

Rubbing Memory the Right Way

Whiteness, (Inter)(in)animation, and Monumental Frottage

Hang on to failure, hang on to derision—a failure and derision that would not invite a reactive triumphalism but pre-empt it—if you want to avoid going to war.

—JACQUELINE ROSE, *WHY WAR? PSYCHOANALYSIS, POLITICS,
AND THE RETURN TO MELANIE KLEIN*¹

FEMINISM, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND THE WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL

Around 2007, while an MFA painting student at the Yale School of Art, Mary Reid Kelley, in partnership with Patrick Kelley, began making a series of feminist video works about World War I, prompted by feelings of being “bogged down by contemporary war,” the approaching centennial of the declaration of World War I, and the deaths of the world’s last surviving World War I veterans. For an artist wanting to work on war in the mode of farce, as Reid Kelley did, these deaths permitted “a certain kind of freedom.”² The series, in explicit dialogue with feminist counterhistories of World War I, was preceded by experiments that used the technique of rubbing known as frottage. The video work that emerged in the wake of these experiments incorporated different forms of animation, including stop-motion and a form of embodied animation performed by fluidly gendered actors painted like black-and-white cartoon characters in ways that close the gap between drawn animation and mortality. Reid Kelley and Kelley locate these stylized performances within virtual 3D digital environments that collage together a variety of historical referents in both serious and farcical modes. These artists bring feminist humor, irreverence, and experimental animation techniques to bear on fixed patriarchal war narratives. By discombobulating linear times, mapped space, and assigned gender roles, their (inter)(in)animating works disrupt ostensibly

untouchable and petrified spaces of memory, making room for, without prescribing, other ways of understanding World War I.

My interest in Reid Kelley and Kelley's (inter)(in)animations dates back to 2008, a paracentennial moment that coincides with the emergence of a substantial body of scholarship that insisted on the importance of reexamining World War I within global, decolonial, and antiracist frameworks.³ The geographic and temporal paradigms proposed by this work underscore the limitations of white feminist scholarly approaches to war that attend to masculinist militarism and white female-identifying actors while ignoring questions of race and empire. Yet these decolonial interventions had also adapted and extended feminist methodological innovations to address the occluded entanglements of war, race, and empire, suggesting both shared ground with and the importance of interdisciplinary critique for future feminist work. These dynamic discussions about war historiography challenged how I had learned to understand World War I through scholarly training, national rituals of remembrance, and family histories. Amid this tension between the feminist World War I scholarship that was an explicit touchstone for Reid Kelley and Kelley's 2008–10 (inter)(in)animations and the rapidly evolving insights of decolonial and antiracist World War I historiography, I became increasingly curious about the experimental prehistory of the four World War I video works. Thanks to the generosity of the artists, I found myself examining Reid Kelley and Kelley's art school-era experiments. They reveal the artists' attempts to reconfigure the relationship between the physical body, language, material culture (including art, archives, film, and architecture), and war. These early frictional engagements with built memorials and war heroes register, albeit elusively, like a haunting, the entanglements of World War I memory with white supremacy and colonialism. This chapter explores what can be learned about the task of unlearning and intervening in entrenched war memory by juxtaposing these two proximate and (inter)(in)animating bodies of work.

GENDER, ANTIHEROIC COMEDY, AND THE QUESTION OF WHITENESS

Four World War I video works hover in a disorienting space between sexual humor and mourning. *Camel Toe* (2008, 1:28, standard-definition video with sound) features Reid Kelley as an airman who marries a ballerina who replaces him with a vibrator; *The Queen's English* (2008, 4:20, standard-definition video with sound) centers on a World War I nurse; *Sadie, the Saddest Sadist* (2009, 7:23, standard-definition video with sound) tells the tale of a munitions worker who contracts syphilis from Jack the sailor; and *You Make Me Iliad* (2010, 14:49, high-definition video with sound) depicts a young poet's perspective on life and death on the Western front as well as his encounter with a Belgian sex worker.⁴

