

ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS FOR LIFE: NIETZSCHE AND CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS

ROGER PADEN

The practice of preserving various parts of urban landscapes for historical purposes raises a variety of normative, metaphysical, and conceptual questions that invite philosophical analysis. The normative questions are particularly interesting. Why should we preserve historical sites? What sites are worth preserving? How should they be preserved and interpreted?¹ In this essay, I apply Nietzsche's theories of history and culture as found in the first two Untimely Meditations to provide a fresh critical framework to some normative questions raised by a particularly difficult instance of historical preservation; namely, the preservation of Confederate monuments. This framework allows me to argue that some monuments should be removed from their prominent public sites, while others should be retained and reinterpreted.

NIETZSCHE ON THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HISTORY

Nietzsche's work might seem to be a strange place to look for ideas concerning historical preservation. He wrote very little about cityscapes (and what little he did write is largely confined to an early work, the first *Meditation* on David Strauss; and he wrote nothing at all about historical preservation.² His most systematic writing about history is found in the second *Meditation*, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," which begins with a rather unpromising quote from Goethe: "I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my

activity.”³ As the study of history is rarely thought invigorating, it might be supposed that Nietzsche would be an opponent not only of the study of history, but of historical preservation, as well; but this supposition would be mistaken as he immediately goes on to argue that, if history does not invigorate, it is

a costly superfluity and luxury [which must be hated by us] because we still lack even the things we need and the superfluous is the enemy of the necessary. [However,] we need history ... but we need it ... for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action.... We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life: for it is possible to value the study of history to such a degree that life becomes stunted and degenerate...⁴

In fact, Nietzsche held that history is essential to a well-lived life, but that only some approaches to history can serve life, while others are always dangerous to it. Moreover, he believed that any approach can become dangerous if relied upon exclusively. The point of the second Meditation is to show how history – and what kinds of history – can be useful.

In that *Meditation*, Nietzsche argues that humans differ from other animals, not because we are essentially rational while they are not; rather, we differ because we have far better and more complex memory. This seemingly small psychological difference, however, has great consequences: humans are “historical animals,” while other animals, lacking a sense of history, live entirely (and happily) in the present. It also follows that these other animals are incapable of significant historical action and cannot grow or change as a species in historical time, while humans live in a world with both a past and a future and, consequently, can plan alternative futures. At the limit, humans can make a project of themselves: unlike animals, they can engage in historically-significant, transformative action.

Nietzsche argues that, to live historically-significant lives, our lives must contain both “historical” moments that involve remembering history and “unhistorical” moments that involve forgetting or ignoring history. To plan, we must be aware of our situation and this requires knowledge of our past, but, to act and create, we must forget – even dismiss – parts of that past. Thus, the “historical and the unhistorical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people, and a culture.”⁵ However, because he believes that the modern age suffers from “an excess of history,”⁶ he focuses his argument on the claim that too much remembering is dangerous; that “there is a degree of ... historical sense which is harmful and ultimately fatal.”⁷

Nietzsche distinguishes several approaches to history. Two unnamed approaches, which are wholly harmful to life, are described in the first

and second *Meditations*, and when he criticizes “the oversaturation of an age with history,” I believe that it is these two unnamed approaches that he has in mind.⁸ The first—and less important of the two—I will call “scientific history.” On Nietzsche’s view, scientific historians are “idler[s] in the garden of knowledge,” “pedantic micrologists,” “who stand aside from life so as to know it unobstructedly.”⁹ But, because the facts they seek are objective, isolated historical facts, unrelated to life and action, they can only be a harmful distraction. I will call the second, more important, approach, “teleological history.” As Daniel Breazeale points out in his Introduction to the *Untimely Meditations*:

*Though the second Untimely Meditation is sometimes read as a blanket rejection of “historicism,” this is far from the truth. What Nietzsche rejects ... is not the basic thesis that every aspect and expression of human life is unavoidably conditioned by history, but rather, the progressive or whiggish consequences that are typically—albeit, in Nietzsche’s view, quite illicitly—drawn from this thesis. It is not historicism per se to which he objects..., but rather the unexamined teleology that usually accompanies it.*¹⁰

Since Hegel and the neo-Hegelians took such a teleological approach to history, throughout the second *Meditation*, Nietzsche repeatedly criticizes their views, which present history as the inevitable unfolding of a pre-established and providential plan. Especially dangerous versions of this history, on Nietzsche’s view, portray this unfolding as essentially complete, as having arrived at what Hegel called, “the end of history.”

