Sites of Historical Memory

Using Re-memory to Expose Silence

BY

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THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Museum and Exhibition Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2020

Chicago, Illinois

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SUMMARY

We are largely unaware of the invisible forces at work that shape both the space we inhabit and our experience of that space. Therefore, it is necessary to interrogate the physical markers that shape that experience. “Sites of Historical Memory: Using Re-memory to Expose Silence” poses the question: what is the purpose of a site of memory? From the entry point of the Confederate monument, “Silent Sam,” at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, this thesis interrogates the silences inherent in representation, how these silences came to be, and the memory strategies that attempt to reckon with them.

This thesis posits that sites of memory serve to create and promote national identity through the appropriation and distortion of memory. The sites discussed are repositioned as sites of “historical memory” to illustrate both this manipulation of memory and how they are understood through the framework of dominant historical narratives. The sites examined include the *Relaciones Geográficas*, maps commissioned in 1577 by King Phillip II of Spain to understand and consolidate resources in New Spain and construct the place of the Americas, the Confederate monument “Silent Sam,” and two anti-monuments created in response to Confederate monuments, *Unsung Founders, Bond and Free* by Do-Ho Suh, and *Rumors of War* by Kehinde Wiley. The analysis is based on the theory of “re-memory” or “re-membering,” piecing together the past and revealing silence to challenge dominant narratives. Using Michel-Rolf Trouillot’s formula of where silences enter in the production of history this thesis examines where silences enter in the creation and designation of these sites as “sites of memory” and how they function in the assertion of a dominant narrative about history and national identity.

This thesis traces the coloniality of power that structures contemporary experiences of space and time, beginning with the attempted placemaking of the *Relaciones Geográficas* and examining
how this placemaking manifests in the racialized space of Silent Sam. This examination continues with an analysis of how attempts to recover memory and redress wrongs through the installation of anti-monuments, illustrated through *Unsung Founders* and *Rumors of War*, further distort and commodify memory. The final chapter argues how the recurrent production of knowledge around the *Relaciones Geográficas* and Silent Sam demonstrates the recuperative potential of “re-membering” and challenges the linear progress myth stemming from the “Discovery.”

This thesis concludes that sites of historical memory assert a false homogeneity of the experience of space, they exist in mythical time. However, they are also liminal spaces where we constantly revisit and revise our relationship with and understanding of the past, present, and future. The people that interact with the space of these sites instigate “re-membering.” They are the physical memory traces. People resist their suppression, exposing both the traumas of the past and the force used to maintain hierarchies and power in the present.
I. INTRODUCTION

In an essay about Beloved, Toni Morrison uses the term, “rememory,” which she defines as “recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past” (2019, 324). Memory and the act of remembering is not a simple, nor easy act. It can be fraught, painful, traumatic, and highly contested – especially for the enslaved, the marginalized, the displaced, the dispossessed, and the descendants of this violence. Morrison’s “rememory” is the tension between the desire to remember and the need to forget. It involves contending with histories of violence and trauma – in Morrison’s case, the legacy of slavery in the United States. Lauret Savoy also plays with what it means to remember: “To re-member is to know that traces now without name… still mark a very real presence. To re-member is to discover patterns in fragments” (2015, 29). This tracing is an acknowledgment of loss. The reconstruction of what no longer exists. Savoy’s “re-membering” grapples with the legacies of colonialism in the Americas – genocide, displacement, divestment, slavery, racism. Using the framework Morrison and Savoy lay out, in this thesis, “re-memory,” to “re-member,” involves piecing together facts when the memories are too painful, buried, or silenced to recall. As Savoy asserts, “silence is residue of memory’s erosion” (2015, 113). Revealing silence uncovers the traces of memory.

On August 20th, 2018, in the culmination of a year of sustained activism, protestors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) toppled the Confederate monument nicknamed “Silent Sam” (Fig. 1-2). I grew up in Chapel Hill and attended UNC from 2010 to 2014. For my entire life, Silent Sam was a fixture of the landscape. Growing up, I would see it every time I went downtown, every time I walked down Franklin Street. As a student, I passed it almost every day, traversing the quad on my way to class. Like most ubiquitous features, it receded into the background. Growing up in a multi-racial family of northern transplants, I was aware of the
problematic nature of Confederate monuments and the contentious history of Silent Sam, but as a white woman, Silent Sam’s presence had virtually no impact on my life and I rarely thought about how by “taking place” Silent Sam actively dispossesses people of color of their spatial belonging at UNC, silences, and sustains the legacy of the university’s slave-owning past (Lipsitz 2011). It was only after I left Chapel Hill that Silent Sam suddenly advanced to the foreground of my imaginary. From my apartment in Chicago, I became a virtual spectator, following the news headlines, my friends’ social media posts, the student and community protests, eventual triumphant removal, and the state’s response. This response is what prompted this investigation into sites of memory.

The term “site of memory,” or “lieu de mémoire,” was coined by the French historian, Pierre Nora. According to Nora, a site of memory is “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which, by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community” (1989, 11). The use of “memorial heritage” is the critical term in this definition. Whose memorial heritage? Which community or communities? And how it is employed in these sites? “By dint of human will” is especially telling. It takes persistent, prolonged intent to create and validate a site of memory.

While Nora’s definition is over thirty years old and is specific to French national identity, it is still widely used today. In 2018, the Coalition of International Sites of Conscience released a study funded by the World Heritage Center of UNESCO on the “Interpretation of Sites of Memory.” While the definition UNESCO uses for the report is “places which are vested with historical, social, or cultural significance because of what has happened there in the past,” they foreground it with Nora’s definition (2018, 13). Since this thesis examines narratives of power, I also foreground my definition with Nora’s.
For the purpose of this thesis, I define a site of memory as a contested site of remembrance, silencing, and erasure, where we struggle over our organization and representation of the past. When I refer to memory, I refer to our personal experience of the past. It is subjective, dependent on the person, their identity and lived experiences. When I refer to history, I refer to the hegemonic narratives constructed by those in power. How those in power organize personal experiences, organize memory, through documenting, archiving, and chronicling, resulting in the exclusion and silencing of many. I acknowledge that there are counter-narratives, other versions of history that are told and preserved, such as public and oral history, that do not fall under this hegemonic umbrella. However, these are not the dominant narratives, the dominant histories that are told. The sites I examine in this thesis are understood through the framework of dominant historical narratives and the powers that sustain them.

According to the state of North Carolina, Silent Sam is a site of memory. In 2015, the North Carolina legislature enacted a statute to protect what it refers to as “objects of remembrance.” It dictates that monuments, memorials, and works of art on state ground cannot be removed without prior approval and if an object is relocated, it must be replaced within ninety days to “a place of equal honor, accessibility, prominence, visibility and availability” (Patel 2018). As a monument on state ground, Silent Sam falls into this category. Defining a monument as an “object of remembrance” is illustrative of what is at stake; whose version of history is being remembered and represented? As a site of memory, whose “memorial heritage” does Silent Sam preserve?

History is largely told and represented by those in power and therefore is indivisible from issues of national identity: “questions of how the nation is imagined and who lays claim to defining and defending it, are intimately intertwined with questions of history and historical representation” (Walkowitz and Knauer 2004, 4). It is impossible to talk about history without discussing its
connection to nation. The construct of nation is built through the claiming of land and the claiming of memory, resulting in displacement, dispossession, and silencing. This leads to the foundational question behind this thesis: what is the purpose of a site of memory?

Nora asserts that memory, our experience of the past, and history, our organization of the past, are in fundamental opposition to each other, and the conflation of the two is the result of the conquest and suppression of memory by history (1989). While I agree with his assessment of the conflation of memory and history, it ignores the actors involved. It is not history, but people, that conquer. This conquest is revealed through analyzing the production of history and the distortion of memory. Both history and memory are mobilized as tools to assert and maintain power. Defining them in opposition to one another shifts the blame from the actors, from those in power. To understand the purpose of a site of memory, one has to understand the power dynamics at play. Sites of memory are contact zones, defined by Mary Louise Pratt as “[spaces] of colonial encounters, the [spaces] in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict” (1992, 6). The tensions that coalesce and erupt at memory sites demonstrate resistance to this conquest, this colonial encounter.

In this thesis, I argue how through designating “sites of memory,” those in power appropriate memory. I am looking specifically at sites of memory in the Americas. The sites I examine are not simply sites of “memory,” but sites of “historical memory,” which Katherine Hite describes as “the less conventionally institutionalized dimension of politics – symbols and sites for contestation, associations palpably expressed through representations, testimonials, imagery, the media, public opinion, and diverse political discourse” (2011, 1079). I apply Hite’s concept of “historical memory” to the sites discussed in this thesis because this definition acknowledges the
political nature of sites of memory. As Hite argues, since these symbols are “less conventionally institutionalized” their political nature is often overlooked. I intend to expose the political, social, and ideological agendas undergirding these sites by explicitly naming them as purveyors of historical memory. Historical memory is the way “groups, collectivities, nations” construct narratives about their history (Hite 2011, 1079). Sites of historical memory serve a specific agenda: the assertion of national identity. This distinction between “memory” and “historical memory” is an attempt to disentangle the conflation of memory and history. It is an attempt to reveal the appropriation of memory and the silencing power of historical production. Memory cannot be reclaimed, but the distortion of it through the production of history can be exposed and understood.

The four sites I examine in this thesis are outlined below. My methodology draws from the framework Michel-Rolph Trouillot lays out in Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (2015). I apply his theory of where silences enter in the production of history to examine where silences enter in the creation and designation of these sites as “sites of memory” and how they function in the assertion of a dominant narrative about history and national identity. According to Trouillot, “not all silences are equal… they cannot be addressed – or redressed – in the same manner… any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly” (2015, 27). Where silences enter depends on power, however, since silences are “the result of a unique process,” each silence is distinct. In this thesis, silence operates differently in each site. In some cases, it is enacted by force – to prevent someone from speaking, to ignore, to erase any experience that deviates from a particular dominant narrative. Silencing can also take the form of co-option – claiming memory to serve a specific purpose, to colonize territory, bolster a usurper, uphold a
particular account, or as cultural and economic capital. Silence can also be palpable. It does not need to be exposed or uncovered. It has agency. It asserts its existence, its absence.

I deconstruct these sites using Trouillot’s formula of where silences enter and explore how and if memory work can uncover silences. Morrison’s and Savoy’s theories of “re-memory” and “re-membering” serve as the foundation for my analysis. In my use of these theories, “re-memory” does not rely on empathy or understanding, but on a conscious commitment to exposing and acknowledging silences in a constant, never-ending, reconstruction of the past, present, and future.

I take a more personal approach, incorporating myself, my memories into the framework. This is not an attempt to write this from my personal perspective, but to illustrate my entry points and thinking about these topics. This follows Savoy’s and Trouillot’s formulas – combining the personal with the historical and moving between different temporalities. Although the time periods I discuss are distinct, I illustrate how power operates the same way, regardless of historical moment.

This thesis endeavors to illustrate that in order to resist the silencing power of hegemonic narratives, it is necessary to understand how space and time are tools used in the creation of the place of the Americas and the subsequent designation of sites of historical memory. Space and place are entangled, but not synonymous. They are both “consequences of interactions and interrelations between people and their material world” (Dym and Offen 2011, 7). What differentiates the two is that space is abstract, while place is the result of “human experience, collective memory, and emotional bonds – often with the nonhuman world” (Dym and Offen 2011, 7). Place is a distortion, the “mapped, ordered representation” of space, “the illegible, heterogeneous, contextually protean use of time and location” (Braham 2002, 386).
The sites discussed exist within a manipulation of space and time, building on what Benedict Anderson describes as the “empty time” of the nation, a homogeneous understanding of space and temporality where everyone in a shared social community experiences time simultaneously, and therefore has the same experience of time and space (2006). I extend Anderson’s “empty time” to assert that the sites discussed in this thesis exist in what I call mythical time. Narratives of power rely on origin stories, on mythmaking. Mythical time assumes not just a homogeneous experience of events but establishes the base, the origins upon which these events are told and unfold.

Silent Sam serves as the entry point to my analysis. Adam H. Domby asserts, “the proponents of the Lost Cause helped construct Jim Crow in North Carolina with both fabricated narratives and the physical colonization of public space in the early twentieth century, which in turn laid the foundation for all that has followed” (2020, 17). However, the erection of Confederate monuments was certainly not the beginning of the colonization of public space in the United States. We have to go back further to understand this colonial project in the Americas. I trace the construction of place through the Relaciones Geográficas (Fig. 3-5), maps commissioned by King Phillip II of Spain in 1577 to create an atlas of maps of New Spain, to illustrate how the racialized space of Silent Sam was designed, and how it is upheld in present-day reactions to Confederate monuments such as Do-Ho Suh’s Unsung Founders, Bond and Free (Fig. 6) and Kehinde Wiley’s Rumors of War (Fig. 7). I then demonstrate how the work of “re-memory” reveals silences by examining the ongoing scholarship on the Relaciones Geográficas and how the meaning of Silent Sam has evolved since its deposition.

