
GLOBAL CRISIS IN MEMORY

Juxtapositioned Memory: Lost Cause Statues and Sites of Lynching

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The paper explores both ‘official’ historical attempts to counter Lost Cause narratives of the former Confederacy, but also the moves towards re-memorialization in the form of statue removal as well as sites that bring forth what has been lost or excluded in Lost Cause accounts. It thus analyses the post-Reconstruction memorialization of Confederate soldiers via monuments throughout the former Confederacy, on the one hand, and the more recent moves (as seen in the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery) to document and commemorate the waves of lynchings which occurred during the same period of time (~1880s–1920s) in many of the same areas of the US South.

This paper explores the memory functions of the Lost Cause account of the US South during and following the US Civil War (1861–65) for contemporary US politics and the US’s status in international politics. Despite being widely discredited by historians, this account remains powerfully resilient in the United States. Following the ambiguous endings of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and its recent Great Recession, in an era that aims to ‘Make America Great Again’, it has been mobilized by the populist US right as an ‘honorable’ defence of white masculinist supremacy that finds emotional resonance with particular groups steeped in racial insecurities. The general point about contemporary crises and the politics of memory made here is that particular memories are shaped both by what is present and what is absent, by what is presented and asserted and what has been hidden, occluded and oppressed. In times of crisis, insecurity and status anxiety, what has long been present to enable and uphold particular sets of ‘memories’ is defended even more vociferously. Yet in doing so, these defences reveal how such presence is precarious and always has been, especially when counter-memories and memorializations no longer remain hidden or occluded, because the latter reveal another account of the past that is, moreover, incredibly important for the politics of the present.

My argument in this essay is threefold. First, there are parallels between the inability of the US South and especially its white population to come to grips with the Confederacy’s defeat and the contemporary US polity and its losses in the 2000s (including especially the Afghanistan and Iraq wars). Second, three interdependent insecurities – race, gender and sex – that drove white Southerners (in particular) remain important for understanding contemporary US politics. Trump’s discourses are thus less productive than reflective of these deeper insecurities that can be linked to broader historical dynamics going back to, at least, the nineteenth-century United States. My third and concluding point, discussed in the penultimate

section, is that, armed with the knowledge of these deeper insecurities, and acknowledging that the Lost Cause myths have been fostered in a variety of settings including textbooks, iconography, literature and art, as well as the monuments a deeper and more robust critique of these myths can and is occurring via not only a counter, but a *re*-memorialization of the US Civil War, slavery and race. The paper explores both 'official' historical attempts to counter Lost Cause narratives and also the moves towards re-memorialization in the form of statue removal as well as sites that bring forth what has been lost or excluded in Lost Cause accounts. It thus analyses the post-Reconstruction memorialization of Confederate soldiers via monuments throughout the former Confederacy, on the one hand, and the more recent moves (as seen in the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery) to document and commemorate the waves of lynchings which occurred during the same period (~1880s–1920s) in many of the same areas of the US South.

One clarification is in order for what follows. I am focused here on how losses, and the sense of 'loss', can be cultivated to make possible new transformations. I am not, however, endorsing the possibility that a loss justifies the repeated turns in US political history to accommodating white racial anxiety in US policies, both foreign and domestic. In fact, the purpose here is to reveal the historical contingencies and processes that in part echo through contemporary US political contexts in ways that reveal them as much more problematic than we might take them to be. Further, the implications for what follows are that not confronting loss directly, *not* taking responsibility for loss, and rather bypassing it with revisionist accounts that shift that blame to others, remains a perpetual source of ontological insecurity for the United States. As it can and has resulted in the repeated use of violence both historically but also in contemporary settings, this is a source of insecurity and a form of politics that *must* be confronted not only analytically, but politically.

