LEE’S LAST STAND: STORY AND NARRATIVE IN THE CONFEDERATE STATUE CONFLICT

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Lisa King, Major Professor

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(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
LEE’S LAST STAND: STORY AND NARRATIVE IN THE
CONFEDERATE STATUE CONFLICT

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Abigail Gena Sutton
May 2019
With increasing frequency we read stories of hateful and violent outbursts that result in property damage, injury and even loss of life. Recently, many of these violent scenes have been set against the backdrop of Confederate memorial sites. What is it about these sites that inspire such violent responses? In my thesis, “Lee’s Last Stand: Story and Narrative in the Confederate Statue Conflict,” I theorize that these reactions are in response to conflicting narratives that call forth identity crises in their subjects. In many cases, southern identity is based on a reconstructed, and often inaccurate, memory of historical events, constructed for both commercial and sociopolitical reasons. This project examines the historical timeline, and tests the validity of this reconstructed memory through the analysis of Confederate memorial sites as material, rhetorical texts, using a method designed by Carole Blair. Through this method of analysis, I research and examine the stories told by three selected Confederate memorial sites, and how those stories interact with viewers' identities, often causing conflict, both internal and external. I conclude that the current conflict is grounded in the opposing narratives that groups have attached to the memorials in order to give legitimacy to their own stories and identities. It is further about the fear and anger that are evoked when a person’s framework is challenged. In response to these emotions, we need to promote an environment of mutual learning, listening, and healing. There is no community feeling about the Civil War and therefore no reconciliation. This thesis proposes that public Confederate memorial sites be transformed into community places of remembrance that represent an inclusive and accurate view of history.
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INTRODUCTION

Exigency

Let us consider the types of stories told about the American South. There are two main themes prevalent in these tales. On the one hand, some of us have been taught nostalgic tales of honor and chivalry, such as Gone with the Wind. On the other, many have learned accounts of devil cotton and slavery, like Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Either way, these stories, and all the others that we have heard, determine how we perceive everything around us and how we react to events that occur in our world. I have to admit, and this is a difficult thing to say aloud, but I had a gut reaction to the news that people were defacing Confederate statues and demanding their removal. The stories that I grew up on glorified the South and lamented the passing of the Confederacy. Consequently, when I heard that a Confederate statue was attacked, I felt that my heritage was under attack and my identity as a Southerner was being judged and deemed unworthy and somehow wrong. Afterward, I felt ashamed for feeling this way and for identifying with symbols and a region that supported the Confederacy and its values. This experience, or dare I say identity crisis, made me realize the need to examine my identity as a white Southerner, my own narrative, and the stories that are the source of my visceral response to attacks on Confederate memorials. This project began as a justification of my beliefs, but I quickly realized that in order to achieve true critical thought, personal relationships to time, place, and identity must be set aside in favor of other lenses. Such realization is a key component to the process of healing that our nation so desperately needs. Understanding the relationship between my embodied stories and popular narratives surrounding Confederate statues helped me come to terms with my identity and to empathize with the feelings of others on both sides of the conflict.
In order to stop the violence at Confederate memorial sites, these narratives and the ways they interact with embodied stories and identities require analysis. The root of the Confederate statue conflict goes deeper than the memorials themselves, into the narratives that have been assigned to them both during and after their inceptions. It is these narratives that must be of primary interest when determining the longevity of a Confederate memorial site. The purpose of this project is to gain a greater understanding of the role these narratives play in the creation of southern identity, and how that role influences viewers’ reactions toward Confederate memorials. This thesis will examine the ways in which people base and develop their beliefs, values, and identities on both the stories they are told, and the stories that they tell themselves to make sense of the world. It will then explore the influence that these embodied stories, specifically Civil War history and memory, have on southern identity. I argue that the effect Confederate memorials have on their viewers relies primarily on how the memorial’s narrative corresponds with the viewer’s embodied stories. In support of this argument, I will analyze the narratives of three Confederate memorial sites to demonstrate the evolving effects of their presence and provide one possible method for determining the legitimacy of Confederate statues.

**Story and Narrative**

To provide some background for the focus of my exploration, I will begin with a story. On June 17, 2015, a young white man attended a prayer meeting at a predominantly African-American church in Charleston, South Carolina. Midway through the service, he stood up and opened fire, killing nine people. This murderer identified with the Confederacy, along with white supremacy and apartheid governments (Corasaniti, et al.). The tragedy in Charleston generated renewed efforts to permanently remove the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State House (Ortiz) and many credit it as the spark that ignited the movement to remove Confederate
That spark turned into a bonfire in August 2017 when violence erupted between white nationalists and counter-protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia and a white nationalist drove a car into the crowd killing one and injuring nineteen (Heim). Following this chaos, Confederate memorials have been torn down or removed by the dozens as they evolved into sites of conflict and vandalism with alarming frequency. This phenomenon is happening across the country, although it is primarily focused in the southeastern part of the United States (Bidgood, et al.). The objects under attack include statues, monuments, plaques, busts, reliefs, carvings, and markers that memorialize Confederate officers, soldiers, and sympathizers. The removal of these memorials is a source of conflict between Americans, some believing that the memorials commemorate and promote racism, and others claiming that they preserve southern culture and honor the sacrifice that some men gave for their beliefs.

Before we can begin to understand the emotions that fuel both sides of this conflict, we must first examine the argumentative narratives for both the removal and the preservation of Confederate memorials. These narratives appeal to the frameworks that are formed by individuals’ personal stories. To begin, I will define these terms: story, framework, and narrative, and discuss how they work together to create the lens through which a person views the world and determines meaning. The terms story and narrative are often used interchangeably, but I understand them as separate concepts. Story is defined as “the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings, whether true or fictitious” (“Story”). I consider story to be an involuntary mechanism – every day that we live, we experience “happenings” and we acquire stories. Everything that we do, say, hear, see, or smell becomes part of our personal story. We draw on these experiences when we encounter new people, things, or concepts, and our stories
evolve into a framework that strongly influences how we perceive them. Our framework is necessary for the categorization of new experiences, because it allows us to relate them to what is already familiar. A person’s heritage is a key component of their framework. As Steven Hoelscher explains, “in times of tension and in the consolidation of power, so many people have turned to cultural memory or heritage, the means by which the past is domesticated, made familiar, and translated into contemporary language” (660). The stories upon which our identities are built are embodied stories. During these tumultuous times in our country, when the concepts we base our identities on are challenged, we tend to revert back to the memories and stories that are familiar to us, and close our minds to anything that defies them. Many white Southerners are suffering from this sort of close-mindedness, which becomes a protective mechanism when our culture, heritage, and identities are called into question.

Narrative, on the other hand, is defined by Randy Olson as a network of “stories that connect a series of events over time, creating large-scale patterns” (52) and is another powerful tool for meaning making (Olson; Sandelowski). Whereas stories are inescapable, narratives are usually formed with some goal, either subconscious or deliberate. The mind may form narratives at the subconscious level to put stories together in a cohesive manner and from them generate meaning (Sandelowski). However, narratives may also be shaped to purposefully appeal and relate to a person’s own set of stories in order to stimulate a specific interpretation of events or generate a certain type of behavior (Corman). According to Stuart Towns, public speeches, especially those at Confederate memorial events, were crucial to promoting narratives regarding the Civil War in the South. The way many white Southerners cling to their Civil War narratives and memorials even today demonstrates how well these orators embedded their narratives in the psyche of the South.
There are two main narratives in the debate over the longevity of Confederate memorials:

(1) The Lost Cause narrative, employed by those who glorify the South’s cause in the Civil War and by extension its memorialized heroes; and (2) the counter narrative, known as the Emancipation narrative, which underscores the role of these memorials in promoting racism and white supremacy (Levin; Spielvogel). These narratives can be unscrupulously manipulated to recruit support for one side of the argument and/or garner support for other political matters, ultimately hindering unification of our country. As Webster and Leib reveal in their article about Confederate symbolism, “Today’s debates over race are cloaked in the guise of other issues – welfare reform, education, public transportation, and the meaning of the Confederate battle flag. These debates are centrally about power, and whose collective vision or agenda will be carried out” (291). The debates over the retention or destruction of Confederate memorial sites are no different – at the heart of the issue is the question of whose narrative will win out and which story will be told in the future.

It is crucial to understand the origins of these narratives, the effect they have had on the identities of Southerners, and the influence they will continue to wield going forward, especially if their symbolism is allowed to endure. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage explains, “Many pressing concerns about personal and regional identity, social interaction, and the exercise of power in the American South depend on an understanding of how the recalled past has been woven into southern life and institutions” (11). Discussing the Lost Cause narrative’s role in southern culture from the Civil War to today’s debates over Confederate symbolism helps to demonstrate how memory is molded and embedded in the creation of identity. Regarding memory’s role in identity formation, Hoelscher states,
…a confluence of powerful events that have shaped modern American identity and its understanding of race – from slavery and the Civil War to Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the civil-rights movement – has occurred in the South. As such, the region has become America's "crucible of race," the key site for the ways in which such profound historical-geographical moments are remembered and rearticulated. (663)

Recognizing the ways that Civil War memory has been molded by the Lost Cause narrative in the South is key to understanding the role Confederate statuary plays in southern identity and by extension the reactions of many Southerners to Confederate memorials. It is only through this understanding that we can begin to comprehend our own feelings and those of others to these historical, yet still identity-shaping, events.

The aim of my research is to determine which stories and narratives are represented at each memorial site. The goal of the analysis is to develop an understanding of the ways viewers act, interact, and react, with each memorial site. Such knowledge will contribute toward determining how to channel the emotions that are aroused into more constructive and instructive avenues by creating a new, inclusive public memory of the Civil War and post-Civil War eras in the American South. To achieve this understanding, my project poses the following research questions: (1) How do history, memory, and identity combine to form embodied stories? (2) What narratives have been ascribed to the Confederate memorial site and how have those narratives evolved with time? (3) How does the memorial’s narrative interact with its viewers’ embodied stories?

I am approaching this project in the only capacity that I am able to – as a white Southerner. I am fully aware that the scars left on the collective psyche of white Southerners, which are still represented in our culture and identities, are nothing compared to those
experienced by African Americans, both then and now. As a white woman, I cannot begin to understand the journey of African Americans through slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and the present Confederate Statue conflict, of which this thesis attempts to make sense. I believe it would be disrespectful to pretend that I can empathize with those horrors and obstacles, or with the ways they affect the culture, heritage, and identities of black Americans. My lack of capacity to comprehend American history from any viewpoint but my own underlines our nation’s need for an inclusive memory. Therefore, as I approach this project from the only viewpoint that I can fully understand, any omission of the ways in which African Americans have been affected by the events discussed here is due entirely to my lack of capacity to fully understand or represent those struggles. I in no way deny that these events have as lasting an effect on that demographic as they have had on my own. Now I will briefly discuss these events and the ways in which they have been remembered and represented in southern identity.
CHAPTER 1: HISTORY, MAJOR CONCEPTS, AND METHODOLOGY

A Brief History

**Civil War**

Events of the mid-1800s related to disparities between North and South regarding slavery, states’ rights, and westward expansion led to the outbreak of the Civil War. Most historians recognize these events as the Missouri Compromise, the Tariff of Abominations, the Compromise of 1850, including the Fugitive Slave Act, the Dred Scott Decision, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, and ultimately the election of President Abraham Lincoln (Blight; Randall and Donald; Towns). In response to what the South saw as northern aggression toward their way of life, the southern states seceded from the United States of America and formed a confederation known as the Confederate States of America. The federal government refused to recognize the Confederacy, simply viewing its citizens as treasonous rebels. Taking an opposite view, southern secessionists likened their position to that of the United States during the Revolution and viewed the Union as an enemy invader (Randall and Donald). As David Blight reveals, “the secession crisis of 1860-1861 was a time of great fear. The deepest anxieties of [N]ortherners and [S]outherners were at stake, as both sections came to view each other in conspiratorial terms” (48). This initial rift allowed the North and South to see each as a cultural Other, which in many ways has still not reconciled to this day.

The secession of the Confederate states from the Union followed by their attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, prompted President Lincoln to call forth the militia, 75,000 soldiers strong, and send them into the South to extinguish the insurrection (Randall and Donald). With these events commenced the Civil War, which lasted 4 years through the surrender at
Appomattox in April 1865. The Civil War to this day represents the largest loss of life on American soil, and was worsened by the incestuous nature of the war, which went beyond simply North versus South and turned families and neighbors against one another. The scars and rifts of the struggle are still deeply embedded in the heritage of Americans. Slavery was the often-disputed, yet ultimately undeniable, cause of the Civil War. However, racial equality had little to no role to play in the conflict. Although African Americans were freed at the end of the Civil War, the next 100 hundred years afforded little improvement to their lives.

**Reconstruction**

For many white Southerners, Reconstruction was as traumatic – or even more so than – the war (Towns; Randall and Donald). J.G. Randall and David Donald paint a vivid picture of the post-Civil War South,

The South had been broken by the war. Lands were devastated. Proud plantations were now mere wrecks. Billions of economic value in slaves had been wiped away by emancipation measures without that compensation which Lincoln himself had admitted to be equitable. Difficult social problems presented themselves in the sudden elevation of a servile race to the status of free laborers and enfranchised citizens. Accumulated capital had disappeared. Banks were shattered; factories were dismantled; the structure of business intercourse had crumbled. In…places great havoc had been wrought by fire.

(543)

Also citing the destruction of homes, lack of currency, and decimation of the population, Randall and Donald call the Civil War, “the collapse of a civilization” (544-5). They, along with Stuart Towns, name the Reconstruction period as the beginning of industrialization in the South and the downfall of the long-standing agricultural system. After emancipation, many former slaves
continued to work the farms. This relationship fed the resentments between the races, as black farm workers complained about poor pay, food provisions, and harsh punishment, while white landowners lamented the cost of wages and the lack of control over their work force (Randall and Donald). The dissension between the races prevented whites and blacks from creating any sort of symbiotic working relationship and allowed for the collapse of the South’s agricultural system.

For whites in the South, the most distressing aspect of the new social order was, “the threat of domination by newly freed slaves over their former masters and all other whites in the region” (Towns 98-99). After emancipation, those former slaves that left the plantations moved into more urban areas (Randall and Donald). White Southerners feared black Southerners in their newfound freedom and the threat that freedom posed to white supremacy, especially considering that in many regions the black population now outnumbered the white. Aggravating the tension between the races was the occupation of former Confederate areas by Federal soldiers, many of whom were African Americans (Randall and Donald). White Southerners were desperate to reassert their supremacy and it was during this time that the Lost Cause narrative, which I will discuss at length in the counter-memory section of this thesis, first began to take hold (Cox, Dixie). What white Southerners saw as oppression from the North generated narratives used to justify the South’s secession from the Union, the implication being that even if the southern states had not seceded, the North would have still taken control of the South and dismantled its society. These narratives helped fuel the hate between North and South. As Towns explains of the Reconstruction era’s role in the creation of the Lost Cause narrative, “living in ‘those dark days’ of defeat, a destroyed social system, a crushed economy, a topsy-turvy labor system, orators of the South created a glorious antebellum era… and a cause that was lost… but justified
and vindicated. Southerners had to create a past that was worthy of pride, of honor, of duty” (67-68). Towns credits southern orators with successfully entrenching this counter-memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction in the southern states and beyond. They promoted ideas for the structure of the post-Civil War South, preached vindication, and promoted segregation of the races, with the whites returning to a racially superior position (Towns). The narrative was touted at Confederate memorial days, which afforded white Southerners in the grip of Reconstruction a small escape from the reality of the post-Civil War era and an opportunity to reflect on the glories, both real and imagined, of the pre-Civil War South (Towns). As Reconstruction faded and celebrations and memorials to the old South occurred with increasing frequency, the Lost Cause narrative was firmly implanted in the region.

Most Lost Cause proponents and orators rejected the idea of a New South, which embraced “reconciliation, racial peace, and a new economic and social order based on industry and scientific, diversified agriculture” (Gannon 41). Lost Causers repudiated any social or economic models that resembled those employed by the North (Griffin). They also resented those who promoted the New South, believing they were turning their backs on their heritage, instead of fighting for the justification and vindication of the Old South’s cause. In contrast to Lost Cause advocates, many made efforts to root the concept of the New South in both the Northern and Southern regions. Martin Griffin presents three individuals who played a significant role in asserting the claim for a New South between the 1870s and the end of the century. Henry Grady and Joel Chandler Harris, both white Southerners, endeavored to overcome northern and southern stereotypical ideas of the post-Civil War South by advocating for a reconciliation that embraced the best of both regions. Grady a southern newspaper editor, traveled North in 1886 to give a speech toward these ends lauding “New England moral rigor,
Virginia liberality, the efforts of Confederate veterans to revitalize their devastated farms, amicable race relations, and most importantly the idea of a region committed to a commercially and industrially progressive future” (Griffin 771). Grady delivered a rather romanticized view of Southern mentality, portraying its people as ready for reconciliation and progress. Lost Cause proponents would certainly have taken exception to this representation, as they were far more focused on redemption for the Confederacy and its defenders. Similarly, Harris used his Uncle Remus stories to promote a New South that blended the perceived peaceful and established economic and social order of the North, “and a sense that the South had something particular—a warmth and feeling for local human experience—to offer an increasingly depersonalized and standardized American nation” (Griffin 772). In this way, Harris seems to draw from parts of the Lost Cause narrative, which lamented the passing of the antebellum South as it gave way to industrialization, a concept which eventually took hold of the nation.

Representing African-American interests in the development of a New South, Griffin discusses Booker T. Washington’s contributions, arguing that Washington considered a stable economy the best way to protect black citizens from becoming the scapegoats of frustrated whites. Washington hoped that once race relations calmed, African Americans would have a better chance of becoming successful citizens of the New South. Those propagating the Lost Cause had no interest in reconciling race relations, and little interest in sectional reconciliation, unless it was on terms that justified the Confederate cause. For these reasons, Lost Cause oratory frequently condemned any idea of a New South, and encouraged future generations to adhere to and promote the Lost Cause of the Confederacy. Their success is evidenced by the ways the Lost Cause is represented in the identities of many white Southerners even today.
The idea of easing racial tensions in the New South was less than successful in most regions. After Andrew Johnson’s more liberal stance on Reconstruction granted pardon to all secessionist states and established new state governments, white Southerners quickly remedied what they saw as an upside-down social order and swiftly set about re-segregating the races (Randall and Donald). As early as 1865, provisions were put in place by these new state governments to ordain what rights black Southerners had, or more accurately, did not have. The “black codes” laid out regulations for marriage, labor, employment, segregation, vagrancy, indentured servitude, criminality, court access, and defined civil rights (Randall and Donald). Despite emancipation, African Americans were still considered a race apart and more often than not, a race below. These black codes paved the way for the Jim Crow era in the American South.

Fearing that the codes provided the South with an opportunity to reinstate the practice of slavery, the federal government established the Freedmen’s Bureau and in 1868 passed the 14th amendment to both establish and protect the rights of African Americans (Randall and Donald). In retaliation and to intimidate black citizens out of exercising their newly granted rights, the Ku Klux Klan became active in the South in the late 1860’s (Randall and Donald). As Brundage states, “Disfranchisement, legal segregation, economic discrimination, and white violence all worked to bolster the power of white men in the region” (28). By keeping African Americans from the polls, governments with strong Confederate and white supremacy leanings were reestablished in southern states (Randall and Donald). Once these Democratic parties regained control, it was not long before Reconstruction was brought to an end in the South. In order to settle the disputed presidential election of Rutherford B. Hayes, Republicans and southern Democrats agreed to a compromise, which effectively ended Reconstruction. Federal occupation vacated the South in April 1877 (Randall and Donald). The compromise may have ended
Reconstruction, which was, in many ways, an unproductive institution, but it did not establish any sort of political diversity in the South or protect the rights of African-American Southerners. Randall and Donald credit the compromise of 1876-1877 with defining “for many generations the pattern of race relations in the South” and with determining “the political alignment of that section for generations” (701).

**Jim Crow**

Hoelscher states, “In the American South, the struggle over memory – always a fundamental issue during moments of rapid political, social, and economic change – crystallized during the age of Jim Crow” (663). The Jim Crow era, which lasted in the South from 1890 until the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, determined the singular history of the Civil War and its strictly white point of view. Jim Crow racism “focused on rigid social distance between the races, legalized segregation, formal racial discrimination, and beliefs in the inherent inferiority of blacks” (Valentino and Sears 674). White Southerners saw African Americans as a different species and used Jim Crow to enforce their separateness and submission to white rule (Webster and Leib). Brundage, among others, credits the Spanish-American war with reigniting nationalism in the United States and fostering a reconciliatory environment, as North and South united against a common enemy. This brand of nationalism united the sections largely on the basis of white supremacy. Essentially, as nationalism increased, Northern tolerance for white supremacy grew, and the Reconstruction era black codes spread across the South and in many places were enacted as law. According to Hoelscher, “White supremacy during Jim Crow depended at its very core on the separation and superiority of white spaces and people” (677). Jim Crow laws ensured that African Americans in the South remained apart from and were treated as inferior to whites.
With few willing or able to contest it, a white southern memory of the Civil War solidified during the Jim Crow era. Brundage explains, “Segregation, disfranchisement, and the consolidation of white power over the resources of the state virtually ostracized blacks from most of the institutions that whites exploited to tell their history” (140). White Southerners enjoyed full control over patriotic celebrations and public spaces. Museums and historical places restricted access to black Southerners and certainly did not seek or accept narratives other than those that agreed with a white southern point of view (Brundage). These restrictions effectively excluded African Americans from southern history for decades. Defeating the New South, the Lost Cause version of Civil War history took such a firm hold on the region that it has yet to be uprooted today. It was during this era of celebrated white supremacy that the majority of Confederate monuments were erected in public spaces to solidify a white southern memory of the Civil War (Cox, Dixie).

**Literature Review**

My understanding of how Confederate memorial sites affect viewers is based on the way that a monument’s narrative interacts with a viewer’s embodied stories. Some viewers embody stories that equate Confederate memorials with racism and white supremacy and advocate for the removal of these symbols. On the other hand, many white Southerners have based their identities on the fabricated narratives attached to Confederate monuments and therefore they feel attacked when a memorial is attacked. These conflicting stories and narratives constitute rhetorical failures, which have created controversial climates at Confederate memorial sites throughout the South, putting people in danger, both psychologically and physically. In order to better understand these conflicts, I will now consider the ways in which history, memory, and identity work together to form the embodied stories that viewers bring with them to a memorial site.
Memory

The history and memory of the Civil War have both been manipulated to meet the needs of the dominant group at any given time and place, which in the American South are those of white Southerners. They have become increasingly discordant with one another as time passes. Memory, as explained by Blair, et al., is “activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of the present” (6). According to Brundage, “contested” memories are most prominent during “moments of crisis or dislocation” (11). Christian Spielvogel agrees stating, “the cultural struggle over how to interpret the past as a way to guide future social and political action becomes especially intense during periods of cultural transition” (9). In the United States, we have experienced many cultural, historical, and memory-related moments of crises in recent years when stories and narratives clash. In the American South, these clashes have often been related to Confederate symbolism and how people remember and embody the meaning of those symbols. The representation of Civil War memory through Confederate memorials still defines for many what it means to be Southern. Blair, et al. discuss at length the binding force that memory has upon a group or culture. These collective, cultural memories rely “on material and/or symbolic supports (Blair, et al. 6). As this thesis will demonstrate, in the American South, memory is bound to Confederate monuments, which have been frequently used to manipulate southern cultural memories and perpetuate certain narratives in its inhabitants.