Nietzsche criticizes this approach on a number of grounds. Most important, he claims that “it implants a belief ... in the old age of mankind, the belief that one is a latecomer and epigone” who believes he or she is living at the end of history.¹¹ Since, in this approach, this belief is accompanied both by the notion that “as things are they had to

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be, as men now are they were bound to become, [and] none may resist this inevitability”¹² and by the notion that the present age possesses “the rarest of virtues, justice, to a greater degree than any other,”¹³ epigones are led to the belief that new, historically-significant action is both impossible and undesirable; and this, in turn, leads to “the total surrender of the personality to the world-process”¹⁴ Thus, as a teleological approach comes to dominate a person or a society, “the instinct for creation will be enfeebled and discouraged”¹⁵ and will be replaced by a “cynical ... prudent practical egoism, through which the forces of life are paralyzed and at last destroyed.”¹⁶ Epigones seek “self-contentment,” while avoiding disturbing “enthusiasms”; indeed, “stupefaction is ... the goal” of those who take this approach.¹⁷ This self-satisfaction, however, is purchased at a great cost: because epigones are incapable of historically-significant action, they are condemned to an a-historical, animal-like existence.

In the second *Meditation*, Nietzsche explicitly discusses three approaches toward history that, unlike the first two, are useful or even “necessary for life.”¹⁸ The first is “antiquarian history.” The antiquarian turns to history to “preserve and revere.”¹⁹ The advantage of antiquarian history is that it can help create a community by presenting it as the result of a wholly-positive history and, in doing so, it can give its members an identity. The antiquarian can

look back to whence he has come, to where he came into being, with love and loyalty.... By tending with care that which has existed from of old, he wants to preserve for those who shall come into existence after him the conditions under which he ... came into existence.... The history of his city becomes for him the history of himself; he reads its walls, its towered gate, its rules and regulations, its holidays, like an illuminated diary of his youth and in all this he finds again himself.... Here we lived, he says to himself, for here we are living; here we shall live, for we are tough and not to be ruined overnight. Thus, with the aid of this “we,” he looks beyond his own individual transitory existence and feels himself to be the spirit of his house, his race, his city.²⁰

Nietzsche holds that this “antiquarian sense of veneration of the past is of the greatest value when it spreads a simple feeling of pleasure and contentment over the modest, rude, even wretched conditions in which a man or a nation lives.” It not only gives “less favored generations and peoples” the courage to endure, but it “restrains them from roving abroad in search of something they think more worth having,” thereby dissipating their energies and abandoning their identity.²¹ It protects a people from being unfaithful “to its own origins and ... given over to a restless, cosmopolitan hunting after new and ever newer things.”²²

Antiquarian history can have certain disadvantages, however. It does not make distinctions as all parts of the antiquarian's history are equally revered and, because nothing is criticized, nothing is understood. More important, by undermining the power of judgment, antiquarian history

undermines continuing and especially higher life..., [as it] no longer conserves but mummifies.... For it knows only how to preserve life, not how to engender it; it always undervalues that which is becoming.... Thus it hinders any firm resolve to attempt something new [and] paralyzes the man of action...²³

The second form, "critical history," is adopted by "a being who suffers and seeks deliverance."²⁴ Nietzsche argues that if, "he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it, and finally condemning it."²⁵ This approach remembers the past only in order to condemn its evils. It provides several advantages to its practitioners: it supplies an antidote to antiquarian history, but more important, it frees people from the past and opens up an unbounded future. But it also has several disadvantages. Because "every past is ... worthy to be condemned, for that is the nature of human things, [this approach to history suggests that] it would be better if nothing existed."²⁶ But by rejecting too much of the past, it leaves critical historians without a horizon to orient their actions: it rejects the existing, historically-grounded self and replaces it with a new one that is so weakly grounded that it turns to mindless cosmopolitan consumption.²⁷

The third approach, "monumental history," is adopted by those who wish to "act and strive."²⁸ Focusing on great individuals and their struggles, this approach makes use of the past to inspire: it finds greatness there and argues that we, too, can be great, if only we "flee from resignation" (the belief

that historically-significant action is not possible) and use “history as a specific against it.”²⁹ This approach has several advantages: it can give us the courage to act in historically-significant ways; it can distance us from our current situation; and it can bring about a new world in which lesser individuals can lead happy lives. But it also has certain disadvantages. The past is always different from the present and the historical analogy on which this approach depends is false. More important, monumental history, on its own, cannot guide us and does not lend itself to planning. Thus, it can lead to great mistakes and pointless destruction.

