We Are What We Remember

We Are What We Remember:
The American Past Through Commemoration

Edited by

Jeffrey Lee Meriwether
and Laura Mattoon D'Amore

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To my Lovies: J, G, and N and their (grudging!) recognition
of the British army.
JLM

For my family, for time, laughter, and for love.
LMD

"Surviving Sherman's March: The Press and Georgia's Salvation Mythology," by Janice Hume and Amber Roessner, was published previously in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 86 no. 1 (Spring 2009): 119-137. This article is reprinted here with permission of the journal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part Two: Producing the Mythic Past

Part Three: Women's Participation in Commemorative Practice

Part Four: Commemorating Space and Place

Part Five: Re/Creating Ideology in Commemorative Practices

PREFACE

JEFFREY LEE MERIWETHER

When Joe Rosenthal photographed the raising of the United States flag on Mount Suribachi on 23 February 1945 (the likeness of which graces our book cover in a reimagined 1945 United States Treasury war loans advertisement), it was indeed a gift from above. This was not the first American flag to fly over Iwo Jima, but its photograph certainly is the better known. In fact, the photograph achieved instant fame, for it symbolized, and its Marines and sailors personified, all that the United States had been fighting for in the Pacific. The media and the public appreciated this serendipity, thereby endowing the event and its photographic proof with meaning.[1] That Rosenthal had not posed the shot made it all the more important to a war effort and a nation that believed in fortune smiling down. The flag raising on Suribachi serves as a place of memory, or a *lieu de mémoire*, in the minds of many Americans. It acts as a vessel for the thoughts and feelings surrounding Americans' understanding of the war effort in the Pacific and the eventual American victory. The United States had allies serving alongside, but this fact hardly matters in the manner in which Americans remember their glorious past.

Historical memory is viscerally challenged when our perceptions of past events, especially glorious periods that reinforce our cultural historical understanding, are undermined by sinister suggestions. In the Iwo Jima image on our cover, replacing the United States flag with the Japanese naval ensign, the Rising Sun, cuts to the heart of how we remember and comprehend the American struggle against Japan. The new flag comes off not as an editorial oversight, for who would make such a mistake, but rather as a deliberate insult to Americans' sacrifices. This passionate reaction goes to the core of the historical memory and commemoration discussion. Perception is reality, and this reality further informs and shapes consequent perceptions and historical memories. Commemoration and memory shape who we are, thus shaping our relationship to the rest of the world.

It is the discomfort that emerges from the altered image that we wish to draw attention to. Perhaps the viewer does a double take, or fills with confusion, frustration, anger—or even uncertainty that their memory of the original image is faulty. Americans invest their identities in their commemorations. They

symbolize the past, and give credence to the present. They remind people that their ancestors have done something good, or brave. But they also, often, blindly trust those representations. An image of a flag raising over Suribachi is endowed with meaning: the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and this was the American response. All of the historical context, the nuance, the weight of the decision to enter WWII and the Pacific theater, and ultimately the United States' decision to drop bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are lost beneath the surface of this veneration. Commemoration connects us to the past, and reminds us of a history that we may, or may not, want to emulate. But commemoration is biased, lying between layers of individual and collective interpretation of significance, detail, and meaning.

Rosenthal could not have posed the Marines and sailors more gloriously, all the more to seal the image and its meaning in the American psyche. Just outside Arlington National Cemetery this image is cast in bronze, recreated in a monument. Philippe Ariès argues that the United States specializes in the cult of heroism,[2] and this Marine Corps Memorial (also known as the Iwo Jima Memorial) only reinforces this reality, for it serves as a place of memory, a physical spot that Americans can visit, touch, and treat as a conduit to the historic event. The historical space enables Americans to become one with the event, and hence the nation's glorious past, thereby reinforcing the power of Rosenthal's image. Though the memorial is a copy of a copy—a simulacra of memory that can be touched—and though it dwells thousands of miles from the site of the original act, it "stands in" for "true history" for those who seek to be a part of America's proud past. As the chapters in this book will demonstrate, that past is only as strong as its present, as commemoration is revised and re/membered based on the values of the present more than it is a representation of a historical moment.

There are historical spaces that are less venerated than the Iwo Jima memorial, but which are is commemorated enough that they are preserved and marked. These *lieux de mémoire* may be anywhere. For example, to reach Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Warwick 88, one must drive either through a car dealership, with all the new vehicles on display, or drive around a used clothing superstore. The graveyard is easily missed, contrasting rather drably with the shiny cars on one side and recycling dumpster on the other. In fact, though it is hundreds of years old, the small knoll appears as if it sprung up after the stores were built on the strip. Its diminutive stature cannot compete with the spatial layout of the automobile-driven shopping district. Cemetery 88 is perched atop a small hill at the back corner of the Cadillac dealership (formerly home of the Arnold family). The earliest stone dates from 1808, but for all the area design and redesign, one would not guess that the knoll at one time lay flush with the surrounding acreage (Figures 1 and 2).[3] How do Rhode Islanders remember this spot? Surely references to the Arnold family

Figure 1: View of Cemetery 88 from the dealership parking lot. Photo taken by Jeffrey Meriwether, June 2012.

