

The background of the cover is a painting. It depicts a pope in the center, wearing a mitre and ornate red and white vestments. He holds a crozier in his left hand and gestures with his right. In the lower-left foreground, a figure in a dark hat kneels in prayer. The background shows a crowd of people and a red curtain on the left.

**THE MICHIGAN JOURNAL OF
HISTORY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
MICHIGAN
VOLUME XVII • 2020-2021**

Fouqueray, Charles, Artist. *Le Cardinal Mercier protège la Belgique*. Belgium, 1916. [Paris: Imp. Lapina] Photograph.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/99613617/>.

Dear Reader,

Greetings! My name is Chase Glasser, and I thank you for reading the XVII edition of the University of Michigan Journal of History. The publication of this edition took place in extremely trying circumstances. Conducted almost entirely virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our staff worked tirelessly in adverse conditions to edit, format, and compile this issue.

Our five selections were carefully chosen based on relevance to current events, depth of research, quality of writing, and uniqueness of topic. While a vast number of submissions were received, I am confident that these truly represent the best we have to offer and will make for interesting and informative reading.

I am indebted to the steady hand of Professor Stephen Berrey, our stalwart faculty advisor, and the indomitable Alexandra Paradowski, my predecessor. They, along with my editorial staff, were invaluable. It is personally bittersweet for me as a graduating senior to leave the Journal, but I am confident it is in capable hands.

I truly hope that this issue is enjoyed, and that the Journal remains a vibrant reflection of collegiate scholarship for years to come.

Chase Glasser, Editor-in-Chief

Editorial Staff

- **Editor-in-Chief**
 - **Chase Glasser**
- **Managing Editor**
 - **Sundus al Ameen**
- **Senior Editors**
 - **Caroline Martin**
 - **Scott Flake**
 - **Annelise Perry**
 - **Hannah Gelber**
- **Associate Editors**
 - **Callie Teitelbaum**
 - **Rain Uddin**
 - **Meredith Tiller**
 - **Mariah Missentzis**
 - **Kelly O'Donnell**
 - **Alexander Leichter**
 - **Zachary Burns**
 - **Madeleine Glasser**
 - **Jill Stecker**
 - **Bennett Walling**
 - **Lily Antor**
 - **Celine Nasser**
 - **Drew Meinecke**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Patriotism and Endurance.....6

Zachary Breininger

Confederate Monuments in Context.....81

Shannon Baker

Corresponding with a Courtier.....191

Mary Basso

Remembering and Forgetting the Pequot War.....244

Jori Johnson

The Foundations of Empire Building.....330

Fernando Lopez Oggier

Patriotism and Endurance

Cardinal Mercier and the Just War Theory in World

War I

Zachary P. Breininger

University of Michigan

On August 4th, 1914, the German army crossed the Belgian border, establishing what would become the infamous western front of World War I. Although the war had started in the east with the Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia in July, Germany's bold move to invade a neutral country that it had sworn to protect in the Treaty of London in 1839 ensured that the war was to be much larger than anticipated, global in scale. Germany's bold move was known as the Schlieffen Plan. The plan called for the German army to circumvent the French army and capture Paris by invading through Belgium. This was supposed to ensure a quick, decisive victory over the French. With the French defeated, the German military would then redeploy

its army to the east to defeat the Russians.¹ If the plan had worked, it would have garnered the German's their desired expeditious victory without being forced to fight a two-front war, in which the odds of victory were slim. The German military bet on the Belgians mustering minimal resistance. However, much to their dismay, Belgium did not give up as easily as the Germans anticipated; Belgium was never conquered.

During the Schlieffen Plan's ill-fated execution, Germany committed numerous atrocities against the Belgian people that came to be known as the "rape of Belgium." German soldiers destroyed churches, burned down the

¹ Herwig, Holger H. *The Marne, 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2011: 33-51

ancient library at Louvain, raped women, and murdered up to six-thousand civilians, including numerous Catholic priests. News of these atrocities spread like wildfire across the globe, and the “rape of Belgium” became a rallying cry for the Entente to defend Belgium against the German “Huns,” proving to be their *raison de guerre*. Amid this destruction, a resounding voice arose, advocating for justice during Belgium’s most desperate hour: the voice of Cardinal Désiré—Joseph Mercier.

As prelate of Belgium, Cardinal Mercier was one of the fiercest advocates for the diminished Belgian nation on the international stage. Arguing for the justice of Belgium’s cause, Cardinal Mercier drew upon his extensive training as a philosopher and theologian. Cardinal Mercier published numerous pastoral letters during the war which encouraged

his flock by appealing to religious and patriotic themes, and also castigated the Germans for their unjust actions. One of the most glaring themes throughout these pastoral letters was justice in the face of evil. For Mercier, the war represented a clash between good and evil, just and unjust. No doubt, he was informed by his deep Catholic faith and a reverence for its traditions. One such philosophical system well seated within Catholic moral doctrine is the concept of the just war. Put simply, war is a by-product of original sin: Humanity is naturally predisposed to evil, and war is one evil that humanity continuously manifests because of its state of natural moral depravity. However, while Catholicism holds that war is an inevitable product of human sinfulness, the Church maintains that war is sometimes justified to prevent

or correct even greater evils.² Catholic thinkers have sought to define conditions and parameters in which war can be morally sanctioned. This succession of Catholic thinkers who have devised various preconditions to establish what a morally just war entails constitutes the Catholic just war tradition. Steeped in this tradition, Cardinal Mercier saw it as his religious and patriotic duty to utilize the language of the Catholic just war tradition to justify Belgium's position in the war. It is through these efforts that Mercier placed himself alongside some of history's most profound thinkers,

² *Excerpts from: Catechism of the Catholic Church – Safeguarding Peace*. USCCB. (n.d).
<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/excerpts-from-catechism-of-the-catholic-church-safeguarding-peace-1997>.

namely St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine of Hippo, by applying the just war theory to the First World War.

Cardinal Mercier's most famous and influential pastoral letter was entitled *Patriotism and Endurance*. Issued for Christmas of 1914, *Patriotism and Endurance* beseeched the Belgian people to endure the hardships begot by the unjust German invasion. Given the destruction and suffering that the war continued to manifest, Mercier found it necessary to justify why the Belgian people ought to continue fighting, and the just war tradition provided a powerful frame of argument, bolstered by its theological appeal to Catholic Belgium. The complex philosophical and theological ideas of just cause, rightful intentions, and just authority are diffused throughout the letter in a fashion that makes it clear that Mercier viewed the just war theory as

applicable to the war he was witnessing, while also engaging for the men asked to give everything to defend their country. Only an equally powerful appeal to justice, patriotism, and virtue in Mercier's mind could overcome the sense of impending defeat felt by the Belgian nation. The result was one of the most stirring letters of the war. Mercier's *Patriotism and Endurance* is the by-product of Mercier's yearning for justice, utilizing both the horrors witnessed by him and his compatriots, along with the maxims found in the just war tradition. *Patriotism and Endurance* serves as the most complete and engrossing of Cardinal Mercier's wartime pastoral letters. Full of religious allusions and poignant prose, the letter encapsulated the sense of injustice brought against Belgium by the illegal German invasion. In arguing that Belgium must continue to fight the war,

Cardinal Mercier deployed language and concepts found within the Catholic just war tradition. This article provides an in-depth exegesis of *Patriotism and Endurance*, using the precepts of the just war theory as a means of dividing the letter into several sections for analysis.

Cardinal Mercier, the Man:

Born in 1851 in Braine d'Alleud, Belgium to a highly religious Walloon family, Désire-Joseph Mercier was seemingly destined to become a prominent figure in the Belgian Catholic Church. When, in 1879, Pope Leo XIII called for a return to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most seminal theologians and philosophers in Catholic Church history, as a means of mounting a serious intellectual challenge to more secular schools of thought, the

young Mercier, already a professor of philosophy, quickly became one of the new movement's star advocates. When the Thomistic Chair of philosophy was founded at the University of Louvain, Mercier became its inaugural officeholder in 1882. The position was expanded to an entire department several years later, thanks to Mercier's ability as a teacher and the attention he attracted to his philosophical production. Louvain became a wellspring of the philosophical movement spurred by Pope Leo XIII's call to return to St. Thomas Aquinas' teachings, Neo-Thomism. Neo-Thomism aimed to implement the argumentation of St. Thomas Aquinas and scholasticism into modern philosophical debates in the fields of theology, ethics, epistemology, cosmology, and, most pertinently, the just war theory. In 1906, he was appointed Archbishop of Malines by

Pope Pius X, also becoming cardinal and prelate of Belgium. His prominent position in the Neo-Thomist movement and the success he had within the Church hierarchy no doubt deepened a familiarity with the Catholic just war tradition and made Mercier all the more likely to utilize its language and argumentation for the benefit of his country and, as he saw it, for his faith.³ Tragically, it would take the most destructive war in history to-date for Mercier to adapt and apply his thoughts on the ancient just war theory to modern war.

Defining the just war:

³ Kitchin, William P. H. Kitchen, "Cardinal Mercier." *The Catholic Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (1926): 66-77.

Before delving into Cardinal Mercier's contribution to the just war tradition via *Patriotism and Endurance*, a brief synopsis of what comprises the just war theory ought to be given. War, one of the primary expressions of political activity, has been nearly unavoidable for most of history. Where there is disagreement, there is bound to be violence. However, many people would agree that not all violence is immoral. Some forms of violence can prevent further loss of life, restore peace, or liberate the oppressed. Conversely, inaction or an unwillingness to confront evil can lead to even greater manifestations of violence. Thus, a paradox arises: Violent action can prevent violent action. The acknowledgment that violence can sometimes be justified is the *raison d'etre* of the just war theory. Taking this paradox of violence as their starting point, just war theorists seek to

integrate concepts of justice, order, and morality into the otherwise obstreperous and destructive nature of armed conflicts. At the center of this integration is the concept of justice. Without justice, a war would be nothing more than a superfluous spilling of blood. Yet, with justice in mind, the seemingly unavoidable tragedy of war can be directed towards maintaining peace, order, and human rights. This, in effect, challenges those in authority to justify why they resort to violence to achieve their goals. In a similar vein, infusing the notion of justice into deliberations about the conduct of belligerents during the fighting holds combatants accountable for their actions, necessitating a clear delineation of what comprises licit violence. Thus, the just war theory includes a two-faceted approach to adjudicating whether a war is just and is justly waged; these facets of the

theory are the justice of the war (*jus ad bellum*) and the justice in the war (*Jus in bello*).⁴

Generally, for a war to be considered just according to the just war tradition, it must be waged for the right reasons and commenced by the right authority and under the right circumstances. This is known as the justice of the war or *jus ad bellum*.⁵ Although no single definition of what constitutes the justice of the war exists, just war theorists agree that for a war to be considered just, it must meet preconditions.

The war must have a just cause. An array of just causes has been put forth by just war theorists. Invasions,

⁴ Moseley, Alexander. "Just War Theory." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed March 27, 2020. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/justwar/>

⁵ Ibid.

unprovoked attacks, and any other aggressive act that violates peace or the right of a country to exist constitute grounds for a just cause. Yet, before a just cause can be declared, the violated party must have just authority to declare said just cause. International recognition as a supreme authority is the requirement for a belligerent to be considered just. Therefore, a just war can only be a war between nations, not merely between armed belligerents. Once it has been established that a potential belligerent has a just cause and right authority to wage a just war, the wronged belligerent still must harbor just intentions. What exactly comprises just intention depends on the injustice directed against the belligerent. For example, repelling an invasion would be a just intention in a war defense. Likewise, retrieval of stolen goods is considered a just

intention if the violator pillaged the just belligerent. Even if the belligerent has a just cause, just authority, and just intentions, war can only be just if recourse to other means is impossible. A just belligerent must entertain peace overtures and compromise—if offered—as preventative measures against unnecessary warfare. If no peace overtures are made, or the emergence of one is unlikely—that leaves the just belligerent no choice but to resort to violence to repeal the injustices. Under these conditions, the war can be considered just. In sum, a just authority can be said to be waging a just war when it has a just cause, possesses just intentions, and resorts to violence only after exhausting alternative avenues.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

In addition to delineating the justice of war, the just war theory provides a framework for judging the belligerents' actions. Integral to the justice of the war itself is the concept of justice in the war (*jus in bello*).⁷ A belligerent might have met all the criteria required for engaging in a just war; however, if that same belligerent wages the war unjustly, the justice of the war is negated.^{8 9}

10

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Rule 3. Definition of Combatants.” Customary IHL - Rule 3. Definition of Combatants. Accessed March 23, 2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule3.

⁹ “Practice Relating to Rule 8. Definition of Military Objectives.” Customary IHL - Practice Relating to Rule 8. Definition of Military Objectives. Accessed March 23, 2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule8

¹⁰ “Rule 156. Definition of War Crimes.” Customary IHL - Rule 156. Definition of War Crimes. Accessed March 23,

Acknowledging that war is an inevitable occurrence, the just war tradition is a series of attempts to define what constitutes a laudable use of force. By emphasizing justice, just war theorists challenge potential belligerents to articulate why they ought to engage in armed conflict. Furthermore, they also create a standard by which belligerents are held to when they engage in armed conflict: A violation of the discrimination and/or proportionality precepts of *jus in bello* renders the war unjust, even when fully justified via the precept of *jus ad bellum*. In effect, abatement in the frequency and brutality of war is the desired

2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule156.

result of the just war theory, although these effects are not guaranteed.¹¹

Many of the theory's precepts are quite general. This is because the just war theory is, primarily, a political and philosophical concept. Yet, its interpretations must exist within time and space. This means that the various interpretations and applications of the theory are historically specific and is a by-product of the varying political challenges faced by just war theorists. Thus, historical context, in tandem with philosophical insight, is necessary when studying the just war theory.¹²

¹¹ Moseley, Alexander. "Just War Theory." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed March 27, 2020. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/justwar/>.

¹² Corey, David D., and J. Daryl Charles. *Just War Tradition: an Introduction*. ISI Books, 2012.

Patriotism and Endurance, Christmas 1914:

Belgium and the Catholic Church's political predicaments in 1914 provide insight into what Mercier confronted as he sat down to write his most famous and influential pastoral letter. Mercier's beloved nation had been the first victim of the war in the west. And, to make matters worse, the Catholic community was being torn apart by the war that already left his nation on the brink. Pope Pius X died on August 20th, 1914, and Mercier's role as a cardinal stipulated that he must leave his beleaguered diocese and head to Rome to elect a new pope.¹³ While in Rome, he encountered firsthand how the war divided the Catholic faithful. Cardinal Mercier encountered both sympathetic and

¹³ De Volder, *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War*: 34

dismissive takes on the injustice faced by Belgium. Cardinals from the Central Powers and neutral states, primarily Italy, questioned why the Belgians had held out for so long. After all, were the Belgians not bringing more death and destruction upon themselves by continuing the war?¹⁴ Mercier kept quiet for the time being, so as to not spoil the chance of having the new pope, Benedict XV, officially condemn the German invasion, which would not happen for several years. Notwithstanding this initial setback, Mercier realized he would soon have his say.

Upon returning to his beloved Belgium from Rome in the fall of 1914, Mercier was confronted with the new realities of warfare. The sting of German atrocities was fresh on Mercier's mind as he set foot back on his native soil.

¹⁴ De Volder, *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War*: 35

Compounding this was the new realization that the war, hoped to be over by Christmas, would probably last several more years. After a stunning Allied victory at the Battle of the Marne in September of 1914, the war, which to that point had been a relatively mobile affair, developed into a seemingly ceaseless stalemate.¹⁵ Trench warfare's advent on the western front was a double-edged sword for the beleaguered Belgian people. Germany, despite its lopsided numerical and technological advantages, could not conquer all of Belgium. A small sliver of land in the northwest remained out of the clutches of Germany. Trench warfare all but ensured that Belgium would not fall without a costly German assault. Thus, "little" Belgium would live to fight

¹⁵ Herwig, Holger H. *The Marne*: 33-51

another day, albeit with most of the country living under German occupation.

While Mercier had learned of the atrocities committed by the German army from news correspondence while he was in Rome, one can only imagine the sorrow the cardinal felt as he gazed upon his beloved homeland reduced to rubble and craters by an enemy he considered categorically unjust. While the cardinal was away electing the next pope, the seat of his diocese, Malines, had been pummeled by artillery, rendering a direct return to his home impossible. Mercier was forced to take up temporary residence in the fortified town of Antwerp. However, shortly after his arrival at Antwerp, the German army besieged the city. Mercier witnessed firsthand the death and destruction that the German army inflicted on his countrymen and

parishioners. The siege was a crushing blow to the already diminished Belgian morale and traumatized the cardinal. The Siege of Antwerp proved to be the last straw for Mercier.¹⁶ Defenselessness could no longer define the Belgian war effort—the courage of its people and the justice of its cause must be known, ruminated Mercier. The cardinal believed the best way to combat these misconceptions was via a letter that spoke of the patriotism and assiduity of the Belgian people, using language that best encapsulated the justice for which Belgium was fighting. Mercier began compiling a letter that would revitalize a nation, throw an occupying power into an international conundrum, and place himself within the Catholic just war canon. This letter was

¹⁶ De Volder, *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War*: 47-51

Patriotism and Endurance. In an overt nod to the Catholic just war tradition, Mercier formulated his interpretation of the justice of the war in terms of just cause, rightful intentions, and just authority.

Just Causes:

Mercier was not hard-pressed to find just causes for fighting the war with Germany. Violations of international law, destruction of church property, the killing of innocents, and the deportation of civilians to aid in the German war effort were all widely publicized and well known. The pain and suffering felt by the Belgian nation bleed through the pages of *Patriotism and Endurance*. But beyond the indictments exists an extrapolation of the rationale behind Belgium continuing the war using the just war requirement of just causes.

“The Rape of Belgium”:

Mercier started his letter by listing the atrocities committed by the German army as they marched through Belgium. Collectively, these various atrocities were referred to by the Allies in propaganda and posterity as “the rape of Belgium.” As an ardent Belgian patriot, Mercier rejected the notion that his homeland was weak and defenseless against the German invasion, favoring one that emphasized his compatriots’ courage in the face of evil and the righteousness of their cause. *Patriotism and Endurance* afforded Mercier with the opportunity to laud Belgians for their sacrifice and courage in combating the Germans but also to provide a logical starting point for his rendition of the just war theory. By starting the letter with these most

obvious violations of the just cause precept, Mercier established that this letter would serve as an indictment of the German military.

It was in Rome itself that I received the tidings - stroke after stroke - of the partial destruction of the Cathedral church of Louvain, next of the burning of the Library and of the scientific installations of our great University and of the devastation of the city, and next of the wholesale shooting of citizens, and tortures inflicted upon women and children, and upon unarmed and undefended men. And while I was still under the shock of these calamities the telegraph brought us news of the bombardment of our beautiful metropolitan church, of the church of Notre Dame au dela la Dyle, of the episcopal palace, and of a

great part of our dear city of
Malines.¹⁷

From Mercier's point of view, the German military invasion constituted far more than a mere military exercise: it was a wholesale demolition of Belgium. Churches, libraries, and civilians, having no military value whatsoever, were the main victims of the German march through Belgium. Mercier's emphasis on the destruction of churches and Catholic institutions, namely the University of Louvain, highlighted the clear injustices of the invasion. In tandem with the *ipso facto* evil of killing civilians, the destruction of church property served as a palpable just cause for the Catholic faithful and the civilized world.

¹⁷ Rev. Joseph Stillemans (biographer, editor and translator), *Cardinal Mercier, Pastorals, Letters, Allocutions 1914-1917*, New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons 1917: 3-4

Deportations and Murder of Clergy:

Next, Mercier accused Germany of deporting thousands of Belgian civilians to work camps back in Germany, a clear violation of international law and another just cause for war: “Thousands of Belgian citizens have in a similar manner been deported to the prisons of Germany—to Münsterlagen, to Celle, and to Magdeburg. At Münsterlagen alone, 3,100 prisoners were numbered.”¹⁸ Thousands more who were not sent to camps perished during the invasion, and along with them died dozens of clergymen.

In my diocese alone I know
that thirteen priests or
religious were put to death.
One of these, the parish priest
of Gelrode, suffered, I
believe, a veritable

¹⁸ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 12

martyrdom. I made a pilgrimage to his grave, and, amid the little flock which so lately he had been feeding with the zeal of an apostle, there did I pray to him that from the height of Heaven he would guard his parish, his diocese, his country.¹⁹

Beyond the *prima facie* evil of murdering innocent civilians and clergy, which alone constituted a powerful just cause for war, Mercier viewed the slain clergymen as martyrs, deserving a rightful place alongside the Communion of Saints. The cardinal's desire to both justify the righteousness of the Belgian *raisons de guerre* and edify the Belgian nation on the virtues and sacrifices made by the country's Catholic clergy is apparent in the above excerpt. Elevation to sainthood in the Catholic faith is an honor only a very select

¹⁹ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 12-3

few can have the privilege of attaining, and for Mercier to compare his fellow men of the cloth to saints indubitably had an edifying effect on the faithful reading or listening to the letter. According to Mercier, the justice of Belgium's war effort lay in its sons and daughter's bravery and sense of the Holy in the face of evil. The message was clear: all must take up their cross for the sake of Belgium and justice.

Violation of International Law:

Without Germany's unprovoked invasion and violation of international law, Belgium would most likely not have joined the war at all. The argument that Germany wantonly violated Belgium's neutrality was so strong that it initiated Britain's participation in the war.²⁰ Indeed, Great

²⁰ Strachan, Hew. *The First World War*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2013: 178-80

Britain and its dominions would suffer immense losses in the war, all because Britain kept its promise to defend Belgium's neutrality enshrined in the 1839 Treaty of London.²¹

Despite the blatant violation of the Treaty of London, some members of the international community questioned the Belgian's will to continue in the war. Why continue fighting a war which had already destroyed so much of the country and taken the lives of thousands of innocent civilians? Mercier wholeheartedly rebuffed calls for Belgium to concede defeat as a means of preventing further bloodshed:

We may now say, my Brethren, without unworthy pride, that our little Belgium has taken a foremost place in the esteem of nations. I am

²¹ Herwig, Holger H. *The Marne*: 33-51

aware that certain onlookers, notably in Italy and in Holland, have asked how it could be necessary to expose this country to so immense a loss of wealth and of life, and whether a verbal manifesto against hostile aggression, or a single cannon-shot on the frontier, would not have served the purpose of protest. But assuredly all men of good feeling will be with us in our rejection of these paltry counsels. Mere utilitarianism is no sufficient rule of Christian citizenship.²²

In calling the Dutch and Italian suggestions to sue for peace “mere utilitarianism,” Mercier brought out the very heart of the just war theory: The justice of the war is more important than the perceived expediency of either war or peace. After all, was it not for expediency’s sake that the

²² Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 24

German army—betting on a futile defensive showing—invaded Belgium and dragged them into the war? And what good would surrender do for the Belgian people at that moment? Belgium itself was in ruins. With hundreds of thousands of Allied troops within Belgium’s borders and the advent of trench warfare, surrender was an undesirable outcome.

Mercier countered the utilitarian mindset with an appeal to international law to make his case for the justice of the war. Reminding the Belgian people and his international audience about the treaty’s violation was not only a rhetorical strategy on the part of Mercier, but it also connected the philosophical precepts of the Catholic just war tradition with the real-world dictates of international law. Mercier discusses the Treaty of London’s violation as

an injustice, not only for its illegality but also for the sheer fact that it was, in his eyes, unjust. While the Treaty of London was almost certainly not promulgated with an eye to the just war theory, the concept that a violation of international law could be considered unjust spoke to a greater sense of justice found in treaties and the Catholic just war tradition alike. Mercier's letter excavated this language of justice, placing the treaty not only in terms of legality but also in the context of morality. For Mercier, the Allied nations, and the Belgian people, Germany's illegal invasion of Belgium also went above and beyond "mere utilitarian" legality, it struck at the very moral principles from which international law first arose. Focusing on the clear injustice of the invasion, Mercier wrote the following excoriation of German actions that lead to the war:

On the 19th of April, 1839, a treaty was signed in London by King Leopold, in the name of Belgium, on the one part, and by the Emperor of Austria, the King of France, the Queen of England, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia, on the other; and its seventh article decreed that Belgium should form a separate and perpetually neutral State, and should be held to the observance of this neutrality in regard to all other States. The co-signatories promised, for themselves and their successors, upon their oath, to fulfil and to observe that treaty in every point and every article without contravention, or tolerance of contravention. Belgium was thus bound in honor to defend her own independence. She kept her oath. The other Powers were bound to respect and to protect her neutrality. Germany violated her oath;

England kept hers. These are the facts.²³

In Mercier's eyes, the injustice of Germany's violation of the Treaty of London alone constituted a justification for continuing the war. Belgium was treaty-bound to secure its sovereignty, no matter how costly its defense may be. With the support of Britain and other Entente Powers, Mercier exalted in Belgium's just war and called for the Belgian people to endure:

The laws of conscience are sovereign laws. We should have acted unworthily had we evaded our obligation by a mere feint of resistance. And now we would not rescind our first resolution; we exult in it. Being called upon to write a most solemn page in the history of our country, we resolved that it should be also

²³ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 24-5

a sincere, also a glorious page. And as long as we are required to give proof of endurance, so long we shall endure.²⁴

The Just Intentions of Belgium:

Although Belgium was by no means lacking just causes, Mercier thought it imperative to emphasize the just intentions of his countrymen in their determination to repel the German invasion. In doing so, Mercier consciously aligned his arguments with the just war theories of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. For them, as for Mercier, the thoughts and intentions were as equally important as the actions themselves to discern the justice of a war. St. Thomas Aquinas, using St. Augustine's articulation in *Contra*

²⁴ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters: 24-5*

Faustus, stated that, “the passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such like things, all these are rightly condemned in war.”²⁵ *Patriotism and Endurance* attempted to highlight how Belgium was conducting the war justly in accordance with the dictums of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Conscious of the immense meaning given to the sacrifice of Christ, Mercier attempted to illustrate that the Belgian people went to war with a sense of duty not unlike that of Christ as he mounted the cross. Known as the Passion of Christ, Jesus’ sacrifice of himself for the sins of mankind

²⁵ “Question 40. War.” SUMMA THEOLOGIAE: War (Secunda Secundae Partis, Q. 40).
<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3040.htm>

serves as both the foundational act of the faith and the prototypical model of duty for the faithful to emulate. Mercier likened the suffering that has befallen the Belgian people to the Passion of Christ and, in doing so, argued for the just intention of the Belgian people in continuing to fight the war:

Why all this sorrow, my God?
Lord, Lord, hast Thou
forsaken us? Then I looked
upon the Crucifix. I looked
upon Jesus, most gentle and
humble Lamb of God,
crushed, clothed in His blood
as in a garment, and I thought
I heard from His own mouth
the words which the Psalmist
uttered in His name: "O God,
my God, look upon me; why
hast Thou forsaken me? O my
God, I shall cry, and Thou wilt
not hear." And forth with the
murmur died upon my lips;
and I remembered what Our
Divine Savior said in His

Gospel: "The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord." The Christian is the servant of a God who became man in order to suffer and to die. To rebel against pain, to revolt against Providence, because it permits grief and bereavement, is to forget whence we came, the school in which we have been taught, the example that each of us carries graven in the name of a Christian, which each of us honors at his hearth, contemplates at the altar of his prayers, and of which he desires that his tomb the place of his last sleep, shall bear the sign.²⁶

Underlying this allusion were two main aims: religious and political sanctification of the Belgian cause. Religiously, the allusion serves to edify the Belgian faithful

²⁶ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 4-5

in the necessity of suffering for the sake of righteousness, as Christ once did for them. Christ bore the punishment for their sins, and now they must suffer with Christ to manifest justice and lasting peace. Politically and philosophically, at stake was the claim that Belgium went to war not out of vengeance, but to defend its national sovereignty and to ensure that the injustice wrought by Germany did not go uncorrected. Without just intentions, a belligerent cannot claim to be fighting a just war, no matter how just their cause may be. The imitation of Christ that Belgium was undergoing in the struggle was the core of Mercier's argument—that Belgium was not fighting the war to exact revenge for German atrocities, but rather for the restoration of its sovereignty, justice, and peace that the war disrupted—a textbook implementation of the just war theory.