In chapter one, I explore how memory is distorted to assert national identity. First, I examine how the Relaciones Geográficas were an attempt by the Spanish to distort time and space to control and dominate the Americas spatially, economically, and epistemically. Then, I illustrate how this
placemaking is essential to understanding the racialized space of Silent Sam. In chapter two, I continue this exploration of the distortion of memory through the installation of what I refer to as “anti-monuments,” focusing specifically on Do-Ho Suh’s *Unsung Founders, Bond and Free* and Kehinde Wiley’s *Rumors of War*. In my analysis, I posit that *Unsung Founders* is an attempt by UNC to utilize memory to promote a unified identity, while *Rumors of War* demonstrates the commodification of memory and how capitalism is both a function of coloniality and a way it is maintained in the present. Chapter three explores how the recurrent production of knowledge at sites of historical memory, through scholarship in the case of the *Relaciones Geográficas*, and through protest with Silent Sam, illustrates how past, present, and future are linked, not linearly but rhizomatically.

History organizes time chronologically, but the boundary between the past and present is constantly shifting, time is not linear. The past is interpreted through the lens of the present, resulting in the continual reinterpretation of place. Re-memory resists placemaking. It is a different way of conceiving of time and space. Re-memory brings the past into the present. The appropriation of memory, especially for the use of the state or for capital, is violent. Forgetting is the mind’s natural response to trauma and is necessary for healing. However, it is also dangerous because it leaves space for other narratives to enter. Re-memory is an attempt to reckon with these narratives. Re-memory exposes how the production of history silences.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a plethora of scholarship on memory, history, and sites of memory with many subgenres on trauma, politics, nationhood, publics, and performance. Sociologists, linguists, historians, writers, geologists, dramaturgs, art historians, and philosophers have written about memory, history, and place. It is a topic that spans disciplines. Much of this scholarship builds on or critiques the French historian, Pierre Nora’s 1989 publication, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” which is considered a foundational text on the examination of sites of memory.

While it is necessary to include Nora in a discussion about sites of memory, I would like to establish that Nora’s work is not the primary influence behind this thesis. Nora’s exploration of memory sites is deeply rooted in French national history and completely ignores its imperial identity as a colonizing force. The scholars who have heavily informed my research are more contemporary and are thinking in radical ways about time, space, place, race, memory, history, and the legacy of colonialism such as Lauret Savoy, Michel Rolf-Trouillot, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Sharon Patricia Holland.

I use Nora as a jumping-off point to illustrate not just how scholars are thinking about sites of memory, but how cultural workers and the general public perceive these sites – as demonstrated by the UNESCO 2018 report, which relies on Nora’s work for its definition of a site of memory. In “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” Nora outlines the difference between memory and history, arguing that memory is life in constant evolution while history is the reconstruction of what is no longer (1989). He challenges the equating of history and memory, asserting that they are in fundamental opposition to each other and the conflation of the two is the result of the conquest and suppression of memory by history. Nora argues that what we call
memory today is actually history. History has completely consumed memory. Nora views history as a symptom of modern society, dependent on documenting and archiving as a way to preserve the past. Sites of memory serve as the materialization of memory.

Nora’s distinction between “real memory” and “modern memory” is problematic. He argues that “real memory – social and unviolated” exists only in “so-called primitive or archaic societies” (1989, 8). This real memory is pure and untouched while modern memory is subject to the encroachment of history. In the introduction to Sites of Memory in Spain and Latin America: Trauma, Politics, and Resistance, “The Politics of the Past and the Fragmentary Present: Locating Memory in Spain and Latin America,” Aida Díaz de León challenges Nora’s nostalgia for the “real memory” of the past, demonstrated through collective traditions and customs, by asking whose history, whose traditions and customs, this overarching narrative about the past preserves (2015). Díaz de León references Katherine Hite’s concept of “historical memory” (2011). Hite defines historical memory as symbols, representations, sites, and discourse that serve a political purpose but are less likely to be recognized as political or in the service of institutions. She asserts that other terms for historical memory are “collective memory,” “social memory,” or “the politics of memory.” Hite argues that “historical memory” is the way “groups, collectivities, nations” construct narratives about their history (2011, 1079).

Díaz de León argues that historical memory becomes a political act, especially in places like Spain and Latin America that are transformed by violence and conflict because the act of remembering and preserving history alters the significance of both the past and the present. To illustrate her point, Díaz de León uses the Truth and Reconciliation Tribunals in Spain, Chile, and Argentina, and the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago, Chile as examples of historical memory acting as a democratic force. Díaz de León’s argument incites the question: is
it possible to recuperate memory when it is institutionalized? Additionally, in the case of museums of memory, who is consuming this memory? In the introduction to *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space*, Lisa Maya Knauer and Daniel Walkowitz allude to the question of how capitalism, tourism, and commerce impact these sites, asking how competing interests, such as “commerce versus contemplation,” get mediated at sites of memory in public spaces (2004, 2).

While Díaz de León posits that historical memory could be used for political purposes to combat hegemonic narratives, according to Hite, historical memory is often used by the nation-state to assert a unified national memory. Hite also references the proliferation of truth commissions and museums of memory, but she uses them as examples of historical memory, how the nation-state asserts and disseminates national memory. This concept of historical memory and its connection to the perpetuation of the nation-state is directly linked to sites of memory and placemaking. The entity who has control of the land shapes both the history and the so-called memories that are told.

Lauret Savoy ties memory and history directly to the land in *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* (2015). Through an exploration of her personal and ancestral history as a mixed-race woman in the U.S., Savoy, a geologist, examines how memory, especially racial memory in the U.S., is embedded in landscape. Savoy references the linguistic anthropologist, Keith Basso’s, 1996 theory on placemaking, which he refers to as both a way of “doing human history,” and “constructing social traditions, and in the process, personal and social identities” (2015, 82). Building off this, Savoy creates a parallel between personal identity and landscape, how both are marked by memory and loss.
Savoy examines the relationship between place, naming, language, colonialism, and race to expose silences and omissions: “we live among countless landscapes of memory in this country. They convey both remembrance and omission, privileging particular arcs of history while neglecting so many others. Historical sites are contested story-sites for the meanings in America’s past-to-present” (2015, 122). She positions sites of memory or historical sites as “story-sites,” highlighting the narrative nature of history. Since these sites uphold certain historical narratives or “stories” while excluding others, they spark contestation. Additionally, these sites serve to define the nation’s history and current identity, “America’s past-to-present.”

Other scholars on sites of memory also highlight the connection between race and the construction of national identity. In How Racism Takes Place, Lipsitz locates race spatially, arguing that in order for racism to exist it must be enacted physically in specific locations (2011). He outlines how the enaction of history, in a physical location, dispossesses certain people of that place. Lipsitz goes on to assert that society in the United States is constructed around a white spatial imaginary which structures place-based racial discrimination as a systemic issue. Similarly, in The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Diana Taylor asserts that “each country in the Americas performs its national identity through the staging and mythification of what it considers to be (usually in the singular) its racial body” (2003, 95). Nation is reliant on the assertion of a unified, homogeneous population, generally marked by race, which depends on othering and exclusion.

Race, and its manifestation in the Americas, is directly linked to colonialism. In “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” Peruvian sociologist, Aníbal Quijano, examines the connection between the creation of the place of the Americas and the construction of race (2000). He extends this to include capitalism. According to Quijano, race and capitalism are the two
historical processes that created the “space/time” of the Americas and the “identity of modernity” (2000, 533). Colonialism in the Americas was the beginning of global capitalism based on a system of racially defined labor. Quijano’s concept, “the coloniality of power,” argues that present-day power structures – political, social, economic, racial, epistemological – are contemporary manifestations of colonialism.

Ramón Grosfoguel and Sylvia Wynter build on the work of Quijano. In “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century,” sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel connects four different genocides, or as he calls them, “epistemicides,” the attempt to exterminate knowledge and ways of knowing (2013). He examines the epistemicides against Muslims and Jews during the Spanish “reconquest” of Al-Andalus, against Indigenous people in the Americas, against Africans through the slave trade, and against women accused of being witches in Europe. By examining these epistemicides, Grosfoguel outlines how the construction of race evolved from the debate over whether or not Native Americans were soulless and was solidified by the trial of Valladolid in 1552 that determined Native Americans did have souls, resulting in the need to import and enslave “soulless” people from Africa to provide labor.

In “1492: A New Worldview,” from Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas, Sylvia Wynter repositions 1492, challenging the pervasive, evolutionary progress myth centered around the “Discovery” (1995). In “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument,” Wynter expands her argument, illustrating how the construction of race created a new human versus subhuman distinction that replaced religious difference, allowing for the secularization of Europe (2003). She argues that it is impossible to challenge the “coloniality of power” without first reevaluating this definition of
“human” that is based in what Quijano refers to as the “racism/ethnicism complex” that structures our current society.

Grosfoguel also establishes a connection between the conquest of Al-Andalus and New Spain and the creation of the nation-state and modern, colonial world system. He argues that the modern idea of nation comes from the Spanish conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and New Spain in the fifteenth century, “the project of the Castilian Christian Monarchy to create a correspondence between the identity of the state and the identity of the population within its territorial boundaries, was the origin of the idea of the nation-state in Europe” (2013, 79). This concept of the nation-state – the homogenization of culture within a specific geographic boundary – is reliant on sites of memory, on inscribing meaning in place, to unify and assert a hegemonic identity. In Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism, Claudio Lomnitz asserts that nationalism has to be tied to “sites of local memory” because “the connections between the state, the people, and the territory are anything but harmonious and stable” (2001, xvi). Lomnitz also argues that origin stories are necessary for the creation of nation because of this “heterogeneous and unconnected population” (2001, xiii).

In addition to placemaking and race, time and its supposed linearity is a tool that nations use to construct history. In The Erotic Life of Racism, Sharon Patricia Holland establishes an intersection of time, space, and race (2012). Holland examines the “temporal immateriality” of Blackness, asserting that Blackness exists to uphold the white progress narrative of linear time. Blackness only exists in space, while whiteness occupies and orders time. As such Blackness exists outside of time, outside of history.

Anderson, homogeneous empty time is the idea that everyone in a shared social community experiences time simultaneously and has the same experience of time, united through shared experiences, primarily the consumption of news. Partha Chatterjee and Lomnitz both challenge Anderson’s assertion that the nation lives in homogeneous empty time.

In “The Nation in Heterogeneous Time,” Chatterjee argues that homogeneous empty time is utopian (2005). People do not actually live in this time. Its function is primarily historical – to connect past, present, and future and demonstrate the development or linear progress of nation. According to Chatterjee, the nation exists in heterogeneous time, everyone experiences time differently. Lomnitz refutes Anderson’s definition of the nation as an imagined political community united by horizontal comradery. Lomnitz argues that depth and silence are byproducts of the formation of a national state, which is in itself a historical process. Nationalism has to be tied to sites of local memory to function effectively, resulting in what Lomnitz refers to as “the geography of the national state” and the “geography of silence” (2001, xv).

This idea that silence is inherent in the construction of nation and thereby the construction of history ties into the work Michel-Rolf Trouillot does in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (2015). Trouillot breaks down where silences enter in the production of history, illustrated through the example of the Haitian Revolution. He highlights four primary points where silences enter: “the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)” (2015, 27). Trouillot weaves together personal and historical anecdotes, supported by academic sources, to create an intimate and cogent argument. While Trouillot focuses on where silences enter in the production of history, Savoy explicitly connects silence to memory. She asserts that “silence is
residue of memory’s erosion,” implying that the production of history is contingent upon the destruction of memory (2015, 113).

This silencing inherent to historical production results in a discussion of recovering memory, and the histories that have been silenced. Much of this discussion on memory studies is linked to performance. As Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik assert in Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, in recent years there has been a transition in memory studies from a focus on linguistics and oral history to performance, “shifting attention from the memory trace to its act – the event of memory… from memory as the trace of what once was to memory as the past’s present moment” (2013, 6). In The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Taylor examines the distinction between embodied memory and archival memory and the role of performance in transmitting knowledge (2003). She argues that performance is “transmitted through a nonarchival system of transfer,” the “repertoire” (2003, xvii). Only those in power, the literate, have access to the archive and as a result, if performance does not transmit knowledge, only those in power can claim ownership over memory, social identity, and history. Taylor refers to performance as “embodied behavior.” She asserts that because the repertoire is live, it cannot be archived. By resisting the historicizing nature of the archive, embodied memory resists history. Although I do not explore the performative nature of memory in this thesis, I do think it is useful to apply performance theory, especially these ideas of memory trace and embodied behavior, for its potential for resistance.
III. HOW MEMORY IS APPROPRIATED TO ASSERT NATIONAL IDENTITY

A. Introduction

“As beings enter into the symbolic and become subjects – the stuff from which personhood is crafted – they enter into a history that literally is not their own; history, in terms of descent, belongs to someone else in the sense that not only is it dependent on those who have come before but also on their place in the racial order – a place that, in turn, defines one’s own” (Holland 2012, 20).

