

Statues And Monuments

An exclusive group of Melbourne's boosters, including several Commissioners from the 1888 Exhibition, were also planning to mark the external central city landscape with a range of statues and monuments. Over the late 1870s and 1880s, they planned to erect five central city statues or monuments, including those to Sir Redmond Barry and the Eight Hours' Day. The statues would augment Burke and Wills' 1865 statue, marking the period as the beginning of the city's 'sort of open air museum of national history'. Melbourne's elite government boosters directly controlled the symbolic use of crown land. Here they erected monuments to individuals, especially to those in their own image, and less often, to moments of the past, deeming them the best illustrations of the public's exemplary lineage. The statues and monuments continued the Exhibition's extensive temporal conversation, and particularly highlighted local, specific histories of the same, consolidating the idea of local progress. We saw in the Exhibition, renderings of local history in portraiture and picturesque forms, while outside the Exhibition Melbourne's boosters rendered local history, both in theme and form, in a more explicit monumental frame. The monuments were presented as a gesture of public indebtedness, symbolising both closure and renewal. Their rhetoric was like the 'colossal' bust of Cook in the International Exhibition, but more reverential and exclusive because of the expensive civic space, or lack of materialism, around each of them.

The boosters who made the monuments and statues were a self-consciously more exclusive group than those who made history in the Exhibition. They were high level men of government—colonial and local politicians, bureaucrats and government-board members, vice-regal and titular heads—whereas in the Exhibition they shared history-

340 The three other statues, with the year of their initiation in parentheses, were to General Charles Gordon (1880s and unveiled 1889), Daniel O'Connell (1875 and unveiled 1891), and Francis Ormond (1889 and unveiled 1897). Ridley, Ronald T., Melbourne's Monuments, pp.59,69,86.
342 Lowenthal, David, Foreign Country, p.323.
making with a range of commercial and artistic interests. The history-making pertaining
to monuments and statues was spatially-pervasive, less negotiable and a more restricted
hegemony on public space and memory than in the International Exhibition.
Occasionally, though, specifically sectional interest groups could penetrate this high
level boosting group, if their politics were not too threatening. This opened up a
limited and precarious historical pluralism in the central civic sphere, occasionally
offering simultaneous but different ‘boosting’ narratives of the colony’s origins and
progress.

This chapter looks at Sir Redmond Barry’s life and the Eight Hours’ Day movement,
and contemporary attempts to historicise them through commemoration, revealing the
development of history-making conglomerations across time and space. It then looks at
the inception, development, unveiling and briefly, at the after-lives of Redmond Barry’s
statue and the Eight Hours’ Day monument, highlighting how the often-unseen
contingencies of each public history-making project can problematise analyses based on
the outcomes alone. In particular the chapter investigates who the history-makers and
boosters were, defining the political edges of their pluralism, and understanding the
relationship between contemporary concerns and acts of history-making. It also
provides a more nuanced profile of the historical themes of statesmen and pioneers,
outlined theoretically in the Introduction and introduced empirically in Chapter One,
and investigates the relationship between the themes and the forms of the statues and
monuments.

343 Bulbeck, Chilla, ‘Remembering Ourselves’, p.413. Bulbeck introduces the notion of
hierarchical pluralism.
Sir Redmond Barry's Statue

...those who triumphed in the cause of their country, or rendered themselves remarkable by their virtue, deemed a statue erected at the public expense, the highest honour they could attain.

Redmond Barry, 1847

Sir Redmond Barry must have been pleased when, thirty years after this early speech to the Melbourne Mechanics’ Institute, his fellow Melbourne Public Library Trustees decided to commission a statue of him. Melbourne’s most prominent colonial boosters acknowledged Barry as both one of the first and amongst their most prodigious. The Argus called him an ‘institution’: ‘[H]e is part of our history, and his biography interweaves itself with the annals of this city more particularly’. 