In these works, embodied animation combines with 3D digital design and bawdy poetry to pressure delusional mythologies of white normative masculinism and femininity, particularly as these mythologies flourish under the banners of heroism, war, nation, and linear wartime chronologies, all sites of antiwar feminist critique. As characters share their affective investments in war using doggerel rhyming couplets full of allusions and puns, meaning spins out of control. Reid Kelley explains that the persistent presence of the rhyming couplets aims to strip the soundtrack of the emotional musical cues usually found in war cinema, making the speaking voice “the sole presence on the soundtrack . . . right in the ear,” “intimate but unrelenting and aggressive in an insistent way.”⁵ This sonic aggression combines with verbal and visual farce in ways that suspend viewer empathy and sentiment, not to cultivate disregard for the war’s dead, but rather to bring attention to how reverent memorialization rituals can block memories excluded by these rituals as well as nuanced reflection on war.

A 2008 Beinecke Library fellowship enabled Reid Kelley to view the manuscripts, letters, and photographs of many writers who had experienced World War I. She studied the diverse ways in which artists and writers in World War I had responded to the war in which they participated, from what she calls the “grotesque and overwhelming realism” of Otto Dix, to the persistence of Cubism in Fernand Léger’s post-Verdun work, to the uses of satire and collage of the Berlin Dadaists.⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld’s *The Sexual History of the Great War* (1930), as well as the film for which he cowrote the screenplay, *Different from the Others* (Richard Oswald, 1919), both became important sources. Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) introduced Reid Kelley to Eric Hiscock’s *The Bells of Hell Go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling* and to the trench writing found in *The Wipers Times*, an often-farcical newspaper written by British soldiers on the Western Front.⁷ “Nothing can compare to *The Wipers Times*,” she states. “It’s really antiheroic—they are making fun of themselves. The types of parody in just that one publication! It’s hard to know where to begin, but one remarkable example: they parody war correspondence. . . . This was incredibly liberating, to not only see and read witnesses talking about their own experiences, but also making fun of it. And this wasn’t published after the fact, this was published in 1916.”⁸

At the level of performance, the artists experimented with the implications of having female actors (most frequently Reid Kelley herself) playing “macho roles,” putting pressure on binary gender paradigms. But this work also reflects the influence of feminist scholarship on World War I that sought to counter the paucity of material about women in official war archives by using oral histories, personal ephemera, period literature, and popular culture. The project was inspired, for example, by the short stories of the American-British writer Mary Borden, who funded and nursed at her own field hospital at the French front, by Angela Wool-lacott’s *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (1994), and by English-language scholarship on the role of “Comfort Women” in World

War II.⁹ Reid Kelley and Kelley spotlight the occluded role of white women in particular as actors in warfare, dismantling patriarchal infrastructures of war remembrance and historiography while rendering visible both the complicity in the war machine of the characters they feature—nurses, munitions workers, and sex workers—and the specifically gendered and sexual forms of violence that mark these actors' wartime experiences.

In some ways, Reid Kelley and Kelley's focus on white women's roles in war risks reinforcing the separation between World War I and the history of empire that a subsequent generation of scholars, such as Santanu Das and Nadia Atia, seek to undo.¹⁰ As Atia points out, "Imperial nations harnessed the power of their colonies in a time of crisis. Yet the presence of these men—and unspecified numbers of women . . .—has largely been erased from popular media representations of the First World War, especially outside Europe."¹¹ Reid Kelley and Kelley's work visually exaggerates the often-unspoken role of whiteness and heroism in maintaining hegemonic landscapes of World War I memory but without offering more capacious or corrected histories. This brings attention to whiteness in a somewhat unstable way, bearing traces of both the rewards and the risks that Shohat and Stam attribute to whiteness studies. They point out that "whiteness studies at its best denaturalizes whiteness as unmarked norm, calling attention to the taken-for-granted privileges that go with whiteness." But, they caution, "At the same time, whiteness studies runs the risk of once again narcissistically recentering whiteness and can reproduce the same isolationist approaches to races, ethnicities, and nations."¹² Through these works, there exists a tension between doing and undoing—between the pathos evident in their feminist treatment of characters such as Sadie, a munitions worker who contracts "the clap," and the (inter)(in)animating humorous tactics that threaten either to bring the whole world of war memory to rubble or to reinforce a sense of an all-white, albeit a denaturalized all-white, world. The characters in these works seem stuck, unable to give form or sense to better alternatives, suggesting the inadequacy of simply supplementing existing memory landscapes with additional narratives. In this chapter I am interested in thinking with this "stuck" space by considering these pieces and the student-era experiments that led up to them and by attending not only to finished works but to unfinished and minor works, as well as to the sites at which they were produced.