Figure 2: View from inside the very small cemetery, with the Cadillac sign in the distance.[4] Photo taken by Jeffrey Meriwether, June 2012.

do not generally come to mind when people recall that it is the cemetery in the car dealership. Therefore, the public's historical memory of this location has almost nothing to do with its function prior to the appearance of the strip mall. Rather, the cemetery only serves as a quirky addition to the remembered market-oriented space. In a state beloved for its quirkiness, the cemetery fits perfectly.

Cultural capital derives from those who steer the historical conversation. Its source also lies with the public's perception of an historical event or location's importance. As re/membrance changes, commemoration and re-commemoration occur, layering meaning to create a new historical memory. In this way, perception becomes reality, and those participants in the actual historical event who lost the opportunity to shape public understanding can face a drawn-out battle to reclaim their recollections in a manner that is publicly acceptable.[5]

For the Arnold family in Cemetery 88, the historic site in the middle of a car dealership might not be a lost cause. The cemetery is registered with the state and remains protected, and in a way honored, on its original ground. Layers of historical meaning and understanding can even develop around historical events and institutions that are historically false. His Majesty's Tenth Regiment of Foot, a Lexington, Massachusetts based reenactment regiment, circa 1775, strives to recreate the British army's Tenth Foot during its time in colonial Boston.[6] While the group celebrates the historic regiment, and therefore emulates its 18th century existence, the very nature of reenactment brings with it a modern interpretation of the past. The reenactors cannot help but bring their biases and individual historical understanding and passion to this supposedly accurate portrayal of a regiment in the Boston garrison. These personal approaches are themselves driving historical layering, for the fact that the reenactors are centuries removed from 1775 necessitates a degree of biased interpretation. What is even more interesting is how the reenactment is further shaped and skewed by dominant personalities in the regiment. Even as the soldiers (as they consider themselves) seek to recreate an authentic Tenth Foot, the regiment's original founder, Vincent J.R. Kehoe, set the tone for that authenticity (arguably, his own authenticity) that has remained over the last four decades. Reenactors who interpret the 10th do so based partially upon regimental culture, a culture initially interpreted not by the men of 1775, but by Colonel Kehoe of 1968.

Tenth soldiers further inform their reenactment with an understanding of how the modern British army functions. Officers' messes, held three times each year, recreate a modern British mess, complete with regimental silver, regimental colours, and a loyal toast to Elizabeth II. Beyond the commemoration and layered historical memory of the 1775 regiment, 10th

soldiers have also created a textured memory of their forty-four-year-old regiment, intermingling remembered history of 1775 with the remembered history of the reenacted regiment. Furthermore, in aligning itself with the modern British army, the Tenth reinforms its history in America by the continued celebration of its (imagined) British identity in England. His Majesty's Tenth exists as two *lieux de mémoir* at once: a venue for remembering 1775 *and* Vincent Kehoe's modern reenacting organization. These simultaneous existences further enrich regimental memory, intertwining the present and the past in a never-ending cycle. We are forever inhabiting several historical spaces at once. We are what we remember.

This book explores the texture of memory, the layers of interpretation and meaning that formulate our understanding of the past. To claim that we are what we remember is to interrogate the very notion of truth and accuracy. Our memories, like our commemorations are fallible, and malleable, and they change over time. As our cultural values change, our relationship to our history changes. This book adds new depth to scholarly dialogues about those cultural and historical tensions.

Notes

[1] Original taken from poster for 7th War Loan, Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/95501013/ [Accessed 10 June 2012]; Japanese Naval Ensign, http://farm1.static.flickr.com/30/61229055_50b4d562b4_o.jpg [Accessed 15 June 2012].

[2] Robin Hanson, "The American National Cemetery and the Production of History and Public Memory", *We Are What We Remember: The American Past Through Commemoration* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 19.

[3] WK 88 George H. Arnold Lot, Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries, http://rihc.info/single_cemetery.php?name=WK%2088 [Accessed 6 June 2012].

[4] Photographs of Cemetery 88 in author's collection.

[5] For example, see Anne Reilly's chapter in this book for a discussion of the Wampanoag struggle for representation at Plimoth Plantation, where institutional control of historical memory long overshadowed consideration of racial authenticity.

[6] See Jeffrey Meriwether's chapter in this book for a more complete discussion of the history of The Tenth Foot.