Building off from allusion to the Passion, Mercier moved from just intentions towards discussing Belgium's aims for engaging in the war. First and foremost, he contended that Belgium was fighting a war of self-defense, not of retribution. The cardinal stressed this by praising Belgium's soldiers for their selfless sacrifice, calling them "saviors." Mercier centered his argument for the just conduct and intentions of Belgium around the concept of patriotism. It was through a sense of patriotic duty and not vengeance that Belgium fought:

Is there a patriot among us
who does not know that
Belgium has grown great?
Nay, which of us would have
the heart to cancel this last
page of our national history?
Which of us does not exult in
the brightness of the glory of
this shattered nation? When in

her throes she brings forth
heroes, our Mother Country
gives her own energy to the
blood of those sons of hers.
Let us acknowledge that we
needed a lesson in patriotism.
There were Belgians, and
many such, who wasted their
time and their talents in futile
quarrels of class with class, of
race with race, of passion with
personal passion. Yet when,
on the second of August, a
mighty foreign power,
confident in its own strength
and defiant of the faith of
treaties, dared to threaten us in
our independence, then did all
Belgians, without difference
of party, or of condition, or of
origin, rise up as one man,
close-ranged about their own
king, and their own
government, and cry to the
invader: "Thou shalt not go
Through!" At once, instantly,
we were conscious of our own
patriotism. For down within us
all is something deeper than
personal interests, than

personal kinships, than party feeling, and this is the need and the will to devote ourselves to that more general interest which Rome termed the public thing. *Res publica*. And this profound will within us is patriotism.²⁷

There was something to be said about the unity that the war fostered in the Belgians. Although Belgium was a divided nation, the German invasion—in the mind of Mercier—inspired a sense of unity that transcended the traditional division between the Walloons and Flemish, as well as Catholic, liberal, and socialist elements found in Belgian politics.²⁸ This spirit of unity alone constituted a just intention on the part of Belgium for Mercier. However, the

²⁷ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 18-9

²⁸ Humes, Samuel, and Wilfried Martens. *Belgium: Long United, Long Divided*. London: Hurst & Company, 2014.

sense of patriotic duty was dependent upon whether individuals viewed the cause of Belgian unity as inherently just. Certainly, Germany and some Flemish separatists viewed the cause of Belgian unity in a negative light. Yet, for Mercier, his parishioners, and the larger Allied and neutral world, a nation united against a foreign adversary who illegally conducted the invasion, the unity fostered by the war very much highlighted the justness of Belgium's intentions during the war, especially given its internal divisions.

These appeals to unity were common to most other belligerents, as in the French notion of *union sacrée* and the German appeal to *burgfrieden*,²⁹ and presented a possible flaw in Mercier's just war theory. If patriotism is the measure

²⁹ Snell, John L. "Socialist Unions and Socialist Patriotism in Germany, 1914-1918." *The American Historical Review* 59, no. 1 (1953): 66-76.

of just intentions, could not Germany be waging a just war as well? Mercier would perhaps counter that the justice of causes and intentions are inextricably linked. Without just causes, there can be no just intentions and *vice versa*. Furthermore, both unjust and just belligerents could have a sense of patriotic duty. However, this has no bearing on the justice of the war itself. “[I]n any belligerent army whatsoever, all who, in good faith, submit to the discipline of their leaders in the service of a cause they believe to be righteous, are sharers in the eternal reward of the soldier's sacrifice.”³⁰ Mercier argued that all soldiers might be exonerated if they were fighting under the pretense of patriotism. He argued that the German high command, and not necessarily its soldiers, were responsible for the injustice

³⁰ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals, Letters*: 23

of the war. Thus, this reasoning acted as a further indictment of the German high command in waging such an unjust war. St. Augustine argued in a very similar vein when outlining what exactly constituted just authority:

If a just man should happen to serve as a soldier under a human king who is sacrilegious, he could rightly wage war at the king's command, maintaining the order of civic peace. For what he is commanded to do is not contrary to the sure precepts of God, or else it is not sure whether it is or not. In this latter case, perhaps the iniquity of servant in the civil order will show the soldier to be innocent.³¹

³¹ Augustine, "Against Faustus the Manichean," XXII, Ch.74 in Reichberg, G.M., Syse, H. and Begby, E. (Eds) *The Ethics of War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 82.

Mercier's discussion of just intentions is derived directly from his discussion of just cause and just authority. His likening of the suffering of the Belgian people to the Passion of Christ attempted to show that they ought to approach—and indeed were approaching—the war much like Christ approached his crucifixion, with solemnity. Mercier also claimed the patriotic resolve of the Belgian people highlighted their just intentions in fighting the war. Within this discussion, Mercier alluded to the Augustinian concept that the just conduct of soldiers and the causes they fought for were the direct responsibility of those in authority. This poses the question: What was a just authority in the eyes of Mercier?

Just Authority:

One of the challenges facing Cardinal Mercier when writing *Patriotism and Endurance* was striking a balance between encouraging the citizens and soldiers of Belgium to continue fighting the war, while preventing the Belgians in occupied territories from openly revolting against their German captors. An open revolt against the Germans would not bode well for the Belgian nation with the international community, who viewed them as victims of German militarism. Furthermore, an insurrection would invite further violence against the already battered and brutalized Belgian population. An escalation of violence on the part of the Belgians would have given credence to the German claim that much of the violence directed towards the Belgian civilian population were punitive and preventive measures

against alleged illegitimate insurgents referred to as *francs-tireurs*.

These *francs-tireurs*, or free shooters, were militia groups of trained civilians, dressed in civilian clothing, who would harass the German military using guerilla tactics and subterfuge. German fear of these *francs-tireurs* groups stemmed from the Franco-Prussian War, in which these groups wreaked havoc on the German military through sabotage, assassination, and guerilla warfare. Even before the war, the German high command disseminated rumors to expect similar resistance in Belgium. The German military used this fear as a justification for much of the atrocities committed during the invasion.³² If an insurrection occurred,

³² Horne, John, and Alan Kramer. "German "Atrocities" and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of

German justification of the atrocities committed would gain credibility, and the image of Belgium as a steadfast and innocent defender of its sovereignty—unjustly attacked and brutalized in an illegal military invasion—would lose credence. Mercier was aware of the possible ramifications that a more bellicose posture in the letter could produce.

In keeping with Catholic conceptions about authority, Mercier stated that temporal sovereign authority derived its very essence, its justification for existence and ability to act, from the divine:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Many are the thoughts that throng the breast of man to-day, and the chief of them all is this: God reveals Himself as the Master. The nations that made the

German Soldiers' Diaries." *The Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 1 (1994): 1-33.

attack, and the nations that are warring in self-defense, alike confess themselves to be in the hand of Him without whom nothing is made, nothing is done.³³

This preface establishes the commonality that both Belgian and German authorities derived their authority from God. Furthermore, both Germany and Belgium, although at war, were united in the Christian faith. Since Belgium and Germany were granted their authority from the same divine source, they were beholden to the same dictates—divine and temporal. Mercier’s observation that both German and Belgium were just authorities that derived their authority from God served two purposes. First, it established the possibility that a mutual understanding could be arrived at by

³³ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals Letters*: 18-19

the two nations to end the war. After all, their shared sense of Christian duty invited the possibility of peace. The other purpose was to establish the applicability of the just war theory to his present situation. The grounds and authority with which Germany fought, while illegal, stemmed from the divine order. This divine order called for justice in waging wars, and since Germany and Belgium both received their authority to wage war from the divine, they must follow God's dictates—including the Catholic just war traditions precepts. Since Germany violated *jus ad bellum* dictates, Mercier's categorization of Germany as a just authority served yet another indictment. One must keep this method of the indictment in mind while viewing the rest of Mercier's outlining of the issue of authority in the letter; for though Mercier acknowledged the justness of German authority in

ruling over its conquered territory, the central argument was that it violated the very principles upon which it derives authority.

Along the same lines of reasoning, Cardinal Mercier relied on the principle of just authority to levy another attack on the German invasion of Belgium: Although Germany was a just authority, it most certainly did not have just authority in Belgium.

The sole lawful authority in Belgium is that of our King, of our Government, of the elected representatives of the nation. This authority alone has a right to our affection, our submission. Thus, the invader's acts of public administration have in themselves no authority, but legitimate authority has tacitly ratified such of those acts as affect the general interest, and this ratification, and this only,

gives them juridic value. Occupied provinces are not conquered provinces. Belgium is no more a German province than Galicia is a Russian province.³⁴

The cardinal's assertion begs the question: How can an authority that is unjust, in this case because of its illicit occupation of another territory, promulgate laws that have force? This question directly challenged the notion of natural law that undergirded the Catholic just war theory. St. Thomas Aquinas' maxim, *lex iniusta non est lex* (an unjust law is no law at all), appeared to lose all gravity when applied to the situation that Belgians found themselves in under German occupation.³⁵ Mercier, seeking a middle ground between a

³⁴ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals Letters*: 27-8

³⁵ Russell, J. S. "Trial by Slogan: Natural Law and Lex Iniusta Non Est Lex." *Law and Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (2000): 433-49

direct open revolt and passive submission, argued that although the authority with which Germany promulgated orders was unjust, and thus invalid, the fact that German had *ipso facto* control over Belgians meant that they must adhere to the dictates of the occupiers. The distinction between just and actual authority was an important one to make. Any calls for an insurrection or even the slightest resistance threatened the very justice with which the Belgians claimed they were fighting. In sum, Mercier asserted that although the Germans had given the Belgians numerous just causes, Germans still had *de facto* control of most of Belgium, and their authority, while unjust, was to be honored.

Nevertheless the occupied portion of our country is in a position it is compelled to endure. The greater part of our towns, having surrendered to the enemy on conditions, are

bound to observe those conditions. From the outset of military operations the civil authorities of the country urged upon all private persons the necessity of abstention from hostile acts against the enemy's army. That instruction remains in force. It is our army, and our army solely, in league with the valiant troops of our Allies, that has the honor and the duty of national defense. Let us entrust the army with our final deliverance. Towards the persons of those who are holding dominion among us by military force, and who assuredly cannot but be sensible of the chivalrous energy with which we have defended, and are still defending our independence, let us conduct ourselves with all needful forbearance. Some among them have declared themselves willing to mitigate, as far as possible, the severity of our situation and to help us

to recover some minimum of regular civic life. Let us observe the rules they have laid upon us so long as those rules do not violate our personal liberty, nor our consciences as Christians, nor our duty to our country. Let us not take bravado for courage, nor tumult for bravery.³⁶

Mercier noted that the army was the sole entity that could engage the enemy: a direct reference to the supposed activity of *francs-tireurs*. Mercier openly castigated the notion that non-uniformed, irregular civilians could take up the defense of their country. This belief had its roots in both practicality and the just war tradition's requirement that only a legitimate authority can conduct violence, directly excluding the *francs-tireurs*. Non-military violence taken

³⁶ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals Letters*: 28

against the Germans undercut the very notion that Germany was fighting an unjust war unjustly. Any action lending credence to German claims that the invaders had to defend themselves against irregular fighters could be used to Germany's advantage. This point is emphasized for a specific reason—Cardinal Mercier was very much afraid of backlash over an insurrection both from Germany, the papacy, and the rest of the world. There was too much to lose for Mercier and Belgium from such an uprising.

One of the last topics addressed in *Patriotism and Endurance* was the role of clergy in the war. Initially, Mercier hoped other Belgian cardinals would join with him to circulate the letter. Much to his chagrin, the other cardinals flatly rejected the proposal to disseminate it.³⁷ They worried

³⁷ De Volder, *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War*: 64

that such a letter would do exactly what Mercier himself feared: cause German backlash, start an insurrection, and jeopardize the justice of the Belgian cause. Yet, much of what the letter said about the clergy's role in the war suggested that Mercier did not wish for the clergy to become the leaders of resistance. Instead, the letter calls for the clergy to be peacemakers, working towards ending the war, albeit on terms favorable to the Belgians.

Well, I affirm upon my honor, and I am prepared to assert upon faith of my oath, that until now I have not met a single ecclesiastic, secular or regular, who had once incited civilians to bear arms against the enemy. All have loyally followed the instructions of their Bishops, given in the early days of August, to the effect that they were to use their moral influence over the civil population so that order

might be preserved and military regulations observed. I exhort you to persevere in this ministry of peace, which is for you the sanest form of patriotism; to accept with all your hearts the privations you have to endure; to simplify still further, if it is possible, your way of life...³⁸

Mercier clarified that the role of the clergy in the war was to pursue peace through imitating Christ. The Belgian people needed the clergy for the faith and strength to endure. He also noted that the clergy had never sanctioned or exhorted civilians to fight the Germans—the spurious reason German leadership used to justify the killing of Belgian clergy.

³⁸ Cardinal Mercier, *Pastorals Letters*: 29-30

In all, Mercier's analysis of just authority in the context of the war is the most cautious and traditionalist dimension of the letter. Considering Mercier's more scathing remarks found throughout the rest of the letter, Mercier is more measured and diplomatic when talking about the issue of authority, aware of the consequences that could befall him and his beloved Belgium if the letter encouraged an insurrection. His more moderate tone also showed that he was writing to multiple audiences in addition to his flock. Mercier sought to assuage the concerns of his fellow bishops and the international community, including the papacy. His fellow bishops' silence on this issue, while understandable given the possibility of reprisals and low morale, weakened

the Belgian cause by showing a lack of unity and resolve.³⁹ Lastly, his insistence that only the Belgian military should conduct military operations shows that Mercier also wrote to millions of Belgians in occupied territory. Combating German occupation via cloak-and-dagger tactics was explicitly forbidden by Mercier, as they not only jeopardized the justice of the Belgian cause but also violated the percept of just authority found within the Catholic just war tradition. This cerebral and steadfast language found in the

³⁹ As noted by Pollard, Pope Benedict XV was labelled as “*le Pape boche*” by some in France for his unwillingness to condemn Germany’s actions. Distrust, if not outright hatred, for the papacy had deep roots in France, dating back to the French Revolution. The events of the First World War convinced some in France that Pope Benedict XV was nothing more than Germany’s lackey. (See Pollard, John. “Papal Diplomacy and The Great War.” *New Blackfriars* 96, no. 1062 (2014): 155.)

letter would catapult Mercier to international acclaim after the publication of the letter.

The Letter's Reception:

Although written for Christmas 1914, German censorship all but ensured that *Patriotism and Endurance* would not be released in time. Dispersed via seminarians who left for home after Christmas, the letter was read from pulpits across Belgium.⁴⁰ Despite German censorship, the letter was published throughout the Allied and neutral world to much acclaim, including in its entirety by the *New York Times*. The Allied press praised the letter and gave Mercier

⁴⁰ De Volder, *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War*: 70

the epithets of “Cardinal of the Allies” and “hero of the nation.”⁴¹

Belgium’s relatively small and inexperienced military withstood a large-scale, highly coordinated invasion from arguably Europe’s most advanced military power. References to scripture and tradition served as arrows in Mercier’s proverbial quiver. The issues of just cause, just intentions, and just authority, for Mercier, provided clear and convincing grounds for Belgium to continue fighting the war, safe in the knowledge that it was fighting on the side of justice. Mercier’s discussion of the justice of the war, by using religious allegory and allusions to other Catholic just war theorists, indicates that *Patriotism and Endurance’s*

⁴¹ De Volder, *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War*: 86-9

purpose was to apply the precepts of the just war theory to the events of World War One. *Patriotism and Endurance* also allows for an insight into attitudes surrounding the war itself. The violence condemned by Mercier would become the standard for modern mechanized warfare. This is a chilling reminder that although Belgium might have been the just belligerent that Mercier made it out to be, in war there can be no true winners. However, this points to the very necessity of the just war tradition to make sense of conflict. The just war theory throws into question the very pretenses under which a war is fought; it is a tool of criticism designed to prevent wars, and it condones war only as a last resort to restore peace and bring about justice.

When reading *Patriotism and Endurance*, one gets the sense Mercier himself, by centering the letter around the

precepts of the justice of the war, was trying to make sense of the war. Unimaginable suffering was unleashed when the First World War started, and Belgium, a peaceful and prosperous nation, was turned into a hellscape. Mercier's appraisal of the situation was that his beloved country had been so criminally wronged by the invasion that the only way to thoroughly rebuke Germany was to harness the intellectual gravity of the millennia-old just war theory. In sum, Cardinal Mercier's *Patriotism and Endurance* provided the Belgian people with reasons to hope that their present struggles and tribulations would not be for naught, and the precepts of the just war theory formed the core of the cardinal's rationale.

Throughout the rest of the war, Cardinal Mercier continued to write pastoral letters in which he continued to

explicate his interpretation of the just war theory. Cardinal Mercier worked tirelessly to convince the papacy to condemn the injustices inflicted upon his beloved Belgian homeland by Germany, culminating in Pope Benedict XV's peace proposal that castigated Germany for its action in and toward Belgium.⁴² Furthermore, he continued to advocate for the return of those deported by the Germans, often writing jointly with other Belgian cardinals whom he also worked to convince to take a stand against the injustices they were witnessing. In the end, Cardinal Mercier and Belgium, although its landscape and people were irrevocably scarred by the horrors of the First World War, prevailed. The Treaty

⁴² "Pope Benedict XV's Peace Proposal." Pope Benedict XV's Peace Proposal - World War I Document Archive. Accessed March 25, 2020. https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Pope_Benedict_XV's_Peace_Proposal.

of Versailles restored Belgium's independence and territory and forced Germany to admit responsibility for the war in article 231 of the treaty.⁴³ While the resulting peace was far from permanent, and Belgium would face a similar invasion by the Nazi-led German military over 30 years after the conclusion of World War I, the intellectual ability and courage demonstrated by Cardinal Mercier in *Patriotism and Endurance* cannot be overlooked.

In sum, Cardinal Mercier's thoughts and actions shepherded a nation on the brink of destruction via the language of the just war tradition and its advocates. The story of Cardinal Mercier and *Patriotism and Endurance* is both inspirational and cautionary. In its cautionary sense, the inevitability of war and suffering renders Cardinal Mercier's

⁴³ Strachan, *The First World War*: 325

task to plead for justice and restoration of order a Sisyphean task. No amount of philosophizing will be able to extricate the desire for conflict entrenched in the human spirit. War will serve as the catalyst for all manner of injustices if humanity continues to have means for doing so. However, Cardinal Mercier's work in the name of justice amid unprecedented death and destruction gives one hope that whenever the incorrigible human predilection towards injustice and violence rears its head, there will be those unafraid to steadfastly and courageously mandate that justice must be wrought.

Bibliography

Books:

Corey, David D., and J. Daryl Charles. *Just War Tradition: an Introduction*. ISI Books, 2012.

De Volder, Jan. *Cardinal Mercier in the First World War: Belgium, Germany and the Catholic Church*. Leuven University Press, 2019

Herwig, Holger H. *The Marne, 1914: the Opening of World War I and the Battle That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2011.

Humes, Samuel, and Wilfried Martens. *Belgium: Long United, Long Divided*. London: Hurst & Company, 2014.

Strachan, Hew. *The First World War*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2013.

Academic Articles:

Augustine, "Against Faustus the Manichean," XXII, Ch.74
in Reichberg, G.M., Syse, H. and Begby, E.
(Eds) *The Ethics of War* (Oxford: Blackwell
Publishing, 2006)

*Excerpts from: Catechism of the Catholic Church –
Safeguarding Peace.* USCCB. (n.d).
[https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-
and-dignity/war-and-peace/excerpts-from-catechism-
of-the-catholic-church-safeguarding-peace-1997.](https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/excerpts-from-catechism-of-the-catholic-church-safeguarding-peace-1997)

Horne, John, and Alan Kramer. "German "Atrocities" and
Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of
German Soldiers' Diaries." *The Journal of Modern
History* 66, no. 1 (1994): 1-33.

Kitchin, William P. H. "Cardinal Mercier." *The Catholic
Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (1926): 66-77.

Russell, J. S. "Trial by Slogan: Natural Law and Lex
Iniusta Non Est Lex." *Law and Philosophy* 19, no. 4
(2000): 433-49.

Snell, John L. "Socialist Unions and Socialist Patriotism in
Germany, 1914-1918." *The American Historical
Review* 59, no. 1 (1953): 66-76.

Moseley, Alexander. "Just War Theory." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed March 27, 2020. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/justwar/>

Pollard, John. "Papal Diplomacy and The Great War." *New Blackfriars* 96, no. 1062 (2014)

"Practice Relating to Rule 8. Definition of Military Objectives." Customary IHL - Practice Relating to Rule 8. Definition of Military Objectives. Accessed March 23, 2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule8

"Question 40. War." SUMMA THEOLOGIAE: War (Secunda Secundae Partis, Q. 40). <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3040.htm>

"Rule 3. Definition of Combatants." Customary IHL - Rule 3. Definition of Combatants. Accessed March 23, 2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule3

"Rule 156. Definition of War Crimes." Customary IHL - Rule 156. Definition of War Crimes. Accessed

March 23, 2020. https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule156

Primary Sources:

“Pope Benedict XV's Peace Proposal.” Pope Benedict XV's Peace Proposal - World War I Document Archive. Accessed March 25, 2020.
https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Pope_Benedict_XV's_Peace_Proposal

Rev. Joseph Stillemans (biographer, editor and translator),
Cardinal Mercier, Pastorals, Letters, Allocutions 1914-1917, New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1917

“Treaty of Versailles.” First World War. Accessed March 23, 2020.
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/aftermath/p_versailles.htm

Confederate Monuments in Context:

Arlington National Cemetery and the Legacy of the

Confederacy

Shannon Baker

Roanoke College

Introduction

Throughout the United States are hundreds of Confederate monuments and memorials, dispersed alongside roads and cemeteries, schools and military bases. Confederate monuments glorify Confederate leaders and soldiers, women and ‘faithful slaves.’ These monuments serve to further the ideology behind the narrative of the Lost Cause – a pseudohistorical interpretation of the Civil War that portrays the Confederacy as having fought a heroic and noble war, not centered on slavery.

This past summer, in particular, has been marked by a growing conversation about what should and should not be memorialized. There has been a discussion about what deserves to be remembered, and more so than that, which histories should be glorified. More Confederate symbols

have been removed in the first six months of 2020 than in the whole of 2019.⁴⁴ Many of those removals have been the work of the public, rather than elected officials. In one notable instance, the United Daughters of the Confederacy headquarters in Richmond, Virginia, was even burned down.⁴⁵ Some people have turned against the Lost Cause.

In order to better understand the Lost Cause, the history of Confederate symbols, and how the debate surrounding the memory of the Confederacy got to this current point of conflict, I focus on a specific monument as

⁴⁴ Camila Domonoske, “Report: 59 Confederate Symbols Removed Since George Floyd’s Death,” *NPR*, August 12, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/12/901771780/report-59-confederate-symbols-removed-since-george-floyds-death>.

⁴⁵ Ned Oliver and Sarah Vogelsong, “Confederate memorial hall burned as second night of outrage erupts in Virginia,” *Virginia Mercury*, May 31, 2020, <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/05/31/a-second-night-of-outrage-erupts-in-virginia/>.

a case study. This paper focuses on the Confederate monument at Arlington National Cemetery for a number of reasons. First, Arlington National Cemetery itself has an extensive Civil War history. Second, a monument in a National Cemetery is symbolic of the nation itself, and the fact that Confederates, who had seceded from the Union, were permitted to be reinterred at Arlington shows how strong a grip the Lost Cause once had over the nation, especially at the turn of the twentieth century. Third, this monument, in many ways, is also almost immune to the debate surrounding Confederate symbols. While it does get mentioned in discussions (and, as of 2020, the U.S. Army has placed the monument itself under review), it is unlikely

that it will ever be removed as a monument in a national cemetery.⁴⁶

The Arlington Confederate monument is emblematic of the Lost Cause ideology. Everything from its symbology to the story of its creation was intended to vindicate the South in the eyes of history. By putting the monument in its historical context, and applying theories from memory studies and public history, I show how the hegemonic power of the Lost Cause became enshrined in this object. This may help us better determine and ground our modern-day debates surrounding the Confederate symbols in the past.

⁴⁶ Richard Sisk, “Army Reviewing ‘Confederate Memorial’ Featuring Slaves at Arlington National Cemetery,” *Military*, July 9, 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/07/09/army-reviewing-confederate-memorial-featuring-slaves-arlington-national-cemetery.html>.

Monuments and memorials dominate public space. Most cities and towns have some sort of commemorative effort, from statues to historic buildings. Infrastructure is named after people long gone and roadside vigils are created for those gone too soon. It is easy to think of monuments as just massive statues at battlefields or in Washington D.C., but the truth is that ways of expressing public memories of the past are more complicated, and often wrapped up in layers of emotion. This is especially true regarding the U.S. Civil War.

In the 1980s and '90s, scholars began to explore the field of memory studies with increasing interest. The field became a way to “explore the various ways that the memory of a society is created, institutionalized,

disseminated, and understood.”⁴⁷ As a multidisciplinary field, scholars became increasingly interested in studying how people think about and remember the past. Academics studying memory try to better comprehend the connections between the public’s different versions of history. “In a sense,” the study of memory, according to historian David Glassberg, “[views] professional historical scholarship as not the only thought about history but one of several versions of the past competing for influence in public in a particular place and time.”⁴⁸ Naturally, this all begs an important question, one Glassberg raised: “with all the possible versions of the past that circulate in society, how do particular accounts of the past get established and

⁴⁷ David Glassberg, “Public History and the Study of Memory,” *The Public Historian* Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring, 1996): 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

disseminated as the public one? How do these public histories change over time?”⁴⁹

David Glassberg’s writing on public history and memory studies builds off of historian Pierre Nora’s earlier work. Nora wrote about what he called the *lieux de mémoire*, that being any place, object, or concept vested with historical significance in the popular collective memory, such as a battlefield or monument. Nora’s writings on memory are important, especially in the discussion of memorials, and he crucially distinguishes the differences between memory and history. Nora argues that the two are fundamentally opposed, memory being “in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 11.

vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation.”⁵⁰ Compare that to history, which is “the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”⁵¹ Because history is “an intellectual and secular production,” it requires both analysis and criticism.⁵² It is an absolute, dictatorial truth of an objective reality. Memory offers more wiggle room, so to speak.

Nora, writing in the late 1980s, was attempting to define a postmodern approach to the past. In this postmodern view, people have their own versions of the past. They have their own memories. These alternative versions of history are not considered to be less valid,

⁵⁰ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989): 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁵² *Ibid.*

because they are how the public remembers what occurred. The modernist view would argue that there is an objective truth, that there is only one narrative to history. Governments, both in the past and in the present, often attempt to foster one singular history to create a culture of nationalism. The aforementioned *lieux de mémoires* are made official by governmental regulations, homogenizing the multiple varied local memories so that they become what Nora calls “invented traditions.”⁵³ These governmental regulations create “official memories,” those being memories that are state-sponsored in an attempt to dominate historical narratives, often to self-aggrandize or mythologize themselves. In propping up a single narrative, governments can achieve hegemonic control of the past.

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

The concept of cultural hegemony is most closely associated with the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Characterized by Gramsci, cultural hegemony is “the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.”⁵⁴ The concept is summed up by historian T. J. Jackson Lears, who writes that “ruling groups *impose* a direction on social life; subordinates are manipulatively persuaded to board the

⁵⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: ElecBook, 1971), 12.

‘dominant fundamental’ express.’⁵⁵ Cultural hegemony means that the ruling-class worldview is imposed upon a larger community, and eventually becomes an acceptable cultural norm. Essentially, it is the idea that ‘if you say something often enough, people start to believe it.’ Lears argues that Gramsci can be insightful to historians from “a variety of intellectual traditions,” writing that, “the concept of cultural hegemony can aid intellectual historians trying to understand how ideas reinforce or undermine existing social structures and social historians seeking to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the power wielded by

⁵⁵ T. J. Jackson Lears, “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 90, No. 3 (June 1985): 568.

dominant groups and the relative cultural autonomy of subordinate groups whom they victimize.”⁵⁶

This is not to say that those with power have complete control of the public’s historical memories. There has been a long tradition of what Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn have called “defiant memory work,” which they define as “using cultural forms to foster liberation.”⁵⁷ Essentially, this is using memories that counter the hegemonic narratives of the past to uplift the oppressed. In the framing of memory as a deliberate form of resistance, a way to “counter engineered forms of state and other violence,” those left out of the nationalistic, hegemonic renderings can find their own place—and power—in the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Erica R. Meiners and Therese Quinn, “Introduction: Defiant Memory Work,” *American Quarterly* 71, No. 2 (2019): 353.

past. A recent example of the power of defiant memory work would be that of the Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond, Virginia. During the summer of 2020, the statue of the Confederate general was graffitied with countless anti-racist slogans and the names of victims of police brutality. The graffitied statue has turned into a sort of icon, with black activists taking pictures with it, dancing, and singing in front of it.⁵⁸ Activists participate in defiant memory work in Richmond, and in so doing, arguably are creating something even more powerful than the original meaning embedded in the monument.