Respect for the Confederacy and its symbols is still crucial to what it means to be Southern in many parts of the region. Regarding the relationship between memory and material rhetoric, Hoelscher explains, “landscapes and material artifacts of place – monuments, memorials, and museums – anchor memory” (661). The Lost Cause narrative has been stamped on the southern landscape in the form of Confederate memorial sites, which anchor a white
southern memory of the Civil War. Blair, et al. claim that certain types of places, “memory places,” have a stronger influence on public memory than others, and use memorials as an example (24). Brundage explains, “By insinuating their memory into public space, groups exert the cultural authority, express the collective solidarity, and achieve a measure of the permanence that they often crave” (6). Dee Britton agrees, claiming that what gets remembered or forgotten is controlled by whoever controls the memorial landscape. Brundage points out that when most Confederate memorials were constructed, the group with the means and ability to exert this authority was composed of rich white people. Confederate memorials have buttressed the South’s public memory of the Civil War for over a century, providing a tangible basis for Southern identity.

Ekaterina Haskins writes that long-standing, stationary memorials “reflect the historical conditions under which they were created” (98). Those erected during the Jim Crow era reflect the racism and white supremacy that were rampant during those times. They also promote the Lost Cause version of Civil War history, as was the intention of many of the creators of Confederate memorials (Lees and Gaske). Spielvogel concurs, stating, “the use of public space to etch a region’s memory of the war permanently on the landscape was the product of well-coordinated institutional and organizational efforts” (11). This is evident in the statues that were erected, their locations, and their connected narratives. Further evident when researching many Confederate monuments is Hoelscher’s assertion that “statues and monuments everywhere reflect changing divisions in the country at the time that they were commissioned, thereby marking successive phases of cultural memory” (661). The spikes in Confederate monument building during the Jim Crow era attest to this claim and mark the onset of a counter memory of the Civil War in the American South.
I consider Civil War memory in the sense of how it is combined and embodied to form the identities of southern individuals. John Bodnar states, “the public memory of [war] is invariably central to any sense of a common past citizens hold and the definition of who they are as a group” (139). Similarly Brundage writes, “collective or historical memory… consists of those common remembrances that identify a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future” (4). Challenging these public, historical memories is to challenge a person’s heritage, culture, and identity. I consider this concept key to understanding the attachment that so many white Southerners have to what they see as “their” memorials and also essential to the process of forming new collective memories. Hoelscher speaks of “objects, images, events, and representations,” – I easily include Confederate memorials and dedications in this description – as “active vehicles in producing, shaping, and giving meaning to cultural memory and heritage.” As the next sections will demonstrate, the widespread memorialization practices at Confederate memorial sites after the Civil War and Reconstruction constitute a long tradition of amalgamating white southern identity with Confederate monuments.

Counter Memory

As I mentioned earlier, the counter memory, largely in opposition to history, is known as the Lost Cause narrative. As Town states, “Lost Cause oratory created the grand narrative story of the Civil War and what had preceded it and what came after Appomattox with the goal of shaping the present and guiding the future” (xii). He even claims – quite rightly, in my opinion – that white southern perception is still colored by this narrative today. The Lost Cause narrative appeals to those who were raised on stories of the Confederacy’s noble cause and the passing of the chivalric South in defeat to an overwhelmingly large and well-supplied Union army (Spielvogel). It has been, and is still being, disseminated in the South through oral tradition,
history lessons, and by the Confederacy’s enduring symbols. Towns explains that, “twentieth-century white [S]outherners learned much of how they were going to think about race, about the North, about the Civil War and Reconstruction, and about themselves from the rhetoric of the Lost Cause” (x).

According to Steven Hoelscher, immediately after the end of the Civil War, the South’s holy and unlosable cause was memorialized by its white population. The term ‘Lost Cause’ was coined in 1866 and widely employed by southern leaders to help white citizens cope with the social, political, and economic pressures of Reconstruction. This narrative provided them with legitimate purposes for the Civil War and the South’s defeat (Towns). As Bodnar explains, “the meaning of violent conflicts has to be cast in the most virtuous of terms if the destruction and ruptures that war brings...are to be accepted…and if sacrifices are to be seen as redemptive rather than regrettable” (140). The Lost Cause narrative fulfills this role admirably. It venerates the chivalry of Confederate generals and condemns the war crimes committed by Union leaders, like Sherman and Sheridan. (Blight; Hunt; Spielvogel; Towns). The Lost Cause claims that the South’s soldiers were braver, its generals cleverer and its cause more righteous, and they were defeated only by the overwhelming amount of weaponry and fighters that the North had at its disposal (Lees and Gaske; Spielvogel; Towns). The narrative alleges that the Civil War was fought in defense of the southern states’ right to secede in response to cultural and economic attacks by the North, and not for the preservation of slavery (Lees and Gaske; Spielvogel).

The Lost Cause asserts that only the South correctly interpreted the Constitution and honored the wishes of the country’s founding fathers, and that the North simply wanted to rob the southern states of their Constitutional rights, including the inalienable rights of its people (Towns). Specifically, the southern interpretation of the Constitution placed the sovereignty of
the states above the power of the government and protected the rights of the states in regard to their property, namely slaves (Towns). The movement cast slavery in a generous light, contending that black slaves were dependent on the care of their masters and unable to govern themselves, even going so far as to claim that God established slavery for the benefit of the slaves (Cox, *Dixie*; Towns). The Lost Cause blames the North for introducing slavery in the United States and claims that Northerners only wanted to abolish the institution after it proved unbeficial for their region (Towns). The narrative stresses the cultural differences between North and South, which led to the inevitable Civil War (Towns).

Biblical imagery is commonly found in the Lost Cause narrative, which likens the South’s sacrifices to that of Jesus and his disciples (Connelly; Towns). Strong religious ties in the South, combined with the fact that church and Sunday school were the only education available to many of the region’s poorer and more isolated communities, ensured the narrative’s agreement with the embodied stories of its listeners. General Robert E. Lee became the personification of the Lost Cause movement, and was often referred to as a Christ-like figure (Connelly). The Lost Cause narrative idolizes Lee’s honor and noble sacrifice – two characteristics that are often used, along with martyrdom, to describe Confederate casualties (Towns). Lost Cause advocates associated Lee with Revolutionary War heroes such as George Washington to legitimize the South’s cause. Lee’s prominence in the movement is evidenced by the prodigiously large number of monuments, sculptures, markers, parks, roads, buildings, facilities, schools, settlements, ships, universities, colleges, counties, coins, stamps, and even holidays that have borne, or still bear his name. Most Confederates believed strongly in the South’s reasons for, and right to, secession and fought fiercely to defend their rights, fulfill their
duties, and assuage their honor (Towns). These beliefs made the South fertile ground for sowing the Lost Cause narrative.

In the early years following the Civil War, the Lost Cause narrative gave defeated Confederates concepts upon which to rebuild their lives. According to David Blight, “the Lost Cause allowed white [S]outherners in the post-Reconstruction era to form a collective identity as victims and survivors” (155). Its justifications for both the South’s participation and defeat in the war allowed white Southerners to make sense of the traumatic war years and endure Reconstruction (Watts). The Lost Cause version of Reconstruction, which claims harsh oppression by the North and African-American rule in the South, created a strong sense of bitterness and resentment in white Southerners toward both groups that has endured to the present (Blight; Towns). In addition to giving white Southerners certain reasons why the war was fought and why it was lost, the Lost Cause attempted to redeem and vindicate the Confederate dead (Lees and Gaske). Southern soldiers were viewed as traitors in the eyes of the Union, and their vindication was a strong motivation for Lost Cause proponents. By justifying the war and rejecting the responsibility of defeat, Southerners were able to redeem the honor of their dead loved ones.

Once Reconstruction had ended, the Lost Cause version of the war was largely accepted around the nation, and redemption achieved, then the South’s goal were accomplished and reconciliation became its new aim (Connelly; Towns). Remaining in opposition with the North was not economically feasible for the South, and they were strongly motivated to reconcile. Again, Robert E. Lee was held up as that merciful and forgiving Christ-like figure, who modeled reconciliation for the region (Towns). As I mentioned briefly in the history section of this chapter, external crises, primarily the Spanish-American War, generated a strong sense of
nationalism for the country to reconcile around, along with a spirit of white supremacy and distrust for other races and ethnicities. Although the sections were reunited, the South emerged from Reconstruction thoroughly segregated and reconciliation between the races has yet to occur.

Towns states that the Lost Cause “created a sense of order and community” in the defeated South (x). This type of community memory figures prominently in the creation of a group identity, which has a strong inclusionary force for its members (Smith and Bergman). Because so many post-Civil War Southerners built their new identities on the stories of the Lost Cause, it is little wonder that the regions’ citizens still believe and cherish it to this day. Towns credits southern rhetors with establishing the Lost Cause narrative in the South, which defined the ways white Southerners viewed historical, present, and future times. These orators were liberally assisted by upper class white women in the South who “committed themselves to reestablishing antebellum class and racial divisions” (Brundage 26). Such women eventually organized themselves into groups – most notably the Ladies Memorial Association (LMA) and United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). They used the construction of Confederate memorials to create a stage for southern rhetors to preach the Lost Cause narrative. Not only was this narrative of the Civil War deeply embraced by those who lived it, and who depended on the counter memory for their new identity, but it was also passed down to their children, becoming part of the identities of future generations for over one hundred and fifty years now.

Hoelscher discusses two important displays of collective memory: “cultural performances and landscape” (661). He stresses the role of “performances,” such as those by southern rhetors, “in the mediation and creation of social communities, including those organized around class, gender, sexuality, and race” and calls them “expressions of ‘otherness’ and
‘identity’ (661). The stories told at memorial dedications over one hundred years ago are still embodied by many white Southerners and continue to factor strongly in the creation of that group identity and the exclusion of “Others.” Confederate monument dedications not only demonstrated which group controlled the landscape, but also strongly influenced the group identity of white Southerners in such a way as to still be significant today. Along these lines, the essays in *Rhetoric, Remembrance, and Visual Form* “explore how physical locations and environments constitute deeply evocative loci of memory” (Demo and Vivian 7). In other words, what is visible on the landscape largely determines what people remember. Leib, et al. write, “the definition, preservation and creation of 'significant' landscapes and the creation of monuments on these landscapes memorializing past historical events are not benign processes, but instead are imbued with much deeper political meaning and symbolism” (304). As the ensuing case studies will demonstrate, many Confederate monuments were built during a time when white supremacy was at a high and were clearly intended as political tools and symbols of white dominance.

While certainly created, initiated, disseminated, and embedded by southern orators, the Lost Cause narrative is furthered today by popular culture. The survival of novels, such as Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* and Thomas F. Dixon, Jr.’s *The Clansman*, the films based on these novels, articles in magazines like *Scribner’s* and *Century* that venerated the South, along with other movies, books, and publications have helped keep the Lost Cause narrative alive and evolving through the generations (Brundage; Hunt; “The Lost Cause”; Towns). Stuart Towns attests to the fact that Lost Cause rhetoric has a strong connection to those who advocated for segregation, opposed the Civil Rights movement, and who still defend the public display of Confederate monuments and other symbols. Undoubtedly many of these people
are simply racists or white supremacists, but for some I believe it goes deeper than that and they truly believe in the Lost Cause version of the South’s war because that is all they have been taught. This narrative is deeply embedded in many Southerners’ cultures and identities (Goldfield; Towns). Excavating it can be a very painful, identity-crisis provoking experience, which creates fear and anger directed toward the object, person, or concept that challenges their beliefs. Proponents of the Lost Cause narrative claim that Confederate memorials are a preservation of southern heritage and are not about hate or racism. It would be nice to believe this, but regardless of how benign the intent behind these memorials may have been – and as my analyses will demonstrate, that intent was usually anything but benign – they have been adopted as symbols of racism and white supremacy (Towns).

Despite the sectional reconciliation that took place over a century ago, there is still a rhetorical failure between those that subscribe to the Lost Cause and those that take a more historically accurate view of events. That more factual view is represented by the Emancipation narrative. This narrative acknowledges that the South’s reasons for secession and the subsequent Civil War were based on defense of the southern way of life. However, it emphasizes that this way of life was “founded on white supremacy and supported by the institution of slavery” (Horton). According to James Horton, the Emancipation narrative stresses that the Civil War and its devastating loss of life was entirely due to an uprising of southern states against the abolition of slavery. This narrative notes the fact that many of the contested memorials were constructed during the early 1900s when violence against African-American citizens was pervasive (Cox, “Why”). The Emancipation narrative condemns Lee for the atrocities that he committed – and encouraged – against African Americans, both freed and enslaved (Appelbaum). Monuments to Lee and other symbols of the Confederacy were used as a rallying point for segregationists
during the 1960s Civil Rights movement and remain the focal point for white supremacists today (Lopez). Those opposed to Confederate memorials generally subscribe to the Emancipation narrative, which tends to liken those with strong southern ties to white supremacy and appeals to people whose idea of the South is based on these stories. Such accounts are illustrated in recent films, such as *Roots, Django Unchained, 12 Years a Slave*, the remake of *The Birth of a Nation*, and many more, which cast white Southerners as demented, yet often charming and colorful, sadists who committed atrocious crimes against the African-American population. Those who subscribe to the Emancipation narrative see Confederate memorials as symbols of white supremacy and feel that “communities across the region have a moral obligation to take up the cause of removing them” (Cox “Why”). While there are certainly other narratives concerning Confederate memorials, the majority of Americans relate to either the Lost Cause or Emancipation narrative, depending on which one most closely aligns with their personal set of stories, or framework, regarding the South.

Many white Southerners have never acknowledged, or are even aware, that an alternative narrative to the Lost Cause exists (Brundage). According to Bernard Armada, “whenever an act of remembrance is produced or performed, competing memories are issued a death sentence…unless someone comes along to keep the latter alive” (216). For every Confederate monument that was raised and every memorial ceremony that took place, the emancipationist memory of the Civil War suffered another death in white southern memory. As Hoelscher explains, “forgetting or amnesia is fundamental to cultural memory” (660) and is a process during which memories are actually replaced. This process was crucial to the healing white Southerners required to deal with the decimation of their culture and beliefs after the Civil War, but it demanded the silencing of alternative memories and narratives (Hoelscher; Linenthal). As
whites regained control of the South following Reconstruction, they used their authority over public spaces to silence and replace the Emancipation narrative and black memory of the Civil War. The new southern identity that emerged is based on reconstructed memories that were developed during that period, and is still at the forefront of white Southern culture today.

**Reconstructed Memory**

Due to cultural amnesia, those of us alive today are operating with a reconstructed memory of the Civil War era, which evolves with the times. According to Spielvogel, commemoration of the Civil War has focused primarily on battles and heroism, causing its true basis, namely slavery, to be forgotten. Leib and co-authors relate public memory not with the past, but with contemporary issues, specifically concerning social power and who will wield it in the future. Hoelscher agrees, stating that cultural memory “is focused inevitably on concerns of the present” and often implemented as a weapon against change (660). He goes on to explain, “determining which version of the past becomes accepted as true and universal carries considerable cultural and political authority” (660), and stresses that objects play a crucial role in this determination. Whites in the South have a fear of displacement that goes back to emancipation, when the black slaves they had oppressed for so many decades became enfranchised citizens and in many areas outnumbered the white population. Controlling the public memory of the Civil War offers a degree of comfort and security to white Southerners who fight to retain control of the present against perceived threats of displacement or marginalization. This public memory, along with Lost Cause rhetoric, has been employed repeatedly over the decades, to ensure separation of the races and white domination in the South (Towns).
Leib, et al. discuss the conflicts over Confederate symbolism stating, “both groups are trying to shape the region’s public memory through the control of the symbolism” (303). They further explain, “the region arguably contains two groups or 'nations' with divergent visions of the past, present and future of the South, both competing for the right to culturally define the same space” (303). As I stated previously, although sectional reconciliation occurred, there are still opposing groups in the South and each group sees its counterpart as “Other,” something to fear and exclude. The reconstructed memory of the Civil War that white southern identity is based upon is dependent on this otherness. As Towns discusses regarding Lost Cause orators, they created and enforced a collective memory of the past that ultimately determined the course of the future in the American South. This memory was based on white citizens’ “shared memory and heritage” (Towns 117). Again, the most popular venue for these orators to propagate this reconstructed collective memory was at Confederate memorial dedications. Therefore, that shared heritage is very firmly tied to Confederate memorial sites and many white Southerners still fulfill the duty charged them by Lost Cause orators to defend these monuments and by extension a white southern version of history (Towns).

Identity

As I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, white southern identity is grounded in the Lost Cause narrative and relates strongly to its symbolism. According to David Blight, “Societies…use history as a source of coherence and identity” (225). Steven Hoelscher claims that the trauma of the Civil War and Reconstruction eras “produced the need to envision new foundations of identity” (663). Southern leaders, orators, and memorial associations provided the people with a new foundation in the form of the Lost Cause narrative. By using Confederate monument sites as the most common stages from which to disseminate the narrative, they
ensured that these memorials would play an equal or greater role in the southern identity of future generations. Lees and Gaske argue that Confederate memorials are less about the war and more about the South’s “struggle to regain a national identity after the loss of a generation” (16). Karen Cox agrees, stating that unveilings represented for white Southerners, “a means of reclaiming their identity” (65). As Webster and Leib write, “traditional white southern identity was forged by the issue of race as well as the region’s legacy of conflict in the 19th century with the North” (288). Identifying as white and Southern invokes a strong group identity that draws liberally from Lost Cause mythology and relies on its collective memory of the Civil War.

Along those same lines, Rebecca Watts claims that white southern group identity depends on separateness – both racially and regionally. Watts, like many other scholars referenced in this chapter, contends that the loss of the Civil War, the subsequent upheaval of the social order during Reconstruction, and the survival of those eras are essential components of southern identity. She states, “by thus keeping Southerners divided both from one another and from the rest of the nation, those who led the South created and maintained a distinctive regional identity from the earliest days of the republic through to the middle of the twentieth century” (10). Watts stresses the crucial role that Confederate symbolism plays in the maintenance of this post-Civil War white southern identity and that the Lost Cause narrative is key to understanding that identity. As Brundage explains, “Southerners…have used history to mold their deepest sense of self” (3). David Blight agrees, stating that cultures “remember and use history as a source of coherence and identity” and that these cultural memories “are the roots of identity formation” (120). Brundage stresses the importance of space in the creation and maintenance of memory and identity. Monuments to the Confederate South recreate and control the sense of past for Southerners and through this process determine their identity. For generations, white
Southerners have controlled the majority of public spaces in the South and thereby achieve “broad recognition of their identities by colonizing public spaces with their version of their past” (Brundage 5-6). Brundage also claims that any memory of the past must be constantly recreated. As demonstrated in this thesis, white southern memory is continuously reconstructed and reaffirmed by the Lost Cause narrative’s survival and by its corresponding Confederate symbolism.

According to Stuart Towns, southern rhetors expounded profusely on traditional values and provided for white Southerners their new community identities. These traditional values are still the basis of white southern identity for many people, and they draw upon them in their defense of the Confederacy. Because their identities are based on the Lost Cause narrative’s rendition of southern heritage and culture, many white Southerners who advocate for Confederate monuments truly believe that they are preserving these values and their heritage, rather than sanctioning racism. Therefore, it stands to reason that any challenges to this memory are interpreted by many white Southerners as a challenge to their identity.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Since the Civil War split our country apart, we have never again been truly unified. Over 150 years later, we remain blacks, whites, rednecks, and Yankees. According to David Blight, for some Americans, the increasing multiculturalism in our country is frightening. This fear of the Other stimulates an instinct to either avoid or lash out against that which is different (Blight). While the last direction I wish for this thesis to turn toward is current politics, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the current political climate in America feeds this fear. Fear of the Other is key to the survival of the opposing narratives in the Confederate statue conflict. Regarding the current conflict, Webster and Leib assert that the struggle is over public memory more so than
Confederate monuments or symbols. Furthermore, whoever wins the conflict will control how history is remembered in the future. Considering that history and memory are the basis for identity, it is understandable why many feel strongly about what should be remembered in their region. Webster and Leib make the stakes clear by stating, “the ‘victors’ in these controversies will also hold significant sway over the memorialization and celebration of the region’s history in the future. In short, they will dominate construction of the region’s self-perception, identity (or identities) and sense of place” (271-2). White Southerners have struggled to maintain dominance over the region since before the Civil War. The fear and uncertainty that they felt when the war and Reconstruction threatened that control are key elements of the Lost Cause narrative’s creation and wide dissemination, and are still at the heart of today’s controversies.

The current conflict over Confederate statues is about more than the monuments or the Civil War. It is also about concepts that challenge the stories that we rely on to make sense of the world. Those of us who were raised in white southern families and have built our identities on embodied stories that venerate the old South are threatened by narratives that challenge the legitimacy of those stories. If those stories are not true, then neither are our identities. Any time our beliefs are challenged, it creates fear and confusion, which can cause people to lash out. I believe fear, rather than overt racism or white supremacy, is what makes many white southerners cling so desperately to the Lost Cause version of southern heritage and by extension its symbolism. Leib, et al. assert that many white Southerners cling to Confederate symbolism in an attempt to prove that they are not ashamed of their heritage. This propensity exposes the identity crisis that many white Southerners are experiencing and their attempts to reject and combat any narratives that challenge their embodied stories. This type of denial is counterproductive to
resolving the current conflicts, as it prevents them from making a “connection between past and present – and the ongoing legacy of racialization today” (Hoelscher 678).

Reliance on the Lost Cause narrative allows many white Southerners to ignore any alternate histories. When a Confederate monument is attacked and those conflicting memories are brought to the forefront, it challenges the embodied stories upon which they have based their identities. This experience creates an identity crisis and evokes feelings of fear, anger, and resentment. Rather than face the realities that contradict their frameworks, many focus their emotions on whatever challenges that framework. Followers of the Lost Cause narrative feel that attacks on Confederate memorial sites are attacks on their identity and they associate the feelings evoked by the ensuing identity crisis on those who desire the removal of the monuments. When we avoid facing the realities that contradict our framework, then our emotions lead to hate directed toward whatever challenges that framework and, in the current situation, to racism. This is a continuation of a decades-old conflict that has emerged from a fear of the Other and allows that fear to turn into hatred and resentment.

Proud white Southerners who believe in the Lost Cause and want to keep its memorials should rightfully be angry with the racist groups who have stolen these symbols to further their own agendas, not with the groups that wish to put an end to racism by removing Confederate monuments from the public landscape. On the other hand, understanding the role the Lost Cause and Confederate memory still play in white southern identity could help those opposed to the memorial sites find a more conducive way to proceed with their removal or alteration, without causing an identity crisis in the monuments’ supporters. It would be more useful to educate those that still prescribe to this narrative, and if they are truly opposed to racism, then I believe that most white Southerners, like myself, could come to a new understanding of Confederate history.
and symbolism. Recognizing that the stakes involved in the conflict over Confederate memorials go much deeper than the stone effigies and into the basis of identity, and considering the ways the Lost Cause narrative has worked to mold white southern memory is crucial to finding a solution to the controversy.