History is determined by and belongs to the victor. This history is organized around a certain racial order. All others exist outside of this history. As Holland asserts, people’s current positionality, their relationship to history, is determined by their own race and the race/power paradigm of those who came before. History is tied to place, both in “the racial order” and the physical sense of place, as a specific location. If we follow Holland’s argument, those who make history also construct the sites that uphold it. Therefore, the sites that exist within history exclude all those who do not descend from a particular racial order. The space of these sites is designed around what Lipsitz’ refers to as a “white spatial imaginary,” which privileges the white and subjugates the rest (2011). To unravel this white spatial imaginary, we must trace this descent – both racial and historical.

The history of the Americas is a history of placemaking. Many of the strategies employed today to “make place” in the Americas build on the narrative of the “Discovery,” otherwise known as the “Conquest” or the “Encounter,” the mythical origin story. According to Trouillot, the “Discovery” is isolated to a single moment, divorced from context to create a “historical fact,” which “facilitates the narrativization of history, the transformation of what happened into that which is said to have happened” (2015, 113). The “place” of the Americas builds upon the historical “fact” of the “Discovery,” the naming of which is “a narrative of power disguised as innocence” (Trouillot 2015, 114).
In order to unpack where silences enter, it is necessary to peel back the accumulated layers. While this silencing certainly begins before the “Discovery,” for the purposes of this thesis I begin at this particular moment in history, the “‘Big Bang’ initiation of the ‘colonial difference’”… “the ‘immense historical rupture’”… that established “a contemporary modernity defined by the ‘rise of the West’ and the ‘subjugation of the rest’” (Wynter 2003, 262-264). This “subjugation of the rest” is upheld in the space of sites of historical memory. The white spatial imaginary that structures our physical relationship with the world begins in the late fifteenth, early sixteenth century with the colonial project. The process of this construction, emerging from the conditions following 1492, is visible in the Relaciones Geográficas, maps commissioned by King Philip II in 1577 to visualize and consolidate his territory and resources in the New World. Its realized form is illustrated through Silent Sam.

The Relaciones Geográficas simultaneously demonstrate how place was constructed during and after the conquest and resist the imperial assertion of place through Indigenous and colonial conceptions of time, space, and land. They illustrate the beginning of this process in the Americas, the narrativization of history based upon “facts,” or what I refer to as mythmaking. Understanding this history of placemaking is vital to understanding how place is constructed and national identity asserted through sites of historical memory. Silent Sam demonstrates how these ideas of place, time, and race unite in the creation of national identity.

B. **The Construction of Place in the Relaciones Geográficas**

Lipsitz locates race spatially: “when I say that racism ‘takes place’ I mean it figuratively, in the way that historians do, to describe things that happen in history. But I also use the term as cultural geographers do, to describe how social relations take on their full force and meaning when they are enacted physically in actual places” (2011, 5). This idea that an ideology must be enacted
physically in a specific location, must be embodied, in order for it to fully be realized, is inherent to understanding why we inscribe meaning in place. Place becomes both a vessel, a repository for enacted history, and a vehicle for communicating this history. “Taking place” has a double meaning – to happen and to claim a physical location. Lipsitz also asserts, “when history takes place, it does so in actual places. Among aggrieved groups, history also takes places away, leaving some people… displaced, disinh erited, dispossessed, and just plain dissed” (2011, 20). History is inextricably tied to place, however, in its physical enaction, it inevitably dispossesses certain people of that place.

King Philip II commissioned the *Relaciones Geográficas* in 1577 with the intention of creating an atlas of maps of New Spain, to control and dominate what Spain claimed as its territory. Juan López de Velasco, the *cosmógrafo-cronista mayor* (main cosmographer-chronicler), was charged with this task. He distributed a fifty-item questionnaire both within Spain and throughout the New World to the Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru along with instructions for lunar eclipse observations in an attempt to establish longitude and latitude. The questions encompassed local and natural history, economic resources, trade, and navigation. The responses were intended to provide the basis for chronicles that would accompany the maps (Mundy 1996).

The responses to the *Relaciones* questionnaire trickled back to Spain between 1578 and 1586 (Mundy 1996). One hundred and ninety-one responses were sent back, including sixty-nine maps. While the *Relaciones* were intended to serve a similar purpose to the Escorial map, an atlas of the geographic expanse of the Iberian Peninsula created in the 1560s, the maps López de Velasco received demonstrated a wide range of cartographic traditions making the creation of a cohesive atlas impossible. López de Velasco obviously intended for the Spanish colonial administrators to create the *Relaciones* maps according to Western cartographic traditions. Renaissance cartography
was heavily informed by Ptolemy’s *Geography*, which distinguished between chorographic maps, cityscapes, and geographic maps, depicting general topographic features; scientific realism, with its emphasis on geometry, longitude, and latitude; and linear perspective (Mundy 1996). This type of cartography focused on showing an accurate visual representation of space.

As Trouillot argues, the first moment where silences enter is in “the moment of fact creation (the making of sources)” which he refers to as the “materiality of the socio-historical process” or “historicity 1” (2015, 27-29). This first moment determines future historical narratives as the construction of these narratives is reliant upon existing material sources. Much like history relies on place to be enacted, it also relies on these material sources as proof of past events. In the case of the *Relaciones Geográficas*, they are doubly implicated in this socio-historical process as they both construct place and serve as primary sources for narratives about history, or “historicity 2” (Trouillot 2015, 29).

The *Relaciones Geográficas* demonstrate conflicting Indigenous and European ideologies, not just over the land, but over ways of thinking about and representing the world. Space, in the service of empire, is defined by its relationship to territory. In New Spain, mapping was an essential part of the process of claiming ownership over territory and the creation of Latin America as a specific place (Dym and Offen 2011). Maps represent, organize, control, and transform space. As such, they are essential to the construction of place. The place of the Americas is a constructed identity.

This linkage of lived experience and memory to place is critical to understanding its co-option by the nation. Land, memory, and identity are inextricably linked. In order to co-opt and distort memory, national identity has to be tied to “sites of local memory” because “the connections between the state, the people, and the territory are anything but harmonious and stable” (Lomnitz 2001, xiii- xvi). Therefore, the entity who controls the land shapes the memories that are told,
creating what Lomnitz refers to as the “geography of silence” (2001, xv). This geography of silence is created by upholding certain memories while erasing others. This is achieved through the abstract and material markers of land ownership – maps, monuments, buildings, etc. All built environments are “geographies of silence,” privileging one specific experience of space.

As Braham contends, “mapping functions through omission” (2002, 385). Maps are instruments of power that contribute to the transformation of the spaces they represent by constructing territorial boundaries and privileging certain areas over others, “world regions… and their corresponding territories, are ideas or cultural constructs whose histories are strongly linked to cartography and mapmaking” (Dym and Offen 2011, 3). The Relaciones, along with other royally sponsored maps, provide “valuable insight into Philip’s attempts to shape the nascent nation-state, to harness the competitive forces of nationalism and regionalism” (Mundy 1996, 1). They were an attempt to artificially construct a cohesive imperial identity while erasing regional and personal ties to the land, to transfer this personal relationship with the land to the national, to transmute it into patriotism. As Savoy asserts, “historical memory [anchors] a patriotic identity in place” (2015, 109).

While the Relaciones questionnaire included questions that obviously demonstrate the attempt to consolidate and exploit natural resources and understand the geography to maintain control of the land, a number of the questions illustrate the true purpose of the chronicle: to establish a linear progression of history, asserting Spanish control. In The Mapping of New Spain, Barbara Mundy creates a parallel between time and text and image and space: “The map, a description of space, found its ideal complement in the chronicle, which described the passage of time. Text and image, time and space: together these amounted to a full description of the new world” (1996, 15). The combination of text and image, time and space, was meant to create the place of New Spain. By
chronicling the New World, López de Velasco was attempting to locate the Indigenous control of territory, and the Indigenous people, in the past, while locating the colonial control in the present and of course, future. This is evident in the second question of the questionnaire:

“Quién fue el descubridor y conquistador de la dicha provincia… y el año de su descubrimiento y conquista, lo que todo buenamente pudiere saber” (De Solano and Ponce 1988, 81). “State who was the discoverer and conqueror of said province… Give the year of its discovery and conquest and all that can be readily learned about it” (Díaz 1995).

History in the New World did not exist prior to the “Discovery.” As Trouillot argues, “contact with the West is seen as the foundation of historicity of different cultures. Once discovered by Europeans, the Other finally enters the human world” (2015, 114).

This is also illustrated in question fourteen:

“Cuyos eran en tiempo de su gentilidad, y el señorío que sobre ellos tenían sus señores, y lo que tributaban, y las adoraciones y costumbres buenas, o malas que tenían” (De Solano and Ponce 1988, 83). “State to whom the Indians belonged in heathen time and what dominion was exercised over them by their lords; what tribute they paid and the form of worship, rites and customs they had, good or bad” (Díaz 1995).

When the “Indians” inhabited “heathen time,” the time before the “Discovery,” they did not inhabit history because history only exists in the mythical time of the nation. They inhabited space but not time, past but not history. Question fifteen solidifies this:

“Cómo se gobernaban, y con quién traían guerra, y cómo peleaban, y el hábito y traje que traían, y el que ahora traen. Y los mantenimientos de que usaban y ahora usan, y si han vivido más o menos sanos antiguamente que ahora, y la causa de que de ello se entendiere” (De Solano and Ponce 1988, 83). “State how they were governed; against whom they carried warfare; how they fought; the clothes and costumes they wore and now wear, the foods they used and now use and whether they used to be more or less healthy anciently than they are now, and what reasons may be learned for this” (Díaz 1995).

While the translation I am referencing translates “antiguamente” to “anciently,” it can also be translated to “in the past.” Both interpretations of the word indicate a schism – a before and after.
The use of the word “anciently” demonstrates how distantly removed “heathen time” was from imperial time. Although the conquest of Mexico by Cortés happened in 1519, only fifty-eight years before the questionnaire was distributed, by locating what we now refer to as “pre-Hispanic” time as either “ancient” or “in the past,” the questionnaire effectively removed Indigenous people from the present, from modern history. The linear progression of the chronicle, establishing the facts of history, would have normalized the conquest as the established natural order and justified and asserted Spain’s continued territorial domination.

This establishment of “heathen time” is directly linked to the construction of race and mythical time in the Americas. As Grosfoguel outlines, the debate over whether or not Native Americans were soulless was solidified by the trial of Valladolid in 1552 that determined Native Americans did have souls, resulting in the need to import and enslave “soulless” people from Africa to provide labor (2013). This resulted in a shift from a system based on religious to racial difference. In 1577, it was an established fact that Indigenous people did have souls. However, as Taylor argues, each nation in the Americas is reliant on the assertion of a unified, racially homogeneous population (2003). By locating Indigenous people in “ancient, heathen time,” the questionnaire contributed to this nascent racial othering, which would result in the “time/space continuum — otherwise known as the West’s progress narrative.” (Holland 2012, 17). As Sylvia Wynter explores, “the new symbolic construct of Race or of innately determined difference… would enable the Spanish state to legitimize its sovereignty over the lands of the Americas in post religious legal terms of Western Europe’s now-expanding state system” (1995, 12).

In Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader, Jordana Dym argues:

“one measure of successful European colonization in the Americas… was the displacement of native cartographic traditions: the literal and figurative colonization of space, a process considered... a colonization of minds and ways of thinking about the world as much as a physical colonization of territory” (2011, 9).
Mapping was more than an assertion of control over territory, but a domination of knowledge, and ways of imagining and representing land. The imposition of Western cartography was an eradication of Indigenous epistemologies, an attempt to divorce land from cultural identity. As Grosfoguel argues, the epistemicide, the extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing, against Indigenous people in the Americas, is fundamental to how knowledge is structured today, the supposed universalism of Western epistemologies (2013). Specifically, in this case, modern-day understandings of history, cartography, and visual culture privilege European or “Western” epistemologies.