⁵⁸ Sarah McCammon, “In Richmond, Va., Protestors Transform A Confederate Statue,” *NPR*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/12/876124924/in-richmond-va-protestors-transform-a-confederate-statue>.

The example of the graffiti bombing of Robert E. Lee's statue is not an aberration in history, but rather part of a long process of conflicting and hotly contested memory practices regarding the Civil War. No one single memory of the Civil War has ever existed, which makes sense given the inherently divisive nature of the conflict. Historian Robert J. Cook argues that in the last three and a half decades of the nineteenth century, "Americans forged four principal strands of Civil War memory: Unionist, emancipationist, Southern, and reconciliatory."⁵⁹ These narratives, Cook writes, were formed in the immediate years following the war, were fashioned largely by those who had lived through the conflict and continue to

⁵⁹ Robert J Cook, *Civil War Memories Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 4.

influence memories of the war even today by “Americans who have no direct connection with those who fought and suffered in it.”⁶⁰ Even in the immediate aftermath of the war, the conflict was remembered in extremely different ways depending upon exactly who was doing the remembering.

Unionist memory was a powerful force in Civil War remembrance, for a time. It dominated during Reconstruction, focusing public attention on the conflict as “a glorious people’s war to safeguard the most important republic on Earth.”⁶¹ Unionist memory was evident in Republican campaigns for political office, and strengthened by the commemorative nature of Federal veterans’

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

organizations, mainly the Grand Army of the Republic. However, Unionist memory of the Civil War has not lived on in modern-day public memories. virtually no one refers to the Civil War as “the War of the Rebellion” anymore. Ultimately, the Unionist narrative would be largely ignored by the turn of the century, especially with the advent of the Spanish-American War. It would be during this conflict that Union veterans would decide that Confederate veterans had fought with honor and could be trusted, as well as attaining a commitment by the federal government to more reconciliatory forms of Civil War commemoration.⁶² In 1898 President McKinley declared it time that the federal government accept responsibility for the care of Confederate graves, a task that had been left previously to

⁶² Ibid., 95-125.

mainly Southern white women. Two years later, Congress would allow the reburial of Confederate soldiers in Arlington National Cemetery. This effectively marked the end of the Unionist strain of Civil War memories.⁶³

Unionist memory, Cook acknowledges, did however also give birth to an emancipationist narrative. In arguing that the Union's actions during the war were representative of "the most noteworthy instance in human history not only of grassroots republican patriotism but also of collective moral virtue," then slavery's abolition would have to be central to any claims that the north had waged a morally necessary and just war.⁶⁴ This is not to say that the Unionist memory was always emancipationist, because

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 71.

frankly, it was not. The Unionist perspective was focused solely on remembering the north as the saviors of the Union, and only included memories of emancipation when it could be used to better portray the north as moral heroes in the conflict. Emancipationist memory, however, offered hope to formerly enslaved people. Activists and newly freed people used the memory of the conflict as one that “highlighted the destruction of slavery *and* racial prejudice as its most important outcomes.”⁶⁵ Under an emancipationist reading of the Civil War, the biggest consequence was not the restoration of the Union, but the complete abolition of slavery, and, ideally, the creation of equal rights in the United States. In the early years of Reconstruction, orators “often made the connection

⁶⁵ Ibid., 77.

between black loyalty to the Union and the ongoing struggle for black equality.”⁶⁶ The memory of the war as one that ended slavery was a powerful tool for African Americans in continuing the fight for equal rights, though they were often robbed of their own historical agency in the actual memory of the conflict itself.

For the most part, African Americans had little power to shape how the conflict was remembered by white society. African Americans were often excluded from the conversations about how the war would be memorialized. Nevertheless, black communities across the United States were still able to participate in commemorative efforts. Post-war African Americans remembered the Civil War at many points throughout the year in events such as

⁶⁶ Ibid., 78.

Emancipation Day, Decoration Day, Lincoln's birthday, and in Texas, black communities commemorated their liberation on June 19 ("Juneteenth"), the day in which they had been notified of their freedom. In fact, Cook cites historian David Blight as crediting Charleston black communities with inaugurating the tradition of Decoration Day.⁶⁷ While black memories of the Civil War were largely ignored and drowned out by the much louder Lost Cause, African Americans were still able to commemorate the conflict as emancipatory. In doing so, these black communities engaged in defiant memory work, and were able to instill their own memories of the conflict and antebellum life in the younger generations.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 78.

Perhaps the most powerful and long-lasting strand of Civil War memory is that of the Lost Cause. Hundreds of monuments were built by groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, with the imagery of the Lost Cause, a long-existing interpretation of the Civil War and Reconstruction by Confederates and their kin, in which they portrayed the South as fighting for a noble and just, but ultimately doomed cause. The Lost Cause sprung out of Confederate sympathizers need to vindicate themselves in the eyes of history. Its escalation was connected with Southern white people's fight against Reconstruction, the consolidation of white supremacy in the 1890s under Democratic rule, and the emergence of a "New South" committed to industrial

progress.⁶⁹ Eventually the Lost Cause morphed into an ideology that could be used to exert control over the public's memories. David Blight has written of the dangers of reconciliatory paths of memory, stating that,

The sectional reunion after so horrible a civil war was a political triumph by the late nineteenth century, but it could not have been achieved without the resubjugation of many of those people whom the war had freed... For many whites, especially veterans and their family members, healing from the war was simply not the same proposition as doing justice to the four million emancipated slaves.⁷⁰

The emergence of “the War between the States” was able to quickly overtake Unionist and emancipationist means of memory. Blight refers to this early stage of the Lost Cause

⁶⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁰ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

as the “diehard era,” when the Lost Cause was fashioned as a coherent discourse by unrepentant former Confederates writing in an incredibly charged political climate.⁷¹ A two-pronged defense of the South was formed, where high-ranking Confederates argued that secession had been legal under the Constitution and the north’s invasion had been unlawful, and that the North only won because they had overwhelming numbers.⁷² These claims appealed immensely to white Southerners’ sense of victimhood post-war, when they felt they were being ‘subjugated’ by Reconstruction. The Lost Cause was “Constructed, like all historical memories, by different groups possessing their own agendas, it was a plastic strain of memory that

⁷¹ Cook, *Civil War Memories*, 42.

⁷² *Ibid.*

smoothed the process of change in a conservative region that remained impoverished and underdeveloped long after military defeat.”⁷³ These ‘processes of change’ refer to the industrialization of the ‘New South’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Essentially, the myth of the Lost Cause was being used by white supremacist leaders to keep the poorer white working class in line during a period of intense social and economic change.

The Lost Cause has survived for so long in part because of its ability to mutate to fit with the times. In the early years post-war, when “embittered” Confederate leaders played a massive role, the Lost Cause was “cloaked in the culture of loss and mourning” throughout the South; however, following the 1889 death of Confederate

⁷³ Ibid., 41.

President Jefferson Davis, the Lost Cause had moved away from its “funerary grip” and become a public celebration of the Southern cause.⁷⁴ In the early post-war years, it was white southern women who took charge of the burial and remembrance of their dead, due to both their sense of familial duty and also because the federal government would take no responsibility for the Confederate dead. Following the death of Davis, a new theory as to the cause of the South’s secession formed. Whereas previously there had been agreement that the cause of secession was to ensure the continuation of slavery, starting around 1890, there was a greater emphasis on the idea of states’ rights.⁷⁵ This sudden pivot away from slavery as the cause of the

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Loewen and Sebesta, *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The “Great Truth” about the “Lost Cause,”* 279-280.

conflict can probably be attributed to two reasons: the first being that most people had been alive when South Carolina had seceded and knew better, the second being that state's rights had no contemporary relevance up until that point.⁷⁶ After 1890, when Confederate soldiers began dying off, the builders of the Lost Cause wanted to distance themselves from the stain of slavery.

Yet another reason why Lost Cause ideology has clung to power for so many generations is due to the way that Lost Cause adherents memorialized their version of the past in the public landscape. The vast majority of Union monuments were built between 1864 and 1890; the majority of Confederate monuments, however, were erected later, between 1890 and 1940. Historians James W.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Loewen and Edward H. Sebesta argue that the reason for the sudden boom in Confederate memorials is simple: “people put up monuments when they win.”⁷⁷ In the 1890s, Confederates and their kin had ‘won’ the Civil War—or, at least they had won their objective for why they had first seceded: they had regained control of Southern state governments and thus the freedom to oppress African Americans without interference.⁷⁸

The Lost Cause also would have been unlikely to withstand many generations had it not been for the early commemorative actions of women. The 1850s saw the presence of women as guardians of the nation’s history, particularly its Revolutionary history, as seen in the Mount

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Vernon Ladies Association's efforts to protect and preserve George Washington's home in the 1850s after decades of decay.⁷⁹ This antebellum association's endeavors hinted at what would come after the Civil War, when women would increase their public activity through historical memory work.⁸⁰

After the Civil War, when it came time to bury the Confederate dead and mourn them properly, the work was left to women. Southern women stepped up, so to speak, by forming Ladies' Memorial Associations, composed largely of elite white women. These associations were among the first to begin building monuments to the Confederacy post-

⁷⁹ William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 21.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

war, though given that much of the aims of these associations had to do with reinterment of the Confederate dead, many of these monuments were much more funerary in nature.⁸¹ These groups were also the prime movers behind the Confederate Memorial Day, a celebration that still exists in many places in various forms to this day.⁸² The associations, while meant mainly for upper-class white women, helped to create a culture of memorializing the Lost Cause in both funerary and celebratory ways in the immediate years following the war.

Without a doubt, the strongest group in protecting the legacy of the Lost Cause is the United Daughters of the Confederacy, founded in 1894. The UDC, which still

⁸¹ Loewen and Sebesta, *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader*, 28.

⁸² *Ibid.*

exists, is a Neo-Confederate group, a term that has its roots in the 1890s and refers to groups who did not fight in the conflict themselves, but intended to further the Lost Cause.⁸³ While the term “Neo-Confederate” has a connotation of a more modern, Neo-Nazi-style white supremacist, it can refer to any one person or group intending to advance the Lost Cause ideology. The UDC in its founding was particularly devoted to memorializing the Confederate cause, “erecting Confederate monuments everywhere, even in corners of the South that had been predominantly Unionist or uninhabited during the war.”⁸⁴ The UDC boasted thirty thousand members within ten

⁸³ “Neo-Confederate,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/neo-confederate>.

⁸⁴ Loewen and Sebesta, *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader*, 279.

years of its founding, most having been born after 1850 and belonging to the South's growing middle-class.⁸⁵ The massive boom in UDC membership can attest to the popularity of the Confederate celebration beginning in the 1890s. While the diehard phase of memorialization in the 1860s had its origins in the historical activities of the Confederate officer class and Ladies' Memorial associations (mainly in the form of personal written narratives), it would ultimately be the work of the UDC that brought forth the "assertive Confederate celebration of the late nineteenth century."⁸⁶ While the Lost Cause inherently acknowledges Southern defeat, these commemorative organizations were integral to the

⁸⁵ Cook, *Civil War Memories*, 64.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

construction of a Jim Crow society that was, according to Cook, a “fitting legacy of the slaveholding Confederacy.”⁸⁷

The current climate regarding memorials—particularly Confederate memorials—is contentious, to say the least. Those who resist the removal of Confederate monuments argue that they are simply statues, just some stone meant for the remembrance of people who died over a century ago. If only it were that simple. To say that a monument, especially a Confederate monument, is simply a statue is inaccurate. According to historian Seth C. Bruggeman, a memorial seeks to engage in “all matter of perceptual trickery.”⁸⁸ The old adage “history is written by

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Seth C. Bruggeman, “Memorials and Monuments,” *The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook*, July 18, 2019, <https://inclusivehistorian.com/memorials-and-monuments/>.

the victors” comes to mind—those in power get to decide what memories are important, and what should be buried. It was the Lost Cause and Confederate descendants that would ultimately make the decisions about how the Civil War should be remembered in the Southern United States. It would be these choices that became memorialized. While the South may not have won the war, they achieved a semblance of their original goal in secession with the failure of Reconstruction: the subjugation of black people under the law. Monuments and memorials tell their own biased version of the past, presented “as if there were no argument.”⁸⁹ But there will always be some influence, some subjective argument presented. In this way,

⁸⁹ Ibid.

monuments can never truly be neutral parties in the presentation and interpretation of the past.

Arlington National Cemetery and its Confederate Monument

Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for many of the nation’s military, is practically drowning in public memory, due in no small part to its unique history. Originally called Arlington House, the estate was constructed by descendants of George Washington between 1808 and 1818 as the “nation’s first memorial to George Washington.”⁹⁰ A Greek-Revival style mansion built by

⁹⁰ U.S. Army, “Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial,” *Arlington Cemetery*, <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/History-of-Arlington-National-Cemetery/Arlington-House>.

George Washington Parke Custis, step-grandson of the first president, Arlington was intended to be a place to display George Washington's heirlooms and memorabilia, in addition to being a working plantation.⁹¹ George Washington Parke Custis owned nearly 200 enslaved people throughout his life, with as many as 63 enslaved people living and working at Arlington. In his will, Parke Custis stipulated that all the enslaved persons at Arlington should be freed upon his death, given that the estate was in good financial standing. However, Robert E. Lee, as the executor of the estate, determined that slavery was needed to improve Arlington's financial status, and the estate's

⁹¹ Ibid.

enslaved people were not officially freed until 1862.⁹² Even decades before the Civil War and Arlington's first burial, the property was already a site of remembrance for a prior war, alongside a complicated history of slavery.

Parke Custis lived at Arlington house until his death in 1857, and the property was passed into the ownership of Mary Anna Randolph Custis, who at that point was married to Robert E. Lee. Upon Virginia's secession from the Union in 1861, the Lees left Arlington House forever. The estate was shortly thereafter occupied by the Union army, due to its strategic location on high ground across from Washington, D.C. Because Mary Custis Lee, the actual owner of the property, failed to pay her taxes following

⁹² National Park Service, "Slavery at Arlington," *U.S. National Park Service*, August 7, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/arho/learn/historyculture/slavery.htm>.

secession, the federal government confiscated the estate.⁹³ First officially used by the federal government as a home for African American refugees, Arlington became a large freedman's village, wherein its residents were often buried on the grounds alongside white Union soldiers.⁹⁴ In 1864, U.S. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs authorized military burials on the property, due both to a severe lack of burial space in Washington and also to prevent the Lees from ever returning home.⁹⁵ Soon after, 200 acres of the Arlington estate was designated as a military cemetery. It would only be after the creation of a national soldiers' cemetery that the grounds became racially segregated.⁹⁶

⁹³ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 174.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁹⁵ U.S. Army, "Arlington House, Robert E. Lee Memorial."

⁹⁶ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 175.

Post-war, neither Robert E. Lee nor Mary Custis Lee ever attempted to regain control of their former home. However, in 1874, their son George Washington Custis Lee sued the government for the property, claiming it had been illegally seized. In 1882, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Lee family, though less than six months later the federal government purchased the property from George Washington Custis Lee to the sum of \$150,000 (more than \$4 million today).⁹⁷ Within a few short years, Arlington had become an important enough memory site that the government would spend a rather large figure to keep it and continue to use it for the burial of the Union dead.

The enormous number of casualties seen in the Civil War demanded a change in how the public perceived

⁹⁷ U.S. Army, “Arlington House, Robert E. Lee Memorial.”

the deaths of servicemen. Whereas previously, there had been no national cemeteries built to honor the dead from prior wars, Northerners demanded that the deaths of some 360,000 soldiers be rightfully recognized. In October of 1865, U.S. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs commissioned a report that revealed the scale of the problem, including “tens of thousands of Union corpses scattered across the South and vulnerable to desecration by disgruntled Confederates.”⁹⁸ Meigs instructed military officers and reburial teams to search the south for Union bodies, which would then be gathered up and reinterred in government cemeteries built on or near the ‘great’ battlefields of the war, or “adjacent to hospitals and prisons.” By March 1870, 309,255 federal bodies, a great

⁹⁸ Cook, *Civil War Memories*, 26.

many of them unidentified, had been collected by the government at a cost of more than \$3 million. Congress then passed legislation to “mark, beautify, and protect these places, thereby guaranteeing their function as prime physical sites of Civil War remembrance for generations to come.”⁹⁹ Of these early national battlefield parks established in the remembrance of the conflict, Gettysburg came to belong solely to Union memory, with public outcry stopping a Confederate monument from being built on the grounds.¹⁰⁰

Southern women were left to deal with the burials of their dead, given that federal programs for reinternment did not include Confederate deceased. By the end of the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 105.

war, roughly one in three Confederates, compared to one in six Federals, had died, in addition to an estimated 50,000 civilians. The sheer amount of death on the Confederate side placed a heavy emotional burden on Southern women. According to Cook, Southern women viewed the care and remembrance of their dead as the “special responsibility” of their sex, adopting relevant mourning rituals such as wearing black and preserving ‘sacred’ keepsakes.¹⁰¹ If there was a body to be buried, women would see that it was buried properly. Southern white communities resented the exclusion of their dead from Arlington, and women saw to it that their fallen would not be left to molder in fields. In the early years, women formed Ladies’ Memorial Associations across the south, a precursor to what would

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 19.

eventually grow into the United Daughters of the Confederacy. These early groups were often comprised of upper-class white women and worked to fund a range of reburial projects throughout the south. Shortly after the South's defeat at Appomattox, Southern women underwent a public effort to bring their dead home and remember them as they saw proper, in a movement that was impressive in its scale, given the lack of federal assistance.

The elite Ladies' Memorial Associations would eventually diminish in power compared to the larger, more organized, middle-class UDC. As the Lost Cause left its mourning period and entered what Timothy Sedore has called the "Confederate Celebration" period, southern white women's roles became less about public mourning,

and more about memorializing.¹⁰² The UDC would become the most prominent group in Southern female memory work after its founding in 1889, and quickly got to work putting up dozens of monuments to the Confederacy and the Lost Cause across the south. It makes sense, then, that following President William McKinley's 1898 push for the federal government to accept responsibility for the care of Confederate graves, and Congress' sanctioning the reinternment of Confederate dead in Arlington in 1900, that the UDC would shortly thereafter make a move to construct a monument in the National Cemetery. And move they did. In 1906, then-U.S. Secretary of War William Howard Taft granted the UDC's request to build a large Confederate

¹⁰² Timothy S. Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 3.

monument in Section 16, which Congress had designated specifically for the Confederate dead.¹⁰³

This is not to say that Arlington's reinterment project went smoothly. Despite the Lost Cause having a firm hold over Civil War memory by the turn of the century, there were still feelings of hostility. Hilary A. Herbert, chairman of the executive committee of the Arlington Confederate Monument Association, wrote of these sentiments in his "History of the Arlington Confederate Monument":

In March 1901, two prominent Southern women... each representing what she insisted was the sentiment of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, had protested to the Secretary of War that the South did not wish its heroes interred at Arlington, but intended to remove their remains to its own soil; and to support their protest these ladies

¹⁰³ Cook, *Civil War Memories*, 110-112.

cited resolutions by a Post of the G. A. R. in Philadelphia, insisting that no monuments or inscriptions be permitted in the National Cemetery ‘that were not in honor of the National flag.’¹⁰⁴

Part of the controversy surrounding the reinterment project was a strong belief from Ladies’ Memorial Associations that southern men should be buried in southern soil, and not buried by northern charity.¹⁰⁵ As Southern women, the Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the up-and-coming UDC felt that they had a duty to the Confederate dead, that they were supposed to be the protectors of their graves and their memories. However, a massive lobbying campaign was created, in which the women’s argument had been “belittled,” while the voices of Confederate veterans were

¹⁰⁴ Hilary A. Herbert, “History of the Arlington Confederate Monument” (Richmond: United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1914), 7-8.

¹⁰⁵ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 189.

emphasized.¹⁰⁶ This fight had briefly halted the reinterment, though after vocal support from multiple UDC chapters, the project continued, and by 1902, 262 Confederate bodies had been reinterred in Section 16.¹⁰⁷ The number would grow to include the 482 buried there today.¹⁰⁸

The reinterment project, finally completed, meant for Confederate sympathizers that a monument must be built quickly. However, there was some debate as to what kind of monument should be created. Some favored a “modest presentation that did not awaken northern anger,” while another camp, led by Hilary Herbert, supported a

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 190.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Army, “Confederate Memorial,” *Arlington Cemetery*, <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Monuments-and-Memorials/Confederate-Memorial>.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Army, “Arlington House, Robert E. Lee Memorial.”

“bolder statement of the Lost Cause.”¹⁰⁹ Herbert, who would later become chairman of the Arlington Confederate Monument Association, believed that the Arlington monument would be the most important Confederate symbol built—even more so than the monument to Jefferson Davis in Richmond, the heart of the Confederacy. “Every state and large city in the South already had its memorials to the Confederate Soldier,” wrote Herbert, “it was the duty of Southerners in Washington City to look after their dead, not gathered into that Confederate Section at Arlington.”¹¹⁰ After Taft’s approval of a monument, the Arlington Confederate Monument Association was formed, an effort combining members of the UDC and the United

¹⁰⁹ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 202.

¹¹⁰ Hilary A. Herbert, “History of the Arlington Confederate Monument,” 8.

Confederate Veterans. The committee then picked the sculptor Moses Ezekiel in 1910 to design and create the monument, with the hopes that it would be done within three years.¹¹¹

An artist with a studio in Italy, Ezekiel originally hailed from Richmond, Virginia, and had graduated from the Virginia Military Institute. A veteran of the Confederacy himself, Ezekiel had a design in mind for the memorial, “[t]his he outlined as a heroic-sized figure, typifying the South; in her extended left hand a laurel wreath with which to crown the dead; her right hand resting on a plow-stock, and underneath, on a circular base, figures representing the heroism and sacrifices of the men and

¹¹¹ Ibid., 13.

women of the South.”¹¹² While Ezekiel worked on the monument in Italy, the call went out to the UDC for fundraising. They collected a sum of \$75,000 to pay for Ezekiel’s contract.¹¹³ Wrote Herbert, “Every Chapter of the U.D.C. was appealed to, and although there were many other calls upon [the UDC], memorial, educational and charitable, it is believed that none failed to respond.”¹¹⁴

The fact that the UDC was able to fundraise enough money for a massive monument rather quickly shows how important a memorial in the National Cemetery was to Confederates and Neo-Confederates. That most every Chapter responded to the call for funds demonstrates that

¹¹² Ibid., 15.

¹¹³ Blair *Cities of the Dead*, 204.

¹¹⁴ Hilary A. Herbert, “History of the Arlington Confederate Monument,” 15.

many white Southerners were invested in remembering the Confederacy as noble and heroic. The creation of the monument was so exciting that the 1912 annual convention of the UDC opened with the laying of the monument's cornerstone, and a newspaper wrote of the whole affair that, "Marking as it does the first time the convention has been held outside of Dixie, it is expected to permanently mark the union between the North and South."¹¹⁵ This memorial to the Lost Cause was so deeply important to the Daughters that they broke eighteen years of prior tradition and held their large annual gathering outside of the South, just so they might be able to be there for the laying of the cornerstone. In addition, the monument was so critical that

¹¹⁵ "United Daughters of Confederacy Gather Here for Big Convention," *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1912.

it was expected to actually completely reconcile North and South.

There were dozens of newspaper articles surrounding the creation and dedication of the Confederate monument, all waxing poetic about the statue's symbolism of both Lost Cause ideology and the reconciliation between North and South. An unnamed former Confederate soldier, interviewed for an article in the *Washington Post* shortly before the monument's unveiling was quoted as saying "A Confederate monument, standing in the National Cemetery at Arlington, will take up the story of our country where the Washington Monument leaves off; and its unveiling will be epochal."¹¹⁶ This monument, for adherents to the Lost

¹¹⁶ "Pay Tribute to the South: Arlington Memorial Members Erecting Fine..." *The Washington Post (1877-1922)*, May 24, 1914.

Cause, was intensely important. The memorial was justification and vindication of the South and the Lost Cause in public memory, where the Confederate dead would always be remembered as fallen, noble American soldiers. It was not even solely Southerners who got swept up in the memory of the Lost Cause. In the same newspaper, less than a week after the unnamed former Confederate gave his statement, an also unnamed former Union soldier and member of the Grand Army of the Republic wrote in a letter, stating:

However, whether present or absent I will be in happy accord with you and those associated with you in the consummation of your efforts to give suitable visible expression of your purpose to honor in perpetuity the soldierly qualities, character, and sacrifices of the Confederate soldier... I visited Arlington and for the first time stood among the graves of the Confederate dead. On our way back home I said that I hoped

the time might come when I could place a flower on each grave, and if some one [*sic*] will see that my wish is granted it will be a comfort to me.¹¹⁷

This former Union soldier was, by the time of the monument's completion, willing to admit that the Confederates he had fought against were, in fact, worthy of a monument honoring them. Not only that, but he too wanted to be directly involved with honoring the fallen Confederates. For this unnamed G.A.R. man, the sacrifices the Confederacy had to endure alongside their 'soldiery conduct' were enough to vindicate the South's actions during the conflict. In the same article it was written that, "the unveiling Thursday will be in the presence and with the help of soldiers who fought in the ranks of the Blue,

¹¹⁷ "Peace Dove Returns: G.A.R. Will Attend Unveiling of Confederate..." *The Washington Post* (1877-1922), May 31, 1914.

and the last link in the chain of brotherly love that unites the North and the South will be forged.”¹¹⁸

This is not to say that everything was completely copacetic between the North and South by the monument’s completion in 1914. The Southern President Woodrow Wilson came under political fire when he unsurprisingly rejected an invitation by the G.A.R. to speak at Union Memorial Day in Arlington Cemetery, an event he had passed on previously. However, what made 1914’s rejection so controversial was the fact that Wilson had accepted an invitation by the UDC to speak at the Confederate monument’s dedication on June 4, with the “same cemetery, different crowd, much different

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

meaning.”¹¹⁹ The President of the United States had rejected the celebration of those who had saved and preserved the Union in favor of those who had tried to abandon the very government that he headed. Wilson survived what would amount to a very minor political blunder when, at the dedication of the monument, he addressed both Union and Confederate veterans, saying that “[the Civil War] chapter in the history of the United States is now closed... we now face and admire one another.”¹²⁰ Wilson then continued his address, mentioning how one day he had just so happened to flip to the name of Robert E.

¹¹⁹ Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, 171.

¹²⁰ Woodrow Wilson, *Address of President Wilson Accepting the monument in memory of the Confederate dead at Arlington national cemetery* (Washington Govt. print. off, 1914), <https://www.loc.gov/item/14030482/>.

Lee in the *Century Cyclopedia of Names*, where Wilson had

found him there in that book published in New York City simply described as an American general. The generosity of our judgements did not begin to-day. The generosity of our judgement was made up soon after this great struggle was over... It is our duty and our privilege to be like the country we represent and, speaking no word of malice, no word of criticism even, stand shoulder to shoulder to lift the burdens of mankind in the future and show the paths of freedom to all the world.¹²¹

Wilson's short address at the monument's dedication relied heavily on themes of reconciliation and honoring the Lost Cause. He took special care to mention that a book published in the North referred to Lee as an American general, not a Southern or Confederate General. By naming Lee as an American general, Wilson groups him alongside

¹²¹ Ibid.

other heroic figures in the nation's history. Wilson then urged the audience to stand together and speak no more malice towards each other. He wanted the country to move on from the Civil War, and in trying to close that chapter in American history, Wilson appealed to Southerners through the Lost Cause.

The monument, dedicated on June 4, 1914, after months of delays, stands in sharp contrast to other funerary monuments throughout Virginia. Whereas other cemetery monuments were somber, the Arlington elegy “offers a celebratory contrast.”¹²² Ezekiel's monument was lavish and larger than life: thirty-two feet tall and topped with a female representation of the South. In her left hand, the laurel wreath facing southward “recognizes the sacrifice of

¹²² Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide*, 115.

her sons to her cause,” while the pruning hook and plow in her right represents peace and reconciliation, as well as the hope of future glory for the south.¹²³ She stands atop a pedestal, decorated with four cinerary urns, representative of the four years of the Civil War. Inscribed beneath is a partial quotation from Isaiah 2:4, “AND THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING HOOKS.”¹²⁴ The verse is completed by the statement “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”¹²⁵ It is inherently a statement of peace, and the completed verse is reconciliatory in nature. The oft-quoted Civil War idea of “brother against brother” would be no

¹²³ Ibid., 116.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Isaiah 2:4 (21st Century King James Version).

more, the monument seems to say. There will be no war again.

