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Transatlantic Monuments: On Memories and Ethics of Settler Histories

Adam Hjorthén

Uppsala University

***Abstract:** This article explores the meanings and significances of memories of settler histories in transatlantic relations. Looking specifically at the medium of monuments, it asks what functions they have played, and continue to play, in relations between the United States and certain European countries. The first section of the article offers an anatomy of transatlantic monuments, outlining its key characteristics through a discussion of some prominent examples that range from Christopher Columbus to Leif Eriksson and the Plymouth Colony. In the second section, this typology is further explored through an in-depth analysis of the 1938 monument of the New Sweden colony (1638–1655) designed by Swedish sculptor Carl Milles. The third section deals with memory and ethics, focusing on the analytical consequences and contemporary ramifications of applying a transatlantic perspective on monuments of settler histories. The article argues that a framing of memories of European settlement in America as transatlantic encourages us to rethink its meanings and functions, but also to reappraise questions of responsibility. As monuments of settlement appear to be politically relevant in Euro-American relations, we need to address consequential questions of inclusion, authority, accountability, and agency, that are central to an ethics of memory in transnational settings.*

***Keywords:** Monuments, transnational memory, settler history, ethics of memory, New Sweden colony (1638–1655)*

Transatlantic Monuments: On Memories and Ethics of Settler Histories
North America is scattered with monuments of European settlement.¹

1 Parts of the article that concern the history of the New Sweden Colony, the New Sweden monument in Wilmington, Delaware, and commemorations at the Fort Christina State Park from 1938 to 2013, have

They are found at the sites where people from Europe made landfall on the American seaboard and in the areas that they settled in the West and Midwest. These plaques, statues, and memorials only tell half the story, however, because European settlement monuments also abound east of the Atlantic. The monuments of William Penn in Pennsylvania and of John Cabot on Newfoundland are mirrored by statues of Penn and Cabot in Bristol, England; a monument to Peter Stuyvesant stands in Stuyvesant Square in New York City, but also at his birthplace in Wolvega, the Netherlands. While there are more than one hundred and fifty monuments of Christopher Columbus in the United States, there are almost as many in Europe, most of them located in Italy and Spain.² The urge to memorialize settlement histories may have been strongest at the settlers' point of arrival—attesting to the usefulness of these pasts as foundational mythologies for regional and national community building in the United States—but they have also played a certain role in cultures of memory connected to the settlers' point of departure. This transnational dimension of memory has during the last century been made functional for the promotion of transatlantic relations. It has had consequences for the cultural memory of American settlement histories, but also for the ways that we can envision an ethics of settler memories.

This article investigates the meanings and significances of monuments of settler histories, focusing on their functions in transatlantic relations between the United States and certain European countries. It is an inquiry that connects to scholarship on the public history of settler memories and Native dispossession. In the United States, memories of settlement have been strongly associated with notions of American innocence—from memories of the Puritans and Manifest Destiny to the establishment of American overseas colonies (what Daniel Immerwahr has called the “pointillist empire”). This notion of settler innocence has in recent years

originally been published in Adam Hjorthén, *Cross-Border Commemorations: Celebrating Swedish Settlement in America*. Copyright © 2018 by the University of Massachusetts Press. It is reprinted here with minor changes. I would like to thank Magnus Rodell and the two anonymous reviewers for comments on previous versions of this article, and Jodie Childers, University of Massachusetts, for graciously sharing sources from her own research into the Leif Eriksson monument in Reykjavik.

- 2 See Peter van der Krogt, “Geographical Distribution of Monuments for Christopher Columbus” (Paper Presented at the 44th Annual Meeting of the Society for the History of Discoveries, October 24, 2003), www.vanderkrogt.net (accessed, May 6, 2020).

been critically examined by North American scholars.³ However, the workings of settler innocence also need to be explored in a transnational perspective. The urgency of this perspective has become evident in light of recent international events. Several anti-racist and anti-colonial protests over monuments have been unfolding during the 2010s, most prominently the #RhodesMustFall movement in South Africa and Great Britain in 2015–2016, centered on statues of Cecil Rhodes, and the 2017 removals of Confederate statues in the aftermath of a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. In the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, statues have once again become sites of contention, their toppling and destruction being emphatic expressions of frustration with the legacies of historical injustices.⁴ The geographical spread of the protests—in Africa, Europe, and North America—give echo to its historical roots in European imperialism, settler colonialism, and the triangular slave trade.⁵ It requires a transnational undertaking to engage with memories of European settlement in the North America. How should we grasp the ethics of settler memories when it plays out in transatlantic settings?

Monuments are (typically) material renderings of a specific past that occupy a public space, with the intention to tell a singular story about that specific past for posterity. Monuments are objects that are made as a result of social will at a particular moment in time—shaped by cultural, political,

- 3 On American innocence and settler memory, see Boyd Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 18–20. On how American empire has been hidden by the myth of the United States as a country without colonies, see Daniel Immerwhar, *How to Hide and Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019). Examples of critical inquiries into the settler memories and Indigenous agency, see Laura L. Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham, M.D.: AltaMira, 2007); Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); David W. Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee: The Lakotas and the Politics of Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 4 For a discussion about monument vandalization as a valid political action, see Sarah Beetham, “From Spray Cans to Minivans: Contesting the Legacy of Confederate Soldier Monuments in the Era of ‘Black Lives Matter,’” *Public Art Dialogue* 6, no. 1 (2016): 9–33; Chong-Ming Lim, “Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 48, no. 2 (2020): 185–216.
- 5 An example of the transatlantic reverberations of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests: when activist in Bristol, England, on June 7, 2020, tore down a statue of seventeenth-century slave trader Edward Colston and dumped it in the River Avon, it was as historian David Olusoga observed “dragged through the streets of a city built on the wealth” of that slave trade. See Olusoga, “The Toppling of Edward Colston’s Statue is Not an Attack on History: It is History,” *The Guardian*, June 8, 2020.

religious, or commercial interests. They were made by communities, and they demand community interpretation and involvement to stay alive. Monuments are, in other words, fundamentally social objects. Because of their social character, monuments have regularly been studied to understand processes of community formation or identity construction. Such scholarship commonly focuses on one national, ethnic, or religious group. But “community” is of course not only local or national, it can also be international or transnational.⁶

During the last decade, scholars in public history and memory studies have critiqued the methodological nationalism of the field, and tried to find new approaches to the study of transnational memory. Astrid Erll has, for example, claimed that the “container-culture approach [to the study of memory] is... epistemologically flawed, because there are too many mnemonic phenomena that do not come into our field of vision with the ‘default’ combination of territorial, ethnic and national collectivity as the main framework of cultural memory.”⁷ As Erll, Aleida Assmann, Michael Rothberg, and others, have shown, memories are not limited to certain groups but are products of interactions across cultures and geopolitical borders, and are subject to ongoing negotiations and cross-referencing.⁸ It is clear that memories in the United States ever since the Revolution have served national and patriotic purposes. Monuments can be powerful tools in instilling a sense of unity and belonging. My point is not to question that scholarship, but to complement it. Memory is indeed “not a zero-sum game,” as Rothberg so aptly has pointed out.⁹ The national and transnational dimensions of memory do not cancel each other out, but have in fact often accompanied each other.