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As with every book, it takes a small village to move it from idea to final product. We want to thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for having faith in this project from the beginning; we felt strongly that this book was a much-needed contribution to the field of history and memory studies, and CSP was unwavering in their support and commitment to our editorial process. We want to thank the contributors to the book, who answered a call for papers, and put their trust in us, as editors, to bring the book to life. It is their hard work, their research, and their cutting edge analyses that made this book as amazing as it is. We had three superb undergraduate research assistants at Roger Williams University: Alex Feldman, who worked diligently on transcribing and conducting interviews and searching databases for us; Mikaela Feroli who read and summarized materials for us; and Wesley Isom who worked fastidiously as our editorial assistant, copy editing, formatting, and helping us move the material into coherent book form. We wish to thank Roger Williams University for their support of this project, by providing funds for professional research and faculty/student research initiatives. Thank you, as well, to the New England American Studies Association, at which we presented early versions of our own chapters at the annual meeting in 2011. The professional feedback, and collegial environment in which to share research was, and continues to be, an invaluable resource for us. And finally, thank you to David Mayers, Scott Magelsson, Sarah J. Purcell, and Jeremy Black for their thoughtful comments on this book. We are honored to be recognized by such esteemed scholars.

INTRODUCTION

LAURA MATTOON D'AMORE

This book project was conceived amidst the Revolution, as Jeffrey and I participated in (him) and observed (me) Revolutionary War reenactors in the Northeast. During this time, we came to realize that the act of commemoration—which reenactors create anew over and over again—is quite revolutionary. Rather than simply passing along knowledge of history, commemoration passes on the knowledge of our present interpretation of the past. As this book shows, commemorative practices are revised and rebuilt based on the spirit of the time in which it is re/created. Historians sometimes imagine that commemoration captures history, but actually commemoration creates new narratives about history that allow people to interact with the past in a way that they find meaningful. That is what underlies "revolution"—revisiting ideas that do not work, and creating a way to change them. As our social values change (race, gender, religion, sexuality, class) our commemorations do, too.

This book is laid out in five parts, representing five critical methodologies for reading the past to address the historical subjectivities inherent in their creation and interpretation. There are underlying similarities between all the chapters in this book, primarily in their critique of the "mystic chords of memory" that we all too often call "history."[7] Current trends in the study of historical memory are particularly relevant to our own present—our biases, our politics, our contextual moment—and strive to name forgotten, overlooked, and denied pasts in traditional histories. Race, gender, and sexuality, for example, raise questions about our most treasured myths: where were the slaves at Jamestowne? How do women or lesbians protect and preserve their own histories, when no one else wants to write them? Our current social climate allows us to question authority, and especially the authoritative definitions of nation, patriotism, and heroism, and belonging. How do we "un-commemorate" things that were "mis-commemorated" in the past? How do we repair the damage done by past commemorations? These are all decidedly modern questions that entirely reimagine the landscape of commemoration as it has been practiced, and studied, before.

Part One: Race and the Development of Commemorative Narrative critiques historical narratives that do not recognize the racism implicit in their own silence. In Chapter One: "Hardtack, Hoopskirts, and Hybridity," Patricia Davis analyzes African American participation in Civil War reenactment in the South. She argues that the Civil War in memory, and especially in reenactment, has reinscribed the "hegemonic history" of white males, all too often making the end of slavery a secondary outcome. Today, black men and women who participate in reenactment have the vocal and symbolic space to clearly articulate slavery's role in the Civil War, while also reaffirming their heritage and pride in the historical agency of their ancestors. Similarly, Julie Humann Anderson argues that white survivors of the U.S.-Dakota War created a "white" collective memory that reinforced the image of innocent white victims attacked by Indians for attempting to achieve a pioneer dream, in Chapter Two: "Memory on the Landscape." The Dakota, who subsequently became branded as brutal and savage, unworthy to live on the land of their heritage, were villainized in this version of history, and effectively concealed Dakota memories and their reasons for going to war. In Chapter Three: "Kake Walk on Kampus," Tanfer Emin Tunc explores the Kake Walk at the University of Vermont between 1893 and 1969, an annual celebration that featured blackface, kinky wigs and high-stepping, and was a sacred collegiate tradition and public re-creation of racist stereotypes of African Americans. And in Chapter Four: "Historic St. Mary's City," Regina Faden discusses how one historic organization is grappling with the realities of their museum's neglected histories of race. Some visitors and scholars, however, question the museum's interpretation. This chapter explores what happens when museums listen to their community, and reevaluate their mission.