The Lost Cause was a strong enough narrative that an instance of its power can be seen physically beneath the monument itself. Moses Ezekiel was buried under his creation, where he still rests today. In a 1914 *Washington Post* article about plans to dedicate the monument later that spring, Ezekiel is mentioned in this way: “the sculptor, Sir Moses Ezekiel, of Rome, contributed his work as an expression of love for the ‘lost cause.’”¹²⁶ He had been the first Jewish cadet to attend the Virginia Military Institute, and had gained international acclaim as an artist, even

¹²⁶ “Rites for Dixie Shaft: Monument to be Bared April 27 in Arlington...” *The Washington Post (1877-1922)*, February 17, 1914, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post, pg. 4. Put in basic newspaper citation style.

being decorated by King Umberto I of Italy and knighted by King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, facts no one without any prior knowledge of the man would have ever guessed based on his grave. His tombstone makes no mention of these groundbreaking accomplishments, only his time as a cadet.¹²⁷ Ultimately, he deemed his worldly renown to be significantly lesser than his time in the Confederacy, fighting for the Lost Cause. Fighting in service of the Lost Cause was the most vital thing he believed that he did with his life. Moses Ezekiel, for anyone who visits Section 16 at Arlington, will not be remembered as an international artist or the first Jewish cadet at VMI, but only for his service to the Confederacy.

¹²⁷ Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide*, 116.

These, of course, are not the only messages contained in the memorial. Below the Isaiah inscription are fourteen inwardly inclined shields, representing the Confederate and border states.¹²⁸ Further down are thirty-two figures, each intended to represent heroism and sacrifice from all peoples in the Confederacy, including figures of a military officer kissing his infant child, who is held by a weeping black ‘mammy’ figure as another child holds onto her skirt, a figure of an enslaved man following his master off to war, a blacksmith leaving his tools as his somber wife watches, and a young woman tying a sword and sash onto her departing soldier.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

The imagery of the ‘faithful slave’ was particularly popular at the time of this memorial’s creation. The UDC and UCV were powerful agents for the transmission of Confederate memory to a new generation. As the groups collaborated, they were able to consolidate and update the Lost Cause narrative through their close attention to, and censorship of, Confederate history. These organizations established historical committees to encourage members to engage in the work of disseminating the ‘true’ facts of the conflict—this placed a greater emphasis on the social harmony that supposedly existed in the Antebellum South, as well as stressing the idea of the “faithful slave.”¹³⁰ During this time, the UDC also began building monuments to the faithful slave, and less than a decade after the

¹³⁰ Cook, *Civil War Memories*, 40-69.

Arlington memorial was completed, Congress had to shelve a UDC proposal to build a national monument to the black mammy in Washington, D.C. due to opposition from black residents within the city.¹³¹ One of the first monuments to the concept of a “faithful slave” was dedicated in 1895 in Fort Mill, South Carolina. This monument featured an image of a black ‘mammy’ cradling a child on the porch of a plantation estate, next to a field slave sitting on a log. This first faithful slave monument was dedicated to “The faithful slaves / who, loyal to a sacred trust, / toiled for the support... of our ‘Confederate States of America.’”¹³²

Moses Ezekiel knew what he was invoking by including a black mammy on the Arlington monument. The

¹³¹ Ibid., 40-69, 125-156.

¹³² Ibid., 67.

imagery of the black ‘mammy,’ so moved by her enslaver going off to war that she weeps, is by design. The historical activities of groups such as the UDC served only to vindicate the Confederacy in the eyes of the world. By portraying slaves as being faithful to their enslavers, to the point of tears, these groups display the Confederate south as something enslaved African Americans were, themselves, faithful to. There is, of course, the insinuation alongside this portrayal that, because slaves had so much fidelity towards their masters, the Civil War could not have been caused by slavery. Alongside that insinuation is the belief that faithful slaves also served the Confederate cause through their loyalty, mainly through their caretaking of crops and children. The Lost Cause would frame the enslaved plantation workers as noble, in that their ‘loyal’

work allowed the Confederate home front to run while the ‘nation’ was at war. It ignores the fact that their loyalty was forced due to their condition as slaves, and that forced loyalty is not fidelity.

While the figure of the black mammy is easily located and analyzed, the figure of the enslaved man following his master off to war has proven to be more difficult for some people over the years. The figure has seen its image being used to prop up the Lost Cause even beyond the false narrative of the “faithful slave.” Often misinterpreted as an image of a black Confederate soldier, the figure has been used in Lost Cause memory even in recent years. During a speech in front of the monument on June 6, 1999, Alister C. Anderson, the “Chaplain-in-Chief” of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, confidently said

As you approach the front of the monument again you will see another negro next to the group of Confederate soldiers. This negro is also a soldier and carries a rifle over his shoulder. Most Americans do not know that there were thousands upon thousands of black soldiers who fought in the Confederate army and navy. These black soldiers were integrated into the ranks of the army with the white soldiers.¹³³

This statement, was, of course, wrong. Confederate wartime policy only allowed black soldiers in its ranks starting two weeks before the fall of Richmond, in a last-ditch effort to save the South. “Even then,” note the historians Loewen and Sebesta, “these soldiers were controversial; when they marched down the street in Confederate uniforms, white adolescents pelted them with

¹³³ Alister C. Anderson, “Address at Arlington National Cemetery,” in *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader*, ed. James W. Loewen and Edward H. Sebesta (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 372.

mud.”¹³⁴ The idea that an image of a black man near a group of Confederate soldiers on a monument shows that ‘thousands and thousands’ of black soldiers were in the Confederacy is nonsensical. It is also interesting to examine Anderson’s choice of words. He describes the figure as being a “negro next to the group of Confederate soldiers,” and never refers to the ‘thousands’ of black soldiers as being Confederates, only that they fought in the army. It is almost as if he himself does not believe the validity of his own claims.

The front of the monument has by and far the most noticeable and largest inscriptions, forcing the viewer’s eye to focus on what is written there. The front of the

¹³⁴ Loewen and Sebesta, *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader*, 373.

monument is inscribed with “—TO-OUR-DEAD-HEROES
– BY-THE-UNITED-DAUGHTERS-OF-THE-
CONFEDERACY – VICTRIX-CAUSA-DIIS-PLACUIT –
SED-VICTA-CATONI.” The Latin translates to “The
victorious cause was pleasing to the gods, but the lost cause
to Cato.”¹³⁵ This phrasing, from the epic poem *Pharsalia*,
ascribes a noble and pleasing Lost Cause to the south. Also
inscribed on the monument is a quote often attributed to the
Reverend Randolph Harrison McKim, a minister in
Washington, D.C., and a veteran of the Confederacy
himself. The quote on the monument is not the whole
excerpt, but the portion inscribed reads, “NOT-FOR-
FAME-OR-REWARD – NOT-FOR-PLACE-OR-FOR-
RANK – NOT-LURED-BY-AMBITION – OR-GOADED-

¹³⁵ Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide*, 115.

BY-NECESSITY – BUT-IN-SIMPLE-OBEDIENCE-TO-DUTY – AS-THEY-UNDERSTOOD-IT – THESE-MEN-SUFFERED-ALL – SACRIFICED-ALL –DARED-ALL-AND-DIED.”¹³⁶ Reverend McKim’s quote seems to best sum up what the Lost Cause had grown into by the early 1900s. It became an ideology that, because the men of the Confederacy had fought ‘dutifully,’ their treason in fighting against the Union could not only be forgiven but should be admired, as we should consequently also ignore the memories of formerly enslaved African Americans and their kin.

The Monument in Modern-Day

¹³⁶ Ibid.

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof attended a Bible study meeting at the historic Emmanuel A.M.E Church in Charleston, South Carolina. In the midst of that meeting, he murdered nine congregants, all of them black. A white supremacist, Roof wanted his actions to spark a “race war.”¹³⁷ However, following the surfacing of photos depicting Roof with the Confederate battle flag, including one in which he held both the flag and a gun, Roof “ignited something else entirely.” According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, his actions sparked “a grassroots movement to remove the flag from public spaces... In what seemed like an instant, the South’s 150-year reverence for

¹³⁷ Southern Poverty Law Center, “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy,” *SPLC*, 2016, https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_whose_heritage.pdf, 6.

the Confederacy was shaken.”¹³⁸ Public officials, responding to national mourning and outcry, removed public displays of Confederate symbology throughout the country, though obviously many still remain to this day.

Following the Charleston massacre, the state of South Carolina, birthplace of the Confederacy, was the first to respond to the shooting. Governor Nikki Haley signed into law a bill that enabled the removal of the Confederate flag from the State House Grounds, where it had flown since 1961 amid the ongoing Civil Rights movement.¹³⁹ The movement was able to quickly move beyond just the flag and began to encompass the removal of Confederate symbols everywhere. In Memphis, the City Council voted

¹³⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

to remove a statue of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who “oversaw the massacre of Black Union soldiers and became a Ku Klux Klan leader.”¹⁴⁰ To remove the statue, the city of Memphis would have needed approval from the state of Tennessee. Rather than trying to appeal to the state, which likely would not have approved the removal, the city exploited a loophole in Tennessee law, selling the park the monument was in to a non-profit, which then removed the monument themselves.¹⁴¹ It is significant that the city of Memphis would go to this extent to remove a statue of Forrest. It demonstrates how powerful the push to remove Confederate monuments has been.

¹⁴⁰ Noah Caldwell, “Where Do Confederate Monuments Go After They Come Down?” *NPR*, August 5, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/05/633952187/where-do-confederate-monuments-go-after-they-come-down>.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Throughout the South, people began taking a hard look at symbols of the Confederacy far beyond the flag and statues. There are schools named after Confederates, state holidays honoring the Confederacy, and multiple major military bases named for Confederate leaders. A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2016 found that there were at least 1,503 Confederate symbols in public spaces throughout the nation.¹⁴² The Charleston shooting came about during a politically divisive time, alongside a push for racial equality with the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014. Activist Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor wrote on the emergence of the movement:

The specter of crisis was also bolstered by cops' simple inability to stop killing Black people... the impact of the movement is

¹⁴² Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy," 10.

undeniable. It can be measured by some localities forcing police to wear body cameras or the firing of a handful of police for violence and brutality that was previously considered unremarkable... Perhaps most telling, it can be measured in the shifting discourse about crime, policing, and race.¹⁴³

Naturally, the fate of Confederate symbols has since become a pressing issue following the Charleston shooting and the advent of the Black Lives Matter movement.

This is not to say that the Charleston shooting was the sole cause of public backlash against Neo-Confederate memory. There has long existed a presidential tradition of sending a wreath to the Arlington monument on Confederate Memorial Day, a tradition that has continued nearly every year since its dedication in 1914. Yet starting

¹⁴³ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 14.

with Barack Obama's election in 2008, there has been a concentrated effort, mainly by professors, to get the highest office in the nation to abandon the tradition. Academics, most notably Edward H. Sebesta, have sent almost-yearly open letters and petitions to the Office of the President throughout the Obama and Trump administrations.

“Unfortunately,” says the open letter from 2010, “to date the Office of the Presidency has actively enabled neo-Confederacy... I ask you to end the federal government's support and enablement of neo-Confederacy starting by not sending a wreath to the Arlington Confederate monument on Memorial Day or any other day this year or years to come.”¹⁴⁴ The open letters did not work, and the

¹⁴⁴ Edward H. Sebesta, “An Open Letter to the President: Stop Recognizing the Sons of Confederate Veterans,” *History News Network*, May 5, 2010, <http://www.hnn.us/articles/126704.html>.

Presidential tradition of honoring the Confederate monument in Arlington continues today, although President Obama did start a new tradition of sending two wreaths: one to the Confederate monument, and another to the African American Civil War Memorial in D.C.¹⁴⁵

In 2017, a “Unite the Right” protest was planned by white nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia in response to the city’s plan to remove a statue of Robert E. Lee from what was then called Lee Park. White supremacists carried tiki torches through the campus of the University of Virginia and chanted racist and anti-Semitic slogans in a rally reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan. The event turned

¹⁴⁵ T. Rees Shapiro, “Confederate Memorial in Arlington: Honoring Rebels on nation’s sacred ground,” *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/confederate-memorial-in-arlington-honoring-rebels-on-nations-sacred-ground/2017/08/17/d2be2576-80bc-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html.

deadly on August 12 when James Alex Fields, Jr., a Neo-Nazi, purposefully drove his car into a group of counter-protestors, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer. The statue of Robert E. Lee still stands today, though many have changed their opinions on keeping Confederate monuments following Heyer's murder. The then-Mayor of Charlottesville Michael Signer had originally voted against removing the monument, but has since stated that following the violence, he has changed his mind. The events in Charlottesville led to the passage of a Virginia law that now allows individual localities to decide what to do with their Confederate monuments and symbols.¹⁴⁶ Similar to how the

¹⁴⁶ Neal Augenstein, "On 3rd anniversary, effects of deadly Charlottesville rally still being felt," *WTOP*, August 12, 2020, <https://wtop.com/virginia/2020/08/on-3rd-anniversary-effects-of-deadly-charlottesville-rally-still-being-felt/>.

Charleston shooting created a backlash against the Confederate battle flag, the Charlottesville white supremacist rally and murder of Heather Heyer has created even more public disdain for Confederate symbols.

Following Heyer's death, descendants of Moses Ezekiel wrote a letter calling for the removal of the Arlington Confederate monument. Twenty-two descendants of Ezekiel, from all over the nation and of varying age, signed the letter. Judith Ezekiel, a professor of women's studies and African American studies, said in an interview with the *Washington Post* that, "We were all horrified at the Nazi and white supremacist demonstration in Charlottesville... All of us agree that monuments to the Confederacy are racist justifications of slavery, of owning people. We wanted to say that although Ezekiel is a relative

of ours, we still believe it's a relic of a racist past."¹⁴⁷ The

letter to the *Post* continued:

Like most such monuments, this statue intended to rewrite history to justify the Confederacy and the subsequent racist Jim Crow laws. It glorifies the fight to own human beings, and, in its portrayal of African Americans, implies their collusion. As proud as our family may be of Moses's artistic prowess, we—some twenty Ezeekiels—say remove that statue. Take it out of its honored spot in Arlington National Cemetery and put it in a museum that makes clear its oppressive history.¹⁴⁸

The Ezekiel family letter, though powerfully written, did

not affect any changes at the cemetery. However, the

existence of the letter does show that there is a changing

¹⁴⁷ T. Rees Shapiro, "Descendants of Rebel sculptor: Remove Confederate Memorial from Arlington National Cemetery," *The Washington Post*, August 18, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/descendants-of-rebel-sculptor-remove-confederate-memorial-from-arlington-national-cemetery/2017/08/18/d4da6a3e-842b-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

belief in America about what stories, exactly, should be honored in public memory.

The very same year that the Ezekiel descendants tried to get their ancestor's sculpture removed, Edward Sebesta tried, again, to get the Office of the President to stop honoring the monument, this time through a change.org petition. Sebesta's petition asked President Trump "to not send a wreath or any other commemorative token to the Arlington Confederate Monument during your administration... The Arlington Confederate Monument is a monument to traitors who through violent insurrection attempted to secede from the United States of America. It is a monument that monumentally endorses secession and

treason.”¹⁴⁹ The petition did not work, and there was still a wreath sent that year.

Interestingly enough, the petition received very few signatures. Whether that is due to poor social media circulation or just genuine disinterest about where the President sends a wreath is debatable, though it can be argued that one possible reason for the lack of public backlash surrounding the specific monument in Arlington is that it is in a cemetery. The idea of changing things at Arlington National Cemetery tends to make people very uncomfortable, whether it is the question of the Ezekiel descendants calling for the monument’s removal, or

¹⁴⁹ Edward H. Sebesta, “Ask President Trump not to send a wreath to the Arlington Confederate monument,” *Change.org*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.change.org/p/edward-h-sebesta-ask-president-trump-not-to-send-a-wreath-to-the-arlington-confederate-monument>.

Sebesta's yearly plea for the President to stop honoring the statue. Arlington is one site very few people want to attack, in part because attacking a cemetery for soldiers is not exactly a good look. A 2020 opinion piece in the *New York Times* addressed the issue of Confederate monuments, saying "it is one point on which the president and his detractors can agree: [removal] should stop at the grave sites and battlefields that are meaningful reminders of our nation's history."¹⁵⁰ It does not matter if people only push for the removal of the monument, because undoubtedly the next question will always be 'what happens to those buried around it?' The Army, which currently has jurisdiction over

¹⁵⁰ Elliot Ackerman, "The Confederate Monuments We Shouldn't Tear Down," *The New York Times*, July 7, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/opinion/confederate-graves-arlington-cemetery.html?partner=IFTTT>.

the Arlington National Cemetery, has confirmed that they are working with the Defense Department “on guidance for display of divisive symbols. Any review would include this memorial.”¹⁵¹ It seems unlikely that the monument will ever be removed from the grounds of Arlington, given that it is a monument in a national cemetery and Americans are fiercely protective of their dead, although it does seem more and more likely that there will be a better context as to how to interpret this monument to the Lost Cause.

The most recent development in changing public opinion on Confederate monuments came in the form of yet another tragedy: the murder of George Floyd, a black man, by the police in Minneapolis in 2020. Floyd’s murder came about during the Black Lives Matter movement, which

¹⁵¹ Sisk, “Army Reviewing ‘Confederate Memorial.’”

calls for protests against police brutality and racial inequality across the nation. His death in late May sparked a renewed summer of protests, with Black Lives Matter activists calling for reform, defunding, or even abolition of the police; an end to qualified immunity for officers; for reinvestment in underfunded communities; for schools, companies, and communities to address their own racial inequality; and, of course, for Confederate monuments to come down. According to NPR, since Floyd's death, 59 Confederate symbols have been removed or replaced, a significant increase from 2019's total removal number of 16.¹⁵² Some symbols and monuments have been "literally brought down by protesters, while other symbols were

¹⁵² Domonoske, "Report: 59 Confederate Symbols Removed Since George Floyd's Death."

removed by local governments or institutions in response to the outcry.”¹⁵³ The outpouring of public support for the Black Lives Matter movement following Floyd’s murder, particularly with the call for the removal of Confederate monuments, shows how public opinion and memory has changed significantly. The Lost Cause is losing its iron grip on Civil War remembrance; while there are still those who argue that monuments are a part of Southern heritage, there is a large, growing movement to push past the idea of a noble Lost Cause, and to portray the South as it was—a slaveholding society.

Following Floyd’s murder, there have been more legislative attempts to remove Confederate symbols from public spaces. Following the Charleston shooting, the

¹⁵³ Ibid.

debate was mainly focused on the battle flag. However, the current debate tends to encompass all Confederate symbols. In July of 2020, the House of Representatives approved a bill to remove statues honoring Confederate figures from the U.S. Capitol, including a bust of Chief Justice Roger Taney, author of the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision that denied freedom to an enslaved man.¹⁵⁴ It is noteworthy that legislation such as this one came about when it did—shortly after George Floyd’s death, after weeks of constant and consistent Black Lives Matter protests, and a week after the death of Representative John Lewis, who had been an icon in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Deirdre Walsh, “House Passes Bill Removing Confederate Statues, Other Figures From Capitol,” *NPR*, July 22, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/22/894165717/house-poised-to-pass-bill-removing-confederate-statues-from-capitol>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Those who support keeping Confederate symbols lambast the people calling for removal, arguing that removing monuments is “erasing history” or that it interferes with Southern heritage. The most notable supporter of Confederate memorials is President Donald Trump, who, in the days after the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, argued on behalf of the statues, saying in a series of tweets: “Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments. You can’t change history, but you can learn from it. Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson—who’s next, Washington, Jefferson? So foolish! Also the beauty that is being taken out of our cities, towns, and parks will be greatly missed and never able to be

comparably replaced!”¹⁵⁶ Asked again about Confederate statues following the murder of George Floyd, Trump has stated that he supported adding new statues but not removing old ones, citing heritage, history, and artistic beauty.¹⁵⁷

Efforts to deface, remove, or undermine Confederate symbols have a long history in this country. A May 30, 1913 article in *The Times Dispatch* reported on a story in Staunton, Virginia, on “An attempt of a vandal to paint the Confederate Monument in Thornrose [cemetery] with green paint,” that had apparently been met with “the

¹⁵⁶ Donald Trump, Twitter post, August 17, 2017, 9:07 A.M., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/898169407213645824>.

¹⁵⁷ Anagha Srikanth, “Trump doubles down on ‘heritage’ defense of Confederate statues,” *The Hill*, June 29, 2020, <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/505060-trump-doubles-down-on-heritage-defense-of-confederate>.

difficulty experienced in reaching the soldier statue at its top.”¹⁵⁸ Barring the vandal’s inability to coat the soldier in paint, they instead covered the monument’s base. That this instance of vandalism occurred when it did is important. That it occurred so close to Confederate Memorial Day (celebrated on different days depending on the state, but typically close to Jefferson Davis’ June 3rd birthday) suggests that the vandal knew the significance of the Confederate monument, and intentionally went out of their way to deface it.

In 1964, San Francisco included a Confederate battle flag in a display over city hall. Although the city insisted that the battle flag’s inclusion was not meant to

¹⁵⁸ “Vandal Defaces Stone,” *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, VA.), May 30, 1913.

have ‘political overtones,’ civil rights leaders “denounced the Confederate flag as ‘a symbol of hate’ and a ‘badge of slavery’” in their calls for its removal.¹⁵⁹ The flag was stolen during a human rights rally. Twenty years later, another “historical” flag display in the same location provoked a member of a radical group to rip the flag down and burn it. This was an effective form of protest, in that the city replaced the Confederate flag with one that commemorated California Union soldiers in the Civil War.¹⁶⁰ There have always been instances of people fighting back against Confederate symbology. Other historic instances of undermining Confederate symbols

¹⁵⁹ John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America’s Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 155.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

have been documented. During the height of the Civil Rights movement, the Confederate battle flag “became the opposing symbol to the Stars and Stripes. Identifying themselves with American principles and patriotism, civil rights protesters marched with the Stars and Stripes. Segregationists often played into the protesters’ strategy by taunting them with Confederate flags.”¹⁶¹

Protesting Confederate symbols and the Lost Cause is a part of American history. Even ignoring the protests against Confederate symbols in the 1960s and ‘70s, the massive protests across the entire nation this past summer are certainly historic in and of themselves. Saying that removing these symbols is erasing history ignores the long history of Americans who fought against oppressive

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 138.

symbols and historical narratives. It is not erasing history to have a genuine conversation about what is worthy of honor and memorialization. It is not denying someone's heritage to move away from an oppressive narrative of the past. The modern-day conversation surrounding Confederate monuments is a difficult one that includes questions such as: what should be done with the monuments? Should they be destroyed or put in museums? Should other memorials be put up that place Confederate monuments into proper context? While these are extremely complex and politically charged questions, it is important to ask them, both for the sake of finally ridding historical memories of the Lost Cause and also for the future of the nation politically.

Conclusion

There are different strands of memory regarding the Civil War, even today. There are still people who see the conflict through the lens of the Lost Cause, meaning that just because the South fought dedicatedly for their cause, there will be those who think that they should be honored, regardless of the fact that the cause they fought so hard for was that of slavery. There are still people who see the Civil War as being caused by the issue of state's rights, rather than the holding of people in bondage. Confederate monuments and other Confederate symbols serve to perpetuate these false narratives—by holding the Confederacy in a place of honor in modern day America, it legitimizes these alternative memory strands. If the Confederacy were to be portrayed as they truly were

(treasonous slaveholders), they obviously would not be deserving of monuments and statues.

The Confederate Monument at Arlington National Cemetery was created by the Lost Cause, as well as perpetuates the Lost Cause. The context in which the monument was made is important. It was built on what had once been the property of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, funded by a neo-Confederate group dedicated to propagating a false narrative of history wherein the South would be vindicated, and sculpted by a former Confederate soldier. The monument is built with the intention of portraying a mythical South, where the Confederate soldiers fought bravely and admirably for their doomed cause, while their faithful slaves also nobly dedicated themselves to the Confederate cause. The entire point of

this monument, and arguably, the majority of Confederate monuments, is to portray the Confederacy as something that future generations would deem worthy of honoring and remembering with kindness.

The Arlington Cemetery Confederate Monument is a notable addition to the conversation surrounding the modern-day debate around Confederate symbols. While very few people call for the monument's outright removal, it is one of the few Confederate monuments that receives outright appreciation from the Office of the President and the Federal government. In putting the Confederate Monument at Arlington into a larger historical context, it is easier to understand the Lost Cause's hegemonic power over Civil War remembrance.

Understanding the Lost Cause is essential to understanding the oppressive nature of these monuments. The overwhelming hegemonic nature of the Lost Cause is evident in the symbolism and history behind monuments, and it is perhaps nowhere better understood than in Arlington Cemetery. By partaking in this research, I have sought to show that the modern-day debate surrounding Confederate symbols is grounded in the past. In grounding this debate in the past, one is able to chart the narrative of the Lost Cause and thereby better argue that these monuments are indeed harmful, and that they have always represented pseudo-historical efforts to vindicate the South.

Bibliography

Ackerman, Elliot. "The Confederate Monuments We Shouldn't Tear Down." *The New York*

Times. July 7, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/opinion/confederate-graves-arlington-cemetery.html?partner=IFTTT>.

Anderson, Alister C. "Address at Arlington National Cemetery." In *The Confederate and Neo-*

Confederate Reader. Edited by James W. Loewen and Edward H. Sebesta. 371-371. Jackson:

University Press of Mississippi, 2010.

Augenstein, Neal. "On 3rd anniversary, effects of deadly Charlottesville rally still being felt."

WTOP. August 12, 2020.

<https://wtop.com/virginia/2020/08/on-3rd-anniversary-effects-of-deadly-charlottesville-rally-still-being-felt/>.

Blair, William A. *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-*

1914. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: The

Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

Bruggeman, Seth C. "Memorials and Monuments." *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook*. July 18, 2019.

<https://inclusivehistorian.com/memorials-and-monuments/>.

Caldwell, Noah. "Where Do Confederate Monuments Go After They Come Down?" *NPR*.

August 5, 2018.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/08/05/633952187/where-do-confederate-monuments-go-after-they-come-down>.

Cook, Robert J. *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865*.

Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.

Coski, John M. *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem*. Cambridge:

The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Domonoske, Camila. “Report: 59 Confederate Symbols Removed Since George Floyd’s Death.”

NPR. August 12, 2020.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/12/901771780/report-59-confederate-symbols-removed-since-george-floyds-death>.

Glassberg, David. “Public History and the Study of Memory.” *The Public Historian* Vol. 18, No.

2 (Spring, 1996): 7-23.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

Edited and translated by Quentin

Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York:

ElecBook, 1971.

Herbert, Hilary A. “History of the Arlington Confederate Monument.” Richmond: United

Daughters of the Confederacy, 1914.

Lears, T.J. Jackson. "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities." *The*

American Historical Review Vol. 90, No. 3 (June 1985): 567-593.

Loewen, James, W., and Edward H. Sebesta. *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader: The*

"Great Truth" about the "Lost Cause." Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.

McCammon, Sarah. "In Richmond, Va., Protestors Transform A Confederate Statue." *NPR*. June

12, 2020.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/12/876124924/in-richmond-va-protestors-transform-a-confederate-statue>.

Meiners, Erica R., and Therese Quinn. "Introduction:
Defiant Memory Work." *American*

Quarterly 71, No. 2 (2019): 353-361.

National Park Service. "Slavery at Arlington." *NPS*. August
7, 2020.

<https://www.nps.gov/arho/learn/historyculture/slavery.htm>.

"Neo-Confederate." *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

[https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-](https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/neo-confederate)

[hate/extremist-files/ideology/neo-confederate](https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/neo-confederate).

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de
Mémoire." *Representations* No. 26,

Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory
(Spring, 1989): 7-24.

Oliver, Ned, and Sarah Vogelsong. “Confederate memorial hall burned as second night of

outrage erupts in Virginia.” *Virginia Mercury*. May 31, 2020.

<https://www.viriniamercury.com/2020/05/31/a-second-night-of-outrage-erupts-in-virginia/>.

“Pay Tribute to the South: Arlington Memorial Members Erecting Fine...” *The Washington*

Post, May 24, 1914.

“Peace Dove Returns: G.A.R. Will Attend Unveiling of Confederate...” *The Washington Post*

(1877-1922). May 31, 1914.

“Rites for Dixie Shaft: Monument to be Bared April 27 in Arlington...” *The Washington Post*

(1877-1922). February 17, 1914.

Sebesta, Edward H. “An Open Letter to the President: Stop Recognizing the Sons of Confederate

Veterans.” *History News Network*. May 5, 2010.

<http://www.hnn.us/articles/126704.html>.

