

**THE EQUESTRIAN CONFEDERATE MONUMENT:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION
OF THE LOST CAUSE AND WHITE SUPREMACY
A THESIS**

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By Kailey Smith-Barth

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**THE EQUESTRIAN CONFEDERATE MONUMENT:
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Abstract

The following thesis examines the equestrian Confederate monument and explores how the visual representation of the Lost Cause has impacted social constructs and ideology. Symbols of colonization and imperialism, such as the image of conqueror and horse, have endured throughout history and are now aligned with white supremacist ideologies as expressed by Confederate Monuments. The analysis will also consider how the symbolism of the equestrian Confederate monument has been challenged and rewritten by Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War*. The analysis will focus on select examples of these monuments, both historical and re-represented, to determine their visual and cultural connotations. Two of the examples, now removed from their original locations in Richmond, Virginia, are the General Robert E. Lee Monument (Figure 1) by Antonin Mercié from 1890, and the General J.E.B Stuart monument (Figure 2) by Frederick Moynihan from 1907; and lastly, *Rumors of War* (Figure 3), by Kehinde Wiley from 2019. The Confederate monuments of Lee and Stuart, and *Rumors of War* will be examined through theories relating to representation and are as follows: Critical Race Theory, using theorists Franz Fanon and W.E.B Du Bois, and Erwin Panofsky's interpretation and use of iconography.

Keywords: Equestrian Confederate monuments, Iconography, Critical Race Studies, The Lost Cause, General Robert E. Lee monument, General J.E.B Stuart monument, Kehinde Wiley

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Acknowledgements

Traditionally, the acknowledgement section is dedicated to recognizing those who assisted the author in their research and writing, but I would like to deviate from that tradition. I would like to instead acknowledge that the land on which I reside and have created this thesis on, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is stolen land. The People of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodawademi people are the rightful inhabitants and guardians of this land. I would like to acknowledge the pain and suffering caused by colonizers, my ancestors, and specifically recognize the impact it has had on the People of the Three Fires.

Education, in the context of colonization has signaled the conscious erasure of first peoples' traditions, histories, languages, and identity. The children of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodawademi people were stolen from their families and forced into residential boarding schools. There were three federally funded boarding schools in Michigan because of the Indian Civilization Act of 1819, and it was not until 1983 that the last school in the state was closed. The sheer terror, pain, cultural genocide, and generational trauma these schools have caused is horrifying. It is my hope that my analysis acknowledges the impact of white supremacy and colonization in such a way that recognizes and honors the experience of Indigenous people in the United States of America. While nothing can undo the history of the U.S. it is our responsibility as scholars to uncover the past, understand how it has created our present, and work to shape a more inclusive and equitable future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

The United States of America is currently experiencing a renewed awareness concerning systemic racism, and a notable shift is happening towards combating and addressing racist history. As a result, Confederate monuments have become a focal point in the effort to challenge systemic racism in American visual representation. Many cities and their local governments have opted to remove their monuments and address their participation in furthering the legacy of the Confederacy. In some cases, though, the monuments have been torn down by protestors supporting the Black Lives Matter Movement.¹ The intent of the following analysis is to investigate the visual symbolism of equestrian Confederate monuments and determine both how they came to be and what their representation means for Americans.

When compared to other established world governments, the United States of America is a new country. Theoretically, the founding of the U.S. was constructed on principles of equality, justice, and self-governance. However, the United States of America, though young, presents a long history of inequality, injustice, and lack of representation in government. One component of the apparent inequity is the presence of systemic racism in American culture, politics, and everyday life. Racism, an ever-present force in American culture, is the result of years upon years of propaganda and power dynamics. Confederate monuments function as a part of said

¹ Black Lives Matter. "About." Black Lives Matter. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.
"#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives."

propaganda, and at their core are the visual representation of white supremacy and the Lost Cause. The Lost Cause, both a literary and visual philosophy, is centered around a white supremacist narrative that denies the culpability of the South and their actions before, during and after the American Civil War (1861-1865). While these monuments are actively being taken down, there are still occurrences of public outrage and confusion over why they are being removed. It is the duty of Americans, no matter their race, to question why these symbols and monuments to a rebellious uprising are venerated in the South to this day.

Traditionally, public monuments and art are meant to commemorate an idea, an action, a person, or an event. In the United States there are thousands of monuments that are in memory of and for the Confederate States of America.² These monuments celebrate the side that lost in the American Civil War (1861-1865), and further the legacy of those who fought for the continued enslavement of Black people in the United States.³ These monuments support a skewed perspective of American history and embrace the ideology of the Lost Cause. Confederate monuments are the visual embodiment of white supremacy and the Lost Cause; and if the United States wishes to address systemic racism, then the existence of these monuments in American culture and history needs to be studied and questioned.

The three main artifacts that are examined in the ensuing chapters are the monuments to General Robert E. Lee (Figure 1) and to General J.E.B Stuart (Figure 2), both from Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA. The third artifact is Kehinde Wiley's modern re-interpretation of the equestrian Confederate monument in his seminal sculpture *Rumors of War* (Figure 3). To narrow the scope of investigation, only one style of monument, the equestrian monument, is studied. The

² John J. Winberry, "'Lest We Forget': The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape," *Southeastern Geographer* 55, No. 1 (2015) (republishing of the 1983 article): 20.

³ Black will be capitalized in this analysis as it better denotes a race, and not a color. White will not be capitalized, though, as it lends more to the ideology of white supremacy.

two monuments of Lee and Stuart, both now removed from their pedestals, function as examples of the equestrian Confederate monuments in a public space. The following identifies how certain visual symbols have contributed to the understanding of Confederate monuments. Then, through the application of different theoretical frameworks, the meanings of the monuments will be made evident.

Literature Review

While there is renewed sense of racial justice in the United States at this time, Confederate monuments have been the topic of scholarly inquiries for years. Although the resources available on the subject are numerous, there is an apparent absence of visual analysis. Many sources, such as the ones utilized in the subsequent chapters, will conclude that they are the symbolism of the Lost Cause but then fail to observe how the visual symbols of the monuments accomplish this. Therefore, through the synthesis of history, art history, cultural analysis, and examinations of power and race structures, the true visual connotations of equestrian Confederate monuments are determined and deconstructed.

There are four foundational sources utilized in the ensuing analysis of equestrian Confederate monuments. The first, Karen L. Cox's *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* from 2019, is a historical and cultural analysis. The second, Adam H. Domby's *The False Cause; Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* from 2020, focuses on social, visual, and cultural structures found in and around the Lost Cause. Then, the third, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent* by Isabell Wilkerson from 2020, is a critical examination of race, power, and caste in the United States. Finally, the last instrumental source, John J. Winberry's "'Lest We Forget':

The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape” from 1983, is a comprehensive data driven and analytical study of Confederate monuments. All four sources-create a framework of historical and social understanding around Confederate monuments.

In *Dixie’s Daughters*, Karen L. Cox discusses the Southern perspective after the Civil War, especially as it relates to white women, power, and the perpetuation of white supremacist ideology.⁴ Cox illustrates how Confederate women were central to the creation and spread of the myth of the Lost Cause, both through educational tactics and public memorial. Central to these Southern white women’s strategies were a restructuring of historical facts and a heightened perception of Southern patriotism and heroism. According to Cox, the purposeful juxtaposition of nationalism and the Confederacy served to supplant the collective memory of the American Civil War, and instead replace it with a history that defends the Confederate legacy.⁵

While Cox narrows down the scope of her analysis to a gender-based study of the Confederacy, Domby’s *The False Cause; Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* takes a broader approach that encompasses more views, including modern perceptions and reflections of how Confederate memory and rhetoric influence people in the United States today.⁶ Domby, as well, concentrates on Confederate Monuments and how they were used as both tools of persuasion and enculturation. Though, in agreement with Cox’s hypothesis, Domby asserts that the perception of the Confederacy and its legacy is strongly rooted in a constructed and skewed history.⁷

⁴ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019).

⁵ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 63-84.

⁶ Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020).

⁷ Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause*, 13-45.

Domby is more concerned with the structure of white supremacist rhetoric and its impact on the behaviors and beliefs of white people, and as a result leaves the perspective Black Americans unaddressed. Consequently, the insight found in Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origin of our Discontents* will assist in revealing the complexities of race and power in the United States. Wilkerson's main assertion is that the United States of America socially and culturally functions within a racial caste system. This system, as viewed by Wilkerson, is a mirror of the caste system that was once predominant in India.⁸ She contrasts the position of Black Americans with that of the lower caste of India and investigates how a system like this is kept in place in the United States. *Caste* provides an example of racial power structures through the viewpoint and experience of a Black American.

Unlike the three previous sources, John J. Winberry's "'Lest We Forget': The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape" from 1983, is an older source. Though it is not as timely as the others, "Lest We Forget" is a fundamental study to include as it offers precise quantitative data on the monuments. Winberry's examination categorizes Confederate Monuments, and provides data relating to their numbers, designs, and locations.⁹ Like Cox and Domby, Winberry also places an emphasis on the Daughters of the Confederacy and how the Lost Cause helped shape the perception and knowledge of the American Civil War.

In the analyses presented by Karen L. Cox, Adam H. Domby, Isabel Wilkerson, and John J. Winberry, the socio-cultural ideology and history around white supremacy, The Lost Cause and Confederate monuments is the focus. While the emphasis on these factors is important, it is only the first step in unpacking the meanings behind Confederate monuments. Therefore, the

⁸ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020), 15-20.

⁹ John J. Winberry, "'Lest We Forget': The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape," *Southeastern Geographer* 55, No. 1 (2015) (republishing of the 1983 article): 19 – 31.

next step is to inspect the monuments through critical lenses and visual theories that assist in dissecting how they are visual symbols of the Lost Cause.

Methodology

The two main theorists used in the following analysis of Confederate monuments are W.E.B. Du Bois and Erwin Panofsky. Du Bois presents a historical synthesis of the Black experience in the United States before, during and after the American Civil War; doing so through a lens that considers the complex interplay of race and class.¹⁰ Du Bois' historical examination of race in the United States will assist with unpacking the many different historical factors that went into the creation of Confederate monument. Panofsky, on the other hand, provides an interpretation of iconography that assists in the structuring and identification of cultural symbols. Panofsky's view of iconography provides an avenue of examination that assists in dissecting the inherent meanings of Confederate monuments.¹¹ Both theorists will inform the later conclusions regarding the counternarratives found in Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War*.

While Du Bois and Panofsky help to analyze the visual representations of the monuments, the application of Michel Foucault's theory concerning power and knowledge is central to considering the larger social context of the monuments.¹² Foucault's observations and conclusions on social structures provides the necessary information to explore how the meaning of the monuments enforce the interplay of power and knowledge. In short, determining how

¹⁰ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

¹¹ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, "Iconography – Iconology: Erwin Panofsky," In *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods*, 96 – 119. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House US, 1995).

Confederate monuments are a part of a social structure enacted by the Lost Cause; a sociopolitical ideology that challenges historical memory and race relations in the South. Consequently, Foucault's theory of power and knowledge will be essential to understanding the tactics of the Lost Cause and how the ideology has integrated itself into American culture, politics, racial caste, visual representation, and education.

Chapter overviews

There are five chapters total in the following examination, and each chapter is divided into multiple sub-sections. The introductory chapter, or the first chapter exists as self-evident. The second chapter, or history chapter, is concerned with the historical ideology and events leading up to the creation of Confederate monuments. The third chapter is the visual analysis of the General Robert E. Lee monument (Figure 1) and the General J.E.B. Stuart monument (Figure 2). The fourth chapter is dedicated to the modern reinterpretation of Confederate monuments as exemplified in Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War*. The fifth and final chapter is the conclusion to this analysis, and it will consider current events relating to Confederate monuments and their subsequent removals.

The sub-categories within the second chapter are the socio-political history behind white supremacy, the Lost Cause, the sociopolitical history behind the American Civil War, Manifest Destiny, The American Civil War, Post-war rhetoric and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and finally the advent of Confederate monuments. The intent of chapter two is to explore how the social constructs and movements prior to the American Civil War shaped the ideology behind the visual representation of Confederate monuments. In total, the second chapter

assists in laying a historical foundation from which the deeper theoretical analysis of visual representation of Confederate monuments builds upon.

The third chapter concentrates on the visual analysis of the General Robert E. Lee monument (Figure 1) and the General J.E.B Stuart monument (Figure 2) from Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA. The sub-sections of the third chapter are Iconography, General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee, Major General James Ewell Brown Stuart, the visual analysis of the Lee and Stuart monuments, and the analysis of space. It is within chapter three that the theoretical interpretation of the monuments is prioritized, and where the symbols are examined. The third chapter applies both Panofsky's interpretation of iconography and Foucault's concept of power and knowledge. Both theorists help to examine the impact of Confederate monuments and how their visual representation has shaped the historical perspective of the American Civil War.

The fourth chapter considers the modern reinterpretation and counternarrative present in Kehinde Wiley's sculpture, *Rumors of War* (Figure 3). The two sub-sections of chapter three are the biography of Kehinde Wiley and followed by the visual analysis of *Rumors of War*. The fourth chapter is concerned with how contemporary interpretations of Confederate monuments challenge how Americans have viewed or continue to view Confederate monuments now. The counternarrative that Wiley presents assists the viewer in thinking of the monuments in an intersectional and dynamic way, rejecting the inherent white supremacy found in the General J.E.B. Stuart and General Robert E. Lee monuments.

The fifth chapter concludes this analysis. The conclusion will reiterate the findings of the previous chapters and address current events in relation to Confederate monuments. The final chapter will also help explain how the perpetuation of the Lost Cause through Confederate monuments is still impacting American society and culture today.

Conclusion

As Confederate monuments are being torn down and removed across the country, it is essential for Americans to unpack what these monuments once embodied and why there is a call for their removal. Furthermore, while there is an abundant amount of literature on the Lost Cause and Confederate monuments, there is an evident lack of visual analysis that investigates how their symbols and meanings reinforce white supremacy. As a result, the following thesis utilizes critical and visual theory to define how equestrian Confederate monuments function as visual representations of white supremacy and the Lost Cause; while also determining how *Rumors of War* draws inspiration from a Confederate monument to challenge symbols of white supremacy, imperialism, and systemic racism.

Chapter 2: History

The American Civil War (1861-1865) was a critical turning point in American history that shaped the direction of American principles and sociocultural ideology. The United States of America's social and political trajectory was greatly impacted by the polarizing conflict between the Union, the North, and the Confederate States of America, the South. The following will build a historical foundation that later informs the visual analysis of the General Robert E. Lee and the General J.E.B. Stuart monuments. Distinct consideration will be given to specific social topics and movements, such as the Lost Cause, manifest destiny, post and pre-war rhetoric, and religious indoctrination, all with the intent of exploring the visual propaganda of specific Confederate monuments.

White Supremacy

To understand the visual implications of Confederate monuments, it first must be explained and established that the core of their existence is built upon the foundation of white supremacy and systemic racism. Both white supremacy and systemic racism are the result of colonization and the perceived religious superiority of the Christian faith. It can therefore be observed that the colonization of the Americas, the subsequent genocide of Indigenous people, and the enslavement of Black people ensured the longevity of white supremacy.

The emergence of whiteness as being tell-tale of one's place in society was a religious invention credited to the marrying of Christianity and colonization. In his book, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity*, James Perkinson dissects how skin color, religion and

colonization come together to create a racially charged religious qualification of non-white people.¹³ Perkinson states,

In the New World ventures, the European struggle to classify those it ruthlessly conquered and relentlessly colonized was underwritten by these unresolved spiritual anxieties and political contradictions on the home front. The process was heavily weighted with metaphysical concerns and had grave existential consequences. Projections about the capacity of the other 'to be saved' became a crucial qualifier in what quickly emerged as a kind of conundrum of the colonizer, a dilemma of the duty to evangelize and civilize. On the one hand, if comprehended as 'save-able,' then the 'wild savages' of these new lands were *de facto* equal to the colonizers as potential spiritual subjects of the Christian message and political subjects of the king. But if potentially equal in the economy of salvation, then how could such souls legitimately be exploited as slave labor, or destroyed as heathen?¹⁴

What Perkinson suggest then is that the colonizers had to find a way of separating themselves from those they oppressed to justify genocide and enslavement.