Nietzsche claims that each of these three approaches has a role to play in a well-ordered life and society. We need antiquarian history to help ground us in that which is valuable in our lives; critical history to distance ourselves from our mistakes; and monumental history to inspire us to significant action. But, we need to balance each approach against the others. If monumental history dominates, change can become irrational and may lead to disaster. If critical history dominates, we can lose both identity and community. If antiquarian history dominates, we can lose our ability to face the challenges of the present effectively.

In order to understand Nietzsche at this point, it is essential to understand what he means by “life” and why he values it; and to do this it is necessary to read the two *Meditations* together as they develop parallel distinctions that are central to understanding that concept. In the second *Meditation*, Nietzsche contrasts cosmopolitans with people who understand and properly use history, while in the first, he contrasts “cultural philistines” with “geniuses,” who understand and properly use culture.³⁰ In each pair, the second term denotes someone who lives life well, while the first denotes a person who does not. The descriptions overlap to a great degree.

Nietzsche claims that epigones inevitably become cosmopolitans who live for the present moment (understood to be the last historical moment) and seek pleasure through the satisfaction of immediate felt needs. As such, they are “given over to a restless ... hunting after new and ever newer things ... thought more worth having.”³¹ Given Nietzsche’s contrast between historical and a-historical beings, cosmopolitans are a-historical beings who live less-than-human lives in which the “forces of life are paralyzed and at last destroyed.”³² The cultural philistine is described in similar terms. These philistines “devised the concept of the epigone-age [in which they think they are living] with the object of obtaining peace and quiet.”³³ They do this to reject the life of the restless, searching genius; and then repress even the memory of that rejection. Desiring only “self-contentment,” they declare that “all seeking [for a truly better life] is at

an end.”³⁴ Characterized by “a lack of style or a chaotic jumble of all styles,”³⁵ both cosmopolitans and philistines reject self-transformation, and this rejection paralyzes and destroys their life force.

This notion of self-transformation is central to Nietzsche’s concept of life. He describes life as a “plastic power” and claims that the greatness of “a man, a people, or a culture” can be measured by the degree to which they possess it.³⁶ This plastic power is inwardly-directed, as it names “the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, [and] to replace what has been lost...”³⁷ This notion of life is connected to Nietzsche’s notion of culture, as he not only believes that a good life requires a vital connection with true culture, but his notion of life is modeled on the idea of culture: it is the epitome of a good life as it involves a continuous transformation which aims at a “unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people”; at “a stylistic unity within which the manifold phenomena which characterize it are harmonized.”³⁸ While Nietzsche points out that this stylistic unity cannot be attained through systematic and oppressive exclusion, he nevertheless thinks that it can be attained only through struggle, as we always find ourselves in states of partial disunity and disorganization. This “grand style originates [only] when the beautiful carries off the victory over the monstrous”; only when life creates a new order out of existing disorder.³⁹ A good life is one that seeks to create an integrated beauty from a chaos of existing forms.

Pursuing this project requires many things. Negatively, it requires the rejection of the “modern” all-consuming search for pleasure; it requires the rejection of the life of the cultural philistine or cosmopolitan.⁴⁰ Positively, what it requires can be determined by reference to the three ways in which history can be useful to life. As emphasized by

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antiquarians, we (as individuals, peoples, or cultures) need a stable and valued foundation in our identity.⁴¹ As emphasized by the critical historian, we need to be able to consider and devalue parts of our history and identity. Finally, as emphasized by the monumental historian, we need the courage to reject a life of pleasure so as to pursue “life.”