Sebesta, Edward H. “Ask President Trump not to send a wreath to the Arlington Confederate

monument.” *Change.org*. February 9, 2017.

<https://www.change.org/p/edward-h-sebesta-ask-president-trump-not-to-send-a-wreath-to-the-arlington-confederate-monument>.

Sedore, Timothy S. *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*. Carbondale:

Southern Illinois University Press, 2011.

Shapiro, T. Rees. “Confederate Memorial in Arlington: Honoring Rebels on nation's sacred

ground.” *The Washington Post*. August 17, 2017.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/confederate-memorial-in-arlington-honoring-rebels-on-nations-sacred-ground/2017/08/17/d2be2576-80be-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html.

Shapiro, T. Rees. “Descendants of Rebel sculptor: Remove Confederate Memorial from

Arlington National Cemetery.” *The Washington Post*. August 18, 2017.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/descendants-of-rebel-sculptor-remove-confederate-memorial-from-arlington-national-cemetery/2017/08/18/d4da6a3e-842b-11e7-ab27-1a21a8e006ab_story.html.

Sisk, Richard. "Army Reviewing 'Confederate Memorial' Featuring Slaves at Arlington National

Cemetery." *Military*. July 9, 2020.

<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/07/09/army-reviewing-confederate-memorial-featuring-slaves-arlington-national-cemetery.html>.

Southern Poverty Law Center. "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy." *SPLC*,

2016.

https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_whose_heritage.pdf.

Srikanth, Anagha. "Trump doubles down on 'heritage' defense of Confederate statues." *The Hill*.

June 29, 2020. <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/505060-trump-doubles-down-on-heritage-defense-of-confederate>.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket

Books, 2016.

Trump, Donald. Twitter post. August 17, 2017, 9:07 A.M.

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/898169407213645824>.

“United Daughters of Confederacy Gather Here for Big Convention.” *The Washington Post*

(1877-1922). November 10, 1912.

U.S. Army. “Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.” *Arlington Cemetery*.

[https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/History-of-Arlington-National-Cemetery/Arlington-House.](https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/History-of-Arlington-National-Cemetery/Arlington-House)

U.S. Army. “Confederate Memorial.” *Arlington Cemetery*.

[https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Monuments-and-Memorials/Confederate-Memorial.](https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Monuments-and-Memorials/Confederate-Memorial)

“Vandal Defaces Stone.” *The Times Dispatch*. May 30, 1913.

Walsh, Deirdre. “House Passes Bill Removing Confederate Statues, Other Figures From

Capitol.” *NPR*. July 22, 2020.

[https://www.npr.org/2020/07/22/894165717/house-poised-to-pass-bill-removing-confederate-statues-from-capitol.](https://www.npr.org/2020/07/22/894165717/house-poised-to-pass-bill-removing-confederate-statues-from-capitol)

Wilson, Woodrow. *Address of President Wilson Accepting
the monument in memory of the*

Confederate dead at Arlington national cemetery.

(Washington Govt. print. off, 1914).

<https://www.loc.gov/item/14030482/>.

Corresponding with a Courtier:

The Gender Politics of Sixteenth Century French

Letters

Mary Basso

University of Michigan

One of the principal methods Duchess Diane de Poitiers employed to maintain her position of power within the early modern French state was the manipulation of prevalent gender norms in written sources. Though sources written by Diane herself are relatively rare, they are telling in that they display her aptitude for navigating the political field using the one thing that was supposed to keep her out of it: her gender. In this article, I will explore how Diane utilized her correspondence to connect with members of the French nobility and to ensure that her place at court was secure despite the many ways in which she broke traditionally accepted gender norms. De Valentinois¹⁶²

¹⁶² Diane de Poitiers' position in French society changed throughout her lifetime, necessitating changes in the way her name was styled. As a young woman, she was simply Diane de Poitiers. Upon her marriage to Louis de Brézé in 1515, she became the Grand Senechal of Normandy. Diane became the Duchess de Valentinois in 1548 and the Duchess d'Étampes in 1553 through her relationship with Henri II.

constructed a persona within her writing that was designed to shield her from the gendered criticism of elites brought on by her sexual relationship with the king. The persona that existed within the royal mistress' letters differed from that created by her lover's wife, queen Catherine de Médicis, because the women occupied different stations within the court and faced different types of criticism from those stationed below them. Throughout the collection of Diane's letters, her use of norms relating to motherhood, the gender hierarchy, and emotional expression are particularly striking for their crucial role in her quest to maintain her power and influence. Within this work, I will examine the context in which Diane was writing letters, the norms she was forced to navigate to remain a publicly acceptable figure, as well as how she manipulated these

norms within her letters to powerful members of the French nobility.

Diane and her Correspondence

Throughout her lifetime, Diane de Poitiers strategically crafted a social network that would eventually allow her to amass political influence and an ever-growing fortune. De Poitiers was the oldest daughter of Jean de Poitiers and Jeanne de Batarnay. Her father was the *seigneur* of Saint Vallier and possessed significant financial holdings.¹⁶³ The high status associated with her family name granted Diane entry into the retinue of Anne de

¹⁶³ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 190. The title of *seigneur* or “lord” in early modern France was one bestowed upon landholding noblemen. It came with privileges such as hunting rights and favorable taxes, as well as duties such as military service to the king.

Beaujeu, the sister of King Charles VII.¹⁶⁴ Anne was a woman of high repute both within France and abroad following her tenure as regent, from 1483 until 1491, during Charles' minority. The princess was known as a woman of high political skill and her court was seen as the proving grounds for young women who wished to procure elite husbands.¹⁶⁵ Diane was educated in this setting, learning communication skills, traditionally male sports like hunting or horse riding, and the intricacies of court politics. The young woman's success in this competitive environment bore fruit when, at the wedding of King François I, she impressed Louis de Brézé and secured his

¹⁶⁴ Didier Le Fur, *Diane de Poitiers* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 16.

¹⁶⁵ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 190.

marriage proposal at the age of fifteen.¹⁶⁶ This match increased Diane's prestige within French society by connecting her to the royal family, as de Brézé was directly related to Charles VII through his mother. Not only this, but Louis was particularly well liked by high ranking court members for his efforts battling the English as the Sénéchal of Normandy. Though the Seigneur d'Anet was more than thirty years her senior, following their wedding in 1515, the couple quickly welcomed two daughters into their family.¹⁶⁷ Diane thus effectively complied with gender norms that demanded wives produce offspring for their husband, however it was likely a disappointment that the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 190.

¹⁶⁷ Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power During the French Wars of Religion: the Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20.

couple did not conceive a male heir. Both her rank and conformance to gendered norms surrounding spousal duties contributed to the high esteem de Poitiers enjoyed at court during this period of her life.

Despite her resounding success in the marriage market and the respect it garnered her, Diane remained unsatisfied with her own lack of influence in circles of influence. Rather than remain stagnant in her position, Diane chose to continue her climb up the social ladder through further education in social skills and court politics. She gained these in her role as Louise de Savoie's lady in waiting.¹⁶⁸ In this favored position, Diane stood witness as Louise controlled the nation as regent for her son François I throughout the Italian wars. This is significant because it

¹⁶⁸ Didier Le Fur, *Diane de Poitiers* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 69.

allowed de Valentinois to see another woman occupy an immensely powerful position in the state as well as the ways in which de Savoie manipulated gender norms to her own advantage when she was in control. Her time at the French court, as well as her efforts to defend the Normandy coast from ongoing English raiding parties following Louis' death in 1531, allowed de Poitiers to develop a close friendship with King François I which would be particularly influential in the later portion of her life.¹⁶⁹ Contacts that the duchess made in this period of her life were crucial to her development of an effective gendered persona that would further her climb through French society.

¹⁶⁹ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 194.

The development of her relationship with Henri II proved critical to Diane's search for political influence. As the second son of François I, for much of Henri's life his older brother was the presumed heir to the throne. Both boys were traded as hostages for their father following his capture by the Spanish during the Italian wars.¹⁷⁰ They remained in captivity for years, with little to no contact with the French court. When the princes returned, both were markedly changed by the experience. Henri's brother developed a respiratory illness that would last the rest of his life while Henri himself had a notably depressed and dour attitude. This change in the boy's personality created an emotional rift between him and François I. In an effort to improve their relations, Diane offered to reeducate the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 197.

eleven-year-old Henri utilizing popular chivalric values of the period to mold him into a more acceptable princely figure.¹⁷¹ This training stressed a “code of ethical conduct” by which he would live his life at court and conduct state business.¹⁷² It further suggested that he should “take up defense of country, widows, and orphans” while developing himself as an individual with expertise in “hunting [and] social games.”¹⁷³ However, chivalry also offered emotional ideals to the young prince which valued “wisdom and sweetness” over physical “prowess.”¹⁷⁴ Though initially this relationship was purely innocent, a

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 198.

¹⁷² Aldo D., Scaglione, *Knights at Court Courtliness, Chivalry & Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 71.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 73-75.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 80.

romantic interest and bond developed between the two. By this time, Diane had already played a key role in arranging his 1533 marriage to her Italian cousin, Catherine de Médicis.¹⁷⁵ The romantic relationship between de Poitiers and the prince began only two years later when Henri came of age at sixteen.¹⁷⁶ During the early years of their relationship, there was a concentrated effort by the couple to keep the affair out of the public eye. However, as Henri aged and became more confident, he behaved more

¹⁷⁵ Robert Knecht, *Catherine de' Medici* (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), 16.

It should be noted that the marriage between Catherine and Henri was carefully arranged by Diane and François I. Diane lobbied for this match over others that would have potentially been more advantageous for France. This was certainly because Catherine's marriage into the king's immediate family would have increased the prestige of Diane's own line. The two women were, in fact, cousins through their grandmothers.

¹⁷⁶ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 198.

brazenly and openly flaunted their relationship by wearing Diane's colors at public events.¹⁷⁷ The solidification of this relationship and its broadcast into the public sphere brought de Poitiers a seemingly higher social status, but with this also came threats to her growing influence.

As it became more widely known at court that she was the official royal mistress, Diane faced social obstacles that she had been able to avoid when her relationship with Henri had been private. Though most French kings had had mistresses, the position of the royal mistress was not officially ingrained in the French court until 1444, during the reign of King Charles VII.¹⁷⁸ Despite this newly formal

¹⁷⁷ Didier Le Fur, *Diane de Poitiers* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 106. In 1559, Henri would perish in a jousting match wearing Diane's colors.

¹⁷⁸ Murielle Gaude-Ferragu, *Queenship in Medieval France, 1300-1500*, trans. Angela Krieger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33-34.

status, the position of mistress remained one of enormous precarity for those who occupied it. Their status could be “ephemeral” because it was tied to the passions of the king.¹⁷⁹ While “beauty and charm” were “crucial” in becoming the mistress, they were not enough to remain in the position long-term.¹⁸⁰ Often, “domestic faction[s]” would form at court amongst the nobility who viewed the mistress as a threat to “the social order” and would attempt to dislodge her by offering other attractive young women to fill the position.¹⁸¹¹⁸² Diane herself experienced a factional movement to remove her when Catherine and her allies

¹⁷⁹ Olwen Hufton, “Reflections on the Role of Women in the Early Modern Court,” *The Court Historian*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2000), 6.

¹⁸⁰ Christine Adams, “‘Belle comme le jour’: Beauty, Power and the King’s Mistress,” *French History* Volume 29, no. 2 (2015): 162.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 163.

¹⁸² Olwen Hufton, “Reflections on the Role of Women in the Early Modern Court,” *The Court Historian*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2000), 6.

unsuccessfully attempted to replace her with the visiting Scottish noble, Jane Flemming.¹⁸³ Of course, while these women occupied the tenuous position of the official mistress, they were capable of wielding immense influence over court and state policy. Their proximity to the king allowed them to gain appointments within the palace for members of their family, secure advantageous marriages for their children, and procure profitable estates or titles for themselves. Beyond the influence the position would have on their personal network, mistresses were able to influence state and war policy through the advice they offered to the

¹⁸³ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 212. This episode was one of such drama at court that it has since become one that is frequently portrayed in modern television series that feature Diane and Henri. Though Jane Flemming's name was changed, her affair with Henri was one of the season long story arcs of the CW network television show *Reign*.

king. To combat factions that sought to remove her and to maintain this position of considerable power, Diane sought to make herself more acceptable to members of the landed elite through her manipulation of prevalent gender norms in letter writing.

Throughout her tenure as the king's official mistress, Diane de Poitiers utilized a gendered persona developed in her letters to maintain a powerful social network of the elite within France that would help keep her in her position. The manner in which de Poitiers projected feminine norms during this period was specifically suited to her role as mistress and differed vastly from the queen's use of feminine norms in her quest to maintain power within the state. De Valentinois' position was much more volatile than that of her rival, as there was always a risk

that the king would simply lose interest and replace her with another woman who had been presented to him by nobles at court. Therefore, her presentation of her curated persona was much more forceful than Catherine's. In her letters, Diane gave careful consideration to her use of gendered norms connected to motherhood, emotions, and the social hierarchy to combat the criticisms lobbied against her. This was crucial to her maintenance of power, as Diane broke many traditionally accepted norms as the king's mistress. Of particular concern were her age and marital status. During this period, only one in four men would be married before the age of thirty-two.¹⁸⁴ Thus, many noblewomen found themselves significantly younger than

¹⁸⁴ Katherine Crawford, *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11.

their husbands and facing an intense power disparity within the relationship.¹⁸⁵ However, de Poitiers was nearly twenty years Henri's senior. This shifted the power dynamic within the relationship to give her much more leverage over her partner. She could give him policy advice grounded in her life experiences, unlike younger women who would not have had the same opportunity to observe powerful female regents like Louise de Savoie at work.¹⁸⁶ Her more advanced age also brought negative attention to her lack of ability to provide children through her relationship with Henri.¹⁸⁷ Though she had already had two children with her

¹⁸⁵ This was true in Diane's own relationship with her husband, Louis de Brézé. When they married, he was more than thirty years her senior. Interestingly, the lord was older than his bride's father at the time of their marriage.

¹⁸⁶ Didier Le Fur, *Diane de Poitiers* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 38.

¹⁸⁷ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 192.

late husband, Diane was unable to directly fulfill this expected role within her new relationship. Through her letters, she was able to combat negative perceptions of her by creating a gendered persona that conformed to norms surrounding motherhood, emotional expression, and the social hierarchy.

Despite the richness of the material provided within these letters, much of Diane's vast collection of correspondence has been lost to historians, creating significant silences in the historical record of her life. Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot discusses the creation of historical silences, positing that they can be created at four key moments. They argue that silence is produced at "the moment of fact creation," the "moment of fact assembly," the "moment of fact retrieval," and the "moment of

retrospective significance.”¹⁸⁸ The duchess’ remaining written record certainly demonstrates the creation of silence on several levels. Diane was known to her contemporaries as a prolific writer, spending large amounts of time crafting and sending her correspondence to members of her social network. However, many of the documents she produced were destroyed by her contemporaries due to their sensitive subject matter. This is true of her letters to Henri, many of which would have been considered a liability should they have been released to the public due to the sexual nature of their relationship. Indeed, prevalent chivalric practices suggested that letters between the participants in an affair be destroyed as they did not demonstrate the “moral

¹⁸⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26.

behaviors” valued within the doctrine.¹⁸⁹ Most of Diane’s surviving letters were written between 1547 and 1559.¹⁹⁰ For this project, I utilized one of the most frequently cited collections of Diane’s letters, published by Georges Guiffrey in the mid-1800s. It should be noted that this volume certainly contains silences that were created at the moment of fact assembly, as it is likely that the editor chose to remove some letters from the collection because he deemed them insignificant to Diane’s story. This record features a large gap spanning from 1534 to approximately 1546. This period includes the moment Henri became the

¹⁸⁹ Aldo D., Scaglione, *Knights at Court Courtliness, Chivalry & Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 79.

¹⁹⁰ Susan Broomhall, “The King and I,” in *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483-1563*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 337.

dauphin of France following the sudden death of his brother, as well as the date that his first child by his wife Catherine was born. Silences in the record are significant here because we are unable to see how Diane's presentation of her gendered persona changed as the status of her relationship with Henri shifted and certainly as Henri's status shifted when he ascended to the throne.

Constructing a Persona Within Letters

To combat negative public assumptions about her inspired by her untraditional relationship with gender norms, Diane curated a persona through her letters that would be more acceptable to the French nobility. This persona was particularly attached to norms concerning motherhood, the social hierarchy, and emotional

expression. By performing norms in her letters, Diane was able to connect herself to a more palatable version of femininity that would allow her to retain her power and privileges within the state.

Motherhood was considered an essential function of womanhood during the sixteenth century and performance of acceptable norms associated with it could win crucial levels of respect among the nobility. The performance of motherhood was so important during this period that a female-bodied person was not considered a “true” woman in the eyes of their communities until they reached menarche and were able to conceive. Their ability to bear children was crucial to their performed gender. The birth of a child could be the cause for “rejoicing,” especially if they

were to be the heir of the family fortune.¹⁹¹ Following the child's birth, noble mothers were expected to take an active role in their education and religious faith. When women were unable to become pregnant it was a cause for great concern. A lack of fertility for aristocratic women put dynastic traditions that depended on a male heir at risk, as there was no way for them to “preserv[e] the family memory” without a child.¹⁹² Women who failed to conceive faced the potential of marital annulment and the relegation to life in a convent.¹⁹³ In more extreme cases, a

¹⁹¹ Susan Broomhall, “Fit for a King? The Gendered Emotional Performances of Catherine de Medici as *Dauphine* of France, 1536-1547,” in *Unexpected Heirs in Early Modern Europe; Potential Kings and Queens*, ed. Valerie Schutte (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 97.

¹⁹² Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013), 248.

¹⁹³ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 230-231.

woman without children might be considered the victim or perpetrator of witchcraft.¹⁹⁴ It was therefore crucial that women conform to these norms if they wished to remain respected members of their community.

As the royal mistress to a king younger than herself, Diane de Poitiers found it necessary to present an image of herself through which she was able to conform to norms surrounding motherhood. There was no doubt that the duchess had fulfilled her traditional role as a mother during her marriage to Louis de Brézé, giving birth to and raising two daughters.¹⁹⁵ Both of these women went on to marry advantageously, inserting themselves more deeply into the royal family. However, by the time Diane began her

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 231.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 192.

relationship with Henri, she was nearly thirty-five.¹⁹⁶ The chances that she would become pregnant and fulfill any gendered expectations connected to motherhood through this union were low and decreasing as the relationship continued. Thus, for Diane to remain viscerally connected to this essential function of womanhood she had to utilize another strategy. In lieu of having her own children with the king, Diane became a mother-like figure to his children with Queen Catherine. Indeed, Diane remained so involved throughout the entire parenting process, she was even credited with helping the couple conceive despite Henri's apparent penile malformation.¹⁹⁷ Following the birth of the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 199.

¹⁹⁷ Jennifer Gordetsky, Ronald Rabinowitz, Jeanne O'Brien, "The "infertility" of Catherine de Medici and its Influence on 16th Century France," *The Canadian Journal of Urology*; Volume 16, no. 2 (2009): 4586.

children, Diane was able to take charge of their care and maintenance as a member of Catherine's group of ladies-in-waiting. She chose the children's wetnurses, monitored their maids, and directed their tutors just as a birth mother was expected to do.¹⁹⁸ This unique association and involvement with the king's children allowed members of the court to more immediately connect Diane with positive gender norms related to motherhood, even though she did not give birth to any of Henri's children.

Diane's use of norms surrounding motherhood was carefully curated to reach an audience that occupied the upper echelons of French society. Her body of letters contains correspondence with important members of the

¹⁹⁸ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 209.

state like the Duke d’Aumale (a member of the powerful Guise family), the count du Bouchage (who had been made *grand sénéchal* of Provence in 1515), and Anne de Montmorency (a general under François I) who all would have been familiarized with these norms through the humanist education popular amongst the elite. The bulk of her writing between 1535 and 1550 was directed toward her “ally,” the duke Jeane d’Humières and his wife, Françoise d’Humières.¹⁹⁹ High ranking members of the court, the two were appointed the *gouverneur* and *gouvernante* of the royal children in 1546.²⁰⁰ The couple maintained the staff charged with caring for the children at

¹⁹⁹ Diane de Poitiers, “Lettres Inédites de Dianne de Poytiers, Pub. d’après Les Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Impérial,.” ed. Guiffrey, Georges Maurice (Paris: Vve J. Renouard, 1866).

²⁰⁰ Robert J. Knecht, *Hero or Tyrant? Henry III, King of France, 1574-89* (London: Routledge, 2016), 5.

Saint-Germain-en-Laye at Diane's behest.²⁰¹ Indeed, nearly half of the thirty-three surviving letters from the period are directed toward the couple, with continued correspondence directed toward Madame d'Humières following her husband's death in 1550.²⁰² Through her correspondence with the couple, Diane was able to illustrate her devotion to acceptable motherhood roles.

Parenthood ideals utilized by the French nobility placed high value on continuous concern for a child's health and well-being. Diane certainly displayed this concern through her flurry of letters to the Humières.

Nearly every letter contains a line regarding the progression

²⁰¹ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 209.

²⁰² Diane de Poitiers, "Lettres Inédites de Dianne de Poytiers, Pub. d'après Les Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Impérial,." ed. Guiffrey, Georges Maurice (Paris: Vve J. Renouard, 1866), 67-68.

of the children's health. The duchess stressed that she only felt "well at ease" when she received good news, especially when there were outbreaks of plague throughout the countryside.²⁰³ However, when news on the children's state was not glowingly positive, Diane was prepared to offer assistance in the form of expert advice, a swarm of medical professionals to be rushed towards the palace, or unique medical treatments. In December of 1547, the Italian nurse at Saint-Germain was "sick with measles," causing many in the Humières household to fear for the health of the children she had been caring for.²⁰⁴ Rather than join their collective panic, Diane returned their letter using a calming tone. She offered to send the letter porter

²⁰³ Ibid, 14-15. Translated "bien aise" to "well at ease."

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 15-16. Translated "malade de la rougeolle" to "sick with measles."

ahead with “some unicorn,” which could be used to treat the illness effectively and eliminate any cause for fear.²⁰⁵ The remedy was particularly powerful because of the unicorn’s association with Christ. Should this mythical remedy fail to function, de Valentinois noted that the king was ready to send “other doctors” to help the household if the situation were to deteriorate.²⁰⁶ The duchess’ involvement in this health scare was indicative of her general behavior surrounding the well-being of the royal children. As if she were their birth mother, she worked to ensure their well-being by involving their father in lobbying for better healthcare through medical professionals. Her mentions of Henri in her letters indicate

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 15-16. Translated “de la licorne” to “some unicorn.”

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 15-16. Translated “autres médecins” to “other doctors.”

her closeness to him and their cooperation as a parenting team. Although she may not have been their birth mother, during this period of their lives Diane functioned as a foster mother to the royal children. This intense level of involvement allowed de Poitiers to connect herself with positive motherhood norms that were so essential to early modern understandings of acceptable womanhood.

Beyond the sometimes dire health communiqués, Diane corresponded with the Humières family to coordinate the day-to-day lives of the royal children as a doting mother might have done. At times, Diane debated incredibly mundane issues like sleeping arrangements for the children living at Saint-Germain. This involvement is particularly clear when the young Queen Mary of Scotland was sent to join the royal nursery in 1548. As preparations

were made, Diane insisted that “madame Elisabeth and the Queen of Scotland [could] be lodged together,” suggesting that the two girls of similar age would get along well.²⁰⁷ However, she allowed the “chamber” that the girls would occupy could be chosen by the Humières.²⁰⁸ Her involvement in the children’s lives and her desire to make them happier by stationing them together following Mary’s arrival in France fulfilled gendered expectations of motherhood, in that she was involved in their maintenance.

Similarly, Diane remained involved in the daily lives of the children by coordinating visits to Saint-

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 35-36. Translated ““madame Ysabal & la Roynne d’Escosse soient logées ensemble” to “madame Elisabeth and the Queen of Scotland can be lodged together.” At the time of her arrival, Mary of Scotland would have been roughly six years old and the French princess would have been three years old.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 35-36. Translated “chambre” to “chamber.”

Germain with their parents. She frequently wrote that the king had a “grand devotion to seeing... his children” to indicate to the Humières an impending visit from the royal entourage.²⁰⁹ Diane served as an essential link between the palace and the nursery, providing both sides with information about the proper time for a visit. At times, Henri’s visitation was prevented by Protestant violence in nearby towns or the “risk of death” from apparent plague flares in nearby villages.²¹⁰ Through her involvement in the quotidian, Diane fulfilled gendered norms of motherhood that called for women to be involved in their children’s lives as a guide and caretaker.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 47. Translated “grand dévotion pour veoir... ses enffans” to “grand devotion to seeing... his children.”

²¹⁰ Ibid. 31-34. Translated “dangier de mort” to “risk of death.”

In her letters, Diane exploited gender norms that suggested women were more emotional than men to solidify emotional connections with advantageous individuals in her social network.

The humoral construction of the body taught followers that women were “more prone” to emotional outbursts than men.²¹¹ Outbursts or expressions of emotion by women were sometimes interpreted as a symptom of their “corporeal infirmity.”²¹² Women were understood to produce “tears” as an expression of their most intense emotions, however this form of expression could also be

²¹¹ Susan Broomhall, “Catherine’s Tears: Diplomatic Corporeality, Affective Performance, and Gender at the Sixteenth-Century French Court,” in *Fluid Bodies and Bodily Fluids in Premodern Europe: Bodies, Blood, and Tears in Literature, Theology, and Art.*, ed. Scott, Anne M., Barbezat, Michael David (Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 60.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

used as a tool in oration and at times in diplomatic work.²¹³ Beyond this “deliberate deployment of emotional display” in person, women could use the gendered assumptions surrounding their emotional state to their advantage through writing.²¹⁴ Because letters were frequently “drafted and correct,” the language within them could be honed through the use of hyperbole and other rhetorical techniques to express one’s desires.²¹⁵ Expressing one’s emotional state could allow writers to gain levels of emotional control over their recipient, perhaps by using guilt over lapsed commitment to obligations or by sharing states of joy when something went as planned.

²¹³ Ibid, 55.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 63.

²¹⁵ Rosemary O’Day, “Tudor and Stuart Women: Their Lives Through Their Letters,” in *Early Modern Women’s Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. James Daybell (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 129.

Diane makes use of gendered expectations about women's inherent emotionality by overtly expressing her sentiments and connecting herself to others through them. In her letters, Diane frequently shared her emotional state with the letter's recipient; notably, the duchess uses this tactic much more frequently than does Catherine. When Diane received news from a friend that was particularly positive, she expressed that she was "well at ease" to have heard from them.²¹⁶ This note might have accompanied the announcement of good health, hearing about the promotion of a family member in the clergy, or the purchase of a new property. Even when there was no direct news or

²¹⁶ Diane de Poitiers, "Lettres Inédites de Dianne de Poytiers, Pub. d'après Les Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Impériale," ed. Guiffrey, Georges Maurice (Paris: Vve J. Renouard, 1866), 14-15. Translated "bien aise" to "well at ease."

correspondence from a member of her social circle, Diane attempted to reach out through her letters to mutual acquaintances. This is evidenced in her letters to her cousin the Count of Bouchage, through whom she consistently offered well wishes and warm emotions to his wife.²¹⁷

Despite having no direct contact with this individual, de Poitiers frequently shared positive emotional greetings with her through their mutual connection. Diane did not limit her expression of emotions to those that were more positive in nature. Instead, the duchess chose to share emotions associated with grief, anger, and frustration with her correspondents as well. Her sorrow when tragedy struck members of her social group is particularly notable. Indeed, Diane took great strides to assure individuals like madame

²¹⁷ Ibid. 66-67.

d'Humières they were not grieving alone at the “loss” of their recently deceased loved one and made sure to offer “good company” to those she wrote to if she believed they were in need of it.²¹⁸ Diane’s expression of her emotions, though relatively frequent, is coordinated and purposeful. Her use of emotional expressions was meant to endear herself to members of her social circle using language that was commonly acceptable for women. Her positive expressions were typically tied to the completion of a task she had orchestrated, the closing of a business deal, or as an encouragement to those who were working for her. More negative expressions like that of grief or anger showed

²¹⁸ Ibid. 69. Translated “la perte” to “loss.” Translated “bone compagnie” to “good company.”

those she was writing to that she shared in their emotional state and was tied to them through their shared feelings.