As Reid Kelley and Kelley's works unravel dominant heroic narratives of World War I through the limited worldviews that accompany antiheroic characters' pattern, a type of political failure or bathos emerges that resonates with the "failure and derision" that, for Rose, is central to the avoidance of going to war. This absence of artistic triumphalism grounds the works' farcical and antimilitaristic approach to war, and it is rooted in the interaction between multiple types of animation, including Reid Kelley's and other actors' embodied performances, which are all inseparable from a whiteness given form by stark black lines. The interaction of these elements—failure, farce, animation, black-outlined whiteness, and war—

overlaps in some ways with tactics Mignon Nixon describes when writing in a later context about the Japanese artist and war survivor Yayoi Kusama. Nixon argues that Kusama manages anti-Japanese public responses to her pacifist work during the Vietnam War by turning to puns, playfulness, “the ludic,” and performative politeness, modes that reveal and bypass “the extent to which women [are] obliged to play up their submissive femininity for the privilege of even the most circumscribed public speech.”¹³ This ludic element, Nixon argues, allows the artist to foreground, in a way that would otherwise have been foreclosed to her, how “Cold War politics had descended into gender farce, that the hyperbolic masculinity responsible for a genocidal war in Vietnam was inextricably bound up with the anxieties and repressions of nuclear-mentality culture.”¹⁴ Though Reid Kelley and Kelley’s World War I work situates itself in relation to a different war history and point of utterance, it too activates the punning, playfulness, and ludic performance strategies found within the tradition of feminist antiwar art that Nixon outlines. Their use of these tactics draws attention to the taboos that surround and uphold the structures and effects of World War I history and memory within western Europe and North America. The bodies of Reid Kelley and Kelley’s performers seem caught between embodied flesh and representational drawings, suspended between early American black-and-white cartoons and twenty-first-century video game worlds.

From 2008 on, Reid Kelley and Kelley paint all their actors white with black outlines and features. These drawings/paintings are animated by living bodies, with Reid Kelley often in a solo or lead role (figure 10). This black-and-white palette explicitly references the political and ludic avant-garde practices of Dada artists, most explicitly Kiki de Montparnasse’s high-contrast makeup in Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy’s *Ballet Mécanique* (1923–24). The works resonate with experimental uses of animation in Berlin Dada theater, discussed in chapter 3, as well as the world of dazzle camouflage, the “strategic distortions” of which, Emily James argues, reflect a “symbiotic relationship” among the military, avant-garde design, and modern women.¹⁵ In the video work, these modernist interactions encounter the black-and-white world of early American comics and cartoons, particularly those of George Herriman’s androgynous Crazy Kat, introducing, perhaps unwittingly, the performance traditions of blackface minstrelsy and whiteface too into both Reid Kelley and Kelley’s painted-body (inter)(in)animations and World War I history.¹⁶ If cross-racial blackface performances in the United States seek to displace Black life and disavow the difference between it and caricature, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s embodied whiteface animations activate a tension between white embodied being and caricature within their broader inquiry into the affective landscape of war making and memory. Though whiteface performances by white actors do not function in the same way as Racquel J. Gates describes Eddie Murphy’s whiteface performance of the character Saul operating in *Coming to America* (John Landis, 1988)—that is, as a “flipping of the script”—they do,



FIGURE 10. Graphically painted nurse and patients, from Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley's *The Queen's English*, 2008.