In November 1839, aged twenty-six, Redmond Barry, proud descendant of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, arrived in Port Phillip with a law degree and a passionate lay interest in classical literature, arts and architecture. Port Phillip had been colonised only four years earlier, and had a white population of 5000. During the 1840s Barry practiced law in conjunction with other municipal legal appointments, and became a leading member of Melbourne’s small, exclusive vice-regal circle, counting Lieutenant Governor La Trobe as a friend. Barry’s group became ‘the actual leaders of Melbourne society’. In 1851 Barry became Victoria’s first Solicitor-General, and then inaugural puisne judge of the Victorian Supreme Court in 1852. However,

348 Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, pp.17,19-22,25; Ryan, Peter, Redmond Barry, p.4
349 Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.271.
350 Ryan, Peter, Entry on Redmond Barry in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.3, p.109; Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, pp.40,43-4; see also footnote 38.
351 de Serville, Paul, Port Phillip Gentlemen, p.60.
352 Ryan, Peter, Redmond Barry, p.29.
William Stawell, also an emigrant Irish lawyer354 whose life would continuously intersect with Barry’s and who would ultimately become his chief monument-maker, gained more prestigious positions than Barry, including Chief Justice.355 While Barry continued his position as Supreme Court judge to his death in 1880, his famous last judicial act being to sentence Ned Kelly to death, he was professionally embittered and began to concentrate more on his extracurricular activities.356

The centre of Barry’s world was the Melbourne Club, the presidency of which he held a record three times.357 He was also involved in the foundation and development of an array of other auspicious Melbourne clubs and institutions, among them the Philosophical Institute, the Philharmonic Society, the Melbourne Hospital, the Melbourne Mechanics’ Institute,358 the Botanical Gardens,359 the Port Phillip Turf Club,360 the Horticultural Society and the Photographic Society.361 We also noted earlier Barry’s involvement in the colony’s exhibition lineage, including as Official Commissioner for the Victorian Court in London in 1862 and Philadelphia in 1876.362

As ‘an indefatigable missionary of civic virtue’,363 Barry’s proudest achievements were his ‘paternity’364 of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery and, along with Hugh Childers, of the University of Melbourne.365 Barry indicated his belief in the purifying effect of literature early when he set up a reading room for ‘working men’ in his Bourke

355 Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.274; see also Smith, F.B., ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.16.
356 Ryan, Peter, Redmond Barry, p.32; Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, pp.80-2.
359 The Argus, 24 August 1887, p.5.
361 Smith, F.B., ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.16.
365 Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.276. Scholars continue to debate whether Childers or Barry ‘founded’ the University. Sutherland writes that while Childers suggested it, ‘all the toil of founding this excellent institution was undertaken by [Barry]’.
Street house. Concerned to redress the colony’s ‘empty materialism’, the gold-rushes exacerbated his fears: ‘[T]here were many sincere friends of the colony who feared that social discord and other miseries would result from a disorganised state of society’. Class distinctions no longer seemed solid, proved for Barry by demands for universal suffrage, which he opposed. Deploying the gold-generated wealth of the colony, Barry’s political colleagues La Trobe and Childers legislated for a university and library, believing that providing access to knowledge was good civic policy. Another of Barry’s political colleagues, Dr Palmer, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, articulated it thus in 1856:

In times past it was thought that education led to disorganisation and turmoil, and was inimical to civil policy; that it would result in insubordination, envy, and disloyalty amongst the people. Now, however, it was admitted that the spread of education had been one of the foremost supporters of the civil power, and had proved the means of averting many civil commotions. The tendency of knowledge undoubtedly was to remove baser tastes and elevate the feelings.

On 3 July 1854, the Governor of Victoria Charles Hotham laid foundation stones for the University and the Library, speaking of the hierarchical complementarity between the institutions:

the Library is the most important [of the two institutions] for the people. Here, you working men will find comfort and society. You...who frequent public-houses...[will find] a refuge...where you will meet with better society, where you will be enabled to associate with the higher and more cultivated classes of society. How many men of great note have sprung from the working-classes and where did they get their knowledge but in libraries such as this is intended to be—a working man’s library? [My italics]

366 As above, p.273.
367 As above, pp.273-4,286; The Argus, 24 August 1887, p.5.
370 See also White, Richard, Inventing Australia, esp. pp.59-61.
371 The Argus, 4 July 1854, not paginated.
372 As above.
As simultaneous inaugural principal Trustee and later, President of the Library, 373 and first Chancellor of the University, 374 Barry ran both institutions, 375 often autocratically. 376 He directed the building works for both these and other institutions with which he was involved, seeing the architectural works as monumental object lessons. 377 Indeed, the buildings’ classicism replaced the ground previously inhabited by ‘savages’, 378 and inside these institutions, Aborigines stood as object lessons to working men in primitive otherness. 379