Negative constructions of femininity as something that made individuals weak or mentally unsound created a hierarchy within early modern France which placed men in a position of power over women. These beliefs were evident in French cultural practices, but were also enshrined in later legal practices like Salic law which barred women from the French line of succession.²¹⁹ This belief was highly visible in court, where the king was valued above his queen and by the early modern period

²¹⁹ Sarah Hanley, "Identity Politics and Rulership in France: Female Political Place and the Fraudulent Salic Law in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Montreuil," in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 78-80.

officially held more power than his partner.²²⁰ However, this was also prevalent in smaller-scale relationships like that between a husband and wife or a woman and another member of the nobility. Because of their inherent “frailty,” women were expected to show respect and obedience to men of equal or higher status than themselves.²²¹ Women like Diane were able to use the construction of femininity as something weak or inferior to accomplish their own goals. By at least publicly conforming to these norms, women were able to create an image for themselves that was more acceptable to other members of their social class. Those who did not visibly adopt these norms were seen more objectionably as “scheming” or “vulgar” and would

²²⁰ Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013), 187.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

thus be less likely to make the connections necessary to stay in a position of power.²²² Conformance to and manipulation of gender norms that demanded women remain subservient to men was a crucial component in a woman's strategy to gain power within the state.

In her letters to powerful men within the French nobility, Diane used specific language to portray herself as compliant to gender norms which dictated women remain beneath men in the social hierarchy. During this period, French widows were typically not allowed to remain in control of their own fortunes and were appointed a

²²² Christine Adams, "Mistresses and Merveilleuses: The Historiographical Record on Female Political Players of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality*, vol. 51, no. 2, (2016): 97.

guardian by the state to monitor their affairs.²²³ After her husband's death, political maneuvering and her close connection to François I allowed de Poitiers to remain in control of her finances and estates.²²⁴ Her tactful management of her *châteaux*, their rents, and her involvement in the political realm are indicative of a woman who knew how to navigate society without a man by her side to protect her. Despite this clearly non-normative status, Diane presented herself as subservient to men to make herself more acceptable to society at large. Diane presented herself to some as a friend, willing to do the bidding of those she was connected to. In her frequent letters to d'Humières, for instance, Diane labeled herself

²²³ Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 195.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 195.

his “very humble and very obedient” servant.²²⁵ Though she gave him instructions on how the royal children should be cared for throughout their years of correspondence, she also used language that indicated she would do favors for him and viewed him with the respect one might give a superior. Similarly, the duchess completed the important work of appeasing nobles during the religious conflicts beginning to shake France through her letters. The Guise family, notoriously staunch Catholics, were riled and ready to spark violence throughout 1548. She wrote to one of their rank, the Duke d’Aumale, to subdue him as she knew that the king was on the road and vulnerable to their

²²⁵ Diane de Poitiers, “Lettres Inédites de Dianne de Poytiers, Pub. d’après Les Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Impérial,.” ed. Guiffrey, Georges Maurice (Paris: Vve J. Renouard, 1866), 29-31.

forces.²²⁶ In her note, de Valentinois wrote that she “beg[ged]” him to end military action as soon as possible.²²⁷ She made clear that she was at his mercy, demonstrating she was subservient. The duchess’ manipulation of gendered expectations to maintain contact with those who offered her a benefit was crucial to her ability to remain acceptable to powerful nobles.

Another important strategy Diane utilized to project the air of a proper lady in her letters was the mention of the nature of her relationship with the king. De Poitiers made sure to note that the king was by her side offering commentary and advice as she wrote. She called attention to Henri’s wishes in a letter to d’Aumale in 1548, saying

²²⁶ Ibid. 26-27.

²²⁷ Ibid, 26-27.

“my lord told me to share his recommendations with you” regarding the position he thought d’Aumale’s son should apply for within the clergy.²²⁸ The duchess made her relationship with the king especially clear through her communiqué related to warfare. Privileged information concerning these affairs shared through her correspondence with high powered lords indicated her proximity to Henri.²²⁹ Her unrestricted access to high level information allowed her to send advice to nobles or ask for the delay of payment on military supplies crucial to the war effort.²³⁰

²²⁸ Ibid. 28-29. Translated “monsr m’a commédé vous faire ses recommandacions” as “my lord told me to share his recommendations with you.”

²²⁹ Susan Broomhall, “The King and I,” in *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483-1563*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 335.

²³⁰ Susan Broomhall, “The King and I,” in *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483-1563*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 341.

She continuously made clear her connection to the king and his involvement in the advice that she was giving.²³¹ In fact, throughout 1546, Diane routinely informed d’Humières regarding the movement of the king throughout the country so he might inform his friends.²³² By including the king’s thoughts and commentary in the letters she was able to frame her place in the relationship as one of subservience rather than partnership, thus making herself appear more acceptable to those who demanded male supremacy. However, this also accomplished the goal of legitimizing the advice she gave to others by tying it to the word of the king. The semblance of subservience created

²³¹ Ibid. 346.

²³² Diane de Poitiers, “Lettres Inédites de Dianne de Poytiers, Pub. d’après Les Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Impérial.” ed. Guiffrey, Georges Maurice (Paris: Vve J. Renouard, 1866), 11-15.

through her body of letters allowed Diane to make and keep allies who provided her with monetary and social success that would not have otherwise been possible.

Conclusions

Diane de Poitiers used letter writing to create a public persona that would be acceptable to members of the French nobility and would allow her to remain in a position of influence within the state. As royal mistress, the duchess occupied a position with the potential to wield a vast amount of power. Proximity to the king presented monetary benefits in the form of new châteaux, jewels, and titles. Beyond this, the mistress had the opportunity to find positions in the court for members of her family that would increase their status in society. However, because of the

advantages that the position offered, it was also the object of intense competition. Factions formed within the court to either support or attempt to oust the current mistress, making it an extremely tenuous one to hold. Maintaining the position over a long period of time required strategy and skill, even for those who adhered to most prevalent gender norms. For women like de Valentinois, who broke multiple norms, it was essential to develop a persona that could deflect criticisms lobbied in their direction. As royal mistress, Diane projected a version of femininity through her letters that conformed to norms of motherhood, emotional expression, and the gendered social hierarchy. Adopting this persona in her written communications allowed her to deflect criticisms regarding her age, fertility, and marital status. By making herself more acceptable to

members of the nobility, de Poitiers stabilized and cemented her position of power within the French state.

Bibliography

Adams, Christine. "Mistresses and Merveilleuses: The Historiographical Record on Female Political Players of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality*, vol. 51, no. 2, (2016): 95-103.

Broomhall, Susan. "The King and I." In *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483-1563*, edited by Susan Broomhall, 335-356. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018.

Broomhall, Susan. "Fit for a King? The Gendered Emotional Performances of Catherine de Medici as *Dauphine* of France, 1536-1547." In *Unexpected Heirs in Early Modern Europe; Potential Kings and Queens*, edited by Valerie Schutte, 85-112. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Broomhall, Susan. "Catherine's Tears: Diplomatic Corporeality, Affective Performance, and Gender at the Sixteenth-Century French Court." In *Fluid Bodies and Bodily Fluids in Premodern Europe*:

Bodies, Blood, and Tears in Literature, Theology, and Art., edited by Scott, Anne M., Barbezat, Michael David, 55-72. Arc Humanities Press, 2019.

Carroll, Stuart. *Noble Power During the French Wars of Religion: the Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Crawford, Katherine, *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Earenfight, Theresa. *Queenship in Medieval Europe*. London: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013.

Gaude-Ferragu, Murielle. *Queenship in Medieval France, 1300-1500*. Translated by Angela Krieger. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Gordetsky, Jennifer, Ronald Rabinowitz, and Jeanne O'Brien. "The "infertility" of Catherine de Medici and its Influence on 16th Century France." *The Canadian Journal of Urology*, Volume 16, no. 2 (2009): 4584-4588.

Hanley, Sarah. "Identity Politics and Rulership in France: Female Political Place and the Fraudulent Salic Law in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Montreuil." In *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, edited by Michael Wolfe, 78-94. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997.

Le Fur, Didier. *Diane de Poitiers*. Paris: Perrin, 2017.

Knecht, Robert. *Catherine de' Medici*. Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998.

Knecht, Robert J. *Hero or Tyrant? Henry III, King of France, 1574-89*. London: Routledge, 2016.

O'Day, Rosemary. "Tudor and Stuart Women: Their Lives Through Their Letters." In *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, edited by James Daybell New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Poitiers, Diane de. *Lettres Inédites de Dianne de Poytiers, Pub. d'après Les Manuscrits de La Bibliothèque Impériale*, edited by Guiffrey, Georges Maurice,. Paris,: Vve J. Renouard, 1866.

Scaglione, Aldo D. *Knights at Court Courtliness, Chivalry & Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1991.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Wellman, Kathleen. *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013.

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING THE PEQUOT

WAR:

Memory, Commemoration, and National Identity in

White America

Jori Johnson

New York University

Please note that access to libraries, archives, and other
sources
referenced in this paper was limited by the impact of
COVID-19.

“How shall I commit this great evil and sin against my God?” considered an unnamed young girl, “about sixteen years of age,” when asked by Captain John Underhill how her Pequot captors had solicited her to “uncleanness.” Underhill, hired in 1630 as militia leader of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was conducting an examination of this young woman and one other, even younger than the first, after a safe return from captivity.²³³ The pair of “maids” had been taken captive in an attack on Wethersfield, Connecticut in April of 1637 in which six men, three women, and twenty cows were slain. Faith prevented the girls from submitting to any temptations

²³³ John Underhill, *Newes from America; Or, A New and Experimentall Discoverie of New England; Containing, A True Relation of Their War-like Proceedings These Two Yeares Last Past, with a Figure of the Indian Fort, or Palizado*, (1638), 25.

allegedly presented during their time of captivity, but they had the opportunity to see the “forts, and curious wigwams, and houses” of the Pequots, and relayed that the Pequots were in possession of “sixteen guns with powder and shot.”²³⁴ Captain John Mason, Connecticut settler and commander alongside Underhill, cited this as one of the key “Grounds and Reasons” for taking action against the Pequots in his *Brief History of the Pequot War*. Both the fact that these girls were kidnapped and the information they provided on what they had seen of the Pequot forts were clearly crucial in the decision to engage in war, but their names were never recorded in contemporary accounts of the Pequot War.

²³⁴ John Mason, *A Brief History of the Pequot War*, (Boston, 1736), 2.

Just shy of three-hundred years later, however, a sign with a block-lettered declaration appeared in front of an unsuspecting home on Main Street in Wethersfield: “Pequod Massacre, April 23, 1637, In This Locality, Home Site of the Captive *Swaine Girls*.”²³⁵ Suddenly, two girls whose identities were lost to history had names, if only a shared surname. Not only were they named, but their connection to the first major conflict between English colonists and Native peoples was being memorialized. But where did this supposed surname come from, and why did it appear three hundred years after the Pequot War took place? The seemingly unusual circumstances surrounding the Swaine Girls marker raise questions about the state of

²³⁵ Emphasis is my own. *Swaine Girls Homesite Marker*, date unknown, photograph, Battlefields of the Pequot War, <https://pequotwar.org/about/memory-legacy/>.

Pequot War memorialization as a whole: how have Americans remembered and commemorated the Pequot War? How has this memory and commemoration changed over time?

Although commemoration holds the potential to highlight events and individuals as historically significant, white New Englanders have exclusively remembered and commemorated the Pequot War in forms which ignore Native peoples and serve primarily as vessels to bolster patriotism, national identity, and a shared past. Historian Jean M. O'Brien has studied the commemoration of wars involving Native Americans extensively and argues that white early New Englanders used commemoration to seize indigeneity from Native peoples, make Native history prefatory and inauthentic, and forge modernity in ways that

made it impossible for Native peoples to ever become “modern.” This paper tracks commemoration of the Pequot War over two centuries and argues that white New Englanders chose to engage with memory of the Pequot War exclusively in response to U.S. American events, as a reassertion of U.S. American presence, memory, and identity. This approach toward commemoration diminishes the historical significance of the Pequot War on its own by painting it as a footnote in the personal and local histories of white Americans, rather than a defining moment in relations between colonists and Native people.

~ ~ ~

The Pequot War was a conflict between Pequots and English colonists in Massachusetts Bay which lasted from 1636 to 1638. At the surface level, the conflict stemmed

from the accidental murder of two English traders by Pequots. The first trader, John Stone, was mistaken for a Dutchman and killed in 1633; the Pequots were seeking the Dutch in order to retaliate for the murder of their sachem, Tatobem. Sachems served as community leaders, responsible for trade, diplomacy, and maintenance of balance with the community. The title of sachem differed from a kinglike status in that a sachem's power was derived from the consent of their followers, creating an overall more reciprocal relationship between leader and follower. The Massachusetts Bay Colony initially accepted the Pequot explanation for the mistaken murder of Stone, but also requested that the Pequots repay them with wampum

and turn in those responsible for the murder.²³⁶ The Pequots made no promises of fulfilling this request, and the issue was dropped until a second trader, John Oldham, was found dead on his ship three years later. Though the English concluded that the Pequots weren't responsible for this murder, they believed it to be a sign that they could be forming a conspiracy.²³⁷ The English renewed their requests for wampum and the deliverance of John Stone's murderers, but the request was rejected.²³⁸ At this point the English escalated the conflict: they formed alliances with the Narragansett and Mohegan tribes and elected to take action against the Pequots, beginning with the raid of Block

²³⁶ Mark Meuwese, "The Dutch Connection: New Netherland, the Pequots, and the Puritans in Southern New England, 1620-1638," *Early American Studies* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2011), 314.

²³⁷ Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War*, (UMass, 1996), 104-105.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 108.

Island led by John Endecott. After numerous skirmishes, the conflict culminated in the burning of the Pequots' Fort Mystic. Captain John Mason orchestrated the attack, killing upwards of seven hundred Pequot men, women, and children. The conflict concluded with the 1638 Treaty of Hartford, in which English colonists tried to further eliminate the Pequots by banning their name and dividing any remaining Pequot captives among the Mohegans and Narragansetts.²³⁹

How we understand the history and legacy of the Pequot War has evolved drastically over the centuries. Contemporaries justified their actions as God's will, and historians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

²³⁹ Neal Salisbury, "Pequot War," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Military and Diplomatic History*, edited by Paul S. Boyer, (Oxford University Press, Inc., 2013).

invoked Social Darwinism to argue that massacre of the Pequots was necessary. Scholars of the 20th century also placed blame on the Pequots as aggressors, though less credence was given to justifying the massacre as a reasonable course of action. In recent decades historians have debated the war's cause, asserting a variety of arguments ranging from English economic greed to Puritan fears exacerbated by proximity to the wilderness.²⁴⁰ Given the lack of consensus over the causes of the war and conclusions to be drawn from it, it is no surprise that historical memory of the Pequot War is equally contentious. Memory, as opposed to history, is not defined by fact. Rather, it is “a fluid set of ideas often reshaped by time, emotion, and the politically savvy, not something

²⁴⁰ Cave, *The Pequot War*, 2-8.

solid, immutable, or truly measurable.”²⁴¹ Memory is formed from the stories we tell about history and shaped by our personal connections to those stories; memory is also changed by the individual telling the story and the context in which they tell it.

²⁴¹ Zheng Wang, *Memory, Politics, Identity, and Conflict: Historical Memory As a Variable*, (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017), 2.



Figure 1: Swaine Girls Marker, date unknown, photograph, Battlefields of the Pequot War, pequotwar.org/about/memory-legacy/

Commemoration is one of the many forms of “storytelling” which informs historical memory: it signals where memory of the person or event which is being commemorated stands at a particular place and moment in time, marks the subject of commemoration as “worth remembering,” perpetuates memory of that subject for future generations, and even speaks to public thought or feeling on contemporaneous events. Because of this, “monuments and memorials say more about us as the erectors than they do about history itself.”²⁴² This becomes especially clear in examining commemoration of the Pequot War. Commemoration can take a wide variety of forms, but most Pequot War commemoration takes the

²⁴² David B. Allison, *Controversial Monuments and Memorials: A Guide to Community Leaders*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 4.

form of monuments, statues, or historical markers, like the Swaine Girls marker. However, the Swaine Girls marker in 1932 was not the first or last memorial to events or figures of the Pequot War—the first monument arrived in 1841, and pulling back an additional century beyond that first monument provides important context for analyzing these commemorative acts.

In order to understand the emergence of Pequot War commemoration in the 19th century, we must examine the origins of American memorial tradition. Public commemorative activity did not begin in the English colonies until the 1760s, well over a hundred years after the Pequot War. Prior to that point, colonial Americans memorialized in a private fashion that was essentially a continuation of European practices, with portraits,

engravings, dedicatory silver, and marble plaques.²⁴³ In the decades following the French and Indian War, however, colonists took an interest in forms of public commemoration.²⁴⁴ In *The Nation's First Monument and the Origins of the American Memorial Tradition: Liberty Enshrined*, Sally Webster examines America's first four public monuments: an obelisk dedicated to French and Indian War casualty General James Wolfe, statues honoring William Pitt and King George III after the 1766 repeal of the Stamp Act, and a memorial to Revolutionary War casualty General Richard Montgomery.

²⁴³ Sally Webster, *The Nation's First Monument and the Origins of the American Memorial Tradition: Liberty Enshrined*, (Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 11.

²⁴⁴ Webster, *The Nation's First Monument*, 7.

Though they emerged from widely varying backgrounds, these monuments serve as time capsules which reveal the subjects colonists found important at the particular moments they were created. For example, the Wolfe obelisk was commissioned by a private citizen, who then appealed to the city for the creation of a public road called Monument Lane in order to grant public access to the memorial. This move replicated the practices of British estates, while also demonstrating that losses and victories by the British military in the French and Indian War were felt acutely by the American colonial population.²⁴⁵ The monument's eventual mysterious disappearance also helps to track public thought; some early 20th century writers theorized that it was demolished after the property was

²⁴⁵ Webster, *The Nation's First Monument*, 26.

confiscated due to the owner being a Loyalist.²⁴⁶ The two public monuments that followed the first met similar fates: statues to William Pitt and King George III, stationed at Wall Street and New York's Bowling Green respectively. Commissioned by the Sons of Liberty, these statues were created in response to the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766, who thought it their "indispensable Duty to endeavor, by erecting a proper Monument, to perpetuate the Memory of so glorious an Event, to the latest posterity."²⁴⁷ However, posterity would not have the opportunity to see the statues; the equestrian monument to George III was destroyed following a reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 9, 1776, and the Pitt monument was ordered to be

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 40.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 63.

removed in 1788 due to being left in a state of neglect after the war.²⁴⁸

The sole survivor of the earliest efforts toward commemoration in America, and perhaps the most demonstrative of the emerging culture of hero worship, is a monument to General Richard Montgomery, commissioned in 1776 and installed in 1787 at St. Paul's Chapel in New York. This was the first *national* memorial, meaning its creation was ordered by the Continental Congress. The Montgomery monument is most indicative of the commemorative culture that would emerge after the Revolution; it was commissioned just three weeks after General Montgomery's death, a moment when the colonies needed a reminder of why they were fighting for the patriot

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 73-79.

cause. The decade-long delay in the monument's installation led to the inclusion of a new element with patriotic imagery: a frame featuring symbols evoking independence and the emergence of a new nation. Congress also set precedent for the creation of more memorials to war heroes, declaring in the call for Montgomery's monument that "those fallen heroes who later 'distinguished themselves in the glorious cause of liberty' should be remembered by the creation of 'the most durable monuments [to be] erected to their honor.'"²⁴⁹

The explicit turn toward honoring those heroes set the tone for commemorative culture in the decades that followed. Initially commemoration, honor, and gratitude for sacrifices were only bestowed upon larger-than-life

²⁴⁹ Webster, *The Nation's First Monument*, 113.

heroes like Washington. This culture, dubbed “hero worship culture” by Sarah J. Purcell, stressed a debt to the nation’s heroes which could only be repaid by honoring them. Over time, common soldiers found they were able claim hero status for themselves by appropriating the language of gratitude used to honor leaders.²⁵⁰ The proliferation of Revolutionary hero images provided the American youth with virtuous figures to emulate and inspiration for their own future service to the nation, thus embedding hero worship culture into the nation’s identity.²⁵¹ As the history of the Revolution became increasingly distant, a scramble occurred to preserve the memories of that generation before they disappeared.

²⁵⁰ Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 53.

²⁵¹ Purcell, *Sealed with Blood*, 138-140.

Individual towns became particularly concerned with putting their veterans on display, in order to demonstrate their local link to a “patriotic past.”²⁵² Finally, the 1830s brought politicians the realization that they could co-opt memory of the Revolution for their own causes, ranging from labor union support to manipulating the meaning of the war in relation to the abolitionist movement.

Based on this evolution of public memory and commemorative activity, we can identify a few trends that would continue to grow in the decades that followed and inspire memorialization: the impulse to honor American heroes, the desire to have personal or local connections to those heroes, and the political adoption of memory. We can also see how commemoration impacts *identity*.

²⁵² Ibid, 188.

Commemoration impacts historical memory by manipulating what stories are shared, about whom, and in what context; in turn, commemoration impacts a nation's identity because "identities are built on historical myths that define who a group member is, what it means to be a group member, and typically, who the group's enemies are."²⁵³ By playing a role in shaping historical myths, commemoration is a factor in defining those elements of group membership. Furthermore, "key historical events—both traumas and glories—are powerful ethnic or large-group markers. Certain struggles the group has endured...shape group identity and bind the people together. Just as historical traumas can bring a group together, so can historical events instill feelings of success

²⁵³ Wang, *Memory, Politics, Identity, and Conflict*, 5.

and triumph.”²⁵⁴ Commemoration serves to emphasize particular events in history, further influencing which events or traumas might bind a group more tightly.

In this context we can begin to understand the emergence of Pequot War commemoration two hundred years after the war occurred and its relevance to shaping national identity and forming a shared past among Americans. The three earliest cases of Pequot War commemoration took the form of monuments and are the only cases in which Native peoples involved in the Pequot War were memorialized: Miantonomi in 1841, Uncas in 1842, and Canonicus in 1883. Canonicus was a sachem of the Narragansetts and recognized by the English as an ally to Roger Williams, an exiled Englishman who lived among

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 15.

Narragansetts and eventually served as an intermediary between the English and Native Americans despite his exile. Canonicus was succeeded by his nephew Miantonomi, and each man was involved in negotiating an alliance between the English and Narragansetts as their conflict with the Pequots escalated.²⁵⁵ Uncas, sachem of the Mohegans, was also recognized by the English as an ally—particularly so by Captain John Mason. Uncas provided the English with valuable information and eventually led Narragansetts and Mohegans into the battle at Fort Mystic alongside Mason.²⁵⁶ While the choice to honor Miantonomi, Uncas, and Canonicus with monuments seems obvious, as each man was a key player in the progression

²⁵⁵ Cave, *The Pequot War*, 127-128.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 146.

and outcome of the Pequot War, the context in which the memorials which were produced created a disconnect between their intention and their meaning.

The Miantonomi monument was originally a “memory heap” of stones placed by passing Native Americans at the site of his 1643 capture—a living memorial created by Native Americans. However, the memory heap eventually disappeared when a white landowner in the area removed the stones “to use in the undersetting of a barn he was erecting in the neighborhood.” The people of Norwich, Connecticut eventually recognized a need to replace the lost memory heap with their own monument: “a five-foot-square granite block placed on a pedestal that raised it to eight feet tall overall” with the “simple inscription ‘Miantonomo.

1643.”²⁵⁷ This monument is a literal representation of the efforts by white Americans to erase Native history and replace it with their own, as detailed by Jean M. O’Brien in *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence*. By eliminating the monument created by Native peoples and replacing it with their own, white New Englanders claimed that their decision to memorialize an individual was superior to any Native memorialization, thus extinguishing any opportunity of Native expression. Not only were these New Englanders participating in literal replacement of Native history, but did so “on the Anniversary of American Independence.”²⁵⁸ This suggests that Miantonomi was only

²⁵⁷ Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of existence in New England*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 58.

²⁵⁸ William L. Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh, A Historical Discourse, Deliver at Norwich, (Conn.) on the Fourth Day of July*,

being considered in the context of *U.S. American* history, and in an especially patriotic setting.

It is also particularly significant that they did this in the midst of the Indian Removal policy, introduced during Andrew Jackson's presidency in 1830 and perpetuated for decades afterward. Under the Indian Removal Act, over 60,000 Native Americans were forcibly removed from tribal lands to areas west of the Mississippi River.²⁵⁹ The policy disregarded treaties which existed between the United States and many tribes, led to the death of thousands of Native Americans, and permitted the wrongful resettlement of land which did not belong to white

1842, on the Occasion of the Erection of a Monument to the Memory of Uncas, the White Man's Friend, and First Chief of the Mohegans, (New York: Dayston & Newman, 1842), 114.

²⁵⁹ "Indian Removal Act (1830)," in *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*, edited by Thomas Riggs, 2nd edition, Gale, 2015.

Americans. The choice to memorialize Miantonomi during the implementation of this policy was a purposeful, political act which reinforced the idea that Native peoples' time had passed, and that they could only exist in romanticized memory from that point onward.

The Uncas monument was erected under the same conditions—like the Miantonomi memorial, the Uncas was also dedicated on July 4th, exactly one year later. In a sickening twist of irony, it was Jackson himself who laid the cornerstone to the monument in 1833.²⁶⁰ This move can be seen as a reinforcement of the physical expulsion of Native peoples from their lands; memorializing “great” sachems of centuries past encouraged the idea that Native peoples did not belong in the “modern” era. The

²⁶⁰ Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, ix.

reinforcement worked—William L. Stone, the writer of *Uncas and Miantonomoh, A Historical Discourse, delivered at Norwich, (Conn.) on the Fourth Day of July, 1842, on the Occasion of the Erection of a Monument to the Memory of Uncas, the White Man’s Friend, and First Chief of the Mohegans*, made it clear to the audience that “the entire extirpation of their race” had occurred. “How little, I repeat, did those children of the forest suppose that the years were drawing nigh, when the multitudinous nations of their own people were to disappear before the descendants of that little group, wasted by famine and reduced to a handful by pestilence.”²⁶¹ White New Englanders used the disappearance narrative to both justify and celebrate American presence on the continent. Still,

²⁶¹ Ibid, 18.

other agendas were involved in the memorialization of Uncas—the Ladies of Norwich, who organized the dedication ceremony, “touted the success of temperance groups like the Cold Water Army and the Washingtonians in reducing the amount of drinking in Norwich” and “looked hopefully to the newly ‘repaired, enlarged, and entirely remodeled’ Mohegan Church...which would aid in the ‘progress of the Gospel’ among their Indian neighbors” in pamphlets distributed at the ceremony.²⁶² The purpose of memorializing Uncas had little to do with the man himself or with the Pequot War—it was a ground for asserting U.S. American history, identity, and politics.

The Canonicus memorial was erected four decades later, yet the context driving its creation was hardly

²⁶² Michael Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohicans*, (Cornell, 2006), 4.

different. In a statement at the top of the *Canonicus Memorial Services* documentation, the memorial committee notes that “the interest in Indian affairs growing out of *the late formal dissolution of the Narragansett tribe of Indians*, has led to an additional realization in the erection and dedication of this memorial.”²⁶³ In 1879, after a decade of trying, the state of Rhode Island abolished the Narragansett tribe, despite unanimous opposition from the tribe and its leaders.²⁶⁴ Again, white New Englanders chose to memorialize a Native figure while they were also erasing their existence, as if building the memorial would send them to a grave, a permanent past. Paradoxically, some

²⁶³ Emphasis my own. *Canonicus Memorial: Services of Dedication, Under the Auspices of the Rhode Island Historical Society, September 21, 1883*, (Providence: Providence Press Company, 1883), 3.

²⁶⁴ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 198.

Narragansett individuals were referenced as being in attendance: “Moses B. Prophet, of the Narragansett tribe,” who had the honor of unveiling the monument, and “Annie A. Thomas, a little Narragansett Indian girl” who presented the event speaker with a bouquet of flowers.²⁶⁵ The idea that white New Englanders could say that Native populations had “faded away before the white man like dew before the sun” while Narragansett individuals were literally in attendance is preposterous, but it was an intentional attempt at brushing disputes over the Narragansett abolition aside. After telling the story of Canonicus, one of the speakers made sure to note that “here we may read that confidence and good faith were returned in kind; that our forefathers found in the red man a friend

²⁶⁵ *Canonicus Memorial*, 9-27.

and not an enemy; that the title deeds to the lands where our fair city stands, were not written in blood and sealed with treachery.”²⁶⁶ The state of Rhode Island sought to push a narrative into public memory that any current Narragansett claims to land were unfounded, once again demonstrating that this act of commemoration was a political tool rather than a true tribute to Canonicus.

Even as the memorials to these sachems worked toward the erasure of Native peoples, they appeared to be honored in ways not so different from the hero worship culture which grew out of the Revolutionary War.

