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Christopher A. Thomas, *The Lincoln Memorial & American Life*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2002, 213 pp., 81 black-and-white illus., $49 Cdn

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the role of print in the social construction of space and the formation of early modern subjectivity across Europe. By foregrounding how print culture may serve as a major source of historical evidence for the production of urban space, San Juan has made an important contribution to the methodologies of art-historical research. The material presented is fascinating, and readers would be advised to invest in a magnifying glass for they will want to see every last detail in the images that are reproduced.

Erin J. Campbell
University of Victoria

Christopher A. Thomas, *The Lincoln Memorial & American Life*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2002, 213 pp., 81 black-and-white illus., $49 Cdn.

When the Lincoln Memorial opened to the public on 30 May 1922, Chief Justice Taft and President Harding spoke of Lincoln's role in saving a nation divided by Civil War. By contrast, at the same ceremony Dr Robert Moton, head of the Tuskegee Industrial Institute, which was founded to serve the African-American community, underlined the contending visions of liberty and bondage, entrenched since the settlement period, in the fabric of American life (pp. 153–57). The dissonance was palpable, as was the unhappy irony of the event's 35,000 onlookers being segregated by race.[1] One newspaper observed that such hypocrisy was unworthy of a ceremony dedicating a temple to a national saviour (p. 158). Details such as this enliven the concluding chapter of this well-crafted study by Christopher Thomas, who maps the chameleon-like associations attached over the years to this revered site of national pilgrimage. A repository of past memory and a focus for shared vision, the Lincoln Memorial has come to embody the highest national aspirations in a land that has always sought to define itself through public symbols and iconicity. Along with the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, and most recently the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial is a touchstone for the imagination of the American public.

Implicit in all of this is the complex interface between the mythologies of nation and individual life experience. Was it the singer, the site, the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, the public broadcast, or some intangible combination of all of these that was so instrumental in determining the impact of the operatic concert delivered by African-American contralto Marion Anderson from the lower terrace of the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday 1939? What synthesis acted to expose the frameworks of institutionalized racism as they were then entrenched? Nearly a quarter century later, on 28 August 1963, a similar confluence of time, place, man, masses, and media made Martin Luther King's declamation "Let freedom ring!" – delivered from the building's portico to those participating in the March on Washington – a clarion call for justice, the righting of historical wrongs, and an unforgettable, deeply moving experience for a generation jaded by the moral weariness of their forebears. Occasions such as these, Thomas argues, have sanctified this temple of memory, and enfolded it within complex layers of meaning. With each such event the site is not merely revised in meaning, but reinvested with new significance, creating an incremental totality bearing all the luster of a natural pearl (pp. 158–62).

Beginning with the tragic events of Lincoln's assassination on Good Friday 1865, Thomas flashes back to the circumstances under which the Republican president first assumed office on the eve of Civil War. At the time Washington –"the City of Magnificent Intentions" as Charles Dickens dubbed it – was starting to take shape amid the swamps of the Potomac, some seventy years after the plan by Pierre-Charles L'Enfant first gave form to the aspirations of a new republic. The type and location of Lincoln's memorial, debated since 1867, but still tenuous in its conception and execution, was negotiated within a larger set of priorities that jockeyed for recognition in a city still to be realized. As for the fallen hero once described in life as a "homely" man, Lincoln assumed in death a historical persona somewhere between "frontier folk hero/Man of the People" and "transcendent American Christ" (pp. 2–5). Indeed the book proposes that this mythic transformation contributed to Lincoln's longevity as an exemplar: "between the end of [post-Civil War] Reconstruction and the mid-nineties, the ... remembered Lincoln was reshaped ... in the discourse of culture rather than partisan politics" (p. 9).

While Lincoln, himself, may have been de-politicized in the grief following his loss, politics still had a great deal to do with the mechanics of his recognition thereafter. Planning for the memorial resumed in 1896 when Republicans regained control of the presidency and both houses of Congress. When Theodore Roosevelt fell heir to the William McKinley presidency in 1901, after yet another assassination, the memorial's final location, on axis with the Capitol dome and the Washington Monument, was inscribed in the McMillan Commission plan. This revision of L'Enfant's plan was drawn up by a new generation of highly qualified planners and architects, many of whom are assumed to have been Republican sympathizers. Debates ensued about the chosen location and the form the memorial should take. Indeed, one vigorously mooted proposal

suggested that a highway might serve as a more practical method of commemoration, leaving readers to consider what might have happened to Marion Anderson, Martin Luther King, and the American Civil Rights Movement had Congress acceded to this idea.