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Oddly, given our self-conception as a future-oriented society with little time for the past, the United States, like Nietzsche’s Germany, seems “oversaturated” with history – and with the wrong kinds of history. This can be seen in the many political battles that are fought over the proper interpretation of our history, in which each side – rather than seeking to promote “life” in Nietzsche’s sense – attempts to “use” history to support its political program, while charging the other side of “abusing” history when it does the same. In these battles, American preservationists have typically adopted two approaches toward history described by Nietzsche. The dominant approach has been teleological; a secondary approach, antiquarian.

Serious preservation work began in the U.S. during the early nineteenth century with attempts to preserve Mount Vernon and Independence Hall. These projects were undertaken by members of upper-class eastern society, and the approach they took to historical preservation—in which they sought to preserve those sites and structures that played important roles in the development of the nation—still dominates the practice. According to William Murtagh, “patriotism fueled the energies of nineteenth-century preservationists to the excluding of any other interest.” Preservationists adopted this approach because they believed that “it is good policy in a republican government to inculcate sentiments of veneration for those departed heroes who have rendered service to their country in times of danger.” To achieve this goal, they sought to protect the houses of worthy political or military figures, along with important political buildings and battlefields, treating them as “shrines or icons.” The dominant theme of these efforts has been a “secular pietism” which sought to preserve buildings thought “worthy of attention for transcendent [i.e., nation building] rather than intrinsic reasons.”⁴²

Such an approach to preservation fits particularly well with the historically dominant self-conception of the United States that understands the country through phrases drawn from a religious context: our county is like a ‘city on a hill’ with a unique ‘manifest destiny.’ This approach is clearly teleological in nature, but as the United States achieved

hegemonic status, this approach increasingly took what Nietzsche thought its most pernicious form, which portrays us as living in “an epigone-age” or, as a best-selling book of a few years back put it, as living at *The End of History*.⁴³ According to Nietzsche, both these approaches, but especially the latter, would have the effect of producing a cynical, self-satisfied cosmopolitanism that would make self-transcending actions (“life”) increasingly difficult for both individuals and cultures.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, a second form of preservationism took an antiquarian approach toward history and should be understood as part of a wider project to raise the status and power of the post-Civil War South. Central to this project is “the myth of the Lost Cause,” which attempts to put the South’s defeat in the Civil War in the best possible light. It does this by arguing for a set of mythical ideas including the idea (1) that slavery was a benign institution; (2) that slavery was an institution in decline; (3) that slavery was not the cause of the South’s secession; (4) that, in the face of demographic and industrial differences, the South could not have won the Civil War; (5) that Lee was one of the greatest generals in history, who bravely fought for a “lost cause,” while Grant was an incompetent brute; and (6) and that Southerners and Southern society were morally superior to their Northern counterparts.⁴⁴ Partisans of this myth have adopted a preservationist program similar to that of the dominant culture. They have sought to preserve the mansions and plantations of important political figures, but they have placed a relatively greater emphasis on military sites, placing statues of Confederate generals in public places, and displays featuring Confederate battle flags.

As Nietzsche notes about antiquarian approaches to history in general, this project can help preserve the antiquarian’s identity, but it does so at some cost. David Lowenthal has argued:

“ODDLY, GIVEN OUR SELF-CONCEPTION AS A FUTURE-ORIENTED SOCIETY WITH LITTLE TIME FOR THE PAST, THE UNITED STATES, LIKE NIETZSCHE’S GERMANY, SEEMS ‘OVERSATURATED’ WITH HISTORY.”

In recoiling from tragic loss or fending off a fearsome future, people the world over revert to ancestral legacies. As hope of progress fades, heritage [Nietzsche's "antiquarian history"] consoles us with tradition.... [However, this search for historical justification is] oppressive, defeatist, [and] decadent.... Breeding xenophobic hate, it becomes a byword for bellicose discord. Perverting the "true" past for greedy or chauvinist ends, heritage undermines historical truth with twisted myth. Exalting rooted faith over critical reason, it stymies social action and sanctions passive acceptance of preordained fate.⁴⁵

And indeed, Southern antiquarian history has helped perpetuate racism, while stifling education and economic growth. A Nietzschean, however, would reject the myth of the lost cause for a different reason, namely, that like all antiquarian histories, Southern antiquarian history undermines "higher life" and "paralyzes the man of action."⁴⁶ As Lowenthal put it: "Miring us in the obsolete, the cult of heritage immures life within museums and monuments."⁴⁷ The myth of the Lost Cause, like most antiquarian histories, does not aid "life."