I suggest, jostle the white normativity of World War memory narratives, including some revisionist ones, in ways that attract (inter)(in)animating attention.¹⁷

When I ask Reid Kelley in 2023 to address, retroactively, how she understands the whiteness of her painted characters over time in relation to race and colonialism, she reflects, "My characters are all white. . . . White people have so much that they need to work out amongst and to each other, and to work out not just between contemporary white people but between living and dead white artists. . . . I feel like the central theme in all of the work is delusion. . . . Somebody is under a delusion that kills them. And to me this is intimately connected to whiteness."¹⁸ The artists' work foregrounds what Reid Kelley describes as "this totally seamless mechanism of confirmation that you are in the center" that accompanies "the state of being white" and invites reflection on the relationship between whiteness and war. The extreme painted whiteness of Reid Kelley and Kelley's characters creates a stark, cartoonish world in which blackness serves only to outline white characters and render them visible within environs where anything other than white liveliness seems structurally impossible. The title of *You Make Me Iliad* explicitly links these works' prevailing whiteness with classicism and classicism's powerful hold on modern ways of dealing with the aftermath of war. But Reid Kelley and Kelley simultaneously undermine modernity's reach for classicism through bathos, puns,

satire, farce, rhyme, nonsense, shattering, cartoons, the abstract animation of letters and object fragments, obscenity, and disorienting combinations of two and three dimensions. These strategies, piled on top of each other, refute any possibility of coherence or stability within the white classical worlds they invoke, even as no other world is indexed or even hinted at by these works.

SKINANIMATION, STOP-MOTION, AND THE DISMANTLING OF CLASSICAL UNITY

In her brilliant study of the entanglements of modernity and classicism in the wake of World War I, Ana Carden-Coyne argues that “transcending racial diversity and weaving bodies together as one, classicism evoked a shared humanity and a universal vision of peace through respect for the dead.”¹⁹ Reid Kelley and Kelley’s practice draws attention in farce-laden but often affectively poignant ways to the work that this “respect for the dead” does. They explore how memory cultures and institutions have the potential to both entrench and scramble hegemonic narratives of war. Their work refuses to allow memorials to function smoothly as what Carden-Coyne describes as “a strategy of forgetting,” and seems to respond to one of Carden-Coyne’s closing questions: “Can mourners of the war dead be co-opted by the state?”²⁰

In this chapter, I continue to stretch (inter)(in)animation’s operations as a world-dismantling and world-creating tool. As the live-action performances of Reid Kelley and Kelley’s black-and-white figures bring war-related cartoon forms to life, these filmed drawings on skin test the limits of available critical vocabulary for describing visual movement effects. The boundaries between painting, drawing, performance, video, and animation start to blur as the actor’s painted skin serves as both ground and animating force for a multimedia drawing: “skinanimation”?²¹ This embodied animation is juxtaposed with the digital stop-motion animation of hand-sculpted objects as well as of letters made in historically charged fonts that trigger a gamut of memories, from German militarism to home movie intertitles, suggesting that this animated intervention into the landscape of World War I memory involves personal and familial memories too.²² In *The Queen’s English*, flimsy 3D shapes made out of paper and plaster figures connoting the rubble of war—teeth, hooves, a hand, a horse’s tail, a bone—move independently around the screen (video 2). In *Sadie, the Saddest Sadist*, letters swirl around, occasionally colliding as if by accident, making and unmaking words—WORK, FUNCTION, CUNT—phrases, or letter piles, encouraging the eye to make new letters from the piles—*cut* from *cun/t*, *off* from *on/ffff*. The digitally mediated physical materiality of these animated shapes and fabricated parts—made not of enamel, dentin, keratin, bone, or flesh, but of paper and bright white plaster—brings them into a sculptural, memorial register that is more mobile and fluid than many non-digital sculptural works might otherwise seem. Furthermore, the mediation and



VIDEO 2. Body parts. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *The Queen's English* (2008).