The Lost Cause, a brief overview

The Lost Cause account of the US Civil War downplayed the role of slavery as a key reason for that conflict, and instead focused on the North's 'aggression' against the South and its way of life.¹ A number of institutions promoted this view throughout the South. Coined in the title of two books by Virginia Confederate sympathizer Edward A. Pollard (*The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates[...]; The Lost Cause Regained*), the Lost Cause gained momentum after the removal of federal forces and Union soldiers throughout the South in 1876, a point marking the end of Reconstruction. A number of institutions developed to circulate this account, such as the Southern Historical Society. One study of that society succinctly characterizes not only its purpose but arguably the purpose of the entire Lost Cause revisionist school:

While the Southern Historical Society purportedly was dedicated to history's preservation, this was not exactly the case. The Society was uninterested in academic history, with its emphasis on objective evaluation of facts, sources, and interpretations. Rather, the organization dedicated itself to the creation of a Confederate historical memory. (Starnes 177–8)

The Society published a series of essays in the 1870s by former Confederate soldiers and generals, notably Jubal Early, and developed alongside other organizations such as the United

¹ 'The rationalization served as an explanation of defeat. Antebellum romanticism, southern religious beliefs, war experiences, and the social, political and economic upheaval of Reconstruction made the explanation especially appealing to white southerners' (Starnes 177).

Sons of the Confederacy and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which promoted the commemoration of Confederate soldiers and battles (Starnes). While this linked a 'history' with a developing Confederate historical memory among white Southerners, and thus a type of story and speaking that promoted this view, it was also enabled by a *silencing* of the black population of the South. Although Confederate resistance and violence upon the recently freed black population occurred on occasion following the Confederate surrender at Appomattox in 1865, such violence increased in intensity and frequency following the 1876 removal of federal forces across the South. Often led by former Confederate generals (such as Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Gordon), paramilitary organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, along with everyday citizen groups, carried out a campaign of terror in the form of beatings and lynchings, increasing especially in the 1890s through to the 1920s.

Despite being discredited in the literature, the links between the Lost Cause myth and especially white American memories of the US Civil War persist. Some of this resilience is due to its embeddedness in various institutions, including the role of universities throughout the South, the historians they employed and the classes they offered. Moreover, some of these groups (especially the United Daughters of the Confederacy) also selected particular Lost Cause textbooks that were used more broadly in grade schools (that included both black and white children) throughout the South to 'teach' children about the Civil War and its aftermath (King).

One seemingly mundane but highly salient further development that proceeded apace during the rise of the Lost Cause was the construction and placement of monuments and memorials to Confederate soldiers throughout the South. Most of these were situated in public sites, including courthouses, parks, schools and cemeteries. The majority of these statues were erected as defiant, and even triumphant, markers of a South 'liberated' from federal soldiers post-Reconstruction, especially in the 1890s and 1900s (Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)).²

These statues, memorials and the historical memories they have enabled have shaped contemporary politics, especially recently in US politics. In Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015, a white 21-year-old man, Dylann Roof, entered an African-American church and killed nine people during a Bible study and prayer service. Roof then turned the gun on himself. He failed, however, to commit suicide as the gun was out of ammunition. Subsequent investigations of Roof's social media presence exposed how he often posed with white supremacist symbols and especially the Confederate battle flag.

This set off a chain of events where Southern state governments, starting with South Carolina, began taking down the flag due to its association with such racial violence (Niquette). Momentum began to build for similar removals of the Confederate statues, especially those in public spaces such as town squares, county courthouses and university campuses. A number were removed in 2015. Several more were removed following a series of events surrounding the neo-Nazi and white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017. This 'Unite the Right' rally itself was mobilized as a protest at the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Shortly thereafter, also in Charlottesville, a 32-year-old counter-protester was killed after a neo-Nazi drove his car into a crowd.³ There

² The SPLC notes that these monuments went up in two waves, first during this period, and then again, but with a different form of iconography, in the 1950s. The SPLC has constructed a detailed database locating and mapping all the Confederate statues of the US South, found here: <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>.