Moreover, contrary to what Nietzsche argues, this antiquarian history has not protected the South from consumerist cosmopolitanism as its partisans have adopted the same practical egoism that Nietzsche thought the most reprehensible consequence of cosmopolitanism. The myth of the Lost Cause gives some Southerners a relatively shallow identity and explains their supposedly-unjust relative poverty, powerlessness, and cultural subordination, only to allow them to more easily pursue their consumer interests. Indeed, the only difference between this antiquarian history and the more dominant teleological history is the dating of history's end: both present us as epigones, living at the twilight end of meaningful history; both produce "stupefaction"; and both make historically-significant, transformative action difficult.

ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS

Following the 2016 murder of nine black parishioners at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston SC, the debate over the preservation of Confederate monuments intensified. Several photos of the murderer with a Confederate battle flag led to protests at public sites featuring this flag, particularly at the State House in Columbia, and these protests raised questions—and inspired further protests (and counter-protests)—concerning the many Confederate monuments located on public sites. Perhaps the most significant of these protests, which occurred in Charlottesville, VA in 2017, was triggered by the City Council's decision to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee and to rename

the park where it stood. This decision attracted the attention of a number of white supremacist groups who, seemingly with President Trump's blessing, protested against the statue's removal. One of these white supremacists killed a counter-protestor.

The issue ostensibly at stake in most of these controversies is whether such statues should be kept in place, removed to other sites, or simply destroyed.⁴⁸ From a Nietzschean perspective these controversies reflect two approaches to history: Southern antiquarians seek to preserve the statues in place, while their opponents, who have adopted a critical approach, call for the statues to be removed or destroyed. Antiquarians offer several arguments in favor of their position. First, they argue that attempts to remove these statues amount to an attack on "Southern" heritage and identity. Note, for example, how the intentionally provocative phrase chanted by Neo-Nazi protestors, "Jews will not replace us," reflects Nietzsche's antiquarian who asserts that "here we lived, here we are living, and here we shall live, for we are tough and not to be ruined overnight."⁴⁹ In addition, Southern antiquarians argue that removing these statues amounts to an attempt to "erase history" and is, therefore, an attack on truth.

Critical historians who favor removing these statues respond that these statues are monuments and, as such, do not simply record history (as the erasure charge implies); instead, they memorialize it. Monuments commemorate; they celebrate, honor, or valorize events, often by depicting a person who played a significant role in them. These figures are valued for the role they played in these historically-important dramas; their personal character is of secondary importance. Statues of Lee, for example, are erected, not because he was an especially virtuous person, but rather because he was a noteworthy Confederate general. Moreover, by expressing value judgments, monuments serve

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the needs of contemporary politics. This service can be seen in the history of Confederate monuments raised during the Jim Crow period so as to refashion contemporary Southern society around a fixed, fundamentalist identity looking favorably on slavery and most at home when surrounded by racist institutions and practices. When this identity was again challenged during the Civil Rights era, these monuments were given legal protection to make their removal difficult, thereby adding a new layer to the institutional racism associated with this identity. Given that the purpose of these statues is to valorize particular historical events in support of a specific Southern identity associated with existing oppressive institutions, attempts to remove them are best understood, not as attempts to erase history, but as attempts to oppose these institutions.⁵⁰

Southern antiquarians try to respond to this argument with a *reductio ad absurdum*: if monuments valorize and if slavery is evil, then we should remove all statues that celebrate slave owners, including those of Washington and Jefferson and, if this is true, we would soon have to remove all memorials. The objection to this slippery-slope argument is obvious: these statues valorize Washington and Jefferson, not as defenders of slavery, but for other, highly significant, historically-transformative actions. Putting this objection aside, however, note how the antiquarian's argument reflects Nietzsche's claim that critical history is problematic because, since every past is worthy of condemnation, it soon rejects all history. But Nietzsche, unlike the Southern antiquarian, makes this claim in support of a broader point; namely, that, since the critical approach tends to sever all connections to history, it is dangerous to life: "men and ages which serve life by judging and destroying a past are always ... endangered men and ages."⁵¹