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.2>



frame-by-frame animation of these objects provokes thought about how white heroic war victory narratives are materially constructed and fixed, as well as how we would remember war otherwise if horses were memorialized not beneath triumphant bronze generals, but through the mediation of war's fragmenting force, through unstable sculptural piles of teeth, hoof, and hair.²³

While plaster and paper are materials of memory, they nevertheless suggest fragility and mutability, a quality underscored by the work's low-budget, jerky animation. The seemingly autonomous movement and self-rearrangement of each war fragment reveals an unruly gap between the ideological aspirations and material realities of fixing official war memory in place. Reid Kelley and Kelley visualize the specters of animation and provisionality that haunt war memorial landscapes. In the wake of World War I, official memory's material mutability was literally on public display as some of the monuments that were supposed to be made in bronze ended up being made in plaster because of lack of funds. Such was the case with the Versailles monument, two equestrian statues of General John J. Pershing and General Lafayette erected in October 1937 to glorify the American army. Less than

four years after the statues were erected, the *New York Times*, under the heading “Pershing Statue, Plaster, Crumbling at Versailles,” reported that these statues had become unintentionally animated and were “threatening to fall on passers-by.”²⁴ Monuments fall and are pushed, statues crumble, new narratives and memories rise in the cracks. It is within and toward such cracks, often evoked through indecent bodily puns, that Reid Kelley and Kelley’s work occurs.

DIGITAL ANIMATION AND THE VISUALIZATION OF HISTORY

Layering different types of (inter)(in)animation, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s stop-motion and performed elements take place against the backdrop of virtual sets created by Kelley using the 3D animation, modeling, simulation, and rendering software Autodesk Maya. Much of the critical potential of this work lies in its activation of a dynamic relationship between virtual and embodied space, between 2D and 3D images, and what this relationship reveals about how war and media alter the lived realities and spatial perceptions of those who experience it.

Suzanne Buchan and James J. Hodge have, albeit in distinct ways, argued that in the twenty-first century animation is ubiquitous in our lives. For Hodge, the ubiquity of animation is intimately linked to, but not conflatable with, the pervasiveness of digital media. In considering Reid Kelley and Kelley’s work, it is helpful to foreground the relationship between these two concepts as Hodge does, arguing that this relationship structures the very possibility and contours of historical consciousness within the digital realm. Hodge states, “To be clear, animation is not synonymous with digital media. Animation appears, instead, as the fundamental mode of phenomenal address by digital machines to human perceivers. So, while animation and digital media are both everywhere, they are not the same. And this is precisely what gives animation its critically expressive power to address the experiential opacity of the digital age.”²⁵ Hodge demonstrates how attending to animation can expand contemporary efforts, including feminist ones, to grapple with the occlusions of history and historiographic challenges and possibilities in the digital age. He makes the suggestive claims that animation has become the “aesthetic correlate” of digital media and that the “emergent ubiquity of animation . . . unmistakably parallels the popular dissemination of digital technologies and the diffusion of digital cultures into culture as such.”²⁶ For Hodge, drawing on Czech media theorist Vilém Flusser, animated images in the digital age help to make visible an opacity that emerges at the moment of a shift away from a mode of writing that is accessible to human consciousness. This leads not to an anti- or ahistorical state, contrary to our fears, but rather to what Flusser calls “another history.”²⁷ “History continues,” Hodge suggests, “but no longer by and for human minds.”²⁸ What this line of thinking about the opacity of the specifically digital present perhaps does not recognize, however, are the occlusions built into

the earlier mediations of history “for human minds” within white supremacist and patriarchal institutions of memory that rely on racist epistemologies of the human. Thinking about the mnemonic exclusions of predigital, human-oriented media in dialogue with the opacity Hodge identifies in the digital realm raises questions about the opacities in war historiography to which these (inter)(in)animations that span digital and predigital eras and media might give form. Considering Reid Kelley and Kelley’s work within such an expanded version of Hodge’s framework posits (inter)(in)animation across virtual and physical spaces as an aesthetic correlate for aspects of World War I history that have been rendered structurally opaque by white supremacist, anthropocentric, and patriarchal institutions of memory that operate in continuous, pervasive and evolving ways.