In review, I consider the current conflict to be about not only the memorials themselves, but even more so about the opposing narratives that groups have attached to the memorials in order to give legitimacy to their own stories and identities. In addition to the narratives, today’s controversies are further about the fear and anger that are evoked when a person’s embodied stories and identity are challenged. As I have discussed in this introduction, rhetoric was successfully employed to embed certain narratives of the Civil War in the southern region and this project aims to demonstrate that rhetoric can also be used to unmask those narratives and excavate a collective memory of the Civil War and post-Civil War South. There is no community feeling about the Civil War and therefore no reconciliation. Our culture is still very much “us versus them” – perhaps memorials are the place to begin melding our identities through our shared, tragic past.

**Methodology**

In this section, I will introduce the technique designed by Carole Blair, which I have utilized in my analysis of each Confederate memorial site. I also provide a description of the research methods I used for each monument. I will discuss my analysis of each Confederate memorial site as a material, rhetorical text in order to discover the narratives that they represent and my consideration of how those narratives interact with viewers’ embodied stories. For the purpose of this paper, I adopt a definition of rhetoric as all forms of communication, whether written, spoken, performative, visual, or material (King). As a form of communication, all
rhetorical works consist of at least two meanings at any given time. There is the meaning that the creator/communicator of the work intended, and there is the meaning derived by the person currently experiencing the work, the receiver, from the effect that the work has on them. In a perfect world, intent and effect would always be in harmony, however meaning will never be universal for every member of an audience. According to Ekaterina Haskins, a monument’s meaning is actually dependent on its viewers and their reactions (90). Each person’s stories that make up their frames of reference will necessarily influence how that person receives a rhetorical work. For works that survive through the generations, meaning may undergo countless changes (Baird; Blair; Leib, et al.).

Intent and effect are the first considerations in a technique designed by Carole Blair to analyze the rhetoric of memorial sites. As Blair emphasizes, “rhetoric has material force beyond the goals, intentions, and motivation of its producers, and it is our responsibility as rhetoricians not just to acknowledge that, but to try to understand it” (22). Similarly, Blair, et al. state, “strong understanding of public memory and of public memory places can emerge only by comprehending their specifically rhetorical character” (2). Therefore, the goal of this rhetorical analysis is to determine which stories the memorials tell and which of the popular narratives most closely aligns with each sites’ rhetoric in order to provide a deeper understanding of viewers’ reactions to Confederate memorial sites. Blair establishes that rhetoric is more than simply text that is written or spoken, and that memorial sites are, in fact, forms of rhetoric. According to Blair, there are five key questions for analyzing memorial sites as material, rhetorical texts: “(1) What is the significance of the text’s material existence? (2) What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text? (3) What are the text’s modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation? (4) What does the text do to (or with, or against)
other texts? (5) How does the text act on people?” (Blair 30). My rhetorical analysis searches for the answers to these questions in order to understand the nature of Confederate public memory places and the profound effect they have on their viewers.

In order to answer these five questions, I first researched the history of each memorial site. I contacted both county and state organizations, such as the local and state libraries, nearby universities, regional and state archives, local chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and any heritage organizations or history museums in the area. These contacts inevitably led me to other contacts for each site that I examined. I found newspaper articles or other publications regarding each memorial site’s inception and dedication, upon which I based my analysis of the intent behind each monument. I also did Google searches for each memorial site to understand the contemporary events surrounding the monument, including any current controversies or modes of preservation, such as enrollment on historic registers or restoration procedures. It is from these searches that I primarily base my discussion of the effect of each memorial. I use my conclusions regarding the intent and effect of each Confederate memorial site to answer Blair’s first question, regarding the significance of the monument’s existence. These searches also enabled me to consider the durability of the memorial and the ways in which it has been preserved and reproduced.

In order to complete the analysis, I travelled to the physical location of each Confederate memorial site considered in this project. One reason for these visits is that many materials related to the monument’s history were simply unavailable online and could only be accessed in person. However, most importantly, I could not entirely understand the context of the monument without personally interacting with it and observing how others interact with, and at, the site. I took photographs of each Confederate memorial site, documenting every angle of the monument. I
also took photographs of the surrounding area, including any supplemental practices that were present. Furthermore, I took note of who else was in the area, whether or not they interacted with the memorial, and if so, what that interaction looked like. From these photographs and observations, I was able to answer the last two questions posed by Carole Blair regarding how the monument interacts with its surroundings and its viewers.

Each site that I chose to research falls into the category of what Lees and Gaske refer to as “community monuments.” They are all located on public property and were donated through private funds. Memorial sites on public property are, I believe, of the utmost concern, since they are interacted with more frequently and unwittingly than monuments located on private property or in cemeteries. Often, these sites must be interacted with by individuals who are going about their daily business, even if they would prefer not to be near such a memorial. Furthermore, the very fact that they are located on public property should mean that the monuments represent the history, memories, heritage, and culture of the public, rather than a selected portion thereof. Over the succeeding chapters, I will examine three Confederate memorial sites according to Carole Blair’s method of analyzing material, rhetorical texts in order to determine which stories and narratives are represented at each Confederate memorial site. Considering the prominent way that history and memory factor into the embodied stories upon which individuals base their identities, I draw from this a better understanding of the effect that the memorial has on its viewers. As I previously asserted, it is this effect that must be of primary importance to those whose decision it is whether the Confederate memorial sites remain, are removed, or are altered to better serve future generations of viewers.
CHAPTER II: CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

Considering that the recent momentum in the movement against Confederate memorials began with the August 2017 violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, the first memorial I consider is the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in the area that was formerly known as Lee Park. Based on my previous discussion of Robert E. Lee’s starring role in the Lost Cause narrative, this chapter examines how the narrative and images of Lee have been used to promote and maintain white supremacy in Charlottesville. Using Blair’s framework, I analyze the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture’s rhetoric to demonstrate that it was constructed for the purpose of instilling white supremacy in future generations, and that its current effect facilitates the clash of competing narratives, stories, and identities that has already had lethal results.

As I previously asserted, representations of Robert E. Lee are central to the Confederate memorial conflict and its opposing narratives, and he is becoming an increasingly controversial character. Proponents of the Lost Cause have ever touted Lee as the figurehead of the South’s noble and chivalrous campaign. As justification and redemption became the focal points of the cause, Lee’s legacy emerged as the invincible military chieftain of the Confederacy and any conflicting memories of him or his military career were forgotten (Connelly; Spielvogel). The rewriting of Lee’s military history started during Reconstruction by what Thomas Connelly calls “the first Lee cult.” Through their efforts, by the 1880s, Lee was considered the “embodiment of the Confederate cause” and the Civil War’s central Confederate leader (Connelly 25). Owing to the work of Jubal Early and other apologists, Robert E. Lee became the exemplified justification and redemption for the South’s secession and defeat. His great sacrifice to leave a country he loved for his cherished Virginia was likened to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Lee’s victories in battle were amplified to establish his unparalleled military genius, while his ultimate
surrender demonstrated that the righteous do not always prevail in their cause (Connelly). The Lee family connection to the Washingtons, as well as similarities drawn between Robert E. Lee and George Washington, were stressed as a reminder that secession from a ruling power was how the United States, and its Constitution, were originally established, further justifying the South’s cause. By World War I, Lee’s image had been redeemed in the eyes of the entire nation (Connelly).

Connelly traces Lee’s development through the generations as the nation’s hero. Much of the respect Lee earned in the eyes of the Union is due to the credit he received for helping to end sectional hostilities by leading the South temperately through Reconstruction. By the early 1900s, the Lost Cause narrative and Lee’s portrayal as a nationalist had become even more widely accepted by a country swept up in Anglo-Saxon pride and wearied by industrialization. Playing off this frustration, apologists added a new facet to the Lost Cause narrative, citing the South’s defense of its idyllic, pastoral way of life as a reason for the Civil War, and the same for its defeat against a more industrialized invader. As representative of this lost culture, Virginia was placed on the same pedestal as Lee by southern writers such as John Esten Cooke, Thomas Nelson Page, Sara Pryor, and Constance Fenimore Woolson and its colonial virtues idolized.

As the country moved into the 1920s and then the Depression era, national interest in the Civil War spiked and Lee’s “reputation reached its highest level” (Connelly 123). Americans in the grip of Depression were able to empathize with the South’s struggle through Reconstruction and yearned for lost southern values, as commemorated by the ever-increasing popularity of southern writers and epitomized in the figure of Robert E. Lee. Post-Civil War industrialization drew an increasing immigrant population to the United States, contributing to the sense of nationalism and nostalgia for an old way of life, and paving the way for a surge in Ku Klux Klan
membership. It was during this period that the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in Charlottesville, Virginia was conceived, created, and dedicated.

**Intent**

In this section, I will discuss my research into the history of the Lee sculpture and my inferences regarding the intent behind the memorial’s creation. I conclude that rather than the stated intention – a work of art to honor the donor’s parents – the sculpture truly stands as a memorial to Lee and a symbol of white supremacy, serving to indoctrinate local children with the Lost Cause narrative for generations. I will begin with a discussion of the monument’s inception. On May 30, 1917, the land for Lee Park was gifted to the city of Charlottesville by Paul Goodloe McIntire in memoriam of his parents, exclusively for the purpose of erecting a statue of Robert E. Lee (“History”). McIntire’s father, George Malcolm McIntire, served as mayor of Charlottesville during the Civil War (Marshall), throughout which the city remained firmly in support of the Confederacy (Jordan).

Lee Park was the first of many parks gifted to the city of Charlottesville by McIntire. In his manuscript entitled *The Gifts of Paul Goodloe McIntire*, James Marshall categorizes the parks donated by McIntire as either “adult spaces with a statue of a prominent Virginia Civil War hero at the center” or geared toward children with “open space” or playgrounds (Marshall 20). However, McIntire’s gifts to the city, which included schools, scholarships, parks, and the local library, prove him very invested in education. Marshall notes McIntire’s “interest in the children of his native community” (Marshall 20). The library that McIntire donated to the city is directly facing the Lee sculpture. Anyone, child or adult, who entered the library to learn, had to do so under Lee’s watchful eye. His presence likely reinforced the type of education that McIntire intended for the children in his community. Given McIntire’s well-documented interest in the
indoctrination of local children and the emphasis placed on children in the speeches related to the dedication of this memorial, which I will examine shortly, I argue that the grounds surrounding these memorials were not only intended for adult use, but were designed to have an impact on children, as well. Paul McIntire was not only a strong proponent of education, but also a generous supporter of the arts. In 1919, he donated $155,000 to the University of Virginia for the endowment of a school of art and a school of music (“Paul”). McIntire’s devotion to the arts is of particular significance because, as I will discuss later in this chapter, the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture’s continued presence in Charlottesville is owing entirely to its classification as an important piece of art.

The presentation of the monument took place on May 21, 1924 and was universally described as the highlight of the 37th Annual Reunion of the Virginia Division of the Grand Camp U.C.V. and of the 29th Reunion of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). Attendance at this event was unanimously reported as higher than any other reunion, and the unveiling of the Lee memorial was given exclusive credit for the attraction (Patton). The Charlottesville newspaper was almost entirely consumed by articles related to the reunion for the entire week, printing full programs, schedule of events, names of important attendees, speakers, and speeches (Figure 1). Articles also welcomed the veterans who had come to Charlottesville to “honor the noble and immortal chieftain,” lauded their efforts to defend the country’s constitutional rights and congratulated them on achieving vindication and on passing their patriotism to their “children and their children’s children” (“Welcome”). Compiled and printed shortly after the reunion was its Proceedings, the preface of which is full of praise for Paul Goodloe McIntire, and gratitude for the “great bronze monument to the leader of the Confederate hosts” which will “teach to other ages” the revered qualities of General Lee (Patton 5).
Figure 1 Articles from Charlottesville Daily Progress May 17 - May 23, 1924. Courtesy of the University of Virginia Library.
The first session of the Grand Camp reunion was opened with a prayer by the division chaplain thanking God “for the occasion that called us together”, and specifying this occasion as “the unveiling of the noble monument erected to the memory of […] a wonderful teacher of young men and the great exemplar to the youth of the land, Robert Edward Lee” (Patton 9-10). Next, the Grand Commander welcomed guests to the unveiling, referring to it as an opportunity to “pay our tribute” to the “pure and unsullied character” of Lee (Patton 11). The Grand Commander gave thanks to God that devotion to “the Cause” had only intensified with the passing of time (Patton 11). The Grand Commander went on to praise “the glory, honor and immortality of the Confederate soldier,” and note the South’s “supremacy” (Patton 12). Next, he glorified southern women and their contribution to the birth of “a new Confederacy” by instilling “into the minds and hearts of their sons and daughters a sacred reverence for the fathers of the Confederacy” (Patton 14). In summation, the Grand Commander called attention to the “intense enthusiasm, zeal and devotion for the Cause” held by the “Daughters and Sons of the Confederacy” (Patton 15). He further stated that the “righteousness of the Cause” for which so many died is “justification under the constitution” (Patton 15). The afternoon session was opened by Major General Freeman of the local United Confederate Veterans division with similar remarks regarding the South’s “righteous cause” (Patton 16). Freeman also informed the U.C.V about a forthcoming “absolutely fair” and “unobjectionable” school history, soon to be published by the American Legion to combat “the errors put before our children in the form of history” (Patton 17).

Next, the Honorable Don Palsey spoke on behalf of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and charged the committee with the justification and redemption of the “righteous cause” and the memory of those who fought for its defense (Patton 19). He equated patriotism with support of
the Confederacy, then accused any young people who were not proud of their Confederate relatives of dishonoring the South and also God. Palsey condemned the idea of a “New South,” which I discussed in chapter one. Like most Lost Cause proponents, he saw the New South as trying to fit into the Union by denying its past, and called for a resurgence of the “Old South with its old courage, its old courtesy, its old reverence for women, its old fortitude in trial, its old spirit of pride in its history, its old devotion to principle and its old traditions of truth and honor and loyalty and right!” (Patton 21). Interestingly, he mentioned neither slavery nor supremacy in his description of this “Old South.” In true Lost Cause fashion, Palsey ended his speech by honoring the Confederate veterans who fought against overpowering forces for the constitutional principles of the southern states and gave thanks that their cause was already being vindicated by history (Patton 21).

Much of the same Lost Cause-themed remarks were heard at the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) reunion, which was held jointly with the Grand Camp reunion. The State Commander opened the morning ceremonies by citing the reason for the gathering – to honor Robert E. Lee. He then equated the United States involvement in World War I to the South’s cause in the Civil War. Next, he gave credit to southern women for preserving its ideals, and ended his speech with an eloquent glorification of both Lee and the state of Virginia. A city councilman spoke on behalf of Charlottesville’s mayor, honoring the veterans, Sons, and Daughters for their sacrifices to the “great cause,” repeatedly calling it “sacred,” “right,” and “just” (Patton 26). He then expressed the city’s gratitude to McIntire for the “monuments” that “will ever remain to remind us of the heroic deeds and great service rendered our country by these sons of Virginia, in whose memory they are erected” (Patton 27).
After the council member, the Governor began a speech glorifying Lee, “that matchless chieftain, that peerless Christian gentleman, that stainless leader of a stainless cause” (Patton 28). He noted the reconciliation between North and South, making no mention of the remaining rampant racial prejudices. The Governor also reportedly expressed his belief that such monuments, as those given to Charlottesville would “serve as an inspiration to the youth of coming generations” (“Chairmen”). Following the Governor, the Honorable Carter Bishop addressed the Sons on behalf of the Grand Camp and recognized the reason for their assembly – “the Cause which was, and is and always will be strong with the strength of Right and immortal with the immortality of Truth” (Patton 30). Next, General Freeman imparted the same information that he had earlier conveyed to the Grand Camp regarding the American Legion history books “now being prepared that will do justice to the Confederate cause” (Patton 34). After this, a representative of the UDC expressed the organization’s gratitude for the opportunity to pay tribute to that peerless leader, General Robert E. Lee” and notes the city’s pride “to own such a work of art” (Patton 35).

Finally, the SCV’s Commander-in-Chief addressed the assembly, recognizing the work of those to ensure “justice be done the South in the histories being formulated for world perusal” (Patton 38). Later in his speech he returned to this topic, stating that soon no history will be allowed in the South that was not first approved by the Veterans, SCV, or UDC (Patton 42). The Commander called for an expansion of the battle, to prevent “unfair histories” from being taught in the rest of the country and urged the need to advertise and commercialize southern history in order to compete with the North (Patton 42). Early in his address, the Commander admitted himself specially bound to address the younger generation. He did so mid-speech, claiming that any southern youth not in the SCV or UDC dishonors his or her heritage and urging them to join
the fight for southern justice. He then attempted to shame the SCV into action by venerating the UDC and their many efforts, chief among them, “helping our historians” (Patton 43). He concluded his speech with a racist anecdote before surrendering the stage to Virginia’s Attorney General (Patton 46-47).

The Robert Edward Lee sculpture was unveiled on the second day of the reunions, May 21, 1924. The celebrations began in the afternoon with a parade, which was led by the local high school band and whose procession included, in addition to the expected veterans, committee members, speakers, members of the SCV, UDC, etc., students from UVA, and Charlottesville and Albemarle High Schools, along with Boy Scouts dressed as military police (Patton 49). Following the opening prayer, Reverend Henry Battle, son of a Confederate General, addressed the audience, remarking on all the groups participating in the celebrations, especially the school children who are the future of the country and must be “shaped in the school room today” (Patton 53). Next, Reverend Jones, chaplain of Washington and Lee University while Robert E. Lee was president there, gave a very long eulogy to Lee. While Reverend Battle noted the repose of Lee’s sculpture, Jones referred to it as a “commanding effigy” and the “incarnation of a truth” (Patton 55). Jones claimed that in the years since the Civil War ended all conflict, hostility, and prejudice had resolved. He made no further distinction, but it is obvious from the sentiments and spirit of the time that he is only referring to such issues between whites. No reference is made to remaining widespread hostilities and prejudices toward African Americans. In recounting Lee’s virtues, Jones adhered to the Lee cult’s propaganda, noting Lee’s abhorrence of slavery (despite the fact that he owned countless human beings during his lifetime), his love for the Union, his sorrow at being forced to choose between it and Virginia, and his devotion to an unwinnable cause in order to defend the states’ right of secession (Patton 58). Jones wrapped up his
panegyric speech to Lee by giving him full credit for the South’s survival of Reconstruction and the ensuing nation-wide peace (Patton 62-63).

After Jones’s devotional speech, the president of Washington and Lee University, Dr. Smith, presented the statue on behalf of Paul Goodloe McIntire to the city of Charlottesville. In his speech, which The Daily Progress entitled “Tribute to Chieftain,” (“H.L.”) Smith referred to the location of the statue as “the center of the city’s social and economic life” (Patton 64). He outlined the purposes of the statue’s presence stating, “may it stand forever to recall the glory of the unforgotten Past, to lift the busy Present to higher levels of patriotism and self-sacrifice, and to teach to endless generations of the Future the lofty lessons of his defeated yet triumphant life” (Patton 64). Adhering to Lost Cause imagery, Smith made reference to Lee’s “ever-growing fame” and drew connections between the general and Christ (Patton 65-67). He then expressed the need for others like Lee to lead the world through its turbulent times by teaching “obedience,” “subordination,” and “supremacy” (Patton 67-68). Smith ended his speech by placing utmost importance on what the children of the South “will become” (Patton 68). Once Dr. Smith’s presentation speech was concluded, Dr. Alderman, president of the University of Virginia, took the stage to accept the “noble statue of Robert Edward Lee” on behalf of the city of Charlottesville (Patton 69). Following the acceptance speech ensued the purported “most dramatic moment” of the celebrations when Lee’s (referred to here as “the greatest man who ever lived”) three year-old great-granddaughter was brought on the stage to pull the veil from the statue. The veil was “an exact reproduction of the…first authentic flag of the Confederacy” (“Grand” 2). The unveiling ceremony closed with a benediction given by the last living member of Lee’s staff (Patton 71).
The monument was unveiled almost sixty years after the Civil War ended and more than fifty years after Lee died, posing the question of what prompted McIntire to make such a gift. McIntire’s stated intention was to honor his parents who were supporters of the Confederacy. McIntire’s father had passed away on August 18, 1884 and his mother, Catherine Clarke, on January 19, 1903 (MS-505). Correspondence between McIntire and his business associates regarding the monument’s conception place heavier emphasis on honoring McIntire’s mother, who had been deceased only fourteen years when McIntire gifted the land to the city. However, my research reveals no mention of such an intent until May 15, 1922, when New York architect, Walter Blair, wrote to McIntire’s business associate, William O. Watson, stating he had conveyed McIntire’s request that “In Honor of Catherine McIntire’ shall be inscribed on the statue” (MS-505.1.B.90). The same day, Blair did in fact write to the sculptor’s, Shrady’s, son, relaying the request (MS-505.1.B.91). Eight days later, W.O. Watson wrote to Blair, informing him of McIntire’s new desire to have the inscription read, “In honor of our Mother Catherine Ann McIntire.” However, the request is followed by a caveat, that McIntire “desires this only if it is in the utmost good taste to show anything of the kind on the monument” and requests Blair’s “judgement on that point” (MS-505.1.B.94). I found no further mention of such an inscription, nor does the monument, in fact, “show anything of the kind.” I conclude from this omission that honoring his mother was not actually McIntire’s primary intention behind the donation of the sculpture.

It is clear that at the end of the Civil War fifty-five percent of Charlottesville’s population was made up of African Americans (Jordan). White citizens imposed strict laws and curfews on the African-American population to prevent any violence or uprisings (Jordan). Lee’s prominent position in the city center on a pedestal in what The News Leader called “fighting pose”
(“Virginia Veterans”) may well have been a display of authority and control as a reminder to African-American members of the community. Along these lines, The Daily Progress newspaper reported a Klan parade that took place on the Saturday preceding the unveiling. The article stated that this was the first such parade in the area, but it was highly successful, drawing an “immense throng of spectators” and “directed attention to the presence of the organization in the community” (“Klan”).

Furthermore, as previously noted, McIntire had a strong fixation on educating local children. Placing the sculpture on the lawn where anyone who wished to enter the library to learn must pass the effigy and then face it as they exit is certainly one way of achieving such an education (Figure 2). Whether McIntire wished to provide observers with an instruction on fine art or to reinforce Confederate narratives will likely never be fully known, partially because McIntire burned all his personal papers before his death. It is fortunate, therefore, that W.O. Watson saved all of his correspondence. Examination of such correspondence, as related to the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture, reveals an obsession with the Confederacy and with instilling reverence for its cause in future generations.

Effect

Next, I will discuss the corresponding aspect of the memorial’s intent, its effect. I will examine how that effect has evolved with the generations and the events that reveal how the monument effects viewers today. The initial, local effect of the sculpture was fairly innocuous. As described in detail above, it was greeted with much fanfare by the white citizens in Charlottesville – the only citizens whose opinions were valued at that time. Local archival research revealed little information regarding how the public perception of the sculpture evolved over the next 70 years, but its next significant event occurred in 1996, when it was added to the
Figure 2 Front of Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
National Register of Historic Places (“History”). I will consider the monument’s status as a historic place in the preservation section of this chapter, but relevant here is the possibility that the proposal to add the sculpture to this register was in response to a change in its effect or reception, which made its preservation questionable. There is another possible motive for its registration, which I will also examine in the preservation section, but regardless of the reason, the memorial’s continued existence since the early 2010’s when the first proposal was made for its removal can be fully credited to its status as a historic place.