By shifting to a focus on the crossing of borders, we alter our way-of-seeing certain monuments as well as our way-of-studying them. To rethink

6 Adam Hjorthén, “Global Histories and Cross-Border Commemoration,” in *Commemoration: The American Association for State and Local History Guide*, ed. Seth C. Bruggeman (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 59–67; Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 199–256.

7 Astrid Erll, “Travelling Memory,” *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 8.

8 See for example Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, eds., *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices, and Trajectories* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

9 Rothberg 2009, 11.

the social dimension of a monument—the “community,” the “we”—requires rethinking a monument’s meanings and functions, but it also impels us to rethink notions of influence, power, and responsibility. As Steffi Hobuß has pointed out, “no single individual or voluntarily acting subject can set the rules for what should or should not be remembered” in transnational settings.¹⁰ This cognitive and analytical shift therefore needs to be coupled with a contemporary discussion about the ethics of commemoration. When considering certain monuments to be “American” monuments, we disregard the fact that cultural memories are created, maintained, and made functional transnationally and transculturally. This, I suggest, have bearing not only on how we understand the past of a monument, but also how we act upon its futures.

The Anatomy of Transatlantic Monuments

What are transatlantic monuments of settler histories? First of all, we have the obvious dimension that it implies a geographic limitation; this article will focus on European-American relations. Second, it concerns histories of European settlement in America, most commonly covering the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The third aspect—which I will expand on below—concerns the memorial function of monuments. It encompasses the tripartite temporalities of memory: the past, the present, and the future.¹¹

First, transatlantic monuments are monuments that concern *pasts* that have crossed borders. It includes colonization, pioneering, and immigration. Applying an even broader perspective, it could also include for example slavery, wars, and acts of terror. There are, of course, a wide range of monuments in the United States that carry this transatlantic potentiality. Sometimes, however, the American national or patriotic character of the monument might shield this dimension. The prerequisite for the framing of settler memories as national or regional American mythologies is a preoccupation with the settlers point of arrival. As a consequence, both public and academic historians have not paid much attention to the relevance of these memories at the settlers’ point of departure.

10 Steffi Hobuß, “Aspects of Memory Acts: Transnational Cultural Memory and Ethics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 3, no. 1 (2011): 3.

11 This concept of temporality, which has shaped “western” memorial culture since the nineteenth century, is closely connected to notions of modernity. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, transl. by Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

A case in point is the Plymouth Colony, which of course is heavily memorialized in New England. The memorial landscape in Plymouth, Massachusetts, prominently features the built memorial structures surrounding Plymouth Rock, as well as the National Monument to the Forefathers, erected in 1889.¹² But there are also monuments and memorial sites to the colony in England and in the Netherlands, attesting to the fact that the memory of the Pilgrims is not circumscribed to New England, or to those individuals across North America who claim colonial ancestors. Its memory is rather cut across a different sort of community, one that stretches the Atlantic, and that has been made meaningful in several contexts. The presence of the Pilgrims is also commemorated in Europe, for example at the Mayflower Steps (1934) in Plymouth, England, or at the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum (1997) in the Netherlands. Here, the history of the Pilgrims is not one of arrival but of connections. This is a history with the potential to be activated for the purpose of manifesting transatlantic relations.

The significance of Plymouth Rock in the contemporary transatlantic nexus was exemplified by its 400th anniversary celebrated in 2020 by two different organizations, one located in Massachusetts, and one in Great Britain. In the words of the British organization, which not surprisingly focused on the history of the *Mayflower*, this is the story of “One ship that links four nations, spans 400 years of history and connects millions of people.”¹³ Since Indigenous communities in recent decades have challenged chauvinistic memories of the Plymouth colony, that center the white man in American history, it has become rather obvious that the celebrations cannot be divorced from ethical consideration. As a consequence, the Wampanoag community was on the board of directors for the celebrations based in Massachusetts, while the Native American history and experience of the colony was a central feature of the organization based in the U.K.¹⁴

The second type of monuments are those whose *many presents* were defined by transatlantic contacts and exchanges, concerning the reasons for its making, the people involved in its making, its financing, its

12 John Seelye, *Memory's Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

13 “An Inspiring Year of Commemoration across 12 Destination,” *Mayflower 400, 1620–2020* (accessed, October 16, 2019), <https://www.mayflower400uk.org>.

14 *Plymouth 400, 1620–2020* (accessed, October 16, 2019), www.plymouth400inc.org.

physical construction, and its inauguration. This category of monuments includes gifts from one country to another. We might think instinctively of monuments that have been original gifts, such as the Statue of Liberty, donated to the United States from France in 1886, but the most common transatlantic monument is likely those that are replicas.¹⁵ There are many monuments in the United States that are replicas of monuments in Europe, and vice versa. Those that concern settlement histories include, for example, the Christopher Columbus statue in Plaza de Colon in Madrid, made by Spanish sculptor Jeronimo Suñol and erected in 1886. A few years later for the 1892 commemoration of Columbus landing, a slightly modified replica of Suñol's monument was constructed in Central Park, New York. It was unveiled in 1894.¹⁶

Another example concerns Leif Eriksson, the Norse explorer who at times has been framed as the first European to “discover” the North American continent around the year 1000. Out of the international plethora of Leif Eriksson monuments, a curious case is the one located in Reykjavik, Iceland. The bronze figure—standing sturdily on the deck of a ship, eyes gazing to the horizon, hands clasping a cross and a long-handled axe—was modelled by American sculptor A. Stirling Calder. It was as a gift from the United States government to Iceland for the commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of the Icelandic parliament (the *Althing*) in 1930. According to a *New York Times* report, the statue showed “a heroic figure symbolizing humanity’s unending quest—the urge which moves men to fly around the globe today as it drove them to sail the unexplored Atlantic centuries ago.” The monument was unveiled in Reykjavik in July 1932.¹⁷