Ultimately, the separation between the races was founded on both a religious basis and a visual juxtaposition. Roger Bastide, in "Color, Racism, and Christianity," argues that the symbolism of color played a large role in determining the value of a human life in the social constructs of colonization. Bastide states, "When Christians tried to justify slavery, they claimed black skin was a punishment from God. They invoked the curses cast upon Cain, the murderer of his brother, and upon Ham, son of Noah, who had found his drunken father naked in his tent. Against the background of this symbolism, they invented causes for the malady, intended to justify in their own eyes a process of production based upon the exploitation of Negro labor."¹⁵ Bastide goes on to further explain that both Protestants and Catholics adopted this twisted association of good and evil with light and dark skin. Because of this symbolism, Christians were

¹³ Non-white is the term used by James Perkinson, but it should be noted that 'non-white' is a term that 'Others' people of color.

¹⁴ James Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2004), 58.

¹⁵ Roger Bastide, "Color, Racism, and Christianity," *Daedalus* 96, no. 2, (Spring 1967): 314.

able to justify their crimes against colonized peoples. Thus, colonizers simply labeled anyone who was not white as inherently sinful because of their skin color.

In a more recent analysis from 2020, Isabelle Wilkerson in *Caste: Origins of our Discontents*, examines the social structure of a caste system as it relates to race in the United States. Wilkerson argues that the United States presents an example of a subconscious racial hierarchy that is four hundred years old.¹⁶ Wilkerson states that,

A caste system is an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of another groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but are ascribed life and death meaning in a hierarchy favoring the dominant caste whose forebears designed it. A caste system uses rigid, often arbitrary boundaries to keep the ranking groupings apart, distinct from one another and in their assigned places.”¹⁷

Wilkerson suggests that the impact of white supremacy helped determine the longevity of a caste system that regulated the value of a human being in the United States.

In agreeance with both Bastide and Perkinson, Isabelle Wilkerson also highlights how skin color, religion, and colonization helped shape white supremacy in the United States.

Wilkerson explores the colonizers’ white supremacist tactic in the following,

To justify their plans, they took pre-existing notions of their own centrality, reinforced by their self-interested interpretation of the Bible, and created a hierarchy of who could do what, who could own what, who was on top and who was on the bottom and who was in between. There emerged a ladder of humanity global in nature, as the upper rung people would descend from Europe with rungs inside that designation, the English Protestants at the very top as their guns and resources would ultimately prevail in the bloody fight over North America. Anyone else would rank in the descending order based on their proximity to those deemed most superior. The ranking would continue downward until one arrived at the very bottom - African captives transported to build a new world and to serve the victors for all of their days, one generation after the next, for twelve generations.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020), 17.

¹⁷ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, 17.

¹⁸ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, 23.

Thus, according to Wilkerson, the United States has presented and still does, a racial caste system that designates the value of one's life based on skin color.

The juxtaposition of skin color with moral goodness and intrinsic value will be further explored in the section dedicated to Western expansionism and manifest destiny, but for now it helps to explain that the rise of white supremacy was in large a Christian concept meant to rationalize the crimes of colonizers against Black, Indigenous and peoples of color. White supremacy is the basis and foundation for the following concepts, social movements, and historical events: The Lost Cause, Manifest Destiny, genocide of Indigenous people in the Americas, enslavement of Black people, the American Civil War, the failure of Reconstruction, the erection of Confederate monuments, and the continuing fight for racial equality in the United States.

The Lost Cause

The Lost Cause is a sociocultural and political ideology that permeates American culture and historical memory in such a way that rewrites the perceived events and reasoning behind the American Civil War, and the actions and philosophy behind the Confederacy. Beginning shortly after the end of the American Civil War, the Lost Cause was adopted by white supremacists and most white Southerners as a self-preservation tactic to deter negative associations with the Confederacy. While the Lost Cause was never founded as its own organization, its rhetoric and ideology were adopted by many groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Daughters of the Confederacy, Confederate Memorial Literary Society, Children of the

Confederacy, Ladies' Memorial Society, Sons of Confederate Veterans, and United Confederate Veterans.¹⁹

According to Adam H. Domby in the *False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory*, the main three tenets of the Lost Cause are as follows: "the Confederacy's cause was noble and just, and the war was fundamentally about states' rights, not slavery." The second tenet is that "slavery was benevolent and slaves' content in their station, so much so that the Civil War and Reconstruction upset a natural hierarchy." And then Domby's definition of the final tenet stressed that "Confederates were among the greatest soldiers in history, and they were only defeated due to the Union's superior manpower and resources."²⁰ In short, Domby's summary of the Lost Cause's beliefs places the Confederacy into a blameless framework. A framework that created a moral separation for Confederate Southerners from their status as enslavers, or descendants of enslavers, and instead upholds that the actions of the Confederacy were ethically right.

The Lost Cause served to reimagine the past and the Antebellum period (1820-1860), as a romanticized era where there was unity among the races. In turn, the soldiers of the Confederacy, according to the mythology of the cause, were "heroic defenders of American principles."²¹ However, the rhetoric of the Lost Cause fails to acknowledge that the Confederacy was anything but a unified front and instead insists that those conscripted were willing participants in the conflict. Domby suggests that the purposeful erasure of southern dissenters, unionists, draft dodgers, and ambivalent southerners elevated the efforts and deeds of the Confederacy during the war, and then after creates a redemption arc for the movement. The historical narrative

¹⁹ Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (University of Virginia Press, 2020), 5.

²⁰ Domby, *The False Cause*, 5.

²¹ Domby, *The False Cause*, 5.

promoted by the Lost Cause thus creates a positive spin on the truth, suggesting that the South was entirely unified during the war, and before the conflict, the South existed in peaceful bliss, where southern gentility was morally justified in their enslavement of Black people.

American sociologist, historian, and civil rights activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, known as W.E.B. Du Bois, presented in 1935 an in-depth analysis of the Black experience, and Black participation in government before and during Reconstruction in his pioneering, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860 – 1880*. Du Bois' analysis still stands as one of the most comprehensive examinations of that period from the often-ignored Black perspective.²² When considering the history and portrayal of the Confederacy, Du Bois stated, "Our histories tend to discuss American slavery so impartially, that in the end nobody seems to have done wrong and everybody was right. Slavery appears to have been thrust upon unwilling helpless America, while the South was blameless in becoming its center. The difference of development, North and South, is explained as a sort of working out of cosmic social and economic law."²³ Du Bois argues that the history of slavery can be so impartial that placing blame or holding those accountable for enacting and participating is underemphasized in American historical texts. The impartiality evident in American historical rhetoric is the result of the influence of the Lost Cause.

Like most Lost Cause touting organizations, the United Daughters of the Confederacy championed the erasure of accountability on behalf of the Confederacy. The United Daughters of the Confederacy built a legacy in the South through their charitable efforts and social programming. The work of the Daughters brought about thousands of Confederate monuments,

²² William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Free Press, 1998), xvii.

²³ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 714.

and shaped historical literature to such a degree that the fault of the South is overridden by the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. The Daughters believed that rectifying the ‘false’ history that the North promoted would help to bring about a ‘truer’ history that vindicated Confederate soldiers and Southern men.²⁴ The organization deemed any negative perspective of the South and the Confederacy to be interpretive inaccuracies. The Daughters goal was to correct those inaccuracies and create a narrative that favored the efforts of the Lost Cause and the Confederacy. Ultimately, the United Daughters of the Confederacy were a driving force behind finding and raising the funds for monuments, as well as restructuring the nation’s public-school curriculum to raise the ensuing generations to believe the propaganda of the Lost Cause.²⁵

While the Lost Cause reimagines the history of the South, it was also a socio-political tactic to turn white southerners against the efforts of Reconstruction and post-war rebuilding of race-relations. The Lost Cause fueled the contempt towards Northern interference and involvement in reordering the South’s government system and placed blame on the newly freed Black population for any issues that arose. In the years to come, especially after the failure of Reconstruction and the implementation of the abhorrent Jim Crow Laws, Black Americans were forced to endure endless persecution and violence because of white supremacy and the legacy of the rhetoric of the Lost Cause.²⁶ The Lost Cause and its impact on the United States is still being fought against today, and the removal of Confederate monuments is only the beginning of the

²⁴ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, 103.

²⁵ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 103.

²⁶ David Pilgrim, “What Was Jim Crow,” Ferris State University: Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, September 2000. Jim Crow Laws were a series of rigid anti-Black laws that created a racial caste system which operated primarily, but not exclusively in southern and border states, between 1877 and the mid-1960s. The caste system of the Jim Crow laws worked to segregate Black Americans from White Americans, further oppressing an already oppressed populace.

effort to unwind a history tarnished by lies and violence against Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the United States.

In the one hundred and fifty years since the American Civil War and the defeat of the Confederacy, the tenets of the Lost Cause have been found in many different white supremacist movements, as well as within the American education system, literature, public art, politics, and even lawmaking. While the Lost Cause can be identified within literary artifacts, the following will trace how the ideology can be observed within visual markers and symbols as well. The ensuing chapters will analyze how select examples of Confederate monuments can be seen as a public testament to white supremacy and the accompanying visual representation of the Lost Cause.

Sociopolitical History behind the American Civil War

Prior to the start of the American Civil War there was an imbalance between North and South regarding economy, industrialization, and modernization. The imbalance and evident economic difference were the result of the distribution of labor. The North relied heavily on cheap immigrant labor in their factories and agricultural sectors, and the South relied on the free labor of enslaved Black people. While in both instances there was a white upper-class that maintained power through their capital, the South's upper-class relied on the agricultural plantation model. The South's agricultural plantation model was an economic structure that systemically held its participants, willing or unwilling, in the same financial bracket for generations. The Southern model was failing though, and western expansionism seemed to be the answer to the enslaver. The following section helps discern the sociopolitical perspectives

leading up to the American Civil War and why those perspectives impact the analysis of Confederate monuments.

The wealth that is envisioned when one considers the South pre-civil war is the elite wealth of the plantation owners, whose grandeur often overshadowed the atrocities and cruel realities of the enslaving class.²⁷ According to Du Bois, “from an economic point of view, this planter class had interest in the consumption rather than production. They exploited labor in order that they themselves should live more grandly and not mainly for increasing production. Their taste went to elaborate households, well-furnished and hospitable; They had enough to eat and drink; They consume large quantities of liquor; They gambled in caroused it kept up the habit of dwelling well into the 19th century.”²⁸ The luxury that the Southern plantation owner existed in was unrealistic compared to their actual profits.

Unlike Northern cities and states, the South did not view industrialization and modernization favorably. Enslavers saw technological progress as a threat to their control over the economic industry of the South. Du Bois contended that Southerners argued against modernization because of the demand to yield to a more humane view of labor. He stated,

The South had but one argument against following modern civilization and this yielding to the demand of laboring humanity: it insisted on the efficiency of Negro labor for ordinary toil and on its essential equality and physical condition this is average labor of Europe and America. But in order to maintain its income without sacrifice or exertion of the South fell back when a doctrine of racial differences which it asserted made higher intelligence and increased efficiency possible for Negro labor. Pushing such an excuse for lazy indulgence, the planter easily found, invented and proved it. His subservient religious leaders reverted to the “curse of Canaan”; his pseudoscientists gathered and supplemented all available doctrines of race inferiority; his scattered schools and pedantic periodicals repeated those legends, until for the average planter born after 1840 it was impossible not to believe that all valid laws in psychology, economics and politics stopped with the Negro race.²⁹

²⁷ David R. Goldfield, *The American Journey: A History of the United States* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 217.

²⁸ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 35.

²⁹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 39.

Thus, the South, unwilling to move with the modernization of the rest of the world, had to find a way to sustain its slavery system and increase its economic growth. Du Bois asserts that there were four reasons that slavery needed to expand for it to survive. Those categories are, “racial control, political power, economic viability, and honor.”³⁰ Racial control, in Du Bois’ perspective, was necessary to prevent any sort of internal rebellion. The population of enslaved individuals was steadily increasing prior to the American Civil War, and geographic closeness of enslaved individuals lent to the possibility of them organizing an insurrection. Secondly, if Southerners wanted to continue to hold any political power, they needed to expand the number of slave states. The number of states declared as slave states directly corresponded to votes in the Senate and the Electoral College. Those votes were vital to prevent any movement against slavery. The next reason, economic viability, was correlative to the fact that slavery encompassed a large portion of Southern wealth. Cotton had begun to exhaust the soil, and by 1860, southern soil had begun to reach its limit. With the South’s largest export slowly eating away at the agricultural viability of the soil, enslavers had to look to a new way of using their assets to earn wealth. The final reason, honor, claimed that “Prohibiting the expansion of slavery implied that the South’s citizens and its culture were inferior to Northerners’ way of life.”³¹ This notion indicates that the very identity of the white enslaver was at risk if slavery were to fail.

The expansion of slavery would become a national topic shortly after the Mexican American War (1846-48), where the U.S. fought against and annexed more than half of Mexico and made the territory into what are now the states of Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada,

³⁰ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 35.

³¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 35-36.

Arizona, California, and part of Colorado.³² Two important events happened leading up to the Mexican American War and the debate over the expansion of slavery into the new territories. First, in 1821 Mexico won its war of independence from Spain and became the United Mexican States. The second event was when Texas, with some assistance from the U.S., became an independent slaveholding republic in 1836, and declared itself the 'Lone Star Republic'.³³ Then, a little less than a decade later, in 1845, U.S. Congress brought Texas into the Union as a state.

After Texas was added as a state, there was a dispute that arose between the United States and Mexico over where the border of Mexico ended and where the new state of Texas began. In a move towards expansionism, the U.S president at the time, James Polk, sent American troops to the Rio Grande River, a territory originally inhabited by Mexicans. The presence of the troops and eventual instigations intended by the Americans led to violence, which then allowed the U.S to declare war on Mexico.³⁴ Eventually, after the conflict resided, the debate began over whether the new territory acquired through the Mexican American war would allow slavery.³⁵ Many Americans at the time believed that slavery was an issue for states to decide, but the newly acquired western territory was under the purview of Congress, and thus was central to the debate surrounding the expansion of slavery into the newly annexed land.³⁶

As previously explored by Du Bois, for slavery to remain a profitable industry, there needed to be racial control over the enslaved populace, more political power held by enslavers, economic viability through the acquirement of more plantation land and the diversification of

³² Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-present* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 149.

³³ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 149.

³⁴ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-present*, 150.

³⁵ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of The United States* (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2014), 131.

³⁶ Christopher J. Olsen, *The American Civil War: A Hands-on History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 3.

crops, and the continuation of honoring the Southern way of life.³⁷ Thus, westward expansionism was central to the survival of the Southern lifestyle and slavery. If the South were unable to move the plantation system westward and create slavery centered communities, the economy of slavery would slowly lose its ability to survive.

Manifest Destiny

A major component in the argument for expanding slavery westward was the notion of Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny was a rhetorical tool of Christian ideology; it served as a justification for westward expansionism prior to and after the American Civil War. The term, first made popular by John O’Sullivan, editor of the journal *Democratic Review*, was meant to imply the inherent right of the ruling individuals, or white people, to take what they believed was their own through God-given right. In 1845, O’Sullivan stated, “Our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”³⁸ While O’Sullivan may have penned the term, the foundation for Manifest Destiny was laid during the earliest stages of the colonization of the Americas through the Christian assertion of white supremacy. In this instance, though, Manifest Destiny came to be associated with pro-slavery ideology and became a rallying call for enslaving Southerners to seek their future out West.

While Manifest Destiny was a prominent literary tactic during westward expansion, it was also a visual device that furthered the propaganda of white supremacy. One of the most popular pieces of Manifest Destiny propaganda is John Gast’s 1872 oil painting, *American Progress* (Figure 6). In *American Progress*, Gast created a visual representation of westward

³⁷ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 37.