Entrance to the Library was free and visitors did not require formal introduction—modern liberal, provisions compared to established European libraries. 380 Men could then reach ‘the highest stage of perfection’ at the University. 381 Barry prided himself on making the University accessible to sons of working men, 382 but it was the non-sectarianism of the University’s entrance policy that underlay its ‘liberal constitution’. 383 While the civic work of Barry and his colleagues was unambiguously secular and liberal, its classlessness was ambiguous at best. 384

Along with the Chief Librarian, Augustus Tulk, Barry developed the Library’s collection. 385 His bias towards European works and histories reflected his belief about

---

373 The other trustees were William Stawell, Dr. Palmer, Hugh Childers and D.C. Macarthur.
376 McCallum, Colin A., The Public Library of Victoria, p.34; Ryan, Peter, Redmond Barry, pp.37-9; Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.284.
380 As above, p.15.
381 Governor Hotham, quoted in The Argus, 4 July 1854, not paginated.
382 Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.284; see also Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, p.90.
383 The Argus, 4 July 1854, not paginated.
civilisation’s origins and genealogy.\textsuperscript{386} Barry disavowed contemporary fictional material,\textsuperscript{387} producing a collection ‘so free from the merely ephemeral, and so strictly confined to that which is of sterling value’.\textsuperscript{388} As in the 1888 Exhibition, Barry presumed to possess ‘good taste’, defined by its imperial, antique provenance, and determined that the working class would also come to seek and value taste. Barry also insisted on classicism in the University curriculum, for which he increasingly attracted criticism from some of his colleagues, thus opening up differences in the ‘taste’ of the city’s boosters. It was partly a generational difference—Barry, an old-fashioned, formal and patrician\textsuperscript{389} eye-witnessing pioneer, held to the classics, while the next generation adopted more modern ideas and tastes. Indeed, during the 1860s and 1870s some of Barry’s colleagues characterised him as ‘old school’, if not ‘yesterday’s man’.\textsuperscript{390}

From soon after the Library’s inception, Barry lobbied successfully for the creation of a museum and art gallery. He established the Library’s first collection of casts of ancient heroes and modern nobles,\textsuperscript{391} and procured paintings which formed the Art Gallery’s embryonic collection at its opening in 1861.\textsuperscript{392} In the 1870s Barry established in the Art Gallery a Portrait Gallery of Colonial Governors. James Smith, a contemporary critic, applauded the initiative:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{386} One of his most famous orders was to London for all the references in Edward Gibbon’s ‘monumental history of Rome’ Edward Gibbon’s \textit{The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire} was published between 1776 and 1788. McCallum, Colin A., \textit{The Public Library of Victoria}, p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{387} Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, pp.157-8; see also comments by Barry about Liverpool Free Library in Fox, Paul, ‘The State Library of Victoria’, p.22.
\item \textsuperscript{388} Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, pp.280-1.
\item \textsuperscript{389} Barry’s obituarist assessed his pomposity in the kindest light, suggesting it was a deliberate contrast with the manners of a new, mass generation: ‘[Barry’s] stateliness of manner was a standing protest against the free and easy demeanour of a generation which...has gone to the opposite extreme...while his language...was greatly preferable...to the slippshod English and the slang which are so popular in many circles’ \textit{The Argus}, 24 November 1880 quoted in Lack, John (ed.), ‘Obsequies for Sir Redmond Barry’, p.42; see also \textit{The Argus}, 24 August 1887, p.5; McCallum, Colin A., \textit{The Public Library of Victoria}, p.34; Ryan, Peter, Entry on Redmond Barry in \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography}, Vol.3, p.109.
\item \textsuperscript{390} In the last two years of his life, Barry was politically out-maneuvred at both the University and the Library, losing battles for exclusive curriculum focus on the classics and exclusion of female entrants to the University (with the exception of medicine), and exclusive retention of powers by the Library Trustees. Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, pp.72,164-6,188-9.
\item \textsuperscript{391} As above, pp.112,123,129-32,141-5.
\end{itemize}
...they deserve no remarks as works of arts...[but they] call attention to the very admirable idea of preserving in a public place such interesting momentoes of our rulers, accompanied...by tickets [which record] the leading dates and most prominent facts of each one's public life.\textsuperscript{393}

The civic provenance of commemorations to Barry, including his statue, lies in Barry's own work, in both form and theme.\textsuperscript{394} He played a major role in encouraging colonial historical veneration through statuary and portraiture, and encouraged statesmen as the pre-eminent commemorative theme, reflecting his endorsement of government by 'hereditary caste' rather than democratic election.\textsuperscript{395}

