

# Overwriting the monument tradition

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## *Lists, loss, and scale*

LEILA EASA AND JENNIFER M. S. STAGER

There is a certain narrative of the history of monuments that traces power from Greek and Roman antiquity to today. In this narrative, figural representation predominates, especially when it comes to monumentalizing the powerful and the dead. Figural monuments designed to memorialize a single person were often erected after that individual's death, functioning less to mourn the deceased and more to celebrate the political world he had embodied, a practice that encodes and perpetuates systems of patriarchal and civic power. Ancient ruler-portraits of women and nonbinary people are comparatively rare; in examples where women have ruled and are monumentalized, such as Hatshepsut, the female pharaoh of ancient Egypt, they adopt the visual codes of patriarchal power.<sup>1</sup> Although each specific, local context reveals cultural and political differences, similar patriarchal figural monumentalizing practices have been maintained across centuries and cultures, constructing a heritage that is of particular interest today.

Recent work in the field of classics has explored the resonance between nineteenth-century Confederate monuments and the robust ruler-portrait tradition from ancient Rome.<sup>2</sup> This work traces a lineage from portrait

statues like the Augustus of Prima Porta or the gilded horse-drawn chariot of Emperor Marcus Aurelius still visible in Rome to modern figural monuments in the United States and United Kingdom. As Sonja Drimmer argues, “two millennia of European and American history could be told through a genealogy of equestrian monuments to men, from Marcus Aurelius to Gattamelata, from Confederate generals to Kehinde Wiley’s exhilarating riposte, ‘Rumors of War’ (2019).”<sup>3</sup> As this genealogy reveals, British and American governments used these cultural artifacts to claim a direct lineage from ancient Rome to modern Anglophone empires in a practice of self-fashioning that they understood as Neoclassical.<sup>4</sup> In fact, this

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1. In Hatshepsut’s case, this included her depiction wearing a ceremonial pharaonic beard. K. Cooney, *The Woman Who Would Be King: Hatshepsut’s Rise to Power in Ancient Egypt* (New York, 2014). M. Beard, *Women and Power: A Manifesto* (New York, 2017).

2. Jennifer Trimble presented the lecture “Modern Statue Destructions and Ancient Roman *Damnatio Memoriae*” at Johns Hopkins University on September 29, 2020, citing James Young, Lynn Meskell, and Kehinde Wiley’s *Rumors of War* (all discussed below).

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Verity Platt presented “Classicism and the Statue Crisis in the Age of Black Lives Matter” at the University of Southern California on October 28, 2020, and published “Why People Are Toppling Monuments to Racism,” *Scientific American*, July 3, 2020. Hallie Franks, Ann Macy Roth, Patricia Eunji Kim, and Eric Varner participated in the roundtable “Monuments and Memory” at New York University on October 29, 2020.

3. S. Drimmer, “Seeing the Bigger Picture on Public Memorials to Women,” *Hyperallergic*, November 27, 2020, <https://hyperallergic.com/601877/>.

4. The December 2020 executive order “Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture” made this connection to Neoclassicism explicit: “President George Washington and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson consciously modeled the most important buildings in Washington, DC, on the classical architecture of ancient Athens and Rome. They sought to use classical architecture to visually connect our contemporary Republic with the antecedents of democracy in classical antiquity, reminding citizens not only of their rights but also their responsibilities in maintaining and perpetuating its institutions.” Exec. Order No. 13,967 (Dec. 18, 2020). Members of the House of Representatives, split largely along party lines, voted 285 to 120 to remove statues of Confederates from the US Capitol—meaning almost thirty percent of congresspeople voted to retain them. Among those, “Representative Mo Brooks (R-AL), who told the insurrectionists on January 6 before they stormed the Capitol ‘Today is the day American patriots start taking down names and kicking ass,’ issued a statement titled: ‘Congressman Mo Brooks Defends States’ Rights, Rips Intolerant Socialists Who Seek to Take Down Capitol Statues They Don’t Like.’” <https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/june-30-2021>.

retrospection had a broader geo-temporal footprint, as the ancient Egyptian obelisks populating many European and American cities make visible, and which the Egyptianizing example of the Washington Monument (1848–84) in DC sought to emulate.<sup>5</sup> This particular mode of self-fashioning according to ancient models was designed to maintain systems of power and silence, and it demands the contemporary work of critique and “fallism”: the practice of tearing down monuments to white supremacy. As Verity Platt has argued, these acts of removal “are not simply acts of destruction: they should rather be understood as moments of what the philosopher Bruno Latour has called ‘Iconoclasm,’ generating new images that can be powerful agents of social change.”<sup>6</sup> Such new images might be created by the fallen statue itself, the empty plinth its removal leaves behind, or even the photographs and videos that capture the process of demolition. Further, not all removals happen in the context of immediate activism; some occur after months or years of protest in the form of state-sponsored actions.

As an extension of recent explorations of the figural monument tradition concurrent with discussions of fallism, we offer a parallel narrative with an equally deep historical precedent. We will trace a nonfigural monument tradition from ancient Athens to contemporary times. This tradition mobilizes language, naming, and the poetic power of the list to elevate not a singular hegemony, but a plurality of voices.<sup>7</sup> Our essay will examine the ways in which this list-based practice creates forms of possibility to offer a more animated and flexible system of monumentalizing.

5. Ella Gonzalez and Cynthia Colburn drew attention to this broader ancient monument footprint in their recent presentation, C. S. Colburn and E. Gonzalez, “The Complex Biographies of Ancient Political Sculptures and Their Relevance Today” (annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, January 2021). Of interest to this essay is the modern circulation of ancient Egyptian obelisks, examples of which now stand in Turkey, France, England, the United States, and Israel. See M. Swetnam-Burland, “*Aegyptus Redacta*: The Egyptian Obelisk in the Augustan Campus Martius,” *Art Bulletin* 92, no. 3 (2010): 135–53; B. Brier, “Saga of Cleopatra’s Needles,” *Archaeology* 55, no. 6 (2002): 48–54.

6. Platt, “Toppling Monuments.”

7. Our understanding of list-based monuments owes much to Athena Kirk’s analysis of apodeictic monuments in ancient Greece: A. Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists: Catalogue and Inventory across Genres* (Cambridge, 2021).