³⁸ Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*, 151.

expansionism through symbols associated with colonization. This painting embodies a visual message that morally validates Manifest Destiny, and functions as an illustration of how the United States viewed the colonization of the western frontier.

There are two symbolic design elements within Gast's *American Progress* that advance the agenda of Manifest Destiny. The first imperative symbol to note in *American Progress* is the woman named Columbia, who is found in the forefront of the composition. She seems to be floating, or flying, from right to left, or from east to west. In this instance, Columbia is a white woman with long blonde hair; she is wearing a white tunic, has a gold star on the crown of her head, is holding a schoolbook in her right hand, and a telegraph wire in her left. Gast's Columbia is a common archetype from that time and is the patriotic symbol of a national deity. This goddess, an American visual emblem, was interchangeably titled 'Columbia' referencing geographical place, or 'Liberty' implying the guiding principle of the U.S. In both instances, her presence in cultural representation came to embody the allegorical spirit of the United States of America.³⁹

John Higham in the "Indian Princess and Roman Goddess: The First Female Symbols of America," explains that the allegorical spirit of the United States came to be characterized through the image of a national deity.⁴⁰ Higham reasons that the emblematic depiction of America was founded in reaction to two different concepts. First, the United States needed to separate itself from Great Britain after the American Revolution, and thus could no longer use the image of 'Britannia,' the allegorical British deity. And second, America needed to establish a

³⁹ John Higham, "Indian Princess and Roman Goddess: The First Female Symbols of America," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (1990): 63.

⁴⁰ John Higham, "Indian Princess and Roman Goddess," 63.

national identity that helped to further the self-serving ideations of colonization.⁴¹ Thus, both Liberty and Columbia became popular symbols of American social philosophy and patriotism.

Columbia, in name, referenced the colonizing explorer Christopher Columbus, and her purpose served to further the white supremacist agenda of colonization and genocide of Indigenous peoples. Columbia accomplished these agendas through subtle nods to patriotism, such as the pairing of the goddess with the American flag, an American eagle, or some indication of the seemingly 'progressive' goals of the United States.⁴² Her illustrated actions were thus seen as patriotic, sanctioned by Christianity, and representative of the goals of white people in the U.S. In the instance of *American Progress*, Columbia embodies the American spirit as it moved from the east to the west, guiding colonizing settlers to new lands, and endorsing the forcible removal and genocide of Indigenous people.

The second symbolic concept to consider in *American Progress* is found in the compositional use of light. The white settlers are represented in many different modes of transportation, such as stagecoach, covered wagon, trains, horseback, and on foot. As they move westward, the settlers are accompanied by a bright light. The light, originating in the east or right side of the print, is set opposing the darkness of the western or left side of the composition. While the settlers are juxtaposed with light, the Indigenous people seen in the left portion of *American Progress* are shadowed in darkness.

As previously considered in the section dedicated to white supremacy, the juxtaposition of lightness to goodness and darkness to sin, was a religious qualification set in place to validate the actions and crimes of Christian colonizers against Black, Indigenous and people of color.⁴³

⁴¹ John Higham, "Indian Princess and Roman Goddess,"64.

⁴² John Higham, "Indian Princess and Roman Goddess,"66.

⁴³ Roger Bastide, "Color, Racism, and Christianity," *Daedalus* 96, no. 2 (Spring 1967): 314.

Referencing back to Isabelle Wilkerson in *Caste: The Origin of our Discontents*, the use of color as a determiner of moral goodness reinforced the caste system of America.⁴⁴ The darker part of the composition, where Indigenous people are present, contrasts the right side of the print where the white settler and brighter light is prominent. Gast's use of lightness and darkness stresses the idea that Indigenous people were of a lower caste, and therefore were lesser beings and deserving of the treatments they endured. Consequently, through *American Progress*, John Gast offers a symbolic image of how white Americans used Manifest Destiny to both participate and perpetuate white supremacy through westward expansionism.

American Progress is only one of many representations that helped to visually spread the propaganda of colonization and Manifest Destiny. The history and impact of visual propaganda is important to note because Confederate monuments also rely on the rhetoric of visual symbolism to communicate meaning and solidify social concepts. Confederate monuments were, and still are, tools of white supremacy that have guided public perspective and reinforced racial caste in the United States.

The goal of Manifest Destiny was to forcibly remove Indigenous peoples, steal and colonize Indigenous land, and potentially expand the South's slavery system. In the same way that white supremacy is a sociocultural belief, Manifest Destiny was a belief system that justified the actions of white colonizers through the name of Christianity. The colonization of the western frontier was the practice grounds of the soldiers who would later go on to serve in both the Confederacy and the Union. Out west, Southern soldiers had a chance to first enact violence and commit genocide before returning to the South to fight for the continuation of slavery in the American Civil War. Consequently, the later visual representations of Confederate monuments

⁴⁴ Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, 17.

are not only an oppressive symbol and tool against Black Americans, but also Indigenous Americans too.

Post-War Rhetoric and The United Daughters of the Confederacy

The end of the American Civil War signaled a shift in the culture of the United States, especially for white Southerners. White Southerners had to find a way to come to terms with their loss and with the presence of the newly freed Black Americans. While Black Americans struggled to find footing in the unequal racial and political terrain of the South, white Southerners began to re-build their legacy through the intentional mythmaking of the Lost Cause.

The white Southern legacy was drenched in nationalistic and white supremacist ideology that was upheld through the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. As discussed in the subsection dedicated to the Lost Cause, Adam H. Domby in the *False Cause*, has outlined the three overarching principles of the white supremacist belief system.⁴⁵ The first principle of the Lost Cause according to Domby dictates that the Confederacy was “noble and just, and the war was fundamentally about states’ rights, not slavery.” Then, the second principle indicates that those enslaved were content in their station and indicates that emancipation and Reconstruction caused a disturbance in the natural racial hierarchy. Domby’s definition of the final principle of the Lost Cause reinforced that the prowess of the Confederate soldiers was historically unmatched, and their loss was only because of the resources available to the Union during the war.⁴⁶ As a result,

⁴⁵ Domby, *The False Cause*, 5.

⁴⁶ Domby, *The False Cause*, 5.

these guiding principles assisted white Southerners in their effort to remain at the top of the economic, social, and racial caste system of the United States after the American Civil War.

One avenue of the Lost Cause that is significant to contemplate and is related to how Confederate soldiers were perceived as superior soldiers, is through the deliberate effort of white Southerners to embrace lineage and ancestry. Anne Sarah Rubin in *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868*, argues that the ancestral connection of the Confederacy to the American Revolution helped solidify a sense of generational patriotism for white Southerners.⁴⁷ Through these ancestral connections, the Confederate white Southerner associated the intentions of the founding fathers and their fight for independence with the mission of the Confederacy. Thus, Confederates emphasized the responsibility of the white Southerner to uphold the patriotic values of the American revolutionaries.

The obligation of the white Southerner to defend these patriotic values was an effort to distract and shift the attention away from their role in slavery. Rubin states, “When Confederates cast themselves as guardians of Revolutionary ideals, they avoided discussing other causes of the war, specifically slavery. The word rarely appeared in evocations of the American Revolution, and when it did, it was usually in the rhetorical sense of the Confederates fearing enslavement to Northern masters. The silence regarding racial slavery suggests that Confederates used the Revolutionary War to shift the terms of debate, and to make the war palatable to conditional Unionists, non-slaveholders, and outside nations.”⁴⁸ According to Rubin, the Southern duty to uphold nationalistic honor shifted the identity of the white Southerner away from their role as enslaver, and instead alluded to their role as American patriot. In relation to the following

⁴⁷ Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 15.

⁴⁸ Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868*, 15.

analysis, patriotism through ancestral connection is an important notion to retain because Confederate monuments later become the physical and visual embodiment of the legacy of the white Southerner.

The propagandic rewriting of white Southern men as the epitome of heroism was established as a way of advancing white supremacy in the United States through the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. There are two definable features to this propagandic reimagining of Confederate men, the first is the emphasis on oration, and the second is the participation of women-led associations and committees. Oration, a Southern speaking tradition, entirely dominated by men, was a prominent fixture to the spread and popularization of the Lost Cause, especially as a tool of defense against the slander of the ex-Confederate soldier. W. Stuart Towns in *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, states, “In the antebellum era and well into the twentieth century, oratory flourished in the southern United States as the expression and reflection of the values of the white male population of the region. Orators described and defended those values in a way that was appreciated by their audiences; as a result, they were respected and revered, and many historians and commentators have reflected on southern public address.”⁴⁹ Towns surmises that the public speaking of white men in the South was a literal platform for the spread of white supremacist ideology amongst the Southern populace. Towns states further, “Ceremonial oratory was part and parcel of these rituals and events and played a major role, perhaps the most important role, in the shaping of the Lost Cause mythology by which many southerners have lived for generations.”⁵⁰ Paired with the advent of the Confederate Memorial Day, oration propagated the rhetoric of the Lost Cause for generations ensuing the American Civil War.

⁴⁹ W. Stuart Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause* (University Alabama Press, 2012), 3.

⁵⁰ Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, 15.

The second proponent of the Lost Cause that served to reimagine the narrative of the Confederacy was the evident rise of women-led organizations. These organizations, founded by Southern women who were the mothers, wives, sisters, aunts, and cousins of Confederate soldiers, were some of the major campaigners for Confederate memorials and monuments. The women-led organizations were the founders and initiators of the Confederate Memorial Day and its celebration.⁵¹ Thus, the pairing of white women organizing Confederate Memorial Days or monument unveiling ceremonies, and then white men at these events, publicly recalling first-hand experience in the Civil War, or lauding the valor of the Confederacy, led to a public ritual that ensured the continuation of Lost Cause ideology.

One of the more prominent organizations, The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), was founded in 1894.⁵² According to Karen L. Cox in *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, the UDC, along with many other pro-Confederate organizations, were responsible for the popularization of Lost Cause style celebrations and monument building. These organizations helped raised funds for the creation and placement of Confederate monuments within public spaces, wrote educational curriculum that revered the Confederacy, placed Confederate flags in classrooms, and hung images of Confederate heroes, such as General Lee. The United Daughters of the Confederacy's goal was to raise generations of southern children who were constantly reminded of white supremacy and the 'honorable' legacy of the South's part in the Civil War.⁵³

⁵¹ Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, 20.

⁵² Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, 63.

⁵³ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, 25.

Subsequently, white Southern women became the gatekeepers and heralds of the furtherance of white supremacy through Lost Cause ideology. Cox suggests that the UDC was the true power behind the Lost Cause, and because of their efforts, the Lost Cause became a generational ideology ingrained into Southern identity starting at a young age.⁵⁴ It is no surprise that the rise of the UDC simultaneously marked the rise in Confederate monuments, with about ninety-three percent of the monuments being erected after 1895.⁵⁵ This correlation is evident as the UDC was one of the largest campaigning organizations to fund monuments; often their campaigns for funding were created through sponsored fairs, concerts, and dinners.⁵⁶

The United Daughters of the Confederacy, who are still active today, has spent the last one hundred and twenty-seven years erecting and maintaining monuments and promoting rhetoric to glorify and mythologize those who were enslavers and murderers. As a result, the existence and justification behind Confederate monuments has not been challenged on a mass scale until more recently. United States, a nation built on a white supremacist structure, has only just begun to remove the monuments in the past decade.

Confederate Monuments

Beginning shortly after the end of the American Civil War, Confederate monuments began to appear across the Southern states. Though, the heyday of the creation of Confederate monuments was not until the turn of the century. John J. Winberry, in his article from 1983, “‘Lest We Forget’ The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape”, surmised that the

⁵⁴ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 39.

⁵⁵ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 64.

⁵⁶ John J. Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget,’ The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape,” 1983, Reprint *Southeastern Geographer* 55, no. 1 (2015): 24.

sudden influx of monuments to the Confederacy in the early twentieth century had to do with three factors. The first factor had to do with timing, and how the increase in monuments coincided with the rise in Confederate veteran deaths. The second factor was how those who were financially ruined after the War, and or due to Reconstruction, were able to regain some of the wealth that they had been lost. These wealthy individuals, of course, were in most cases either former enslavers or their children. The financial participation of white Southerners was detrimental to the building of the monuments. Without the appropriate funds, organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy, would have been unable to successfully erect the monuments and memorials.⁵⁷

The last reason for the influx of monuments was due to the rise of the Lost Cause and the rhetoric that encompassed Southern identity. By presenting the past as the more desirable reality they sought to memorialize the old south as a way of constructing the new South.⁵⁸ As previously explored, W. Stuart Towns in *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, considers how this new South and states, “Unfortunately, the South would try its best to build, through these speeches, monuments, re-unions, and celebrations of the Lost Cause, a new society that was as close as possible a mirror image of the old one.”⁵⁹ Thus, both Towns and Winberry agree that the influx of Confederate monuments in the twentieth century coincided with the need of white Southerners to rebuild the South into a replicated version of the past.

There are four distinct types of Confederate monuments and four evident locations for the monuments.⁶⁰ The first type of monument is the soldier on top of a column, either with weapon held at parade rest or weaponless. The second type is a soldier on top of a column with his

⁵⁷ Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget,’ The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape,”27.

⁵⁸ Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget,’ The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape,”27.

⁵⁹ Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, 3

⁶⁰ John J. Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget,’”20.

weapon in a combat ready stance, or he is carrying a flag or bugle. The third is simply an obelisk, covered with a flag, or holding an urn, cannon ball, or other object. Then the final type is simply miscellaneous, and this is the category where equestrian monuments may fall. The four distinctive places that monuments are commonly found in are cemeteries, parks, and courthouse squares.⁶¹

While there are evidently four different kinds of Confederate monuments, historically their collective erection was cause for a specific kind of celebration, one that enforced the Lost Cause and glorified the Confederacy. As previously considered, the act of unveiling a given monument was a celebratory event that the entire white community participated in. The intent of an unveiling celebration was to highlight a visual symbol of the Lost Cause, i.e., the monument; remind the Southerners of their ties to the Confederacy, and to influence future generations in their support and perception of the Confederacy. The unveilings meant a large celebration with dances, food, and drink; they also had certain roles embodied by community members. In some instances, thirteen young girls representing the thirteen original Confederate states, dressed in Confederate colors, would assist with the unveiling. In addition, there would often be children who formed a choir to accompany the ceremony with patriotic songs, such as “Dixie” or “America”.⁶² An example of an unveiling ceremony will be considered in the following chapter when analyzing the General Robert E. Lee monument.

Alongside unveiling ceremonies is the annual Confederate Memorial Day. Every year, shortly after the Civil War, Confederate Memorial Day was held in Southern towns and cities. The Confederate Memorial Day was usually April 26th, the same date that General Joseph E.

⁶¹ John J. Winberry, ““Lest We Forget,””20.

⁶² Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, 77.

Johnston surrendered, but this sometimes varied based on state or city.⁶³ A celebratory day owed to Southern women and their need to uplift Confederate veterans this holiday marked a day of remembrance that included gathering around Confederate monuments to listen “to speeches about the heroic deeds of southern soldiers, and place flowers and flags on the graves of the Confederate dead.”⁶⁴ The act and participation of public memorial served to remind southerners of the Civil War, and also to continue the belief in the Lost Cause; further indoctrinating future generations through visual representations of “heroes” and the epitome of southern masculinity and leadership.

The large-scale celebrations of Confederate monuments as they cropped-up around the country reinforced the intentions of the Lost Cause. W. Stuart Towns considers the public celebrations and displays, and states, “These rituals and rhetoric sought to reaffirm the common sentiments of the southern people, much like a Sunday church service reaffirms the congregation’s beliefs in the sacred creeds and sacraments of their faith. These events provided for continuity with the traditions and history of the white South, strengthened community solidarity against outsiders such as the military occupation and the hated “carpetbaggers,” and promoted the confidence of the audience in an era of low self-esteem for many white southerners.”⁶⁵ The result of Confederate monuments and their celebrations dominating the South’s landscape made Southern patriotism synonymous with American patriotism, which in turn perpetuated the idea that Confederate monuments embodied true Americanism.⁶⁶

⁶³ Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, 3.

⁶⁴ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 27.