³ Fox News, which has often characterized the removal of Confederate statues in regretful tones, has a running list of removed statues here: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/08/21/which-confederate-statues-were-removed-running-list.html>.

has, nevertheless, been a strong backlash against monument removal. Several states passed laws preventing their removal or even relocation. This, in turn, has led to yet another reaction in the form of frustrated communities tearing down the statues illegally, often during the night, as University of North Carolina students did in August 2018 with the 'Silent Sam' statue in Chapel Hill.⁴ All of this has proceeded during a time of heightened racial tensions in the United States, fuelled even more so by the rhetoric and conduct of the Trump administration, which I discuss in more detail below. The monuments are not solely responsible for the Lost Cause mythology's resilience in the twenty-first-century American South. But they do scatter its landscape and enable an important and exclusive historical narrative to permeate, even though the South's purpose in the Civil War was the clear-cut focus to maintain the institution of slavery. They all, from the most common inscription, 'Lest We Forget', crystallize the politics of historical memory. The monuments also enable the erroneous notion directly inherited from the Lost Cause, common to this day, that 'the lack of an ability to compromise led to the Civil War, and men and women of good faith on both sides made their stand where their conscience had them make their stand'.⁵

Implications for contemporary US foreign policy

How the US Civil War played out, and the role of slavery and race therein, remains politically urgent to this day. I return to two of the three prongs of my argument here, also noted in the introduction. First, that especially during times of traumatic war 'loss', the United States exhibits certain insecurities that recall the ways in which the US South has (or has not) grappled with the Confederacy's loss in the Civil War. Much like the context that generated the Lost Cause, US foreign policy in the mid-2010s operated in the shadows of traumatic War-on-Terror losses. A number of recent essays have noted the absence of statues commemorating one of the Confederacy's most famous generals, James Longstreet. The Lost Cause abandoned Longstreet when he proved to embrace Republican politics, endorse former Union general Ulysses S. Grant for president and, most blasphemous of all, led a force of black troops to put down a white supremacist revolt in New Orleans in 1874. But it was the Lost Cause's work in the late 1800s in blaming Longstreet *for* the Confederacy's loss that is most pertinent to the role of victory and defeat in war. As one analyst summarizes:

After Lee's death in 1870 when the venerated general was no longer around to defend his trusted lieutenant, Lost Cause adherents perpetrated a false story that Longstreet had deliberately disobeyed Lee's order to attack the Union lines at sunrise on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg. That disobedience, they argued, lost the battle – and, in their eyes, the war. (Holmes)

The importance of winning wars permeates security studies, but the identity effects that defeat enables are increasingly a matter of great interest. In a recent study, Jelena Subotic and I focused on war victory (and, to a lesser extent, other practices in international relations) as

⁴ Silent Sam was a statue, like many others during the time, gifted by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1909 to the University of North Carolina to honour the students of that university who fought for the Confederacy in the US Civil War. The monument was erected in 1913, placed near the 'Upper Quad' area of campus, a central location. It had long been a source of controversy on campus, subject to graffiti over the years, even before it was removed in 2018.

⁵ This was a statement made by John Kelly, US President Donald J. Trump's then chief of staff, when asked about the controversies over Confederate statues in October of 2017. Kelly also said that Robert E. Lee was a 'noble man'. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/10/31/john-kelly-calls-robert-e-lee-an-honorable-man-and-says-lack-of-compromise-caused-the-civil-war/?utm_term=.8a121720f5bd.

a core feature of US ontological security, one that was called into question by the defeats in Afghanistan and Iraq. Most markedly, such losses contain a 'morally injurious' element, as we noted:

Winning or success is important in the context of ontological insecurity and moral injury because it brings forth fundamental moral dilemmas about wars that were *not* won. Put succinctly, if the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq *couldn't* have ever been won, then how could they be considered just? And if they were not just, what does this do to the US view of self as a just state? (Subotic and Steele 392)

The sunk identity costs associated with 'loss' generate insecurity. Despite the ambiguous outcomes of the wars in Afghanistan and especially Iraq, the interpretation of those as 'losses' enabled particular elites to utilize this insecurity for politically expedient purposes. As with the construction of the Lost Cause as a way to bypass the shame over the Confederacy's defeat, the current US President, Donald Trump, has focused on ways to 'Make America Great Again' by specifically foregrounding winning. This helps articulate Trump's views, issued time and again during his 2016 campaign, of the deficiency of the United States' place in global politics – the United States 'doesn't have victories anymore, we don't win, we don't win at anything'.⁶ It also explains the resonance that this has with particular groups who fear both decline, and the ascendancy of other groups (domestically and internationally).⁷ Owing to the clarification disclosed at the end of my introduction, one political and societal takeaway here is not only how this is analytically important but also that Trump's rise is fuelled not by white security, but *insecurity*.