## Countermonuments

A fundamental challenge in the production of monuments is how to represent the deaths of many. Consider, as examples of catastrophe, the losses of the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and September 11, 2001. While the circumstances of these atrocities are distinct, their casualties represent a number larger than the human mind can easily grasp. Efforts to memorialize large-scale traumas may prioritize absence over presence, highlighting blank or negative spaces like empty plinths or the darkness surrounding a beam of light (in contrast to the occupied spaces of figural representation). James Young has theorized this practice as countermonumentality, using as an example Sol Lewitt’s *Black Form—Dedicated to the Missing Jews* (1987), an empty plinth built from black concrete blocks, rather than the more traditional materials of white marble or bronze, to represent the blank space left by the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> Lynn Meskell has named a related practice, that of negative heritage, “which operates between the dual poles of transformation and erasure, depending on the context.”<sup>9</sup> In an essay that traces multiple politics of removal, including some that employ the arguments undergirding fallism, Meskell describes Ground Zero, the site of the terrorist attacks that resulted in the collapse of the World Trade Center towers and mass casualties on September 11, 2001. Writing shortly after the attacks, Meskell decries the incipient recasting of the site, still a burial ground, as a museum through the collection of artifacts for display.<sup>10</sup> Although not discussed by Meskell, an alternative to the practice of displaying objects is the collectively produced *Tribute in Light* (2002–present), which now marks the site of this negative heritage, projecting beams of light skyward where the Twin Towers once rose. These light beams memorialize lost lives and structures without permanently replacing them or commodifying their ruins.

A more traditional artistic response to the challenge of memorializing loss has been to create emblematic representations in accordance with the figural tradition—to

8. J. E. Young “The Counter-monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267–96. The cube was originally positioned near baroque architecture in a public space that might have otherwise lifted up an equestrian monument to a monarch. See counterpoint: T. Stubblefield, “Do Disappearing Monuments Simply Disappear? The Counter-monument in Revision,” *Future Anterior* 8, no. 2 (2011): 1–11.

9. L. Meskell, “Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archaeology,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (2002): 570–71.

10. Meskell, “Negative Heritage,” 560–61.



Figure 1. Kehinde Wiley, *Rumors of War*, 2019. Bronze with stone pedestal, 8.35 x 7.77 x 4.82 m. Richmond, VA, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2019.39. Photo: Travis Fullerton © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

take all of the dead and compress them into a few representative figures that stand in for the totality of loss, as in Rowan Gillespie's *Famine* (1997) in Dublin and George Segal's *Gay Liberation* (1980–92) in New York City. These examples are distinct from the equestrian monument tradition that elevates specific individuals, but equestrian monuments (of which Confederate monuments are an example) may also stand in for larger military and political losses and thus implicitly represent a larger group. Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War* (2019) both emerges from and responds to this practice (fig. 1). Wiley's bronze sculpture, commissioned by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, offers a pointed critique of the Confederate statues installed along Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, a major boulevard in proximity to the museum. The monument appropriates the pose and material of the equestrian portrait of Confederate general J. E. B. Stuart but instead presents an unnamed young Black man with short dreadlocks seated astride a horse, clad in a hoodie, ripped jeans, and high-tops. With this substitution, Wiley translates the equestrian paradigm into the realm of everyday life, creating a figural monument that protests its own genre.

Wiley's statue claims the associated powers undergirding the equestrian figural tradition for

contemporary Black men, expanding its visual system to affirm power beyond its historical reference points. At the same time, the impact of Wiley's statue also creates a site-specific countermonument. When *Rumors of War* was unveiled in Richmond in December 2019, the Confederate monuments to which it responded still stood. Now, empty plinths mark the spots where four Confederate statues were removed in the summer of 2020. Most recently, following a judicial ruling, the Robert E. Lee statue was also removed on September 8, 2021.<sup>11</sup> Wiley's intervention ultimately accelerated the change that led to the removal of Confederate statues. Although initially produced as a critique of these monuments, Wiley's statue now stands alone, a victory won through protest and a structural change to the city that in turn changes the meaning of the statue itself.

Wiley's decision to leave his figure unnamed, in deliberate contrast with the named Confederates marking the avenue, allows the figure to do emblematic work; however, despite this anonymity, the openness of the unnamed figure raises questions about who is being

11. W. Evans and D. Streever, "Virginia's Massive Robert E. Lee Statue Has Been Removed," NPR, September 8, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/08/1035004639>.

represented and who may be excluded, especially given the clear gendering of Wiley's subject. Other monumentalizing strategies—often deploying different media—overcome this occlusion, drawing attention to each individual person represented rather than aggregating them into an emblematic figural representation. Frequently, this approach foregrounds the practice of naming. The social media campaigns #SayHerName and #SayTheirNames use lists of Black lives lost to police violence, and thereby perform a fundamental recovery not only of individual names in the now but also of the very status of lists in the archive.<sup>12</sup> These contemporary lists take many forms—names painted on protest placards, letters affirming solidarity with mourners posted to the internet, and fabric strands woven through fence links, among others. Although efforts to deplatform perpetrators of such violence have been a focus of public action, public and media attention may still highlight them through news reports and online dialogue, erasing the lives and individuality of the victims.<sup>13</sup> #SayTheirNames responds to this erasure by returning focus to the individuals who have been unjustly killed, seeking to include many, even when the list is tragically long.

Such memorial lists are not only a modern practice but have roots in the very classical tradition that privileged figural monuments. While a list-based monument may be similarly civic and patriarchal (and indeed, those discussed below primarily feature men), it nonetheless offers a more flexible form and is especially well-suited to the representation of vast loss. Moreover, unlike the single-figure monument, memorials of this type stress the relationship between individuals and their larger communities.

### List monuments

List-based monuments can be traced back at least to the ancient Greek practice of carving casualty lists into stone pillars. Confronted with significant casualties of Athenians during the Persian Wars, ancient Greek carvers changed how they memorialized their dead, turning away from figural gravestones that marked

individual burials.<sup>14</sup> In his monograph on the treatment of the war dead in fifth-century BCE Athens, Nathan Arrington traces a civic strategy that shifted toward public cemeteries, sometimes with communal graves, and toward annual casualty lists carved into marble pillars (fig. 2).<sup>15</sup> These lists of names were produced and renewed annually with the names of the dead organized by Kleisthenic tribe, allowing beholders to locate each person relationally.<sup>16</sup> Arrington argues that this visual strategy emphasized shared sacrifice rather than individual valor to reinforce these losses as experienced collectively for a common goal.<sup>17</sup> The system of individual grave markers encouraged mourners to tend to each grave site and mourn their own dead, whereas the casualty lists invited those who read them to see their beloved's name and recognize it in relation to the surrounding names of others who had died.<sup>18</sup> The governing intention driving the production of these casualty lists may have been to emphasize collective grief. However, by highlighting multiple levels of scale—the collective community, the Kleisthenic tribal group, and each individual name—the lists not only recorded and broadcast the totality of loss but also demonstrated its impact on multiple and intersecting communities within the collective.<sup>19</sup> Their names no longer dispersed across individual grave markers, the fallen are gathered together by the lists.

14. N. Axarlis, "Plague Victims Found: Mass Burial in Athens," *Archaeology*, April 15, 1998, <https://archive.archaeology.org/online/news/kerameikos.html>.

15. See N. T. Arrington, *Ashes, Images, and Memories: The Presence of the War Dead In Fifth-Century Athens* (New York, 2014), 91–124, esp. 92–94 and fig. 3.1. In some examples, the lists were topped by a figural scene of cavalry or foot soldiers in battle; Arrington, *Ashes, Images, and Memories*, 102–3.