While the *Relaciones* failed miserably in their attempted homogenization and consolidation of land in the New World, which I discuss further in chapter three, they did provide the groundwork for other, more successful, sites of historical memory. Trouillot argues that the second moment where silences enter is in “the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives)” (2015, 27). The physical landscape functions as an archive. This physical landscape is imagined and created through mapmaking, the consolidation of territory. Maps provide the imagined experience of space, but the material sources erected in the landscape shape the lived experience of that space. The landmarks that mark and organize space are by no means neutral. They are the three-dimensional enaction of a two-dimensional spatial organization that privileges Western epistemologies. This is certainly the case with Silent Sam and its assertion of the “lost cause” myth. As Guevara asserts, “time and space have been colonized and Europe has been constructed as the reference of global history… thus most terms used to explain the social, cultural, and political complexity in the Americas are inventions, including ‘indigenous’ and ‘indigeneity’ (also a term used to racialize space and time)” (2019, 267). Sites of historical memory exist in and create
mythical time through the assertion of a fixed, Westernized past, creating both a white spatial imaginary and a geography of silence.

C. **The Mythical Time of Silent Sam**

Silent Sam was erected in 1913, forty-eight years after the end of the Civil War during the Jim Crow era. Like many Confederate monuments of this time period, it was partially funded by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) as part of a campaign to rewrite the history of the Civil War. During this time, Confederate monuments were being mass-produced and installed throughout the south while the UDC was also distributing propagandistic literature to schools, praising the heroism of the Ku Klux Klan (Domby 2020). These Confederate monuments canonize the “lost cause” myth of the Civil War which “views slavery as a benevolent system and argues that the Civil War was fought over states’ rights” (Forest and Johnson 2018, 1).

Unlike the majority of these cheaply made monuments, Silent Sam was commissioned and created by the sculptor, John Wilson. In 2017, when protestors toppled a similar Confederate monument outside the Durham County courthouse, it crumpled into a heap of mangled metal (Fig. 8). When Silent Sam received similar treatment the following year, it maintained its form with no discernible damage. Many supporters of Silent Sam used this as a justification for its continued presence at UNC, as a valuable piece of art.

Wilson’s bronze statue features an anonymous Confederate soldier, facing north, with a rifle in his hands. The soldier stands atop a large stone pedestal displaying a brass plaque. The plaque presents a woman in classical garb, the personification of the state of North Carolina. She stands with her hand on the shoulder of a young, male student, urging him to go to war to defend his state (Fig. 9). Two other plaques are displayed on the pedestal. The first, a dedication to its benefactors, “Erected under the auspices of the North Carolina division of the United Daughters of the
Confederacy, aided by the alumni of the University” (Fig. 10). The second, a dedication to the students who fought in the Civil War, “To the sons of the University who entered the war of 1861 in answer to the call of their country and whose lives taught the lesson of their great commander that duty is the sublimest word in the English language” (Fig. 11). Silent Sam received its nickname because the soldier has no ammunition and cannot fire its gun. The “Sam” is possibly a reference to Uncle Sam. The appropriation of a U.S. patriotic symbol as a nickname for a Confederate monument further establishes the Confederacy as integral to national identity.

Since its erection in 1913, Silent Sam stood in McCorkle Place, at the entryway to the University. McCorkle Place faces Franklin Street, the main thoroughfare in downtown Chapel Hill, and is the original site of the University. It is home to the oldest buildings and the Old Well, the primary visual symbol of UNC. UNC is the oldest public university in the country, established in 1789, and the flagship institution of the University of North Carolina system. At the time of the University’s founding, North Carolina was a slave-owning state and the University was largely built, and for much of its first century, maintained, by the labor of enslaved people. McCorkle Place, its landscape and imagery, is synonymous with the University. Silent Sam’s presence in a place of such prominence on the University’s physical and visual landscape, and the continued debate over Confederate monuments, is a blatant assertion of how the Confederacy is still intimately tied to southern, state, and national identity.

The erection of monuments is a time-honored nation building strategy. Monuments not only claim ownership through the organization and transformation of space but shape the material and visual culture of the spaces they inhabit. Monuments are a physical manifestation of the historical process; a tool that asserts and privileges certain narratives while silencing others. Like maps, monuments are part of the materiality upon which narratives are constructed. However, while they
serve as the materiality of sources, they also assert and perpetuate specific narratives, creating additional silences in the moment of fact retrieval. Trouillot identifies two formulas of silencing in the making of narratives: erasure and banalization. “Some narratives cancel what happened through direct erasure of facts and their relevance (erasure)... Other narratives sweeten the horror or banalize the uniqueness of a situation by focusing on the details (banalization)” (2015, 97). Both of these formulas are at play in Confederate monuments.

The “lost cause” is a rewriting of the narrative of the war after defeat. Confederate monuments attempt to revise the nation’s history by mythologizing the past, “monuments may not remember events so much as bury them altogether beneath layers of national myths and explanations” (Young 1992, 272). Silent Sam is a perpetuation of this myth, an “investment in the historic whiteness of place” (Caison 2018). The goal of these monuments was not to memorialize but to maintain a certain social, racial, and spatial order. On the About South Podcast, UNC Professors Malinda Maynor Lowery and William Sturkey make an important distinction between a monument and a memorial: a memorial honors a loss whereas a monument celebrates some new entity or concept (2018). While masquerading as a memorial to the “sons of the University,” as a monument, Silent Sam celebrates and upholds white supremacy and the Confederacy’s revised version of history.

Applying Trouillot’s formula, the revisionist narrative of slavery as a “benevolent system” erases while the focus on states’ rights banalizes. “The joint effect of these two types of formulas is a powerful silencing: whatever has not been cancelled out in the generalities dies in the cumulative irrelevance of a heap of details” (Trouillot 2015, 97). While neither slavery nor the Civil War has been erased from our history, the continued presence of Confederate monuments demonstrates how this powerful silencing of the past results in continued silencing in the present.
When Silent Sam was toppled in 2018, much of the debate centered around the 2015 law on “objects of remembrance.” The timing of the law was no coincidence, following the precedent of other Southern states attempting to preserve their interpretation of history in the wake of increased pressure to confront and remove Confederate monuments. The law was passed thirty-six days after the Charleston church shooting and continues a history of suppression by both the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees. In 2011, the Real Silent Sam Coalition, which defines itself as a group of “students, faculty, and community members devoted to bringing historical accuracy to the physical and mental landscapes at [UNC],” pushed to rename Saunders Hall, named after William Saunders a known Ku Klux Klan leader (2018). While they were successful in renaming the building, the Board of Trustees responded to this activism by enacting a sixteen-year freeze on renaming other campus buildings.

While many maintain that Silent Sam is a memorial to the UNC students who fought in the Civil War, its true purpose is abundantly clear. At the installation ceremony for Silent Sam in 1913, Julian Carr, an industrialist who was largely responsible for the economic and industrial boom in and around Chapel Hill, gave the dedication for the statue. His dedication is often cited as demonstrative of the racist values Silent Sam upholds due to this anecdote: “One hundred yards from where we stand, less than ninety days perhaps after my return from Appomattox, I horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds, because... she had publicly insulted and maligned a Southern lady” (Carr 1913). While this is indicative of Carr’s own ideologies, as Andrew Tobolowsky explores in his 2018 annotation of Carr’s speech, the following quote demonstrates that the only freedom the Civil War was attempting to preserve was that of white people:

“The present generation, I am persuaded, scarcely takes note of what the Confederate soldier meant to the welfare of the Anglo Saxon race... their courage
and steadfastness saved the very life of the Anglo Saxon race in the South... and today, as a consequence the purest strain of the Anglo Saxon is to be found in the 13 Southern States” (Carr 1913).

This speech by Julian Carr is common knowledge. The history of slavery in the United States is common knowledge. Even with the “lost cause” campaign, the Civil War and Jim Crow laws are common knowledge. However, by locating events in the past, by historicizing them, by freezing moments in time through the erection of monuments, they are removed from contemporary controversies and their existence justified as historical preservation. In these spaces, memory is used as a tool to authenticate the relegation of contemporary concerns, like racism, to the past.

During the summer of 2019, I took a tour of the U.S. Capitol Building. The ceiling of the rotunda features *The Apotheosis of Washington* while the walls are decorated with historical paintings and a frescoed frieze depicting “American history.” The paintings were commissioned by Congress and created beginning in 1819. Featured are four scenes from the Revolutionary War as well as the “Discovery” and early exploration, including the *Landing of Columbus* and *Baptism of Pocahontas*. The frieze, begun in 1877, documents U.S. history beginning with the “Discovery” up to the California Gold Rush. Aside from representing a reductive and glorified version of history, the depictions of Native Americans in the murals and sculptural reliefs are particularly derogatory. During the tour, one of my friends asked the guide about the problematic nature of the art displayed – whether or not they had considered covering up the paintings, adding to them, or contextualizing them to provide a more complete version of history. The tour guide, who had obviously been reciting her speech by rote, struggled to come up with a response. Ultimately, she said the art was created during a specific moment in history and therefore should be interpreted within that context. As though, by virtue of the art being done in the past it now exists in a time
capsule, a vacuum, removed from contemporary life. This same argument is used to justify the continued presence of Confederate monuments in public spaces. Because they represent history, they are isolated from contemporary concerns and controversies, and cannot be interpreted in a contemporary light.

Defining Silent Sam as an “object of remembrance” is a continuation of the “lost cause” myth and precludes all but one specific interaction with and interpretation of the Monument. Silent Sam asserts a homogeneous experience of time and space, designed around Lipsitz’ white spatial imaginary. As Trouillot outlines, power, and those who wield it, is indivisible from history: “History is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge the exposition of its roots” (2015, xxiii). The subsuming of memory in the process of historical production is an example of this, the invisibility of power. Revealing how memory is appropriated is the “ultimate challenge, the exposition” of power’s roots (2015, xxiii). Monuments are highly visible symbols that perpetuate this invisibility. Their visibility is their most powerful weapon. They hide in plain sight.

D. Conclusion

The assertion that history exists in the past upholds mythical time. It negates the varied responses people have to their environments, but “the way we move through space determines how we are ascribed to specific forms of representation, and at the same time, the way we are represented and perceived determines the forms in which we can move” (Guevara 2019, 269). Landscape is linked to our identity. It is personal. What comprises our landscape – streets, buildings, landmarks – shapes not just our physical movement through space but our mental conception of space and who has the right to occupy it. This is done both overtly and covertly.
While sites of historical memory overtly shape the experience of space, the covert silencing they enact is even more powerful. By upholding certain narratives about history, these sites not only displace but normalize displacement. The reason hegemonic structures are so powerful is because of their invisibility, they naturalize hierarchies. This is asserted through the space-time dichotomy I outlined previously with the Relaciones Geográficas, “those who order the world, who are world-making master time – those animals and humans who are perceived as having no world-making effects – merely occupy space” (Holland 2012, 10). Sites of historical memory exist within Holland’s “world-making” time while relegating those with “no world-making effects” to “temporal immateriality” (2012, 10). In the case of Silent Sam, it is evident whose experience is privileged in the space of the Monument.
IV. ANTI-MONUMENTS AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF MEMORY

A. Introduction

As Trouillot argues “at some stage, for reasons that are themselves historical, most often spurred by controversy, collectivities experience the need to impose a test of credibility on certain events and narratives because it matters to them whether these events are true or false, whether these stories are fact and fiction” (2015, 11). What we remember is the result of a series of choices. By making a choice, myriad other possibilities, potential histories, are automatically eliminated. Silence is the inevitable byproduct. This silencing inherent to historical production results in a discussion of recovering memory, or the histories that have been silenced. Revising history through the claiming of memory has become a trend, especially, to combat traumatic, horrific events. However, because the reasons for testing the credibility of narratives “are themselves historical,” the impulse must be examined. The need to reckon with memory, to either find absolution for past crimes or come to terms with and memorialize horrors perpetrated against a body, community, country, is a national project. It is a further example of how memory serves as a vehicle to protect and promote national identity.

In recent years, truth and reconciliation councils and museums dedicated to memory have sprung up, supposedly as spaces of resistance to confront the past (Díaz de León 2015). But is it possible to recuperate memory when it is institutionalized? Is resistance possible in these controlled, curated spaces? The nation, as a construct, is reliant on hegemonic structures to maintain any form of unified identity. Therefore, can a nation, any nation, effectively represent memory? Is it possible to do this in any way that is not inherently self-serving?

Memorials, counter-monuments, and art installations are memory strategies that purport to combat self-serving, nation building attempts to reckon with memory. *Unsung Founders, Bond*
and Free by Do-Ho Suh and Rumors of War by Kehinde Wiley both challenge traditional monument forms in an attempt to contend with Confederate monuments and the narratives they construct and uphold. Unsung Founders uses the formula of the counter-monument, while Rumors of War appropriates and attempts to subvert the Confederate monument form. I refer to these monumentalizing attempts to counteract the narratives upheld by traditional monuments as “anti-monuments.” Unlike counter-monuments, which I define below, these anti-monument attempts often reify what they try to counter or rely on sentimentality or empathy to elicit an emotional response, “across race, class, and gender lines” (Samuels 1992, 6).