Second, and related, three particular interdependent insecurities – race, gender and sex – that drove white Southerners (especially), remain important for understanding contemporary US politics. My argument is not that there is a one-to-one connection between white Southern insecurity of that time, the role of monuments in embedding and attending to that insecurity, and contemporary US politics. Rather, the monuments and other practices associated with the Lost Cause serve to paper over these insecurities in a way that prevents a deeper critique of contemporary foreign policy discourses that have led to, at times, incredibly oppressive and violent outcomes.

Race remains the most obvious of these dynamics. Notably missing in the stories of the Lost Cause is the practice of lynching. Lynching's history dates back well before the US Civil War; however, it appears to have heightened in areas where black population growth was the highest (Ayers). So central was the practice of lynching to racial hierarchies in the South that a number of studies point to its early twentieth-century practice against blacks by (then) recent waves of Italian, Czech and Irish immigrants as a way to 'claim whiteness' (Nevels). Often, the frequency of these practices correlated with periods when Lost Cause monuments were erected. For instance, during the same decade when a plurality of the monuments were erected (1900–10), there was a pronounced spike in lynchings of African Americans across

⁶ Quoted in the *Daily Mail*, on <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1217073/Trump-Oklahoma-America-doesn-t-victories-anymore.html>.

⁷ The looming demographic shift in the United States of whites no longer being the 'majority' has been studied by a number of scholars. In one series of experiments, social psychologists found that the United States' increasing diversity generated fear and anxiety among white subjects. Thus, 'rather than ushering in a more tolerant future, the increasing diversity of the nation may instead yield intergroup hostility' (Craig and Richeson, 1).

the South.⁸ Thus, both lynching and monument erection should be considered effects of the Lost Cause.

We find echoes in this racial insecurity through Trump's treatment of race and racism in domestic political settings. This included his reluctance to criticize Nazis and white supremacists for their violent protests in Charlottesville in 2017, his tepid and transactional response to aid for Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria, or his declaration that any African-American NFL athlete who knelt during the US national anthem was a 'son of a bitch' (Graham). He also expressed notable anxieties over race and US foreign policy, and especially regarding migration and foreign aid. In January 2018, he reportedly asked senators of both parties, in the context of continuing aid to Haiti, El Salvador and Honduras, 'why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here'? Within this, he singled out Haiti, asking 'why do we need more Haitians? Take them out', contrasting Haiti with the predominantly white Norway, whose people he was more favourable towards admitting (Dawsey). In other remarks and in other settings, Trump had argued that Nigerians if admitted would never 'go back to their huts' (Kendi). This has led some commentators to argue that Trump's stance on immigration is less about taking a 'hardline' against all immigration and more to simply restrict non-white immigration to the United States (Kendi).

The sexual insecurity of white Southern men has also been a focus for historians. Joel Williamson's 1984 study examined how white Southern (former) slaveholders created the myth of the 'black beast' whose insatiable sexual drives threatened not only white women but also white men's sexual dominance over female slaves. Lynching itself proliferated in this context as a way to challenge black sexuality. Of course, white Southern men had another insecurity source to conceal – the widespread rape of black women during and following slavery (Wells-Barnett 16; Dray 70). Regardless of its source, its effect, as Wells warned fellow blacks, would be straightforward: 'so frequently is the cry of rape now raised it is in a fair way to stamp us a race of rapists and desperadoes' (Williamson 37–8, emphasis added).