Alexander Sutherland, Barry's contemporary and first posthumous biographer, compared Barry positively with a series of other Melbourne men: Batman, Fawker\textsuperscript{396} and Esmond.\textsuperscript{397} Barry, although 'his fame is purely local', was in the same 'class' as [George] Washington and [James] Cook, motivated for noble reasons and by their virtuous characters rather than innate talent to carry out their aims, and sometimes exhibiting 'eccentricities and weaknesses'.\textsuperscript{398} Barry's motives, however, reflected in his diverse interests, did indeed serve his interests. He made distinctions between the various social groups he was involved with, such as the Melbourne Club and the Philosophical Institute, and that part of his work which was either for the elevation of working men, such as the expressly public Library, or their control by law, such as in the Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{399} It was in the acquittal of these aims that Barry could be devoted to Victoria\textsuperscript{400} while still holding that it was 'a despicable part of the world'.\textsuperscript{401} Barry's anxiety epitomised the tension, which continued in the 1888 Melbourne Exhibition, between the civic leaders maintaining private, privileged and conservative spheres of

\textsuperscript{392} As above, pp.141.
\textsuperscript{393} James Smith cited in Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, p.170.
\textsuperscript{394} \textit{The Age}, 24 August 1887, p.5.
\textsuperscript{396} Batman and Fawker were largely acknowledged as the founders of Port Phillip.
\textsuperscript{397} Esmond was imputed as the discoverer of gold in Victoria.
\textsuperscript{398} Sutherland, Alexander, 'Sir Redmond Barry', pp.263-4,287.
\textsuperscript{399} Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, p.93.
\textsuperscript{400} Sutherland, Alexander, 'Sir Redmond Barry', p.271.
\textsuperscript{401} Redmond Barry quoted in Sutherland, Alexander, 'Sir Redmond Barry', p.288. In fact the quote shows Barry beginning to change his mind about Victoria's status as 'a despicable part of the world' during a tour to Europe and Asia.
knowledge and culture, and their more liberal urge to tame the mob through giving them access to knowledge.

The contemporary transformation of Barry into a 'historic figure' played a role in silencing this class problematic because of its very claim to be 'public', and thus beyond partisanship, and the apparent unassailability of its forms. Moves to memorialise Barry as an historic figure started early, and occurred frequently throughout his life. In the first place, Barry was his own best memorialist, and—perhaps also determined to show some of his more critical colleagues that he was far from anachronistic—did as much during his own lifetime to consolidate his status as an important historical actor in the colony's development as his contemporary boosters and descendants. In 1860 Charles Summers made a marble bust of Barry, and cast a bronze medallion in 1865 while Thomas Woolner created a marble bust in 1878. Prominent colonial artists painted Barry's portrait, including John Botterill (c.1860), Robert Dowling (1886) and George Folingsby (1879). In 1875 Barry placed the Botterill portrait in the Colonial Governors' Portrait Gallery because he had acted in that capacity for two weeks, while other portraits of Barry ended up in the University's Council Chamber and Law School, the Victorian Supreme Court Library and the public collections he helped establish. Barry's image was also captured in a range of wood-engravings and photographic portraits. (Illustrations 18 - 21) As might be expected, many of the forms which memorialised Barry were those which he had encouraged the colonial masses to cultivate, and the strength of the public reception of object lessons about Barry the historic actor may have been due in large part to him.

407 As above, p.261.
408 Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, p.170.
409 Redmond Barry Biography File, State Library of Victoria.
Illustration 18
Sir Redmond Barry, Literature, Science, Music, &c.
Illustration 19
Sir Redmond Barry, by John Botterill, c.1860
Sir Redmond Barry, k.c.m.g., Senior Trustee, 1858, President 1870-1880

Illustration 20
Sir Redmond Barry, c.1875
Illustration 21
Judge Redmond Barry, *The Australasian Sketcher*, 20 February 1875
Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
Barry and his colleagues also attempted to memorialise him in other forms. In 1858 a street approaching the University was named after him,\footnote{Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, p.92.} and in 1859 H.A. Billing and Captain Sturt proposed a statue of Barry in the Library’s new Queen’s Hall. A budget of £500 was established and £250 collected, but nothing eventuated.\footnote{Ridley, R.T., ‘James Gilbert’, p.26.} Barry’s civic work was acknowledged with imperial honours in 1860 and again in 1877.\footnote{Ryan, Peter, Entry on Redmond Barry in \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography}, Vol.3, p.110.} In 1870 Barry had his coat of arms placed above the Library’s entrance doors, and the arms of the other trustees placed in the external front wall. This placed private marks upon the institution whose public credentials he had so jealously guarded, again exposing the tension between public endeavour and private interests.\footnote{Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, p.167.} In 1886 a Hall in the Public Library was named after him.\footnote{Redmond Barry Biography File, State Library of Victoria.} (\textit{Illustration 22})