⁶⁵ Towns, *Enduring Legacy*, 15.

⁶⁶ Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, 77.

Chapter Conclusion

In summation, Confederate monuments are the result of how the American Civil War shaped sociocultural rhetoric through visual representation. The Lost Cause and Manifest Destiny are white supremacist ideologies and are perpetuated through the visual propaganda of Confederate monuments. The Confederacy, while the loser of the War, successfully created the mythology of the Lost Cause to perpetuate white supremacy, oppress Black Americans, and vindicate those who fought for the continuation of slavery. The Lost Cause is closely related to Manifest Destiny, and while the former was founded after the War, both ideologies are based on the religion of Christianity, and white supremacy. Manifest Destiny was a rallying call for white Southerners and a justification for the expansion of slavery into the new western states. The celebration of Confederate monuments was a Lost Cause tactic to continue the legacy of the Confederacy.

Chapter 3: Visual Analysis

Confederate monuments are meant to act as a visual representation of the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. The main goal of the Lost Cause is to re-shape the history of the American Civil War into a more positive and white-washed version. It is an ideology that acts as a mask to cover up how the Confederacy was a pro-slavery government, and instead insists that it was a patriotic movement that stood for Southern states' constitutional rights.

The style of representation that is found in equestrian Confederate monument follows a distinct visual tradition that glorifies imperialist imagery and the power of royalty and the wealthy elite; the South, historically, has seen the representation of Confederate soldiers and generals as a romanticized version of the 'Old South.' Therefore, the equestrian Confederate monuments of General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B Stuart will be compared and examined in relation to the sculpture of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius and to the painting *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* by Jacques-Louis David.

Until very recently, Confederate monuments have existed in town squares, cemeteries, government buildings, courthouses, and even in the capitol building of the United States of America, in Washington D.C. They have been adorned with flowers, flags and have been the focal point of 'heritage' celebrations. And yet, the effort to create a beautiful aura around Confederate monuments does not erase the fact that they still represent and embody the values of a ruling class of enslavers.

Iconography

A way in which the Confederate monuments may be deciphered is through the visual theory of Iconography; particularly focusing on how cultural symbols are significant to an artifact's meaning. Applying iconography to Confederate monuments will help this analysis discern the intricate meanings behind the monuments and how their existence is derivative of systemic racism. Iconography is an art historical theory that explores how themes and ideas come together to create meaning within a representation or artifact. One of the original practitioners of iconography, Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), focused on how the theory could help interpret works of art as symbolic expressions of a particular culture.⁶⁷ Panofsky's approach to iconography will help to inform the visual analysis of the General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B. Stuart Confederate monuments.

Panofsky's approach to iconography worked to dissect an artifact through the lens of its given cultural and historical origins. There are three central steps within Panofsky's approach; these steps are defining both the primary subject matter, the secondary subject matter, and then the intrinsic meaning of an artifact. The first step, identifying the primary subject matter, is divided between factual or expressional artistic motifs, and is dedicated to finding the formal elements of an artifact.⁶⁸ One may think of this section as the first layer of an artifact, and is the readily evident motifs in an object. Panofsky saw this section as the pre-iconographical analysis and found that the interpretation in this step relied on practical experiences.

The *Primary Subject matter*, the first step of Panofsky's method, will be concerned with the first layer of visual representations found in Confederate monuments, exploring the more

⁶⁷ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, "Iconography – Iconology: Erwin Panofsky," In *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods*, 96 – 119 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 96 – 97.

⁶⁸ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, "Iconography – Iconology: Erwin Panofsky," 109.

factual and practical interpretations of the monuments. Here, the General Robert E. Lee monument and General J.E.B Stuart monument, will be introduced, a general visual description given, and formal elements discussed. The intent of this section will be to discern the visual markers and symbols present in the monuments.

The secondary or conventional subject matter is concerned with the images, stories, and allegories that create specific themes and concepts within an artifact. This second layer of analysis is more dependent on specific historical constructs and how those constructs, or conditions, themes, and concepts are embodied through objects or events. The secondary subject matter is about the assignment of meaning to specific representations.⁶⁹

The figural analysis, or the secondary subject matter will focus on the Lost Cause and the underlying allegory found within the examples of the Lee and Stuart monuments. In turn, this segment will help to discern how the visual representation of the Confederate monuments is a layered cultural symbol. i.e., the visual marker of a white supremacist ideology, the Lost Cause. The resulting conclusions of this section will discern how the General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B Stuart monuments create meaning through their visual symbolism.

The third and concluding step to Panofsky's approach is the cumulative layering of all the above sections; the "*Intrinsic meaning or events, constituting the world of 'symbolical' values.*"⁷⁰ Within this section, one may examine an artifact through all three lenses, considering how style, types, and cultural symbols come together to express certain themes and concepts relevant to a particular period of representation. Therefore, the last section is where factual and secondary subject matter are viewed together to create an iconological interpretation of the object being examined. It is within the intrinsic meaning step, or final section of analysis, that conclusions

⁶⁹ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, "Iconography – Iconology: Erwin Panofsky," 109.

⁷⁰ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, "Iconography – Iconology: Erwin Panofsky," 109.

will be drawn regarding the representation of the select Confederate monuments, outlining how they have functioned as symbols of systemic racism, colonization, and imperialism.

General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee

Primary subject matter, according to Panofsky, is comprised of present and discernable visual elements and symbols within an artifact. These elements, of course, are considered through the historical events and social concepts prevalent during the time of their creation. The following will be dedicated to exploring the biographies of both General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B. Stuart, in order to better understand who and what their representations came to embody. The history of these men falls into the category of primary subject matter as their representations were indicative of how the Lost Cause shaped the culture of the South.

General-in-Chief Robert E. Lee is one of the most written about and prominent figures within the American Civil War, and this can be attributed to his mythos and the time spent as the Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, the primary armed force of the Confederacy.⁷¹ As well, the myth and legend of General Robert E. Lee is a result of the efforts of the Lost Cause and thus a part of the formal elements of the monument. Lee's education, prowess on the battlefield, and connection to the Southern aristocracy made him the perfect representation for the Lost Cause. Per Iconography, the representation of Lee has become synonymous with a mythical hero, especially for the white Southern viewer who has been indoctrinated through the Lost Cause for generations. Lee represents a version of the South that

⁷¹ Michael Fellman, *The Making of Robert E. Lee* (Random House, 2000), 5.

was entirely constructed through the Lost Cause and the effort to rewrite a past riddled with the pain and oppression of Black, Indigenous and peoples of color.

Born in 1807, Robert Edward Lee was the product of the Virginian gentry and as a result was born into Southern aristocracy. Lee's particular line of gentry was known as a crucial part of the 'first families of Virginia'.⁷² The wealthy plantation owning elite of the 'first families' were, in fact, a dominating network of cousins. Often, second and third cousins would marry each other to keep wealth and land within the family; and their wealth was the direct result of enslavement and forced labor. Because of these factors and who his family was, Lee was both an active enslaver during his life and fought for the continuation of slavery during the American Civil War.⁷³

Prior to the American Civil War, Lee pursued a career within the military, graduating from the United States Military Academy, or West Point, in 1829; he then went on to serve as an army engineer, and then in the Mexican American War. Lee served in the United States Army from 1829-1861, and then for the Confederate States from 1861-1865. After the American Civil War, Lee became the president of Washington College and stayed there until he died in 1870 at 63 years old.

After the Civil War, Robert E. Lee became a symbol of the Lost Cause, embodying the Southern ideal of gentility and masculinity. Often called the "cult of Lincoln and Lee," the ideology surrounding Lee positioned him as a symbol of the old South and manly virtue, erasing the emphasis on his involvement with slavery.⁷⁴ Therefore, when Lee is represented within Confederate monuments it creates a space of nostalgia and dilutes the violent Southern past that

⁷² Michael Fellman, *The Making of Robert E. Lee*, 4-9

⁷³ Michael Fellman, *The Making of Robert E. Lee*, 64.

⁷⁴ Eric Foner, "The Making and the Breaking of the Legend of Robert E. Lee," 2.

should be associated with the Confederacy. An example of the romanization of this Confederate figure is evident in the 1865 book *Southern Generals, Who They Are*, by Charles B. Richardson. Richardson positions Lee in such a way that could be compared to heroes of Greek mythology, elevating both Lee's ancestry and his character. Richardson states,

Of a Virginian family, whose members for more than two hundred years had been settled in the states, and some whom had handed down to posterity names and indissolubly connected with all that was bright, glorious, and god-like in the cause of national freedom, besides being inseparably coupled with all to be esteemed in the mind and intellectual qualities of man, the present military commander-in-chief of the Southern forces is one on whom all eyes turn, with more than ordinary interest, and whose influences is, perhaps, even greater than that of the President of the Confederate States himself.⁷⁵

Robert E. Lee's image was mass produced and used as a symbol of the Lost Cause, and because of this association with white supremacist ideology his representation has come to embody systematic racism within American culture. Lee's representation convinces the viewer via primary subject matter that he, a representative of the "old South," is a gentleman and a good person. Through the morally good narrative the Lost Cause created of Lee, history shifted societal perception away from the ugly reality that he stood for racial oppression, discrimination, and enslavement, and instead prioritizes the argument regarding states' rights to self-government.

Major General James Ewell Brown Stuart

While Lee was a figurehead for the Lost Cause, Stuart was a lesser character who was not as prominent within the rhetoric that went into constructing Lost Cause ideology. Stuart, though,

⁷⁵ Charles B. Richardson, *Southern Generals, Who They Are*, 1865 reprint (North Scituate, Digital Scanning, 2001), 10.

is an important piece of this analysis as his Richmond monument directly influenced the Kehinde Wiley sculpture, *Rumors of War*, that is to be discussed in the following chapter. In the same way that Lee's representation has become commonplace and synonymous with the Lost Cause, Stuart's representation has also come to embody the legacy of the Confederacy.

Major General James Ewell Brown Stuart was born February 6, 1833, in Patrick County, Virginia, and died May 12, 1864, in Richmond, Virginia, after being wounded in battle during the American Civil War. James Ewell Brown (J.E.B.) Stuart graduated WestPoint in 1954, and then went on to ride in the 1st Calvary of Kansas during the Mexican American War.⁷⁶ In 1861, Stuart resigned from the U.S. Army and joined the Confederate Army as a colonel of the 1st Virginia calvary. Within the same year, he was promoted to Brigadier General and from there became one of the most valuable Calvary generals that the Confederacy had.⁷⁷

Prior to the American Civil War, Stuart was a soldier for the U.S. Army Calvary and contributed to the effort to displace and remove Indigenous peoples in the United States and western territories. Through his military service Stuart aided the United States government in breaking treaties with the Indigenous tribes, fought against Indigenous resistance, and participated in the systematic genocide of Indigenous peoples. As noted, before, western expansionism was the product of white supremacy and was justified through the ideology of Manifest Destiny.

Often overlooked historically, calvary troops employed the 'first way of war,' a tactic that encouraged field units to slaughter all livestock, burn all crops and kill all Indigenous people they encountered, which included women, children, and the elderly. Tragically, this tactic was

⁷⁶ George A. Scott, *Commanders of the Civil War: Brief Biographies of Selected Generals and Statesmen in the Conflict of the War between the States* (New York: Scott & Nix, 2011), 77.

⁷⁷ George A. Scott, *Commanders of the Civil War: Brief Biographies of Selected Generals and Statesmen in the Conflict of the War between the States* (New York: Scott & Nix, 2011), 77.

reserved for when the younger Indigenous men, the main defense against attack, had left to fight another unit of the U.S. military.⁷⁸ The widespread practice of murdering and eradicating whole groups of Indigenous peoples was common for those serving out west in the U.S. calvary. Though, like most American history concerning the systematic oppression of Black, Indigenous and peoples of color, the negatives parts are left out or erased.

In the same way that the Lost Cause rewrote history to reflect the South more positively, the ideology of Manifest Destiny also created a romanticized version of the truth concerning western expansionism. One author, Charles B. Richardson, who romanticized the lives and actions of those who served in the Confederacy, said of Stuart, “His regiment having been ordered to the wilds of New Mexico, he soon had an opportunity for indulging the bent of his inclination in riding and fighting with the boldest and fiercest among all the brave spirits that were there. Could we find space to narrate them, many stirring pictures might be given of his roving, dashing, adventurous life in that region - warring with the Indians and bounding over the mighty plains.”⁷⁹

J.E.B. Stuart was a part of westward expansionism, Manifest Destiny, and the colonization of the western plains of the United States. His part in the oppression, genocide and cultural erasure of Indigenous peoples is often overlooked or ignored but is essential to understand the actions of Stuart prior to his service in the Confederacy. As a general in the Confederacy, Stuart became a key part of information and scouting reconnaissance. While he died a year before the end of the American Civil War, Stuart still became a mythic representation of the Lost Cause and the Confederacy.

⁷⁸ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of The United States*, 132.

⁷⁹ Charles B. Richardson, *Southern Generals, Who They Are*, 358.

Visual Analysis of the Lee and Stuart Monuments

The General Robert E. Lee Monument was once located at the center of the intersection of Monument Avenue and Allen Avenue in Richmond, Virginia. The monument was erected May 29, 1890 and was one of the first monuments to be constructed upon the famous Monument Avenue.⁸⁰ The monument is comprised of “a granite plinth, base, and pedestal surmounted by equestrian sculpture, in bronze, facing south.”⁸¹ The base is reminiscent of a Greek temple; with two ionic columns framing a bronze plaque that is embossed with “Lee” at its center. The artist of the sculpture was Jean Antonio Mercie, and the designer was Paul Pujot, and the estimated cost of the project was around seventy-five thousand dollars. The monument is owned by the Commonwealth of Virginia and was listed on the state and national registers in 2006 and 2007 as a “‘masterpiece’ of French academic sculpture and ‘an icon for the cult of the ‘Lost Cause’.”⁸² The monument remained standing until September 8th, 2021, when it was removed by the Virginia Department of General Services after it was the focal point of Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. Originally plans were made shortly after the protests to remove the monument, but because of a legal challenge to its removal, the decision to remove the monument had to go through a ruling by the Supreme Court of Virginia.⁸³

⁸⁰ Virginia Department of Historic Resources, “Monument Avenue Historic District,” (DHR, Virginia Department of Historic Resources). <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-0174/> Monument Avenue is a residential boulevard in Richmond, Virginia that extends for five miles or fourteen blocks. The Avenue begins at the termination of West Franklin Street and extends westward, ending at Roseneath rd. Along Monument Avenue is an array of monuments dedicated to those who fought within the Confederate Army. The Avenue was the focal point of the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, and as a result, all the monuments have been removed and all that remains is their plinths.

⁸¹ Timothy S. Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 147.

⁸² Virginia Department of Historic Resources, “Why the COV Can Remove Richmond’s Lee Monument Despite its Designation to the State and Federal Historic Registers,” (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Last modified June 5, 2020).

⁸³ N’dea Yancey-Bragg, et al., “Virginia Removes Richmond’s Robert E. Lee Statue, Its Largest Confederate Monument,” *USA Today*, (Last modified September 8, 2021).

Historically speaking, the completion of the Lee monument project took about twenty years of disorderly planning. The unveiling and debut of the sixty-one-foot monument featured one of the largest crowds to date for a monument dedication, and the local papers stated that there was about one hundred and forty thousand attendees.⁸⁴ Jubal A. Early, a veteran Confederate general, Lost Cause promoter, and an active participant in the erection of the monument said this of the work,

It is vain work for us to seek anywhere for a parallel to the great character which has won our admiration and love...Our beloved Chief stand, like some lofty column which rears its head among the highest, in grandeur, simple, pure and sublime, needing no borrowed lustre; and he is all our own, the south should see that a monument to his glorious memory is erected at the Confederate capitol, in defense of which his wonderous talents and sublime virtues were displayed.⁸⁵

Jubal Early's praise of Lee follows a pattern via the rhetoric of the Lost Cause that mythologized the prominent figures of the Confederacy. Because of the active romanticizing of Lee both during and after the American Civil War, the image of Robert E. Lee has become the foremost representation of Southern gentility and leadership.