16. Arrington, *Ashes, Images, and Memories*, 92–100.

17. Arrington, *Ashes, Images, and Memories*, 95.

18. On mourning practices at the grave site for individual burials, see S. Estrin, "Memory Incarnate: Material Objects and Private Visions in Classical Athens, from Euripides' *Ion* to the Gravesite," in *The Materialities of Greek Tragedy: Objects and Affect in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, ed. M. Telò and M. Mueller (London, 2018), 111–32.

19. Arrington notes that while the majority of those listed were citizens, the lists also included the names of noncitizens and enslaved men and so the collective civic community produced by these lists transcended citizenship: Arrington, *Ashes, Images, and Memories*, 97. Athena Kirk argues that even in their physical design, these monuments do the affective work of mourning, suggesting that the "arrangement and the intervening spaces serve as a way to recover the lost dead spatially, while the prominence of each tribe's name verbally repatriates them to their native localities"; Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 76. The tradition of making annual casualty lists began in Athens sometime before the earliest dated example of 464 BCE, earlier in the epigraphic record than other regular inscribed accounts, such as the Athenian Tribute Lists or inventories from the Parthenon and other treasuries.

12. See K. McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," *The Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (2014): 17, for the relationship between the commodification of the Black body and the production of lists in the archive.

13. Although such work remains unfinished today, in the twentieth century, media attention began to shift from the perpetrator to the victim. See C. Greer, "News Media, Victims and Crime," in *Victims, Crime and Society: An Introduction*, ed. P. Davies, P. Francis, and C. Greer, 2nd ed. (London, 2017), 49.

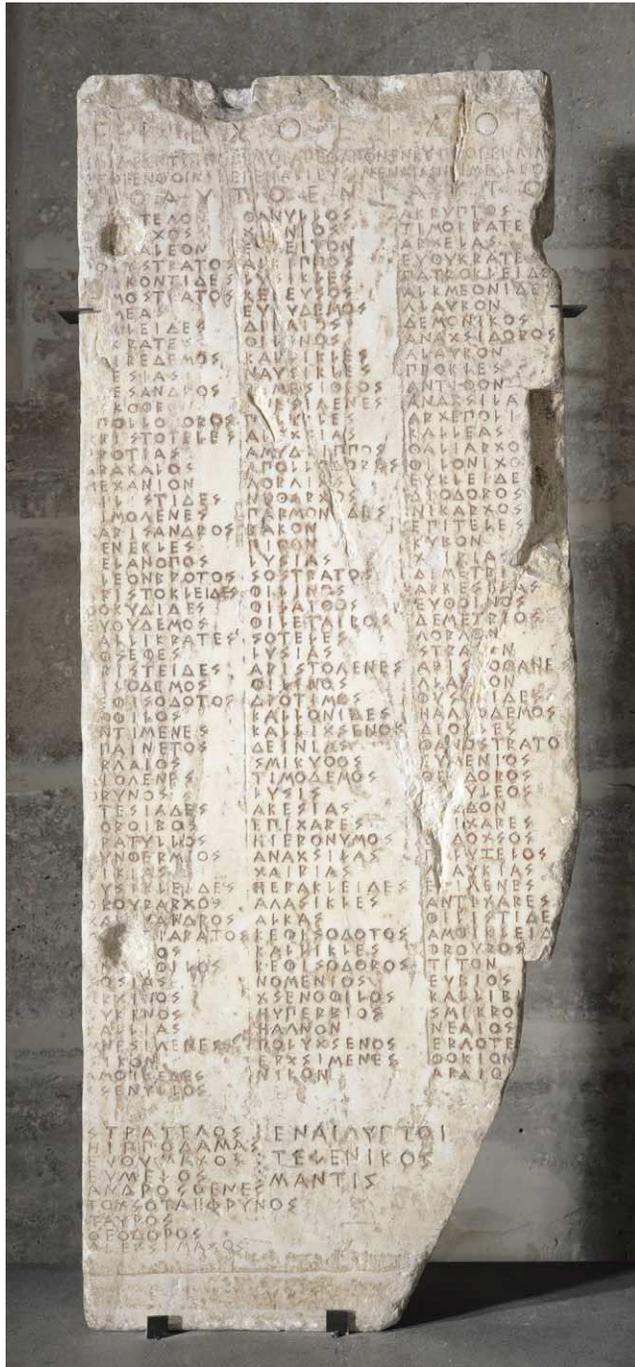


Figure 2. Casualty list for the tribe Erechtheis, perhaps 460 BCE. Pentelic marble, 148.5 x 59 x 8 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Ma 863. Photo: Hervé Lewandowski © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

In her monograph on lists in ancient Greece, Athena Kirk analyzes the way that list-based memorial strategies maximized the impact of a visceral experience of mass

loss while highlighting the individuality of each of the dead.<sup>20</sup> Arguing for a transmedial approach to lists and exploring them across various textual genres and material instantiations, Kirk theorizes ancient Greek list-making as a genre unto itself that interweaves visual and verbal strategies.<sup>21</sup> Reevaluating the ancient Greek *apodeiknumi* (to show, display, or inventory), Kirk argues that the verb form narrates the simultaneous show-and-tell of list practices and defines its noun form, *apodexis*, as “an enumerative display with words.”<sup>22</sup> Kirk locates precursors of *apodexis* in archaic poetic practices, including the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships*, which counts and thereby elevates specific elite men while also evoking quantities beyond those possible to name, and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, whose typologies compress, sort, and value women as commodities.<sup>23</sup> As Kirk shows, apodeictic monuments like casualty lists deploy a strategy of simultaneous visual and verbal display and thereby structure Greek historiography and archivism.<sup>24</sup>

Arrington and Kirk have demonstrated the significance of a different kind of monumental practice in fifth-century BCE Athens—the height of classicism within the modern imagination—one that counters the history of art written with predominantly figural monuments to powerful men as its scaffolding. This theorization of apodeictic monuments in ancient Greece informs our understanding of list-based monuments more broadly. The poetic possibilities of apodeictic monuments have long been crucial to the construction of memory and should therefore be examined more closely, starting with a very recent monument: the *New York Times* cover that conveyed the first wave of death from COVID-19.

### Ink and paper lists

On May 24, 2020, the *New York Times* printed the names, ages, residences, and a single-phrase epitaph across the entire front page for 1,000 of the first 100,000 Americans who had died of COVID-19 (fig. 3).<sup>25</sup>

20. Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 73–77.

21. Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 3.

22. On *apodeiknumi* and *apodexis*, see Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 91, 119; on Kirk’s intervention in the traditional meaning of the noun form, see Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 107.

23. Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 20–30, 48–77.

24. Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 91–109, 140–46.

