

**DISSONANT HERITAGE AND THE HAZARDS OF RETENTION**

*Jon Calame\**

**ABSTRACT**

Finally, after years of negotiation and fundraising, a Confederate monument in Athens, Georgia (USA) – decorated with fresh flowers – was ready for public dedication. Many supporters, along with clergy and local politicians, were in attendance. Just as a solemn speech had begun, though, a local newspaper records the sudden arrival of a violent storm as “wind, rain and lightning... suddenly burst forward in great fury. (Merton, 1956 : 30-247). The assembly scattered momentarily, then carried on in a nearby Baptist church. It was the first of many storms which would swirl around this memorial to Athens’ Civil War dead.

These words were let it be:

*Bright Angels come and Guard our Sleeping Heroes*

... which may ring strangely to our years now, it being unusual, even in a literary context, to compare the dead with the sleeping. Were these simple poetic indulgences, or did the monument’s designers intend to suggest that their object represented something more... something which was then merely dormant, temporarily defeated, but capable of being awoken to a new life? Was the true purpose of the monument to gaze forward in anticipation of this awakening, rather than to look back in reverence?

This paper will explore a few divergent contemporary interpretations of these controversial objects in the public domain, tracing the lineage of motivation leading some call for their protection and others to call for their removal.