Debates continued for a decade before the appointment of architect Henry Bacon, who had previously worked with two leading firms, New York's McKim, Mead & White and Burnham & Associates of Chicago, both with established reputations for Beaux-Arts classicism extending back to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. From his wealth of experience Bacon conceived and oversaw the building of a Greco-Roman marble temple, set on the cross-axis of the site. The task occupied him for more than ten years, until the installation within that precinct of a twenty-foot marble likeness of Lincoln by Daniel Chester French. All aspects of the project took on an exalted level of importance in the eyes of the American public, as is demonstrated by the fact that Senator Shafroth from Colorado, who had lobbied for the use of Yule marble from his home state to construct the memorial, then revelled in its selection for what he described as "the Greatest Memorial in the Western hemisphere" (p. 115). Such fastidious observations on the part of the author underline the fact that a large public project is always "ideologically invested," to paraphrase Donald Preziosi.[2]

Of all the chapters in the book, those dealing with the design and construction of the Lincoln Memorial are, perhaps, the most canonical in their approach to architectural history. But, these are set within a larger contextual framework detailing Lincoln's reincarnation from man to myth, and in the case of the monument, from a site of national reconciliation to a very forceful symbol of the struggle to emancipate African-Americans. An appreciation of the difference between a project mourning an assassinated leader and what the Memorial has come to mean on a national level is part of the understanding to which this piece of scholarship contributes. One is left to ponder if these meanings were latent from the outset in the policies that Lincoln sought to forward during his presidency or if his ghost was by now a mere bystander in this temple of memory. While this work makes little of its methodological grounding, preferring to demonstrate rather than theorize, the understanding of how monuments work as public symbols and sites of memory is extremely important to its conceptual grounding.[3]

The trajectory of new methodological approaches in architectural history has gained momentum over the past three-and-a-half decades. In the mid-1980s, for example, Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman wrote the introduction to *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture IV*, which identified writings from the 1970s by Henry Glassie and Lowell Cummings as pivotal in the rapprochement between traditional architectural history and approaches informed by linguistics (semiotics), anthropology, social and community history, and material culture studies. Others like Cary Carson and Dell Upton were identified more broadly in terms of architectural "communities" or a "landscape" approach to architectural history that included many different kinds and scales of buildings, both vernacular and high style. By the 1980s, when Carter and Herman wrote these comments, the focus had shifted to the study of building systems and ultimately to "the rigorous recovery of cultural meanings through careful documentation of actual buildings supplemented by research in primary documents."[4] Thus, the critique of the canon mounted by scholars of vernacular architecture brought to the fore a new set of strategies that considered all types of built form in relation to issues such as class, gender, and race, as well as ritual and use.

In 1997, following the lead of her predecessor Nicholas Adams, Eve Blau, incoming editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,* affirmed her readiness to entrench new methodological approaches and contemporary critical theory in the canon of mainstream architectural history. Blau's "Representing Architectural History" describes the expansion of the discipline under the impact of "post-structural theories and the critical and historiographical methods of cultural and intellectual history." Class, gender, the body, race, ethnicity, colonialism, death, infirmity, public and private, also held an important place, often in interdisciplinary and self-reflexive contexts.[5] Many other writers, particularly since the mid-1990s, have underlined the fact that the study of architectural history is now less concerned with chronology and more with thematic approaches. Furthermore, humanist biography, which assumed a direct correspondence between the life of the architect and the works produced, tends to take a back seat to self-reflexive approaches that focus on contextual questions as much as the documentation and description of the monument itself. These innovative strategies inform the account Thomas gives of the Lincoln Memorial.