The first official proposal to remove the sculpture, made in 2012 by City Council Member Kristin Szakos, was met with strong opposition by other citizens and resulted in harassing behavior directed toward Szakos, allegedly by members of Aryan Nation (“Robert E. Lee Statues Comes Under Fire”). As the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum in 2014, Confederate symbols were more frequently interpreted as symbols of white supremacy and national feeling about them soured (Fortin). In 2016, a special commission was established to consider Lee’s continued presence in Charlottesville, and it was determined that the sculpture should either be moved or altered to reflect a more accurate and inclusive view of history (Fortin). In February 2017, the City Council voted to remove the sculpture (Suarez, “Historic Vote”), but removal was halted when a lawsuit was brought against the city, challenging its right to demand the sculpture’s removal (Suarez, “Charlottesville City Council Votes”). The council did vote unanimously in June 2017 to change the name from Lee Park to Emancipation Park (Suarez, “Charlottesville City Council Renames”). At the time this paper was written, the legal battle is still ongoing and no final decision regarding the sculpture’s fate has been reached. However, the initial vote to remove the statue made it a focal point for white supremacists. White nationalists led a torch-lit march on the city in May 2017, and the Ku Klux Klan held a white
power rally in July 2017, both protesting the council’s decision (McLaughlin). Although the march and KKK rally were met by overwhelming numbers of counter-protestors, police were able to disperse the crowds without violence. This fortune did not hold for the August 2017 white nationalist rally mentioned previously, which resulted in multiple injuries and the death of a counter protestor.

Clearly, the effect this sculpture had on people when it was dedicated in 1924 is no longer the effect it has on people today. The narratives represented at this memorial site generate very negative effects given the current discord in our nation. Carole Blair recommends considering what would be different if the memorial never existed (Blair 34). I have found no evidence of all-inclusive positive effects that this memorial has had, but the recent negative effects that have resulted from its existence, namely its appropriation by white supremacist groups, its selection as a rallying site for said groups, and its role as the setting for the violent, fatal clashing of narratives, are irrefutable.

**Durability**

The next aspect of memorial sites that Blair recommends examining is their “apparatuses and degrees of durability” (37). Here I consider how the memorial’s material durability contributes to its ultimate vulnerability and mutability. The Lee sculpture is made of bronze and stands atop a granite pedestal. Both of these substances are very hard and durable – clearly intended to last a long time. Although granite and bronze are extremely resilient materials, as Blair points out, this does not make the sculpture invulnerable. Vandals have spray painted phrases like, “Black Lives Matter” and at one point even splashed red paint – eerily resembling blood splatter – over its base (“Charlottesville Parks and Rec”). The sculpture has been targeted by protestors and transformed into a medium for dissent, surely not intended by its creators. This
vulnerability makes the story that the memorial tells easily alterable, especially given the technology available today. The more viewers photograph the memorial in its altered state and share the pictures on the internet, the more the sculpture’s narrative is changed. A simple google image search yields a plethora of photographs of the monument in an altered state, or of altered photographs of the monument (Figure 3). Each of these ascribes different meaning to the memorial, demonstrating its vulnerability.

Preservation and Reproduction

Third, I consider how the sculpture is preserved and reproduced. I will discuss the aspects of the memorial’s conservation that make it eligible to have its protections and modes of preservation reviewed. I will also examine the ways that the monument has been reproduced and the reproductions enabled by its existence. The memorial’s main mode of preservation is its entry on the National Register of Historic Places, which was used to overturn the February 2017 vote in favor of the statue’s removal. The Robert Edward Lee sculpture is registered individually, and also part of a representative group of sculptures. Both registration forms were prepared by a resident of Charlottesville, Betsy Gohdes-Baten, in April 1996. In the description section of the individual registration form, Gohdes-Baten cites McIntire’s goal in giving the land and statue “to make a place worthy of the likeness of the most distinguished Confederate general” (“National Register, May 1997”). No mention is made of McIntire’s parents or any effort to honor them.

In the statement of significance, Gohdes-Baten places the sculpture’s eligibility “under criterion C as an important art object” and alleges that it meets the registration requirements by retaining “its historic integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.” Juxtaposing the scene that I have described which surrounded the original dedication of this memorial in May 1924 with the mob scene of August 2017, should make it
Figure 3 Representative of Google image search. See Works Cited for sources.
quite clear that the feeling and association of the monument have changed significantly and do not in any sense retain their “historic integrity,” exposing the fallacy of this statement. Gohdes-Baten concludes her report with a prediction that the sculpture will never be removed from its original location, as “sentiment in Charlottesville will undoubtedly keep it there, for the monument is a unique memorial to the most eminent Confederate hero of all and an outstanding example of the figurative outdoor sculpture of the late City Beautiful movement.” It is notable here that although the sculpture was registered for its significance as an “important art object,” that significance takes second place in the preparer’s closing statement, which emphasizes first and foremost the tribute the sculpture offers to Lee. I must also point out the irony of this assertion, as the sentiment in Charlottesville has clearly changed significantly, considering that the City Council voted to remove the sculpture in February 2017.

On the “Multiple Property Documentation Form,” Gohdes-Baten places much more emphasis on the sculpture’s significance as a work of art. She claims that the sculpture of Lee, alongside those of Stonewall Jackson, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and George Rogers Clark are representative of the early twentieth century “City Beautiful” movement. In describing the historic context, Gohdes-Baten notes how members of the National Sculpture Society (NSS) significantly influenced the types of sculptures chosen by city benefactors, such as Paul Goodloe McIntire. She quotes many NSS members’ belief “that figurative sculptures of great men and events would serve to ‘supplement the study of books in our schools and form a part of our educational methods.’” Gohdes-Baten then surmises, “sculpture, in other words, could perform a valuable function by teaching history and serving as an inspiration for future charity and patriotism.” I earlier expressed my suspicion that McIntire’s fixation on the indoctrination of local children and the Lee sculpture’s proximity to the library were indicative of the message that
he intended the statue to convey. The history that the sculpture teaches and the type of patriotism it seems to inspire should be reason enough to review its eligibility for protection as a historic place.

My examination of local archives leads me to believe that the Lee sculpture was originally placed on the register not because of its artistic value or to protect it from removal by anti-Confederates, but primarily in an effort to help secure government funding to have the monument cleaned and ultimately preserved. A Charlottesville resident, Robert Kuhlthau, conducted a survey of the sculpture in 1994. In 1997, he received a letter from a city planner, informing him that the city would be applying for a grant to help them restore the monument. The letter also states that the statue’s placement on the National Registry is pending (MS-296c). It was this letter that first led me to believe the two situations, the statues deteriorating condition and its placement on the national registry, were linked. Additionally, the Daily Progress reported on April 22, 1997 that Charlottesville had applied for state grants to “restore three historic statues,” after attempting for more than a year to raise the money locally (“Community”). The article reported that the Lee statue was in the worst shape of all, and estimated the cost of cleaning it at $29,302. In a similar article published on April 11, 1997, Charlottesville’s director of planning calls the statues “important cultural assets of the community” (“City Seeks”). Another related article published on April 16, 1997 argues that the cleaning and restoration are crucial for the preservation of the monument and therefore make “artistic sense” (“Jackson”). Found in the same file as these newspaper articles was an invitation to commemorate the restoration of the Lee and Jackson statues at a ceremony on September 26, 1999. The Robert E. Lee Sculpture in Lee Park was scheduled to be rededicated in a ceremony that day at 4pm. I was not able to determine from the records available to me whether or not the city was able to secure
government funding to assist with the cleaning and restoration. However, I can confirm that the applications to place the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture on the National Register of Historic Places were prepared in April 1996, around the time efforts to raise money for its restoration began. The applications were accepted in May 1997 and two years later, all restoration work had been completed. The timing leads me to deduce a strong connection between the sculpture’s need to be cleaned and restored for its preservation, and its placement on the National Register of Historic Places. This information is extremely relevant to any attempt to reclassify this sculpture and review its status as a historic place.

Clearly, its registration as a national historic place is a key component of its preservation, making it difficult to legally remove the sculpture. The corresponding aspect, its modes of reproduction, include pictures and stories, of and about the monument, which is substantially more widely viewed than it ever was before the proposal to have it removed. In some ways this type of reproduction is a disadvantage to those looking for the stories that the memorial tells. To look at a picture of the sculpture rather than to visit it personally can offer a false impression. Seeing a memorial in person, interacting with its surroundings, and observing how others interact with it is a completely different experience than looking at a reproduction (Blair). As Blair explains of rhetoric’s materiality, “its capacity to be engaged physically actually determines its extreme mutability” (Blair 39). My own experience with the monument was very enlightening. Everything I read about the statue led me to believe that it was in a very central and tourisy part of the city. For example, on May 20, 1924 the *Daily Progress* describes the location of the monument as “situated in the heart of the city, surrounded by churches…, the city library, U.S. government building and post office and other public buildings” (“Grand Camp”). More recently, when addressing the need to clean the statue, the *Daily Progress* states that its holds
“contributory value in bringing tourists downtown” (“Jackson”). However, where the monument is located is not an area that would draw tourists. There are no shops or restaurants in its immediate vicinity. It is still surrounded on all four corners by churches, but facing the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, which moved into the building that was originally donated by McIntire for the town library.

The other occupants of the park, besides myself and Lee, were a number of seemingly homeless persons, who appeared to be living under a nearby tree. There were also several teenagers gathering in the park – both white and African American. They did not appear to acknowledge, or interact with, the monument whatsoever. In cities across America, undesirable locations tend to be abandoned to the less fortunate, and those who are able often retreat to the outskirts and more gentrified areas. The park where the statue resides is no longer a prominent part of the city. The city has moved away from the monument, effectively abandoning it, which I believe is an indication of how public perception and feeling toward it has changed.

In addition to photographic reproduction, of which there has lately been plenty, the stories that are told about the memorial and the narratives that people attempt to tailor it to are reproductions in themselves. As I mentioned previously, there are gaps in the available information surrounding the establishment of the memorial. McIntire burned all of his own records; therefore the actual story behind the memorial’s inception, known by McIntire in 1917, will likely never be wholly accessible to researchers. It is arguable that the original account is no longer even relevant. The story that the sculpture tells is different for each viewer, as it interacts with his or her stories. It also evolves with the generations. As Blair has experienced in her research of memorial sites, “all opportunity to study the original event has evaporated with time”
(Blair 38); the story that it tells now and the effect that it has on its viewers is what must be of primary concern to those deciding the memorial’s fate.

**Linkages**

The fourth significant aspect of analyzing the rhetoric of memorial sites is what they do to, with, or against other texts, more specifically, the relationship between the memorial site and its immediate context (Blair 39). Blair points out some, “linkages that stand out in attending to these memorials: enabling, appropriating, contextualizing, supplementing, correcting, challenging, competing, and silencing” (Blair 39). Many of these linkages run rampant in debates surrounding the longevity of the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture. It has been alleged that the sculpture’s existence enables racist narratives and that it is appropriated by white supremacy groups, as evidenced in their proclivity for rallying around the site. The representation of Lee in this sculpture certainly seems ideally designed to enable such narratives. Having grown up around horses, the first thing that I noticed as I approached the statue from its right side was how Traveller strained, mouth open, against the harsh bit, the reins held in Lee’s left hand, as he casually controlled the animal (Figure 4). The National Register of Historic Places registration form also makes mention of this feature, stating “Lee has Traveller well in hand, but the horse’s neck is overbent and his mouth is open as he pulls against the bit” and “Lee reins him in” (“National Register, May 1997”). This display of control, domination, and dare I say supremacy, is easily interpreted as Lee’s – and by extension the South’s – supremacy over African Americans and the Union, aligning with the Lost Cause narrative (Spielvogel). This display of power is likely what made the monument appeal to supremacist groups.

According to the Register, the sculpture is twenty-six feet tall, twelve feet long, and eight feet wide, at the bottom of the oval-shaped pedestal. On the front of the pedestal, is a “fighting
Figure 4 Right side of Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
eagle with wings expanded and almost surrounded by oak leaves.” On the rear is an “eagle and oak leaves with a wreath of laurel.” In addition to being our country’s symbol, the eagle also symbolizes victory, pride, and royalty, all words used to describe both Lee and the Cause in the memorial’s dedication. The oak tree is known to be strong, enduring, and mighty, while the laurel wreath is an ancient symbol of victory and honor. The presence of these symbols on the sculpture all support the Lost Cause narrative’s refusal to admit or accept defeat, its deification of Lee, and the persistent claim that the South’s cause was righteous and justified. As I noted before, the statue bears no inscription honoring McIntire’s parents, but is simply inscribed, identically on the right and left sides, “ROBERT EDWARD LEE” and the years of his birth and death, 1807 and 1870, respectively. The sculpture’s commanding presence and context, strongly lacking in subtlety, negate the need for any supplementary inscription to further its narrative.

Lee’s position on the granite pedestal, above viewers, puts the story this sculpture tells in a context of power and dominance. At least in recent cases, supplemental rhetorical activity has been in the form of protest, such as spray painted messages left on the sculpture. When observing the environment around the sculpture, I was able to witness some additional supplemental activity, which is missed in most photographic and media reproductions. Historic churches surround Emancipation Park; they were there since before the land was purchased by McIntire, turned into a park, and the monument erected at its center. I have no way of knowing what type of supplemental activity the churches provided to the sculpture at its unveiling, but at the time of my visit they displayed messages that seemed to compete with the monument’s narrative. On the north corner is a Methodist church, which boasts a banner spanning the entire length of its front façade and reads “Y ♥ u Are Welcome Here” (Figure 5).
Figure 5 First United Methodist Church in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
On the west corner stands the old Episcopal church, which is now a day shelter for Charlottesville’s homeless called “The Haven.” Its sign sports gay pride colors and was currently advertising a women’s choir concert. As I continued circling the block, reveling in the spirit of these messages, I saw a third church on the south corner that had a small sign in the window (Figure 6). At first, I read the sign as “civil” and thought it an odd, but appropriate suggestion. When I looked again I realized the sign actually said “C’ville,” which, I learned from my visit, is a popular abbreviation that locals use for the city. I found my reading mistake rather satirical, and also felt that it shed a spirit of irony on Charlottesville’s nickname, given the less-than-civil interactions that had so recently taken place.

The supplemental rhetorical practices of the Methodist church and the homeless shelter are inclusive messages in direct contrast with the messages of exclusivity and supremacy most often ascribed to the monument. These actions still fall into the category of what Blair describes as “public, memory practices” (Blair 40), but unlike Blair’s examples, their intention is to draw attention toward an alternative narrative, rather than the one that the sculpture adheres to with its deification of Lee. Similar to Blair’s examples, these practices “point to a struggle over memory and its representation” (Blair 42) and also point toward correcting and challenging the stories surrounding the sculpture.

Some additional supplemental activity, presumably placed there by town officials, seems to protect and enable the statue’s narrative. The monument is surrounded by orange safety fencing to keep anyone from coming any nearer than about eight feet of the site. Just inside the safety fencing are no less than six signs encircling the site that read “CITY PERSONNEL ONLY NO TRESPASSING” (Figure 7). Another form of governmental supplemental activity existing
Figure 6 Christ Episcopal Church Office in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
Figure 7 Safety fencing surrounding the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
at the memorial until recently was a black shroud completely covering the monument. In an attempt to mute the sculpture following the August 2017 violence, the “city council voted to obscure it from public view” (Haag). The shroud was intended to signify the city’s mourning for the loss of life that occurred there and likely served also to prevent further vandalism. However, on February 27, 2018 a circuit court judge ruled that the city had to remove the shroud after determining that the council intended the covering to remain permanently. It was after the shroud was removed that the safety fencing and signs were added. The addition of the fencing and warning signs give the viewer the impression that the city approves of the sculpture and protects its narrative, but this supplemental activity also demonstrates the memorial’s vulnerability. As the Google images that I provided earlier in this chapter show, if viewers are allowed to approach the monument, its message and associations can be easily altered and those alterations reproduced for millions to see.

The memorial to Lee is a focal point for the two competing narratives as they clash over representations of the stories told by the sculpture. If my earlier hypothesis regarding the sculpture’s role as a reminder to African-American citizens of who holds the position of power is correct, then the memorial has acted to silence protest and dissent for nearly ninety years. Now protestors are working to silence the statue by removing it from its place of dominance. The final ruling on the monument’s removal is expected sometime in 2019, but in the meantime, the city council is planning further supplemental rhetorical activity, such as additional statues and historical signage which will provide a more inclusive and accurate context regarding the Civil War (Haag).
Acting

Finally, I consider how the sculpture acts on its viewers and how the stories that they bring with them interact with the memorial site. Appropriately, the conservation assessment prepared to analyze the condition of the Lee sculpture and recommend a treatment approach states in its introduction, “None of the sculptures exists in a vacuum. There is an effect on each sculpture by that which surrounds it, and conversely each has an effect on anything that is adjacent to it” (MS-296c). This is very true, although in another context besides the one implied in this statement. It would be extremely difficult to be anywhere in the sculpture’s proximity and not interact with it, whether that interaction entails moving closer to examine it, or moving away to avoid contact (Blair 46-47). I found it disturbing that the library, while moved from its original building directly facing the sculpture, is still only on the next corner and anyone who wants to use its services would find it impossible to completely avoid interacting with the monument. Whether the sculpture draws in or repels observers likely depends on how it interacts with the observer’s stories. If a person subscribes to the Lost Cause narrative and sees the sculpture as a preservation of southern heritage and a display of honor and chivalry, then Lee’s presence is comforting and inspiring. However, if the observer adheres to the Emancipation narrative, then the sculpture and its display of authority and control is probably very disturbing and being near it is likely an uncomfortable experience. Certainly, there are other narratives that may interact with the sculpture in different ways or not at all. Blair points out, memorials sites are “communal spaces” (Blair 48) and observers do not only interact with the memorial, but also with each other. When stories conflict, they trigger strong emotions and, as has happened all too often recently, those interactions can turn violent.
Conclusion and Proposal

In review, I have established through rhetorical analysis that though the original intention behind the memorial was reported to be honoring the donor’s parents, correspondence regarding the monument’s inception along with speeches given at its unveiling place far greater emphasis on memorializing Lee and promoting the Lost Cause narrative in youth and future generations. The effect of the monument has grown increasingly negative over time, causing much dissent and even the loss of a life. Although the sculpture’s materials are durable, its materiality lends a certain vulnerability to its narrative, which has been altered by protestors. Reproductions of the site can offer a false representation of its effects. Those effects change from viewer to viewer and evolve with time, as does the relationship between the site and its immediate context. Finally, how viewers interact with the sculpture depends wholly on the stories that they bring with them to the memorial site and how those stories align with popular narratives. Evidence has been provided here to justify a review of the sculpture’s protected status as a historic place, and I believe it should be removed from the register. If this protection were removed, it would likely have a positive effect on the ruling expected this year regarding the ultimate fate of the monument.

The Charlottesville city council’s plans to supplement the stories told at this memorial site with a more inclusive and accurate historical context are very appropriate, and other cities should follow their example. I find it unfortunate, however, that such supplemental activity did not take place sooner, before the situation escalated to the point that violence and death occurred. Notwithstanding that, perhaps an inclusive and historically accurate memorial site will help broaden the minds of white Southerners and begin to combat the Lost Cause narrative that so many are still in thrall to in the South. I hope that this will begin to counteract some of the
misunderstanding, fear, and hate that emerge when embodied stories are challenged and help make memorials sites places of peace and healing, as they should be.
CHAPTER III: ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Based on my previous discussion of reconstructed memory and identity, this chapter moves my research farther south to Asheville, North Carolina in order to examine how the appropriation of the Vance memorial site by Lost Cause proponents has enabled the reconstruction of the late governor’s memory as a local Civil War and Reconstruction-era hero. This memory of Vance is embedded in many of Asheville’s white citizens’ identities, causing them to embrace the Lost Cause version of history to the extent that public funds were used for the restoration of the monument as recently as 2015. I again employ Carole Blair’s method for the analysis of material rhetoric to demonstrate how this appropriation has supported the survival of the Lost Cause narrative in the Asheville area and excluded its African-American citizens from historical remembrance or representation for more than one hundred years.

First, I will offer a brief overview of Vance’s life to provide some context for his prominent, yet controversial role in the history of Asheville. Most of my information on Zebulon Baird Vance comes from a biography by Gordon McKinney. This publication was recommended to me by the reference librarian in the Pack Memorial Library’s North Carolina Room as the best work on Vance. Zebulon Baird Vance was born in Buncombe County, North Carolina on May 13, 1830. According to McKinney, the fact that the Vance family owned slaves gave young Zebulon the freedom to pursue an education and a career in politics from an early age. McKinney credits Vance’s education and political experience with giving him excellent interpersonal skills, which served him well throughout his career. He also labels Vance as one of the area’s elite citizens. By early 1853, Vance had gained a reputation as an excellent orator and was elected to the North Carolina State legislature, where he supported legislation “for the benefit of Buncombe County and western North Carolina” (McKinney 42). This propensity to
work for his constituents lasted throughout the Civil War and caused Vance a fair amount of grief during Reconstruction. However, I believe it is this aspect of his reputation that commands the respect of Asheville’s citizens – at least the white population – to this day. In 1856, Vance was elected to Congress. McKinney credits Vance’s skills at addressing “illiterate or semiliterate” voters with entertaining stories as the key to his success in the campaign (54). These talents are what enabled Vance to form a connection with the mountain population in western North Carolina.

Vance had a reputation as a Unionist, and as sectional tensions rose, he remained conservative and a nationalist. This position was attractive to the mountain citizens of the region. It was only Lincoln’s call for troops after the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861 that angered Vance sufficiently to make him turn to secession as the only resort. He, along with the rest of the North Carolina state legislature, voted to secede on May 20, 1861. The decision was unanimous. Vance served briefly in the military and in 1862 left the army to accept his election as governor. McKinney calls Vance’s election “the first true landslide in North Carolina history,” reporting “he won nearly two-thirds of the army vote and almost three-quarter of the civilian vote” (106).

Vance may have been a Unionist, but once North Carolina elected to secede and he was elected governor, he did thoroughly embrace the Confederation and its cause. Despite his support of the Confederacy, Vance put his people first, standing against the Confederate government when it threatened North Carolina’s sovereignty in terms of conscription laws. Through the war, Vance continuously attempted to protect the rights of North Carolina from Confederate government encroachment. These types of actions help explain the deep reverence many North Carolinians have for Vance to this day. As the war dragged on and more taxes and restrictions were placed on citizens to support the cause, public feeling toward the Confederacy soured in
North Carolina. Vance tried to protect his citizens and boost morale – walking the tightrope between them and the Richmond government. In his campaign for reelection as governor, Vance attempted to restore loyalty to the Confederacy and dissuade people from wanting to leave it and/or rejoin the Union. Using racism to play on the fears of his voters, Vance warned his audiences that Lincoln was not to be trusted, and that he [Lincoln] would take what white Southerners had and give it to blacks if the Confederacy was defeated. Vance’s campaign speeches prominently featured rhetoric that became part of the Lost Cause narrative, comparing the Confederacy with the United States during the Revolutionary War and using biblical imagery, to which his less-educated constituents could easily relate.