In time for the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, the Icelandic government received permission to use Calder’s plaster cast to make a bronze replica of the statue to place in the Icelandic pavilion. When the World’s Fair closed in 1940, the Mariner’s Museum in Newport News, Virginia, volunteered to

15 Edward Berenson, *The Statue of Liberty: A Transatlantic Story* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

16 William E. Curtis, *Christopher Columbus: His Portraits and His Monuments; A Descriptive Catalogue, Part II* (Chicago: W.H. Lowdermilk, 1893), 67–68; Chauncey M. Depew, *Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Christopher Columbus in Central Park, New York, Saturday, May 12th, 1894...* ([New York], 1894).

17 T.C. Linn, Jr., “Ericson Statue Shown: A. Stirling Calder Has Completed Model of Work to Be Presented to Iceland,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1931; Thorstina J. Walters, “A Statue of Leif Ericsson is America’s Gift to Iceland,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1932.

take care of the replica, placing it outside the main entrance of the museum. Although Icelandic-American congressmen in the 1950s tried to get the statue relocated to Washington, D.C., considering such a move a symbolic “demonstration of further good will and of friendly relations existing between this Nation and the Government of Iceland,” the replica of the U.S. gift to Iceland still stands in Virginia.¹⁸

This circular, back-and-forth-and-back-again motion of the monument is in part a consequence of economics; it is easier and cheaper to make a monument from an existing cast than to design a new one. However, it also demonstrates how memories of Leif Eriksson have become entangled across the Atlantic, providing a history of a North American “Viking” exploration (or “discovery”) to which both Americans and Scandinavians can feel prideful connection.¹⁹

The third temporal dimension concerns how monuments have been used to calcify *future relations* across the Atlantic. This includes monuments made through cross-border cooperation, but it can also concern monuments initiated by U.S. groups specifically to bolster international relations. Although not monumental in its expression, a fascinating example is the German-American Friendship Garden, located very close to the Washington Monument on The Mall in Washington, D.C. It was established in 1983 as part of the German-American Tricentennial, which celebrated the 300th anniversary of German Mennonite families’ first settlement in the state of Pennsylvania. As the result of a Congressional resolution, President Ronald Reagan in 1987 issued a proclamation describing the Federal Republic of Germany as a “bulwark of democracy,” that shared “common values as well as... heritage.” Reagan ended his proclamation by stating that “The German-American Friendship Garden is symbolic of the close and amicable relations” between the countries. The garden was dedicated by Reagan and

18 “Acceptance of Gift from the Ericsson Memorial Committee,” August 2, 1955, Congressional Record, 84th Congress, 1st Session, vol. 101, part 10 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 12868–12870. Quote on p. 12869. The negotiations regarding the plaster cast and the push for relocating the statue to Washington, D.C., was made through the Ericsson Memorial Committee of the Icelandic National League.

19 Anette Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact: The Vikings of Vinland, the Peoples of the Dawnland, and the Anglo-American Anxiety of Discovery* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Dag Blanck, “The Transnational Viking: The Role of the Viking in Sweden, the United States, and Swedish America,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016), 19 pp.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1988.²⁰ The commemoration and memorial were part of the Cold War manifestation of a contemporary Western Alliance, as well as of historical German-American relations.

The anatomy of transatlantic monuments can be used to begin to explore the degree of involvement of various groups and actors in settler memories. There is a set of monuments that have been functional tools in European-American relations. They have—for cultural, social, commercial, and very often for political purposes—been intended to create communities that stretch across the Atlantic, based on representations of shared pasts, presents, and futures. In the remainder of this article, I will turn to discuss a specific case that demonstrates all of these dimensions, displaying a great degree of involvement among several groups on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the harbor of the city of Gothenburg in western Sweden stands a monument to the New Sweden colony (1638–1655), a short-lived settlement once located on the banks of the Delaware River, covering parts of present-day Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The bronze monument, 26 feet (or 8 meter) tall situated at the end of a stone wharf, depicts the voyage of the ship *Kalmar Nyckel* from Gothenburg to Delaware, the founding of the colony, the life of the colonists, and their relation to Native Americans. The monument is not, however, an original. The original is located some 3,900 miles away, in the outskirts of Wilmington, Delaware, standing feet away from the claimed landing site of the Swedish colonists, a place popularly called The Rocks.

As will become clear, this is in many ways an atypical example of a transatlantic memory. Unlike most other settler colonial histories, the legacy of New Sweden has not been contested by Indigenous groups. The overwhelmingly benevolent memory of this North American colony makes the quest for an ethics of memory more difficult to ascertain, but also more salient to address. Looking closely at this case is a way of complicating notions of agency, meaning, function, and responsibility of settlement memories in America.

20 Ronald Reagan, Proclamation 5719, “German-American Day, 1987,” October 2, 1987, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum (accessed, October 16, 2019), www.reaganlibrary.gov.



Figure 1. The New Sweden monument in Wilmington was completed in time for the opening of the Fort Christina State Park in 1938. Courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.

On Memories: The Case of New Sweden

The New Sweden colony is sometimes described in popular lore as a “forgotten” history.²¹ This is clearly not true. One could even argue that, in relation to the colony’s impact on North American and Swedish history, the volume of its historiography—academic and popular—has in fact outsized its historical significance. Still, it is by all means a brief episode in the larger history of European settlement of North America. The colony’s memory has foremost been nurtured in Swedish America, Sweden, and the Delaware Valley (since Finland was a part of Sweden in the seventeenth century, the colony has since the 1930s also been commemorated by Finns and Finnish-Americans).²²

21 A recent example is the documentary *Kalmar Nyckel: The Forgotten Journey*, directed by Nancy Glass, Samuel Heed, and Patrick Stegall (Wilmington, Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, 2017).