25. Our focus is the print paper and its form rather than the digital version. While most people now access individual articles digitally, as an object of mourning, this newspaper invited purchase of the physical



Figure 3. "U.S. Deaths Near 100,000, an Incalculable Loss," cover of the *New York Times*, May 24, 2020. Photo: author.

"Mary Virginia McKeon, 64, Chicago, devoured art in every medium . . . Albert Petrocchi, 73, New York City, fire chief who answered the call on 9/11 . . . Latasha Andrews, 33, New Jersey, always first to offer help to those in need." So read the phrases that tried, in centimeters, to capture lives and loss. This printed list of names staged its impact in part through its sheer volume of continuous text. So many lives lost, and it was only May.

Six columns of black text on soft gray newspaper ran beneath the headline—"U.S. Deaths Near 100,000, an Incalculable Loss"—and wrapped the fold. On any other day, a variety of articles and photographs would be pieced together into an irregular grid communicating the most pressing news of the day. In contrast, the repeated,

regular intervals of the six columns of text registered May 23's difference.

The *New York Times*'s cover staged the world not from the vantage point of reflection but in medias res—not even close, as it turned out, to the midpoint of the mass casualties that the United States faced. Through this change in format, the front page moved beyond reporting to become a monument. As such, the cover does something different types of work—by listing names, it highlights each individual, but by using selective examples (1,000 out of 100,000), it is also emblematic to some degree. At the same time, it is diverse; within the selection of 1,000 names, the editors chose people of different genders, geographies, and ages. Finally, as the monument was synchronous with the losses it represented, much like the AIDS Memorial Quilt (now comprising over 48,000 panels that have accumulated over time), it sought to effect political change. The *Times* does perform similar activist work—of drawing

form. However, an interactive digital list remains available here: "An Incalculable Loss," <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/05/24/us/us-coronavirus-deaths-100000.html> (updated May 27, 2020).

attention to a problem in order to inspire action—in part simply by naming the dead.

The front page intended to solve a problem of comprehension: how to grasp both the enormity of the toll and the specific individuals within it. While the cover's headline narrates the single story told by these columns, 100,000 lives is too large for easy visualization or comprehension, even when excerpted as 1,000 names. Within each column, individual people are not divided by line breaks. Instead, to give order to this unfathomable number, an interpunct—a black dot—separates the epitaph of the previous person from the boldfaced name of the next, and these microhistories flow together down each column, suggesting both separation and interconnectedness (as the virus also does). The interpuncts also evoke footnotes or asterisks, each of which would typically indicate more to come but which here mark finality or, like full stops, the hard stop of the end of a life.<sup>26</sup>

Each interpunct invites the reader to pause and in the space of that pause wells up a small moment of grief before the next name. Together with the excerpted words, these marks evoke poetic quotation, the style by which we would represent, in formal prose, lines of verse by separating each line with slashes. If we removed all language, we would see only a grid of six column dividers populated by an irregular pattern of interpuncts: 1,000 to represent 100,000. In fact, this dot strategy was later employed by the *Times* for their cover on February 21, 2021, published when the US neared 500,000 COVID deaths. That cover printed almost half a million dots organized chronologically, each representing one individual person. The graphic begins with a few dots puncturing the mostly blank space of the section devoted to the start of the pandemic and concludes with so many pushed together that bands of black begin to form.<sup>27</sup>

The layout of the May 2020 cover eschews figural representation of the dead, marking each person not

with an image of their body but instead through text, providing their name, age, place of death, and an epitaph excerpted from their obituary as it was printed in their local paper.<sup>28</sup> Notably, the epitaphs are fragments relocated from their local origins to a space meant to represent the nation as a whole. As these epitaphs vary in length, they create their own patterns within the columns on the cover, like uneven breaks in quoted lines of poetry, and force us to think about words on a page and the blank space—or lack thereof—surrounding them. The printed page makes a fractal of sorts—letters to words, words to columns, columns to page—that figures the relationship of individual to community to nation.<sup>29</sup> The overall organization of the page addresses such relationships while also equalizing the dead in connection with each other.

The cover also performs metacommentary on COVID-19 loss more generally, highlighting the structures by which economic precarity of all forms produces vulnerability in both individuals and organizations. For example, by listing the names of people who might not otherwise be mentioned in a publication like the *New York Times*, the cover implicitly acknowledges its power as an institution that typically excludes everyday people and their personal lives. Moreover, by excerpting obituaries from local newspapers, the *Times* cover highlights the work of small publications struggling against conglomerate presses. Such papers are the most at-risk amid the economic precarity that the pandemic has deepened, even as the era of Trump has valorized attacking the press more generally.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, as a monument the paper emphasizes transience in the medium of fine and fragile newspaper, ubiquity through the paper's mechanical reproducibility, and movement through the networks of community built by its physical circulations and recirculations.

26. Ancient Greek and Roman carvers also used interpuncts to separate words carved into stone, as on the Marathon casualty list from Eua-Loukou and the Pantheon in Rome. C. M. Keesling, "The Marathon Casualty List from Eua-Loukou and the Plintheadon Style in Attic Inscriptions," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 180 (2012): 139–48. P. Saenger, "Physiologie de la lecture et séparation des mots," *Annales* 44, no. 4 (1989): 943–50, and *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, CA, 1997), 9–12.

27. N. Coleman, "On the Front Page, a Wall of Grief," *Times Insider*, February 21, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/21/insider/covid-500k-front-page.html>.

28. The digital version, in contrast to the print paper, includes small gray figural markers for each individual memorialized in the issue. When one moves the cursor over a gray silhouette, the text describing a single individual appears, suggesting that the editors understood that in its digital form, the list could not sustain its lack of figural representation.

29. And yet the pandemic is global by nature. While social structures, existing inequalities, and government-driven responses are deeply national and varied, the virus is borderless.

30. P. M. Abernathy "The Loss of Local News: What It Means for Communities," in *The Expanding News Desert* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2018), <https://www.usnewsdeserts.com/reports/expanding-news-desert/loss-of-local-news/>. A. Buncombe, "Trump Is Biggest Threat to Press Freedom in US in My Lifetime, Says Dan Rather," *The Independent*, October 6, 2020.

## Mirrored lists

The *New York Times's* list-based approach to monumentalizing the dead aligned, in a different medium, with Maya Lin's iconic Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated in Washington, DC, on November 13, 1982 (fig. 4). Lin, a female, first-generation Asian American twenty-one-year-old undergraduate student at Yale University, won the juried contest of anonymous submissions for the commission, which was administered by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.<sup>31</sup> Lin's chevron of shining black granite emerges directly from the earth, rises ten feet, and extends over 246 feet in length. In keeping with the jury's stipulation that the memorial include the names of the fallen, 58,318 names of American soldiers who died in the Vietnam War have been cut into its stone.<sup>32</sup> Lin organized the names in chronological order of each death, spanning two decades of war. Only the first (1957) and final (1975) years in which American soldiers died in active combat are marked on the monument: the internal chronology of the war is marked simply by the progression of names. The names of those who died on a given day are organized alphabetically; the viewer is thus confronted with a new day of loss with each alphabetical cycle.<sup>33</sup> Grouping the names in this way (instead of by date of birth or alphabetically from start to finish) reminds the viewer that each individual was part of a group of fellow soldiers who perished during the same twenty-four hours.<sup>34</sup> Although different from the Athenian annual casualty lists' arrangement by tribe, Lin's day-by-day chronological organization drawn out over the eighteen years of active combat performs

similar work for mourners, as each name is gathered into a community of the fallen.