McKinney states that after being re-elected in 1864 Vance continued his work to reaffirm North Carolina’s commitment to the Confederate cause, refusing to see his state dishonored. Although certainly there was one line in the sand that Vance would not cross to insure a southern victory, and that line was a racist one. In late 1864, a vague resolution was passed that authorized the use of slaves for any required public service. Vance argued that this did not mean as Confederate soldiers, but only for noncombat purposes. He refused to arm slaves, claiming that to do so would negate the entire purpose of the war. McKinney states of Vance, “throughout his life his estimate of African Americans’ potential would never change, and his overt racism would remain a part of his public persona” (238).

Vance was arrested along with the other Confederate governors on Ulysses S. Grant’s orders in May 1865. He was transported to Washington by a Jewish man, who treated him with kindness and humanity. McKinney credits this interaction as the “most important single factor in Zeb’s appreciation of and later support for the Jewish community” (McKinney 252). Vance’s support of the Jewish population is a large part of his legacy today and is much more well known...
by the general public than his prejudices against African Americans. As I have argued similarly throughout this thesis, Vance’s white-washed legacy can be at least partially credited to the monuments raised in his honor and the Lost Cause version of his personal history that they promote.

After arriving in Washington, Vance was incarcerated for forty-seven days, but was never formally charged with any crimes. Andrew Johnson paroled Vance on July 6, 1865. During his parole, Vance used writing as a political platform to absolve himself of any responsibility for the trying times that North Carolina was experiencing during Reconstruction. He wholly blamed abolitionists for the troubles of the Civil War and Reconstruction, using the Bible “to justify the institution of slavery, his own activities, and the activities of his social class” as was the wont of Lost Cause orators all over the South (McKinney 260). When the terms of Vance’s parole again permitted him to move about the state, he relocated to Charlotte and became a partner in a law firm, increasing his reputation as both a humanitarian and a great orator. According to McKinney, Vance often offered his legal services free of charge to people who could not afford to pay his fees, and scores of people would attend court sessions just to hear Vance deliver his arguments. Between these and his speeches as a delegate for the newly formed Democratic Party, Vance’s skills and reputation as an orator increased. McKinney explains that, in order to keep himself in the public eye, Vance gave public speeches about nonpolitical subjects. It was during this time that Vance became interested in and informed on Jewish history, and he earned money for delivering addresses on that topic. Vance also became involved with local historical groups, using this platform to defend North Carolina and rebut any lasting suspicion that the state had not been committed to the Confederate cause. The inferiority of African Americans was another one of Vance’s frequent public speaking topics and one bound to sit well with the majority of his
audiences. Although pardoned in March 1867, Vance was forbidden by the Reconstruction Act to vote or hold political office. This was particularly grating since Reconstruction legislation granted African Americans the political rights now denied Vance. His public speeches allowed him to remain in the political arena, however, and to vent his frustration with the issue of race.

Vance found an elevated stage from which to further his views on the inferiority of blacks when the North Carolina Constitutional Convention assembled to draft a new state constitution in January 1868. Vance helped to unite the Conservatives under a banner of racial prejudice. Vance campaigned fervently on a racist platform to unite white voters under a canopy of white supremacy. Eerily reminiscent of today’s debates over Confederate memorials, torch-lit marches and racial altercations surrounded North Carolina’s 1876 election. Vance and the Conservatives resorted to terrorist tactics and the Ku Klux Klan to keep Republican voters from the polls. Elite white citizens used scaremongering among poor mountain whites to turn them against their black neighbors. McKinney notes the stark contrast between Vance’s positive approach to problem solving during the Civil War and the destructive extremes he was willing to go through during Reconstruction to regain a prominent political position. The biographer remarks, “his negative approach has unfortunate consequences for race relations in North Carolina” (278).

McKinney points out a turning point in North Carolina history that occurred with Vance’s 1876 election as governor. He claims that any lasting criticisms of Vance’s service during the Civil War, both as officer and governor, were forgotten and North Carolina’s white citizen began to take pride in their state’s service to the Confederacy. According to McKinney, “never again would Zeb…be challenged to defend the Confederacy and its policies. The romantic vision of the conflict would eventually be publicized by organizations that plastered the
South with memorials to the Confederate dead, rehabilitated Jefferson Davis, and elevated Robert E. Lee to secular sainthood” (323). North Carolina’s Civil War history became part of the Lost Cause legend, which groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy have memorialized in downtown Asheville to ensure this memory’s survival.

Vance’s time as governor saw North Carolina transition from Reconstruction “to what has been called the period of southern ‘redemption,’” and Vance was credited with leading his state through (McKinney 343). With his 1878 election to the U.S. Senate, Vance’s own personal vindication was also complete. Some of his early acts as senator include giving speeches in defense of southern history textbooks, advising his fellow senators that reconciliation would be achieved if the North would simply leave the South alone, and refusing to admit that North Carolina’s African-American citizens were ever mistreated, intimidated, or “denied equal educational opportunities” (McKinney 354). Vance remained a leading figure in the Democratic Party throughout his career in Washington. According to McKinney, “the only glue that held the party together was its racist commitment to white political, economic, and social dominance” (366). Vance’s lifelong commitment to white supremacy made him an excellent figurehead for the Democratic movement. McKinney explains, “his assumption that whites were racially superior to blacks was so deeply ingrained that he often found himself unable to express his point in any other terms” (368).

Some positive achievements from Vance’s senate career include his support of the Blair Education Bill in March 1884. This bill was proposed by his opponents and through his support, Vance demonstrated his willingness to vote across party lines, if doing so would be in North Carolina’s best interest. Vance claimed he supported the bill on behalf of his state’s African-American citizens. Its obvious advantage was the provision of funds for both white and black
schools, enabling all southern citizens to receive an education, but still remain racially segregated. Vance championed the South on many other political and economic issues, including the reduction of trade tariffs. His concern for “the common man” ensured “his enormous personal popularity among the public at large” (383). In 1885, Vance began construction on Gombroon, his dream home in the mountains. He used native materials and hired local men, further gaining the approval of western North Carolinians. According to McKinney, “the project began to contribute to the community’s identity” (376).

Eventually, Vance’s health began to fail and he had to have one eye removed. While no longer able to serve as Senator, Vance was still valuable as a campaigner for the Democratic Party. As such, Vance “assumed that racial animosity would still be a powerful motivating force among the electorate in 1890” (McKinney 385). In debates, he spoke disparagingly of African Americans and defended his party’s terror tactics by claiming that if blacks were too intimidated by whites to vote, then they could not be trusted to participate in government. In 1890, a history of Reconstruction that Vance had contributed to was published. In it Vance “distorted his descriptions…for partisan effect,” omitted any mention of the KKK, and used openly racist language to discuss African-American participation in the events of the Reconstruction era” (McKinney 386). These actions, combined with his politics during and after the Civil War, justify McKinney’s claim that Vance significantly damaged race relations in the state of North Carolina. His wide popularity and glowing reputation among the public ensured that his racist opinions were not only heard, but also embraced by his constituents.

On April 14, 1894, Vance had a severe stroke and died. According to McKinney, by 1916 Vance’s memory had been completely whitewashed, leaving only his gregarious personality, his skills as an orator, and his service to the citizens of North Carolina during and after the Civil War.
to live after him. Vance’s legacy lived on for decades in the Democratic Party’s post-Reconstruction bid to reclaim control of the government. His successful tactics were employed for years after his death. The most fruitful campaign in this effort was the election of 1898, in which Democrats again united voters on the platform of white supremacy. As ex-mayor, William J. Cocke, explained to Asheville’s Zeb Vance Democratic Club on January 3, 1898, “The great issue confronting the people looms up as it presses to the front, and overshadows all others, the issue of White Supremacy! …the Anglo Saxon must assert his supremacy and superiority and again control the affairs of our people” (24). This rhetoric was especially appealing to poor white citizens, who needed a scapegoat for their economic troubles and were happy to no longer be considered the lowest rung on the social ladder. Democrats maligned African Americans, claiming they were an inferior race, unequipped to participate in politics, and unable to govern themselves, much less whites.

Reminiscent of Vance’s election techniques, Democrats also used terrorist tactics and employed the Ku Klux Klan to intimidate black voters, and whites with Republican ties, away from the polls. In nearby Wilmington, North Carolina, on November 10, 1898, a mob of white citizens, led by a local Democratic Party leader, took exception to publications by the editor of the local African-American newspaper and started a riot. They burned the newspaper office, killed at least fourteen black citizens, and dispersed the majority of the city’s prominent black residents (Larson). Media coverage of the events claimed either that the African-American community started the riot or justified the actions taken by Wilmington’s white citizens in subjugating the blacks (Larson). The riot was fictionalized by several authors, but arguably the most famous account was The Marrow of Tradition by Charles Chesnutt. Chesnutt’s novel examines the connections between the lives of the city’s different races. Jennifer Larson
summarizes the book stating, “Chesnutt depicts the problems afflicting the New South, offering an invective that criticizes the nation's panicked responses to issues of social equality and interracial relationships.” According to Larson, “this massacre further fueled an ongoing statewide disfranchisement campaign designed to crush black political power.” The Democratic Party’s tactics to exclude North Carolina’s black citizens from the political system were successful. As historian Nicholas Graham concludes of the 1898 election, the Democrats regained power in the state “and quickly began work on legislation that would effectively disfranchise African-American voters for decades to come” (3). It was in this period of reigning white supremacy that the Vance Monument was erected in front of Asheville’s courthouse.

**Intent**

In this section, I will discuss the events surrounding the conception and dedication of the Vance Monument and my inferences regarding the original intent of the monument’s creators. According to McKinney, “Zeb’s death came during a period in which Confederate heroes were being honored all over the South. Since there were no great military leaders from North Carolina for him to complete with, Zeb became the symbolic leader of the Lost Cause in his home state” (406). Almost immediately following his death, the Vance Monument Association was formed in Asheville. Little progress was made toward a memorial until George Pack stepped in as patron in 1896. Pack struck a deal with Buncombe County Commissioners that if they would donate the land, then he would donate $2000 for a memorial to Vance. The County Board accepted Pack’s offer and further resolved that “the land in front of the court house belonging to the county be forever dedicated to the use contemplated and referred to in said proposition” (“Monument History”). An informative history of the Vance Monument’s inception was published on the day of its cornerstone ceremony in the *Asheville Daily Citizen*. According to the article, the
monument base is fourteen feet square and nine feet high. Its foundation runs five feet underground and the shaft extends sixty-six feet into the air, making the total height of the obelisk 75 feet. The core of the shaft is made of “extra hard brick laid in cement mortar.” The face of the obelisk shaft is granite block, which is secured to the core with galvanized iron. Of the markings intended to be included on the monument, the article states, “On each side of the base there will be a polished panel 4x9 feet, and on each of the chamfered corners there will also be a polished panel. The only lettering on the monument will be on the large panels, on each of which there will be the one word, ‘Vance’” (“Monument History”).

In contrast to the Lee Monument in Charlottesville, the memorial to Vance took shape relatively quickly. Pack made his proposal to the Board of County Commissioners in June 1896. The proposal was accepted almost immediately, the contract awarded in September, and the ground broken in October 1897, the cornerstone was laid on December 22, 1897, and the monument was dedicated on May 10, 1898. Also unlike the ceremonies in Charlottesville, the dedication of the Vance Monument passed with very little recognition. When my research yielded no coverage of the event, I was concerned that I was not able to find these records. However, a file at the North Carolina room of the Pack Library in downtown Asheville corroborated the fact that there was simply no detailed newspaper coverage of the dedication (“Monuments & Markers”). I am led by this omission to believe that the May 1898 dedication was conducted with very little ceremony and was not considered an important event by the citizens of Asheville. However, significant media attention was given to the cornerstone laying in December 1897.

When the monument was restored in 2015 – which I will discuss in the preservation section of this paper – a time capsule was retrieved from underneath the cornerstone. The
Western Regional Archives in Asheville is in possession of the time capsule and its contents. I visited the archives with a view to examining these contents, and was both surprised and confused to discover that it primarily contained Masonic documents. After reviewing the documents, I concluded that cornerstone ceremonies were simply in the purview of Masonic lodges in this era, as they seem to have presided over them with great frequency. Furthermore, the Masonic documents revealed no concern with the Civil War, the Confederacy, or with race, but suggested that the Masons of the time were primarily focused on orphans, widows, and prohibition. Also in the time capsule was the “City of Asheville, North Carolina Year Book 1896-97.” In the section of this text entitled “Report of Mayor,” the following statement is found concerning Vance:

There should be an effort made by your honorable body to induce the County Commissioners to co-operate with us in beautifying and enclosing Court House Square, where the monument is to be erected to the late Senator Z. B. Vance. It would be fitting to give it the name of Vance Square, to perpetuate the name and fame of North Carolina’s greatest commoner. He will ever live in the hearts of the people of North Carolina, for death cannot efface his greatness and his glory. (12)

The last statement of the mayor’s seems to be true. Based on my visit to Asheville, Vance still maintains an excellent reputation in the hearts of many North Carolinians. Even those that do not support Confederate memorials seem to believe Vance’s monument should remain standing in honor of his service to the state.

Another item in the capsule is the “Charter of the City of Asheville, North Carolina. Ratified March 13, 1895.” This document demonstrates the restrictions that were placed on African-American citizens by the Democratic Party in terms of political participation and inter-
racial relationships. Adhering to Reconstruction regulations, the North Carolina legislature agreed to remove mention of race from the state’s statutes, with a few exceptions. However, examination of this charter reveals how they adhered to the letter of that agreement, but not necessarily the spirit. Repeatedly the charter prefaces the words “citizen” or “resident” with the italicized word “bona fide.” Section ninety-nine of the charter reveals that the board of aldermen were established as “the exclusive judges of the bona fides of such residents” (42). I conclude that this discretion was used to award or deny any rights the aldermen wished to any citizens they chose and through this method, African Americans in Asheville were denied their political and civil rights.

The “The Code of the City of Asheville, Adopted May 6, 1887,” also in the Vance Monument time capsule, uses similar language to distinguish which citizens were enfranchised and which were not. The Code gives town commissioners the right to limit where African Americans can go, which establishments they can enter, and how long they can remain. Although adopted more than twenty years after Emancipation, the Code places these restrictions both on slaves and on “free persons of color” and endorses “corporeal punishment” for anyone who disobeys (39). Both the Code and the Charter establish that Asheville’s schools will be racially segregated, but that funds will be distributed to the school districts without discrimination. The Code establishes several ordinances to keep black and white citizens segregated, even in death, Asheville’s African-American citizens had to be buried in separate cemeteries. Strict fines were levied on those who marry or have sexual relations with a member of the opposite race or a “person of mixed blood” (197-8). Keeping with the spirit of the times, as was common in cities after the Civil War, the Code contains vagrancy laws that allow for the arrest of anyone “who shall habitually wander about the street…without any visible means of
support” (200). These types of vagrancy laws were often used to keep out ex-slaves and other black people who had trouble getting decent jobs. They also allowed these people to be essentially re-enslaved after their arrest and used as free labor. The Code sets an ordinance “forbidding all disorderly shouting, dancing and tumultuous assemblies on the part of slaves and free negroes in the streets, markets and other public places in said town” (345-6). Again, the mention of slaves well after Emancipation is baffling. Many former Confederate states were convinced that slavery would be reinstated, and perhaps these laws were retained for that eventuality. It would be interesting to know when, and if, all mention of slaves was finally removed from these books, but that is outside the scope of this project.

The only item related to the Confederacy in the time capsule was The Zebulon Vance Camp of United Confederate Veterans camp list from December 22, 1897. A camp reunion was part of the cornerstone dedication festivities, and according to McKinney, “When the band began to play ‘Dixie,’” these veterans gave “a shout that rattled the leaves of the trees” (408). This rendition of “Dixie” is the only nod to the former Confederacy that I found mention of in the ceremonies surrounding the Vance Monument. Planned in the program were “patriotic” songs, such as “America” and “The Old North State,” that were intended to be sung by local schoolchildren (“Cornerstone Ceremonies”; “Vance Monument”). However, inclement weather on the day of the cornerstone dedication caused that part of the program to be cancelled for fear of causing the children to become ill (“With Masonic Ceremony”). While some items in the time capsule demonstrate that Asheville, like most other post-Civil War and Reconstruction southern cities promoted and protected white supremacy, the lack of Confederate symbolism and Lost Cause rhetoric surrounding the Vance Monument is highly noteworthy in comparison to other Confederate memorial sites. This omission suggests that the monument was, in fact, intended to
honor Vance for his service to North Carolinians rather than to support the propagation of the Lost Cause narrative, as many later monuments were clearly intended.

Effect

Next, I will examine the evolving effect that the Vance Monument has on its viewers to analyze the consequences of its existence. Like the Lee Memorial in Charlottesville, the Vance Monument was well received by Asheville’s “bona fide” citizens. The Asheville Daily Citizen reported that the spectators of the cornerstone ceremony “filled the Square and afterwards packed the court house” (“With Masonic Ceremony”). Compared to other Confederate memorial sites that have been targeted by white supremacy groups and by protestors, the Vance monument maintains a fairly low profile in that regard. Some Asheville residents believe this is because many people are not aware of Vance’s lifelong racial prejudices or the damage that he did to race relations in North Carolina following Emancipation.

The current effect of the memorial was perhaps best revealed in 2015 when public funds were used to restore the Vance Monument. Remarkable was the fact that public funds were allowed to be used for this purpose. Recalling the restoration of the Lee memorial site, the city of Charlottesville had to apply for federal government grants to finance the work, indicating that local public funds were not eligible to be used for the project. The decision to use public funds for the restoration of the Vance Monument brought a new level of attention to the memorial’s existence. Many citizens used the local newspapers and associated websites to voice their concern that the monument was not only still standing during a time when Confederate memorials around the country were being torn down, but that the city of Asheville was seemingly condoning its presence by allocating funds for its restoration. I will discuss this restoration in the preservation section of this paper, but noteworthy here is the degree of
controversy that surrounded the Vance Monument restoration (Figure 8), which suggests that perhaps the effect of the memorial is not as innocuous as the relative lack of protesting and vandalism suggests.

I discussed in the previous sections those parts of the time capsule’s contents that pertained to race because those are the pieces of information relevant to my project. The time capsule’s contents demonstrate that Asheville was far from being an atypically progressive southern city that immediately after the Civil War integrated African Americans fully into its social, economic, and political systems. However, there were pages and pages of documents in the capsule that had absolutely nothing to do with racial discrimination and spoke to the positive aspects of post-Civil War Asheville. One such item in the time capsule was a copy of a newspaper called the Colored Enterprise, which I learned was operated by and for Asheville’s black residents. The newspaper contained what at the time could only be considered inflammatory articles encouraging African Americans to resist discrimination and racial prejudice. The fact that the local government allowed the newspaper to operate, let alone to be included in the time capsule, is far more than I imagine most southern towns would permit, recall the Wilmington riot of 1898 that I discussed earlier in this chapter. The copy of this newspaper found in the Vance Monument time capsule is the only copy known to exist today. Without the monument, the time capsule, and the groups that compiled its contents, this piece of African-American history would have been lost forever.

Overall, the presence of the Vance Monument in downtown Asheville seems to have been fairly non-injurious in the past, although the use of public funds for its restoration in 2015 did bring its negative aspects more to the forefront. I believe the low profile that the monument has for supremacist groups and protesters is two-fold. First, it is protected by the exalted
Take down the Vance Monument

The Advance Monument: A proposal for Asheville’s Vance problem

New that New Orleans has toppled its statue of Robert E. Lee, Asheville should take a hard look at the man we honor in our city’s most prominent public space.

I speak of Zebulon Vance.

Who?

You know, Zeb Vance, North Carolina’s Civil War governor, whose name is carved into the granite obelisk rising above Pack Square.
reputation that Zebulon Vance still maintains in the Asheville area, based on the reasons I discussed early on in this chapter pertaining to his public service and care for the citizens of North Carolina. Second, its lack of Confederate symbolism would cause some to argue that the obelisk is not a Confederate monument. Unfortunately, the absence of Confederate symbolism lasted only until 1926 when the United Daughters of the Confederacy appropriated the site to further their Lost Cause agenda. I will examine this appropriation at length in the linkages section of this analysis.

**Durability**

I will now consider the durability of the memorial and how that durability is both an asset and a detriment as it contributes to the longevity of the monument. I earlier gave an account of the materials used in the construction of the Vance obelisk. The granite exterior secured by iron to the brick interior makes it clear that the monument was intended to last for many generations. However, the stone in the elements has a tendency to erode. With its location in the mountains, Asheville experiences a wide variance of weather. The wind, rain, ice and snow all work on the monument, eroding the stone and necessitating its recent restoration. The chemical reaction of the elements on the stone causes a change in the way the monument appears as years pass. This brings to mind a comparison of how the narrative surrounding Zebulon Vance and the monument changes with time, causing the memorial to appear differently to viewers. As I mentioned earlier, within twenty years after the monument was built, Vance’s memory was fully cleansed and all transgressions forgotten, as he emerged during the highpoint of the Lost Cause movement as North Carolina’s local hero.

After the 1960s Civil Rights movement, the people of North Carolina slowly came to mean more than simply white people once again. As African Americans regained their foothold
in Asheville’s political and social structures and an alternate history emerged, the negative effects Vance had on North Carolina, especially concerning race relations, drifted back to the surface. Now, the monument has a different context for many viewers than it once did as a freestanding tribute to honor and to remember Vance for his service to the people of North Carolina. As I have previously contended, meaning changes with the generations. The monument’s physical appearance changes as time passes, but also does the way viewers interpret the monument. As viewers learn alternative narratives, they bring those stories with them to the memorial site and these will always effect the way the monument acts on them. When different narratives are introduced, they work on the monument in much the same as the weather does, changing its appearance. So the more durable the monument is, the longer it will last, and the more changes it will undergo. Durability, in terms of materials, as we witnessed of the Lee Monument, may not always be an advantage when dealing with material rhetoric.

**Preservation and Reproduction**

This section examines the monument’s possibilities of reproduction and modes of preservation and considers how these contribute to the longevity of the Lost Cause narrative in the South’s reconstructed history. As with most other Confederate memorials, the reproduction of the Vance Monument has greatly increased with the availability of technology, such as camera phones and the internet. The controversy surrounding Confederate memorial sites has also drawn more attention to the obelisk than it has had in years past. The memorial site itself serves to reproduce the Lost Cause version of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Asheville, especially with the appropriation of the site, which I look forward to discussing in the next section. These facts regarding the monument’s possibilities of reproduction are true of most, if not all, existing
One significant mode of preservation is chapter 100, article 1 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Effective July 23, 2015 this statute states, “a monument, memorial, or work of art owned by the State may not be removed, relocated, or altered in any way without the approval of the North Carolina Historical Commission.” It goes on to stipulate that if a memorial is temporarily relocated, then it must be returned within ninety days to its original location or to a location of “similar prominence, honor, visibility, availability, and access” and may not be placed in a museum or cemetery unless that was its original location. As with the memorial to Lee in Charlottesville, such regulations make it nearly impossible to legally move or remove the Vance Monument, ensuring its preservation.