22 On the Finnish-Swedish conflict at the New Sweden Tercentenary, see Max Engman, “The Tug-of-War

The area in the Delaware Valley that would become the location of the New Sweden colony was originally inhabited by Lenape and Susquehannock Indians. Although a changing cast of Europeans laid claim to the Delaware Valley, the Lenape had control over the majority of the region for most of the seventeenth century. Despite a steadily decreasing population, the Lenape lived in close proximity with the Europeans, mingling, intermarrying, and—especially important for the modern memory of the Swedish settlement—working to maintain trade and uphold peaceful and beneficial relations with the colonists.²³ The arrival of European settlers marked the beginning of the long process of Lenape dispossession, pushing them in the mid-eighteenth century to Ohio Country and in the 1860s further on to Indian Territory. As a result of these forced movements, most Lenape in the United States today live in Oklahoma.²⁴ Although New Sweden was a minor episode in the centuries-long history of Lenape dispossession, it remains an event in the larger European takeover of the North American continent. While academic and popular historians long tended to exempt New Sweden from the concurrent context of European colonial settlement, recent scholarship has insisted that the colony needs to be described in such larger Atlantic and American contexts.²⁵

In March 1638, the *Kalmar Nyckel* (the Key of Kalmar), and the smaller *Fågel Grip* (the Griffin) entered Delaware Bay, equipped by the New Sweden Company to establish a colony along the Delaware River. The colonists allegedly stepped ashore at The Rocks to sign a treaty with the Lenape. The colony that developed along the river centered around a few scattered settlements. At its peak in the early 1650s, it had less than four hundred inhabitants, mainly from Sweden, but with a substantial group from present-day Finland. Unlike its neighboring British and Dutch colonies, New Sweden was never involved in warfare with the Indigenous populations. In both historical scholarship and popular history, this fact was

over 'Nya Sverige' 1938," *Swedish American Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (April 1994): 69–117.

23 Jean R. Soderlund, *Lenape Country: Delaware Valley Society Before William Penn* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Mark L. Thompson, *The Contest for the Delaware Valley: Allegiance, Identity, and Empire in the Seventeenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2013). See also Hjorthén 2018, 19–22.

24 John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Norther Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 78–111, 211–232.

25 Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Magdalena Naum and Jonas M. Nordin, eds., *Scandinavian Colonialism and the Rise of Modernity: Small Time Agents in a Global Arena* (New York: Springer, 2013).

long explained as a result of Swedish agency, based on the notion of a special affinity between the colonists and the Lenape. In reality, the lack of warfare was mainly due to the actions of the Lenape. It was the Lenape, and in particular Lenape women, who worked to uphold relations beneficial for trade.²⁶ During its short existence, the colony had infrequent contact with homeland Sweden; few ships arrived with supplies and manpower, making it difficult for colonial governors to consolidate their regional power. In 1655, the colony was overtaken by the Dutch of New Netherlands.²⁷ Although the Swedish colonial reign in North America came to a swift end, the memory of those seventeen years has proved both useful and valuable.

We can begin to explore the anatomy of New Sweden memories by looking at the original monument by Carl Milles in the Fort Christina State Park. Historian Seth C. Bruggeman has aptly pointed out that “when you see a monument, you see the end of a sentence... but you never get to know what the sentence was.” The physical singularity of the monument is made to embody an argument “as if there were no argument.”²⁸ With this in mind, it is appropriate to begin to examine the parts of the sentence that a viewer, quite literally, can see.

The Fort Christina State Park is located east of downtown Wilmington, in one of the poorer neighborhoods of the city.²⁹ The park was closed for a decade due to loitering and vandalism, but was reopened to the public in 2016. Since 2015, it has been one of seven sites that constitute the First State National Historic Park in Delaware. Although governed by the National Park Service, the park’s public history program is run by the Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, which occupy the lot right next to the park. The Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, in turn, is centered on the 1997 recreation of the colonial ship *Kalmar Nyckel*. For most of the year, exempting periods when it sails off the coast of the Mid-Atlantic region, the ship is anchored feet away from the park, providing an enticing image of colonial history coming

26 Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters among the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

27 See Clinton A. Weslager, *New Sweden on the Delaware: 1638–1655* (Wilmington: Middle Atlantic, 1988); Carol E. Hoffecker, Richard Waldron, Lorraine E. Williams, and Barbara E. Benson, eds., *New Sweden in America* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995).

28 Seth C. Bruggeman, “Monument Lab asks Philadelphians to Think About the City’s Memorials in New Way,” Keystone Crossroads, Vimeo, (uploaded September 12, 2017; accessed, October 16, 2019), <https://vimeo.com>; Seth. C. Bruggeman, “Introduction: Conundrum and Nuance in American Memory,” in Bruggeman 2017, 3.

29 The following discussion about the monument in Wilmington comes from Hjorthén 2018, 65–66, 74–80.

alive. Inside the gates, there are two objects of significance. The first is The Rocks itself—the natural stone wharf where the colonists of 1638 are said to have landed. The second is the New Sweden monument, created in 1938 for the three-hundredth anniversary of the colony. These two objects are epistemologically entwined, each being charged with meaning by the other.

The monument is an eight-sided column with concave surfaces. Unlike its replica in Gothenburg, the Wilmington version is made of black Swedish granite. On top of the column rests the ship, *Kalmar Nyckel*, slightly tilted in the wind. The column is covered with several panel reliefs, and with inscriptions in Swedish and English. The main inscription declares the monument to be a gift from “the people of Sweden” to commemorate “the first Swedish settlement on American soil.” Even though the reliefs are not linearly placed, the monument is both pedagogical and particular in form, and tells a coherent story of departure, landing, and settlement.

The four larger reliefs represent the broad outlines of the colony’s history. The ship *Kalmar Nyckel* crosses an ocean, and travels from Gothenburg, lined with long rows of houses, towards Delaware, with its natural landscape inhabited by various animals. On arrival, three males dressed in nonspecific Native clothing meet two males dressed in European seventeenth-century-style clothes, holding a sign with the Swedish coat of arms. Another relief features three men, one bare-chested with nonspecific Native attire, surrounding a horse that, according to the inscription, had run away and been returned by the Natives. Lastly, a large relief depicts “New Sweden” with a woman holding a child, surrounded by figures doing agricultural and cultural work.