The real problem with the two approaches to history that have shaped the controversy over Confederate statues is that neither approach "serves life." At best the antiquarian approach might preserve, or "mummify," a (particularly unacceptable and vexed) form of life and identity, while critical history, because it destroys its own historical horizon, tends to produce a weakened personality that itself cannot tolerate criticism. But these criticisms raise two questions: First, philosophically, how should history be approached? And second, how can these philosophical criticisms help solve the essentially historical/architectural controversy over Confederate statues? As to the first question, at the end of his critique of critical history, Nietzsche writes:

For since we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations ... and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible

*wholly to free ourselves from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originated in them. The best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a new second nature, so that our first nature withers away.*⁵²

It would seem that, here, Nietzsche is arguing that these two approaches need to be combined, if they are to support life; that it is necessary to both criticize one's history and to ground oneself in it. We must understand not only that our identity grows out of our past but also that it cannot simply be identified with it. In addition, we need the courage to take on the task of developing a new identity out of our history—of bringing unity to the historical manifold—and this, Nietzsche argues, is only possible with the aid of monumental history. In addition, we must separate the notion of growth and development from the teleological notion of inevitable fate: we must incorporate notions of inescapable struggle and contingency into our history.

But how can such a complex approach to history be represented in an urban landscape? How can monuments help us accomplish this task? Consider another example: The Appomattox Memorial in Alexandria VA is a bronze statue of an unarmed Confederate soldier standing on a stone base with inscriptions on four sides. Modeled on a painting by John Elder of a soldier viewing the Appomattox battlefield after Lee's surrender, the statue portrays a soldier standing with crossed arms, equipment hanging from one shoulder and one hand holding a hat. (Figure 1) His head is bowed, his eyes look down. His expression is often described as "somber" or "contemplative." The inscriptions state that the memorial was "Erected to the Memory of Confederate Dead of Alexandria by their Surviving

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Comrades” and, claiming that “They Died in the Consciousness of Duty Faithfully Performed,” list 100 names. The memorial is set at the center of an intersection where, at the beginning of the war, local troops assembled in advance of an invading Union army to march south to join Lee, and the soldier looks south along the path they took. Originally set on a broad median, the site of the memorial was greatly reduced to accommodate the construction of a new parkway, eventually named after Jefferson Davis. On the intersection’s southwest corner stands the Lyceum, Alexandria’s history museum.⁵³ The memorial was erected by the Robert E. Lee Camp of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) in 1889, early in the Jim Crow period. Realizing that the statue would be controversial, the UCV successfully petitioned the Virginia House of Delegates to protect it from being removed and, indeed, although it was thought a fine work of public art when it was erected, it has long been controversial. This controversy came to a head in late 2016, following the Charleston murders, when the City Council voted to remove the statue to another location and rename the adjacent parkway.⁵⁴

As with other recent controversies, this controversy took the form of a debate between antiquarians and critical historians, and conventional alternatives would have us choose between the antiquarian preservation of the statue as is, or its critical removal. A third approach that Nietzsche’s thinking opens us to—one that “serves life”—would be to incorporate the existing memorial into a larger work of art by taking advantage of the remaining, narrow landscaped median immediately south of the memorial. This median should be the site of two low panels displaying friezes visible to passing pedestrians and motorists. The western (southbound) side of these panels should contain scenes of slaves being marched south from the auction houses of Alexandria, home to one of the largest slave-trading operations in the country. The eastern side of the panels should contain scenes showing self-emancipated slaves traveling north on the underground railroad, an important route of which ran through Alexandria. To the south of these panels, in the middle of the next intersection, a new statue should be erected showing members of the 29th and 31st Brigades of “U.S. Colored Troops,” who helped defeat Lee’s army at Appomattox. An account of Alexandria’s role in both the slave trade and the Civil War, and an account of history of the statue and these recent changes, should be available at the adjacent Lyceum, and at the Alexandria Black History Museum, a few blocks north.