Part Two: Producing the Mythic Past, approaches the role of mythmaking in commemorative practice from a practical perspective. Scholars generally accept that our national myths are subjective; this section explores how that process of subjectivity informs collective memory. In Chapter Five: "'And Touched the Face of God…': Memorializing Disaster in the U.S. Space Program," A. Bowdoin Van Riper challenges beloved national myths of heroism that are intertwined with space exploration. Specifically, he analyzes the systematic redefinition of reality as it is manifested across range of official, quasi-official, and unofficial tributes to NASA's fallen astronauts. In Chapter Six: "Alternate History as Countermonument," Rhona Trauvitch characterizes alternate history novels as countermonuments, and argues that alternate history is historically valuable as an accurate account of actual hopes and fears; alternate history serves as commemoration of sentiments and attitudes about the future, making it a literary monument to historical possibility. Janice Hume and Amber Roessner examine the role of the

nineteenth century press in shaping history as it was understood in its present, and as we recall it today, in Chapter Seven: "Surviving Sherman's March." General William Tecumseh Sherman's 1864 "March to the Sea" inspired "salvation stories" in the press that have become part of collective memory in Georgia. Rather than recalling destruction, these accounts focus on the quick thinking and crafty hospitality of townspeople or Northerners' appreciation of the beauty of homes and the charm of Southern women, and provide insight into how demoralized Southerners dealt with defeat. And in Chapter Eight: "A Victory After All," Christine Knauer analyzes how the creation of a Korean War Memorial transformed the war's position in national memory from an unimportant and ambiguous war sandwiched between WWII and Vietnam, to a success story that affirmed a national identity constructed as innately American. The memorial and commemoration celebrations offered closure to a war experience that put the nation's self-image into question.

Part Three: Women's Participation in Commemorative Practice, gives voice to the ways that women have shaped history. This section addresses women's agency in defining their own spaces in U.S. history, taking on creative memorial practices to ensure that their stories are told. In Chapter Nine: "Confronting the Past," Dianna Winslow rhetorically analyzes park sites in Seneca Falls, N.Y., as a national place of remembering that performs a national narrative. Winslow examines the memory art work of artist, educator, and African American feminist Carrie Mae Weems to explore the slippage between the Women's Rights National Historical Park as a state-sponsored site reinforcing dominant cultural versions of social history and public remembering, and the feminist intentions of the site to challenge that cultural memory. In Chapter Ten: "Clio's Handmaids." Lara Kelland considers how participants in the Women's and Lesbian Liberation movements of the 1970s developed memory practices to build identity, movement cohesion, political purpose, and mainstream legitimacy. By conducting original research and developing new archival collections and practices to address the dearth of material on women's and lesbians' histories, activists educated their larger movements through visual projects such as art exhibits, historic postcards, and slide shows, as well as through more formal educational projects such as movement leadership conferences on women's and lesbian history, and mainstream curricular efforts like National Women's History Week. Laura Mattoon D'Amore, in Chapter Eleven: "Patriarchal Boots," imagines the ways in which historical memory is interrupted when reenactment of historical events is compromised by inaccuracy. D'Amore explores the participation of women as British soldiers in Revolutionary War reenactment, suggesting that the participants challenge the status quo by

playing with gender expectations, while also affirming a feminist history of women's participation in public events historically dominated by males.

Part Four: Commemorating Space and Place, offers fresh perspectives on the intersections between contemporary social expectations, and the consecration of land that connects us to a cherished past. Clara Silverstein Schnee explores the challenges faced by modernizing forces at Historic Jamestowne and Plimoth Plantation, in Chapter Twelve: "One Nation, Two Inclusive Founding Stories." She notes that as social and political climates change, so too do the focuses of historic sites, as they strive to maintain relevance to a multicultural public. In Chapter Thirteen, "The Pilgrimization of Plymouth," Anne Reilly describes the early twentieth century reconstruction of Plymouth's waterfront to make it a place of veneration to ensure that the Pilgrims—and, consequently, white, middle-class culture—held a central place in American national identity. By returning the Mayflower landing place to the state in which they thought the Pilgrims found it, the planners attempted to connect with a better, preindustrial American past, and encouraged people to visit America's authentic hometown. In Chapter Fourteen: "Commemoration as Affirmation," Cynthia J. Miller explores Bill Monroe's birthplace and homestead in Rosine, K.Y., and argues that these spaces have become key elements in Western Kentucky's Americana identity. The town is a noted site on the state's Bluegrass, Blues, and Barbecue trail, inscribing Monroe's life onto the landscape and serving to craft the town residents' sense of identity and community.

Finally, in *Part Five: Re/creating Ideology in Commemorative Practices*, contributors examine the way that ideologies of political and religious moments both shape, and are shaped by, commemorative practices. In Chapter Fifteen: "Crusades, Parades, and Revivals," Kevin Doyle examines early American commemoration of November 5, 1605. Picking up the story in the late 1740s, he assesses the fate of the Fifth of November as the Atlantic world, and urban America in particular, suffered through a period angst and uncertainty about their Pre-Revolutionary identity. Looking toward the legacy of Britain in contemporary American culture, in Chapter Sixteen: "Enemies of Independence, Defenders of Patriotism," Jeffrey Meriwether focuses on reenactments of the His Majesty's Tenth Regiment of Foot, one of the regiments present at the Battle of Lexington and Concord. Particularly, Meriwether considers why patriotic Americans would want to play the role of the enemy, and how decades of the regiment's reenactment history informs their knowledge and performance of the past. In Chapter Seventeen: "The All-American Eternal Family," Cynthia Culver Prescott traces changes in Mormon sculptor Avard T. Fairbanks' pioneer sculptures, highlighting shifting American family ideals over some fifty years. She argues that these changes reveal competing sacred and secular family values within the