The effective date of this statute is of special interest, considering that the rededication of the Vance Monument, following its restoration, took place in June 2015. The restoration was in response to a 2008 assessment of the monument’s condition, “which revealed a significant amount of corrosion, failing mortar joints, corroded markers, and over all dirt and stain” (“Vance Monument Restoration”). As I indicated earlier, in 2015 public funds were used to restore the Vance Monument. Granted, the vast majority of the project was paid for by a local non-profit, the 26th North Carolina, leaving only $11,000 to come out of the city’s coffers (“Vance Monument Restoration”). Reportedly, this money was used “to prepare the site for work, repair the wrought iron fence, and remove, preserve and replace the existing time capsule located in the base of the monument” (“Vance Monument Restoration”). The fact that public funds were purportedly not used for the actual monument restoration did not soothe the concerns of protestors. Asheville’s African-American Heritage Commission pointed out that the area where
the monument is located, the previous courtyard, was used as a slave market prior to the Civil War and started a – so far unsuccessful – petition to have a memorial to African Americans built in the area (“Vance Monument: A Brief History”). Others objecting to the monument’s restoration noted Vance’s controversial history, especially the fact that his family owned slaves and he himself was a known racist, as discussed at length in the introduction to this chapter. The use of public funds in the restoration effort seems to have dredged up a previously unknown level of protest against the monument’s existence and it is likely that this protest prompted the passing of the aforementioned statute.

In an effort to recognize the controversy surrounding the restoration of the monument, city leaders did acknowledge at the rededication ceremony on June 6, 2015 that Vance’s family were slaveowners and spoke briefly about race relations and segregation in the city of Asheville’s history (“Commemorative”). In defense of the memorial, the chairman of the County Board of Commissioners remarked that if history is forgotten, “we’re going to repeat the mistakes of the past” (“Commemorative”). These sentiments are echoed at the bottom of the rededication plaque placed in front of the monument, which reads, “So that the future may learn from the past” (Figure 9). This seems to be the platform that Asheville’s city officials used to support the use of public funds to aid the monument’s restoration. If remembering and learning from the past to avoid future mistakes is truly the purpose of restoring and preserving the Vance memorial site, then the addition of other historical viewpoints seems an excellent way to truly achieve this goal.

Like the Lee Monument, a locked fence to prevent viewers from physically interacting with the memorial surrounds the Vance obelisk (Figure 10). Unlike the orange safety fencing in Charlottesville, the fence surrounding the Vance Monument at least gives the appearance of
Figure 9 Vance Monument Rededication Plaque in Asheville, North Carolina in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.

Figure 10 Fencing at Vance Memorial Site in Asheville, North Carolina in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
being decorative. However, its presence still keeps viewers at arm’s length and prevents them from altering the appearance of the monument, either by simply adding to the erosive elements or contributing supplementary messages that would change the monument’s narrative, such as happened in 2015, almost immediately following the restoration, when protest groups spray painted “Black Lives Matter” on the monument’s base.

**Linkages**

This section discusses the how the appropriation of the Vance Monument site has placed it in a context that enables the Lost Cause narrative and a reconstructed history of both Vance and the Civil War to survive in the identities of Ashevillians. Regarding the relationship between the Vance Monument and its context, some would argue that honoring Vance, who was undoubtedly a slave owner and a white supremacist, enables the survival of racist narratives. It would be impossible to deny such a claim out of hand, but I will offer a suggestion that the appropriation of the memorial site by groups such as the UDC has done more to further the Lost Cause narrative than the Vance obelisk, devoid of Confederate symbolism and Lost Cause rhetoric, has done in and of itself. This appropriation began in 1926 with the addition of a Dixie Highway marker featuring an image of Lee mounted on Traveller. According to an uncited article found in the Pack Library North Carolina Room’s “Monuments Committee” folder the Dixie Highway was constructed by North Carolina’s UDC to remind “thousands of people from all sections of the United States” of Robert E. Lee. The project began in 1922 with the goal of setting Lee markers on each state’s border between Michigan and Florida. The article, which was published by the chairwoman of the UDC North Carolina division, states that he Lee markers are bronze plaques “set upon heavy stones” and are meant to read, “Dedicated to the South’s greatest Hero, in loving memory by The Daughters of the Confederacy.” The marker at the Vance
The memorial site does not actually contain this statement or have any such epitaphs related to Lee. It says simply, “Erected and dedicated by the/United Daughters of the Confederacy/and friends/in loving memory of/Robert E. Lee/and to mark the route of the/Dixie Highway/The shaft memorial and highway straight/attest his worth – he cometh to his own/~Littlefield/Erected 1926.” The line of poetry is from a poem by A.W. Littlefield entitled “The Last Shall be First,” which is yet another example of biblical imagery being employed to further the Lost Cause narrative.

The intent of the Dixie highway is made clear in the article’s next statement, which laments the fact that Lee memorials were, at that time, often in out of the way places, such as cemeteries. Whereas, “these highway markers will meet the eyes of more people in a week than will many other monuments in a decade,” and thereby “for decades upon decades must remind countless thousands of the great character and acts of the immortal Confederate Chief.” It was also around this time, in the early 1920s, that the UDC’s movement to pepper the South’s prominent locations with public memorials to Lee began. Their goal for these highly visible memorials to Lee and for the Dixie highway was a simple one and was stated in the last sentence of the article, “to generate in minds of men and women yet unborn the wish to be like Robert Edward Lee.” Corroborating this goal, an article published in volume thirty-four of *The Confederate Veteran* declares the markers’ purpose “to cherish [s]outhern ideals, keep alive [s]outhern traditions, and to perpetuate in bronze and stone the true history of the Southland” (“Marking” 205; 237). This article also reveals that the marker at the Vance memorial site was the first one placed and refers to it as “a historic shrine” (205), which “expresses the profound respect and high esteem in which he [Lee] is held by all Americans to-day, irrespective of birth or section” (237). Given the current controversy surrounding Lee’s legacy, which I have discussed at length, these sentiments clearly no longer represent “all Americans.” Furthermore,
based on my in-depth discussion of Lee in the previous chapter of this thesis, upholding Lee as a role model for future generations promotes a sense of white supremacy, and doing so has substantially aided the embedding of the Lost Cause narrative in generations of southern identity. As such, the presence of the marker at this memorial site, and truly at every site, should be sincerely reevaluated.

The addition of the Lee memorialization on the Dixie highway marker at the site of the Vance Monument was only the first of a long list of appropriations that have occurred there. Added to the obelisk is a plaque, again donated by the UDC, which associates the Confederacy with the Vance monument. The plaque reads, “In honor of Zebulon Baird Vance/Confederate soldier, War Governor/U.S. Senator, Orator, Statesman/May 13, 1830 – April 14, 1894/ This tablet is placed by Asheville Chapter U.D.C./1938” (Figure 11). Articles surrounding the original conception and dedication of this monument nearly exclusively refer to the honoree as “Senator Vance.” His service to the Confederacy was rarely, if ever, mentioned. The fact that the UDC made Vance’s relationship to the Confederacy the first two things for which the plaque honors him demonstrates the appropriation of the site to further the Lost Cause narrative in the memory of the public. Media coverage of the plaque’s unveiling also focuses on Vance’s short time as a Confederate soldier and his tenure as Governor during the Civil War. This reconstructed memory of Vance denotes his appropriation by Lost Cause proponents to represent that enduring legacy in the state of North Carolina, as mentioned by McKinney. The UDC’s continued addition of Confederate rhetoric to the Vance memorial site in Asheville is clearly an attempt to keep that memory of the Civil War foremost in the minds of viewers. These supplemental rhetorical practices all took place during the height of Jim Crow, and as explained before served not only to bolster white supremacy and racism in the minds of white Southerners, but to remind black
Southerners of their subservient place in society, as well.

There are additional plaques around the memorial site, including one on the back of the Dixie highway marker that honors Confederate Colonel John Kerr Connally of the N.C. Regiment, who was wounded at Gettysburg. I mentioned earlier the plaque placed in 2015 at the monument’s rededication, declaring it a bridge between the past and the future and expressing gratitude to those that contributed to the restoration. There is also a plaque commending the World War I service of a company of North Carolina soldiers and another one marking where the time capsule was recovered. Baffling many viewers, is the presence of two turkeys – apparently one male and one female, and two pigs – a sow and her shoat. Each of the bronze animals appears to be walking on a path laid into the brick plaza. They are surrounded by the tracks of both other animals and of human beings (Figure 12). The only reason for this that I could think of was to attract children to the memorial site, as was the aim of Paul McIntire in his placing of Charlottesville’s Confederate memorials. Whether this was the intention or not, the bronze animals certainly serve that purpose. It was difficult to get a picture of the figures that did not contain a child – as children seem to enjoy climbing onto the bronze beasts. My research yielded
Figure 12 Bronze pigs at Vance Memorial Site in Asheville, North Carolina in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
another, no less disturbing explanation of these additions to the memorial site. UNCA history professor, Milton Ready, reveals in his 2015 opinion piece for *MountainX* that the path represents the Buncombe Turnpike, what Ready refers to as “Western North Carolina’s major antebellum ‘freeway.’” Prior to the Civil War, the turnpike was used to bring slaves and livestock into Western North Carolina (Ready). Ready contends that the footprints on the path at the base of the Vance Monument would represent those of slaves, who were the humans most commonly found herding animals down the turnpike. I rather doubt that was the connotation intended by those who added these figures to the memorial site in 1991 to mark the Asheville Urban Trail, but the explanation by Ready makes it impossible now to see them in any other light.

The addition of confederate symbolism and rhetoric to the memorial site does not seem to be in the original spirit of the monument. As I mentioned earlier, when the obelisk was designed, it was specifically stated that it would have no lettering except the word “Vance.” The cornerstone ceremony was free of Lost Cause rhetoric, as was what little is known about the unveiling ceremony. However, the additions to the monument serve what I must consider is the purpose of this supplemental rhetorical activity, to appropriate the site and place it in a context that furthers the Lost Cause narrative in its viewers’ memories of the Civil War. Of the type of supplemental rhetorical activity that attempts to correct or challenge the Lost Cause narrative now represented at the Vance memorial site, there has been relatively little in comparison to other Confederate memorial sites. As I mentioned early, I found two reports of the monument base being spray painted with the phrase “Black Lives Matter.” Evidently, the piglet was stolen from the turnpike path and the sow damaged in 2007 resulting in their absence from the site for two years (“Crossroads”). My observation of the site revealed one other attempt to silence the
Lost Cause memory represented by the appropriation of the memorial site. The plaque on the Dixie highway marker was marred by scratches and one corner of it was pried up in an obvious attempt to wrest it from the stone. The scratches were concentrated on the wording commemorating Lee and on the image of Lee’s face. Traveller, on the other hand, escaped censure. (Figure 13).

There have been multiple proposals, sparked by the monument’s 2015 restoration, to add memorials to African Americans in the vicinity of the site. Given the many plaques and structures that have already been added to the site, it should be a small matter to add another, but in reality I am sure it is not that simple. Because Pack Square belongs to the city of Asheville, I imagine that there is a vast amount of political red tape standing between the idea and the realization of such a monument. According to a 2015 article in Carolina Public Press, “a coalition of local groups, led by UNC Asheville’s Center for Diversity Education… are pushing for an ‘iconic’ monument to be erected in Pack Square that recognizes the achievements, sacrifices and histories of Western North Carolina’s African Americans” (Forbes). An opinion piece written by an Asheville historian suggests markers that discuss the controversial aspects of Vance’s memory and represent the heritage of local African Americans (Essig). When I was visiting the Vance memorial site, I overheard some other viewers having a similar discussion and voicing the need for more context and a plural history to be represented at the site. Such additions would go a long way toward competing with the currently unchallenged whitewashed memory of Vance and the Lost Cause represented at the memorial site today and preventing it from continuing to silence the stories of other Western North Carolinians.
Figure 13 Dixie Highway Marker at Vance Memorial Site in Asheville, North Carolina in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
Acting

I consider in this section the relatively limited ways that the Vance Monument acts on its viewers and the relation of this to the scope in which the Lost Cause narrative acts on the identities of white Southerners. I have alluded a few times to the fact that the Vance monument has received relatively little negative attention when compared to other Confederate memorial sites. Upon investigation of local resources, I have discovered two incidents of spray painting on the base of the monument and the aforementioned vandalism of the supplemental rhetorical material at the site. Asheville was the site of a KKK rally in 1997, but from the limited materials I have available to me that reference this rally, none mention Vance or the memorial site. Based on my observations, the Vance Monument, in its well-trafficked downtown Asheville location, is quite the tourist destination. Many families were taking photographs in front of the monument, while their children played nearby. I will point out that I do not recall seeing a single person who was not white at the memorial site. As I mentioned previously, one group of viewers was discussing the need for a more comprehensive historical representation in Pack Square. The current lack of context and omission of controversies surrounding Vance’s legacy at the memorial site, combined with the fact that most viewers embody stories that do not conflict with the site’s context, make the ways the monument acts on its viewers fairly negligible.

We might discuss here less of how the statue acts on its viewers and more of how the Lost Cause narrative acts on their identities. As I pointed out, most of the memorial site’s visitors seem to be white people – either local residents or those with the means to travel to a tourist destination such as Asheville. An Asheville author and historian, Rob Neufeld, offers his opinion on the limited negative attention that has surrounded the Vance monument stating, “it is not of a person, a soldier, a horse, or some kind of object that symbolized the war,” calling the obelisk
“an abstract thing” (Walton). Neufeld uses this explanation to defend the Vance monument, stating that it does not represent slavery, but simply honors Vance. From my short visit to Asheville, I believe that many residents would agree with this statement, as Vance still has an excellent reputation in that area and even some opposed to Confederate monuments stand in defense of the Vance memorial. The obelisk’s ability to act on viewers may be dimmed by its abstract nature, but the fact that the Lost Cause narrative is so deeply embedded in the cultures, histories, and identities of many of the monuments’ viewers also contributes to its protected status. It is arguable that the reconstructed memory of Vance presented and almost universally accepted in the early 1900s is a part of this narrative and therefore is also a key component to the identities of Asheville’s white citizens, leading them to embrace and protect the monument.

**Conclusion and Proposal**

Like in many other areas of the South where the Lost Cause is deeply embedded in its residents’ cultures and identities, it would be difficult to wrest the rose-tinted legacy of Zebulon Vance from the people of Asheville. He is credited with being a steadfast servant of the region and caring for its population during what many would consider the most turbulent time in their history. Biographer McKinney makes it clear that the racist platform on which Vance and the Democrats ran was exactly why they regained power in Western North Carolina after the Civil War. These beliefs agreed with those embraced by the white citizens of Asheville during a time when their lives were in a state of complete upheaval and that is exactly why they voted for Vance. White supremacy was all they had to hold onto, and Vance and his Democratic Party were sure to keep these citizens in fear of being marginalized by newly freed black citizens. This fear, which as I demonstrated in the introduction of this thesis, is still deeply embedded in the identities of many white Southerners. However, these tactics, his politics, and the belief he held
that black people are inferior to whites are not, in my opinion, something for which Vance should be memorialized.

At face value, Vance’s legacy and the context of his monument are less offensive than others we could discuss. As such, his bigotry and slave ownership are easily overlooked by most of Asheville’s white population. However, Vance’s politics and unapologetic racism, combined with the fact that the site has been appropriated by Lost Cause proponents and used to perpetuate that narrative in Western North Carolina make the memorial a candidate for censure. To begin with, the supplemental material rhetoric that has been added to the site by the United Daughters of the Confederacy should be removed. I have presented evidence here to demonstrate that these additions were not in the original spirit of the memorial. They were added during the South’s regrettable Jim Crow era to appropriate the Vance Memorial site and place it in a context of white supremacy for the purpose of perpetuating the Lost Cause narrative in viewers.

Furthermore, additional historical context that discusses Vance’s politics on race should be added to the memorial site. In the interest of truly desiring to educate viewers, it would be appropriate to also discuss the services Vance provided to the state of North Carolina, such as advocating for education and his attempts to protect citizens during the Civil War, especially from the Confederate government. I would wager that many are completely unaware of who Vance was or what he did, good and bad, for the state. Contemporary Ashevillians are generally considered an eclectic, bohemian group. It is likely these traits that make downtown Asheville a poor spot for rallies, protests, or overt racism. However, acknowledgement of the existence of the underlying racism represented by the Vance Monument, and the fact that it must be offensive to many residents, especially the African-American members of the community, is the least that can be done in lieu of removing the memorial.
CHAPTER IV: KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

For my final case study, I have chosen to bring the research home, to a site within minutes of where I live and work. Reflective of my claims regarding the effect of the Lost Cause Narrative and the UDC’s role in furthering it, this chapter examines how the narrative has contributed to the reconstruction of East Tennessee’s history and is firmly embedded in the identities of the region’s inhabitants. Utilizing Blair’s framework, I analyze the rhetoric of the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead to demonstrate how this reconstructed history is still accepted in the area and the influence it has on the people’s embodied stories and identities. I argue that the lack of historical accuracies in the region calls strongly for addition of historical context to the memorial site.

Digby Seymour discusses in his book, *Divided Loyalties*, the ways Tennessee geographically separated the North and South during the Civil War, representing a strategic location for both armies. Similarly, Tennesseans were divided in their convictions between the Union and the Confederacy, with “most of the unionist sentiment…in the eastern counties” (Randall and Donald 186). According to Seymour, “most East Tennesseans remained steadfastly loyal to the Union. Paradoxically, in Knoxville, the dominant commercial and manufacturing town of East Tennessee, many of the leading citizens were sympathetic to the South” (4). Illustrating the division in Knoxville, Seymour explains that both Confederate and Union rallies were held in Knoxville, sometimes simultaneously, and counter-protestors were present at each of them, further fueling animosities. In Knoxville, the Confederate supporters were primarily composed of the city’s wealthy citizens. However, the Union supporters in East Tennessee, especially those that Seymour calls “mountaineers,” far outnumbered the secessionists of the region. Seymour discusses how secessionist mentality evolved in Tennessee, reporting that the
first statewide secession convention, held in January 1861, was defeated, with approximately fifty-four percent of the votes against leaving the Union. Similar to the course of pre-war events in Asheville, Lincoln’s call for troops angered many formerly loyal Unionists and the second convention in June was successful – only thirty-one percent voted against secession. Seventy percent of those who voted to remain in the Union were from East Tennessee and the majority of the 31,000 Tennesseans who joined the Union came from the Eastern region. However, of Knoxville’s population, nearly seventy percent of the 1,154 people who cast a vote voted to join the Confederacy (Seymour). Seymour describes the situation stating, “Knoxville was to become the focal point of a struggle between the now ‘disloyal Unionists’ and their Confederate rulers (7). Many East Tennessee Unionists formed guerilla groups to harry Confederate soldiers and citizens alike (Seymour). In November 1861, after a coordinated burning of railroad bridges by Unionists, “Knoxville was immediately placed under martial law. All weapons of citizens were seized, and no one was allowed to enter or leave town without a permit” (Seymour 32). Three Unionists who were convicted of the bridge-burnings were executed in December 1861. Knoxville’s Confederate occupiers left the gallows standing to discourage others from opposing their control over the region (Seymour). This act is echoed today in the existence of Confederate memorials, which stand as silent reminders of which groups have held and still hold power over the South.

According to Seymour, the Confederate army had little success in recruiting soldiers in the area to defend East Tennessee against a Union invasion. In fact, many locals fled to Kentucky or simply hid in the Smoky Mountains to avoid conscription laws. Union officials elected in East Tennessee refused to call out the militia, instead choosing to wait for the Federal army to arrive so that they could join forces. In response to a recommendation that “East
Tennessee forces be strengthened,” the Confederate army “commenced an earthwork fort on a hill northwest of the University,” which they named Fort Loudon (Seymour 76). The fort was not yet completed when General Burnside led his Union forces into East Tennessee in September 1863, and the Confederate army was forced to abandon its position in Knoxville (Seymour). With this transfer of power, Seymour reports, “the loyal Unionist population exploded with joy” as “crowds lined the streets to cheer the Union army” (85).

East Tennessee enjoyed a period of relative peace until, although undermanned and lacking the proper strategic military tools, Confederate General Longstreet was ordered to invade. Grant instructed General Burnside that East Tennessee was crucial to the Union, but Knoxville especially should be held at all cost. In return, Burnside charged General William Sanders with defending Knoxville against Longstreet’s advance “for another day in order to complete the defense works of the city, particularly the various forts” (Seymour 141). According to Seymour, Sanders did so with his life; he was shot through the spleen and died during the Confederate advance on Knoxville. When Fort Loudon was completed, the Union army renamed it Fort Sanders in his honor. Sanders was a cousin to Confederate president Jefferson Davis and “the only general of [s]outhern birth killed while serving in the Union army” (Seymour 149).

Longstreet identified Fort Sanders as the best point of attack and, misjudging the depth of the ditch in front of the fort, Longstreet attacked on the morning of November 29, 1863 (Seymour). According to Seymour’s account of the battle, the Union army had run telegraph wire, which, obscured by the morning mist, the Confederate army had difficulty avoiding or breaking through. The Union defenders had also strategically altered the terrain in front of the fort to funnel the attacking army into the ditch, whose depth had been terribly misjudged by Longstreet. After only twenty minutes of fighting, 129 Confederate soldiers were killed, 458
wounded and 226 were missing in action (Seymour 205). Longstreet ultimately had to end his siege and flee with his army on December 4th to escape General Sherman, who was approaching Knoxville with his troops (Seymour). Seymour contends that the loss of East Tennessee “was a major factor in the collapse of the Confederacy” (220).

According to Seymour, “The [C]onfederate dead were hastily buried in a common shallow grave” (207) When the bodies started to rise through the frozen ground and be foraged by animals, a local coffin worker and undertaker worked together to provide each soldier a pine coffin. Purportedly, “ninety-two bodies were removed from the battlefield grave and re-interred in the Confederate Cemetery on Bethel Avenue” (Seymour 208). A memorial was placed in the cemetery by Knoxville’s Ladies’ Memorial Association in 1892. Reunions for those who fought together at Fort Sanders began soon after the Civil War. Seymour suggests that Knoxville’s Union population was soon ready to forget the past and move forward. However, as I have discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, the defeated Confederates, led by the UDC, were focused on justification and vindication of their glorious Cause. They were determined to not only ensure the war was remembered, but to also guarantee that memory was a reconstructed one of their choosing. With that goal in mind, “In between [reunions]…the United Daughters of the Confederacy …and other organizations kept the memory of the epic struggle alive” (Seymour 279).