Like Helen Hill, whose work I discuss in chapter 5, Reid Kelley grew up in South Carolina, where she learned, in part by stopping at every memorial with her parents and siblings, that history is always contested. She explains, “In the South, at least in terms of the Civil War, there’s this historical burden. You’re aware pretty early on that there isn’t just one version that’s accepted, that people are kind of tugging at this historical record . . . wanting to manipulate the history one way or another.”²⁹ When asked how her sense of historical time has changed over the last decade as her work has shifted its focus from World War I to the violence of neoliberalism, often through a classical mythology lens, Reid Kelley responds: “The work is maybe made to have time for us to ask the question ‘what is history’ in a way that we could properly answer it. To ask the question in the right medium for us . . . I guess I . . . think of history as a building, that you’re constantly in one room or another and the shape is different.”³⁰ Though Reid Kelley sees each “room” as distinct, each also “has a door, each has a window,” and she states that it helps “to know the previous rooms and the previous eras, because people take something from each era, each scenario.”³¹ She describes “looking back on art” as “a reliable indicator of belief and delusion,” suggesting how an artist’s engagement of history might differ from that of a historian. She asks, “What’s the prevailing status quo or line, the mythology? I think that’s really revealed in what artists are doing. And that’s why I think a lot of the characters [in my work] are artists.”³²

Reid Kelley and Kelley’s (inter)(in)animations set in motion bawdy and disruptive versions of World War I narratives that have become petrified in university archives and architecture, museums, personal memory, and monumental, militarized spaces of national remembering. They mine raw material from these sites only to re-present these looted fragments in (inter)(in)animated, humorous, nonsensical, and vulgar ways that often border on derision. These gestures neither celebrate the ahistorical nor generate better, fuller histories. Rather, they activate ludic feminist strategies to contest and disrupt entrenched forms, delusions, mythologies, and exclusions of war memory and the way these things shape daily life.³³ This work employs an often-aggressive process of reanimation and reordering in both verbal and visual realms to illuminate from within the violent but normal-

ized operations of history on the present, as supported by the intertwined infrastructures of war, capitalism, and culture. Supplementing Reid Kelley's spatialized and delusional framing of history in her scripts and performances, Kelley's lighting, shooting, virtual digital set designs, and stop-motion scenarios underscore the potential of digital illusions of space and mobility to pressure, and provide alternatives to, existing models of historical time. He observes,

We started off very tightly on a specific time-period in World War I; things have . . . I don't know what the right descriptive word is . . . "expanded"? . . . or have a less strict focus on a time setting, and that has shifted. And the reason I bring this up is . . . how animation breaks open time. . . . It frees the maker from a kind of tyranny of time—both in the process of making, because you're no longer in a 1:1 time frame, but also with what you make. I think there's this interesting analogue between . . . breaking from a strict time setting to a . . . more open field of history, of jumping back and forth.³⁴

When evaluating Reid Kelley and Kelley's use of early twentieth-century modernist and satirical vernacular responses to World War I in their twenty-first-century farcical aesthetic, it is worth recalling historian Jay Winter's critique of what he calls the "modernist hypothesis." Winter warns against the danger of teleological, tendentious, and oversimplified histories of World War I's memory culture. He argues against an unhelpfully rigid divide between traditional responses ("classical, romantic, or religious images and ideas"), which he insists had enduring appeal because they created spaces of mourning in a context of mass death, and modernist (or "iconoclastic") ones, the importance of which he suggests has been overstated by cultural historians such as Fussell. Winter writes, "Irony's cutting edge—the savage wit of Dada or surrealism, for example—could express anger and despair, and did so in enduring ways; but it could not heal. Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less profound, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind."³⁵ Winter cautions against oversimplifying tradition, not to fix or protect certain modes of memory, but to keep in sight the "messiness" of the past, "its non-linearity, its vigorous and stubbornly visible incompatibilities," and the importance of "an historical sense of the meaning ascribed to war memorials at the time they were constructed," which, he notes, was "highly personal."³⁶