The monument can be read as a linear narrative, introduced by the adventurous journey of the ship that crowns the monument. This journey is broken down in the larger reliefs. The voyage from Sweden to the Americas is one from culture to nature; the Swedes’ land treaty with the Natives is one of benevolence and respect; the settling and cultivation of colonial soil is connected to virtues such as hard work, family, and religion; and the relations with the Natives are characterized as friendly through the somewhat peculiar story of the runaway horse. A short, solitary inscription signals the end of the venture and the impact of the narrative: “And thus the Swedish colonists established civilization in the Delaware Valley.” It is a proclamation that positions New Sweden as the foundational history of the region, establishing the Swedish colonists as carriers of modernity and progress to an area inhabited

by people who supposedly belong to an archaic past.³⁰ The inscription is the last and visible part of the monument-as-sentence. To see the beginning of the sentence, we need to investigate its making.

The monument was created for the 1938 New Sweden Tercentenary. This was a commemoration organized and celebrated jointly by several different groups: by the governments of Sweden, Finland, and the United States, by the states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, and by Swedish Americans and Finnish Americans. The interest in the event grew considerably in the mid-1930s when it began to be discussed among state representatives in Delaware and Pennsylvania. There were different reasons for these states' interest in the colony. The most important was economic and political considerations, connected to the prospect of the commemoration becoming an international event. The celebration was regarded by New Deal politicians—who at the time governed Delaware and Pennsylvania—as a potential source of tax revenue, but also a way of manifesting a historical and contemporary connection with Sweden. In 1932, the same year as Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President, Sweden elected a Social Democratic government led by Per Albin Hansson. The Hansson government set out to reshape Swedish society, establishing a modern welfare state based on institutionalized compromises among the state, industry, business, and trade unions.³¹ These political developments did not go unnoticed in the United States.

More than any other person, the American journalist Marquis Childs contributed to spreading a positive image of Sweden through his highly successful book *Sweden: The Middle Way* published in 1936. The book argued that Sweden offered an appealing alternative to communism and capitalism, combining public and private ownership with state regulations and social reforms. *The Middle Way* was publicly praised by President Roosevelt, and was instrumental in focusing the attention of New Deal politicians on the developments in Sweden.³² These transatlantic

30 The notion of civilization and progress connects to ideas about modernity, see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10.

31 Hjorthén 2018, 27–29, 37–53.

32 Marquis W. Childs, *Sweden: The Middle Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936). On the impact and significance of Childs's book, see Carl Marklund, "The Social Laboratory, the Middle Way and the Swedish Model: Three Frames for the Image of Sweden," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 34, no. 3 (2009): 268–77; and Carl Marklund, "A Swedish *Norden* or a Nordic Sweden? Image Politics in the West during the Cold War," in *Communicating the North: Media Structures and Images in the Making of the Nordic Region*, ed. Jonas Harvard and Peter Stadius (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2013), 265–70.

ideological threads contributed to the unprecedented interest among the U.S. federal government and several American states in making the 1938 commemoration a transatlantic event.

The locus for the celebration was The Rocks. In the early twentieth century, The Rocks was located on a shipyard owned by the Wilson Line and surrounded by industrial complexes. Clearing up the area and turning it into a park became a priority of the Delaware commission. The Rocks, they declared, “bear to all of this region the same relation that ‘Plymouth Rock’ bears to New England. As the New Englanders have cared for and hallowed their Rocks, so the people of Delaware should care for and hallow ‘The Rocks.’”³³ In the spring of 1937, the State of Delaware acquired the land from the Wilson Line and started constructing the Fort Christina State Park, naming it after the colonial fort once located close to the site. In response to the great local interest in the Delaware Valley, the Swedish government decided to construct a monument to the colony, and to place it in the park.³⁴

The Swedish commemorative commission choose Swedish artist Carl Milles to make the monument. The choice was made in an effort to stir as much American interest as possible in the monument, and thus in the commemoration. Rather than a reflection of any particular Swedish aesthetic, the design was selected with the U.S. government and people “in America” as the main target audiences (with which they probably meant Swedish Americans and residents of the Delaware Valley). Milles had by the mid-1930s made a name for himself in the United States. He was at the time professor at the Cranbrook Institute of Art outside Detroit, and had received a few prominent public commissions in the United States. Milles drew up a design proposal that, with minor changes, became the monument that we see today. The selection of reliefs and the inscriptions were made in cooperation between Milles himself, the Swedish-American historian Amandus Johnson, and the Swedish ambassador to the United States, Wollmar Boström. The monument was financed through a national subscription in Sweden, with donations from nearly 170,000 Swedes. It was carved in Stockholm before being shipped in pieces to Wilmington, to be assembled on site.³⁵ The production thus symbolized its cross-border quality.

33 Report of Delaware Swedish Tercentenary Commission, Minutes, 1330:6, box 1, Temporary Commemorative Commissions, Delaware Tercentenary Commission/Delaware Swedish Tercentenary Commission, Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Delaware.

34 Hjorthén 2018, 66–67.

35 Hjorthén 2018, 74–76, 79.



Figure 2. The replica of the New Sweden monument in Gothenburg was unveiled in 1958. Source: "Delawaremonumentet in Gothenburg," by Andreas Argirakis, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

As the shipment of crates departed Sweden for Delaware in the spring of 1938, the plaster cast of the monument was left on the quay of Södermälärstrand in downtown Stockholm. It had in January been bought by the Swedish Co-operative Union (*Kooperativa förbundet*, or KF), who already the same year commissioned the making of a bronze replica. KF had originally intended to place the replica in the Baltic Sea inlet to Stockholm but, due to difficulties of accommodating the monument in the city zoning plans, the bronze elements were left in their crates unpacked.³⁶ After a twenty-year hiatus, an opportunity finally materialized of placing the monument in Gothenburg. It was unveiled in December 1958.³⁷ The decision to place the monument in Gothenburg appears to have been primarily practical; unlike in Stockholm, that city actually provided a central location for the KF donation. In the process, the move also altered the monument's historical claim, connecting it to the transatlantic grid of the colonial venture. The move situated the monument on the historical trajectory of the colonial voyage, placing it in the city from where the colonists had departed their transatlantic crossing, and thus marking Gothenburg as part of the colony's transcultural memoryscape. Since 2016, the monument stands some eighty feet away from a terminal building for trams, buses, and boats, providing a peculiar backdrop to contemporary transportation. While the monument in Gothenburg stands quiet—serving, according to some observers, as a mere shed for the gusting winds of the North Sea³⁸—its sibling in Wilmington has, with some regularity, attracted more vivid gatherings.