This is where the shift in both memory and identity began in East Tennessee. Seymour makes it clear that the majority of the region’s population was pro-Union. He states, “It was from East Tennessee’s eligible 45,000 males that most of the 30,000 loyalists enlisted. It is even more remarkable that these men were not drafted, were usually given no bounties, and were often forced to escape or fight their way to the Union lines to formally volunteer their services” (223).
Seymour reports that Union general Sheridan, stationed in Sevierville after the siege of Knoxville, recorded, “The intense loyalty of this part of Tennessee exceeded that of any other section I was in during the war” (215). Seymour sums up the post-Civil War feeling in Knoxville stating “many former Confederate sympathizers left Knoxville and East Tennessee for the friendlier climates of more typical southern cities…Knoxville never adopted the custom widespread in other southern cities of naming streets, schools, and public and private buildings for Confederate heroes” (219). Seymour notes that the few efforts to honor Civil War leaders reflect “the strong Union sentiment characteristic of this southern town,” citing honorariums to Farragut, Sanders, and Andrew Johnson.

It was not until the Jim Crow era that the UDC created the Confederate memorial still located in downtown Knoxville. It was their efforts and those of similar organizations that spread the Lost Cause narrative throughout East Tennessee. Times of fear and uncertainty, such as the Spanish-American War, the Great Depression, and World War I were ripe for playing on the residents’ anxieties. White supremacy and nationalism were offered as comfort and reassurance to the less wealthy people, especially those mountaineers that Seymour portrays as strongly pro-Union. Non-whites, specifically African Americans, the main non-white population in the area, were sacrificed as scapegoats on which East Tennesseans could blame hard times and scarcity of jobs. East Tennesseans began to accept and believe in the justification of the Confederacy’s Lost Cause. Authentic history and actual loyalties were forgotten and the region embraced a reconstructed, pro-southern memory of the Civil War, weaving it into their identities.

**Intent**

In this section, I will discuss the UDC’s charitable, preservation, and historical efforts in East Tennessee. Through this account, I will demonstrate that the intention behind these efforts
was to alter the memory of the Civil War in East Tennessee and perpetuate the Lost Cause narrative in the area’s residents. I conclude that the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead is one specific example of this intention and its existence represents a shift in East Tennesseans’ memories and identities that is still in effect today.

Kelli B. Nelson’s essay in *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times*, attests to the fact that the ladies of the local UDC were the driving force behind the shift in East Tennessee’s public memory. Nelson explains that as the Lost Cause narrative took hold in the early twentieth century and public memory shifted, the presence of Confederate monuments increased. This change was largely driven by the UDC and evinced in the “monuments they erected, as well as the rhetoric of their dedications, [which] spoke to the ills of society in such a powerful way as to legitimize Confederate memory” (Nelson 103). Karen Cox would add that the UDC made the Lost Cause a force for vindication, as well as memorialization. Cox defines “Confederate culture” as a term used to describe images and beliefs based on race and class, which are associated with the Confederacy (*Dixie* 1). Confederate memorial sites fall firmly within this category.

The UDC characteristically used monument building and dedications to promote Confederate culture, by ascribing it to regional concerns. In the early twentieth century, this was primarily focused on the old pastoral way of life that drew the favor of many East Tennesseans, especially rural people in the mountainous regions, who were uncomfortable with immigration and industrialization. During World War I, a time when nationalism was at a high, patriotism was also linked to the reconstructed memory of the Confederacy’s defenders, portrayed as most gallant, chivalrous, and bravest of men. The issues of the Great War generated a feeling of xenophobia that fertilized the time for reconciliation between North and South based on the idea
of white supremacy. The UDC did not hesitate to use these turbulent times to further their goal of promoting Confederate memory through charitable work, monument building, and the upholding “traditional social, racial, and gender roles” (Nelson 109).

These conservative values were particularly attractive to East Tennesseans threatened with population boom, industrialization, and modernism. People of all races competed for factory jobs that took their toll on both the workers’ bodies and minds, while still barely enabling them to make ends meet. As changing times forced a change in lifestyle, many Appalachians felt intimidated, resentful and resistant. It was from these feelings of fear and distrust that the KKK gained their first foothold in the region (Nelson). White supremacy was a powerful image to whites who felt powerless in the evolving world. The Klan was revered by the UDC for helping to reestablish white supremacy in the years following Reconstruction (Cox, *Dixie*). These difficult times made it easier for the UDC to embed the Lost Cause narrative and Confederate values into the memory and identity of East Tennesseans. They accomplished this not only through monument building, but also by supplying local schools and libraries with history books that obscured the reasons for the Civil War and promoted white supremacy, guaranteeing that their efforts would continue to indoctrinate future generations (Brundage; Cox, *Dixie*; Nelson). The UDC also targeted children in their campaign by offering scholarships to descendants of Confederate soldiers and creating organizations, such as Children of the Confederacy (CofC) (Cox, *Dixie*; Nelson). Such scholarships often helped children from poor white communities become teachers, and ensured the continued teaching of the Lost Cause narrative in rural schools (Cox, *Dixie*).

Unveiling ceremonies for Confederate memorials were usually organized and executed by the UDC, even for monuments not built through their funding or influence, as demonstrated
by the monument I examined in Charlottesville. These unveilings were an additional tool for indoctrinating children with the Lost Cause narrative. Local youth were always a key component in the ceremonies, especially auxiliary organizations to the UDC, such as the CofC, and they were excused from school for the occasion (Cox, *Dixie* 63). This type of participation linked the Confederacy to happy childhood memories, making it more likely that the children would embrace its ideals, perpetuate the Lost Cause narrative, and become “living monuments to the Confederacy” (Cox, *Dixie* 120). Indeed, the success of the UDC’s campaign is evidenced by the many East Tennesseans who still embrace Confederate culture as the basis of their southern identities.

As Nelson concludes, “the local UDC chapters helped place the region solidly within the Confederacy,” by transforming “the narrative of Civil War memory for generations of East Tennesseans” (119-120). I can personally attest to the Lost Cause narrative’s longevity in East Tennessee, because through all my childhood growing up in this region, I never encountered a single thing that made me question this version of history. When I discuss my research with friends who grew up in East Tennessee, their responses make it obvious that they fully accept the Lost Cause narrative as a true representation of historical events. Now, having discussed the undisputable intent and ensuing effect of the UDC on East Tennessean’s memories and identities, I will examine the effect of their monument at Fort Sanders.

**Effect**

In this section, I will discuss the events surrounding the inception, creation, and dedication of the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead. Through this discussion, I will demonstrate that the memorial was built as a bastion to the Lost Cause narrative. I argue that the UDC intended the memorial to represent the reconstructed memory of
the Civil War in East Tennessee and to ensure the embedding of the Lost Cause narrative in the identities of future generations.

Standing near the University of Tennessee’s Knoxville campus is a marble monument bearing the inscription,

"To the memory of the Confederate soldiers
who fell in the assault on Fort Sanders
November 28, 1863.

Nor wreck, nor change, nor Winter’s blight,
Nor time’s remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of glory’s light
That gilds your glorious tomb.

Erected by Knoxville Chapter No. 89,
United Daughters of the Confederacy.
Nov. 29, 1914."

The erection of the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead was coordinated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and financed by John P. Kern, the son of a Confederate soldier, who after being wounded in the war made his home in Knoxville (Neely; Nelson). The monument was dedicated in 1914, more than fifty years after 813 Confederate soldiers fell in the Battle of Fort Sanders (Seymour). The city of Knoxville allowed the UDC to build the memorial as a way to mark the location of the battle once the last of Fort Sanders’s ruins gave way to development (Neely; Nelson). As I discussed earlier in this chapter, although primarily pro-Union, calls for blue-gray reconciliation and national patriotism during the years of World War I allowed the UDC to enforce the Lost Cause narrative in Knoxville and the surrounding region (Nelson). This created a shift in public memory during which many East Tennesseans conveniently reimagined the region’s history and adopted Confederate rhetorics.

The unveiling of the Fort Sanders monument was not nearly as well documented as the ceremonies in Charlottesville or the cornerstone dedication in Asheville. I was able to locate and
contact the UDC chapter that erected the monument, but they claimed to have no records and simply directed me to the comparatively sparse newspaper coverage of the affair. It was evident from studying even these limited sources that the marked shift in public memory from Union to Confederate rhetorics made the monument’s 1914 dedication a well-received event. Given the length of time between the battle and the dedication of the monument, fifty-one years to be exact, it is no surprise that the ceremony was attended by only nine veterans of the battle – eight Confederate and one Union (“Veterans at Unveiling”). Inclement weather forced most of the ceremonies indoors, but vehicles were on-hand to drive the veterans to the monument for the unveiling. The monument was shrouded in a Confederate flag, which was removed by Miss Elizabeth Atlee, the granddaughter of a Confederate soldier who fought at Fort Sanders (“Monument to Confederates”). Here Mr. Kern presented two “enormous wreaths of laurel” to be placed atop the monument after the flag was removed. After the unveiling, Miss Atlee attended the remaining ceremonies wearing a corsage of red and white (no blue) and a Confederate flag draped around her shoulders like a shawl (“Monument to Confederates”).

Once the veterans and revered guests were returned to the Episcopal church parish house, the dedication began with a prayer from the local Presbyterian minister. Next, a representative of the Ladies’ Memorial Association, Missie Ault, addressed the group on its behalf. Miss Ault stated the reason for the gathering was to remember the southern soldiers who died for their country at Fort Sanders, voicing respect and admiration for these soldiers’ heroism and nobility (“Unveil”). She touched briefly on the efforts of her organization to honor Confederate Civil War veterans, both living and dead. In her closing remarks, Miss Ault addressed the veterans present, wishing God’s blessings upon them, both now and in the hereafter. She quoted 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.” As I have discussed in previous chapters, biblical imagery was often used in association with the Lost Cause narrative to illustrate the sacredness of the South’s cause (Cox, *Dixie* 11). Miss Ault omitted the end of the verse, in which Paul states that the Lord would give this crown to all who loved him, presumably because such inclusiveness does not demonstrate that God is on the side of the South. Kelli Nelson calls the LMA “the precursor to the UDC” (103) and credits this association with being the first group to unobtrusively use their gender as a way to influence politics by relying heavily on the stereotypical image of women as caregivers to veterans and their families.

Following Miss Ault of the LMA was the principal address delivered by W.T. Kennerly, a historian from the Sons of Confederate Veterans’ Henry M. Ashby camp. Kennerly opened his address with complaints regarding how history books largely ignore the Battle of Fort Sanders. He then gave a detailed description of the fort itself (2-4) before segueing into a description of the battle (4-11). Half of Kennerly’s speech was dedicated to the glorification of Confederate soldiers, noting their nobility, bravery, heroism, courage and gallantry. Continuing with classic Lost Cause rhetoric, Kennerly praised the superiority of Confederate men and blamed the power of fate and chance for their defeat. He omitted the folly of the Confederate charge and the needless loss of life in what was clearly an unwinnable battle, instead repeatedly praising the bravery of the soldiers who continued to charge over their comrades’ dead bodies, before being cut down themselves by the fort’s defenders (8-10). Kennerly did not completely ignore these defenders; he spent a small portion of his speech’s end on their defense of the fort. Again aligning with Lost Cause rhetoric, Kennerly first noted the overwhelming number of fighters and weaponry that defended the fort against the Confederate attack. He also credited the fort itself for
how few Union soldiers died during the siege – likely because the Confederacy started the fort’s construction.

In conclusion, Kennerly complimented the women of the South, especially the UDC, noting specifically how they bore up under the hardships of war, motivated their men to fight, and then rebuilt the South in the wake of the Civil War’s destruction. He drew on the Lost Cause narrative’s portrayal of a genteel and civilized southern way of life, alluding to its defense as a motivating factor for the South to secede and fight. Kennerly made similar references early in his speech, as he pointed out that when Union soldiers first occupied Knoxville, the fort was incomplete and they used slaves to finish it before the Confederate assault could begin. This reference to the Union army’s use of slave labor concurs with Lost Cause rhetoric that asserts the South did not secede in defense of slavery, but of state’s rights and their superior way of life. However, slave labor is perhaps an inappropriate term here, as recruiters for the Union army were permitted to accept the service of any African American who wished to enlist and to confiscate the male slaves of any person in rebellion against the Union (Markel). Many slaves in Tennessee elected to serve with the Union army rather than remain in slavery. Seymour notes the fact that African-American men helped reinforce the fort against the attacking Confederate army by using cotton bales to build up the parapets (156), although he does not specify if they were volunteers or what the Union army called “contraband.” The height of the parapets was a key factor in preventing the Confederate soldiers from breaching the fort. Kennerly further defended the Confederate cause stating that the Confederate soldiers who attacked Fort Sanders “had nothing to do with fomenting the strife and controversies, which brought about the terrible conflict of our Civil War” (7). He claims here that they were simply concerned with defending their homes and filled with patriotism for their country. This is another popular facet of the Lost
Cause narrative, which disregards the fact that many without slaves fought to retain white supremacy and were often goaded into service by plantation owners.

Kennerly ended his speech with the inevitable remarks about how the monument would “serve to call the attention of our children and our children’s children to the dauntless daring of [s]outhern manhood” (14). Given the UDC’s well-documented goal of indoctrinating children, this memorial would surely have been intended to further instill the Lost Cause narrative in local youth. Though the single reference to children here is less disturbing than the unrelenting focus placed on them by the Charlottesville monument and dedication, it is no less effective. Kennerly ultimately stated of the memorial, “I trust that it may stand here as a perpetual monument to both the bravery of the Confederate soldiers engaged in this battle and to the loyalty and devotion of the women of the South” (14). The *Sunday Journal and Tribune* reported that Kennerly “was deeply moved,” “held the large audience in emotional interest,” and “was constantly interrupted by applause” (“Monument to Confederates”), indicating the acceptance of the Lost Cause narrative in Knoxville, if not most of East Tennessee by the time of the memorial’s 1914 dedication.

Following Mr. Kennerly was an address from the UDC member whose idea it was to erect the monument, Mrs. Mellen. Mrs. Mellen gave a brief and romanticized overview of the Battle of Fort Sanders, highlighting the valiant sacrifice of the Confederate dead (“Unveil”). Succeeding Mrs. Mellen’s address was the recitation of an original poem by the Tennessee division of the UDC’s poet laureate, in which the Confederate soldiers were eulogized. In her poem entitled, “Tribute to Confederates,” Mrs. Lucie Tipton speaks of the heroic efforts of the Confederate soldiers who stormed Fort Sanders (“Unveil”). Lost Cause rhetoric is evident not only in the glorification of the Confederates, but also in phrases like “Three times did our flag
over ramparts wave,” which calls to mind “The Star-Spangled Banner.” References to the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and other struggles between America and England are frequently used in the Lost Cause narrative as a reminder that the United States became a country by seceding from the British Empire, thereby justifying the South in seceding from the Union. Mrs. Tipton refers to the UDC’s goal of justification and redemption for the Confederacy in the lines “Ours the heritage in tongues of stone…To tell for aye their deathless glory” (“Unveil”). Following Mrs. Tipton’s recitation, the ceremony was concluded with a prayer by the local Episcopal reverend and the playing of “Taps” (“Unveil”).

Since its dedication in 1914, the effect of the Fort Sanders memorial on Knoxvillians has remained much the same. Its presence, along with other Confederate monuments in the region, has served for decades as a constant reminder, and symbol of, the Lost Cause narrative that is embodied by many of the area’s residents. This is evidenced even today, as a petition to remove the monument received only about two thousand signatures, while a counter-petition garnered more than twice that much support (change.org). Tennessee legislation passed in early 2016 requires a two-thirds vote from the Tennessee Historical Commission for the “renaming, removing or relocation of any statues, monuments and other memorials” on public property (Ebert). This is a sharpening of the previous law, which only required a majority vote. Considering the 71-23 vote in favor of passing the bill, it makes the legal removal of Confederate monuments in Tennessee nearly impossible.

White nationalists attempted to hold a rally at the Fort Sanders memorial site in August 2017, but less than fifty people showed up with ties to white supremacy, while nearly three thousand counter-protestors were on hand (Lakin, et al). News reports and interviews show that most counter-protestors were not interested in attacking the memorial or demanding its removal.
On the contrary, most of the rally participants were ignorant of the monument’s history, and some had been previously unaware of its existence (Lakin, et al.) Their objective was simply to protest white supremacy and racism; one counter-protester even stated, “it's about racism at any rallying point...not a rock” (Lakin, et al.). Some citizens claimed to have come to protect the monument in the interest of preserving history (Lakin, et al). Fortunately, and likely due to a combination of the overwhelming number of counter-protestors and the preparedness of police forces that learned from the tragedy in Charlottesville, the rally ended relatively quickly and without violence.

In considering what would be different if the site did not exist, it is obvious that the monument would not be used as a rallying point for white supremacists or appropriated for racist rhetorics had it never been constructed. However, since the development of the Fort Sanders site, without this marker there would be nothing on the battleground to commemorate the Confederate soldiers who lost their lives in the terribly misguided campaign to take the fort. Yet, as I mentioned, according to Seymour and corroborated by a Knoxville Sentinel article about the unveiling, at the time the monument was dedicated these soldiers had already been reinterred in the Bethel cemetery by the Ladies’ Memorial Association and a monument erected there in their remembrance (Seymour; “Unveil”). A cemetery seems a more appropriate place for such a memorial, but perhaps not a visible enough location for the UDC’s purposes. As Karen Cox explains, “after the UDC was founded, the majority of monuments erected to the Confederacy were placed in public settings...where they could be observed by children” (Dixie 2). Therefore, they used the development of the battleground as justification to place a stone effigy to the Lost Cause in a highly visible location in the middle of town. As characteristic of the UDC’s efforts to instill Confederate culture in the region, the monument’s effect on viewers is so subtle that it
continues to represent the Lost Cause narrative’s hold on East Tennessee, while attracting very few enemies. To elaborate more on the effect of the memorial, I will next consider how the appearance of the monument may contribute to its low profile as a target for vandalism or removal.

**Durability**

In this section I will examine the features of the Fort Sanders memorial that contribute to its longevity. In comparison to the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in Charlottesville, the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead seems to have relatively few enemies. As far as research reveals, it has only been vandalized once, when some light-colored paint was sprayed on it, and even that seems a half-hearted attempt in comparison to what has been done to Lee. As previously mentioned, counter-protestors at the August rally in Knoxville did not target the monument; most indicated that they were only concerned with the white supremacists, not the memorial. Additionally, petitions to save the memorial received far more support than those proposing its removal. I believe this difference can be better understood by answering Carole Blair’s second question and examining the memorial’s “apparatuses and degrees of durability” (Blair 37). In contrast to the Lee sculpture’s display of power and dominance, the Fort Sanders memorial is fairly non-invasive. It is quite unassuming in size and presence – only slightly taller than the average person and not much wider. The most noticeable symbol on the monument, found at eye-level, is the Southern Cross of Honor. Many people likely would not recognize this cross, but it is another of the UDC’s devices employed to reinforce the Lost Cause narrative. In the center of the cross is a small Confederate flag, but surrounded by the other words and emblems on the cross, the flag does not stand out and could easily be missed by passersby. Atop the monument is a larger Confederate flag, but the manner in which it is artfully draped, rather
than spread out seems to lessen its ability to act on viewers (Figure 14). There is a plaque toward the bottom of the monument, with small lettering that requires viewers to move in close in order to read its inscription. The inscription itself is comparatively inoffensive, simply stating that the monument is in memory of the Confederate soldiers who died on this site, the date of the battle, and a few lines of a poem, which speak of undiminished glory (Figure 15). The monument is made of Tennessee pink marble, which is a very solid and durable substance and symbolizes the intention of the UDC that the monument should be a lasting marker. The monument’s degrees of durability contribute strongly to its modes of preservation.

**Preservation and Reproduction**

In regard to the memorial’s preservation features, I will consider how its apparatuses and degrees of durability have aided the monument’s continued existence in Knoxville, thereby enabling its reproduction of the Lost Cause narrative in viewers’ memories and identities for generations. All the aspects mentioned in the previous paragraph contribute to the monument’s low profile, which lessens the degree to which it has been targeted for removal. It has been argued that a defining feature of monuments in Knoxville is the honoring of nameless soldiers for their sacrifice without denigrating any other group (McElroy). Seymour points out that “no Tennessean would become a member of the ruling Confederate government” nor would anyone from Tennessee “achieve the rank of full general and command an army in the field for the Confederacy” (7-8). Because of these facts, the Lost Cause in East Tennessee is missing a figurehead. Rather than appropriate one, as the UDC did in Asheville with Zebulon Vance, they chose not to personify the monument. This has contributed to the longevity of the monument by keeping it from becoming a target for protestors, as the reputations of Confederate officers long propped up by the Lost Cause narrative begin to tumble. It also aligns with the modus operandi
Figure 14 Confederate flag on the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead in Knoxville, TN in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
Figure 15 Plaque on the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead in Knoxville, TN in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
of the UDC, to maintain a subtle presence that sheds a favorable light on the Confederacy. Their objective has always been to covertly and consistently associate the old South with chivalry, valor, and humanity in order to reinforce the Lost Cause narrative (Nelson). The Fort Sanders monument is representative of the UDC’s inconspicuous efforts, and as such does not evoke the strong emotional responses seen at other memorial sites such as Charlottesville’s Robert Edward Lee Sculpture. As a result, the story that the monument tells does not overtly interfere with most of its viewers’ stories. Owing to the UDC’s efforts in the area to instill the Lost Cause, beginning in the schoolroom, many of the viewers already subscribe to that narrative. The monument is further preserved by the Tennessee Heritage Protection Act which “prohibits the removal, relocation, or renaming of a memorial that is, or is located on, public property” (“Tennessee”). It is worth noting that unlike the Lee monument in Charlottesville, the Fort Sanders memorial does not appear on the National Register of Historic Places. Found on this register is the Fort Sanders Historic District, which is comprised of a listing of 437 properties, but the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead is not among them. The memorial’s absence from this National Register should make any alteration to its presence a simpler matter than if it did enjoy such protection. All of these factors contribute to the preservation and longevity of the monument.

As for its modes and possibilities of reproduction, the Fort Sanders memorial site is a physical reproduction of the Lost Cause narrative, which is fervently promoted by its creators, the UDC. The monument reproduces stories of the South’s brave and honorable efforts to defend the rights of its states and citizens in the Civil War. This is evidenced by the presence of the Southern Cross of Honor in the center of the monument (Figure 16). The Confederate flag is in the very center of the cross, surrounding by a laurel wreath, which is an ancient symbol of honor.
The presence of laurel on the monument and at the unveiling ceremony implies the Confederate cause was an honorable one and denotes the UDC’s goal of vindication for their Confederate ancestors. The words on the three uppermost arms of the cross read “United Daughters Confederacy”, while the bottom reads “To The U.C.V.” It is an interesting choice to spell out the name of the organization at the top, but initialize United Confederate Veterans at the bottom. Placing the emphasis on dutiful daughters remembering their ancestors, rather than Confederate veterans is another ploy to make the symbol less invasive. This is certainly the angle chosen by a local newspaper that covered the unveiling of the monument. The *Knoxville Sentinel* ran an article, presumably written by the editor, which stressed the great losses of the women of the Confederacy, both of their way of life and their “fathers, brothers, and husbands” (“Battle”). The writer went on to praise the women of the UDC for their “undying loyalty and veneration for the cause of the South” and to stress how appropriate it is that they should be the ones to raise the
monument out of “filial affection” (“Battle”). The article ends with a discussion of the reconciliation between the North and South. What is not seen on the monument, but is traditionally displayed on the back of the Southern Cross of Honor, is the motto of the Confederacy, “Deo Vindice,” which is Latin for “Under God as our Vindicator.” This motto is adapted from the originally proposed motto, “Deo Duce Vincemus,” meaning “under the leadership of God we will conquer” (“Deo Vindice”). Both of these mottos imply that the Confederacy’s cause was a holy one and that they were on the side of God. The current motto, and the one the UDC adopted for their cross, portrays the Confederate cause as justified and liberating, rather than conquering, which aligns with the Lost Cause narrative. These features of the monument reinforce the reconstructed memory of the Civil War in East Tennessee while not openly conflicting with the embodied stories of viewers who do not subscribe to this narrative. Therefore, even those who protest racism and white supremacy seem to find little fault with the monument or lobby for its removal.