While Lee's image was a normal representation for the Lost Cause, the design of the monument goes against the standard for most military equestrian monuments. Mercie decided against Lee wearing his hat and instead, he holds it in his hand. Mercie, intending to add to the legendary aura of the general, stated that "... a brow so noble must not be hidden."⁸⁶ As well, Mercie intended to encompass the devotion that the mythical general inspired in his troops. His Napoleonic approach "Represents General Lee as having ridden-to some eminence where he may better view the movements of the enemy, and here his soldiers recognizing his presence,

⁸⁴ Maurie D. Mcinnis, "'To Strike Terror': Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power," *Studies in the History of Art, Symposium Papers LVIII: The Civil War in Art and Memory* 81 (2017): 136.

⁸⁵ Timothy S. Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 147.

⁸⁶ Timothy S. Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 147.

greet him with one of those outbursts of cheers which never failed to welcome his presence among them, and as the General for a moment rein in his horse and acknowledge the greeting by taking off his hat.”⁸⁷ Thus, the perceived physical action captured in the monument embraced the mythical representation of Lee as a gentleman, as observed in the removal of his hat.

The other difference evident within the General Robert E. Lee monument from Richmond was that unlike most representations of Lee, his famous steed Traveler is absent. Mercie decided that the stature of the equine was too slender when matched with the enormity of the Confederate general’s presence. So instead, Mercie used an equine model that was larger than Traveler, a French hunter with some Percheron lineage.⁸⁸ Mercie intended the replacement of Traveler to help demarcate the power behind the representation of Lee. Horses, whether in figural representations, or real-life encounters, represent a sort of power, nobility, strength, and courage; and when a figure is seen or represented riding on a horse, they borrow all these qualities and take them on as they are the ones “conquering” or mastering the horse through riding them.⁸⁹ It therefore can be assumed that since Lee is represented riding a larger horse he is perceived as mastering a stronger animal than what he actually rode during the American Civil War.

Just like the Lee monument, the General J.E.B Stuart monument was located on Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA, until July 7th of 2020 after Black Lives Matter supporters used the avenue as the focal point of their protests.⁹⁰ Originally, the Stuart monument was located at the end of Monument Ave in the middle of a roundabout, intersecting with Stuart

⁸⁷ Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 156.

⁸⁸ Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America*, 156.

⁸⁹ Peter Edwards, et al, *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World* (Leiden: BRILL, 2011), 296.

⁹⁰ Henry Graff, “Statue of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart Removed in Richmond,” *NBC12*, (Last modified July 7, 2020).

Circle Road. The monument was within eyesight and only a five-minute walk from monument of General Robert E. Lee. Arriving seventeen years after Lee in 1907, the Stuart monument by Frederick Moynihan was a fifteen-foot bronze sculpture mounted on a seven and half foot pedestal.⁹¹ Like Lee, Stuart was depicted riding his horse, 'General,' the horse he was riding when he was wounded defending the city of Richmond. The long inscription on the plinth explains in detail the birth and death location of Stuart, along with a death announcement from General Lee that said, "His grateful countrymen will mourn his loss and cherish his memory. To his comrades in arms, he has left the proud recollection of his deeds and the inspiring influence of his example."⁹² The romanticized literary and visual representation of Stuart made him into a knight-like figure of the Confederacy, racing at the last minute and providing Lee with the information to gain the upper-hand fighting against the Union. Through the knight in shining armor rhetoric, a picture of Stuart was created that painted him as a hero, even though his ethics and actions were anything but. Stuart, the same as Lee, was a part of the slavery system and the culture that held it in place. The Lost Cause not only rewrote the history of the American Civil War, but also the character of the people that participated. Thus, General J.E.B. Stuart, a colonizer, became a symbol of the Confederacy through his knight-like representation.

The different inscriptions on Stuart's monument presented a unique case of ornamental punctuation. The punctuation style is distinctly classical Greek and was unusual for this type of monument at the time.⁹³ Utilizing classical references for the written description of the representation of Stuart potentially creates a literary juxtaposition between the Greek hero archetype and the legacy of Stuart as the knight-like Confederate Calvary general. While the

⁹¹ Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 148.

⁹² Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 148.

⁹³ Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 148.

punctuation found on Stuart's monument was a stylized choice meant to bolster the perceived heroism of the general, the use of inscriptions on monuments was commonplace. Often the different inscriptions found on Confederate monuments "exhausted repertoires of superlatives in rounding the Confederate military achievement."⁹⁴ As a result, the writing on Confederate monuments were done in such a way to uplift and glorify the history of the Confederacy.

Some of the most influential propaganda of the Lost Cause is found in romanticized literature on biographical details, battles, or events. In some instances, the actual naming of the War on the placards of monuments is slightly misconstrued, with the use of 'war of the rebellion' or 'war for the suppression of the rebellion,' being used instead of 'American Civil War.'⁹⁵ The written rhetoric of monuments thus exists to validate and praise the Confederacy, overwriting the historical events and facts behind those being represented. Referencing back to Panofsky, the inscriptions found on Confederate monuments are primary subject matter as they represent the common theme of the Lost Cause using written rhetoric to reinforce their ideology. While the historical themes found in both the visual and written rhetoric are secondary subject matter. On Stuart's monument the use of classical Greek punctuation acts as a visual tool that connects the representation of Stuart to the Greeks and their tradition of exalting heroic archetypes. Thus, when observing both the primary and secondary subject matter of the monument, the Lost Cause rhetoric aligns the life and efforts of Stuart with that of exemplary hero found in ancient times, overshadowing how he fought for the continuation of the enslavement of Black people in the United States.

⁹⁴ Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 207.

⁹⁵ Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America*, 222.

As previously stated, the secondary subject matter of the monuments is found in their ability to connect to specific themes found in cultural and art historical representation. In the case of the J.E.B Stuart and Robert E. Lee monuments, they are examples of a historical theme that places significance on equestrian sculptures that venerate colonization and imperialism. Interestingly, the Stuart monument is a somewhat unique example of the equestrian visual artifact because it is potentially an instance of plagiarism. Critics and historians have suggested that Frederick Moynihan plagiarized his sculpture of Stuart, as it bears a distinct and undeniable resemblance to John Foley's statue of General Sir James Outram in Kolkata (Calcutta), India.⁹⁶ Some surmise that since Moynihan had been an understudy of Foley's, the borrowing of form was acceptable. What this outward representation of plagiarism offers, though, is a juxtaposition between British imperialism and American nationalism, both via civic monuments. The monument in India was dedicated to General Outram, a leader in the oppression of the Indian rebellion against the British monarchy's colonization of India. The monument of Stuart, in comparison, was dedicated to a general who actively participated in the oppression of Indigenous peoples and fought for the continued enslavement of Black people. Thus, in both instances the monuments to these individuals serve to glorify colonization and communicate a sense of power over the space and anyone viewing the sculptures.

Beginning in the nineteenth century imperial monuments became a growing trend in countries colonized by France and Britain according to Xavier Guégan in "Transmissible Sites: Monuments, Memorials and Their Visibility on the Metropole and Periphery." Guégan states, "In the nineteenth century, in post- Enlightenment and industrial France and Britain, political schemes and their related colonial discourses had to change in order to convince populations that

⁹⁶ Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 149.

there was a ‘right’ to colonize. The two imperial powers thus sought to legitimize their newly established colonial structures by different means: visual ones, the erection of monuments, statues, and memorials.”⁹⁷ Colonizing powerhouses, like France and Britain had already developed a language of oppression through visual representation via monuments and the South mirrored that language through their Confederate monuments. This visual concept, colonization through presence, is thus a secondary subject matter in relation to the monuments being examined.

While the nineteenth and early twentieth century saw an uptick in equestrian monuments, the theme or practice of placing a person of power, such as a monarch or military leader, upon a horse in a monument, sculpture, or painting is one that dates all the way back to antiquity.⁹⁸ In fact, the equestrian monument is a common symbol of imperial authority, and historically it has been commonplace to depict those holding power within a society on horseback; this is evident within classic Greek and Roman depictions of Emperors and Caesars. Consequently, the Lost Cause often referenced traditional western art representations, such as the equestrian monument, and in doing so aligned Confederate representations with some of the most influential societies, events, and cultures throughout western history. Thus, such a juxtaposition situates the American Civil War on the same level of importance as post-revolutionary Europe or the ancient histories that form the epics of western history.⁹⁹ The Lost Cause, whether intentional or not, created a visual connection through known art historical symbolism that situated Confederate monuments as commemorative and culturally significant to the American people.

⁹⁷ Guégan, Xavier, “Transmissible Sites: Monuments, Memorials and Their Visibility on the Metropole and Periphery,” In *Sites of Imperial Memory: Commemorating Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 21.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America*, 1.

⁹⁹ Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America*, 207.

The origin of equestrian monuments can be traced to the ancient Greeks and then later the Romans; and it is from those ancient sculptures that western art drew inspiration. One of the more notable examples that artists have referenced for hundreds of years is the equestrian sculpture of Marcus Aurelius (Figure 10) from roughly 170-180 AD.¹⁰⁰ The sculpture of the Roman Emperor is fourteen feet tall, gilded hollow-cast bronze, and is one of the few remaining examples from the Romans of an equestrian sculpture. The sculpture features the Emperor Marcus Aurelius balancing calmly stirrup-less on his horse, gaze to the right and slightly downward, following his right arm as it extends outward in a commanding gesture. His left hand, while empty now, would have once held the reins to his mount.¹⁰¹

In comparing the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius to the General Robert E. Lee Confederate monument it can be noted that there is a similar feel to the body language of the figure. Both hold the reins in the left hand and sit astride the horse as if it is effortless. Although they are not entirely mirrored in their different visual elements, the Emperor is raising his right hand and Lee is holding his hat, their posture holds an essence that radiates power and control. Furthermore, the casualness in which Lee holds his hat could be compared to the attire that Marcus Aurelius wears in his representation. According to Peter Stewart in “The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius,” the attire that Marcus wears is somewhat simple and more representative of a general or gentleman traveling. The conscious choice to depict Lee and the Emperor as casual, more like the everyday human, creates a connection between the average viewer and the sculptures. It can be suggested then that the humanizing elements of the monuments make them more relatable.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Stewart, “The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius,” In *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 266.

¹⁰¹ Stewart, “The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius,” 266.

When something or someone is more relatable it creates empathy in the viewer, and in turn that connection could make it easier to sway their opinion regarding a viewpoint or idea.

Even though Marcus Aurelius' clothes are not indicative of vast wealth or power, the way in which his horse is positioned and the type of saddle cloth he rides on is emblematic of the imperial power of Rome.¹⁰² First, the figure of the horse from the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius is speculated to be a portrait of a specific animal. Its musculature and rendering are lifelike, and its individualistic teeth suggest it is not a simple generic representation of a horse.¹⁰³ As if frozen in time, the raised right hoof of the horse, along with the contraction of its muscles simulates the movement of the animal and communicates the strength of the horse to the viewer. Stewart in his analysis of the sculpture suggests that the raised right hoof is connotative of a popular historical representation that placed a figure below the lifted hoof. In "Equestrian Statues in Antiquity: City, People, Monuments," authors Lucia Nováková, Erik Hrnčiarik, and Miroslava Daňová agree with Stewart's observation and further state that the motif of a "victorious fighter stabbing an enemy lying under horse hooves" was a sculptural tradition that came from the Middle East and was later adopted by the Greeks around the fourth century BC.¹⁰⁴ While the conquered figure is no longer present in the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, having been removed at some point in history, the implications regarding power and imperialism behind the raised hoof remains.

Secondly, the stance of the horse is not the only allegorical symbol of power found in the sculpture; the saddle cloth also is indicative of the imperial power of the Roman emperor. The saddle cloth strays away from the design usually depicted in Roman art and artifacts from the time of Marcus Aurelius. According to Helmut Nickel in "The Emperor's New Saddle Cloth:

¹⁰² Stewart, "The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius," 266.

¹⁰³ Stewart, "The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius," 266.

¹⁰⁴ Lucia Nováková, Erik Hrnčiarik, and Miroslava Daňová, "Equestrian Statues in Antiquity: City, People, Monuments," *Studia historica Nitriensia* 22, no.2 (2018): 438.

The Ephippium of the Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius,” the saddle cloth, and possibly the horse as well, are Sarmatian in origin. Nickel maintains that the unique origin of the design is the result of Marcus’ victory over the Sarmatians in modern day Hungary in 175 AD.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, while the raised hoof is an allusion to the conquered figure, the saddle cloth references the peoples whom Marcus Aurelius did defeat and conquer; thus, asserting power and control over said people and their culture.

When comparing the horse in the Emperor’s sculpture to the Lee and Stuart monument one may notice that while the Lee monument does not have a raised hoof, the Stuart monument does. As if echoing the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, Stuart’s horse also holds its right hoof aloft and when observing this action through a similar historical lens, like the Emperor’s sculpture, there is an existent connection. While Marcus Aurelius’ mount is meant to be towering over a conquered figure, it begs the question of who Stuart is meant to be metaphorically looming over and symbolically conquering. In this nonliteral situation, that figure could have been an enslaved Black individual or an Indigenous person. As noted previously, J.E.B. Stuart was a well-known military figure for westward expansionism, and his colonization of Indigenous people was touted as exemplary knight-like behavior by the Lost Cause. Therefore, while there is not a figure under the hoof of Stuart’s mount there is still that sense of crushing power and animosity in the horse’s action; and when seen in the same light as Marcus Aurelius, placing a conquered figure in the Stuart monument would have accurately reflected the actions of Stuart as a colonizer.

Another important comparison between the equestrian monuments of Lee and Stuart to the Marcus Aurelius’ to note is the difference in dimensions. Whereas the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius is a slightly larger than life representation of the Emperor and his horse at fourteen feet

¹⁰⁵ Helmut Nickel, “The Emperor’s New Saddle Cloth: The Ephippium of the Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 24 (1989): 24.

in tall, the monuments of Lee and Stuart are massive in contrast.¹⁰⁶ The Lee monument, plinth and pedestal included, once stood at sixty-one feet, and the Stuart was twenty-two feet high in total.¹⁰⁷ Though the Stuart monument is closer in size to Marcus Aurelius', there is a vast difference between the Lee monument and the Emperor's sculpture. The Lee monument, one of the largest Confederate monuments in Richmond, Virginia, once towered over the landscape.¹⁰⁸ The sheer size of the monument conveyed a clear message, the message that Lee was a larger than life individual in the eyes of white Southerners. The mythological standing of Lee was one of the points of emphasis found in Lost Cause rhetoric; thus, the overinflation of the man's character via discourse physically manifested in his monument.

Unlike the Lee and Stuart monuments, the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius has survived many shifts in culture, power, and religion throughout its existence. Peter Stewart hypothesizes that the statue most likely survived throughout the ages because it was mistaken for a representation of the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great.¹⁰⁹ While this may or may not be true, the statue of Marcus Aurelius became a point of artistic reference for equestrian statues and sculpture across Europe. Stewart attributes this popularity with the statue's successful equestrian naturalism and ability to communicate the power and influence of the rider.¹¹⁰ The sculpture of Marcus Aurelius is an excellent example of secondary subject matter and how images and symbols move through history and create traditions of meaning.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Stewart, "The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius," In *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 266.

¹⁰⁷ Sedore, *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*, 147-148.

¹⁰⁸ N'dea Yancey-Bragg, et al., "Virginia Removes Richmond's Robert E. Lee Statue, Its Largest Confederate Monument," *USA Today*, (Last modified September 8, 2021).

¹⁰⁹ Peter Stewart, "The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius," In *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 269.

¹¹⁰ Stewart, "The Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius," 272-273.

While the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius offers an ancient example of the equestrian sculpture, it is important to also consider other points in history and different forms of representation. Nicholas Warner in his article *Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art* considers the painting of *Napoleon crossing the Alps* (Figure 7) by Jacques-Louis David from 1800, and how the representation of authority figures on horseback are art historical representations of power and propaganda. Warner suggests that every detail of the figure and horse connote meaning for the viewer, especially for those living during that time. In his analysis of *Napoleon crossing the Alps*, Warner highlights the importance of the minute details of the figure: the un-gloved right-hand vs the gloved left-hand, the twisting posture and outward gaze.