The original monument was unveiled in Wilmington on June 27, 1938, at an event that also marked the inauguration of the New Sweden Tercentenary, and the arrival of the two sizeable, official Swedish and Finnish delegations to the United States. Thousands of Delaware residents and Swedish Americans from throughout the country had gathered in the park, where the state of Delaware had constructed a speaker's stand facing the monument. Except for Sweden's Prince Bertil—the acting leader of the Swedish delegation in lieu of his father, Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf who was recuperating from renal colic contracted during the Atlantic crossing—

36 On the KF purchase of the plaster cast and making of the bronze replica, see "Kooperativa köper Milles skepp," *Dagens Nyheter*, January 16, 1938; "Brons-Delaware färdigt till jul," *Aftonbladet*, May 14, 1938. On the erection and unveiling of the monument in Gothenburg, see "Albin Johansson invigde Millesmonument i Göteborg," *Dagens Nyheter*, December 20, 1958; "Calmare Nyckel," *Göteborgs-Tidningen, Söndagstidningen*, December 7, 1958.

37 See for example "Göteborg får replik av Delawaremonument," *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 19, 1958.

38 Dan Sjögren, "Skål för de vinddrivna," *Göteborgsposten*, April 25, 2018.

the main speaker of the event was Franklin D. Roosevelt.³⁹ The President used the occasion to demonstrate his country's good relations with Sweden and Finland.

In his address, the President welcomed the foreign delegations by saying that they represented "a true friendship under which we have lived from the earliest times unmarred by any rift, unbroken by any misunderstanding." Sweden, Finland, and the United States, he declared, "will continue their service in the days to come in the cause of friendship and of peace among the nations of the world."⁴⁰ These statements were not only courteous platitudes. They were a way of showing that Sweden and Finland were part of the democratic orbit. For Sweden, a country with a historically strong economic and cultural orientation toward Germany, Roosevelt's remarks were intended to bring the country closer to American interests, functioning as a form of public diplomacy at a time of political unrest. The basis for these claims were the stories about the friendship between the colonists and the Lenape Indians, as manifested for example through the monument.

The timing of the commemoration was advantageous for the three nations who were grappling with mounting geopolitical tensions and the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia. Throughout the celebrations in June and July of 1938, newspapers covered stories about the tercentenary alongside alarming headlines of the Nazi regime's terrorizing of Jews in Germany and Austria, and of bombings in Spain and China.⁴¹ The notion of historical friendship served diplomatic purposes, functioning as a statement of political allegiance at a crucial geopolitical moment.

Before the 1938 commemoration, there was no fixed site to remember and to celebrate the New Sweden colony. The creation of the Fort Christina State Park changed that. The monument by Carl Milles has since 1938 become the seemingly natural place for commemorating this history, with large celebrations arranged at the site in 1963, 1988, and 2013. Every one of these occasions have been performed in cooperation between Swedish-American organizations, the state of Delaware, and the Swedish government, with participation of Swedish royals.

On a beautiful spring day in May, 2013, the Swedish King and Queen and

39 Hjorthén 2018, 6–7.

40 Franklin D. Roosevelt, speech, June 27, 1938, in *Observance of the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the First Permanent Settlement in the Delaware River Valley, 1938* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 18–19.

41 Hjorthén 2018, 160.

the Finnish speaker of parliament, together with local and regional officials, boarded a full-scale replica of the seventeenth-century vessel *Kalmar Nyckel* in downtown Wilmington. They travelled a short distance down the Christina River and docked at The Rocks. As the royals and government representatives stepped ashore, they were greeted by Mark “Quiet Hawk” Gould of the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation and Dennis Coker of the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware.⁴² Together, they had reenacted a scene from the colonial landing. It was a moment fixed in the cultural memory of the colony, anchored in the monument standing a few feet away.

The 2013 commemoration was the first time that the colonial landing had been reenacted using the recreation of *Kalmar Nyckel*, and with Lenape participants. The celebration had been planned by the New Sweden Alliance Incorporated, an organization consisting of seventeen Swedish-American associations and institutions in the Delaware Valley. Although Gould and Coker participated, none of these men were involved in organizing the event. They had no voice in the official reports of the Swedish government and Royal House, nor in most of the media coverages. The handshake between the Swedish King and Mark Gould echoed the texts and images on the monument, as well as other, common images of settler-Indigenous amity and reconciliation in American history.⁴³

It is clear that the primary object of this sort of transatlantic friendship was not between the Swedish state and the Lenape, but between the Swedish state on the one hand, and U.S. politicians, Swedish-American cultural leaders, and Delaware Valley businessmen on the other. At a banquet at the riverside Chase Center in Wilmington, in front of an audience of businesspeople, Delaware governor Jack Markell, and Vice-President Joe Biden, the Swedish King declared that “the early migrants planted the seeds of a deep-rooted partnership among our countries.”⁴⁴

42 *Sverige & Amerika* 45–46, no. 1–2 (2013).

43 Penelope Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 19–23. The image also reverberates with those associated with New Sweden memories, as reflected in the glossy report of the Swedish commission for the 1988 New Sweden commemoration that featured two images: a late seventeenth-century illustration by Thomas Campanius Holm of New a Sweden colonist and Lenape shaking hands—taken from Campanius’ *Kort beskrifning om provincien Nya Sverige uti America* (Stockholm, 1702)—and a contemporary photograph of President Ronald Reagan and Queen Silvia, both flashing bright smiles and the former showing a thumbs-up. See *New Sweden ’88: 350 Years of Friendship* (Stockholm: Swedish National Committee for New Sweden ’88, 1989).

44 “H. M. Konungens tal vid galamiddag i Wilmington,” May 11, 2013, Sveriges Kungahus (accessed,

He claimed that, what he described as, the Swedish “immigrants” of the seventeenth century and their descendants have “bound our transatlantic community together,” making “our relations today as strong as ever.”⁴⁵ In this way, the King contextualized New Sweden as a form of immigration—turning the colonists into what John Bodnar famously called “the children of capitalism,” setting off on a benevolent search for better lives⁴⁶—rather than as settlers or colonists intent on claiming land, replenishing this land, and extracting surplus to the benefit of the homeland.