Similar to other sites discussed in this thesis, the Fort Sanders memorial is more susceptible to reproduction given the technology available today. However, it has been reproduced and shared through this mode less frequently and less maliciously than other memorials that are more contentious and have stronger effects on their viewers, such as the Lee monument in Charlottesville. As with its degrees of durability and modes of preservation, this can likely be attributed to the subtlety of the monument’s effects on viewers and the fact that it does not openly or overtly contradict most viewers’ embodied stories.

**Linkages**

Regarding what the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead does to, with, or against other texts, I examine the linkages recommended by Blair: “enabling,
appropriating, contextualizing, supplementing, correcting, challenging, competing, and silencing” (Blair 39). As I have already established, the memorial enables the Lost Cause narrative and other Confederate rhetorics. This was specifically cited in the petition for the monument’s removal, which claimed it enabled the collaboration of neo-Confederates and alt-right (Dorman). For that reason, white supremacists have attempted to appropriate the monument by rallying in its defense. Because of the monument’s context of honoring the dead without overt displays of control and supremacy, defense is largely unnecessary and counter protestors focused on the white supremacists without threatening the monument’s existence.

Like the Lee monument in Charlottesville, governmental supplemental activity is present at the Fort Sanders memorial site. Unlike Charlottesville, it is not in physical protection of the site, but in contribution to its history. There are two signs from the Tennessee Historical Commission on 17th street near the memorial that provide a brief history of the fort and the battle (Figures 17 and 18). Both signs mention Confederate General Longstreet, but neither mentions General Burnside, the victorious defender of Fort Sanders. Although the signage calls Longstreet’s charge “unsuccessful,” the rhetoric of the signs lends a tone of heroism and bravery to the historical account that they provide. For example, sign IE68 calls the attack a “bayonet charge,” making it clear that the Confederate soldiers valiantly engaged in close-quarter combat with the fort’s Union defenders. Still excluding any mention of the federal troops or their commander, the sign states that the Confederate forces were thwarted by “a deep ditch and by raking cannon fire.” This decidedly Lost Cause representation of the events of the Battle of Fort Sanders demonstrates that the Tennessee Historical Commission is sanctioning and perpetuating a reconstructed memory of the war in Knoxville.
Figure 17 Tennessee Historical Commission sign in Knoxville, TN in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.

Figure 18 Tennessee Historical Commission sign in Knoxville, TN in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
Curiously, there is no physical protection at all for the Fort Sanders monument, which simply sits between a busy downtown city street and a sidewalk (Figure 19). Yet, due to the monument’s low profile, there has been little civilian supplemental activity either in contribution to, or in protest of the memorial, nor have any significant efforts been made to correct or challenge the story it tells. There is a factor of competition that dates back to the monument’s inception. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many monuments were constructed in East Tennessee, most reflecting its historical support of the Union (Nelson). The UDC’s Confederate monument at Fort Sanders directly competes with the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Union Troops located about a block away (Figure 20). The Union monument was presented four years after the Confederate monument (Neely). It is much larger and more ornate; both its images and inscriptions are messages of peace and reconciliation. The two monuments are not within sight of one another, so their ability to compete with, or silence one another is limited. Had the Union monument been constructed earlier, it would have been interesting to see if the UDC altered their usually subtle tones in response to its presence. One objective of the memorial, as well as the Lost Cause narrative, is to silence the stories that equate the South’s efforts in the Civil War with the defense of slavery. Given the fact that East Tennessee has accepted the Lost Cause narrative and the reconstructed memory of its on Civil War history, I believe it is safe to say the silencing has been a success. For the same reason, few efforts have been made to silence the Confederate monument’s stories of chivalry, honor, and a noble, indeed holy cause.

**Acting**

I next analyze the features of the monument discussed above and how they contribute to muting any overt ways the memorial acts on its viewers. The monument’s stories and its
Figure 19 Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead in Knoxville, TN in 2018. Photograph by Abigail G. Sutton.
Figure 20 The Monument to the 79th New York Highlanders at Fort Sanders in Knoxville, TN. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fort-sanders-ny-79th-tn1.jpg.
statement of intent, to remember the fallen soldiers, combined with the fact that it was dedicated to them by their daughters, tend to generate sympathy from its viewers. Even those whose stories do not align with the Lost Cause narrative are inclined to view the memorial as a harmless piece of stone. The ways that it acts on its viewers are so subtle as to seem negligible. However, the monument’s presence, combined with other efforts by the UDC, have been crucial to the public memory shift from a more historically accurate Union view, to a Confederate one (Nelson). Like the Vance monument in Asheville, the difference in the effect that the sculpture in Charlottesville has on people versus the effect of the monument in Knoxville can be at least partially credited to how well the Lost Cause narrative corresponds with its viewers’ embodied stories. Owing to the efforts of groups like the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Ladies Memorial Association, the Lost Cause narrative is a well-embedded part of many East Tennesseans’ identities. As Kelli Nelson points out, “In the early twentieth century, women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy began constructing monuments throughout the region that joined images of the Confederacy to contemporary issues …shifting the slant of Civil War memory from the Union to the Confederate side” (Nelson 101). The UDC in East Tennessee used monuments to reinforce a Confederate style of patriotism and equate support for the Confederacy with nationalism, especially at the beginning of World War I when national feeling was at a high (Nelson). The UDC further bolstered the Lost Cause narrative through highly visible charitable work, intended to demonstrate the chivalry and humanity of the South. The speeches given at the dedication of the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead spoke of the humility, bravery, courage, and valor of the Confederate troops who sacrificed their lives in defense of their states’ rights. The success of these efforts to deeply embed the Lost
Cause narrative into the identities of East Tennesseans can still be witnessed today in the wide acceptance of the Confederate monument at Fort Sanders.

**Conclusion and Proposal**

To recapitulate this rhetorical analysis of the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead, I have recognized that the monument was constructed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy with the stated intention of memorializing the Confederate soldiers who died at the site. I have established that the UDC’s true intention was to further the Lost Cause narrative in East Tennessee by creating a memorial that associated the region with the Confederacy and associated the Confederacy with honor, valor, and chivalry. The effect of the UDC, and by extension the monument, has been to reinforce Confederate culture in the region and successfully embed a reconstructed history of East Tennessee’s Civil War into the memories and identities of its residents. The monument’s durability goes beyond the Tennessee pink marble of which it is composed, into the subtle tones of the UDC’s emblems and devices, which help protect the monument from those protesting Confederate symbolism. The stories told by the monument reproduce the Lost Cause narrative, but do so in an understated manner that has similarly limited the monument from being targeted by protestors. The monument is also preserved by the Tennessee Heritage Protection Act, enabling it to continue reproducing the Lost Cause narrative for future generations of East Tennesseans. Its narrative of vindication competes with that of peace and reconciliation told by a nearby Union monument. The Confederate monument seems to have few overt effects on its viewers, but its overall effects, working in concert with other efforts by the UDC to reinforce the Lost Cause narrative, are far reaching.

Taking into consideration all the reasons discussed in this chapter, it is unlikely that the monument will be moved, removed, or otherwise altered in the near future. One can only hope
that its presence will continue to go largely unnoticed, and that it will not be further appropriated by white supremacist groups, or again selected as a rallying point for hatred and racism. These types of activities draw attention to the monument’s narrative and cause a violent clash of personal stories and identities that can have grievous effects, such as those seen in Charlottesville during the summer of 2017. When asked about the topic during an interview with Inside of Knoxville, Calvin Chappelle, the director of a local historic museum, admitted that he would not advocate for the monument’s removal. However, he recommended adding a monument to The First United States Colored Troops Heavy Artillery, which was organized in 1864 at Knoxville, Tennessee for the protection of the region after the majority of the Union army was deployed elsewhere (Markel; “Monument Battle Lines”). According to the article, Mr. Chappelle is also spearheading efforts to compile and transcribe the records relating to this regiment and their history in Knoxville. This information would be very beneficial to the Tennessee Historical Commission and enable them to enrich the area by creating additional signage. This type of supplemental rhetoric should provide a more accurate version of the Civil War in East Tennessee and include the struggles and contributions of African Americans to the area’s history.
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to make sense of, and contribute to ending, the violence at Confederate memorial sites. The introduction described the project’s exigency and objectives. The first chapter discussed the enduring connection between Civil War history, the strong memory of those traumatic years, the counter memory that has been diligently propagated by Lost Cause proponents, and the reconstructed memory still often regarded as fact in many parts of the South. This connection is key to understanding the attachment that so many have to Confederate memorials, which are deeply embedded in their identities. The association between history, memory and identity has been demonstrated in chapters two through four by their representation in three Confederate memorial sites. Chapter one closed with an explanation of the research methodology used in this thesis.

Chapter two analyzed the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture in Charlottesville, Virginia, concluding that the true intention behind the memorial’s construction was to perpetuate the Lost Cause narrative and racism in future generations. The monument’s continued existence in downtown Charlottesville has enabled the presence of white supremacists groups in the area and created space for narratives to collide, generating violence and death. Furthermore, the purpose behind, and statements on, the memorial’s application for registration as a National Historic Place contain inconsistencies that call for a review of the monument’s protected status, ideally contributing to the legal decision regarding the memorial’s fate.

The third chapter considered the Vance Monument in Asheville, North Carolina and the ways that memorial site has been appropriated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to embed the Lost Cause narrative in the region’s culture. Research showed that the organization used Vance’s memory and reputation to establish him as North Carolina’s Civil War and
Reconstruction era hero. In doing so, they essentially erased from white Southern memory the damage done by Vance to race relations in western North Carolina. This appropriation has also excluded the area’s African-American history from representation, a point that is now being contested by many local residents. Chapter three concluded that both the appropriation and the exclusion should be addressed at the memorial site.

Chapter four presented the final case study, the Battle of Fort Sanders Memorial to the Confederate Dead in Knoxville, Tennessee. This chapter examined how the UDC’s influence in the area through charitable work, shaping local school curriculums, and building monuments in public spaces effectively rewrote East Tennessee’s history. The counter narrative instilled a southern, Confederate reconstructed memory in the identities of its white population, erasing remembrance of the fact that the majority of the region’s inhabitants were supporters of the Union. That this reconstructed memory is so firmly embedded in the identities of many of the area’s citizens underlines the need for historical context to compete with the Lost Cause narrative currently uncontested at the Fort Sanders memorial site.

My analysis of these memorials has yielded evidence of the ways in which Confederate monuments have been used, and are still being used, to further the Lost Cause narrative and reconstructed memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction era in the South. Proof has been submitted that many of these public, community memorials were constructed during the Jim Crow era as symbols of white dominance. Moreover, many of the monuments, along with other Confederate symbols, were appropriated by white supremacy groups during the 1960s Civil Rights movement and used to represent the superiority of whites, strengthening even more the association of Confederate symbolism with racism and hate.
The context of these Confederate memorials conflicts strongly with the embodied stories of viewers who subscribe to the Emancipation narrative causing them to call for the removal of Confederate monuments from public property. Owing to the efforts of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, nearly every southern region contains one or more Confederate memorial sites. These sites generally represent the South’s popular reconstructed memory of the Civil War, which focuses on the honor and chivalry of an idyllic utopia attacked by a Northern aggressor for its culture and society, resulting in the loss of both. White Southerners whose identities are based on this reconstructed memory consider these memorials to be symbols of that perfect world that was forever lost except for its memory. I believe that many white Southerners who defend Confederate memorials do so not from an articulated sense of white supremacy or racism, but from a belief in the reconstructed memory that laments the passing of a simpler agrarian lifestyle that many still long for. Most do not realize that this reconstructed memory was created by, and represented the culture of, only elite Southern whites. Having never been taught any alternative narratives, many see their defense of Confederate memorials as a defense of their identities and heritage, not overt racism.

In no way do I suggest that Confederate memorials should be allowed to remain as bastions to the Lost Cause narrative. Community memorials whose narratives react negatively with their viewers’ embodied stories must be reconsidered. Everyone should be able to walk through their town square without being forced to face down a symbol that conflicts with their embodied stories, causing discomfit. I simply wish to raise awareness of the fact that those white Southerners whose identities are based on the narrative and stories perpetuated by the monuments should not be viewed as all racists and white supremacists, and consequently their feelings on the subject should not be summarily discarded as such. Many who advocate for the
preservation of Confederate monuments ground their identities in an idealized memory of the Southern past, not realizing that the monuments represent white supremacy and racism. Comprehending the depth of the meaning of Confederate memorials sites to individuals of all races should be forefront in determining the correct way to go about offering an alternative, inclusive memory. In an effort to make community Civil War memorials work for the community rather than a selected portion, I propose an alternate solution.

I am not the first person to propose a solution for Confederate memorial sites. Many proposals have been made, ranging from doing nothing to destroying all Confederate memorials, with varying suggestions in between, such as removing Confederate symbolism from memorial sites (Lees and Gaske) or relocating Confederate monuments to museum spaces (Levinson). I do not believe there is a solution that will serve for every site; as my analyses demonstrate, each site is different, has a different intent, effect, possibility for reproduction, mode of preservation, varying linkages, and subsequently each site acts differently on its viewers. I offer my research to those whose responsibility it is to decide the fate of Confederate memorials. I hope those with that power will carefully consider the effect of the Confederate monuments in their regions and the ways their meaning is interpreted today by viewers. From that consideration, a decision should be made about how best to adapt the site so that it may teach its viewers that there is more than one narrative because there was more than one demographic affected by the Civil War and Reconstruction eras in the American South.

To demonstrate the range of solutions available, I will offer a possible adaptation for each memorial site represented in this thesis. These proposals are based on the analyses that have been discussed in the preceding chapters. For Charlottesville’s Robert Edward Lee Sculpture, I believe removing Lee from his pedestal is the correct course of action. The context of power and
supremacy behind this memorial is made clear from my research, as is the donor’s intent to indoctrinate local children with the Lost Cause narrative. However, the site could certainly continue to serve as a memorial, but it should represent Charlottesville’s inclusive Civil War era history, not merely an elite, white version.

On the other hand, the Vance obelisk in Asheville was not conceived or dedicated in terms of the Confederacy. It could be argued that the obelisk itself is not a Confederate memorial. Before the monument was appropriated, there was no representation of the Civil War, the Confederacy, or any related topic at the site. Vance is a beloved figure in Asheville and the monument was erected in his honor. A case could be made that the Vance obelisk should remain, but I contend that the appropriation of the site, primarily by the UDC, should be corrected and those additions removed. My research clearly shows that they were not in the original spirit of the monument and therefore they should not be eligible for the protection afforded by the state of North Carolina to memorial sites. The supplemental material rhetoric could be replaced with new pieces that represent the controversy surrounding Vance’s legacy, so recently brought to the surface. Furthermore, Asheville’s African-American citizens and their histories should be represented at the memorial site. My research in the area revealed that several locals had, in my opinion, excellent suggestions on how to adapt the space; it is simply a matter of convincing those with the power to act to recognize the problem and listen to solutions.

Lastly, the abstract nature of the Fort Sanders memorial has created minimal controversy. However, the Confederate symbolism represented on the monument and the fact that white supremacy groups have recently attempted to appropriate it is undeniable. I struggle to propose a solution for this memorial; I do not know if this is because I, being from the area, am too close to the problem, or if it is simply a difficult case. Certainly the UDC did well to make the monument
as palatable as possible to any Unionists still living in East Tennessee at the time of its dedication. Those efforts still have an effect today, resulting in the wide acceptance of the monument’s presence, even by those who openly protest white supremacy and racism. I believe more should be done to represent the largely Unionist loyalties of the residents of East Tennessee and the ways in which Lost Cause proponents have rewritten the region’s history. Conceivably the Fort Sanders memorial site is the place for this type of activity to compete with the Confederate symbolism of the existing monument. An informational path leading from the Union monument to the Confederate monument would demonstrate the transformation in the identities of East Tennesseans and provided the much-needed historical context. Perhaps a similar construct could be designed to represent the history and contributions of East Tennessee’s African-American population.

As the above paragraphs demonstrate, each region has different stories to tell and as such, the solution for each memorial site will differ. Future research and community participation are necessary for the creation of a new public memory in the South. This is not something that can be created overnight. Many whose identities are firmly embedded in the Lost Cause will remain close-minded. However, the best way to prevent this from continuing is to open the minds of future generations to alternative narratives by constructing a new community identity. Telling stories is the primary method that the Lost Cause narrative was propagated in the South and it is also the best way to begin combatting this singular account. Confederate memorial sites are ideal locations for sharing stories, melding heritages, and combining cultures based on a diverse southern identity. Laws have been passed in numerous cities and states that prohibit the removal and/or alteration of Confederate memorial sites. However, in many instances, I believe these can be circumvented by city councils and community members, much like the Charlottesville City
Council demonstrates with their plans to adapt the Lee memorial site. Supplemental material rhetoric at Confederate memorial sites that represents alternative narratives to the Lost Cause would be a perfect place to begin telling other stories that have been so long silenced in the American South.

My proposals for these sites are naturally colored by my perceptions, both as a researcher on the topic and as a white Southerner. Being aware of how our perceptions are skewed by story and narrative is important, but will not entirely prevent the distortion from occurring. For this reason, the future of community memorials should be a community decision. The sharing of stories generated by this type of project would likely do more to promote alternative narratives than any memorial site could hope to achieve. As Gregory Clark writes of rhetorical experience, “experience is what does in a democracy the rhetorical work that prompts people to learn and to change, and in ways that help them sustain their identity and their actions as a community” (115). Helping people to grow will always be more successful than trying to force them to change.

My work is also limited by the availability of resources. Similarly, the perceptions of the people who choose what to record and what to preserve, will always have an effect on the stories told by the records that survive. As I have discussed and demonstrated throughout this thesis, those people were, more often than not, elite whites. Therefore, records represent what was relevant to that demographic and what that demographic wanted to be remembered. African-American response to Confederate memorial sites was nearly always excluded. Further limiting the availability of resources is time. The older the memorial is, the fewer documents survive to tell its history such as with the Vance obelisk and the limited records available regarding its inception, creation, and dedication. Additional projects, such as this one, for other Confederate
memorials will help preserve that data for future researchers. However, as I have stated previously, while the intent of a memorial site is important in establishing context, the current and future effects of the monument must be the primary concerns of those determining its fate. The scope of my research is also limited geographically to Confederate memorial sites that are within a reasonable travel distance to my location. This excluded monuments in the deep South, such as Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, which would be excellent subjects for future research and analysis. Purportedly, slavery, racism, and white supremacy were far more violent and prevalent in that region than in the upper parts of the South where I conducted my research. We are just beginning to see competing narratives in these regions such as the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice recently opened in Montgomery, Alabama. These memory spaces confront the hard truths of violence and injustice against African Americans in our country’s history. I would expect the narratives told by memorials in the deep South to have a stronger effect on the embodied stories of both black and white Southerners, increasing the ways they act on their viewers. It is therefore surprising that violence at Confederate memorial sites in this region has seldom made national news, or drawn the country’s attention. The reasons for this are outside the scope of this thesis, but would be another topic for future exploration.

My research has changed my view of Confederate monuments because it has taught me to look for the stories and narratives that are represented at a memorial site. Not every viewer is able to perform that level of research; therefore, unilateral memorial sites are more likely to reinforce a viewer’s embodied stories than to prompt them to search for new or supplemental information. For those that subscribe to the Lost Cause narrative, the memorial site will reinforce the viewer’s belief in the South’s righteous and justified cause to defend their way of life against
an attacking enemy. Viewers that embody the Emancipation narrative will see Confederate memorial sites as symbols of white supremacy and dominance, raised during an era when African Americans were oppressed, persecuted, and even murdered for nothing more than their race. It is for this reason that I call for, rather than a blanket removal of everything considered to be a Confederate monument, an adaptation of Confederate memorial sites to represent an inclusive southern history of the region. As Lees and Gaske argue, “the public needs help in understanding the continuing importance of our Civil War monuments. This will require, in some cases, providing controversial or unpleasant facts about these monuments in an informed discussion of the present” (305). However, bringing these facts to the surface rather than continuing to bury any aspect of southern history that disagrees with our embodied stories is an important part of building a community memory.

A new, plural reconstructed memory for further generations to embody is the only path to true reconciliation. Confederate memorial sites must accommodate a collective history of the Civil War and post-Civil War South. The material rhetoric of the South’s memorial sites needs to be shaped toward promoting a new, inclusive public memory for the identities of the next generation. This type of adaptation would ensure that viewers would have the opportunity to learn an inclusive history of their region, instead of only hearing one version of history and embodying reconstructed memories of the Civil War. David Blight claims, “the most important forms of healing are probably those that come from a combination of emotion and knowledge that instructs and even surprises us” (176). This is exactly what we should strive to create at Confederate memorial sites, by giving viewers an opportunity to discover new pieces of the story, incorporate these with their own, forming a new, inclusive memory.
As I have demonstrated in this thesis, the attacking and tearing down of Confederate monuments generates an identity crisis in their viewers whose histories, memories, culture, and heritage are so firmly grounded in a southern identity based on the Lost Cause narrative, signifying a rhetorical failure. When this narrative is attacked, those who have no other memories or histories to turn to feel that they are attacked and they become frightened, angry, bitter and resentful. In many cases violence has occurred around Confederate monuments, as they become flashpoints for conflicting narratives. In response to the rhetorical failure of many Confederate memorial sites, we need to promote and environment of rhetorical listening, mutual learning, and ultimately healing. The adaptation of these sites would contribute to a plural southern memory and a new community identity in the South. It is my hope that an inclusive history would reduce the incidents of identity crises that produce violence at Confederate memorial sites, by creating space for memories, cultures, and heritages to meld, and destroying the space for racism.


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VITA

Abigail Sutton was born and raised in East Tennessee. After high school, she moved to Knoxville and earned her Bachelor of Arts in English with a concentration in Technical Communications at the University of Tennessee, graduating in December 2012. After a brief hiatus, Abigail decided to pursue a Masters of Arts degree in English with a concentration in Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics. Although her primary goal for graduate school was to strengthen her technical writing and editing skills, through her study with Dr. Lisa King, Abigail became interested in cultural rhetorics. Abigail has long harbored a fascination for history and was excited to explore the intersection of history and rhetoric at Confederate memorial sites.

While attending classes, Abigail has worked for the University of Tennessee’s Office of Information Technology for more than twelve years. She seized the opportunity when returning to graduate school to enroll in German classes and has gained an intermediate understanding of the language. Abigail is exploring employment opportunities in Germany or Austria, where she can utilize her technical writing and editing knowledge, while improving her language skills. However, she will always be a Vol for Life.