B. The Unsung Founders Memorial

Before Silent Sam was toppled, the university did take steps in an attempt to contextualize the Monument and acknowledge UNC’s history. One of these steps was the installation of Unsung Founders, Bond and Free by Do-Ho Suh, commonly known as the “Unsung Founders Memorial” (Fig. 6). Like Silent Sam, it is located in McCorkle Place, at the entryway to the University. Unsung Founders was dedicated on November 5th, 2005. It was a gift from the class of 2002. The memorial was largely designed in response to Silent Sam and the controversy over the Monument, to celebrate the people of color who built the University. It has always been interpreted, and largely criticized, due to its proximity to Silent Sam. However, it is also reliant on the presence of Silent Sam to serve its intended function.

The memorial features a low to the ground, circular, black granite tabletop, supported by three hundred bronze figures. The surface of the table is inscribed with “The class of 2002 honors the University’s unsung founders – the people of color bond and free – who helped build the Carolina that we cherish today.” The surface is highly polished and reflective. The bronze figures figuratively and literally support the tabletop. They are positioned identically, with arms raised,
legs braced, the left forward and right back, as they support the tabletop. While they are in identical positions, there are different types of figures, primarily distinguished by their clothes and physical features. There are three types of men represented – wearing jackets, in shirtsleeves, and shirtless; while the women are distinguished primarily by their breasts, skirts, and headscarves (Fig. 12-13). The table is accompanied by five black stone seats. The roughly hewn seats are supposed to reference the unmarked headstones of the enslaved people buried in the Chapel Hill cemetery. When seated at the table, the sitter’s face is reflected back at them in the table’s surface. The memorial was installed in McCorkle Place to be in conversation with Silent Sam. This spatial relationship is visible in Figure 6. When installed, *Unsung Founders* lay in the shadow of Silent Sam.

Although it is referred to as a memorial, *Unsung Founders* utilizes the strategies of the counter-monument. James Young coined the term counter-monument in his article, “The Counter-Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today” (1992). Counter-monuments are defined in opposition to traditional monuments. Young argues that by assigning monumentality to an object, traditional monuments relieve viewers of the work of remembering. Memory is contained within the space of the monument. Counter-monuments return this obligation to the viewer. They implicate the viewer in the act of remembering. The counter-monument intentionally challenges traditional monument conventions.

> “Its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town’s feet” (Young 1992, 277).
Although Young discusses the counter-monument specifically within the context of Germany coming to terms with the Holocaust, according to his definition, counter-monuments are spaces where we actively engage and reckon with memory.

In “Memory of Absence: Contemporary Counter-monuments,” Sabrina DeTurk argues that counter-monuments complicate the act of remembering (2017). They are reliant on viewer interaction both to activate the monument and to do the necessary memory work. A counter-monument “does not stay neatly within bounds of space or time but calls our attention to the ongoing work of memory and to those lapses of memory that threaten to compromise our reckoning with the past” (DeTurk 2017, 83). The work of remembering must be completed by the viewer. Formally, common design elements used in counter-monuments include a highly polished and reflective surface so that the viewers cannot help but see themselves implicated in the space of the monument; a site that activates the memorial in some way, the viewer is meant to interact on a mental, emotional, and physical level with the monument; the incorporation of the names of the victims; and functionality, often counter-monuments have a use in public space. DeTurk asserts that anger in response to these monuments is commonplace, in fact, it is characteristic of counter-monuments, and demonstrates their success in challenging the traditional monument form. Young takes it even further, arguing that “by resisting its own reason for being, the counter-monument paradoxically reinvigorates the very idea of the monument itself” (1992, 295).

Formally and conceptually, *Unsung Founders* follow Young and DeTurk’s formulas for a counter-monument. The memorial has a reflective surface that implicates the viewer; it is functional, meant to be sat at; and the space of the memorial is activated by the viewer’s engagement. It is an attempt for UNC to reckon with its history, how the labor of enslaved people largely built and operated the university for much of its existence. However, this reckoning is
problematized when we ask who is instigating this engagement? It is necessary to consider the actors and motivations involved. “History, as social process, involves people in three distinct capacities: 1) as *agents*, or occupants of structural positions; 2) as *actors* in constant interface with a context; and 3) as *subjects*, that is, as voices aware of their vocality” (Trouillot 2015, 23). In this case, UNC is an agent. It occupies a structural position of power. So why did UNC commission and install *Unsung Founders*?

It is important to note the context in which it was dedicated and the proximity to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The UNC class of 2002 debated over a monument to 9/11, but the proposals had already been submitted and ultimately it decided on *Unsung Founders*. Considering that the University contributed $40,000 to help fund the memorial, it was obviously “interested in the symbolic value of this monument” (McMillan 2017, 145). A wave of nationalism swept the country following 9/11. This nationalism is dependent on the work of memory. The tragedy of the attacks was mobilized as a national unification tool. “Always remember” and “never forget” became and has remained a call to action, a rallying cry to memorialize the event. For those old enough to remember, telling the story of where you were, what you were doing, how you felt, when the Twin Towers were hit, is a collective bonding ritual. This collective memory building maintains the mythical time of the nation by establishing a specific experience of the events. The installation of *Unsung Founders* and the University’s financial support of it demonstrate an eagerness to symbolically assert that UNC, and by extension, the nation, had reconciled with its troubled past, and assert a unified national identity, against foreign aggressors. In light of this, what is the purpose of *Unsung Founders*? To memorialize history? To honor the university’s “Unsung Founders?” To pacify the protests against Silent Sam? To assert a unified national identity in the wake of 9/11?
With the removal of Silent Sam, *Unsung Founders* stands alone and must be analyzed accordingly (Fig. 14). Considering that this is supposedly a memorial for “people of color bond and free,” and it is figurative, the issue of who is representing not just the Black body, but the enslaved Black body, and how, is central to this discussion. The artist who created *Unsung Founders*, Do-Ho Suh, is Korean. What is problematic here is not so much that a Korean artist was chosen to create a memorial specifically for African Americans, but the reasoning behind it. As stated by Ben Singer, the senior class president at the time, “Do-Ho… grew up in similar oppressive circumstances in Korea, where he’s from” (McMillan 2017, 155). This flattening of the experiences of all people of color under the umbrella of “oppression” completely negates the purpose of the counter-monument, to reckon with a specific national history, that of slavery in the United States. The language used in the memorial referring to “people of color” instead of explicitly acknowledging Blackness has also been criticized for this very reason.

This generalization, the Black body as a token of oppression, extends to the figures represented in the memorial (Fig. 12-13). They are anonymous, repeated figures. The figures have obviously racialized features – wide noses, full lips. The shirtless men are muscular, the masculine ideal. Although the women are distinguished primarily by their breasts, they are not sexualized in the way the male figures are. These figures fit into visual tropes of representing Blackness. As McMillan asserts “the issue of national, racial, and historical identity is collapsed into one general idea of blackness” (2017, 148).

This “general idea of blackness” is compounded by the anonymity of the figures, the nameless men and women. This anonymity is a primary critique of the memorial; “the central notion of the Unsung Founders Memorial, that enslaved Chapel Hillians are unsung, is contradicted by the extensive archives and Southern Historical Collection at the University” (McMillan 2017, 142).
Not only is there extensive documentation of the work done by “college servants,” who, it can be assumed were enslaved prior to 1863, but there is identifiable information about these people that were foundational to the university. Their names and stories are well documented, as are the identities of their descendants. As McMillan outlines, this anonymity is in stark contrast to the specific, named monuments elsewhere in McCorkle Place. Even Silent Sam refers to specific individuals. The names of the three hundred and twenty-one students who fought in the Civil War are memorialized on plaques in Memorial Hall, a short walk from the Monument.

This collapsing of time, history, and identity into one idea of Blackness maintains the “temporal immateriality” of Blackness asserted by Silent Sam (Holland 2012, 10). The counter-monument is meant to challenge mythical time: “the very notion of linear time assumes memory of a past moment: time as the perpetually measured distance between this moment and the next, between this instant and a past remembered. In this sense, the counter-monument asks us to recognize that time and memory are interdependent, in dialectical flux” (Young 1992, 294). Yet, Unsung Founders furthers mythical time. In its attempt to demonstrate that the University is acknowledging and making reparations for its racist past, it asserts a racial progress myth. It upholds the nation’s white spatial imaginary by both arresting time and establishing a narrative of racial progress. However, this myth is reliant on the presence of Silent Sam. This progress is visualized through the presentation of the two in conversation – a visual succession. With the removal of the Monument, Unsung Founders no longer represents progress nor improvement.

Unsung Founders does not actively reckon with history nor complicate the act of remembering. It falls back on tropes of representing Blackness and relies on the formulaic prescription provided by the counter-monument to assert its supposed function. As McMillan argues, “this is the only monument that explicitly remembers forgetting” (2017, 152). Counter-monuments explicitly name
victims, in this case, *Unsung Founders* explicitly erases. According to both Young and DeTurk, the primary goal of the counter-monument is to create a space where viewers actively engage and reckon with memory – this does not happen with *Unsung Founders*. I refer to *Unsung Founders* as an anti-monument to make explicit its failure as a counter-monument. I would argue that in many ways erecting memorials and counter-monuments is a way that nations, or in this case a state university, attempt to absolve themselves of their troubled history by putting the onus of memory work onto their citizens. As an anti-monument, *Unsung Founders* is even more damaging than a traditional monument because it pretends to subvert the power structures it actually upholds. The same can be said about *Rumors of War*.

C. **Rumors of War**

On September 27th, 2019, *Rumors of War* by Kehinde Wiley was installed in Times Square. Wiley created *Rumors of War* in response to the Confederate monument of General James Ewell Brown (J.E.B.) Stuart on Arthur Ashe Boulevard, recently renamed from Monument Avenue, in Richmond, Virginia. Since its unveiling, the Monument has been removed from Times Square and installed in its permanent location, in front of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, where it is in direct dialogue with the J.E.B. Stuart Monument (Fig. 15-16). Standing twenty-seven feet tall and sixteen feet wide, *Rumors of War* features a young, African American man with locs, dressed in what Times Square Art refers to as “urban streetwear,” astride a horse, elevated on a large pedestal (2019) (Fig. 17). The front right leg of the horse is raised, which in typical equestrian portraiture indicates the rider was harmed during battle. While this is Wiley’s first public, monumental sculptural work, it fits squarely into his corpus of large scale, figurative, painted portraits, primarily of Black men, inserted into well-known Western masterpieces, with vibrant, ornate backgrounds.
In fact, it draws directly from a series of paintings Wiley did in 2005 also entitled *Rumors of War* that was inspired by the history of equestrian portraiture (Fig. 18).

What does it mean for a monument celebrating Black manhood, by a Black artist, to be erected at the same time that Confederate monuments, like Silent Sam, are actively being removed through protest? In a statement about the piece, Times Square Arts, who sponsored the installation in partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Sean Kelly Gallery, asserts “standing as a statue to the violence afflicted against bodies every day, Wiley’s work presents a powerful visual repositioning of young Black men in our public consciousness while directly engaging the national conversation around controversial monuments and their role in perpetuating incomplete narratives and contemporary inequalities” (2019). *Rumors of War* is meant to serve as the antithesis to the traditional monument form, specifically the Confederate monument. It has been heralded as a radical resituating of Black men in the nation’s imaginary, a challenge to white supremacy, and dubbed the “anti-Confederate monument” (Capps 2019).

This anti-monument trend has influenced many recent memorial sites with varying degrees of effectiveness, including the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin, the 9/11 *Memorial* in New York City, and the *National Memorial for Peace and Justice* in Montgomery, Alabama. It is impossible to ignore the economic impact of these sites. They are valuable tourist attractions. Anti-monuments, especially in the form of counter-monuments and art installations, often have great aesthetic appeal. This is irresistible in our social media culture. There are countless photos of people climbing on and posing with the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*. Engagement with these sites is often limited to a well-staged Instagram post. The visual appeal of these sites is compounded by the allure of horror. Human beings have an undeniable fascination with violence and atrocity and the majority of these sites are memorializing national trauma,
generally marked by blood. In the space of these sites, memory becomes cultural capital, a profitable tourist commodity. This parallels the emergence of what Anthony Shelton refers to as the “master narrative of the ‘New Economy’ which predicates a major rearticulation of the arts, cultural, and knowledge organizations, and their commodification within a knowledge and experience economy” (2013, 18). In this New Economy, patrimony is a commodity, cultural heritage generates revenue. Cultural sites feed this “knowledge and experience economy” as tourist destinations, often framed as redressing previous wrongs.