This new work of urban art avoids the pitfalls of dichotomous thinking that contributed to the debacle in Charlottesville by weaving

together Nietzsche's three approaches to history so as to make a complete monument that serves life. Critical history would be served by the low panels showing slaves being marched south. These panels would make the evils of slavery visible, and their presence near the soldier would indicate the cause of the war. As could be made clear at the nearby museums, their height and orientation, relative to the soldier, and delayed construction would gesture at their 'invisibility' perpetuated in repressive bad faith by the myth of the lost cause. Antiquarian history would be served by retaining the contemplative look of the soldier. Pondering his loss in this cause, he might now be understood as realizing that the 'duty' which he "faithfully performed" was embedded in a controversial identity, shaped and imposed by economic interests that may have differed from his own. He now faces the future with a new task: mummification or the development of a new, more vital identity based on a more complete understanding of history. Monumental history would be served by the statue of the black soldiers at the southern end of the ensemble, by the slaves emancipating themselves as they travel north on the railroad, and, possibly, by the Confederate soldier

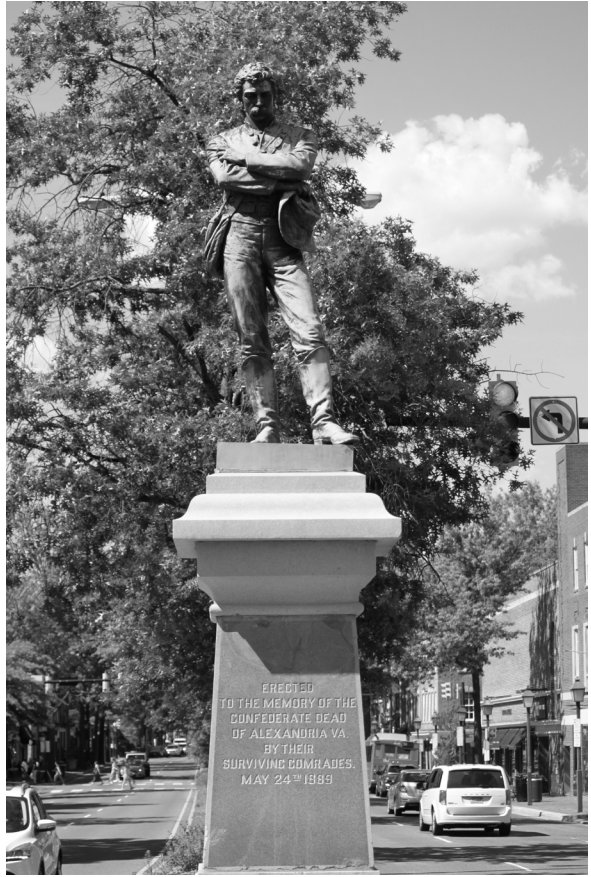


FIGURE 1: APPOMATTOX MEMORIAL, ALEXANDRIA, VA

now given an opportunity for a new identity. This new memorial would also reject the teleological history of most memorials by showing that the conflict at the heart of the memorial is not yet fully resolved: the myth is still with us; the soldier has not yet begun his new life. The task of forging a new American identity rooted in the crimes and ideals, the struggles and the values of the past is not yet complete, nor is its outcome clear. The purpose of the new monument is to lead people to contemplate these ideas. Of course, this statue possesses several unique advantages (its emotional qualities and location) that make it easy to re-purpose. Other statues would be more difficult to redesign and some are best taken down. In some cases, there may simply be no room to add new materials. In others, the statues might simply be too caught up in the Myth of the Lost Cause, too antiquarian, or too racist to be successfully transformed. Public artists can be very creative people and may be able to salvage many existing statues, but in judging their proposals the important question to ask is: “Does this proposal transform this monument in such a way that it serves life?” If not, it should be removed or destroyed.⁵⁵

Nietzsche’s theories of history and culture can help us understand that cities need to incorporate history into the urban fabric and that both historical preservation and memorialization have central roles in the urban design. Memorials can fulfill this role, but only if they aim at engendering the life goal of vital, unified, and beautiful identities. As the United States continues to ponder the role of Confederate monuments in its urban spaces, Nietzsche’s life-serving approach to history provides a useful alternative to the debilitating stand-off between subservience to history and cosmopolitan forgetfulness.

ENDNOTES

1. William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), p. 5; see also Charles B. Hosmer, *Presence of the Past* (New York: Putnam, 1965).
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, “David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer,” In Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, edited by Daniel Breazeale. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 1-55. Hereinafter, “Strauss.”
- [3] Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” In Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*: 57-124, p. 59. Hereinafter, “History.”
4. Nietzsche, “History,” 59.