It is important to pause here and consider the perspective of the Lenape. It is possible to conceive of the 2013 event as empowering the participating Lenape tribes. The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation of New Jersey and the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware have both received state recognition from New Jersey and Delaware. Thus far, however, they have not obtained federal recognition. An oral history of the Nanticoke nation describes that “the Swedish government and royal family visit occasionally, and Sweden even considers the tribe to be a sovereign nation.”⁴⁷ There has not been any involvement from any Delaware tribe in Oklahoma, which are the only U.S. based Lenape tribes to have received federal recognition, and it does not appear that they have ever sought participation. For the Lenape of the Delaware Valley, participating in a cross-border commemoration in which tribal members appear with foreign heads of state might serve as a form of symbolic recognition, as leverage in their struggle for sovereignty.

Material renderings of cultural memory carries a certain power through its very materiality. But the fact that a monument literally takes place and “occupies the ground,” as W.J.T. Mitchell writes, does not necessarily mean that material renderings of memory are more resilient.⁴⁸ On the contrary, #RhodesMustFall and the movement to take down Confederate

October 16, 2019), <http://www.kungahuset.se/>.

45 “H. M. Konungens tal vid Buena Vista Plantation,” May 11, 2013, Sveriges Kungahus (accessed, October 16, 2019), <http://www.kungahuset.se>.

46 John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 1.

47 Amy Hill Hearth, “*Strong Medicine*” *Speaks: A Native American Elder Has Her Say; An Oral History* (New York: Astria, 2008), 26. On Native sovereignty struggles and the difference between state and federal recognition, see Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O’Brien, eds., *Recognition, Sovereignty Struggles, and Indigenous Rights in the United States: A Sourcebook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

48 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 159.

statues in the United States shows that monuments also provide foci for cultural memorial conflicts. Monuments might be dead matter in everyday life—standing silent in parks, street corners, and roundabouts—but their significance as specimens of power is unraveled at times of social crisis.⁴⁹ They can serve as the concrete thing in a contestation that otherwise might have appeared as a fight of windmills.

In Wilmington and Gothenburg, the monuments by Carl Milles still stand unaltered. There have been no revisions of its singular historical claim. The end of the sentence has remained intact. Through material culture and commemoration on both sides of the Atlantic, it is clear that New Sweden is still celebrated as a history of transatlantic relations, founded on a settler colonial legacy that presents the colony as a foundational history of the Delaware Valley. It is this combination—of transatlantic exchanges, coupled with settler legacies—that prompts a discussion about ethics.

On Ethics: Historians, the Public, and Settler Histories

The question of participation and belonging is important in all commemorations, but it is particularly acute in those that concern histories of violence, displacement, dispossession, and injustice, or those that cross any number of national, social, or religious borders. Histories of settlement are infused with questions of power, and thus of ethics.

Before I move on to discuss notions of ethics, it is important to stress an obvious, but sometimes forgotten, fact about commemorations: they are not natural. We do not *have* to celebrate certain histories. It is possible to resist the commemorative urge so easily stirred by the rhythms that, according to Frank Ankersmit, are determined by “extrahistorical and purely arithmetical considerations.”⁵⁰ After all, commemorations are not consequences of the past; they are contemporary enactments. If you do choose to commemorate history, there are different ways of envisioning an ethics of memory.

49 Arguing for the value and reconciliatory potential of “living memorials” over material memorials, Annie E. Coombes has pointed out that physical monuments usually only come alive in the context of events. See “Decolonizing the Monument/Rethinking the Memorial,” paper presented at the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University, February 6, 2020.

50 Ankersmit posits that the “naturalness” of commemorating, for example, Columbus’s landing in 1992, and not in say 1976 or 1990, is simply because our “preference for numbers that are a multiple of five,” which is based on “the fact that we happen to have five fingers on each of our two hands.” Frank R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 166–167.

The first is as a responsibility to history.⁵¹ In his book *Silencing the Past* from 1995, Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote about the many ways that power shapes the production of history. Historical narratives, he wrote, “involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production.... The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.”⁵² Following Trouillot, an ethics of memory can be defined as exposing how historically unequal relations have shaped the way that we remember the past and comprehend the present. The historian, just like public figures making claims about history, can thus be said to have an ethical obligation to “tell it like it was,” to strive toward historical authenticity.

An example is the description of colonialism as immigration. In the case of New Sweden, this has been standard fare. It is frequently present in descriptions of New Sweden as the “beginning of Swedish immigration to America,” statements that conflate seventeenth-century history with nineteenth-century history. Colonialism and immigration, though, are two different and discrete processes; one connected to mercantilism and imperialism, the other to industrialization and capitalism. There are of course cases where colonialism and migration indeed are connected, specifically in processes of settler colonialism. Beginning in the sixteenth century, European settlers moved to North America to found sovereign political orders. They were later followed by many generations of migrants moving into areas where a settler sovereignty already had been established.⁵³ This does not mean that settler colonialism *is* or can be equaled to immigration but, rather, that immigration is a fundamental aspect in understanding the long-term consequences of European settlement of Indigenous lands. To indeed talk about a seventeenth-century colony in a concurrent context of European (settler) colonialism can be considered a way of being “true” to the past.

A second way of conceptualizing an ethics of memory is in terms of responsibility to the present. In this line of thought, the significance is not

51 This should be differentiated from responsibilities to the *past*, which is discussed in relation to processes of individual and collective identity by Jeffrey Blustein, *The Moral Demands of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

52 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), xix.

53 See for example Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 3–4.

measured by the level of authenticity with which we treat the past, but how we act on the consequences of this past. Patricia Lorenzoni and Ulla Manns have written that authenticity is not primarily a question about being faithful toward the past, but in being honest toward the now in which the past remains engaged.⁵⁴ While a responsibility to history hinges on a past separated temporally from the present, a responsibility to the present implies a temporality in which “the past” is an “ongoing now.” The prominence of this type of presentism in historical scholarship is, according to Victoria Fareld, expressed in the recent decades’ transformation of historians from “experts on a past that no longer exists” to “therapists for society’s managing of a past that in different ways lives on in the present.”⁵⁵ A responsibility toward the present is thus a way of tackling the historically grounded injustices that we still live with. Such a responsibility may be shared by organizers and activists, but it can also be maintained by academic scholars.