The commerce and consumption of memory through tourism is indelibly linked to colonialism, and in our global economy, capitalism has replaced nationalism as a marker of value. We are all subject to the “economic regime” of capitalism (Shelton 2013, 18). As Chatterjee argues, “empty homogeneous time is the utopian time of capital” (2005, 927). The linearity of nation, of progress, is linked to the development of capitalism. The empty time of the nation has been replaced by the empty time of capital. In these spaces, history no longer subsumes memory, capital does.

There are certainly different implications when an artist decides to make an art piece, versus when a nation, state, or university commissions an artist with a specific vision in mind. Particularly in this case, where a Black artist is responding to the historic and continued erasure of Black people from both the art historical canon and United States’ history. It would be a mistake to downplay the symbolic and emotional value of Wiley’s work. However, the motivation still must be unpacked. In the case of Rumors of War, the space it inhabits is critical. Why did Wiley decide to first put Rumors of War in Times Square and then move it to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts?

Times Square is by no means a neutral location. In many ways, it is the epicenter of capitalism, commerce, and tourism nationally and globally. It is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the world and is iconic for its massive, digital screens and garish billboard advertisements. It is
also a critical marker of time. Yearly, countless people make the pilgrimage to watch the ball drop in Times Square on New Year’s Eve, while millions of others watch live from their homes. The Times Square website even has a New Year’s Eve countdown running year-round. It truly epitomizes Chatterjee’s “utopian time of capital.” So, what does it mean for *Rumors of War* to exist in this space?

According to Wiley,

> “*Rumors of War* attempts to use the language of equestrian portraiture to both embrace and subsume the fetishization of state violence. New York and Times Square in particular sit at the crossroads of human movement on a global scale. To have the *Rumors of War* sculpture presented in such a context lays bare the scope and scale of the project in its conceit to expose the beautiful and terrible potentiality of art to sculpt the language of domination” (Times Square Arts 2019).

Essentially, according to his statement, Wiley chose Times Square because of the amount of foot traffic it receives. It was an attempt to display his co-option and subversion of the Confederate monument on a global scale. This global focus is an extension of Wiley’s practice. In his ongoing *World Stage* series, Wiley selects and visits countries he believes are “on the conversation block in the 21st century,” because of their “broader, global, political importance – strategically for America, and the world at large” (Wiley 2020). Wiley argues that *Rumors of War* demonstrates the power of art to “sculpt the language of domination” and positions his piece as a disruption in this emblematic crossroads of capitalism and globalism. However, this statement ignores Wiley’s own complicity in this system.

By inserting the Monument in Times Square, he is explicitly locating it within the global market. Art, especially the art of a well-known artist like Wiley, is a commodity. It has significant monetary value. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts paid $2 million for *Rumors of War*. It is no coincidence that an edition of the sculpture was on display by the Sean Kelly Gallery at Art Basel in Miami, at the same time that the original *Rumors of War* made its transition from Times Square
to its much less visible location at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. According to his agreement with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Wiley can produce two more editions of *Rumors of War*. Many would argue, justifiably, that it is Wiley’s right to make a profit off his art. However, in the case of *Rumors of War*, it is not just art that Wiley is profiting off of, but memory. While he is by no means the first artist to do this, we must take this into consideration, especially given the widespread commodification of memory that often accompanies attempts to reckon with the past.

With *Rumors of War*, the issue of audience is key: who is consuming this memory? As Trouillot argues, “the value of a historical product cannot be debated without taking into account both the context of its production and the context of its consumption” (2015, 146). Wiley has previously stated, “Let’s face it. I make really high-priced luxury goods for wealthy consumers” (Tsai 2015, 14). Wiley traffics in emotion. He produces art for the “sentimental consumer” by offering “artifacts overloaded with emotional values for sale to an audience shaped by their consumption” (Samuels 1992, 4). By purchasing one of Wiley’s pieces, the consumer can imagine themself as subversive, as a history maker rewriting the art historical canon.

His pieces are safe, commercial, and largely non-controversial because they are situated as recuperating the Black body for a Black audience.

“One of the reasons we love Wiley, of course, is that he fetishizes brown skin – or, to be more precise, because of the way he draws our attention to how brown skin is fetishized: the sheen and musculature that presage our arrival as real bodies. If he draws on the fetish as ethnographic object, commodity, and sexual stand-in, he brackets the way a fetish is as much a victim of power and visual dislocation as an agent to respond to historical erasure. Indeed, his paintings’ fetishism turns them into cyphers that allow black people to look at black people so that other people can look at black people again” (Lax 2015, 92).

But is his work really for a Black audience? According to his own statement, he is making art for “wealthy consumers,” presumably white, and capitalizing on their need to absolve themselves of any guilt associated with viewing and owning representations of the Black body.
Like *Unsung Founders*, *Rumors of War* falls victim to tropes of representing “one general idea of Blackness” (McMillan 2017, 148). In this case, the stereotypical representation of the contemporary Black, urban male. While Wiley does base his portraits on specific individuals, and they are sometimes named in his pieces, his portrait of President Barak Obama being, of course, the most well-known example, the model in *Rumors of War* is not named. This anonymous figure is a stand-in for all Black men. Considering that the monument Wiley is responding to is of a specific individual, this undermines his attempt to elevate Blackness and complete the “incomplete narratives” Confederate monuments perpetuate. This anonymity is magnified by the unveiling of *Rumors of War* in Times Square, where it is completely removed from the J.E.B Stuart monument, divorced from the context it supposedly responds to.

*Rumors of War* allows viewers to relieve themselves of guilt. Sentimentality, “[evokes] a certain form of emotional response, usually empathy, in the reader or viewer… it produces or reproduces spectacles that cross race, class, and gender boundaries” (Samuels 1992, 4). But as Aruna D’Souza argues, empathy leads to inaction (2018). She asserts that we rely on empathy to cross divides, be they cultural, ethnic, racial, etc, and to instigate political change. However, empathy perpetuates this false idea that we have to understand something in order for it to be considered valid. D’Souza uses the example of the 2016 presidential election to illustrate this:

“liberal pundits realized with horror how many people were willing to vote for an outspoken white supremacist, a misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, and otherwise hateful man, and doubled down on the idea that empathy was the key to a more progressive political arena. ‘Love trumps hate’ became the postelection rallying cry, as it had been during Hilary Clinton’s campaign: a slogan that placed the personal obligation to understand each other at the heart of the politics of resistance” (2018, 42).

Memory work also falls prey to the perils of empathy. This is epitomized in Alison Landsberg’s notion of “prosthetic memory.” Landsberg argues that prosthetic memory is a way people
“assimilate as personal experience historical events they did not live” (2004). Memory sites offer this experience. Empathy is an extension of sentimentality and “prevents what is imagined as a ‘genuine’ engagement with politics and history” (Samuels 1992, 4). As an “artifact overloaded with emotional value,” Rumors of War inhibits further engagement with contemporary and past narratives and invokes a spate of problems, primarily empathy, spectatorship, fetishism, and voyeurism. Wiley’s work goes a step further than evoking empathy. It “solves” the problem for the white viewer. Rumors of War is celebratory, triumphant. In its victory, it absolves the viewer of having to empathize or feel guilt for histories of racial violence and subjugation, allows them to pretend that contemporary racial issues have been addressed with the installation of a monument celebrating Blackness, and gives them permission to look at the Black body again.

Rumors of War does not implicate the viewer in any way nor generate conversation nor complicate. Presenting the piece out of context in Times Square belies its meaning as responding to a specific monument, in a specific location. It sensationalizes. This is further complicated by the ambiguity of Wiley’s intent. Is he profiting off a painful and fraught narrative and treating memory as a commodity?

D. Conclusion

Unsung Founders and Rumors of War are attempts to fill silences, to redress a violent past and right previous wrongs. However, it is not possible to do this. A monument or memorial cannot “re-member.” As soon as a monument is erected it exists outside of time, in mythical time. It relegates all that enter or interact with the space it inhabits to either the center or the margins, depending on the narrative it sustains, and relieves the viewer of the work of remembering. As Young argues, “in this age of mass memory production and consumption… there seems to be an inverse proportion between the memorialization of the past and its contemplation and study. For once we
assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember” (1992, 273).

*Unsung Founders* and *Rumors of War* are unsuccessful as anti-monuments because they fall prey to the constraints of the traditional monument form and end up using memory for their own ends, to unify or as a commodity. By relying on the counter-monument formula and the presence of Silent Sam as a point of comparison, *Unsung Founders* pretends to relieve the burden of memory. *Rumors of War*, on the other hand, mimics all of the monumentalizing tactics of the Confederate monument it responds to. By co-opting the Confederate monument form, Wiley is attempting to locate these monuments and memories, their painful silencing, in the present. However, as Audre Lorde argues, “the master’s tools will never dismantle master’s house” (1984). In an attempt to redress the past, to fill silence, both *Unsung Founders* and *Rumors of War* end up creating additional silences in the present.
V. RE-MEMORY: RECKONING WITH SILENCES

A. Introduction

In “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” Hortense Spillers asserts, “the loss of the indigenous name/land provides a metaphor of displacement for other human and cultural features and relations, including the displacement of the genitalia, the female’s and the male’s desire that engenders future” (1987, 73). Spillers’ wordplay in this passage compounds her comparison of loss of name and land and loss of humanity, exemplified in the loss of future through the displacement of progeny. The use of the word “displacement” operates on multiple levels. Displacement can mean the act of moving from one space, place, position, or location to another, but it can also mean the occupation of that space by another entity, replacement, resulting in the expulsion of the space’s original inhabitant. In this case, “the loss of indigenous name/land” results in the physical displacement of persons from their ancestral roots. By defining the genitalia as a “human and cultural feature… the female’s and the male’s desire that engenders future,” Spillers implies that the function of the genitalia is not solely for biological but also for cultural reproduction. Future is created both by a continued lineage and the continuance of culture. The loss of the past, indigenous name, and land, results in the loss of the cultural future.

This loss creates a vacuum easily occupied by historical narratives and myths. Re-memory pieces together the fragments of the past, the erasure of history, identity, and native land, in the generation of a cultural future. As Savoy asserts, “re-membering is an alternative to extinction” (2015, 186). The future can only be realized by unraveling the accounts of the past. In the fall of 2019, I attended a lecture in Chicago where Ta-Nehisi Coates discussed his new novel, The Water Dancer. Coates made a statement that stuck with me, “we build myths on forgetting.” The
hegemonic narratives or “myths” about the past depend on silencing, on forced forgetting. Since the place of the Americas itself is a fabrication, it easily facilitates mythmaking.

The creation of myths based in Western ideologies impose narratives that normalize domination and colonization and are central to the colonial project in the Americas. These myths also establish a colonial linearity of time. In *Time and Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, Fabian asserts: “When modern anthropology began to construct its other in terms of topoi implying distance, difference and opposition, its intent was… to construct ordered Space and Time - a cosmos - for Western society to inhabit rather than ‘understanding other cultures’” (2014, 111). In this “inhabit” versus “understand” paradigm, it is not just land that is inhabited, but culture. In order to inhabit both land and culture, the space and time of the Americas had to be constructed through mythmaking.

However, this mythmaking is also a reminder that storytelling is the way we construct the past. Since history is nothing more than a narrative, “that which is said to have happened… a story about that process,” we have the power to alter the story (Trouillot 2015, 2). The ongoing scholarship on the *Relaciones Geográficas* and the current production of history around Silent Sam demonstrate our power to alter our understanding of the past. Knowledge production is cyclical. It is a recurrent, nonlinear process. Our perception of the present changes our interpretation of the past, collapsing this colonial linearity and challenging mythical time.

B. **The Resistance of Place in the Relaciones Geográficas**

The evolving interpretations and scholarship on the *Relaciones Geográficas* are a resistance to the mythologizing and historicizing nature of place. According to Trouillot, the final two moments where silences enter are in “the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives)” and “the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)” (2015, 27). The
continued study of and scholarship on the *Relaciones* exposes these silences; “imagining the subject position of the culturally dispossessed missing from the archives leads the historian to surprising new insights about the kinds of agencies that were practiced in a heterogeneous colonial society” (Farago 2012, 249).

While monuments and anti-monuments distort memory in a way that supports nationalism, colonialism, and capitalism, in the *Relaciones*, the imposition of the Spanish understanding of space and territory was an attempt to eradicate the way the original inhabitants of the Americas understood their relationship to land. This “epistemicide” was a key component of the colonial process and the creation of a new world order (Grosfoguel 2013). Contemporary analyses of the *Relaciones* reveal this attempted silencing and explore what kind of narratives and epistemologies are possible outside of the imposed Western framework.