Along with racial insecurities, President Trump's discourse has, going back to his first speech as a candidate through to present debates over migration, evinced quite graphic sexual insecurities on a number of issues. Most infamously, Trump articulated his anxiety over migration in these terms. At his presidential campaign launch, he noted in justifying his particular stance that

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best [...] They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. (quoted in Reilly)

In the 2018–19 government shutdown over funding for his wall, Trump further described scenarios for what happened at the border:

Human trafficking – grabbing women, in particular – and children, but women – tapping them up, wrapping tape around their mouths so they can't shout or scream, tying up their hands behind their back and even their legs and putting them in a back seat of a car or a van – three, four, five, six, seven at a time. (Mettler)

⁸ On the monuments, see the chart at <https://www.splcenter.org/20180604/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#findings>; on lynchings, see <http://www.monroeworktoday.org/explore/>.

That experts saw these comments as being ‘divorced from reality’ was, in this case, beside the point. For it is not only with regard to immigration but, more broadly, the United States being taken ‘advantage of’ that Trump has invoked rape. In the summer of 2016, as a presidential candidate, Trump took aim at China: ‘We can’t continue to allow China to rape our country and that’s what they’re doing. It’s the greatest theft in the history of the world’ – a statement that drew ‘excited applause’ from those in the audience at the rally (Diamond). In another comment on the Trans-pacific Partnership, Trump asserted: ‘the Trans-Pacific Partnership is another disaster done and pushed by special interests who want to rape our country—just a continuing rape of our country’ (Lima). Such statements disclose the underlying (and sexualized) insecurity of a vulnerable US self to any form of deals, in a broader context of political economic relations.

A gendered set of practices also fostered the Lost Cause perspective. White Southern masculinity was defined by a code of chivalry and toughness. White Southern honour had, in the words W.E.B Du Bois, ‘tended to inflate the ego of most planters beyond all reason, they became arrogant, strutting, quarrelsome kinglets [...] they expected deference and self-abasement; they were choleric and easily insulted’ (Du Bois 52–3).⁹ There is a similarly overt, masculinist posture in Trump’s foreign policy positions. Commentators have taken special notice of Trump’s curious admiration for authoritarian leaders across the global spectrum, from North Korea’s Kim Jong Un, to Duterte in the Philippines, to Putin in Russia, to Erdogan in Turkey, to the Saudi regime (Powers). This can, in part, be understood through the lens of a form of masculine dominance politics found in honour cultures based on hierarchy, even if such admiration has come at the expense of defending US interests from foreign influence and actions. Hence Trump’s otherwise bizarre defence of Putin at the July 2018 Helsinki summit,¹⁰ and of the Saudis following the dismemberment killing of US journalist Jamal Khashoggi (Myre).

The central point in all of these examples is that there are echoes, if not perfectly connected threads, of white insecurity and paranoid projection in Trump’s rhetoric that recall the projections of insecurity found in the Lost Cause perspective and practices associated with it during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Common to both is the fear of a lost status, the willingness to use violence against non-white internal ‘Others’ to maintain or regain that status, and the claims of victimhood to justify particular means of action. Yet I return to one of my main lines of argument issued earlier: these practices cover up a core insecurity over how the past has been represented and defended, and the job of academia as a vocation is to not only discuss what fuels that insecurity but what practices help challenge and uncover and contest it in everyday spaces and places. Specifically, such insecurities can be parried via practices of counter-memorialization to not only make absent what is present (as in monument destruction) but to make present what has been absent in accounts like the Lost Cause.

Juxtaposing the Lost Cause in historical memory: breadth and depth

The status of Confederate statues across the US South remains unresolved, and until the North Carolina statue Silent Sam’s downfall in August 2018, no monuments had been removed in almost a year. But the debate seems active, with those seeking the statues’ removal or relocation settling on largely one of three tactics: 1) destruction (as in the case of Silent Sam); 2) removal or 3) ‘counter-memory’ or ‘filling out’. Surveys of Americans suggest that majorities

⁹ On Du Bois’s work during this time, see Shawn Alexander’s study, especially chapter 2.