5. Nietzsche, "History," 63.
6. Nietzsche, "History," 67,
7. Nietzsche, "History," 62.
8. Nietzsche, "History," 83; and Nietzsche, "Strauss," 30-35.
9. Nietzsche, "History," 59, 68, and 117.
10. Daniel Breazeale, "Introduction." In Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*: vii-xxxiii, p. xv.
11. Nietzsche, History, 83.
12. Nietzsche, "History," 107.
13. Nietzsche, "History," 83,
14. Nietzsche, "History," 107.
15. Nietzsche, "History," 95.
16. Nietzsche, "History," 83.
17. Nietzsche, "Strauss," 10-11.
18. Nietzsche, "History," 75.
19. Nietzsche, "History," 67.
20. Nietzsche, "History," 72-3.
21. Nietzsche, "History," 73.
22. Nietzsche, "History" 74.
23. Nietzsche, "History," 75.
24. Nietzsche, "History," 67.
25. Nietzsche, "History," 75-6.
26. Nietzsche, "History," 76.
27. Nietzsche, "History," 76.
28. Nietzsche, "History," 67.
29. Nietzsche, "History," 68.
30. Nietzsche, "Strauss," 11.
31. Nietzsche, "History," 73-74.
32. Nietzsche, "History," 83.
33. Nietzsche, "Strauss," 10.
34. Nietzsche, "Strauss," 10-11.
35. Nietzsche, "Strauss," 6,
36. Nietzsche, "History," 62.

37. Nietzsche, "History," 62.
38. Nietzsche, "Strauss," 7-8.
39. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Wanderer and his Shadow," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 301-395, p. 334.
40. William Arrowsmith, "Introduction," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unmodern Observations*. Edited by William Arrowsmith. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. xi, quoting "History," 60.
41. Nietzsche, "History," 63.
42. Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, pp. xxvii, xxviii, and 11-24; also see Hosmer, *Presence of the Past*, pp. 298-303.
43. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: Free Press, 1992).
44. Edward H. Bonekemper, *The Myth of the Lost Cause: Why the South Fought the Civil War and Why the North Won* (Washington, DC: Regnery History, 2015); and Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2013), pp. 251-254.
45. David Lowenthal, "The Heritage Crusade and its Contradictions." In Max Page and Randall Mason, *Giving Preservation a History*, (New York: Routledge, 2004): 19-43, p. 19.
46. Nietzsche, "History," 75.
47. Lowenthal, "The Heritage Crusade," p. 19.
48. Monica Hesse, "A Quandary Set in Stone," *Washington Post*, 5/9/2016, C1; Christopher Phelps, "Removing Racist Symbols Isn't a Denial of History," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan 29, 2016, pp. 48-51; Sarah Fenton, "The Confederacy, Its Symbols, and the Politics of Public Culture," *AHA Today*, 1/9/2016.
49. Nietzsche, "History," 73.
50. In fact, the erasure charge is more accurately applied to the attempts to preserve these statues, as these monuments materialize an ideology that attempts to erase the history of slavery. This is consistent with another of Nietzsche's criticisms of antiquarian history; namely, that it "possesses an extremely restricted field of vision" (Nietzsche, "History," 74).
51. Nietzsche, "History," 76.
52. Nietzsche, "History," 76.
53. Office of Historic Alexandria, "The Confederate Statue," <https://www.ohax.org/>

alexandriava.gov/ uploadedFiles/historic/info/brochures/ ConfederateStatueBrochure.pdf/, accessed 5/12/2015.

54. Sullivan, Patricia, “Alexandria will seek to move Confederate statue and rename Jefferson Davis Highway,” https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/alexandria-will-seek-to-move-confederate-statue-and-rename-jefferson-davis-highway/2016/09/17/fec35310-7b53-11e6-ac8e-cf8e0dd91dc7_story.html?utm_term=.1b5f0e67d0e7rnon/ accessed 9/26/2017.

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55. The controversy surrounding the Confederacy Memorial Carving at Stone Mountain, Georgia that gained prominence during the 2018 Governor’s race between a white male and a black female candidate may be one such example admitting of no life-serving solution.