Miantonomi, Uncas, and Canonicus were all referred to as honorable, heroic figures, but always with caveats. For example, the Canonicus memorial dedication orator said

²⁶⁶ *Canonicus Memorial*, 25.

that “if there had been no Canoncius, the light of Rhode Island’s history *through Roger Williams*, might never have cast its bright and cheering rays upon a then half-enlightened age.”²⁶⁷ In the eyes of the white New Englanders commemorating them, these men could only be honored by recognizing what their actions allowed white colonists, such as Roger Williams, to accomplish. Moreover, their status as heroes was diminished by their race: “no man, not of our own race, deserves kindlier memories than Canonicus...savage though he was, and surrounded as he was by the fierce and barbaric customs of his people.”²⁶⁸ White New Englanders were unable to truly

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 26.

recognize and honor alliances made with these men which might have very well saved the New England colonies.

What did the commemoration of Miantonomi, Uncas, and Canonicus have to say about the men themselves, or about the Pequot War? Very little—ultimately these acts of commemoration served as a method of strengthening American identity. Two of the three were memorialized on Independence Day, and the orator at the Uncas memorial dedication explicitly stated that “the rearing of monuments, in honor of the illustrious dead of years long past, is...justified by every impulse of patriotism.”²⁶⁹ The ceremonies revolving around the dedication of each memorial told the story of the Pequot War, but the widely varying political agendas, contexts and

²⁶⁹ Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomoh*, 15.

stipulations surrounding each act of commemoration drew focus away from the subjects.

Figure 2: Upper Left: Uncas Monument, date unknown, photograph, CT Monuments.net,

-norwich/



Copyright 1905 by the Rotograph Co.

R 5384 Uncas Monument, Norwich, Conn.

*Having a fine time of it
Norwich Conn. Sept. 1905*

Figure 3: Lower Left: Canonicus Monument, date unknown, photograph, Go Providence, goprovidence.com/listing/Canonicus-square/24206/

Figure 4: Lower Right: Miantonomi monument, date unknown, photography, Find A Grave, findagrave.com/cemetery/2677923/miantonomo-monument



In a more overt attempt at reinforcing patriotism, American identity, and a shared past, Captain John Mason was the next “hero” of the Pequot War to be commemorated. The motion to honor Mason with a statue was first made in 1886 by the New-London County

Historical Society in Connecticut, and those involved in the commissioning were surprised that “an event so pregnant with results, so heroic in execution, and so beneficial to the colonists, both of Connecticut and New England, should so long have remained without a memorial.”²⁷⁰ The process of raising funds and selecting an artist for the monument’s creation was drawn out by “excitement consequent on the beginning of our long array of national centennials,” according to the orator at the statue’s dedication. The finished product, erected in 1889, stands twenty feet tall, with the nine-foot statue of Mason perched on a twenty-three ton granite pedestal “with a fine poise, denoting strength and action, with the right hand grasping the half-

²⁷⁰ Thomas S. Collier, *A History of the Statue Erected to Commemorate the Heroic Achievement of Maj. John Mason and his Comrades, with an Account of the Unveiling Ceremonies*, (The Commission, 1889), 7.

drawn sword.” The inscription at the base of the statue states its purpose “to commemorate the heroic achievement of Major John Mason and his comrades, who near this spot, in 1637, overthrew the Pequot, and preserved the settlements from destruction.” The orator deemed it to be “a worthy memorial of a most heroic action.”²⁷¹

Upon close examination of the account detailing the ceremonious John Mason statue unveiling, it becomes clear that the Pequot War and its “hero” were not the only things on the minds of those in attendance. The orator at the statue’s dedication acknowledged outright that “the minds of sixty million people have been occupied with memories of those whom they fondly call ‘the fathers,’”²⁷² which is

²⁷¹ Collier, *A History of the Statue*, 8-16.

²⁷² Collier, *A History of the Statue*, 22.

obvious given that the memorial's completion was delayed by a preoccupation with the United State Centennial celebration. In arguing that "the whole succession of events we have so lately commemorated was made possible" by the actions of John Mason, the orator was strategically linking the history of the lesser-known Pequot War to the same reverence granted to the Revolutionary War. This not only extended the narrative of American history and the legacy of the Revolution by more than a hundred years, but also served to connect local history to the national narrative.

By stating that the events of the Revolution could not have occurred without Mason's actions, an equivalence was also created between John Mason and the then-beloved heroes of the Revolutionary War. Praise for Mason at the

unveiling ceremony was so high that one has to wonder if the “many descendants” present at the event had a hand in writing the speeches given, especially because they went as far as falsifying what is known to be historical fact.²⁷³ “It is not probable that any women or children were in the stockade,” the orator said of Mason’s attack on Fort Mystic. “The only occupants of the fort were Pequot Warriors.”²⁷⁴ This is demonstrably false: women, children, and warriors alike were present at the fort and slaughtered without discrimination. Even contemporary accounts recognized this: in his account of the war, John Underhill considered whether or not the massacre of women and children was immoral before deciding that it could be

²⁷³ Ibid, 15.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 41.

justified with religion.²⁷⁵ The active choice to revise this element of the story suggests that the orator knew nineteenth-century New Englanders would not agree that this was moral action, and might even reject honoring Mason as a hero. Instead, the removal of this crucial piece of the story altered the narrative of the Pequot War and certainly changed collective memory of the war for those subjected to this narrative.

²⁷⁵ Cave, *The Pequot War*, 151-152.



Figure 5: Major John Mason statue, date unknown, photograph, Indian & Colonial Research Center, indianandcolonial.org/john-mason-statue

As much as the Mason commemorators were dreaming about the distant past they could never fully know, they were also thinking about more recent history they had actually endured. “In our own time,” the orator asked, “who that lived and was part of the great contention that covered so many years of violent controversy and hot debate, culminating in civil war, does not thank God that his lot was cast in such a stirring and eventful time?”²⁷⁶ The orator’s choice to cast the Civil War in this light of excitement is strange considering the death and destruction brought by the war, but also intentional. By linking the

²⁷⁶ Collier, *A History of the Statue*, 25.

Pequot War to the honor of the American Revolution, describing them as exciting times to live through, and then making a direct comparison to living through the Civil War, the orator sought to instill pride and patriotism in those who were in attendance. Given that the monument was dedicated less than twenty-five years after the end of the Civil War, many individuals in attendance had likely lived through or fought in the war, or had an older relative who had done so. By allowing the audience to consider that the events which they or their relatives had lived through were exciting and valuable, and that living through such events granted them the opportunity to contribute to their country in a memorable, patriotic way, the act of commemoration was clearly geared toward bolstering American patriotism and identity.

With the continuation of Pequot War commemoration into the 20th century, it becomes increasingly clear that the memorialization contributed more to reinforcing U.S. American identity than it did to memory of the war itself. Some monuments that went up during this period were comparable to those of the 19th century, like the statue to Lion Gardiner in Old Saybrook, Connecticut. Gardiner was an actor in the war as the commander of Saybrook Fort and one of the few contemporary figures who documented the events of the Pequot War. Gardiner is perhaps best remembered for writing “you come hither to raise these wasps about my ears, and then you will take wing and flee away” in response to Captain John Endecott’s less-than-successful first charge against the Pequots, which ultimately did more

harm than good for the English. The quote was frequently, if not oddly, referenced in retellings of the Pequot War at monument dedication ceremonies.²⁷⁷ The Gardiner statue was erected in 1930 by the descendants of Gardiner, twenty-five of whom were in attendance at the dedication ceremony. The speaker at the event was John Winthrop Gardiner, a descendant of both John Winthrop and Lion Gardiner. Not only did the family erect the statue to Gardiner, who was described as someone who “played a most important part in frustrating the attempt of the Pequot Indians to drive the colonists out of New England,” but they also dedicated the land as a public park.²⁷⁸ While this

²⁷⁷ The Mason and Uncas statue dedications shared this quote with their audiences, along with countless secondary sources written on the Pequot War.

²⁷⁸ “Unveil Monument,” *The Middletown, (Conn.) Press*, November 21, 1930.

statue plays into the culture of hero worship seen in the Mason statue, it also points out the need for individuals to build their personal ties to history, thus staking a claim in early American history and bringing the “hardships and successes” that America has endured into their own identities.

Building personal connections to U.S. American history became increasingly popular among white New Englanders over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the establishment of societies dedicated to preserving family and local histories, and with the eventual rise of genealogy as a hobby. The New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), for example, was founded in 1845 by educated and elderly white businessmen with the goal of preserving the public documents of the towns of

Massachusetts, gathering data on cemetery memorials, and forming a library.²⁷⁹ Membership was expensive and exclusive, and the Society sought to keep itself that way. The purpose of the Society changed over time, with continuous debate among members over the types of documents to hold in the Society's library, whether its focus should be on publishing genealogical data or publishing scholarly articles, and so on. One mission remained clear over the course of the Society's near two-hundred year history: to preserve family histories and memory of the past because they believed it would strengthen U.S. American ideals, identity, and

²⁷⁹ John A. Schutz, *A Noble Pursuit: The Sesquicentennial History of the New England Historic Genealogical Society 1845-1995*, (Boston, Mass: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1995), 10-13.

patriotism.²⁸⁰ Societies like the NEHGS have encouraged the impulse to create links between ancestry and historic events, and done so in forms which associate such connections with social elitism.

²⁸⁰ Schutz, *A Noble Pursuit*, 224-228.



Figure 6: Lion Gardiner Monument, Old Saybrook, date unknown, photograph, CTPostcards.net, ctpostcards.net/lion-gardiner-monument-old-saybrook/

Another indication of this trend is found in two markers to soldiers of the Pequot War: one to James Cole in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and the other to Thomas Sherwood in Fairfield, Connecticut. The markers, placed in 1917 and 1950 respectively, honor the memory of two men whose names are otherwise absent in histories of the Pequot War. Because these men were not major players in the war, the simple plaque memorials built to honor them would likely not exist if the descendants of each soldier had not chosen to erect them. The families behind these commemorative acts are comparable to the common soldiers of the Revolutionary War who appropriated the language of gratitude and hero worship in order to gain

social currency. Bridging the gap between colonial history and the present day allows for individuals like these descendants to build both their family identity and a U.S. American identity, to make the claim that their existence is a direct result of “great” events memorialized in history books. The Sherwood marker, for example, was not just erected by his descendants, but by the *Sherwood Kindred of America*, an organization which has worked to trace the history of its surname back to the 12th century. It does not appear that Thomas Sherwood made any outstanding contributions to society that might typically be recognized as “worth” memorializing; his marker describes him as a Puritan, pioneer, ancestor, founder, settler, deputy, and

soldier.²⁸¹ Similarly, the marker to James Cole simply bears his birth, death, and status as a settler and soldier.²⁸² And yet, these descendants made a statement that their ancestors *were* important by choosing to memorialize their presence in history. Commemorators used these particular markers to connect their claims of early American ancestry to their own identities. Essentially, commemorators wanted to say something about themselves, not about the Pequot War.

The most telling, and also disconcerting, sign that Pequot War commemorators were more interested in connecting personal and local history to the national narrative lies in the forms of commemoration which are

²⁸¹ Michael Herrick, "Thomas Sherwood Memorial," The Historical Marker Database, published November 8, 2019, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=27173>.

²⁸² Bill Coughlin, "James Cole," The Historical Marker Database, published August 25, 2017, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=107426>.

completely unsubstantiated. This is where commemoration and memory depart from history: “unlike history, which is concerned primarily with circumstance, commemoration dwells almost entirely in feeling.”²⁸³ Commemoration allows for myth to be built into memory, for legends to be confused for history, and, as in the case of Mason, for history to be completely falsified. Only in the context of memory and identity can myth be given the same weight as history, because it has the same effect as any other, more accurate form of memorialization might. Myth can be woven into the stories we tell about history, and thus becomes part of our national identity. Consider the stories of George Washington chopping down his father’s cherry

²⁸³ Seth C. Bruggeman, *Commemoration: The American Association for State and Local History Guide*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017), 1.

tree, or Betsy Ross sewing the first American flag: though they lack any basis in fact, these stories are told to encourage American youth to become honest, contributing members of society.²⁸⁴

With regards to the Pequot War, demarcation of the “Dover Stone Church” is one such form of this memorialized myth-turned-history. The Dover Stone Church is not a literal church, but a natural formation of rocks and waterfall in Dover Plains, New York. The site was recognized with a New York State Marker placed sometime between 1926 and 1966 as part of a marker program run by the State Education Department, and later added to the National

²⁸⁴ Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986*. Cambridge, Mass.: (Harvard University Press, 1988), 3-13.

Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2014. The site marker reads: “A cavern, with a waterfall, refuge of Sassacus, Pequot chief, fleeing from rout of his tribe at New London, Conn. afterward killed by Mohawks.”²⁸⁵ The story of Sassacus, Pequot sachem, fleeing to the Mohawks after the final attack of the Pequot War in a desperate attempt at survival is well documented in histories of the war, but there is no contemporary source providing evidence that he took refuge in the Dover cavern. The NRHP application for the site includes this story as a point of relevance for marking it a historic place, and references the *General history of Dutchess county, from 1609 to 1876, inclusive* as a source. The book, published in 1877, also

²⁸⁵ Steve Soessel, “Dover Stone Church,” The Historical Marker Database, published August 19, 2019, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=137968>.

describes the Sassacus story as a legend.²⁸⁶ The Dover Stone Church mythology does not serve the purpose of instilling values into American youth, but it still has much to say about the individuals who felt it was worth memorializing.²⁸⁷ Much like the monuments to Miantonomi, Uncas, and Canonicus, it relegates Native

²⁸⁶ Philip H. Smith, *General history of Dutchess county, from 1609 to 1876, inclusive*, (Pawling, New York: Published by the Author, 1877), 150-154.

²⁸⁷ One woman, Edith Harrison, was responsible for submitting over a hundred applications to the New York State Historical Marker program in 1935, many of them in Dutchess County where the Dover Stone Church is located. Some of the sites Harrison petitioned to receive markers for later turned out to be totally incorrect. For example, she marked an Native American burial ground, which was later discovered to be an African American burial ground. It's uncertain at this time if she is responsible for the Dover Stone Church marker, but if she is, it's even more likely to be of dubious origin. Information from Bill Jeffway, "The Recovery of a Rural African American Burial Ground is a Recovery of Voices & Lives," Dutchess County Historical Society, posted October 2018, <https://dchsny.org/af-am-burial-milan/>

peoples to a permanent past, as a mere feature in state and national history.

Unfortunately, the memorialization of the so-called Swaine girls which led to the subject of this paper likely falls into this category as well. The marker was placed in 1932 after Jared Butler Standish, amateur historian and local preservationist, completed “the most exhaustive compilation of historic data ever made relative” to Wethersfield, Connecticut. The “Pequod Massacre” marker was just one of eighty sites selected to be marked as the Washington Bicentennial celebration approached. Other sites selected for memorialization ranged widely: the first church, the first shipyard, “the place where Jared Ingersol resigned his Stamp Act



Figure 7: Steve Stoessel, Dover Stone Church Marker, August 17, 2019, photograph, The Historical Marker Database, hmdb.org/m.asp?m=137968&Result=1



Figure 8: Dover Stone Church, date unknown, photograph, Atlas Obscura, atlasobscura.com/places/dover-plains-stone-church

commission,” the first plow shop, the first seed company, taverns, and more. This is the practice of “firsting” referenced in Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting*; by

claiming these firsts, white New Englanders made Native history an illegitimate precursor to the “real” history that began with English arrival.²⁸⁸

To return to the specifics of the “Pequod Massacre, Swaine girls” marker, the newspaper article which announced the placement of these eighty markers described the spot as “The place of ‘William Swaine,’ at River Road and Main Street, where Swaine’s daughter and an unknown girl were captured by Indians.” This is troubling to begin with, as it already differs from the text of the marker: was it a Swaine girl and an unknown girl, or two Swaine girls? Perhaps the former was not concise enough for the sign? Neither sources contemporary to the Pequot War nor major secondary sources written on the subject reference the

²⁸⁸ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 2.

Swaine name; internet sources seem to be the perpetrators of this story, but even they cannot get their stories straight.²⁸⁹ Some say that the kidnapped girls were daughters of Abraham Swaine while others write William Swaine; regardless of which Swaine is cited, the stories are split between the girls being sisters, or one being a Swaine and the other an unknown girl.²⁹⁰ Many of the Internet perpetrators lack sources, but those who do bother cite old histories of Connecticut, such as *History of the colony of*

²⁸⁹ Winthrop, Mason, Gardiner, and Underhill do not name the girls in their accounts of the war. Major secondary sources on the Pequot War, like those from Cave and Jennings, do not name the girls either.

²⁹⁰ Wikipedia, Fairfieldhistory.org, Ctmq.org, and numerous genealogy message boards seem to be responsible for continuing the rumor of the Swaine name. Ctmq.org says that the girls were daughters of Abraham Swaine, though a commenter corrects the author to say that it was William Swaine. Accessgenealogy.com says daughters of Abraham Swaine. Familypedia.org says daughters of William Swaine. Fairfieldhistory.org simply says two daughters from the Swaine family.

New Haven to its absorption into Connecticut. This history indeed includes a short biography of William Swaine and references two of his daughters being captured by Pequots. The book goes on to note that the girls were rescued by the Dutch and left to the care of Lion Gardiner, “Who wrote in 1660: ‘I am yet to have thanks for my care and charge about them.’”²⁹¹ Tracing this remark back to the papers and biography of Lion Gardiner, however, brings us back to square one: in the same letter, Gardiner refers to the girls as “the two maids.” Nowhere in his papers does Gardiner reference the Swaines.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Edward Elias Atwater, *History of the colony of New Haven to its absorption into Connecticut*, (Meriden, CT: The Journal Publishing Company, 1902), 610.

²⁹² The account of the kidnapped girls appears at page 15. Additional search terms were used throughout the book including girl, maid, and various spellings of Swaine. Curtiss C. Gardiner, *Lion Gardiner, and*

If seeking out the origin of the Swaine name weren't impossible enough, returning to the physical marker raises even further questions. The house which was marked indeed belonged to William Swaine, but how did Standish know that this was the particular spot at which the Pequots attacked?²⁹³ The precise location of the attack is actually unknown; some historians, like Standish, have written that the attack occurred in the village proper, while others have disputed this, stating that it occurred in meadows near the river.²⁹⁴ Standish must have had his reasoning for marking the Swaine house given his

his descendants (1599-1890), (St. Louis: A. Whipple Publisher, 1890), 15.

²⁹³ Martha Smart, historian at Wethersfield Historical Society, email message to author, March 12, 2020.

²⁹⁴ Accounts quoted in Cave's book cite the attack hitting the village proper. Volume I of the *History of Ancient Wethersfield* by Adams and Stiles refute this account, as does Francis Jennings.

“exhaustive” research into the history of Wethersfield, but the entire investigation is rendered unnecessary by simply returning to the context in which the marker and its seventy-nine companions were produced. Once again, the memorial was placed in the year of the Washington Bicentennial, and just two years prior to the tercentenary of Wethersfield’s founding. In this context, it is less likely that the Pequot War or the Swaine girls were being deemed “worthy” of memorialization; rather, in a setting in which American heroes, U.S. American history, and local history were being celebrated, it was necessary to document every instance of connection that Wethersfield had to the larger history of the country. The Swaine girls and other victims of the “Pequot Massacre” on Wethersfield were only

recognized alongside dozens of other people and places within town, not on their own “merit.”

The Pequot War continues to be memorialized in small ways—still in contexts which utilize memory of the war for alternative purposes, and especially military ones. A marker far, far away from Pequot War territory in Haywood, Tennessee honors the Army National Guard, mentioning that the Guard “predates the founding of our nation,” “is the direct descendant of the militias of the thirteen original colonies,” and “has participated in every American conflict since the Pequot War of 1637.”²⁹⁵

Likewise, a Veterans Memorial in Farmington, Connecticut, dedicated in 1992, hosts pillars representing

²⁹⁵ Ken Smith, “Army National Guard,” The Historical Marker Database, published June 16, 2016, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=52989>.

the five branches of the U.S. military and the conflicts each branch has been involved in. Names of local veterans are also carved into each column beneath the appropriate conflict. The first conflict listed on the Army column is “Suppression of Pequots (1637),” though there are no names of local veterans listed beneath it.²⁹⁶ These memorials serve to legitimize the military’s constant presence in American history and, once again, to connect the local to the national. Time after time, the Pequot War is memorialized in forms which extend the scope of U.S. American history and strengthen nationalistic, patriotic identities.

²⁹⁶ Michael Herrick, “Farmington Veterans Memorial,” The Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=33068>.

However, historical revisionism has brought to light some of the issues in Pequot War memorials—particularly the monument to John Mason. Native Americans began to protest the statue’s presence at Fort Mystic in 1992, arguing that honoring Mason at Fort Mystic, rather than the hundreds of Pequots slaughtered at the site, was disrespectful. The Mason statue was removed from Fort Mystic in 1996, only to be placed at a new site in Windsor, Connecticut, the town in which Mason settled prior to the Pequot War.²⁹⁷ However, the statue has seen continued backlash at its new location. Windsor’s Town Council reviewed a spending proposal in 2016 which allocated funds for assessing several local monuments and markers in

²⁹⁷ Christine Ermenc, “John Mason and His Statue,” Windsor Historical Society, published April 15th, 2017, <https://windsorhistoricalsociety.org/john-mason-and-his-statue/>.

need of repairs, the John Mason statue being one of them. A council member asked to strike the Mason statue from the list because of his association with the massacre. The council agreed to remove Mason from the list, and to even assess possibilities for removing or destroying it altogether.²⁹⁸

In other cases, any semblance of recognition for the Pequot War has been unceremoniously discarded. The “Swaine” Girls marker no longer stands in front of the house across the street from Hanmer Park in Wethersfield; it is unclear when or why it was removed.²⁹⁹ The two young maids kidnapped during the Pequot War are once

²⁹⁸ Harlan Levy, “Windsor council turns back on John Mason statue,” *Journal Inquirer*, December 7, 2016.

²⁹⁹ Martha Smart at the Wethersfield Historical Society suggested removal of the sign was at the purview of the homeowner.

again nameless, and the attack that occurred on Wethersfield left to the history books. Not only has the marker been removed, but a “much larger” marker highlighting “ship building and maritime trade” has appeared across the street from where it once stood. In fact, the marker is part of a full series underscoring “the role of nearby Connecticut River in the history of Wethersfield...Also highlighted are nearby homes of captains and the roles some of them had in the American Revolution.”³⁰⁰ Commemoration shapes the stories we tell about people and events in history, but its impermanence allows for those stories to change. What was once considered a worthwhile element in the history of

³⁰⁰ Martha Smart, historian at Wethersfield Historical Society, email message to author, March 12, 2020.

Wethersfield, a place which might boost local pride and identity, is no longer recognized as such. Other stories have been asserted in its place, reinforcing the idea that Wethersfield commemorators only utilized memory of the Pequot War because *any* local history was relevant in the context of Washington Bicentennial and Wethersfield tercentenary celebrations.

Through the interrogation of two centuries of Pequot War memorialization, it becomes evident that the white New Englanders who commemorated the war were not moved by any real desire to preserve memory of a significant moment in early colonial history. The Pequot War defined decades of relations between colonists and Native peoples, early New England's political sphere, and the path toward economic domination and expansion for

the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In spite of this, white New Englanders were more often inspired to memorialize by contemporary politics, ancestral connections to history, celebration of U.S. American anniversaries, and the desire to connect local history to the national narrative. The result is a chain of memorials, monuments, and markers which claim to honor the people and places of the Pequot War, but in reality assert United States presence, patriotism, memory, and identity in spaces which hold the opportunity to genuinely recognize Native peoples and educate the American public about the violence and manipulation which colonists executed against them.

The existing memorials to the Pequot War reveal that commemoration is a time capsule to the moment in which the commemoration occurs, and maintaining that

memory may not prove beneficial to any parties involved. Furthermore, they demonstrate the idea that commemoration which seeks to celebrate the nation “often presumes that everyone understands ‘nation’ in the same terms” when, in reality, people across the country experience and understand the nation in vastly different ways.³⁰¹ All instances of Pequot War commemoration have come from a place which celebrates the United States and its history as understood by white Americans, and mainly those in positions of privilege. The discomfort surrounding the John Mason statue from Fort Mystic is a sign that Americans may be contending with the fallible historical memory, American patriotism, and identity which they have been taught, but it is only the beginning of a long road

³⁰¹ Bruggeman, *Commemoration*, 7-9.

to understanding the true scope and impact of the relationship between commemoration, memory, and identity in the United States.

Bibliography

- Allison, David B. *Controversial Monuments and Memorials: A Guide to Community Leaders*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018.
- Atwater, Edward Elias. *History of the colony of New Haven to its absorption into Connecticut*. Meriden, CT: The Journal Publishing Company, 1902.
- Bruggeman, Seth C. *Commemoration: The American Association for State and Local History Guide*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017.
- Canonicus Memorial: Services of Dedication, Under the Auspices of the Rhode Island Historical Society, September 21, 1883*. Providence: Providence Press Company, 1883.
- Canonicus Monument*. Date unknown. Photograph. Go Providence. Accessed May 20, 2020. goprovidence.com/listing/Canonicus-square/24206/.
- Cave, Alfred A. *The Pequot War*. UMass, 1996.

Collier, Thomas S. *A History of the Statue Erected to Commemorate the Heroic Achievement of Maj. John Mason and his Comrades, with an Account of the Unveiling Ceremonies*. The Commission, 1889.

Coughlin, Bill. "James Cole." The Historical Marker Database. Published August 25, 2017.
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=107426>.

Dover Stone Church. Date unknown. Photograph. Atlas Obscura. Accessed May 20, 2020.
atlasobscura.com/places/dover-plains-stone-church.

Ermenc, Christine. "John Mason and His Statue." Windsor Historical Society. Published April 15th, 2017.
<https://windsorhistoricalsociety.org/john-mason-and-his-statue/>.

Gardiner, Curtiss C. *Lion Gardiner, and his descendants (1599-1890)*. St. Louis: A. Whipple Publisher, 1890.

Herrick, Michael. "Farmington Veterans Memorial." The Historical Marker Database. Accessed May 20, 2020. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=33068>.

Herrick, Michael. "Thomas Sherwood Memorial." The Historical Marker Database. Published November 8, 2019. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=27173>.

"Indian Removal Act (1830)." In *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*, edited by Thomas Riggs. Gale, 2015.

Jeffway, Bill. "The Recovery of a Rural African American Burial Ground is a Recovery of Voices & Lives." Dutchess County Historical Society. Published October 2018. <https://dchsny.org/af-am-burial-milan/>

Levy, Harlan. "Windsor council turns back on John Mason statue." *Journal Inquirer*, December 7, 2016.

Lion Gardiner Monument, Old Saybrook. Date unknown. Photograph. CTPostcards.net. Accessed May 20, 2020. ctpostcards.net/lion-gardiner-monument-old-saybrook/

Major John Mason statue. Date unknown. Photograph. Indian & Colonial Research Center. Accessed May 20, 2020. indianandcolonial.org/john-mason-statue

Mason, John. *A Brief History of the Pequot War*. Boston, 1736.

Meuwese, Mark. "The Dutch Connection: New Netherland, the Pequots, and the Puritans in Southern New England, 1620-1638." *Early American Studies* 9, no. 2, Spring 2011.

Marling, Karal Ann. *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Miantonomi monument. Date unknown. Photograph. Find A Grave. Accessed May 20, 2020.
findagrave.com/cemetery/2677923/miantonomo-monument

Oberg, Michael. *Uncas: First of the Mohicans*. Cornell, 2006.

O'Brien, Jean M. *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of existence in New England*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

- Purcell, Sarah J. *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- Salisbury, Neal. "Pequot War" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Military and Diplomatic History*, edited by Paul S. Boyer. Oxford University Press, Inc., 2013.
- Schutz, John A. *A Noble Pursuit: The Sesquicentennial History of the New England Historic Genealogical Society 1845-1995*. Boston, MA: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1995.
- Smith, Ken. "Army National Guard." The Historical Marker Database. Published June 16, 2016.
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=52989>.
- Smith, Philip H. *General history of Dutchess county, from 1609 to 1876, inclusive*. Pawling, New York: Published by the Author, 1877.
- Soessel, Steve. "Dover Stone Church." The Historical Marker Database. Published August 19, 2019.
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=137968>.

Stone, William L. *Uncas and Miantonomoh, A Historical Discourse, Deliver at Norwich, (Conn.) on the Fourth Day of July, 1842, on the Occasion of the Erection of a Monument to the Memory of Uncas, the White Man's Friend, and First Chief of the Mohegans*. New York: Dayston & Newman, 1842.