¹⁰ Trump repeatedly defended Putin’s innocence by saying how ‘strongly’ Putin denied the accusations of Russia’s interference in US elections: ‘I will tell you that president Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today’, <https://www.vox.com/2018/7/16/17576956/transcript-putin-trump-russia-helsinki-press-conference>.

of US Americans favour leaving the statues where they are (YouGov; Kahn), although the surveys break down along typical political and racial lines (with Republicans and whites in favour of the status quo, Democrats and African Americans instead for the removal).

If removal remains a no-go, then the third of these options, favoured by certain scholars of memory politics, may entail some productive avenues for challenging the myths of the Lost Cause. Scholars of memory politics note that options 1 or 2, while admirable, might allow 'white memory' to 'forget' not the mythology the statues represent but rather the 'evil that is still with us' that can be connected to the times of the statues themselves (Newson 137).

How would this proceed? While I have focused on the monuments and their prominent placement throughout the South for over a century, which I will return to momentarily, the institutionalization of the Lost Cause myths proceeded through a broad array of practices, media and venues. This included the aforementioned embeddedness of Lost Cause historians throughout Southern public universities, and the teaching of this history in Southern textbooks. Particularly, important popular cultural productions reinforced and further distributed the Lost Cause narrative to a wider audience. This included the iconic September 1990 Ken Burns documentary, *The Civil War*, on the US Public Broadcasting System. The nine-episode series reached a broad audience, but portrayed only a selective assessment of the US Civil War, confounding the view that slavery was one of its root causes and including Lost Cause or nostalgic voices more prominently than respected historical ones. As Keri Leigh Merritt aptly notes:

The sins of omission in *The Civil War* unfortunately are not without consequence. Because so many Americans have had their basic understanding of the causes of secession, the realities of racial slavery, and the atrocities of the Confederacy profoundly shaped by this documentary, current day topics, from the Confederate Monument/flag debate to the push for reparations by American Descendants of Slaves, remain bitterly divisive, even though clear historical answers obviously exist. (Merritt)

In addition to the Lost Cause narrative about the Civil War's origins, there is a corollary myth, the Appomattox Myth, about how it ended and concluded succinctly for both warring parties.¹¹ Yet there has been a pronounced pushback and re-memorialization of the US Civil War, slavery and race since 2010 that provides a good starting point for juxtaposing, and even dislodging, the Lost Cause narratives and the problematic white nationalist politics they have enabled. While not as deeply entrenched, these responses and rearticulations have been as wide and broad.

History as a discipline has largely discredited the Lost Cause, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s but even more so in recent decades (Lewis). James McPherson summarizes the overwhelmingly dominant view of Civil War historians when he notes that

the best historical scholars over the last generation or more have argued convincingly for the centrality of slavery among the causes of the Civil War. The evidence for such arguments provided in the letters, speeches, and articles written by those who established and supported the Confederacy is overwhelming and difficult to deny. (Quoted in Horton)

¹¹ As Luke Campbell and I noted in a recent essay: 'Despite the Appomattox Myth, there never was a "just" reconciliation brought about by Grant's magnanimity and by the "honourable" way the otherwise devastating war "ended" [...] the war may have ended "officially", but the US Civil War remains as a structural and cultural presence in the United States to this day' (Campbell & Steele 151).

The 2010s has seen a number of both academic but also public and publicized attempts to re-examine the early twentieth century. In the field of International Relations, the decade saw a critical reappraisal of this important era and the global racial anxieties of the white North. Ashworth (2014) details how a pervasive racial insecurity permeated many works on the 'international' as the nineteenth century drew to a close, especially within Anglo-American contexts, and in ways that echo the insecurities noted throughout this paper. De Carvalho et al. further delineate how the 'founding' of International Relations as a field in 1919 in the wake of the First World War evinced an anxiety about an ascendant global South. The authors point to a number of examples from the time, both in International Relations and the field of international thought. These include Woodrow Wilson's concerns regarding the same principle of self-determination being applied to colonies, 'the inhabitants of which lacked the type of "character" that was in turn the necessary prerequisite for the future awarding of self-determination' (De Carvalho et al. 751).