Collectively, the various portrait and three-dimensional images of Barry and the naming rites give us some sense of the wide-ranging colonial forms of public history, and how each moment had its own rhetoric, as did its collectivity over time and space. Barry’s name and image was imprinted on colonial Melbourne’s central civic and institutional landscape. His repeated appearance told of his high position in the hierarchy of historic actors, and his continued reinforcement as a public hero obscured the politics of his work. Barry was very evidently contradictory and hypocritical,\footnote{Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, p.57; Ridley, R.T., Book review of \textit{Redmond Barry: An Anglo-Irish Australian}, by Ann Galbally in \textit{Australian Historical Studies}, No.107, 1996, p.368.} which made hagiography difficult for even Barry’s closest allies and earliest memorialists. Barry’s contemporaries, however, decided that his status as an eye-witness pioneer of state more than compensated for Barry’s flaws.\footnote{Galbally, Ann, \textit{Redmond Barry}, p.92.}

In 1877, as Barry aged and contracted diabetes, his Library colleagues suggested a monument as a grand memorial gesture, knowing that Barry would appreciate it. In the closure the monument also signalled, Barry’s colleagues may also have been implying that his reign had ended. A Barry Statue Committee formed, with Barry’s long-standing
Illustration 22
Barry Hall, Public Library of Victoria
Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
colleague and nemesis, Sir William Stawell, as President. The Committee membership included Melbourne's most prominent boosters. William Cain, Melbourne’s Mayor, was General Chairman, David McArthur was Chairman of the Executive Committee and the Honorable Thomas Loader was Honorary Treasurer, while twenty-two other senior public men were ordinary members, including the heads of many of the institutions with which Barry was associated, other public officials, politicians and businessmen.

The Committee established a budget of £1500, to be raised by public subscription, but it came forth slowly. Barry’s death in 1880 encouraged a further rush of subscriptions, but by 1883 only £1100 had been raised, and accounts for much of the Committee’s slow movement through to its unveiling. The lack of funds for the statue is remarkable considering it involved some of Melbourne’s wealthiest cultural and civic patrons, and that it honoured Melbourne’s elite civic pioneer, who had died midway through the fund-raising process. We saw previously that an earlier attempt to monumentise Barry was thwarted because of lack of funds. It raises a more general question, to which we will return, about the effects of the contingencies of funding on public history-making endeavours.

In May 1878 the Committee sought a site for the monument in Swanston Street, in front of the Public Library. While the Committee originally suggested that it be placed on the lawn, after ‘mature consideration [it] decided that the most fitting place for it was on the stone terrace immediately in front of the main entrance to the library’, where it was ultimately placed. Thus on approach to the Library, the viewer would look up the stairway to see Barry’s bronze cast in the centre of the foreground, ‘flanked on either

---

417 Stawell was knighted in 1886.
418 The Argus, 24 August 1887, p.5.
419 The Argus, 3 August 1887, p.7; Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, p.193.
421 As above, p.26.
422 The Argus, 3 August 1887, p.7.
side by the bronze lions which guard the entrance’,\textsuperscript{423} and backrounded by the ‘pure, classical, substantial’\textsuperscript{424} Library. The viewer would see two generations of monumental object lessons in civic progress.