Swaine Girls Homesite Marker. Date unknown.
Photograph. Battlefields of the Pequot War.
Accessed May 20, 2020.

<https://pequotwar.org/about/memory-legacy>

Uncas Monument. Date unknown. Photograph. CT Monuments.net. Accessed May 20, 2020.
<http://ctmonuments.net/2009/03/uncas-monument-norwich/>

Underhill, John. *Newes from America; Or, A New and Experimentall Discoverie of New England; Containing, A True Relation of Their War-like Proceedings These Two Yeares Last Past, with a Figure of the Indian Fort, or Palizado*. 1638.

“Unveil Monument,” *The Middletown, (Conn.) Press*, November 21, 1930.

Wang, Zheng. *Memory, Politics, Identity, and Conflict: Historical Memory As a Variable*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017.

Webster, Sally. *The Nation's First Monument and the Origins of the American Memorial Tradition: Liberty Enshrined*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

The Foundations of Empire-Building:
**Does Genghis Khan's Legacy Correspond with the
"Great Man" View of History?**

Fernando Lopez Oggier

University of California Los Angeles

Introduction

On an unspecified day in 1210, a delegation from the Great Jin dynasty was sent to Genghis Khan calling for the submission of the unified Mongol tribes to the Great Jin. The dynasty was in control of the flow of goods throughout the Silk Road. Defying them was likely to limit the Mongols' access to valuable resources. Upon receiving this request, historical records narrate that Genghis Khan spat on the ground, mounted his horse, and rode north, leaving the stunned delegation choking on his dust.³⁰²

Incidentally, the Mongol Empire would go on to bring the Great Jin dynasty to its knees.³⁰³ In the years leading up to

³⁰² Weatherford, J. "Genghis Khan And The Making Of The Modern World. United States." (Three Rivers Press, 2004).

³⁰³ Ibid.

the conquest, the dynasty's forces had been conducting expeditions in the Mongol steppe resulting in the enslavement and killing of various Mongol groups. They collected tribute from these groups and encouraged rivalries amongst them in attempts to decentralize their forces. All these schemes paled in comparison when the Mongols began their conquest of the dynasty under Genghis Khan in 1211. The Mongols inflicted cataclysmic damage on a dynasty that had ruled the Great Plains of Asia for over a century. Although the Great Jin dynasty officially fell in 1234, the ruthless invasion of 1211 set the tone for the campaigns of conquest that would follow,

spearheading the proliferation of the remarkably vast Mongol Empire.³⁰⁴

For many people, the brutality displayed by the Mongol Empire throughout the 13th century has immortalized Genghis Khan as a genocidal ruler. Others view the former emperor as an astute military leader and a key historical figure. Aside from assembling the largest empire in history, Genghis Khan brought the Silk Road under a cohesive political milieu which expanded the cultural horizons of the archaic Eurasian civilizations.³⁰⁵

The brutality displayed by the Mongol Empire throughout

³⁰⁴ Weatherford, J. "Genghis Khan And The Making Of The Modern World. United States." (Three Rivers Press, 2004).

³⁰⁵ Rossabi, Morris. "The Mongols and global history: a Norton documents reader." (WW Norton, 2011).

the 13th century has immortalized Genghis Khan as a genocidal and cruel ruler. The atrocities committed run as deep as widespread rape that occurred while expanding the vast empire. In fact, genetic evidence indicates that up to 0.5% of men today share common ancestry with Genghis Khan himself. The number is 10% for those who reside within the territories of the former Mongol Empire.³⁰⁶ When Genghis Khan's genetic lineage manages to transcend the test of time, it's difficult to overlook the mark that the former emperor left on human history.

In this case, Genghis Khan's legacy can be interpreted through the "Great Man" theory. This is a 19th century notion that history is largely explained by the

³⁰⁶ Mayell, Hillary. "Genghis Khan a prolific lover, dna data implies." National Geographic News 14 (2003).

influence of key figures who, due to their personal attributes, have had decisive historical impacts.³⁰⁷ The “Great Man” view of history is mostly attributed to Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle gave a number of lectures on how leadership and heroism shape the different arcs of history. Carlyle’s lectures were rooted in gender bias and religious narratives while also lacking rigorous academic techniques. Nonetheless, many of the themes found in the “Great Man” view of history have motivated behavioral theories of leadership and resonate with contemporary discourses in business and corporate leadership.³⁰⁸ Prior to the 20th century, this historical notion consolidated the meaning of

³⁰⁷ Spector, Bert Alan. "Carlyle, Freud, and the great man theory more fully considered." *Leadership* 12, no. 2 (2016): 250-260.

³⁰⁸ Spector, Bert Alan. "Carlyle, Freud, and the great man theory more fully considered." *Leadership* 12, no. 2 (2016): 250-260.

leadership and aided in differentiating leaders from followers. Cawthon (1996, p. 1) explains that “the contention that *leaders are born, not made* was widely accepted, not only by scholars, but by those attempting to influence the behavior of others.” Although the theory as an academic source has fallen out of favor, reassessment of old evidence and new analyses have led organizational psychologists and management scholars to concur with the notion that innate qualities and particular experiences influence the caliber of a leader.³⁰⁹

At first glance, Genghis Khan seems to make a rather compelling case for the “Great Man” view of history. His perseverance, astute military and empire-building

³⁰⁹ Organ, Dennis W. "Leadership: The great man theory revisited." (1996): 1-4.

strategies, as well as his ruling capabilities are cited as his main influential qualities. However, empirical evidence and historical literature demonstrate that there were also a number of circumstances that facilitated the proliferation of the Mongol Empire and Genghis Khan's rise to power. These circumstances include: climate, the socio-political organization of the Mongols, Genghis Khan's natural claim to authority, and the historical context of various events.

Genghis Khan as a model for the “Great Man” View of History

Background

Most scholars estimate Genghis Khan's birth to have taken place in 1167. Born to the name of Temüjin, Genghis Khan's early life is shrouded in relative

uncertainty due to the lack of written accounts and contemporary records. The historical evidence available indicates that Temüjin grew up in a competitive familial structure and underwent a multitude of hardships. His early life shaped his understanding of socio-political relations and entrenched his unwavering perseverance.³¹⁰

Temüjin's father died when he was only nine years old. This created a difficult situation for him as it would be hard for anyone, no matter how loyal, to follow a nine-year-old chieftain. As a child, Temüjin's family was often "reduced to living on berries and on what they could grub up from the earth".³¹¹ They also depended on the game that Temüjin and his brothers would hunt. He had a competitive

³¹⁰ Morgan, David. "The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe." Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (Wiley, 1986).

³¹¹ Ibid., 58

relationship with his brothers, one of whom he killed after a disagreement during a hunting expedition.³¹² In 1177 Temüjin was captured and enslaved by the Tayichi'ud, who were former allies of his father. He was able to escape shortly thereafter, this gave him a favorable reputation amongst other tribal forces.³¹³ Temüjin began to make alliances with other groups in order to get back in favor with his original tribe. At the time, the most prominent tribes were the Tatars located in eastern Mongolia, the Keraits in the center, the Merkits to the north of them, and the Naimans in the west. The most influential of these during Temüjin's early life were the Tatar's, receiving

³¹² Weatherford, J. "Genghis Khan And The Making Of The Modern World. United States." (Three Rivers Press, 2004).

³¹³ Matthews, Rupert. "Mongols: History's Fearless Fighters." (Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2015): 12-20

support from the Great Jin dynasty. During Temüjin's youth, the solidification of power and political alliances happened through arranged marriages. Temüjin grew up observing a volatile and difficult political climate that was abundant in raids, corruption, theft, and tribal warfare.³¹⁴ This could have aided in shaping Temüjin into a cunning ruler and ruthless military commander.

Temüjin rose to power through alliances with prominent tribes. One of his first vital alliances was with Toghril, the Khan of the Keraites. Temüjin continued to amass military power and started defeating his major rivals.³¹⁵ He was able to defeat the Merkits after the

³¹⁴ Morgan, David. "The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe." Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (Wiley, 1986).

³¹⁵ Onon, Urgunge, ed. *The History and the Life of Chinggis Khan: The Secret History of the Mongols*. (Brill Archive, 1990).

kidnapping of his first wife in 1188. The Merkits were fully incorporated into the Mongol confederation by 1200.³¹⁶ The Tatars, who killed Temüjin's father, fell to Toghrlil around 1202 with the aid of Temüjin. The Naimans were also defeated through military campaigns. Despite Temüjin's military success, there were various rifts in the alliances he formed and more rival groups started sprouting up as a result. Nonetheless, Temüjin was consistently able to stifle their ambitions. Even Toghrlil, who also developed a rift with Temüjin, eventually met his end at the hands of a Naiman scout.³¹⁷ By 1203 the last Khan of the Naimans

³¹⁶ Matthews, Rupert. "Mongols: History's Fearless Fighters." (Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2015): 12-30

³¹⁷ Morgan, David. "The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe." Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (Wiley, 1986).

died in battle. Their defeat left Temüjin as the sole ruler of the Mongol steppe.³¹⁸

Temüjin began to build an increasingly powerful Mongol confederation that eventually recognized him as the Khan of the Mongols. Historical records indicate that it was around this time when he assumed the title of Genghis Khan, meaning ‘oceanic’ or ‘universal’ ruler. By 1206, Genghis Khan had unified the Mongol tribes which came together to form the Mongol Empire.³¹⁹ This prompts the question: How did an enslaved ten-year-old chieftain, who had been deserted by his followers, grow up to rule over the largest contiguous empire in human history?

³¹⁸ Twitchett, Denis C., Herbert Franke, and John King Fairbank, eds. *The Cambridge history of China: Volume 6, Alien regimes and border states, 907-1368*. Vol. 6. (Cambridge University Press, 1978).

³¹⁹ Morgan, David. “The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe.” Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (Wiley, 1986).

Empire-Building & Military Strategies

Genghis Khan used astute military strategies and empire-building techniques to achieve imperial success. He was skilled in overcoming the inherent weaknesses of the Mongol army to conquer territories. For instance, during the conquest of the Great Jin dynasty, walled cities proved to be a critical counter to cavalry. Thus, during a siege on one of the dynasty's cities, Genghis Khan offered "to raise the siege if he were given 1,000 cats and 10,000 swallows".³²⁰ When the animals were handed over, he proceeded to attach material to their nails which was set on fire. It didn't take long for the city to go up in flames;

³²⁰ Ibid., 65

capitalizing on the confusion caused by the fire, Genghis Khan's forces stormed the city.³²¹

Deceit and fear-mongering were common practice for Genghis Khan's campaigns of conquest. He also had an extensive network of spies that allowed him to gather intelligence and formulate tactics.³²² During the brutal conquests of the Khwarezmian Empire, Genghis Khan's forces used these tactics to create friction and divide enemy powers.³²³ The Khwarezmian Empire already suffered from infighting between factions within the empire which allowed the Mongols to capitalize on their decentralized

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Di Cosmo, Nicola, and Dalizhabu Bao. *Manchu-Mongol Relations on the Eve of the Qing Conquest: a documentary history*. (Brill, 2003).

³²³ McLynn, Frank. *Genghis Khan: His conquests, his empire, his legacy*. (Da Capo Press, 2015).

hierarchy of command.³²⁴ In March 1220 Genghis Khan mobilized his forces towards Samarkand, the capital of the Khwarezmian Empire. The Mongols waged psychological warfare on the city and its forces; they had spies which informed Genghis Khan of the infighting between the Shah and his mother. Since the Shah's mother commanded elite cavalry divisions and senior commanders, Genghis Khan began to argue that the Queen mother should unify her army against her 'treacherous' son. In the meantime, he arranged for letters from deserters to be sent to the Shah that stated that his mother and her army had allied themselves with the Mongols. This fueled the growing disunity in the Khwarezmian Empire. The Mongols

³²⁴ Onon, Urgunge, ed. *The History and the Life of Chinggis Khan: The Secret History of the Mongols*. (Brill Archive, 1990): 129

continued their psychological strategies by issuing fake decrees in the name of the Shah or the Queen mother to further divide enemy forces and disorient their command structure. Ultimately, the Shah's mother kept the Khwarezm generals and the forces under her command as a garrison. During the fighting, Genghis Khan and his forces pretended to retreat to lure the garrison out of the fortifications of the city. The garrison fell for the trap as they followed the Mongols' false retreat only to be overwhelmingly massacred in open combat. The capital city of Samarkand fell two days later.³²⁵ This kind of psychological warfare proved effective at disorientating

³²⁵ McLynn, Frank. *Genghis Khan: His conquests, his empire, his legacy*. (Da Capo Press, 2015).

enemy groups and creating ruptures in the line of command.

Finally, when Genghis Khan defeated rival tribes he would take the tribe into his protection and fully integrate its members into the Mongol Empire. Hence, the conquered people felt loyalty to Genghis Khan and his support grew in number.³²⁶ This practice was sacrosanct for his initial campaigns of conquest. Throughout the attack of Hsi-Hsia in 1209 the Mongols “soon found it necessary to add a train of Chinese siege engineers to their forces”³²⁷ who defected to the Mongol Empire. Despite his psychological tactics, Genghis Khan also tended to offer diplomatic solutions to

³²⁶ Weatherford, J. "Genghis Khan And The Making Of The Modern World. United States." (Three Rivers Press, 2004).

³²⁷ Morgan, David. *The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (Wiley, 1986): 65

his invasions. In fact, the Mongols never planned to conquer the Khwarezmian Empire; they originally sought out a trade partnership with them. However, when the Shah repeatedly violated the Mongols' peace treaty the war ensued.³²⁸

Ruling Capabilities

Genghis Khan differed from previous Mongol rulers in his meritocratic approach and his tendency towards religious tolerance. The empire was grounded in a meritocracy irrespective of ethnicity or wealth. This allowed Genghis Khan to attract a range of followers from

³²⁸ Prawdin, Michael. *The Builders of the Mogul Empire*. (Routledge, 2018).

various socioeconomic classes while other nomadic leaders mostly cared about the wealthy elite.³²⁹

Moreover, Genghis Khan established the Yassa code of law to incentivize obedience by promising future spoils of war to members of the Mongol Empire. Since it was a secretive, oral code of law, it could be modified and used selectively by Genghis Khan and his sons which facilitated his dominion over the growing empire.³³⁰

Genghis Khan's circumstantial advantages

Climate

³²⁹ Hildinger, Erik. *Warriors of the Steppe: A Military History of Central Asia, 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D.* New York: (Sarpedon, 1997).

³³⁰ Weatherford, J. "Genghis Khan And The Making Of The Modern World. United States." (Three Rivers Press, 2004).

Regardless of Genghis Khan's personal characteristics, there is an array of different circumstances that facilitated the vast spread of the Mongol Empire. Empirical evidence indicates that climatic conditions were considerably favorable during Genghis Khan's rise to power. Paleoclimate research shows "a dramatic change in temperature and precipitation in the 13th century that would have translated into enhanced productivity and increased availability of energy in the steppes".³³¹ The degree to which this favored the proliferation of the Mongol Empire cannot be overstated. The rise of Genghis Khan coincided with 15 consecutive years of above average

³³¹ Pederson, Neil, Amy E. Hessel, Nachin Baatarbileg, Kevin J. Anchukaitis, and Nicola Di Cosmo. "Pluvials, droughts, the Mongol Empire, and modern Mongolia." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 12 (2014): 4376

moisture. This climatic feat is unprecedented over the last 1,112 years. The Mongol Empire's influence and military success hinged on the strength of its cavalry. The constantly wet and warm conditions not only strengthened the cavalry but also facilitated the usage of domesticated livestock.³³²

Despite these expedient climatic conditions, the years leading up to the 13th century were characterized by dryness and low grassland productivity. From the 1180s onwards, these dry conditions corresponded with political instability and frequent tribal warfare in the Mongolian steppe. Regardless of the specific events that set this socio-political instability in motion, the increasing dry conditions would have played a role in the collapse of the Mongols'

³³² Ibid., 4375-4376

organizational structure, making way for Genghis Khan's rule.³³³

Socio-Political Organization

The Mongol tribes of the 12th century were a very decentralized society, mostly involving a clan system that was held together by blood relationships. However, this clan lineage system began to decay. As an increasing number of clans propagated themselves they also expanded into other groups or subdivisions. *The Secret History of the Mongols* provides an account of various clans splitting up into smaller units or reassembling themselves into different tribes (*amyaks*). This led to a multitude of groups coalescing around the supremacy of particular clan lineages

³³³ Ibid., 4375-4379

to form tribal confederations and states that differed in size.³³⁴ Additionally, the reorganization of Mongol society was accompanied by socioeconomic stratification. This stratification happened in accordance with ownership of cattle, the region's main form of wealth. Cattle ownership was concentrated in the hands of a few nobles. Mongolian nobility was primarily made up of people who held more influential titles such as *Khan* (chief/king) or *Baghatur* (brave, hero). The majority of members in Mongol society were commoners. By the time Genghis Khan gained some notoriety in the latter half of the 12th century, most of the

³³⁴ Kahn, Paul. *The Secret History of the Mongols: the Origin of Chinghis Khan: an Adaptation of the Yuan Ch'ao Pi Shih, Based Primarily on the English Translation by Francis Woodman Cleaves.* San Francisco. San Francisco: (North Point Press, 1949).

Mongols were adopting an *amyak* tribal system of socio-political organization.³³⁵

With nothing resembling a ‘central government’ and the presence of a fluid tribal structure, unified leadership under a young nomad warrior was providential.³³⁶ The Mongolian tribes that inhabited the steppe during this time were sufficiently alike in their way of life and their ethnic background that they could be molded together into a structured, overarching society.³³⁷

³³⁵ Seyfeydinovich, Asimov M, and C E Bosworth. *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Age of Achievement, 8750 Ad to the End of the 15th Century*. Paris, France: (UNESCO, 1998).

³³⁶ Kahn, Paul. *The Secret History of the Mongols: the Origin of Chinghis Khan: an Adaptation of the Yuan Ch'ao Pi Shih, Based Primarily on the English Translation by Francis Woodman Cleaves*. San Francisco. San Francisco: (North Point Press, 1949).

³³⁷ Seyfeydinovich, Asimov M, and C E Bosworth. *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Age of Achievement, 8750 Ad to the End of the 15th Century*. Paris, France: (UNESCO, 1998).

These structural developments facilitated the unification of the Mongols under Genghis Khan.

Claim to Authority

In addition, Genghis Khan was born with some sort of claim to authority. Yesügei, Genghis Khan's father, was a major chief of the Khamag Mongol confederation.³³⁸

Yesügei had developed his own set of military and political relationships throughout his life, some of which benefitted Genghis Khan as he acquired influence. Toghril, the Khan of the Keraites, was favorably disposed towards Genghis Khan due to the good relationship Toghril had with Yesügei. Genghis Khan's alliance with Toghril was

³³⁸ Rossabi, Morris. *The Mongols and global history: a Norton documents reader*. (WW Norton, 2011).

instrumental in their defeat of the Tatars and in his acquisition of military might.³³⁹ Perhaps it's ironic that it was the Tatars who killed Yesügei in the first place.

Historical Context

Arguably, many of the events in Genghis Khan's early life and the historical context of several of his conquests played out in his favor. As mentioned previously, the hardships he faced in his youth shaped his ambition and fortified his perseverance. Although this was originally presented as a personal quality, this could also be considered circumstantial. Another child born under similar conditions might not have persevered in the way that

³³⁹ Morgan, David. *The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (Wiley, 1986).

Genghis Khan did. However, had these events not taken place, Genghis Khan's will might've not solidified in the same manner. It's impossible to pinpoint the exact degree to which historical events or personal characteristics were more influential in shaping Genghis Khan. Nonetheless, it's important to note that Genghis Khan grew up in a particularly unforgiving society and with a competitive familial structure that led him to establish his authority.

Moreover, the early Chinese conquests were aided by the historical context of the 13th century. The Great Jin dynasty had ruled in China for a little over a century by the time the Mongols launched their conquest. The Great Jin dynasty's subjects, called the Jurchens, were foreigners who originally organized themselves in tribal confederations. They didn't feel much loyalty to the Jin

emperor either. This made them more willing to defect to the Mongol Empire during the campaigns of conquests, facilitating the spread of the empire and allowing it to grow in number.³⁴⁰

Genghis Khan's Legacy and Modern Politics

It's been over eight centuries since Genghis Khan's birth; his legacy has endured and the emperor has been memorialized all over the world, particularly in modern-day Mongolia. Despite the lack of academic rigor that the "Great Man" view of history holds; its underlying framework still influences how historical figures are perceived and memorialized.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

Genghis Khan's image has been used as a tool for the creation of a national Mongolian identity as well as commercial profit. Genghis Khan has been disparaged and vilified by those outside his homeland yet celebrated and glorified by Mongols. His legacy has been an object of worship for decades, even centuries, in Mongolia.³⁴¹ His legacy underwent a significant shift during the Soviet Union's command of Mongolia throughout the 20th century. The Soviet Union dictated that Genghis Khan was to be painted in a negative light to undermine Mongolian nationalism. This was also accompanied by the suppression of other cultural factors, such as Tibetan Buddhism, to further subvert ethnic identity. The Soviets wanted to form

³⁴¹ Rossabi, Morris. "Modern Mongolia and Chinggis Khan." *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* 3 no. 1 (2017): 24-26

a new national identity that centered around Communist ideals and Communist revolutionaries in Mongolia.

Mongolia remained under the Soviet sphere of influence for six decades. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the first multi-party elections were held in Mongolia in 1990. This ushered in a new era of deification of Genghis Khan.³⁴²

Many Mongolian democrats demanded the revival of traditional elements of Mongolian society, namely the revival of Tibetan Buddhism, the reintroduction of Mongolian script which had been replaced by Cyrillic during Soviet domination, and finally, the reintegration of Genghis Khan as a national symbol. Genghis Khan was celebrated in national festivals and religious celebrations as

³⁴² Ibid., 26

well as academic conferences and art exhibits.³⁴³ This also marked the beginning of the commodification of Genghis Khan's image. Ulaanbaatar's international airport was renamed to the "Chinggis Khaan International Airport" in 2005 to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Mongolian state. As part of this celebration, a 40-meter high statue of the Khan was also unveiled near Ulaanbaatar. Moreover, the capital's best hotels were named after Genghis Khan as well as one of Mongolia's most popular beers. Additionally, Genghis Khan's image appears in every denomination of the Mongolian tögrög (Mongolia's

³⁴³ Campi, Alicia. "Globalization's impact on Mongolian identity issues and the image of Chinggis Khan." *Mongolian culture and society in the age of globalization* (2006): 75-78.

currency), almost like a physical manifestation of this commodification.³⁴⁴

The idealization of Genghis Khan by Mongolians has created ahistorical narratives surrounding his legacy. Various scholars and Mongolian politicians paint the Khan as an advocate of democracy, women's rights and international law based on inaccurate understandings of Genghis Khan's legacy. Even those hailing him as an extraordinary military figure fail to consider that nomadic pastoral groups had developed the same military tactics and weapons centuries before the Mongols.³⁴⁵ Creating a robust national identity is critical in the formation of a strong and independent nation-state. Many of these interpretations of

³⁴⁴ Rossabi, Morris. "Modern Mongolia and Chinggis Khan." *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* 3 no. 1 (2017): 26-28

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27

Genghis Khan's legacy are probably driven by the need to create a unifying historical narrative. However, basing national identity on flawed historical legacies is problematic not just due to their inaccuracy, but also because these narratives can inform political developments and national policies. The Mongolian state began promoting this national cult to foster Mongolian unity. However, in a period of substantial economic inequality and government corruption, many Mongolians and third-party onlookers view the constant promotion of Genghis Khan's image as a way to deflect antagonism towards the economic and political elites under the guise of promoting Mongolian unity. Some argue that the revival of Genghis Khan's image after its suppression under Soviet influence was a response to political corruption, environmental

degradation and increasing economic inequality.

Mongolians were presented with the promise of a better future while a small number of Mongolian elites benefited from the misdirection. These responses to growing inequalities distract the populace from the socioeconomic problems at hand.³⁴⁶

Despite the glorification and demonization of this key historical figure, most historians today are generally balanced and grounded in their evaluation of Genghis Khan. While most scholars acknowledge the destruction and havoc that the Mongol Empire brought about, they also recognize the contributions that this empire made to human development, namely the expansion of trade over long distances as well as technological and cultural diffusion.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 28-29

Genghis Khan is also widely recognized as a key figure in spearheading the unification of the Turco-Mongol peoples in the Mongolian steppe.³⁴⁷

Conclusion

Genghis Khan's legacy will continue to remain controversial regardless of whether he was an innately successful leader or a product of Mongol society. Nonetheless, his symbolic mark on history influences how society understands the agency of individuals in historical outcomes. Genghis Khan's biography seemingly supports narratives like the "Great Man" view of history; however, history cannot be understood through the lens of a single

³⁴⁷ Rossabi, Morris. "Modern Mongolia: from khans to commissars to capitalists." (Univ of California Press, 2005).

individual. In this case, there are various social, environmental, and political factors that played a significant role in the expansion of the Mongol Empire and Genghis Khan's ability to solidify himself as a key historical figure. Genghis Khan arguably benefitted from circumstances to the same degree that any other historical leader has. His legacy does not particularly correspond with the "Great Man" theory given the historically propitious circumstances that coincided with his rise to power. Ultimately, no leader can attribute their entire success to their personal characteristics. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to pinpoint the exact degree to which circumstances and personal qualities influence the course of history. Regardless of these limitations, strictly ascribing to a particular view of history can skew our understanding

of it. Hence, using narratives like the “Great Man” view of history as a tool for analysis rather than as an explanatory framework might yield a more holistic understanding of historical events.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Di Cosmo, Nicola, and Dalizhabu Bao. *Manchu-Mongol Relations on the Eve of the Qing Conquest: a documentary history*. (Brill, 2003).

Kahn, Paul. *The Secret History of the Mongols: the Origin of Chinghis Khan: an Adaptation of the Yuan Ch'ao Pi Shih, Based Primarily on the English Translation by Francis Woodman Cleaves*. San Francisco. San Francisco: (North Point Press, 1949).

Onon, Urgunge, ed. *The History and the Life of Chinggis Khan: The Secret History of the Mongols*. (Brill Archive, 1990).

Rossabi, Morris. *The Mongols and global history: a Norton documents reader*. (WW Norton, 2011).

Secondary Sources

Campi, Alicia. "Globalization's impact on Mongolian identity issues and the image of Chinggis Khan."

Mongolian culture and society in the age of globalization (2006): 67-99.

Cawthon, David L. "Leadership: The great man theory revisited ." *Business Horizons* 39 no. 3 (1996): 1-4.

Hildinger, Erik. *Warriors of the Steppe: A Military History of Central Asia, 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D.* New York: (Sarpedon, 1997).

Matthews, Rupert. *Mongols: History's Fearless Fighters.* (Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2015): 12-30.

Mayell, Hillary. "Genghis khan a prolific lover, dna data implies." *National Geographic News* 14 (2003).

McLynn, Frank. *Genghis Khan: His conquests, his empire, his legacy.* (Da Capo Press, 2015).

Morgan, David. *The Mongols. The Peoples of Europe.* Oxford and Cambridge, MA, (1986).

Organ, Dennis W. "Leadership: The great man theory revisited." (1996): 1-4.

Pederson, Neil, Amy E Hessel, Nachin Baatarbileg, Kevin J Anchukaitis, and Nico Di Cosmo. 2014. "Pluvials, droughts, the Mongol Empire, and modern Mongolia." Edited by Karl W. Butzer. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111 (12): 4375-4379.

Prawdin, Michael. *The Builders of the Mogul Empire*. (Routledge, 2018).

Rossabi, Morris. "Modern Mongolia and Chinggis Khan." *Georgetown Journal of Asian Affairs* 3 no. 1 (2017): 24-30

Rossabi, Morris. "Modern Mongolia: from khans to commissars to capitalists." (Univ of California Press, 2005).

Seyfeydinovich, Asimov M, and C E Bosworth. *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Age of Achievement, 8750 Ad to the End of the 15th Century*. Paris, France: (UNESCO, 1998).

Spector, Bert Alan. "Carlyle, Freud, and the great man theory more fully considered." *Leadership* 12, no. 2 (2016): 250-260.

Twitchett, Denis C., Herbert Franke, and John King
Fairbank, eds. The Cambridge history of China:
Volume 6, Alien regimes and border states, 907-
1368. Vol. 6. (Cambridge University Press, 1978).

Weatherford, J. "Genghis Khan And The Making Of The
Modern World. United States." (Three
Rivers Press, 2004).