Mormon church and secular governments, and communities in the American West. Fairbanks' shifting portrayals of Mormon families highlights Latter-day Saints' efforts to assimilate into the broader American society, while remaining true to distinct LDS doctrine and cultural values. And in the final chapter of the book, Chapter Eighteen, "The American National Cemetery and the Production of History and Public Memory," Robin Hanson examines the United States National Cemetery System. Originally created as a temporary solution to war-time casualties, the National Cemetery evolved into a cultural landscape that serves as both a physical and spiritual location for the construction and perpetuation of American ideas about death, citizenship, patriotism, and nationhood. Thus, the public's perception of the National Cemetery as a sacred shrine provides the physical location for our continuing claim to the ownership of America.

Each section of the book adds depth to current dialogues about the interpretation of history, the control of collective memory, and the power that is wielded when commemorating the past. Each author strives to explore what is at stake when social norms change, and commemoration does not. Furthermore, they examine the pressures that interest groups and marginalized people add to discussions about relevant historical representation and storytelling. Far from merely venerating the past, commemoration creates a past that is always already tainted with its present moment, subject to the interpretations of the people who control it, and changed by the subjectivity that audiences bring to it. This book begins to unravel some of the baggage that our cherished narratives impose on American identity.

Notes

[1] Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1861, From His First Inaugural Address.

PART ONE:

RACE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMEMORATIVE NARRATIVE

CHAPTER ONE

HARDTACK, HOOPSKIRTS AND HYBRIDITY: RACE, HERITAGE TOURISM, AND NEW SOUTH NARRATIVES IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL WAR REENACTMENT

PATRICIA DAVIS

The 11th annual reenactment of the battle of Ft. Pocahontas, held in Charles City County, Virginia in May of 2008, displayed most of the elements of a traditional Civil War reenactment: a large, well-maintained battlefield, a sealed-off area under a tent for spectators to gather, converse, and watch the battle, and a small number of vendors selling food, books, t-shirts, and other memorabilia from the event. The scene conveyed a mix of the old and the new that was quite striking, as men, women, and children dressed in antebellum-period attire, talked on cell phones, and sported digital cameras and camcorders. There was a short path leading visitors away from the battlefield toward a small plantation/museum, where a docent casually announced the guided tours taking place every thirty minutes. There was also a long trail leading into the woods beyond the battlefield to the encampment area—the living space where the reenactors congregated before and after the battle, eating hard tack, singing songs, cleaning muskets, and engaging in other acts deemed authentic simulacra of the daily existence of a Civil War soldier.

This reenactment, however, also contained some decidedly *nontraditional* elements. Down the hill from the encampment area, on the north bank of the James River, was a prayer circle made up of approximately thirty African American men and women, all descendants of many of the men who had fought in the battle soon to be reenacted. Some of them wore t-shirts bearing the names and regiments of their ancestors. To the melodic beat of an African drummer, an elderly black woman, evangelist Wanza Mae Snead, led the prayer:

> We need to get this history into our souls so we can tell our children that these people died for them. That's why they have it so easy. There is blood in this ground. We as a people, we [are] a rock. We need to tell our children. How can we tell our children if we don't know? This is the truth, this is history…we need to know we are a *somebody* because our forefathers fought for us to be somebody. We have lost our heritage, but praise God it's coming back…we can commend our forefathers for what they did for us. They had to take the banner and honor the flag. How come we can't take this heritage and pass it to our children? What happened here…was the beginning of freedom.

These types of activities may seem out of place at an event popularly presumed to be the sole province of conservative white males. More than a century's worth of discourses in novels, journals, film, and television have presented a dominant picture of the Civil War as a battle between northern and southern white men. Until the film *Glory* was released in 1989, most people were not even aware of the fact that black men fought in the Civil War, much less of the existence of a small but growing reenactment community, mainly inspired by the film, dedicated to representing the experiences of the mostly-forgotten 216,000 black men who fought for the Union. Nevertheless, this community is indicative of the changing dynamics of Civil War reenactment as African American men "suit up" and participate in battles as United States Colored Troops (USCT) reenactors.

African American reenactment is a relatively new phenomenon that is emerging among increasing numbers of men and women motivated by a desire to (re)claim memories of slavery and the Civil War. The new battlefield narratives that have emerged as a result of their participation have afforded opportunities to reassess the cultural work performed by reenactments in general: the valorization of the Confederate soldier both on and off the battlefield invites us to suspend all of our skepticism about the Confederate cause as irrelevant. Likewise, the discursive focus on values such as valor and gallantry, along with the preoccupation with authenticity and the minutiae of battle, have shifted the performative focus away from the causes and consequences of the war. These activities have helped advance two white-centered, historical visions of the war; that of the Lost Cause, which positioned the southern cause as a valiant struggle against impossible odds, and that of Reconciliation, which situated the war as a brother-versus-brother conflict and represented the postwar era as a reunion of northern and southern whites.[1] Both visions erase black agency. The African American presence in reenactment has brought race back to the fore, recovering its Emancipationist vision.