¹¹¹ The un-gloved right-hand of Napoleon in *Napoleon crossing the Alps* points upward and towards the mountains. Warner asserts that the upward movement signifies both the physical and spiritual power of the figure, and the lack of a glove is both humanizing and intimate. In contrast, the gloved left-hand holds the energized horse in place, indicating both his control over the volatile animal and his ability to unleash the physical power of the horse. The representation of the hands of Napoleon thus emphasizes his ability to control, direct, and unleash the animal. ¹¹²

Furthermore, the horse can be interpreted as the representation of Napoleon's empire and his perceived ability to lead. A concept bolstered by the twisting posture of the figure, which according to Warner, is a dynamic representation of leadership. While moving forward on his upward path, Napoleon twists and looks off as if looking towards his followers or soldiers, pulling them in the direction of his movement. The action of looking back shows the leader as someone who is aware of the people following them and gives the people attention while leading

¹¹¹ Nicholas O Warner, "Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art," *Leadership and the Humanities* 2, no. 1 (March 2014): 19-21.

¹¹² Nicholas O Warner, "Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art," 20-21.

them. Warner believes that these visual symbols help to position a leader in such a way that the viewer is forced to see them as ennobled and justified in their leadership decisions and abilities.¹¹³

In the monuments of General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B. Stuart, the horse is used to both assert their military standing and their perceived power within the Lost Cause and Southern culture. The Stuart monument replicates the twisting posture highlighted by Warner in *Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art*, and by doing so gives the viewer a sense of connection through the physical language of the body. Stuart's body language in the monument clearly depicts him as looking out and slightly back, as if looking back at someone or something. In a historical context, this may have been Stuart looking back at his troops and urging them forward. As suggested by Warner, this is a humanizing anecdote that creates a sense of kinship and connection between the viewer and the monument. A good leader takes into consideration the existence and autonomy of their followers. Therefore, Stuart gazing towards an imagined follower, helps to exemplify or convince the viewer that he is a good leader because of a perceived visual representation of empathy and connectivity to the average person or soldier.

While Stuart's gaze humanizes his leadership ability, his body language attests to his ability to control the power that a leader is given. This can be seen in how his horse's forward movement is easily kept in check by his left hand gripping the double reins, while his right-hand holds his saber at his side. The ease with which the figure controls the explosive-looking animal attests to the power that Stuart was supposed to have. Like the way in which David depicts Napoleon keeping his horse in check, Stuart symbolically holds both the ability to control and unleash the animal. The rider, in this case, General J.E.B. Stuart, is the controller of an

¹¹³ Nicholas O Warner, "Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art," 20-21.

animalistic power, thus able to direct if, how, and where that power is unleashed. A notion that would be essential to a soldier, and especially a cavalry general. Comparing Stuart's monument to David's famous *Napoleon crossing the Alps* illustrates how the symbolism in the equestrian depiction is a historical theme, and a secondary subject matter category.

While an artwork may reflect the power of a leader, it may also help shape one's perception and relationship towards that person.¹¹⁴ Confederate monuments both represent the legacy and power of the Lost Cause, while also helping build upon that power through their representation. Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* determines that power and knowledge are self-reliant systems that are working in conjunction to create power.¹¹⁵ Foucault denies that there is an epicenter to this power, but rather it comes from what he calls "a strategic distribution of elements of different natures and levels."¹¹⁶ These different elements and factors can be identified as the visual, oral, and written rhetoric of the Lost Cause. The interchangeable relationship between power and knowledge is often set within parameters of control, coercion, and influence; especially when considering oppositional politics.¹¹⁷ The Lost Cause fought against emancipation, then Reconstruction, and to deny equality it used tactics of control and coercion to convince white Southerners that the antebellum South was the pinnacle of Southern culture and racial ordering. The Lost Cause, thus, held power in the South through its monopoly on systems of knowledge, i.e., education, politics, and religion.

Confederate monuments act as the visual representation of Lost Cause, and when viewed through the lens presented by Foucault, they are one of the elements of "strategic distribution"

¹¹⁴ Warner, "Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art," 23.

¹¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House US, 1995), 296.

¹¹⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 307.

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Simons, *Foucault and the Political*: (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1995), 30.

that go into creating power for the Lost Cause. Domby notes in *The False Cause* “The creation of Confederate monuments was thus a larger project to celebrate the success of white supremacy, remind the public of the proper order of things, maintain white racial unity, and cement control in the South’s politics and upon the landscape.”¹¹⁸ Like the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius the monuments to Lee and Stuart functioned as visual tools of power, control, and coercion over their respective population. Therefore, it can be inferred that in some instances art can be both a part of representing power as well as an element in creating said power through representation.

The Confederates and the Lost Cause were not the first to use representation as an avenue to generate power; ancient cultures also used representation to convey meaning in their time. The intentional creation and placement of statues and monuments in ancient Greece and the Roman empire was an effort to legitimize the power of those in control of the government.¹¹⁹ The same theme and tactic to create power through visual aid is identifiable in colonizing European countries’ representation as well. Therefore, those who wish to convey, grasp, or create power use artistic representation paired with the intentional use of space to convey messages of superiority both consciously and subconsciously to the masses. The Confederates simply echoed a legacy that is observable throughout western history and in different imperial governments. The main difference is that while others may have been commemorating victories or solidifying the sovereignty of a ruler, the South instead created power through representation despite their loss. As a result, the Lost Cause has rewritten the collective memory of many generations of Americans and expanded both the rhetoric of white supremacy and systemic racism into the twenty-first century.

¹¹⁸ Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory*, 20.

¹¹⁹ Lucia Nováková, Erik Hrnčiarik, and Miroslava Daňová, “Equestrian Statues in Antiquity: City, People, Monuments,” *Studia historica Nitriensia* 22, no.2 (2018): 443.

Analysis of Space

While the figural design of the monuments helps to convince the viewer of the perceived power of the person being depicted, the physical space the monument exists in also plays an important part in conveying and creating power. It is through the presence and use of an object in a space that meaning can be created. In this case, both monuments have now been removed from Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, but at one point the original intent and use of the space helped convince the viewer of the monuments' significance and the power of the Confederacy.

The space that these monuments once occupied was originally the capital of the Confederacy, and the collective public memory of Monument Avenue was shaped by it being seat of the Confederate government. The memory of a space plays a key role in understanding the intent and meaning of said space. In an analysis of Alcatraz Island and the Native American Occupation from November of 1969 to June of 1971, authors Cynthia Duquette Smith and Teresa Bergman consider how public memory plays an important role in how a viewer recalls or views historical places and events. Smith and Bergman explore public memory as, "a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future."¹²⁰ They argue that the experience of Alcatraz Island is greatly shaped by the sensorial experience of the space and that because of the physicality of the prison, the visitor is far more likely to recall the space as a penitentiary and not the site of one of the more important Indigenous resistance protests.¹²¹ Therefore, in the same way that Indigenous

¹²⁰ Cynthia Duquette Smith and Teresa Bergman, "You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space," In *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, et al (University of Alabama Press, 2010), 164.

¹²¹ Duquette Smith and Bergman, "You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space," 183.

resistance is often overlooked on Alcatraz, the visitor to Richmond, Virginia may also overlook the history of the space, and, as is the case with Alcatraz, replace the memories of enslavement with that of celebration and national pride.

How a physical space is utilized is of a great importance to the collective memory of that space, the people who inhabited it, and the visual representation present in it. In ancient societies, like Greece and the Roman empire, there was a pointed use of public sculpture and statuary to convey messages regarding those in power; and to reinforce the point being made by those monuments there was an emphasis placed on public speaking near the sculptures.¹²² Comparably, the South also placed great importance on the transmission of information via public intercourse. The two main modes of public communication used in both antiquity and the post-American Civil War South were through public oration and the written word. Confederate monuments intentionally provided a platform for both these modes of communication. The monuments themselves became the location of the written word via their engraved plinths and then they became the gathering place for different forms of oration that supported and furthered the ideology of the Lost Cause.

According to Maurie D. Mcinnis in “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power,” the use of the Confederate monuments as facilitating sites for the spread of the Lost Cause was essential to sustaining the influence and power of white supremacy. Similar to how the visual elements of public sculptures add to their perceived power when seen through Foucault’s perspective, the physical space in which they reside also functions as a component of the strategic distribution that constructs their power. Mcinnis states, “Even more important than

¹²² Lucia Nováková, Erik Hrnčiarik, and Miroslava Daňová, “Equestrian Statues in Antiquity: City, People, Monuments,” *Studia historica Nitriensia* 22, no.2 (2018): 435.

the visual repetitions was the way in which both the Virginia Washington Monument and (later) the Lee Monument were used as performative sites of white power before, during, and after the war.”¹²³ Not only did utilizing the Confederate monuments as sites to practice the rhetoric of the Lost Cause create power, but it also helped control and direct the mindset of white Southerners. Another author, Stuart Towns, in *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause* explores how public oration was central to the building of collective memory after the Confederacy’s defeat in the American Civil War. Towns, in agreement with Mcinnis, states “Living in ‘those dark days’ of defeat, a destroyed social system, a crushed economy, a topsy-turvy labor system, orators of the South created a glorious antebellum era worthy of King Arthur and his knights and Walter Scott’s tales of old Scotland, and a cause that was lost, but not forgotten; gone, but justified and vindicated.”¹²⁴ Therefore, the performance of white supremacy at and via the monuments in Richmond, Virginia reinforced and furthered the message of the Lost Cause.

The unveiling of the General Robert E. Lee Confederate monument is an example of how public performances influenced and shaped the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. Mcinnis notes that the “The unveiling itself was accompanied by speeches, orations, and prayers, and the newspapers for days were filled with biographies of Lee, as well as extensive coverage of all topics related to the Confederacy.”¹²⁵ The parade that accompanied the unveiling featured around twenty thousand former Confederate and lasted about two hours; the celebrations themselves lasted three days. The date of the unveiling, May 29th, 1890, later became an annual reunion of

¹²³ Maurie D. Mcinnis, “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power,” *Studies in the History of Art, Symposium Papers LVIII: The Civil War in Art and Memory* 81 (2017): 135.

¹²⁴ Stuart W. Towns, *Enduring Legacy: Rhetoric and Ritual of the Lost Cause*, (University Alabama Press, 2012) 67.

¹²⁵ Maurie D. Mcinnis, “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power,” 137.

Confederate celebration and lasted until 1932.¹²⁶ According to Mcinnis “In the Lee Monument white Richmonders had a new symbol of white supremacy, and the military parades were a powerful reminder of the violence and racial control that had existed before the war and that were soon reinstated throughout the South.”¹²⁷ It was through Confederate monuments and the performances centered around them that white Southerners were able to reestablished and reinforced their white supremacist identity.

The use of space as a location for identity building is more closely observed in museum studies, but in the instance of Monument Avenue there is a discernable connection between the construction of identity and the use of space. Jay Rounds argues in his article, “Doing Identity Work in Museums,” that museum visitors utilize the exhibition space as a place to create and practice identity while also receiving peer feedback and validation.¹²⁸ Rounds states “The dynamics of identity work are thus created by the tension between the self-conscious mind that seeks the meaning of one’s life, and the necessity of acting in the external world in order to be able to live at all. An identity is a vision of the proper way to live one’s life, not only for oneself, but also for other people, other creatures and whatever else exists in the external world to which that identity defines a duty.”¹²⁹ While Rounds is considering the diverse potential of museums to help facilitate identity work, the concept of identity work when applied to the physical space of Monument Avenue would contrast with that diversity. Instead of facilitating growth, the use of Confederate monuments as sites to practice the rhetoric of the Lost Cause reinforced the

¹²⁶ Maurie D. Mcinnis, “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power,” 137.

¹²⁷ Maurie D. Mcinnis, “‘To Strike Terror’: Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power,” 140.

¹²⁸ Jay Rounds, “Doing Identity Work in Museums,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 49, no. 2 (April 2006): 133-135.

¹²⁹ Jay Rounds, “Doing Identity Work in Museums,” 135.

ideology of white supremacy and normalized its existence amongst the white Southern populace for generations to come.

Chapter Conclusion

The General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B Stuart equestrian monuments are the visual representations of the Lost Cause and white supremacy. The monuments draw upon a long historical tradition that utilizes equestrian monuments as tools to communicate power, enforce imperialism, and further colonization. Using Erwin Panofsky's approach to iconography the Lee and Stuart monuments are the primary subject matter, or artifacts being examined. Then the stories and allegories found within them, such as the history of equestrian monuments, are the secondary subject matter. Therefore, the final step in Panofsky's approach to iconography dictates that the synthesis of the primary subject matter with the secondary subject matter creates intrinsic meaning for an object.¹³⁰ The intrinsic meaning of the equestrian monuments of Lee and Stuart is that they act as tools of power to reinforce white supremacy and further the goals of the Lost Cause.

¹³⁰ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, "Iconography – Iconology: Erwin Panofsky," 109.

Chapter 4: Modern Reinterpretation and Counternarratives

Confederate monuments are slowly making their exit from American culture and representation, but they have left a lasting mark on public art monuments and the representation of historical figures. The influence of the Lost Cause shaped culture in the United States, especially in Southern states, and while these monuments are slowly being removed, their influence is still present. One artist, Kehinde Wiley, directly draws from the monument of General J.E.B Stuart and uses its figural representation and symbols to address systemic racism. Wiley, who traditionally is a portrait painter, first unveiled *Rumors of War* (Figure 4) on September 27th, 2019, in Times Square in New York City. The sculpture was later relocated to its intended home in Richmond, Virginia in December of 2019.¹³¹ *Rumors of War* was commissioned by the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, where it now stands, only a couple blocks away from Monument Avenue and the monument that influenced its design, the General J.E.B. Stuart monument (Figure 2).¹³² The following will extrapolate on how *Rumors of War* is a modern reinterpretation of Confederate Monuments, and how the work criticizes the existence of Confederate representations through the use of visual symbolism that is both historically and contemporary.

Kehinde Wiley

Unlike the monuments to the Confederacy, *Rumors of War* is created by a Black man and is the visual representation of a Black man. The creator, Kehinde Wiley, is an African American

¹³¹ Virginia Museum of Fine Art, "Sculpture Created by Kehinde Wiley for VMFA," (Virginia Museum of Fine Art,).

¹³² Susan Stamberg, "'Rumors of War' in Richmond Marks a Monumentally Unequal America," *PR* (Last modified June 25, 2020,).

artist from Los Angeles, California. Wiley began practicing art at an early age and studied in after school art classes. When Wiley was twelve, in 1989, he traveled to the Russia to participate in a program that sponsored fifty American children to live in the U.S.S.R. and study art and the Russian language.¹³³ In 1999, Wiley earned his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, and then his MFA from Yale in 2001. It wasn't until his studies at Yale that he began exploring topics relating to identity and sexuality.¹³⁴ At Yale Wiley started to see painting as a political act, which led him to question how and why subject matter in both current and art historical representation were lacking in examples of Black individuals.¹³⁵ Wiley began exploring the depiction of the Black individuals, especially integrating the imagery of Black people into classically idealized portraits with a modern twist. He concentrates on how classical European paintings of noblemen, royalty and aristocrats positioned the figure, both in pose and materiality. On his website, Wiley states, "Most of the backgrounds I end up using are sheer decorative devices. Things that come from things like wallpaper or the architectural façade ornamentation of a building, and in a way, it robs the painting of any sense of place or location, and it's located strictly in an area of the decorative".¹³⁶ The removal of the subject from recognizable space can be seen as a way of focusing the viewer on the figure alone and what symbolism the figure may hold. The symbolism present indicates the juxtaposition of high art, through European design, with someone who is not usually the subject of high art.

Wiley's painting, *Portrait of Andries Stilte II* from 2006 (Figure 5), exemplifies the use of high art symbolism paired with Black representation. In *Andries Stilte II* a Black man is posed

¹³³ Alexandra Duncan, "Kehinde Wiley Artist Overview and Analysis," Ed. by The Art Story Contributors, *The Art Story* (Last modified August 6, 2018).