Barry died on 23 November 1880, and both Parliament and the University adjourned for the day as a mark of respect.\textsuperscript{425} Barry’s funeral was attended by the highest representatives of the state and the church, and tens of thousands of spectators watched the cortege pass through central Melbourne,\textsuperscript{426} marking a characteristic widespread public embrace of the streets for the ritual expression of grief in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{427} (Illustration 23) His death prompted the Committee to move the monument effort along, as well as encouraging the hanging of a portrait in Wilson Hall at the University.\textsuperscript{428}

In 1883 the Committee half-heartedly selected a statue design by James Gilbert, Melbourne’s leading sculptor,\textsuperscript{429} which gave ‘a true likeness of their late friend’ rather than being an outstanding aesthetic piece,\textsuperscript{430} emphasising verisimilitude over aestheticism. Two years later Gilbert died with an estate valued at £300,\textsuperscript{431} and contemporary rumour had it that his life insurance contributed to the statue fund,\textsuperscript{432} the accuracy of which remains unconfirmed.\textsuperscript{433} Percival Ball, a recent English emigrant with emerging credentials as a sculptor, took over the commission and completed the model in 1886.\textsuperscript{434}

\textsuperscript{423} The Argus, 24 August 1887, p.5.
\textsuperscript{424} The Argus, 4 July 1854, not paginated.
\textsuperscript{425} Galbally, Ann, Redmond Barry, p.193.
\textsuperscript{426} Lack, John (ed.), ‘Obsequies for Sir Redmond Barry’, p.43.
\textsuperscript{427} Brown-May, Andrew, Melbourne Street Life, pp.188-90.
\textsuperscript{428} Sutherland, Alexander, ‘Sir Redmond Barry’, p.294.
\textsuperscript{430} As above, p.26.
\textsuperscript{431} As above, pp.28,30.
\textsuperscript{432} Selby, Isaac, The Old Pioneers’ Memorial History of Melbourne from the Discovery of Port Phillip down to the World War, Old Pioneers’ Memorial Fund, Melbourne, 1924, p.252.
\textsuperscript{433} Ridley, R.T., ‘James Gilbert’, p.27.
\textsuperscript{434} As above.
Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
Sir Redmond Barry's funeral. The Australian Sketcher, 4 December 1880
Illustration 23
The statue, cast in bronze, was described as being of 'heroic size', ten feet high, mounted on an eight feet high pedestal. *The Illustrated Australian News* described it as follows:

the deceased judge is represented in his Chancellor's robes, with the order of St Michael and St George and other insignia, holding his cap in one hand and the University statutes in the other. The attitude is dignified and commanding.\(^{435}\)

(Illustration 24)

The statue represents characteristic complementarity between form and theme: the hero's monumental sacrificial gain is commemorated with exaggerated physicality or gigantism—the attributes of manly prowess.

Ten years later, on 23 August 1887, the most 'interesting [and] suggestive [event]...since the foundation of the colony [occurred]'^\(^{436}\)—a big statement indeed, pointing to the importance Melbourne's boosters placed on these monumental articulations of history. Thousands of people watched the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch unveil the statue,\(^{437}\) signalling their embrace and understanding of the civic sphere's high rhetorical and material moments.

The ceremony was about closure, a colonial, generational *fin de siècle*, as much as renewal. Sir George Verdon, the President of the Library's Trustees, stated that 'it was for our own sakes that we have erected a statue to [Barry's] memory'.\(^ {438}\) In commemorating Barry, these most prominent boosters were burying the 'old school' colonial pioneers and with it living memory of the beginnings, while implicitly memorialising and reaffirming their contemporary actions as politicians, civic officials and servants. The Governor stated at the opening that the influence which Barry exercised:

must be fresh in the recollection of many present, but especially in that of his old colleagues, who worked with him in the formation, and in the management of the

---

\(^{435}\) *The Illustrated Australian News*, 3 February 1886, p.19.

\(^{436}\) Sir George Verdon quoted in *The Argus*, 24 August 1887, p.5.

\(^{437}\) *The Argus*, 24 August 1887, p.5.

\(^{438}\) As above.
Illustration 24
Statue of Sir Redmond Barry, Charles Rudd Photographer, 1887
Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
great institutions with which his name and theirs are connected; institutions which, I trust, will ever remain as monuments of the early greatness of this city, and as leading records of the large mindedness of those men.\textsuperscript{439}

George Verdon then brought the generational emphasis to the present:

It is our earnest desire to continue the good work which Sir Redmond Barry began. The principles of management which he laid down we have endeavoured to follow.\textsuperscript{440}

The issue of class in Barry’s historic works and its continuation in the present was high in the speakers’ minds. While they singled Barry out as exceptional, they emphasised the classless nature of his work. Verdon reflected that Barry’s work did not distinguish between ‘class or creed’, while both the Mayor and the Governor spoke of the ‘grateful feelings of all classes’ towards Sir Redmond.\textsuperscript{441} As we have seen, however, Barry’s educative work was very specifically directed to the working class, and these words continued to underpin the boosters’ concern about gaining appreciation and respect from the working class. And so it was that class politics were submerged in the construction of a specifically public hero, with the words on the plaque recording:

\begin{quote}
Erected by a grateful public to perpetuate the memory of invaluable services rendered to Victoria by Sir Redmond Barry, Kt., Doctor of Laws and Judge of the Supreme Court.
\end{quote}