The high shine of the granite slabs of Lin's wall reflects each visitor so that a beholder sees not only the sharp cut of names into black granite but also their own image mirrored by the monument's surface. This reflection implicates each viewer for a brief moment in the systems of military violence that produced so much death, connects their body with the list of names beneath their silhouette, and potentially reminds them of their own future death. The carved names invite touch, and many visitors trace individual letters with their fingers or rub pencils over scraps of paper pressed against part of the list to bring home an image of a name or several names.<sup>35</sup> Unlike the nearby Lincoln Memorial (dedicated 1922), in which a monochrome portrait sculpture of the former president sits within a white marble temple, Lin's commission included no figural representation or plinth, hallmarks of traditional memorials, and in the immediate moment after the design was revealed, many veterans, politicians, and pundits responded in dismay at what they perceived as Lin's departure from tradition. By foregrounding the list as the memorial's primary focus and eschewing the white marble figural form that had come to characterize such monuments, Lin's design seemed to deny veterans the heroization of past war memorials. In some ways, the controversial reception of the memorial mirrored the debates about the unpopular and protracted war itself.<sup>36</sup> These critiques of the monument were compounded by Lin's youth, gender, and race, none of which had been known before her design was selected.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, Lin's memorial drew bipartisan criticism that mobilized the image of a police report on a traffic accident to critique its reliance on names and lists—established tools of administrative bureaucracy.<sup>38</sup> For some, Lin's disavowal of tradition failed to appropriately honor the fallen through its refusal of ornamentation. For others, Lin's aesthetics aligned her with left-wing, antiwar, elite practitioners of Minimalism and so also failed to appropriately honor the fallen. Published a month before the monument's dedication, Tom Wolfe's

31. On objections raised to Lin's memorial, especially the racist critique of its color and the antifeminist critique of its plinthless connection to the feminized earth, see M. Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Representations* 35 (1991): 122–23.

32. P. Spreiregen, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Design Competition," in *The Architectural Competition: Research Inquiries and Experiences*, ed. M. Rönn, R. Kazemian, and J. E. Andersson (Stockholm, 2010), 578–600. Originally, the memorial included 57,939 names, but 379 have subsequently been added. On the chronology and diversity of the names, see Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image," 127.

33. The monument does not mark the deaths of any Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, or deaths of American soldiers from traumas connected to the war that took place after the final ceasefire agreement in 1975. See Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image," 127.

34. To aid visitors in finding a particular name, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund published a key to the names, listing them in alphabetical order with their location on the wall: *Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Directory of Names* (Washington, DC, 1991).

35. See T. Morrissey, *Between the Lines: Photographs from the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (Syracuse, NY, 2000).

36. E. Wolfson, "The 'Black Gash of Shame': Revisiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Controversy," *Art 21*, March 15, 2017, <https://art21.org/read/the-black-gash-of-shame-revisiting-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial-controversy/>.

37. A. M. Wagner, "Once Upon a Time: The Vietnam Memorial at Age Twenty-Five," *Threepenny Review* 112 (2008): 19.

38. Wolfson, "Black Gash of Shame."



Figure 4. Maya Ying Lin with Cooper-Lecky Partnership, section of the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Black granite, 3.23 x 150.4 m. Photo: author.

op-ed on Lin's memorial maligned modern art movements and left-wing elite academics. Dramatizing paradigm shifts in art school instruction in the twentieth century, Wolfe claims that "janitors were instructed to throw out the plaster casts, those thousands of Corinthian capitals and Esquiline vases and whatnot that students had been using as models for drawing. For that matter, the hell with drawing itself . . . Modernism was abstract."<sup>39</sup> This image of faculty at elite institutions instructing working-class employees to dispose of the models with which artists had traditionally trained served Wolfe's conservative political agenda, casting the

stripped-down simplicity of Lin's list-based monument as anti-prole—simultaneously elitist and communist. Wolfe contends that "statues of heroic soldiers were the most inutterably bourgeois of all. . . . You could put a gun at the temple of one of the new breed [of artists] and you couldn't make him sculpt a realistic figure of a soldier to put up on a pedestal."<sup>40</sup> And these were just the sort of people, trained at Harvard, Yale, and MIT, Wolfe argues, who judged the competition and selected Lin's proposal. In a move that perpetuates long-standing anti-Islam rhetoric, Wolfe calls these judges "art mullahs." Thus Wolfe characterizes those who selected Lin's proposal as not only elitist but Eastern and effete, tapping into

39. T. Wolfe, "Art Disputes War: The Battle of the Vietnam Memorial," *Washington Post*, October 13, 1982. See also the discussion in Wolfson, "Black Gash of Shame."

40. Wolfe, "Art Disputes War."

enduring Orientalist tropes that also played into anti-Asian bias churned up during the war itself and directed against Lin.

In the face of the outcry over Lin's design, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund commissioned a second monument of three men in combat gear cast in monochrome bronze (*Three Soldiers*, 1984).<sup>41</sup> The artist, Frederick Hart, had also participated in the original contest and been passed over for Lin's monument. His more traditional figural monument includes the first representation of an African American man on or surrounding the National Mall, pitting this "first" against the "firsts" of Lin's monument. This idealized trio stands within feet of the chevron in an effort to embody and offset the nonfigural list and is another example of an emblematic monument. The return to figuration satisfied some of the complaints against Lin's alternative approach, but it is the wall itself that has emerged as an icon in subsequent years.

Among the laudatory descriptions of Lin's memorial after its dedication were comments during a Senate committee meeting in which Daniel Smith of the National Park Service referred to "the aesthetic qualities that make this memorial, in the view of many, one of the most emotionally moving memorials ever built," and Senator Tom Daschle commented that "the Wall has proven to be an amazing instrument for healing."<sup>42</sup> Nowhere in the extended committee notes is any reference to the early controversy over the monument; instead, speakers consistently affirm its singular importance and success. The wall has been so successful that several grassroots organizations have created replicas of the memorial for veterans and others who cannot make the pilgrimage to DC.<sup>43</sup> Lin's memorial has become the subject of reproductions and scaled-down copies of just the sort Wolfe claimed elite art professors had been instructing their cleaning staff to throw out in the early twentieth century.

41. On masculinist ways of being and Hart's additional figural memorial, see Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image," 126–28.

42. *Memorial to Honor Armed Forces; Requirements for Name on Vietnam Veterans Memorial; Memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr.; and Center for Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*, 108th Cong., June 3, 2003, 20.