¹³⁴ Alexandra Duncan, "Kehinde Wiley Artist Overview and Analysis," Ed. by The Art Story Contributors, *The Art Story* (Last modified August 6, 2018).

¹³⁵ "About," (Kehinde Wiley Studio).

¹³⁶ "About," (Kehinde Wiley Studio).

with his left foot leading and his right foot behind, balancing his weight between the two, his left hand is on his hip, his right hand atop a cane, and nose pointed upwards. The man's attire is loose fitting and draped, with a white t-shirt and baggy blue jeans that bunch at the top of reddish-brown boots. While his clothing is more modern in style, the way that Wiley portrays and renders the depth of the material creates a sense or feeling of historical clothing. The background is made entirely of stylized floral wallpaper, which serves to frame the figure of the man, making the figure the focal point. The piece is then complimented by a gold rococo frame that solidifies the cohesion between contemporary and historical.

In exploring his use of contrast between elements of pop culture and high art, Zoya Kocur and Susan Cahan in *Rethinking Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, state, "Wiley's awareness of historical exclusion is always evident throughout his work. Through his juxtaposition of 'highbrow' western and European portraiture of the 18th and 19th C with contemporary imagery, what emerges is an expression of the vitality and heroism of urban black men and a critique of society's modes of exclusion and control."¹³⁷ Thus, through his use of content that is relative to art history, such as patterns and poses, Wiley creates a connection to historical depictions that were once traditionally representative of white, upper-class aristocracy. In doing so, Kehinde Wiley challenges the norms concerning Black representation in fine art through a visual narrative that aligns Black identity with traditional western symbols of power and social ranking. In challenging these norms, he is addressing the absence of Black representation in western cannon and how symbols of power and social ranking were reserved for white people alone. Thus, Wiley replaces the white individual, who is the perceived holder of

¹³⁷ New Museum, *Rethinking Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*, ed. by Susan Cahan and Zoya Kocur, (Routledge, 2011), 228.

power with someone who historically held less power in western society, which highlights the historical racial inequality found in art and culture.

Visual Analysis

Measuring at twenty-seven feet in height and sixteen feet in width, *Rumors of War* stands outside the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, on Arthur Ashe Boulevard, a mile, and a half from where the General Robert E. Lee and General J.E.B Stuart monuments on Monument Avenue once stood.¹³⁸ In an interview with the New York Times, the director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Alex Nyerger, states in reference to *Rumors of War*, “The oppression of African Americans is still pervasive in our society. But if anyone is going to take on the mantle of trying to change the conversation and make things better for the present and the future, I can think of no better place to start.”¹³⁹ The following will consider how *Rumors of War* addresses the oppression of Black Americans, and how it uses references to Confederate monuments to both challenge and change the conversation regarding their existence.

Rumors of War is one of Wiley’s first sculptural works, and like his two-dimensional work, his three-dimensional works consider the intersections of identity, race, and culture. Similar to his paintings, Wiley is considering representation and identity in *Rumors of War* (Figure 3) and constructs a visual narrative; a narrative that historically would have excluded Black individuals. In *Rumors of War*, Wiley is drawing upon the historical tradition of equestrian sculptures, but instead uses the representation of a Black man to juxtapose historical context with contemporary identity and systemic racism.

¹³⁸ Directions from Robert E Lee Memorial, Richmond, VA 23220 to Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N Arthur Ashe Blvd, Richmond, VA 23220. Map. Google Maps.

¹³⁹ Reggie Ugwu, “Kehinde Wiley’s Times Square Monument: That’s No Robert E. Lee,”1.

As stated previously, white supremacy is a culturally ingrained ideology in the United States. The Lost Cause functioned as an agent of white supremacy by rewriting history to favor the white enslaver. Using Foucault's perspective on power, it can be surmised that white supremacy as a guiding ideology in the United States is the result of how power and knowledge worked together to create a standard of 'normalcy.'¹⁴⁰ This standard dictates the superiority of the white individual over BIPOC individuals, and is a concept deeply rooted in colonization. Confederate monuments, as visual representations of the Lost Cause, are tools of white supremacy to reinforce the narrative of the Lost Cause in the United States. Kehinde Wiley is taking the visual elements of Confederate monuments and superimposing a Black person in place of the white enslaver. In doing so, Wiley subverts the narrative of the Lost Cause and white supremacy, challenging the symbols of power through claiming them as his own. The following will consider how Wiley uses symbolism to reference Confederate monuments, and through *Rumors of War* presents a critique of visual culture and its perpetuation of systemic racism and white supremacy.

Similar to Kehinde Wiley's paintings of Black masculinity, the bronze equestrian sculpture *Rumors of War* (Figure 4) presents an interesting narrative that helps direct the viewer towards thinking of race in the United States critically. The Black man that is featured in the sculpture seems to be frozen in time as he reins in his massive horse that seems to be exploding with energy. The man holds the reins in his left hand and looks back over his right shoulder while gripping the back of his saddle with his right hand. The man stares off into the distance, as if looking at someone or something behind him. His cornrowed hair is pulled back in a high ponytail, he wears a hooded sweatshirt, ripped jeans, and Nike sneakers. While his attire may

¹⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Random House US, 1995), 304.

seem plain when compared to the power and strength of the charger Wiley intentionally depict his figure in modern day clothes. The clothing style is called streetwear, and while it may seem ordinary, the clothes are imbued with cultural connotations and meanings, especially as it relates to lower-class symbols of wealth and the Black community. Symbolically, streetwear is a reclamation of power through the rejection of westernized norms of fashion and is an integral part of Black American identity and culture.

Now, while Foucault highlights the prevalence of power in social structure, he also suggests that where there is power there is also resistance. In Jonathan Simmons' analysis of Foucault's argument regarding power and resistance, Simmons suggests that resistance always occurs in reaction to the power and knowledge binary.¹⁴¹ In the example found in *Rumors of War*, Kehinde Wiley's choice to represent the Black man in streetwear is an indication of resistance. Streetwear is an example of how culture creates meaning through visual representation, and in this instance, streetwear helps the wearer to explore counterculture through self-adornment. According to King ADZ and Wilma Stone, streetwear is a fashion trend that started as a sub-cultural style and then grew into a multi-billion-dollar industry.¹⁴² The origins of its style developed from lower-class associated clothing, such as sportswear, workwear, and combat wear. As a symbol though, streetwear was the culmination of the human reaction to the sub-urban environment.¹⁴³ King ADZ and Wilma Stone assert that within streetwear there is a reaction to different issues, such as racism, sexism, domestic violence, class, religion, issues of sexuality, and many different forms of oppression and or discrimination.¹⁴⁴ ADZ and Stone

¹⁴¹ Jonathan Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, (Taylor & Francis Group, 1995), 83.

¹⁴² King Adz and Wilma Stone, "A Definition of Streetwear," In *This Is Not Fashion: Streetwear. Past, Present and Future*, (Farnborough: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 23-31.

¹⁴³ ADZ and Stone, "A Definition of Streetwear," 24.

¹⁴⁴ ADZ and Stone, "A Definition of Streetwear," 24.

state, “It is, for example, paramount to remember that street culture was born out of feelings of powerlessness and alienation, and we should examine how that in turn might affect global justice.” Streetwear, when viewed through a critical lens then asserts a visual resistance through fashion, subverting the mainstream expectations regarding fashion.

A distinct narrative arises when comparing *Rumors of War*, and its use of streetwear, to the J.E.B. Stuart monument and the Confederate uniform. In the Stuart monument, one can see that J.E.B. Stuart is represented in his full Confederate cavalry uniform; a uniform that is emblematic of the Confederacy’s fight for the continuation of slavery and worn by a man who committed genocide against Indigenous peoples. In contrast, the streetwear found in *Rumors of War*, according to the definition explored by ADZ and Stone, represents the fashion of counterculture and Black resistance. Thus, Wiley uses the absence of the Confederate uniform to instead install symbols of Black resistance through fashion. Through his elimination of the Confederate uniform, Wiley subverts the power of the Lost Cause, and thus constitutes a representation that places the Black body and voice in a place that had originally been occupied by a white supremacist symbol and narrative.

Kehinde Wiley’s play on the concept of representing power and subverting the narrative draws directly from Confederate monuments and in this instance the example of the General J.E.B. Stuart monument (Figure 2) from Richmond Virginia.¹⁴⁵ When visiting Richmond, Virginia in 2016 Wiley found himself confronted by the equestrian statues of Confederate generals and their associations with slavery and systemic racism.¹⁴⁶ In an interview with the New York Times, Wiley states, “I felt that there had to be some way to turn this ship around,” and,

¹⁴⁵ Jasmine Weber, “In Times Square, Kehinde Wiley Unveils a Massive Monument to Black Identity,” *Hyperallergic*, (September 27, 2019).

¹⁴⁶ Virginia Museum of Fine Art, “Sculpture Created by Kehinde Wiley for VMFA,” (Virginia Museum of Fine Art,).

“Maybe I can’t do it as one person, but this is my way of intervening, of saying ‘Enough already.’”¹⁴⁷ *Rumors of War*, is thus a direct response to the racist representation found in Confederate monuments. According to Sarah Beetham in her critical analysis, *From Spray Cans to Minivans: Contesting the Legacy of Confederate Soldier Monuments in the Era of ‘Black Lives Matter’*, the Confederate monument does not serve as a reminder of lives lost, but rather as memorial to the Lost Cause.¹⁴⁸ Beetham states, “In this context, a monument to Confederate soldiers served as a reminder of a regime formed to preserve slavery, enforce white supremacy and impose racially motivated violence on black Southerners”.¹⁴⁹ Thus, in using imagery so closely tied to racist ideology, Wiley is challenging oppressive systems of representation and reclaiming power over depictions that for Black individuals had previously been tools of oppression.

Now as previously stated, equestrian statues and monuments have existed throughout history as symbols of power, especially symbols of imperialism and colonization. *Rumors of War*, like the other monuments and sculptures previously examined operates as a symbol of power. The intention of said power though is different when compared to equestrian Confederate monuments. As noted, *Rumors of War* is a direct reinterpretation of the General J.E.B Stuart monument, and because it is identical, the horses are depicted with the same movement and stance. In both the Stuart monument and the Wiley sculpture, the horse is depicted as if frozen mid stride, with its right front leg held aloft. Therefore, in the same manner as the Stuart

¹⁴⁷ Reggie Ugwu, “Kehinde Wiley’s Times Square Monument: That’s No Robert E. Lee,” *The New York Times*, (September 27, 2019).

¹⁴⁸ Sarah Beetham, “From Spray Cans to Minivans: Contesting the Legacy of Confederate Soldier Monuments in the Era of ‘Black Lives Matter,’” *Public Art Dialogue* 6, no. 1 (2016): 9-33.

¹⁴⁹ Beetham, “From Spray Cans to Minivans,” 19.

monument, the stance of the horse in *Rumors of War* is reminiscent of other historical equestrian depictions, such as the sculpture of Marcus Aurelius (Figure 10).

In the previous chapter it was concluded that the raised hoof found in Stuart's mount is a part of a larger tradition that recalls ancient sculptures, and in particular, the sculpture of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. In the instance of Marcus Aurelius, the raised hoof was a part of a popular motif that at one time depicted a conquered figure beneath the horse. Donald M. Reynolds in *Monuments and Masterpieces: Histories and Views of Public Sculpture in New York City* notes that most depictions have disregarded the conquered figure, but the leg is still raised to signify victory and power.¹⁵⁰

Now, while *Rumors of War* does not feature a figure beneath the horse, the positioning and stance of the horse echoes that of the Emperor's and Stuart's. While Stuart never featured a figure beneath his horse, if it had the monument may have included an enslaved Black individual or even a Native American. In comparison, Wiley's sculpture features a Black individual riding the horse, and not beneath the horse. Historically, especially within western history, it would have been more likely for the Black man to be the conquered rather than the conqueror. Thus, Wiley subverts a once historically popular narrative and creates a counternarrative that reimagines power and representation.

In *Rumors of War* the body language of the horse communicates the layered history of the equestrian sculpture. The figure, though, goes against the standards of European depiction and instead of a white ruler, monarch, emperor, general, or soldier, there is instead a modern-day Black man. The man, unlike the depiction of Stuart, twists in his saddle looking back and to the right, and he holds himself in that position by gripping the back of the saddle. His dynamic

¹⁵⁰ Donald Martin Reynolds, "The Equestrian Monument," In *Monuments and Masterpieces: Histories and Views of Public Sculpture in New York City*, (Thames and Hudson, 1997), 112-34.

movement seems to indicate that while the horse is moving forward, the rider is looking back. The man looking backwards may be both a literal and figurative choice by the artist.

In the instance of Stuart, as well as Lee, the gaze is meant to humanize and reference their regard and concern for their troops. Stuart, like Napoleon in *Napoleon crossing the Alps*, seems to be urging his troops forward through his consideration of their presence. In the case of *Rumors of War*, the man is not a calvary general and there should not be troops for him to look back on. The solid grip of his hand on the back of the saddle creates a sense of resistance; and while the equestrian sculpture of Marcus Aurelius, and the monument of General Robert E. Lee communicate a sense of relaxed command, the man in *Rumors of War* instead holds tension in his body language. Perhaps, rather than the man looking back at soldiers, he is instead looking back on history and observing the events that have accumulated into his present. The tension in his body could be indicative of the generational trauma he holds, as well as the trauma he has experienced as a Black man. Finally, his gaze and backwards movement may be to remind the viewer that history has the potential to repeat itself, thus, it is important to understand the past in order to move forward into a better future.

While the horse is closely linked to Confederate representation, there are other factors to consider when viewing *Rumors of War*. First, aside from the connection to the South, one may consider why it is that Wiley is using classical white European depiction, i.e., the equestrian sculpture, to create a sense of identity and power for Black representation. It would seem counter-productive to use western values of aesthetic to better promote Black identity; but instead, this is where critical theory paired with visual studies helps to better explain systems of value and oppression present within society and culture. According to Apollo Amoko in their introductory article, *Race and Postcoloniality*, colonization placed European modernity at the

apex of human accomplishment and civilization.¹⁵¹ The result of prioritizing European artistic standards is that non-western cultures and societies are seen as less than and their aesthetic values places lower on the scale built by colonizer. Amoko suggests that the influence of colonization determines interactions of everyday life and that ideas regarding race, nationality, gender, sexuality, and other identities are still regarded within the context of the colonial encounter.¹⁵² *Rumors of War*, thus, should be considered within a postcolonial lens, as it uses westernized aesthetic values to better convey the presentation of Black individuals. Wiley uses western art techniques to explore historical depictions of Black individuals and how the modern Black identity has been built, and he states,

And I recognize the complexity that exists with anyone's desire to cut off colonial toxicity, because while we want to celebrate a pure or perhaps imagined African identity, artists at their best navigate multiplicity. We're tricksters. We're able to exist at the crossroads. Africans have evolved the aesthetic of nomads. To be able to create an identity under duress is the defining feature of an African aesthetic, even an African American aesthetic. Look at the blues — this is about how you create grace under fire, and there's something beautiful and terrible about it. It's impossible to create a singular narrative of how modern Africa is evolving, into what identity it will become. It's as complicated as the population is.¹⁵³

Identity is thus multifaceted to Wiley, and he finds that there can be beauty in aesthetic born out of oppression. And as previously mentioned, streetwear is a fashion that was created as a reaction to systemic racism and oppression. Therefore, in *Rumors of War* Wiley utilizes streetwear as a literal and symbolic creation of Black identity in a colonized system of values. Colonization serves to erase culture in non-western peoples and streetwear functions as a rejection of this erasure and instead stands as a symbol of Black American culture and identity.

¹⁵¹ Apollo Amoko, "Race and Postcoloniality," In *The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory* (Routledge, 2013), 131-43.

¹⁵² Apollo Amoko, "Race and Postcoloniality," 131-132.

¹⁵³ Dionne Searcey, "Kehinde Wiley (and His Infinity Pool) Are Ready to Spoil Artists," *The New York Times*, (June 4, 2019).