Figure 1. Prayer Circle at Ft. Pocahontas, Charles City County, Virginia, May 2008. Photograph by Patricia Davis

However, black reenactors' mobilization of these memories extends beyond the need to recognize black contributions to one of the most pivotal eras of American history. As many memory studies scholars have acknowledged, the interpretation, commemoration, and representation of history is as much, or more, concerned with the needs of the present and future as it is with the past.[2] Black men and women who participate in the hobby do so as a means of reconstituting dominant memories foregrounding white masculine heroism into African American-centered memories that can be mobilized in the service of contemporary goals. By refocusing discourses of the war onto the struggle for emancipation, they are able to reposition it as the first pivotal battle in the ongoing social, political, and economic struggles of African Americans. It is their duty, they believe, to articulate the story of vital black participation in the war as a rebuttal to the popular image of blacks as passive beneficiaries of the heroic sacrifices of white men. Along the same lines, black reenactors envision the image of the valiant Civil War soldier as a rebuttal to the stereotypical representations of black men rooted in southern mythology and promulgated by past and contemporary commercial mass media. In working toward these goals, they and their supporters have asserted the relevance of the war in the lives of contemporary African

Americans, and have thus focused their performances on this target audience. Battle reenactment represents the unlikely marriage of black cultural politics to Civil War history.

The product of this "marriage" is a battlefield hybridity that advances new narratives about the war itself, as well as its historiography. Hybridity, a contested but key concept most closely identified with postcolonial studies and cultural criticism, provides a particularly useful analytical tool with which to examine the production of these new memories. As Homi Bhabha has suggested, hybridity entails the mixing of practices at the margins and intersections of dominant culture. It arises out of a set of interventions that entail the appropriation, rearticulation and, ultimately, subversion of dominant cultural practices, along with the power relations that sustain them. In short, hybridity produces a set of counternarratives disruptive of the canon and its exclusions.[3] My usage of the term here goes beyond superficial concerns with the intermingling of black and white bodies on the battlefields, the encampment areas, and the spectator stands. It also encompasses a cultural appropriation both disruptive of the Lost Cause and Reconciliationist hegemony produced through traditional reenactment and assertive of a decentered, diasporic masculine identity distinguishable from the pathological images typically assigned to black men. Moreover, the discourses from which dominant historical narratives derive their authority do not begin and end with the human actors. In Civil War reenactment, the very ground upon which these performances take place constitutes an additional site through which hybridity intervenes in the production of new historical narratives. The presence of uniformed and civilian black bodies on the "hallowed ground" of the Civil War battlefield helps reconstitute it as a hybrid space to which multiple meanings may be assigned. Thus, the hybridity produced through these reenactments extends beyond the corporeal to encompass narrative, identity, and space, enabling black and white men to engage in battle over Civil War memory—both literally and figuratively.

In order to explicate the construction of the new memories enabled by African Americans' entry into battlefield representation, I have divided this discussion into four parts. In the first, I provide the context for these "New South" narratives by examining the different objectives and narratives African Americans bring to traditional reenactment, as well as how these differences provide critical interrogation and contestation of the dominant Civil War memory performed. The second portion of the essay extends this analysis through a discussion of the ways in which hybridity intervenes in the newly negotiable discursive construction of the battlefield landscape as sacred ground. This is followed by case studies of two reenactments; a more traditional festival with diminishing black participation, and one in which African Americans are featured prominently and centrally. Finally, I conclude

with a brief discussion of the current and potential transformations advanced through hybrid reenactments.

In Search of a Usable Past: Black versus Traditional Reenactment

On March 3, 2003, the Kentucky Senate passed a resolution reactivating the 12th USCHA, a reenactment unit based in Lexington. Formed in 2002 as both a reenactment and educational unit of the Camp Nelson Foundation, the group was recognized by the Commonwealth for its contributions in building educational outreach programs focusing on the role of African Americans in the war.[4] Camp Nelson, located a short distance away in the small town of Nicholasville, was a Union Army training depot, refugee camp, and major recruitment center for black soldiers. The reconstruction of these aspects of the site's history is a significant part of the cultural work performed by the group. Their principal concern, as they see it, lies in telling the story of the USCT and refuting common myths about the war propagated by white professional historians. As one of the reenactors from this unit declared,

> Most reenactors exist for battle. Our concern is telling the story of the USCT. We resist 'reenactor' and prefer 'living historians.' This is about being a black male and our image. This story is something to be proud of and needs to be told correctly. Getting out on weekends and rolling around in the dirt…is more for whites. Our mission goes beyond that. Some folks out there don't know. That's what we're here for.