43. John Devitt devised a traveling wall that was first exhibited in 1984; the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (VVB) formed in 1985 to create a portable replica at three-fifths scale of the memorial; Pittsburg State University in Kansas also designed a half-size replica on their campus. See <http://www.themovingwall.org/>, <http://www.travelingwall.us/>, and <https://www.psuvetmemorial.org/>.

Lin's aniconic approach refused to elevate and monumentalize a catastrophic and controversial war and instead grounded, narrated, and named the human losses. Critically, however, her monument only records the names of those who died in combat, not those who died while conscripted but not actively fighting or those who were damaged by the war but died after its conclusion. Further, Lin chose not to highlight differences of class, race, and rank among those who served, instead implicitly suggesting that veterans are equal in the moment of death. Debates over who should or should not be eligible for inscription continue, and further additions have been made to the site, expanding beyond the parameters of the original list: in 2000 a commemorative plaque was installed to honor those who died after the war as a result of the injuries they sustained, and the Vietnam Women's Memorial, a bronze figural monument depicting in part a female nurse tending to a wounded male soldier, was dedicated in 1993.<sup>44</sup> This expansion remains in tension with the impact of the monument itself, which stems in large part from Lin's creativity within the constraints of the competition's guidelines—constraints that these additions wholly circumvent.

### Blank spaces and poetry

Speaking of her intent in listing the names of the American soldiers in the chronological order of their deaths, Lin is said to have indicated that she wished to make the list read "like an epic Greek poem."<sup>45</sup> Notably, while she sought a different form from the classical figural monument for her memorial, she nevertheless found resonance with ancient Greek poetic practices, perhaps because poetry employs a more deconstructive strategy of representation. This resonance also aligns with the synergy between archaic poetry and the ancient Greek casualty list-monuments discussed above. Lin's system of arrangement, bookending her start and finish dates but providing no other numerical reference points and instead allowing a new alphabetical cycle to

44. For continuing debates concerning space on the National Mall, the parameters of the memorial, and the demand for an educational center, see the hearings of June 2003, "Memorial to Honor Armed Forces."

45. Although the source interview remains unknown, multiple publications attribute this intention to Maya Lin, the first of which appears to be "America Remembers," *National Geographic* 167, no. 5 (1985): 571. See also Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image," 127; and R. Wagner-Pacifici and B. Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 2 (1991): 406.

indicate a new day, itself suggests the basic operation of poetry—that is, to allow combinations of letters of the alphabet to represent and suggest a multitude of forms (and, in this case, to register protest).

The poet Alice Oswald trades on both of these concepts, rewriting an epic Greek poem by exposing its essence as a combination of letters in her 2011 work *Memorial*, a poem she described as an “oral cemetery.”<sup>46</sup> To produce the first section of the work, she stripped Homer’s *Iliad* of all but the names of its dead—what she calls her “reckless dismissal of seven-eighths of the poem.”<sup>47</sup> This blackout or erasure yields a list of names in block capitals:

PROTESILAUS  
 ECHEPOLUS  
 ELEPHENOR  
 SIMOISIUS  
 LEUKOS  
 DEMOCOON  
 DIORES  
 PIROUS  
 PHEGEUS  
 IDAEUS<sup>48</sup>

Oswald extracts the list of casualties from the poem to showcase the overall tally of loss. Organized in chronological order by the moment of death like in Lin’s memorial, the block letters of the names provide a visual, poetic form of monument.<sup>49</sup> In listing just these names, Oswald has removed all narrative. What remains is pure sign—names that don’t themselves take action

46. A. Oswald, *Memorial: A Version of Homer’s Iliad* (New York, 2013), ix. Our focus is on the first section of this poem—the list of names. The second produces biographies for each name, while the third translates similes from the ancient Greek.

47. Oswald, *Memorial*, x.

48. Oswald, *Memorial*, 1.

49. Carolin Hahnemann also notes the comparison between Lin and Oswald and connects it to equalizing the dead: “Abandoning the epic’s narrative focus on a handful of heroes, she gives equal treatment to all the dead, blurring social distinctions, and in many cases even rendering it impossible for the reader to tell which side a man was fighting on.” C. Hahnemann, “Feminist at Second Glance? Alice Oswald’s *Memorial* as a Response to Homer’s *Iliad*,” in *Homer’s Daughters: Women’s Responses to Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ed. F. Cox and E. Theodorakopoulos (Oxford, 2019), 90–91. See also C. Hahnemann, “Book of Paper, Book of Stone: An Exploration of Alice Oswald’s *Memorial*,” *Arion* 22, no. 1 (2014): 1–32, for a discussion that also explores Lin and the Athenian casualty lists.

but merely evoke it, as if the surrounding text itself has passed away, its capital letters conjuring the incised epitaph of a tomb. Oswald’s removal of the story line provides an interpretation of the *Iliad* itself, suggesting that all we learn from the narrative of war is the timeline and names of the dead, the tally and chronology of the lost. A name indexes a person, but in this case the presence of a name also marks their absence from the world of the living, creating an occupation of space as well as a blank. In addition, the source poem’s historical place as part of oral tradition means that in performance, temporal space may separate these names—a rhapsode reciting the *Iliad* might pause, perhaps for a significant duration, to create a memorial effect (a “moment of silence”). In Oswald’s textual version, she has fewer tools to control time and must exploit space to achieve this same effect.

Oswald’s contention that her methods are “compatible with the spirit of oral poetry, which was never stable but always adapting itself to a new audience, as if its language, unlike written language, was still alive and kicking” suggests a fascinating operation wherein she creates a text in the spirit of speech acts that destroys most of the possible speech, leaving instead only the sign of the sign.<sup>50</sup> In the end, the name, not the body, endures, yet in Oswald’s work, its meaning as a “positive” inscription is underwritten by the blank, “negative” space surrounding it.