Broader accounts have focused on the consistent and persistent ways, following Reconstruction through the twentieth century, in which the South sought to reimpose a white supremacist order – an order that is both ensured but also pushed into the background with the Confederate monuments and their attendant Lost Cause mythologies. Another documentary was aired in Spring 2019 on US Public Broadcasting. Compared to the 1990 *Civil War* series, *Reconstruction*, hosted by Henry Louis Gates, involved only renowned historians of the Civil War and the era that followed. The series does not, as *The Civil War* most definitely did, gloss over the conflicts that continued during and following this brief yet important period of US history. In one telling moment, the historian Shawn Leigh Alexander asserts: 'Violence goes side-by-side in American history to the creation of white supremacist racial ideology that has driven us from slavery all the way to the present day' (quoted in Bergeson-Lockwood 2019). And to drive this contemporary point home, the series begins at Charleston AME Mother Emanuel Church, where the aforementioned white supremacist Dylann Roof had gunned down, in 2015, nine black churchgoers.¹²

No contemporary statement has more forcefully and effectively pushed the importance of the persistence of white supremacy than Ta-Nehisi Coates's 2014 essay "The Case for Reparations" in *The Atlantic*. In addition to restarting debates over reparations for African Americans in the 2010s,¹³ the essay contrasts with the 'clean break' view of the US Civil War by drawing out important connections in the persistence of white supremacy throughout *all* of the United States (North and South alike), during the late nineteenth and all of the twentieth century, via the historical practices of lynching, segregation, redlining of residential housing, policing practices and an institutionally prejudiced judicial system (Coates 2014).

Montgomery, Alabama: The Memorial for Peace and Justice

But are there any physical sites, memorials or forms of commemoration that can serve to redescribe, rediscover and furthermore repoliticize the racial violence that Confederate statues and the Lost Cause have effectively served to occlude? Perhaps no legacy of the continuation of white supremacy following the US Civil War looms larger than lynching. Lynching not only killed individuals, but terrorized the black population throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This practice, prevalent throughout the same areas where Confederate

¹² Here, too, the projection of sexual insecurities were present for Roof, who reportedly told his victims before shooting: 'You rape our women and are taking over our country' (quoted in Wade).

¹³ In the month I'm currently writing this, many of the current US Democratic candidates for president are being pressed on their views of reparations, a topic that has never been an issue for past presidential campaigns. Further, hearings were conducted by the House Judiciary Committee on 19 June 2019 to re-examine the topic of reparations. The Committee, which is controlled by Democrats, called Coates to testify at that hearing.

monuments and iconography proliferate, is increasingly being documented and commemorated through a number of recovery projects and programmes. These projects do not represent so much a *depoliticization* of memory – in other words, some kind of ‘debunking’ of the Lost Cause so that the ‘rational’ mind can finally see down illuminated pathways to the past. Rather, they represent a *repoliticization* of historical memory, making present what has long been absent as a way to grapple with the politics of that past and its effects in the present.

One notable effort is the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, aka the ‘Lynching Memorial’, that opened in April 2018.¹⁴ The memorial includes coffin-like slabs that hang within a large open-air gazebo recording the dates and names (if known) of every lynching in every county in the United States. When visitors to the memorial approach the slabs, they are at eye level. As one proceeds through the exhibit, the slabs remain at the same height, but the pathway descends lower and lower so that, by the end, one is looking up at the slabs as if they are people hanging above. In the climax of the exhibit, visitors then ascend back up onto a hill in the centre of the memorial where they stand above one and all, as if they are either 1) being lynched themselves with onlookers surrounding them and/or 2) being judged for their role in acquiescing to, or even promoting, the practices of discrimination and racial hierarchy that produced and then followed from lynching.