López de Velasco presumed that the colonial administrators he intended to complete the *Relaciones* questionnaire had the same cartographic epistemology and relationship to space, as that of mapmakers in Spain, and thus would represent the territory similarly. It would not have occurred to López de Velasco that not only would colonial mapmakers have a different relationship with images and territory than that of Spanish mapmakers, but that most of the *Relaciones* maps would be made by Indigenous people. The maps created for the *Relaciones* belie the mythical time of the empire because they assert the lived experiences of their makers, be they Indigenous or colonial. As Mundy explores, in sixteenth-century New Spain, written text was given primacy over images (1996). Because Indigenous communication was largely image based, it was considered inferior to the mode of communication of the conqueror, alphabetic writing. Since images were “the texts of the conqueror,” and therefore subordinate to written text, the creation of the maps for the *Relaciones* largely fell to Indigenous artists, while the colonial Spaniards occupied themselves
with the accompanying written texts. These maps, by Indigenous makers, “give us a viewpoint of
sixteenth-century Amerindians who were using a familiar indigenous idiom,” that could not be
achieved through the translation of any form of writing (Mundy 1996, xix).

This colonial “anti-image bias” is further confirmed by the fact that when the colonists did
create the maps, they rarely signed them, whereas they did sign the written texts, “thereby
celebrating their authorship and testifying to its authority” (Mundy 1996, 30). The attitude the
colonists had towards maps and images demonstrates a rupture in empire, in nation. From early
on, the homogenization of culture across the empire proved impossible. Not only did many of the
maps created by Indigenous mapmakers show “space that was still defined and represented by the
communities of its Indigenous inhabitants,” but the relationship the colonial administrators had to
mapmaking and the space of New Spain demonstrates a radical disconnect (Mundy 1996, 214).

While stylistically the colonial maps were based on European models, the renditions, for the
most part, were careless and indifferent, potentially resulting from “the tenuousness of their
connection to their immediate surroundings” (Mundy 1996, 34). Mundy highlights the example of
Treviño’s map of Los Peñoles, which “showed little but a series of towns and ranches connected
by roads – perhaps the closest reflection of Treviño’s experience of space” (1996, 35). Although
technically the colonial maps did rely on European cartographic traditions, this representation of
the lived experience of space is radically different than the scientific realism asserted through
Renaissance cartography. This is important, as much of the earlier scholarship done on the
Relaciones used both the colonial and Indigenous maps either as examples of Western
representation displacing Indigenous representation or as examples of hybridity. However, “a
geographic map is neither exclusively ‘Indian’ nor exclusively ‘Renaissance’” (Russo 2014, 247).
Russo argues that by “recovering traces of… pre-Hispanic representation[s] of space” it is possible
to demonstrate how both cartographic traditions, Mesoamerican and European, “were reciprocally transformed” (2014, 198).

As Farago explores in “Understanding Visuality,” analyses of visual culture typically rely on Western epistemology that privileges sight, the visual, over all other senses and types of signifying practices, “the primary problem has not been the neglect of other peoples’ visualities… rather, the problem has been the imposition of European understandings of art as primarily visual on world culture” (2012, 243). Farago uses Mesoamerica as an example of how privileging the visual often results in misinterpretations of cultural production:

“The fundamental paradigm… operating in central Mexican thought acknowledges only one principle of being, thus the concept that sight resembles smells, which in turn resembles sounds… Nahuatl metaphors and metonyms go beyond the visual and aural registers to convey a synesthetic paradigm very different from Western conceptions of the discreetly functioning senses” (2012, 249).

This synesthetic experience is evident in the pre-Hispanic cartographic tradition of piedras-mapas, monumental stone maps found in central Mexico. Russo analyzes the “circular realism” of space in these maps: “while looking at the ‘map,’ people would turn around it, thereby reproducing the circular movement that the immobile work suggests they follow” (2014, 201). This circular representation of time and space privileges the experiential, involving all senses, not solely the visual.

The present circulation, scholarship, and interest in the Relaciones collapses linear temporality and locates them in the present, not the past. As McDonough asserts, “the very technology once designed and utilized to know as much as possible about colonial subjects and territories in order to control them is acquiring different meanings and uses in the hands of still-colonial subjects in processes of recovering their knowledges and practices today” (2019, 482). The cyclical nature of the production of knowledge about the maps is a recuperation of Indigenous memory. McDonough
refers to the *Relaciones* as “an unusual repository of written collective land memory” that illustrate “Mesoamerican systems of remembrance” (2019, 474). This term “collective land memory” establishes an intimate connection between land, memory, and identity. McDonough argues that the Indigenous responses to the *Relaciones* “provide insight to the agreed-on history of the people and its inextricable connection to the land” (2019, 472). This personal connection to the land subverts placemaking.

Mundy argues that the *Relaciones* offer Mexico “a chance to repossess and reinterpret its tortured colonial past” (1996, 216). In her conclusion to *Mapping Latin America*, Mundy offers an anecdote about the map of Macuilsuchil (Fig. 5):

“In 1989, I visited the small town of Macuilxochitl, Oaxaca, where the Relación Geográfica map of Macuilsuchil had been painted some four centuries before. I happened to arrive midmorning… and was welcomed into a large, sparsely furnished room in the Ayuntamiento… On the wall in the room was a framed photograph of their *Relación Geográfica* map. These townsmen… easily identified the topography of the map as their own” (1996, 216).

This anecdote demonstrates the relationship between memory, identity, and landscape. By reclaiming the map, this community re-established its personal ties to the land and rejected the colonial assertion of place. By locating their existence in the present, not in the past, they rejected mythical time.

The *Relaciones Geográficas* were not well received in Spain. They were an utter failure for López de Velasco and his atlas never came to fruition, demonstrating that even at the time of their creation they failed in the assertion of national identity and placemaking. As Mundy points out, the *Relaciones* current state of neglect is indicative of how little they were valued. They were not treated as treasured Spanish patrimony nor even well maintained, but left largely untouched, hidden away in archives (1996). Additionally, many of the *Relaciones* no longer reside in Spain. A bulk of them is now in the United States as part of the Benson Latin American Collection at the
University of Texas at Austin. Out of the one hundred and ninety-one responses to the questionnaire, the present location of one hundred and sixty-seven is known. Forty-three of these are in the Benson Latin American Collection. The others remain in Spain, in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville and the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid.

The *Relaciones Geográficas* were commissioned with the explicit purpose of silencing and erasing Indigenous ownership over the territory of New Spain and asserting Renaissance visual language, and yet in their creation, they actually expose and subvert this attempted silencing. New interpretations of the maps are a repossessing of space and demonstrate the recuperative potential of the cyclical nature of knowledge production by exposing this silencing. Power often resides in invisibility, in the acceptance of dominant epistemologies as natural and normal. In the case of maps, they rely on the acceptance of their normalcy in controlling space. As illustrated by contemporary scholarship on the *Relaciones*, it can take centuries before this invisibility of power is exposed and contested. Similarly, it has taken over a century for Silent Sam to be challenged.

C. **Silent Sam: Re-membering through Protest**

Although Silent Sam was removed in August 2018, the controversy surrounding it has not abated. The continued struggle over the Monument reveals its true purpose in upholding a certain spatial, racial, and hierarchical order. This struggle – between the student and community-led resistance and the UNC administration’s response – is a retelling of the history of the Monument. It is a remaking of its meaning and legacy. As Trouillot asserts,

“what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on the process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercises of power that make some narratives possible and silence others” (2015, 24).
The history of Silent Sam is changing, is being revealed through this struggle. Power is being laid bare and silenced narratives are surfacing. Re-membering is active. It involves protest, dissent, defiance.

The University’s response to this dissent is revelatory. It is obvious that UNC is deeply invested in maintaining Silent Sam. This is reflected in the administration’s behavior in the years preceding and following the Monument’s removal, especially in the stark difference in how opponents and proponents of the Monument have been treated. While there have been protests against Silent Sam since the 1960s, the activism increased exponentially in the past few years, beginning around the time Donald Trump was elected president. This is understandable given that “political transformations... serve as triggers or flashpoints for renewed struggles over the legacy of the past” (Walkowitz and Knauer 2004, 4). This activism is also part of the national discourse over Confederate monuments which has grown increasingly urgent since the violence perpetrated by white nationalists in Charlottesville in 2017, while protesting the removal of the Robert E. Lee monument.

In the year before Silent Sam was toppled, UNC spent $390,000 on armed security around the statue. This increased policing led to clashes between police and protestors. In April 2018, Maya Little, a UNC doctoral student, and prominent Silent Sam activist, smeared a mixture of her own blood and ink on the statue. She was arrested, charged with misdemeanor vandalism, and sent before the UNC Honor Court (Bridges, 2018). Little was a key figure in the removal of Silent Sam in August 2018 and was arrested for a second time during additional protests in December 2018 over the UNC Board of Trustee’s proposal for what to do with the deposed Monument. After her initial arrest, protestors put up signs contextualizing Silent Sam and referencing the history of police violence towards protestors. Students then caught police on camera removing these signs,
ripping them up, and throwing them away. As a result of the continued clashes between police and protestors, as well as the increased pilgrimage of white supremacists to defend the Monument, the Town of Chapel Hill requested that the University move Silent Sam from campus as it was becoming an issue of public safety for the University and the town.

On December 3rd, 2018, the Board of Trustees released their proposal titled “Recommendation for the Disposition and Preservation of the Confederate Monument.” The proposal involved building a new $5.3 million “single use” building called the “University and History Education Center,” to house Silent Sam and create space for exhibitions contextualizing the statue and exploring UNC’s history. In addition to the initial $5.3 million, the building would have cost $800,000 annually to operate, most of this going towards security. The Board of Trustees also requested the allocation of an additional $2 million annually for increased policing on campus as a response to the increased activism.

The goal of this proposal was not to ensure the safety of the UNC community but to protect the Confederate monument. This is explicit in the language used in the proposal. Silent Sam is referred to as an “artifact,” conveniently neutralizing the issue of it being a monument to the Confederacy, while still implying value. This upholds the mythical time of Silent Sam by suggesting that as an “artifact,” the Monument exists in the past, removing it from current debates on persisting racial issues. This language furthers the mythologization of Silent Sam and the “lost cause.” It insinuates cultural value and the need for future, archaeological study.

The night the proposal was released, there was an organized protest around Silent Sam’s now boarded up base. While the protest was largely peaceful, UNC police brought riot gear and tear gas to suppress it, reflecting the increased tensions. One of the most powerful responses to the proposal was this statement released by the Black Student Movement:
“The report asserts that ‘it is an attainable goal to place the UNC-Chapel Hill administration and UNC Police in the best possible position to prevent serious violence and maintain order during the complex events that are sure to resume once the Artifacts are restored on campus by undertaking certain actions.’ These words remind us of words used by Martin Luther King Jr. in his indictment of white moderates. In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, King writes: ‘...the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice’ (2018).

On January 15th, 2019, UNC Chancellor, Carol Folt, ordered the removal of Silent Sam’s pedestal and resigned her position. Although she offered to remain through the end of the academic year, the Board of Governors (BOG) voted to have her effectively removed from office by the end of the month. An interim chancellor was selected, and the BOG went back into negotiations to determine the fate of the deposed Monument.

On November 27th, 2019, the day before Thanksgiving, the BOG revealed that in a closed door meeting they agreed to give Silent Sam to the North Carolina Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) along with $2.5 million for its “maintenance, display, and preservation” (Murphy, 2020). There was an outpouring of protest in response to this announcement to give the Monument to a white nationalist organization. The UNC student newspaper, The Daily Tarheel, is currently suing the University and the Board of Governors over the decision, arguing that the BOG violated the state’s Open Meetings Law. The Daily Tarheel also released an extensive exposé revealing the illicit dealings between the BOG and the SCV. These dealings center around a sum of $74,999 that the UNC System paid the SCV. This payment was not revealed until December 2019, a month after the agreement. The Daily Tarheel alleges that the University essentially funded a back-door deal with a white supremacist group and this secrecy is evidence of its culpability.

As I outlined previously, Silent Sam was partially funded by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). The UDC is arguing that they have a legal claim to the Monument because
of the 2015 “objects of remembrance” law. They argue that Silent Sam was a “conditional gift” for the University and since the University failed to return the Monument to its original location within ninety days of its removal, it forfeited ownership and possession of the Monument reverted back to the UDC (McGee 2020). The Daily Tarheel contends that the $74,999 payment to the SCV was actually to facilitate a lawsuit against the University and that the BOG essentially colluded with the SCV to ensure they would gain possession of Silent Sam. The SCV funneled the money to the UDC to obtain ownership of Silent Sam. As owners of the Monument, they then had the legal grounds to sue the University, claiming it violated the “objects of remembrance” law and secure the $2.5 million settlement.