### Naming the unnamed

A different process must take place, however, when records do not name the dead. In M. NourbeSe Philip’s book-length poem of 2008, *Zong!*, she “untells” the horrific fact-based narrative of her text’s titular slave ship. During its 1782 transatlantic journey, *Zong!*’s captain threw more than 130 enslaved people overboard to drown, believing that the loss of their economic “value” could be compensated via an insurance claim. Philip’s book mobilizes constraint, erasure, and the cut-up tradition in poetry by using only the five hundred words of the ensuing legal decision *Gregson v. Gilbert*—the text she calls the “mother document”—to engage with the horror of this massacre.<sup>51</sup> The text evokes

50. Oswald, *Memorial*, x.

51. M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown, CT, 2011), 200. Writing of this mother document, Philip claims that “the case is the tombstone, the one public marker of the murder of those Africans on board the *Zong!*, locating it in a specific time and place. It is a public moment, a textual monument marking their murder and their existence, their small histories that ended so tragically,” Philip, *Zong!*, 194. In an interview, Philip describes the process of reconstituting the

drowning spatially in the form of a concrete poem—words cast across its pages, unmoored—and breaks up words from the mother document, allowing the poem to devolve into fragmentation, first to the word, then to the syllable, and finally to the letter. This fragmentation expands the possibilities of what *Zong!* can do, for breaking up the larger words allows Philip to use French, Latin, Shona, and Yoruba (among other languages), as well as write in phonemes and individual letters. In addition, as Meilani Clay points out, this breaking up of words allows Philip to directly invoke African American vernacular English: “When Philip writes ‘this be,’ she is using AAVE’s ‘habitual be’ to call attention to the fact that ‘this’ massacre within the context of ‘this’ larger human atrocity that ‘was’ the institution of slavery will forever stand as something that has happened, in some ways is happening, and as far as we know will happen again, which is the unique frame of time represented by the habitual be.”<sup>52</sup> The final section of the book dissolves even further as the text moves from dark black ink to very light gray, leaving a palimpsest, the ghost of words more shadow than ink, augmented with strikethroughs and overwriting. The constraint of using the language of the legal decision as the basis for imagining the life of the murdered mirrors the colonialist imposition of language more generally, and some scholars have argued that Philip’s poetic deconstruction of such language does, in some ways, imagine an “outside” of the master’s house.<sup>53</sup> Michael Leong has suggested that, while many contemporary conceptual poets turn to documents as source materials for poems, such techniques are perhaps especially well-suited to “respond[ing] to racial traumas,” as reexamining documents through a poetic lens can create “conceptual elegies, poems that are able to redouble their sense of ‘afterness’ via redocumentation into powerful acts of mourning.”<sup>54</sup> In Philip’s case, access to

language, history, and documentation itself is limited by what was and was not preserved through time.

History does not record the names of the people who were murdered by the ship captain when they were forced from the *Zong* to the sea. Philip’s text, then, faces a particular challenge of listing a group of people whose names have been lost, (white)washed away. Jessica Marie Johnson has named these gaps in the archive “null values”: “Instead of pausing at empirical silence or accepting it at face value, surfacing silence in the empirical, imperial archive as having a value—a null value—imbues absence with disruption and possibility.”<sup>55</sup> Philip both recognizes the null value in the absence of names for those killed on the *Zong* and chooses to overwrite it with her own version of potential names, following a practice related to what Saidiya Hartman has named “critical fabulation.” Hartman describes such fabulation as a mode of writing whose “intention . . . isn’t anything as miraculous as recovering the lives of the enslaved or redeeming the dead, but rather laboring to paint as full a picture of the lives of the captives as possible.”<sup>56</sup> Rather than fabricate a story (which the mother document already tells), Philip instead fills the archival gap with names. To name the *Zong* dead, Philip researched Yoruba names and listed historically accurate possibilities in the first section of her book, which appear as five or six traditional male and female names at the bottom of each page in tiny font. “Masuz Zuwena Ogunshye Ziyad Ogwambi Keturah” reads page 3, mirroring the footnote quality of the *New York Times* names while also anchoring the bottom of the page of poetry, as if the names have drowned in the depths of the sea.<sup>57</sup> At the end of the fourth book, titled “Ferrum” (the last section of the text printed in black ink), Philip again lists names, this time in the same size as her regular font but in cursive, evoking signatures, the voices of the dead signing off. “Bektemba Agbeke Gbolahan Fasuyi Abifarin Olurun,” announces the first line of the name-list verse (fig. 5).<sup>58</sup>

court case: “you take these hard facts, this desiccated fact situation of *Gregson v. Gilbert*—and you reintroduce those emotions and feelings that were removed.” Quoted in P. Saunders, “Defending the Dead, Confronting the Archive: A Conversation with M. NourbeSe Philip,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 66.

52. M. Clay, “Response to Philip” (unpublished manuscript, November 20, 2020), typescript.

53. See, e.g., K. M. B. Siklosi, “‘the absolute / of water’: The Submarine Poetic of M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!*,” *Canadian Literature* 228/229 (2016): 111–30; and A. Quema, “M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!*: Metaphors, Laws, and Fugues of Justice,” *Journal of Law and Society* 43, no. 1 (2016): 85–104.

54. M. Leong, *Contested Records: The Turn to Documents in Contemporary North American Poetry* (Iowa City, IA, 2020), 144 and 152.

55. J. M. Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2020), 134–35.

56. Hartman continues: “This double gesture can be described as straining against the limits of the archive to write a cultural history of the captive, and, at the same time, enacting the impossibility of representing the lives of the captives precisely through the process of narration.” S. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 11.

57. “The Africans on board the *Zong* must be named. They will be ghostly footnotes floating below the text—‘underwater . . . a place of consequence’” (Philip, *Zong!*, 200).

58. Philip, *Zong!*, 173. Marta and Matylda Figlerowicz have theorized signatures as signifying both individual agency and the



that “a black archival presence not only enumerates the dead and dying, but also acts as an origin story. This is where we begin, this is where historic blackness comes from: the list, the breathless numbers, the absolutely economic, the mathematics of the unliving.”<sup>60</sup>

Working in tension between telling and untelling while also capturing a polyphony of voices, Philip’s text moves forward and backward, articulating, revising, recirculating, and fading in and out. In some ways, because of this tension, we see this book as much as we read it, watching early words come apart as they sink and then, in later sections, begin to line up formally and structurally as if from the violence of the language with which they are narrated until, in “Zong! #26,” they assemble into a block paragraph that exposes the words of the mother document for their profound inadequacy. Once the reader experiences this block, the words begin to expand and eventually explode across the page until the final palimpsest section in which they simultaneously accumulate and fade out. Throughout this process, instead of a “complete story,” the reader sees the impact of text on the page, the rips the words make in blankness, their tiny wounds.

Philip’s use of faded grayscale in her last section intervenes in the monumental tradition, whose materials tend toward shiny bronze or white marble, and connects her practice to several works discussed above: Sol Lewitt’s black platform, the *New York Times*’s black ink on gray paper, and the gray letters cut into Maya Lin’s reflective black granite. All of these are visually distinct from the traditions invoked by the Lincoln Memorial’s monochrome white marble or Wiley’s repurposing of monochrome bronze to mount his critique, and they propose an alternative to the violent systems undergirding traditional monuments. By rejecting the solidity of the patriarchal monument, grayscale makes visible that which it marks. These haunting shades are superimposed on top of our words (in Philip), written across our own reflections (in Lin), and printed on our bodies (like newsprint transferred onto skin).