There are three particular effects of the memorial that should be noted, considering the themes explored in this essay and this volume as a whole. First is the location, both within Montgomery (only miles from the ‘First Confederate White House’) and near a site where slave trading occurred for centuries. Second, it is part of a broader initiative that also included the opening of the Legacy Museum which draws out the longer, and persistent, history of white supremacy throughout the United States in other practices such as segregation and mass incarceration. Third, the memorial is but a first step in the broader democratization of re-memorizing the South. Duplicate slabs have been produced to eventually be transported and then displayed at the courthouses of the actual counties where the lynchings took place, in some cases directly juxtaposed with the statues of Confederate soldiers that pepper those public lands (Sales).

Conclusions

There are three points even this short paper hopes to push forward. First, the rise of populist memory politics often follows times of not only crisis, but loss. The inability of political communities to accept those losses connects both the case of the US South and its push towards Lost Cause mythology and Confederate statue iconography and the case of 2010s United States following the trauma of defeats in the War-on-Terror theatres of Afghanistan and Iraq. The latter proceeds along with broader shifts and dislocations associated with the Global Financial Crisis and the ‘Great Recession’ of the late 2000s, the election of the first African-American president and the demographic changes noted earlier that are creating both a more diverse US society but also a backlash via older white paranoia and potential loss of white majority status. Second, what is crucial to both cases is a bypassing of shame over defeats that call into question hierarchical orders and status. In the US South, the Confederacy’s defeat entailed an upending of the white supremacist order that had been centralized in the institution of slavery for over 200 years. The Lost Cause, and supremacist practices such as lynching and segregation, *and* the erection of monuments, were all attempts to reimpose that hierarchical order, especially from 1876 onward. Trump’s racialized discourses linked to a promise to ‘Make America Great Again’ can likewise be seen as attempts to reimpose the ‘lost’ hegemonic status of the United States following the 2000s. Read in this light, the repeated

¹⁴ <https://eji.org/national-lynching-memorial>.

verenerations of Confederate generals by Trump,¹⁵ members of his administration,¹⁶ and the echoes of the Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War by Trump's advisors and associates,¹⁷ are not only poor readings of history but *integral to avoiding the centrality of race from the US past to the US present*.

Yet, third, the moves in the field of history, contemporary essays, popular culture and especially in memorial projects such as the Lynching Memorial, which all call out the legacy of slavery, and the Civil War and its effects, can unfasten how that war and the nineteenth-century United States is narrated and remembered. Furthermore, since the present includes similar attempts by the populist right to reassert a white supremacist order it sees as in peril, these repoliticization and rememorialization moves seeking to right the myths of the past, can *also* call into question those dangerous present politics of the 'populist' contemporary United States.

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¹⁵ In both October 2018 and April 2019, Trump called Lee a 'great general', in both contexts on the aforementioned metric of someone who 'won' battles. In the former case, at a rally, Trump exclaimed: 'So Robert E. Lee was a great general and Abraham Lincoln developed a phobia, he couldn't beat Robert E. Lee. He was going crazy [...] but Robert E. Lee was winning battle after battle after battle and Abraham Lincoln came home and he said "I can't beat Robert E. Lee."' See <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/10/12/trump-robert-e-lee-898520>.

The latter occasion for praising Lee occurred when Trump was pressed about his earlier remarks regarding the Charlottesville 2017 protests that the latter included 'good people on both sides', see <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/04/26/trump-calls-robert-e-lee-a-great-general-as-biden-attacks-charlottesville-response.html>.

¹⁶ Trump's former Chief of Staff John Kelly, quoted earlier in this chapter regarding the root cause of the Civil War being due to an inability to compromise, also called Robert E. Lee an 'honorable man' in October 2017. See <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-chief-staff-john-kelly-calls-confederate-gen/story?id=50828711>.

¹⁷ In August 2017, the conservative economist and advisor to Trump, Stephen Moore, defended Robert E. Lee as someone who 'hated slavery' and that 'the Civil War was about the South having its own rights'. See <https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2019/04/26/stephen-moore-defended-slave-owner-robert-e-lee-wrongly-claiming-lee-hated-slavery/223577>.

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