Verdon’s closing words attended to the future, where his anxieties over class and generational succession merged. He hoped that Barry’s statue:

\begin{quote}
might be an object which would be before the eyes of the youth of this colony, that they should emulate the virtues, and the talents, and the great works which Sir Redmond Barry had performed.\textsuperscript{442}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{439} As above.
\textsuperscript{440} As above.
\textsuperscript{441} As above.
\textsuperscript{442} As above.
As true emulation was impossible, Barry, like other exemplary individuals, was to stand for more abstract virtues of civic duty and sacrifice for all men in any future cause that demanded it.

The ceremony highlighted a pattern occurring throughout Barry’s life: boosters disposed of particular histories as ‘public goods’, in order to gain public, hereditary endorsement for their own political work, neutralising and naturalising it and any future calls for civic commitment as a question of ensuring the colony’s progress. The monument did most of its specific work, however, for the generation which unravelled it, as its language and message for viewers obtained obscurity over time, although it could be periodically resurrected as a high rhetorical moment for future generations of civic leaders to press home their preoccupations.

All monuments have an after-life, only a brief part of which this thesis can address. In the next year the Library Trustees augmented the monumental conglomeration in front of the Library when they replaced one of the bronze lions. They purchased two sculptures by leading English sculptor Joseph E. Boehm from the British Loan Collection at the 1888 Centennial Exhibition, and mounted ‘St George and the Dragon’ in the centre of the north lawn, later relocating it to the top of the Library’s north lawn. In 1907 the Trustees purchased another bronze, ‘Jeanne D’arc’, by Emmanuel Fremiet, with funds from the Felton Bequest, and mounted it at the top of the Library’s south lawn. The monumental conglomeration of which Barry’s statue was already part, was consolidated on either side by military symbols of imperialism.

**The Eight Hours’ Day Monument**

On 11 February 1856, the Melbourne Public Library opened, aiming to attract the very class of men who built it. A few blocks north, building workers were constructing the quadrangle at the University of Melbourne. A week later, stonemasons from these and other building sites met as members of the Operative Stonemasons’ Society. The

---

444 *The Herald*, 29 June 1968.
445 As above.
Society’s President, James Stephens, and its Secretary, James Galloway, both Chartist,$^{446}$ spoke on the need to reduce working hours from ten to eight per day. A subsequent meeting resolved that:

a reduction of the hours of labour would be greatly beneficial to the trade, and also tend to improve our social and moral condition, and that this meeting pledges itself to use every lawful endeavour to bring about so desirable a result.$^{447}$

A Society delegation met with employers, the publicity from which encouraged other tradesmen including bricklayers, carpenters and joiners, plasterers and slaters to form unions and also lobby employers.$^{448}$ Discussions led to a meeting of employers and 700 ‘members of all the mechanical trades’ on 12 April 1856, chaired by Melbourne’s popular Mayor, John Thomas Smith, a publican$^{449}$ and self-proclaimed ‘working man’,$^{450}$ to discuss ‘the expediency and practicability of abridging the hours of labor to eight hours per day’.$^{451}$ The Chairman was wary of the class politics of the meeting, and hoped that the ‘hard-working-men’ in attendance would be ‘impartial…should any person propose anything opposed to their general views’.$^{452}$

Dr Thomas Embling, a medical practitioner and ‘moderately radical’ Victorian politician,$^{453}$ addressed the meeting, stating that:

the enervating effects of this climate, the advanced state of civilisation, the progress of the arts and sciences, and the demand for intellectual gratification and improvement, call for an abridgment of the hours of labour.$^{454}$

---

$^{448}$ Letter by James Galloway cited in Ebbels, R.N., *The Australian Labor Movement*, p.64
$^{450}$ *The Argus*, 12 April 1856, p.5.
$^{451}$ As above.
$^{452}$ As above.
$^{454}$ *The Argus*, 12 April 1856, p.5.
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
McCubbin, Maryanne

Title:
Object lessons: public history in Melbourne 1887-1935

Date:
2000-05

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39464

File Description:
p.74-89

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.