As this vision suggests, African American participation brings a more pedagogical focus to reenactment. Traditional reenactments, which are comprised mostly—if not solely—of white reenactors, are typically marked by a festive atmosphere of parades, pageants, artillery demonstrations, and other celebratory activities. The actual battle lies at the center of these festivities. In contrast, hybrid reenactments, which undertake the project of interrogating dominant history through the recovery of marginalized memories, perform cultural work that disregards the pageantry and spectacle characteristic of traditional reenactment in favor of low-key, smaller scale presentations. This is a very important feature of these reenactments, as the superficiality of traditional reenactment enables less critical readings of the myths associated with the war, while the more pedagogical nature of African American-centered battle reproductions afford spectators opportunities to contest the assumptions of dominant memory.

Many black reenactors view their mission as extending beyond their battlefield performances to encompass uniformed, first-person, living history presentations at schools, museums, juvenile detention centers, and other institutions. They see these venues as more productive in reaching out to African Americans who may be wary of attending battle reenactments. A member of the Camp Nelson unit explained that his group views increasing black interest in battle simulations as their primary duty, tying increased knowledge of this history to a better contemporary reality. Describing their mission as a "cultural shift," he said that, "blacks have seen reenactments as a negative thing, rather than an educational opportunity…it should be seen as an opportunity for blacks. There are negatives, but blacks should see how these negatives affect the present and keep us at a disadvantage. We should arm ourselves against current policies."

Nevertheless, black reenactors' greatest contribution to influencing the dominant memory of the war occurs on and around the battlefield. Through their interactions with spectators in the encampment areas before and after battles, they are able to engage in conversations intended to inform people about the pivotal role black soldiers played in the war. More importantly, reenactments featuring the USCT are more likely to incorporate educational symposia into the featured activities. Visitors are treated to scholarly presentations foregrounding black Civil War history, on such subjects as the black spy network, the Underground Railroad, and the role of the USCT. These reenactments also feature presentations intended specifically to refute the Lost Cause-friendly myth, commonly and deliberately perpetuated through traditional reenactment, that African American soldiers fought for the Confederacy. The discursive focus on educating the public about the little-known service of the USCT illustrates the potential for hybridity at these events to transform these performances from racialized spectacle to pedagogical event.

The pedagogical focus advanced through the presence of African Americans as reenactors and spectators operates in combination with the corporeal performance of uniformed black bodies occupying the sacred space of the battlefield. One of the more significant dilemmas surrounding the recovery of marginalized memory lies in the question of whether the greater disruption of the power of hegemonic narratives occurs through the creation of alternative, separate memories for specialized audiences or through the direct confrontation with dominant memory on its own turf, the Civil War battlefield. For most of the men, the answer is the latter. Through reenactment, forgotten narratives gain fluidity, moving both inside and outside of black communities. When asked why reenactments offered a more productive venue for the representation of African American Civil War history, many reenactors expressed opinions that pointed to the advantages

for both performers and spectators of live performance. Ricky Davis of the 3rd USCT unit said, "History for most folks is a hard sell. Reenactments are flesh and blood—smacks them in the head…it's fun to see people charged up, saying 'I didn't know that.'" James Carney summed up the objective of his reenactment regiment by quoting Confucius: "'What you hear, you will forget. What you see, you will remember. What you experience, you will understand.' This quote personifies us. We invite audience participation."

The subversive potential inherent in African American reenactment is highly fluid, extending beyond the battlefield into other areas of the visitor experience (and, by extension, social life) in ways that are useful. The construction of these new memories does not begin nor end with the battle recreation itself; all aspects of the visitor experience are subject to the imposition of particular interpretations of history. The films shown in the small theaters in the visitors' areas, as well as the books and memorabilia sold inside the gift shops advance historical narratives that are as meaningful as the performances on the battlefield. Just before going into "battle" in Wilmington, North Carolina, George Reid of the 127th Ohio Volunteers (5th USCT) described his habit of venturing into Civil War souvenir shops near the sites of many of the reenactments in full uniform. In discussing the ways in which his appearance presents a rather stark and interesting contrast to the reams of Confederate memorabilia inside the shops, he said that, "We like dispelling [myths] by our own presence. We put on our uniforms and that is the statement—we don't have to *say* anything. I like doing that. I even do it at work." By their very presence, black participants refute the Lost-Cause friendly, white-centered narratives of the war.