### Return to embodiment

The monuments we have traced tell a history different from the conventions of the figural tradition. This alternative lineage of list-based monuments leaves room for more voices and possibilities, decentering the systems of power that have predominated for so long in

favor of a more flexible, open, and activist praxis. As a final demonstration of this flexibility, we turn to performance. Performances marshal the dynamics of embodiment and its possibilities, but they also confront new challenges, especially when translating from texts that capitalize on blank space. For example, when performing *Zong!*, Philip faces a dilemma: “Do you read the fragments across the spaces for comprehension and meaning, or do you honour the spaces and read the fragments as they exist, which I have written elsewhere is a threat to cohesion.”<sup>61</sup> This question identifies one of the perils of the blank space as a tool of memorializing: what if it is skipped over? Blank space, in certain ways, invites skipping by its very nature. Yet it can also make an important contribution to meaning—what Johnson has named null value.<sup>62</sup> We can never tell a full story. This limitation is particularly violent in the case of the *Zong!*, in which individuals acting within capitalist systems of property murdered the named and excised their names from the archive. Yet we can, as Philip does, nevertheless mobilize blankness as a form of resistance, retaining possibility and space.

Another way to lift up blank space is to fold multiple actors or monuments together in a ritual of embodiment. In 2014, forty-three college students from Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers’ College in the Mexican state of Guerrero were disappeared by security forces. No trace of the students has been found, and they are presumed dead. In 2016, Luis Sierra and Cecilia McDonagh, third-grade Spanish-immersion teachers at Alvarado Elementary School in San Francisco, California, decided to teach this history to their students, including the children of the present authors. Over the course of the fall, each student painted a portrait of one of the missing, crafted a papier-mâché mask layered with colorful strips of Mexican textiles and miniature photographic prints, and built a percussive rain stick to strap across their chests (fig. 6). Each mask was cast directly from a different child’s face and so bears an indexical trace of its model

61. P. Watkins, “We Can Never Tell the Entire Story of Slavery: In Conversation with M. NourbeSe Philip,” *Toronto Review of Books*, April 30, 2014.

62. Philip explains that “in the case of the *Zong!*, the log book was lost, so from the beginning there were lacunae in the story, in the text, which becomes a metaphor for what I am talking about the impossibility of telling the entire story, and the problematic about the desire to do so.” The one section of the book Philip says can’t be read out loud is the final palimpsest section in which words disappear into silence, suggesting once again the challenges inherent in representing silence (or blank space) in various mediums. Watkins, “We Can Never Tell.”

60. McKittrick. “Mathematics Black Life,” 17.



Figure 6. Juniper Easa-Murphy, *Mask for the Missing*, 2015. Papier-mâché and mixed media. 30.5 x 14 x 8.9 cm. Photo: author.

while also merging each living child with the dead student they embody.<sup>63</sup> Then, in a haunting performance, forty-three American third-graders put on clothing made of textiles that matched the masks to dance the story of these aspiring teachers. In their costumes, it was no longer possible to differentiate one child from the next. As the performance progressed, the students read in French and English an excerpt from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* in which the prince watches forty-three sunsets in one day.<sup>64</sup> In the book, this accumulation of sunsets refers to the forty-three sunsets required by the Nazis to capture France. The performers returned the forty-three teachers from

63. On the related practice of painting portraits from death masks, see A. Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie" [1902], in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* (Los Angeles, 1999), 218.

64. Notably, while the French text gives the number "quarante-trois," the first English translator of the book, Katherine Woods, changed this

Ayotzinapa to the cycles of nature by metaphorizing each of them as an individual sunset, each disappearance an ending in time. Ultimately, this multilingual performance brought together the historically and geographically separate traumas of the German invasion of France during World War II and the Holocaust with the state-sponsored disappearance of the Ayotzinapa teachers, demonstrating the way one monument can evoke another in layered traumas, much like the layers of paper constituting the papier-mâché masks.

In the final minute of the performance, the children ceased their percussive beat and stood still in two rows. Then each child spoke a single name aloud, one after the next: Alexander, Dorian, Israel, José, Miguel Ángel. Speaking names out loud has become a powerful tool of protest and mourning, and this performance engaged its power while also adding the element of embodiment. This spoken list joined the two traditions of figural and apodeictic memorials: for a brief moment, the deceased person and the person speaking each name were united so that the figural was brought back into the process of monumentalizing through performance (as Philip says, through ceremony the "the bones of the undead can find a resting place within us").<sup>65</sup> The children conjured each of the forty-three students into the room and embodied them, blurring time, age, nationality, language, and space. Their performance gave figure and list to occupy what had until that moment remained mystery and absence. In their bodies and voices, time folded for a second to create a new, brief synchronicity—and another form of protest.

Like these children—like so many of the creators we have explored in this essay—we might inscribe, fabulate, or chant the names of our dead in memoriam. We might mobilize the blank spaces of the page or the silence in between the words, working within constraints that we must constantly seek to refigure. Between these collected blank spaces flow lists of names. Each list

number to forty-four, perhaps to recognize the age at which Saint-Exupéry died, but this erased the author's intention. A. de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. K. Woods (New York, 1943), 25. Woods's change seems to have been absorbed by subsequent French versions, such as the Gallimard edition of 1999, which gives "quarante-quatre"; A. de Saint-Exupéry, *Le petit prince* (Paris, 1999), 29.

65. Quoted in Watkins, "We Can Never Tell." Philip continues: "Each time I perform *Zong!*, it manifests as Ceremony. Drawing on the brilliant essay by the Caribbean novelist, George Lamming, on the Ceremony of the Dead he witnessed in Haiti, I would agree with him that there is a sense in which the living and the dead share an interest in the future, albeit in different ways."

forges scale from individuation. Each name, even when marked only by interpunct or ribbon, can push us onward. However, list-based monuments demand not merely that we see, touch, or hear those who have died. Instead, by honoring or embodying names, we come to recognize our implication in these incalculable losses even as we mourn. List monuments thereby demand in the present that we work to reform our possible futures.

Overwriting the figural monument tradition by recognizing the parallel lineage of the list monument may itself function as a practice of social mourning, refocusing on individuals while also reminding us that

they have been with us all along. Like the artists whose graffiti and light projections on a Confederate statue revise and reclaim the meaning of such work, we seek to metaphorically write on top of history itself, revealing overlooked narratives.<sup>66</sup> While the figural has garnered more attention, the quieter practice of memorializing by naming is a deep part of history and one that produces a particular understanding of the cyclical nature of loss. By their very nature, list monuments suggest expandability, acknowledging the ongoing and unfinished business of mourning.<sup>67</sup> As their open-endedness shows, the work of grieving is ever iterative.

66. On multimedia artistic interventions as a means of protesting the Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond, see E. Marcus, "Will the Last Confederate Statue Standing Turn Off the Lights?" *New York Times*, June 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/23/style/statue-richmond-lee.html>.

67. For a haunting example of this, see Michael Leong's research on the publication history of page 134 of Claudia Rankine's book-length poem *Citizen: An American Lyric*, on which Rankine records an ever-growing list of memorials of Black lives cut short by police violence. The first printing included one name, the eighth printing included nine names, the nineteenth printing included twenty-six names, and the project tragically continues (Leong, *Contested Records*, 153–58).