The UNC System claims the $74,999 sum has nothing to do with Silent Sam, but that it is an agreement with the SCV to prevent them from displaying Confederate symbols on UNC property for five years, to ensure public safety. However, the payment is just one dollar below the bar for which the UNC System would need permission from the NC Attorney General. The Daily Tarheel also outlines the tenuous legal claim that the UDC has to Silent Sam. In all likelihood, any lawsuit against the University would have been unsuccessful. Therefore, the $2.5 million settlement was both unnecessary and unexpected. On February 12th, 2020, the judge reversed the decision giving ownership of the Monument to the SCV, ruling they lacked legal standing and had no claim to ownership over the Monument. The SCV has been ordered to return Silent Sam and the $2.5 million settlement to UNC. Currently, the decision about what to do with the Monument remains unresolved.

It is necessary to ask the question: Why is UNC so insistent on maintaining Silent Sam? To the extent that it would essentially machinate an unsubstantiated lawsuit to pay millions of dollars to a white nationalist group. The controversy over the Monument has been highly publicized and
damaging for the University’s reputation. In December 2019, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation withdrew a $1.5 million grant from the University when it learned about the agreement between the BOG and SCV. The Foundation released a statement saying: “Allocating university funding toward protecting a statue that glorifies the Confederacy, slavery, and white supremacy — whether from public or private sources — runs antithetical to who we are and what we believe as a foundation” (Associated Press 2019). Considering that the purpose of the grant was to support “a campus-wide educational reckoning focusing on historical truth telling and confronting the University’s entanglements with slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and the memorialization of the Confederacy,” it is no wonder it was rescinded (Di Liscia 2019).

Holland argues that “the mysterious life force of racist endeavor: in constantly trying to align the world according to a particular ordering, it arrests time rather than attests to its futurity” (2012, 19). Silent Sam upholds a particular ordering that the University is reluctant to relinquish both because it maintains hierarchies of power and historicizes racism: “barricaded safely in the past, the living can even condemn the institution [of slavery] while ignoring… what has fed an ever-mutable caste system to the present” (Savoy 2015, 111). Having a visible symbol containing the ills of the present to the past mitigates the need to act.

What will be remembered about this controversy? The University’s support of Silent Sam is a futile and blatant attempt to uphold a white spatial imaginary. However, much of the power of this spatial imaginary resided in Silent Sam’s invisibility. Its covert manipulation of space. Now that the Monument is national news, it has lost much of its power. In many ways, Silent Sam is more visible now in its absence than it ever was in its place of prominence on McCorkle Place. This is not to say that the violence Silent Sam embodies has diminished. It persists even though the Monument is no longer occupying its physical location on UNC’s campus. As Savoy asserts, “to
inhabit this country is to be marked by residues of its still unfolding history, a history weighted by tangled ideas of ‘race’ and the land itself” (2015, 185). This violence, that has been largely silenced for so long, is not only being highlighted but written into the unfolding history of the University.

I returned to Chapel Hill this summer. My sister and I were enlisted to give our fifteen-year-old cousin a tour of UNC. As we entered McCorkle Place, our eyes immediately searched for Silent Sam. The Monument’s absence is both profound and underwhelming. As our eyes traced the landscape, we couldn’t determine where it had been. No physical traces remained; nothing marked the spot where Silent Sam stood for over one hundred years. Yet it seemed necessary to conjure up the specter. Assured of its physical absence, my sister and I began to explain to our cousin the history of the Monument.

This storytelling, this oral history, is not the only way the controversy over Silent Sam is being incorporated into the history of the University. The dissent over the Monument has sparked further inquiries into the University’s current treatment of students of color. #BlackOutLoudUNC, an initiative organized by UNC doctoral students, Cortland Gilliam and Jerry J. Wilson in partnership with Yet & Still and the Center for the Study of the American South, explores representations of Blackness at UNC and asks “what does it mean to be seen as a guest in the home that your ancestors built?” (2019). On September 25th, 2019, they held a pop-up art exhibition of the responses to this question and are currently accepting submissions for another. Just because Silent Sam has been removed from campus does not mean the conversation about UNC’s complicity in perpetuating a white spatial imaginary has ended. The legacy of Silent Sam and the University is being remade and the erasure Silent Sam upholds laid bare. This re-membering is a rewriting of the history of the Monument. A continual retelling of its meaning.
D. **Conclusion**

While the scholarship on the *Relaciones* challenges placemaking, the activism against Silent Sam is an assertion of Chatterjee’s “heterogeneous time” (2005). Both demonstrate a rupture with mythical time and an attempt to create cultural futures through the retracing of the past and the reclamation of physical space in the present. As Trouillot argues, history is revealed through the process, the construction of narratives (2015). Re-memory is a process of excavation. Unearthing the context of the construction of these sites reveals the silences inherent in their creation. The present day meaning of these sites changes their meaning in the past, which in turn changes their future meaning.
VI. CONCLUSION

Sites of memory are palimpsests, “[places] made over but trying to trace back” (Savoy 2015, 86). Re-memory is this process of tracing back. Because these sites are so layered, the result of years of mythmaking, nation building, pillaging of land, of people, of knowledge, erasure, and revision, any understanding of their significance requires extensive tracing. Savoy’s use of “trace” refers to both this piecing together of the past, and the remnants that remain; the physical vestiges of the past, the ghosts that linger, the imprints that cannot be expunged, the palpable silences. While these traces, these silences, are suggestions of what might have been, they are also actors, aiding in their own discovery. Silences have agency. They are unwilling to lay buried, to remain in the past. Savoy locates herself as a palimpsest. Her existence, her body, her heritage, as an African American, Euro-American, Native-American woman, is a physical, irrefutable trace of the past and all its complexities.

If we circle back to Nora’s definition, sites of memory are created “by dint of human will” (1996). While I believe Nora refers to the physical, intellectual, or artistic labor involved in the construction of a physical site, I refer to the labor of silencing enacted at these sites by those in power. Silencing happens actively, “by dint of human will.” The violence of this silencing manifests in these sites. However, silence is also tangible. People, the living traces of this silencing, resist their suppression, exposing both the traumas of the past and the force used to maintain hierarchies and power in the present.

In this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate that the creation of the place of the Americas is a history of silencing. The Americas are an aggregate of these silences. What I refer to as “sites of historical memory” uphold silencing by asserting a false homogeneity of experience of space and time based in mythical origin stories, mythical time. Memory is distorted to endorse these sites as
receptacles of history and create a linear progression of events, a progress narrative. But sites do not have intrinsic meaning. People instill them with meaning. The work of re-memory reveals this silencing, this distortion of memory.

It is not possible to recover the trace, to repair the past. As I illustrate through *Unsung Founders* and *Rumors of War*, any attempt to demonstrate that the brutality of past events has been reconciled is ultimately self-serving. But it is possible to reveal the trace, to reveal silence. Re-memory is this excavation of what was buried. Re-memory is not just a process of retelling, but of exposing power. It uncovers latent coloniality.

The creation of the *Relaciones* was an attempted epistemicide of Indigenous knowledge, an attempt for Spain to legitimize its sovereignty in the Americas through the construction of ideas of race and nation, the repercussions of which persist today. These repercussions are evident in the racialized space of Silent Sam and the attempts by the University to maintain the power it is afforded by this spatial order. The Board of Governors is clinging to the “objects of remembrance” law, an edict created by an overwhelmingly white legislature, to profess the soundness, I would even argue, morality, of its behavior. However, the legislation used to validate Silent Sam, and the people writing, imposing, and upholding this legislation, are a direct result of the coloniality of power, the origins of which are visible in the *Relaciones*. The global, “empty time of capital” that *Rumors of War* exists in is just an extension of this coloniality. A continuance of the control of labor based on capital that defines modernity and the colonial global system (Quijano, 2000).

Especially in our current moment, it is important to recognize and critically examine sites that are nationalist symbols because many of the strategies employed during conquest and colonization to “make” place are still employed today to assert national identity. White supremacy is evidence of this coloniality of power. In “Empty the Museum, Decolonize the Curriculum, Open Theory,”
Nicholas Mirzoeff argues that “whiteness demarcates the boundaries of the space of appearance and makes it a space of representation” (2017, 12). He argues that in the United States, white supremacy masquerades as European heritage and is the premise of the condition of authoritarian nationalism Trump proposes. Mirzoeff argues that this is not based on ideology but on aesthetics and desire. This is evident in the sites I have discussed.

As demonstrated by the *Relaciones* and Silent Sam, it is the people that exist in the present, as products of the past, that not only instigate re-membering, but serve as constant reminders, as traces of what was, of what has been silenced. Using Taylor’s term “embodied memory,” when people inhabit the space of the sites discussed in this thesis, they are embodying memory (2003). While I do not necessarily agree that embodied memory is a performative act, I use Taylor’s term to illustrate the function of the trace. The reclamation of the *Relaciones* map of Macuiltsuchil by the people who are still intimately connected to the land represented illustrates the agency of the trace. The sustained activism against Silent Sam and the decisions of the UNC Board of Governors by students and the Chapel Hill community refute the relegation of racism to the past by asserting its unequivocal existence in the present. Memory is embodied through the trace. This embodiment is the most effective challenge to the distortion of memory these sites maintain.

Sites of memory are liminal spaces where we constantly revisit and revise our relationship with and understanding of the past. Perpetual reimagining happens at these sites. They are spaces of transition, “in and out of time” (Turner 1967, 94). Although these sites uphold mythical time, their meaning is not stagnant. “Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in the same sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (Turner 1967, 97). These sites simultaneously uphold and subvert “structural assertions” of space and time. It depends on
the person who interacts with the site – whether or not they enter into this liminal process, the “realm of pure possibility where novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.” Although the physical markers of sites of memory may exist outside of time and uphold oppressive narratives about history, the meaning of these sites is constantly in flux. They are transitional, mutable spaces. Re-memory is this process of transition, the rite of passage.
Appendix

Fig. 1: John Wilson, *Confederate Monument (Silent Sam)*, 1913, bronze, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, Image Credit: Jonathan Drake/Reuters.

Fig. 2: Toppled Confederate Monument, Silent Sam, August 21, 2019, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC, Image Credit: Gerry Broome/AP.
Fig. 3: *Relación Geográfica Map of Atitlán, Santiago, Guatemala*, 1585, 61.5x81 cm., Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Image Credit: Benson Latin American Collection.

Fig. 4: *Relación Geográfica Map of Guaxtepex, Tepuztlán, Mexico*, 1580, 62x85 cm., Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Image Credit: Benson Latin American Collection.
Fig. 5: Relación Geográfica Map of Macuilxóchitl, Tlacochahuaya, Mexico, 1580, 61.5x85 cm., Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, Spain, Image Credit: Barbara Mundy/The Mapping of New Spain: Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas.
Fig. 6: Do-Ho Suh, *Unsung Founders, Bond and Free*, dedicated 2005, black granite and bronze, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, Image Credit: Don McCullough flickr CC.

Fig. 7: Kehinde Wiley, *Rumors of War*, 2019, bronze, Times Square, New York City, NY, Image Credit: Times Square Arts.
Fig. 8: Confederate Monument toppled outside Durham County Courthouse, August 14, 2017, Durham, NC, Image Credit: Casey Toth/News & Observer.

Fig. 9: Detail of Confederate Monument (Silent Sam), Plaque, Image Credit: DocSouth/UNC.
Fig. 10: Detail of *Confederate Monument (Silent Sam)*, Left Inscription, Image Credit: DocSouth/UNC.

Fig. 11: Detail of *Confederate Monument (Silent Sam)*, Right Inscription, Image Credit: DocSouth/UNC.

Fig. 12: Detail of *Unsung Founders, Bond and Free*, Male and Female Figures, Image Credit: Keith Weston.
Fig. 13: Detail of *Unsung Founders, Bond and Free*, Male and Female Figures, Image Credit: Mark Schultz/News & Observer.

Fig. 14: *Unsung Founders* after Silent Sam’s removal, 2020, Image Credit: Nina Versenyi
Fig. 15: Rumors of War being installed outside of Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, December 10, 2019, Richmond, VA, Image Credit: Scott Elmquist/Richmond Style Weekly.

Fig. 16: Frederick Moynihan, General James Ewell Brown Stuart Monument, 1907, bronze, Richmond, VA, Image Credit: Hal Jespersen/Wikimedia.
Fig. 17: Detail of *Rumors of War*, Image Credit: Rachel Papo/The New York Times.

Fig. 18: Kehinde Wiley, *The Officer of the Hussars*, 2007, oil on canvas, 304.8 × 304.8 cm., Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Image Credit: Detroit Institute of Arts.
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