Not only does this account reveal how the Lincoln Memorial has shifted meanings in the parallax of time, it also explores how historicism and tradition were once used to signify reverence and how such indices inhabit the imagination of the public even today. As a parallel, Thomas includes an analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of 1975–82, a more recent *sortie* into the rituals of grief and remembrance, initially labeled an "anti-monument" (pp. 165–66) because the Maya Lin design was thought to lack the necessary historical references. It was too unconventional, too personal, and too evocative of the public resistance to the war's continuance. To appease conservative sensibilities, two sculptural groups in bronze were introduced on one corner of the site, in conformity with traditional expectations favouring iconic but nameless military figures. However, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial soon demonstrated a

much more personal form of commemoration. Engraved with the names of each of the 58,000 Americans who sacrificed their lives in the conflict, it stands, not like the white crosses of Normandy, drawn up in the ranks in which the men served, but as a collective, black granite tombstone of monumental proportions, where family members attend their loved ones and openly weep before the graven record of a lost name.

Thomas demonstrates that the scholars of architecture have rediscovered its profound emblematic resonance, temporarily eviscerated by International Modernism. As Spiro Kostof has pointed out, built form is shaped by and for human rituals.[6] Its transactions operate in both directions, to enhance or degrade the prestige of the participants, or to add yet further associations to sites of communal experience. President Bill Clinton staged his 1993 inauguration party at the Lincoln Memorial by design, just as Robert Kennedy used references from Lincoln's funeral for his brother's last journey to Arlington cemetery (pp. 152, 162–64). On the other side of the coin is a decision by a former Ontario premier to present his government's budget on the premises of a manufacturer, who was also a party supporter, rather than in the Legislative Assembly, where budgets are delivered customarily. This account follows the Lincoln Memorial through all its incarnations, into the popular media of film and editorial cartoon. It is a site that stands at the heart of what America holds most dear, a fact amply demonstrated by the number of recent publications on the subject targeted at school-aged children between the ages of 4 and 12: "Give me a child until he is seven ..."[7]

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Notes

1 Thomas (p. 157) adds that there were 400 lynchings of black citizens between 1918 and 1927, as well as a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s.

2 Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven, 1989).

3 Thomas (pp. 144–45) quotes Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7–25; and John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1992), on issues to do with collective memory and commemoration as the prerogative of the elite. Recent periodical literature on architectural symbolism includes Deborah van der Plaat, "Seeking a 'symbolism comprehensible' to 'the great majority of spectators': William Lethaby's architecture, mysticism and myth and its debt to Victorian mythography," *Architectural History* 45 (2002), 363–85; Gregory Paul Caicco, "Building memory (damming the Deluge)," *Fifth Column* 10, 2/3 (1998), 18–27; Iris Aravot, "Interpretations of myth in contemporary architectural writing," *Journal of Architectural Planning and Research* 13 (Winter 1996), 271–300.

4 Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman, eds, "Introduction: Toward a New Architectural History," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV* (Columbia and London, 1985), 1–6; Bernard Herman, "The 'new' architectural history," *CRM Bulletin* 17, 2 (1994), 6–7.

5 Eve Blau, "Representing Architectural History," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, 2 (1997), 144–45. Most of the theoretical analysis takes place in the periodical literature, such as Nicholas Adams, "Editorial: the Architectural History Foundation: research and publishing today, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53 (September 1994), 263–64; Sylvia Lavin, "Theory into history, or, the will to anthology," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (September 1999), 494–99; Glen Hill, "Architectural history research after postmodernism," *Architectural Theory Review* 5 (November 2000), 72–88, while book publications tend to be focused on anthologies such as Kate Nesbitt, *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965–1995* (Princeton, 1996); K. Michael Hays, *Architectural Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).

6 Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals*, 2nd ed., (New York, 1995).

7 Of the twenty-two books on this subject listed by Amazon.com, thirteen are intended for school-aged children.

Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880–1914*. Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, 255 pp., 90 black-and-white illus., $99.95 U.S.

This excellent study is a model for the combination of historical, visual, and theoretical analyses. Kristina Huneault explores the representation of working women in late Victorian and early twentieth-century Britain in painting, press illustration, photography, and trade union banners, the latter well-illustrated and one of the author's contributions to the study of visual culture. Her categories of working women include domestic servants, flower girls/women, factory workers, sweated labour, and trade unionists. She moves from working women's representations by others to the intervention and assertion of their identities in their own representations and public displays.

Her thesis that "imagery is intimately tied up with identity" (p. 5) is applied to identities of the represented subjects, or the artists, or the audience/spectators. Her plan is to map the complex, socially and economically contradictory identities of working women within the historical relations among images, social orders, and real work. Much of women's work required throwing off pretensions to hegemonic femininity, handling