Therefore, *Rumors of War* functions as an artifact that is derivative of the Black experience and Black identity within American culture and society.

The way that identity is shaped in the United States, especially Black identity, is important when considering how *Rumors of War* acts as a visual counternarrative. According to historian and theorist W.E.B Du Bois, Black identity is ruled by a state of ‘Double Consciousness’, where one may view themselves through the eyes of another. In the same way that the male gaze functions within American visual culture, the inherent white patriarchal gaze also takes precedent subconsciously.¹⁵⁴ As a result, one may first think of their life within a white male context before seeing it as their own as determined by their race, gender, or sexual orientation. So, double consciousness is the inability to first think outside of the colonized white perspective, which inherently sees the Black identity as Other. And as a result, the presence of double consciousness weighs heavily on a community that is still struggling everyday against systematic oppression and racism.

Consequently, it can be proposed that Wiley has created an illustration of double consciousness through the juxtaposition of the rider’s Black identity with the western historical ties of the charger. The charger, with its connection to both Confederate monuments and ancient statuary, signifies the presence of white colonial influence, while the Black man dressed in streetwear represents the fight for self-expression and Black identity outside of western ideal. Additionally, the Black man riding and commanding the horse is indicative of the reclamation of self-governance as it pertains to the Black community in the United States. In chapter three, it was considered how handling a warhorse, such as the one Wiley is depicting, automatically

¹⁵⁴ W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

implies leadership and power.¹⁵⁵ Kehinde Wiley replicates the design of equestrian Confederate monuments and replaces the figure of the white enslaver with a Black man; as a result, *Rumors of War*, like other pieces by Wiley, addresses the historical representation of power and how it has traditionally been held by the white individual.

One final observation that could be reached regarding *Rumors of War* is that the figure depicted upon the war horse is a herald of the times. He, like all Black Americans, exist in a country riddled with systemic racism and police brutality, and while the existence of racism is evident, many choose to ignore it or deny its existence. Thus, racism becomes a ‘rumor,’ and ‘war’ a nod towards the violence enacted on Black people in the United States through white supremacy.

Rumors of War by Kehinde Wiley is an active commentary against the Lost Cause, white supremacy and systemic racism through visual representation. For the Black community it may serve as an example of representation within westernized canon, a rarity in the art world, and as a reminder of what challenges may lie ahead in restructuring representation. And for the white viewer it may help to situate the perspective of the colonized and how they have been forced to survive within this culture. According to Mare Black in *Fanon and Duboisian Double Conscious*, “For the colonizer and for the white Americans, embracing the perspective of the subjugated, marginalized, and silenced populations can introduce white double consciousness. Just as colonized intellectuals can view their colonized perspectives from other viewpoints, so too can whites view themselves from other angles”.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, if a white individual were to

¹⁵⁵ Nicholas O Warner, “Picturing Power: The Depiction of Leadership in Art,” *Leadership and the Humanities* 2, no. 1 (March 2014), 19-21.

¹⁵⁶ Mare Black, “Fanon and Duboisian Double Conscious,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self Knowledge*, (Summer 2007), 7.

view *Rumors of War* with the experiences of the Black community in mind, they might begin to glimpse the impact racism has in the United States.

The Greeks, the Romans, and then later the Lost Cause, used the equestrian monument to communicate the authority of their calvaries and armies, and legitimize the claims to power the individuals depicted in the monuments strove to grasp. The motif of power depicted in equestrian monuments is also found in many other forms throughout history. As previously explored, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* is another instance of power through visual representation. The same can be said of many other paintings, sculptures, and forms of visual artifacts. They all echo the sentiment that power is gained through control, and that control is communicated via the effortless handling of an animal, but in the reality of the physical world it is enacted through the domination of a conquered people.

In *Rumors of War* Kehinde Wiley presents the viewer with the familiar symbols of power and control that has been used in public equestrian monuments since antiquity. Unlike the Greeks, Romans, and Confederates though, Wiley's equestrian depiction is one of rebellion against the conquering colonizer. He takes the history of the equestrian monument and all the associations of its existence and uses it to bring to light the evident inequality, systemic racism, and injustice faced by the Black community today. Through Wiley and *Rumors of War*, the equestrian sculpture, a once well-known symbol of colonization, imperialism, power, and control, can now be seen as a symbol of resistance against a system that upholds white supremacy and systemic racism.

Chapter Conclusion

Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War* exemplifies how the use of westernized aesthetic paired with Black representation creates a dialogue between how art has historically been exclusive and layered with white supremacist values. *Rumors of War* is a in depth consideration of identity, and how Black identity has been constructed through an oppressive colonial system. It connects back to historical statuary, i.e., the Confederate Monument, and the Lost Cause, an ideology that served to erase and minimize the experience of Black American. In creating that connection with the Lost Cause, Wiley brings to the viewers' attention to how the Lost Cause is still prevalent and needs to be addressed within a modern context. Through the lens of both post-colonial theory and Duboisian double consciousness, *Rumors of War* becomes a physical manifestation and critique of the experiences of Black Americans. Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War* is a visual tool, challenging the existence of Confederate monuments, and signaling the need for change within American culture and society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Eight minutes and forty-six seconds...Hands up, don't shoot... Black lives matter... I can't breathe... Eight minutes and forty-six seconds was the initial time believed that Derek Chauvin knelt on the neck of George Floyd until he died of asphyxiation.¹⁵⁷ On May 25th, 2020, Floyd left a store after using a fake twenty-dollar bill, and shortly after was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a police officer, ignored his plea, "I can't breathe." While the rallying call of "Black Lives Matter" had been used in protests for years prior to Floyd's murder, the chant, along with "hands up, don't shoot" became the protest chant heard across the United States of America, as major cities witnessed civil protests on an enormous scale.¹⁵⁸

Prior to Floyd's murder, in March of 2020, Breonna Taylor was shot and killed in her own apartment in Louisville, Kentucky, when unmarked police officers burst into her home.¹⁵⁹ The raid by the officers was entirely based on the inconsistent testimony of a witness, who insisted Taylor's home was a part of a drug operation. Both Taylor and her boyfriend Kenneth Walker were awoken by pounding on their door as police tried to enter the residence. Walker, not knowing who was at the door, armed himself and then shot an officer in the leg when they forced their way into the apartment. In response, ten bullets were fired into the residence. Breonna Taylor, an emergency room technician, was struck five times and died shortly after. She failed to receive medical attention in time as responders instead cared for the officer who had been shot by Walker. Five minutes passed after the arrival of medical responders before it was

¹⁵⁷ Evan Hill, et al, "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody," *The New York Times*, (January 24, 2022).

¹⁵⁸ Derrick Bryson Taylor, "George Floyd Protests: A TimeLine," *The New York Times*, (November 5, 2021).

¹⁵⁹ Richard A. Oppel Jr., Derrick Bryson Taylor, and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, "What to Know About Breonna Taylor's Death," *The New York Times*, (August 23, 2022).

noted that Taylor was mortally wounded.¹⁶⁰ Breonna Taylor was murdered in her own home for a crime she had no part in. Later, Taylor's murder also became a focal point for the protests that would rock the country that summer.

The protests that took place during the summer of 2020 targeted Confederate Monuments, and Monument Avenue in Richmond was central to the backlash. The bases of the General Robert E. Lee (Figure 8) and the General J.E.B. Stuart monument (Figure 9) were covered in graffiti from the protests over the summer. The graffiti ranges from explicit phrases, to ACAB, to 'Black Lives Matter' in large lettering. The message is clear though, protestors viewed these monuments as symbols that align with the violence enacted on Black American. The space the monuments occupied and their intended meaning via the Lost Cause changed and the representations that once served to hide the South's history of slavery instead highlighted it. The true implications of the monuments were revealed as graffiti gradually covered them in text that called out their white supremacist nature. Unfortunately, the protests of the murder of Black people in the U.S. did not prevent the violence from continuing.

Fast forward to this year, in July of 2022, a white man entered a grocery store in Buffalo New York, and murdered ten Black people.¹⁶¹ The mass shooting was live streamed online by the shooter, Payton Gendron, a nineteen-year-old white supremacist. Gendron outlined his intent in an online journal prior to the attack and supported his reasoning with white supremacist ideology. The hate crime was one of domestic terrorism and the murderer specifically targeted elderly Black individuals.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Richard A. Oppel Jr., Derrick Bryson Taylor, and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, "What to Know About Breonna Taylor's Death," *The New York Times*, (August 23, 2022).

¹⁶¹ Aaron Katersky, and Bill Hutchinson, "Buffalo Mass Shooting Suspect 'radicalized' by Fringe Social Media: NY Attorney General," *ABC News*, (October 18, 2022).

¹⁶² Aaron Katersky, and Bill Hutchinson, "Buffalo Mass Shooting Suspect 'radicalized' by Fringe Social Media: NY Attorney General," *ABC News*, (October 18, 2022).

One may think that the above is surely a random occurrence of present-day white supremacist backed violence... It is not. In August of 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, protesters marched through the campus of the University of Virginia at night. The crowd, comprised of neo-Nazis' and white supremacists, carried tiki torches, extended Nazi salutes, and chanted, "Sieg Heil," and "White lives matter," and "Jews will not replace us."¹⁶³ The next day the protestors gathered around the city's Confederate monuments. There a white supremacist rammed a car into a crowd of counter protesters and killed a paralegal named Heather Heyer and injured many others.¹⁶⁴ The display of violence in Charlottesville, VA, exemplifies that in the United States the Lost Cause and White Supremacy is alive and well.

The General Robert E. Lee Confederate monument from Charlottesville, VA, where white supremacist protesters gathered in 2017, was not removed until the summer of 2021. The statue was donated to an African American heritage center to be melted down and remade into a new piece of public art.¹⁶⁵ In Richmond, the General J.E.B. Stuart was the first of the two monuments to be removed. Stuart's monument was removed July 7th, 2020 and placed into storage.¹⁶⁶ The General Robert E. Lee monument followed a year later and was removed September 8th, 2021.¹⁶⁷ It was reported last January that the Lee statue would tentatively be acquired by Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, 333-334.

¹⁶⁴ Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, 333-334.

¹⁶⁵ Eduardo Medina, "Charlottesville's Statue of Robert E. Lee Will Be Melted Down," *The New York Times*, (December 7, 2021).

¹⁶⁶ Henry Graff, "Statue of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart Removed in Richmond," *NBC12*, (Last modified July 7, 2020).

¹⁶⁷ N'dea Yancey-Bragg, et al., "Virginia Removes Richmond's Robert E. Lee Statue, Its Largest Confederate Monument," *USA Today*, (Last modified September 8, 2021).

¹⁶⁸ Livia Gershon, "Richmond's Robert E. Lee Statue Is Headed to a Black History Museum," *Smithsonian Magazine*, (January 5, 2022).

One hundred and fifty-seven years after the American Civil War, Black men, women, and children are still being murdered in the street, in their places of religious practice, in grocery stores, in their homes, in their beds. The above instances of murder and violence are only a few in relation to the larger picture. In a study from 2021, by the nonprofit group Mapping Police Violence, data indicates that Black people are twice as likely to be shot and killed by the police.¹⁶⁹ All this information begs American people to question how this sort of violence and systemic racism is still a large part of our society. It is my hypothesis that Confederate monuments have played a part in the perpetuation of this violence. As visual tools of the Lost Cause, and thus white supremacy, these monuments to enslavers have done their part to carry the violent legacy and ideology of the Confederacy into our present day. The removal of these monuments is the removal of symbols of white supremacy. It is only the beginning, though, as the United States begins to unravel its ingrained structures of systemic racism. We should not only tear down the monuments to our nations enslavers, but also tear down the system that allowed these symbols of hatred to exist in the first place.

¹⁶⁹ Curtis Bunn, "Report: Black People Are Still Killed by Police at a Higher Rate than Other Groups," *NBC News*, (March 3, 2022).

Image Reference



(Figure 1)

Martin Falbisoner, *Statue Robert E. Lee Richmond*, September 7th, 2013, digital image,
Wikimedia Commons.



(Figure 2)

Martin Falbisoner, *Monument Avenue Historic District, Richmond Virginia: The J.E.B Stuart Monument*, September 7th, 2013, digital image, Wikimedia Commons.



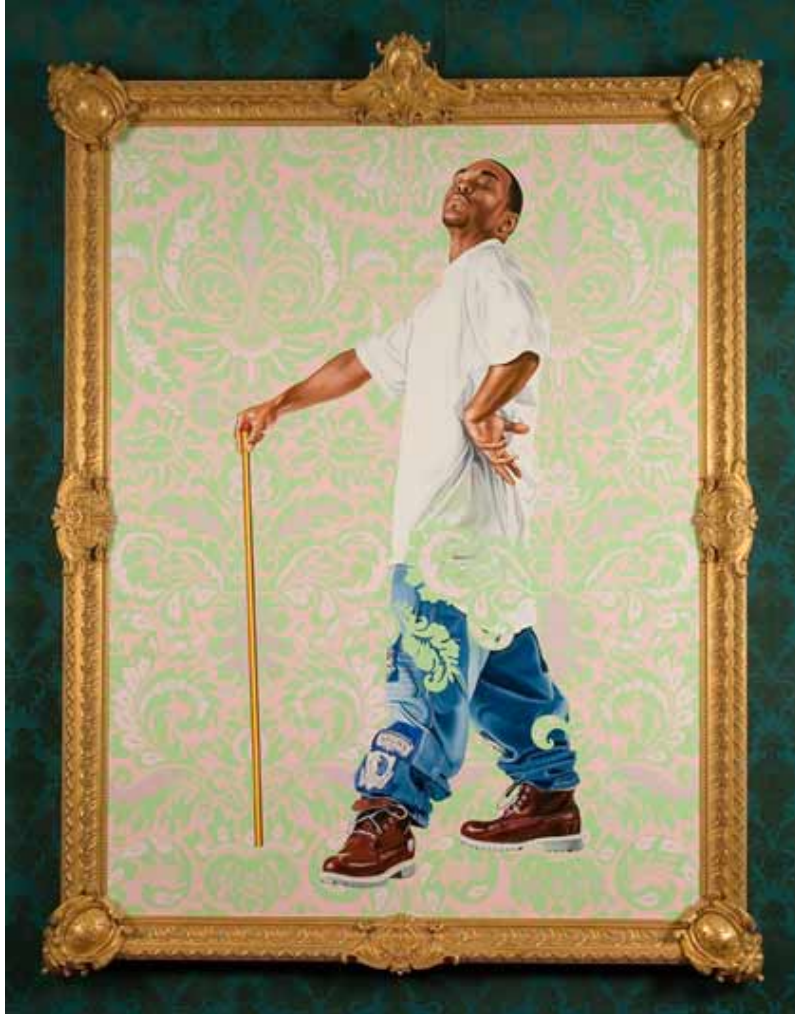
(Figure 3)

Ryan K. Smith, *In Rumors of War, Kehinde Wiley Blends a modern figure with the classic form of a mounted soldier*, May 18th, 2020, digital image, The Newsmagazine of the American Historical Association.



(Figure 4)

Travis Fullerton, *Rumors of War by Kehinde Wiley*, digital image, Virginia Museum of Fine Art, 2019.



(Figure 5)

Wiley, Kehinde. *Portrait of Andries Stilte II*. 2006. Oil and Enamel on Canvas.



(Figure 6)

John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, oil on canvas, Wikimedia commons.



(Figure 7)

Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, 1805, oil on canvas, Château de Malmaison, Paris, France.



(Figure 8)

Vividmirage, *Vandalized Robert E. Lee Memorial on Monument Avenue, National Historic Landmark, Richmond, VA, July 5th, 2020*, digital image, Wikimedia Commons.



(Figure 9)

Tyler Walter, *Photo I took of protests in Richmond, Virginia in relation to the George Floyd protests*, June 1st, 2020, digital image, Wikimedia Commons.



(Figure 10)

Matthias Kabel, *Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius Full View Front Left*, April 8, 2009,

Photograph. Wikimedia Commons.

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