This brings me to the third way of conceptualizing ethics, which concerns memory in transatlantic relations. The philosopher Avishai Margalit has made a distinction between ethics and morality of memory connected to another distinction, between two types of human relations. What Margalit calls “thick relations” are “anchored in a shared past or moored in shared memory,” and encompass the categories of “parent, friend, lover, [and] fellow-countryman.” The second type are “thin relations,” that rely, as he writes, “on some aspects of being human.” They are “in general our relations to the stranger and the remote.” “Because it encompasses all humanity, morality is long on geography and short on memory. Ethics is typically short on geography and long on memory.” The ethics of memory are thus, in Margalit’s account, the domain of thick relations. It belongs to families, nations, or other imagined communities.⁵⁶

Michael Rothberg has aptly pointed out that Margalit’s philosophy rests on a “monocultural and generally nation-based imagination of

54 Patricia Lorenzoni and Ulla Manns, “Inledning,” in *Historiens hemvist: Etik, politik och historikernas ansvar*, ed. Patricia Lorenzoni and Ulla Manns (Gothenburg: Makadam, 2016), 17.

55 Victoria Fareld, “Tiden är nu: Presentism, tidskris och historiska sår,” in *Samtider: Perspektiv på 2000-talets idéhistoria*, ed. Anders Burman and Lena Lennerhed (Gothenburg: Daidalos, 2017), 21, 25. My translation.

56 Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 7–8. An example of a study that employs Margalit’s theory is John Sundholm, “The Cultural Trauma Process, or the Ethics and Mobility of Memory,” in *Memory and Migration: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Memory Studies* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011), 120–134.

community.”⁵⁷ As attested by migratory processes, including those engaged in making sense of colonial settlement, community is not nationally contained but can also be transnationally formed and transculturally shaped. This begs the questions about how community—the “we”—is envisioned in commemorative activities, and who has the power to participate in processes of remembrance.

Especially concerning commemorations of difficult pasts, it is important for organizers to consider the question “who might think about this history as being ‘their own’?”⁵⁸ Of course, the answer to that question has had, and will have, different answers at different times. It is essentially a question of inclusion and exclusion. This is particularly important when memory concerns historically disenfranchised communities or minority groups, such as Black Americans and Indigenous populations. “Ultimately,” as public historian David Neufeld has argued, “the purpose of public history work with aboriginal peoples is the presentation of a community’s story to ensure that its existence is acknowledged and its interests respected.”⁵⁹ One way in which commemoration can become tainted with injustice and inequality is through the process of its establishment. (Another is through the chosen object of remembrance. Often, as the monument protests of the 2010s have unveiled, these problems appear to come in tandem.) The philosopher Chong-Ming Lim maintains that, to account for fairness in commemoration, “one necessary condition... is that the participants enter it as equals” and that members of a community are not “neglected, dismissed, or suppressed during the process of determining who or what to commemorate.”⁶⁰ The question of fair inclusion and equality is thus one of historical authority. It encourages consideration of which groups to involve in commemorations, on what conditions they are allowed to participate, and ultimately what voices and messages that are allowed to occupy public space.

Looking at the 400th anniversary of the Plymouth Colony discussed

57 Michael Rothberg, “Multidirectional Memory in Migratory Settings: The Case of Post-Holocaust Germany,” in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 132. See also A. Dirk Moses and Michael Rothberg, “A Dialogue on the Ethics and Politics of Transcultural Memory,” in *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders*, ed. Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 29–38.

58 Hjorthén 2017, 63.

59 David Neufeld, “Ethics in the Practice of Public History with Aboriginal Communities,” *The Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 121.

60 Lim 2020, 188.

earlier, this has clearly been one of the lessons learned during the last decades. Of course, in the case of Plymouth, Massachusetts, the organizer's considerations might not have been one of ethics but of public relations and, eventually, of business. Regardless of the source of their concern, however, a (by)product of their work has still been ethical, as it has led to greater Indigenous involvement. This development did not come out of nowhere. It is the result of decades worth of Native American activism, including by the American Indian Movement who, for example, on Thanksgiving Day 1970 disrupted the 350th anniversary of the Plymouth Colony by occupying a replica of the *Mayflower*.⁶¹

But then, considering the case of New Sweden, whose memory has not been a target of Native activism, a fair question might be: if neither the Lenape, Swedes, or European-Americans, are opposed to the ways in which the colony is being celebrated, why at all talk about this as a problem of ethics? One answer would be that it is a problem because of the fact that political, economic, and social capital is not evenly distributed between the groups involved—not historically, nor today. There are some groups that have a clear advantage of power, and who have considerable influence over the negotiation of memory—most notably the Swedish state, represented by the Swedish embassy in Washington, D.C.⁶² The Embassy is today, and has ever since the 1930s, been a forceful champion of the narrative that the New Sweden colony exemplify the long historical prowess of the Swedish state, and the claim that New Sweden constituted a sort of benevolent colonialism (or “early immigration”). Though the inclusion of Lenape representatives could be considered a step in the direction of greater ethical consideration, it is clear that their participation has in no way altered the narrative or visual representation of the colony's legacy. Looking at the commemoration in the light of responsibility to the past and to the present, or to the handling of memory in transatlantic relations, the

61 Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 151.

62 In writing about the significance of negotiation in memory and processes of remembering, Steffi Hobuß has argued that negotiation “does not weaken the category of responsibility; to the contrary, it stresses the important role everybody takes in these processes of negotiation.” See Hobuß, “Memory Acts: Memory Without Representation; Theoretical and Methodological Suggestions,” in *In Search of Transcultural Memory in Europe*, ed. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Niklas Bernsand, and Marco La Rosa (Lund: Centre for European Studies at Lund University, 2017), 26.

bodily presence of the Lenape did not change the cultural memory of New Sweden. If anything, they served to calcify it.

We can think about the involvement of the Swedish state in this history of settlement in America through the notion of detachment and attachment. There is clearly a spatial and social distance, of detachment, between Sweden and the Delaware Valley. This distance makes it seemingly easier to not get immersed in the politically fraught legacies of dispossession and racism that remain a struggle for Native American communities. Perhaps this distance also defines the question of historical accountability. Is the historical problem of Native dispossession an American, or a transatlantic legacy? This is a question that engages the spatial, transnational dimension of the ethics of memory. Thinking about the transcultural dimension, however, it is similarly clear that there is a sense of closeness, of attachment, of all involved groups to the claims of a shared heritage. Together, these two dimensions—of transnational detachment and transcultural attachment—inevitably pushes the question of ethics to the fore. It forces us to acknowledge the agency of non-American actors in the circulation of what sometimes simplistically is called “American memories.”