As reenactment has become more readily identified with southern culture and the rhetoric of resistance, the last few decades produced the notion that the war was fought for the preservation of states' rights. The dominance of this version has perpetuated and intensified the erasure of memories of the role of slavery in the war. Despite many white reenactors' (primarily Confederate) insistence that race plays no part in their activities and, indeed, played no (or an insignificant) part in the Civil War, racial politics are located squarely within the performances, if expressed only through their attempted silencing. If the role of slavery in the war cannot be completely erased from battlefield narratives, its historical significance must be diminished. It is for this reason that the contention that blacks took up arms for the Confederacy is useful, as it implies the primacy of other, more noble causes, rather than slavery. This diminution of the role of slavery works effectively to construct memories consistent with both the Lost Cause and reconciliationist visions of the war, at the expense of its emancipationist vision. These silences regarding the role of slavery are often performed implicitly, through the focus on authenticity and battle minutiae. However, they are also made

explicit during reenactors' interactions with visitors in the encampment areas. Most Confederate reenactors are quite happy to discuss with visitors their version of the events that precipitated the war, but there is, very often, a distinct reluctance to place slavery at the center of the conflict. Slavery was *a cause*, but not *the cause,* is the typical response given before the launch into the stock explanations of states' rights and taxation. This deflection typically forecloses any further discussions of slavery. Moreover, the myth that African Americans took up arms and fought for the Confederacy has recently become pervasive at traditional reenactments, not only in the verbal discourses advanced by the reenactors, but also in the forms of books on display and for sale in the sutlers' areas. The greater the black presence at reenactments, the scarcer these stock explanations became.

In addition to the production of critical counternarratives, hybridity intervenes in these performances in yet another important way. As many cultural scholars have noted, African Americans have continually appropriated representations from commercial culture as means of reconstructing them for their own meanings and uses, which includes transgression of the cultural limitations and boundaries imposed upon their identities.[5] African American participants use reenactment as a means of constructing a diasporic identity that represents a combination of their historical experiences. Writing on Afro-Caribbean identity, Stuart Hall articulates a notion of cultural identity, constituted within representation that is defined "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity." Diasporic identities, he suggests, are those "which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference."[6] It is of this aspect of hybridity that the prayer circle described at the beginning of this chapter is illustrative. Black reenactments enable participants to construct and represent the multiplicity of their cultural "presences" (to use Hall's term): African and American. In addition to the integration of such African traditions as prayer circles and the attendant invocation of ancestors, many of the men described their reenactment participation in terms of a desire to reconstruct Civil War memory in the vein of an older tradition, that of African warriors. At the same time, in revising dominant narratives to reflect the USCT's role in the preservation of the Union, they are engaging in the hobby as a means of asserting a sense of belonging to the national community. This underscores what is, perhaps, the greatest irony of African American participation in reenactment: while white Confederate reenactors use the hobby as a means of constructing a historically-conscious, southern identity separate from that of the broader American identity, black men use it as a means of asserting a sense of citizenship and belonging to the nation. The differences in African American and white reenactment proceed from there. Traditional reenactment enables its participants to ritually perform the

sectional identities each side constructed for itself before the war, divisions which were intensified by the war. With the North imagined as synonymous with American identity, and the South positioned as proudly and defiantly antithetical to American identity, African Americans, whose agency in the war was neatly erased from dominant post-bellum memory, were barred from belonging within either. In bringing these traditions together, black men see themselves as engaged in the work of constructing a hybrid identity that integrates both their African and American presences through the production of the memories constituting the primal scene of which these differences were constructed--the history and memory of slavery.

Hallowed Ground: The National Park Service and New Battlefield Narratives

The new narratives constructed through African American participation in reenactment extends to the battlefield itself, reconstructing it as a hybrid space upon which multiple stories may be told. The uniformed presence of black men on the Civil War battlefield assigns new meanings to the battlefield landscape, disrupting the Lost Cause narrative that is perpetuated, both implicitly and explicitly, through reenactment. The preserved battlefields on or near where reenactments take place long existed as symbols of the virtue of sacrifice for either *home* (in the southern imagination) or *union* (in the northern imagination). This vision has relied, in large part, on the positioning of these landscapes as sacred ground, with a corresponding need to be protected from political, commercial, or racial defilement.[7] America's battlefields are simultaneously sacred spaces and places. They are sacred spaces in the sense that they are the scenes of great violence, sacrifice, death, and destruction; a patient and determined search can still yield shell casings, bullets, and bone fragments from wars waged more than a century ago. After battles were fought, makeshift funerals were often conducted right on the spot where the dead had fallen—many Civil War battlefields contain small or large cemeteries with stone records of those who gave their lives. They are also sacred places in the sense that they signify the history that constitutes a significant part of group identities, and, to an even greater extent, national identity and heritage. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal cite Levi-Strauss's contention that the value of the sacred is itself empty of meaning and therefore susceptible to the reception of any meaning whatsoever, in suggesting that consecration is "part of the cultural work of sacralizing space, time, persons, and social relations."[8] Geographer David Harvey has referred to this practice as the "aestheticization of politics…in which appeal to the mythology of place and person has a strong role to play."[9] (Harvey, 1989: 209, quoted in Chidester & Linenthal, 7). This highly subjective process of