Reid Kelley and Kelley use (inter)(in)animation to activate and foreground this messiness, placing incompatible fragments in the same frame to illuminate the failures and strains of war narratives. These failures are refracted partly by performing the limitations of a supplemental historiographic logic that proceeds by adding white heroines, such as female munitions workers and nurses, to the hero's story. Such additions render visible in the memory landscape the occlusions and operations of gender in the history of war. One scene in *You Make Me Iliad* shows Reid Kelley playing both Humble, a soldier-poet who ends up dying of gas poisoning, and a Belgian sex worker. As the sex worker gives herself an abortion,

her speech, full of rhymes and puns, highlights the challenge of giving verbal form to the experiences of those rendered helpless by overwhelming violence. She asks Humble, the soldier-poet, “Do you recall my home? It was en route, / Your army sacked it as I bawled my eyes out— / Quite helplessly—but in this setting / I’m Alpha Female, and I’m Alpha Betting / That you can author, but can’t spell, disaster.” The speaker claims the status of an Alpha Female in the midst of her abortion as digitally animated letters tumble into the bucket below, something she narrates by talking of the “Refugees that trickle down my leg.” This visualizes and animates the space of unspeakability, the limits and exclusions of the language of history, and perhaps suggests, albeit through the nonsense language of puns, an affinity between the power of the Alpha Female in war and the detritus of life that here takes the abstracted form of random animated letters. Here too the role of the poetic is foregrounded as part of the work’s (inter)(in)animating methodology. The Belgian sex worker describes herself as “a Whore for Metaphor,” declares, “Hyperbole is my internal organ,” and confesses, “I shit vowels.” What, the work provokes viewers to ask, should feminist revisionist war narratives look, sound, and feel like, and what can (inter)(in)animation contribute to necessarily contested feminist efforts to remember war differently?

Angela Y. Davis, speaking about the relationship between feminism and anti-war activism, underscores the importance of interdisciplinary feminist methodologies that “impel us to explore connections that are not always apparent.”³⁷ She continues, “They enable us to inhabit contradictions and to discover what is productive about those contradictions. These are methods of thought and action that urge us to think things together that appear to be entirely separate and to disaggregate things that seem to belong together.”³⁸ Resonant with Hodge’s discussion of the affinity between animation and historiographic opacity, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s (inter)(in)animating World War I work makes new connections where there were none and disaggregates fixed couplings to enable different ways of thinking, not only about war and feminist modes of resistance to it, but also about the experiences of failure and incompleteness endemic to all ongoing resistance efforts.

SPOLIA AND BELLICOSE ANTIWAR CRITICISM

There are no triumphs in Reid Kelley and Kelley’s historical returns; the artists offer no better monuments of memory. These are, rather, disaggregating artists in search, like Walter Benjamin, of disruptions to our current trajectory. In *the Body of the Surgeon* (2017), Reid Kelley and Kelley link settler colonialism and US imperialism by rearranging Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1855 epic *The Song of Hiawatha* into a narrative about the Hiroshima bomb. Tate Liverpool curator Lauren Barnes usefully suggests that these verbal rearrangements “could be understood as a linguistic parallel to architectural spolia.”³⁹ This suggestive analogy gives a nod to Reid Kelley’s architectural and spatial understanding of history and paves

the way for thinking about (inter)(in)animation's spoliating possibilities, including in built space.

Spolia is a bellicose word connoting the spoils of war and an aggressive, and at times masculinized, attitude to the authority of the past. As architectural historian Dale Kinney explains regarding the sixteenth-century antiquarian circle that included Raphael, "Deliberately or not, their choice of *spolia*, Italian *spoglie*, implied violent removal from a violated source, a rape of the classical past."⁴⁰ While some *spolia* uses suggest "an acceptance of the authority of the Latin/Roman past"—Kinney calls these "flaccid" examples—others adopt a "strong" relation to the Roman precedent, which can involve both "repulsion and attraction."⁴¹ Referencing the use of classic colonnades, the language of *spolia* suggests both the desirability and precarity of the "reliable infrastructure of empire."⁴² For Kinney, *spolia* are intriguing because they are fundamentally ambiguous; shafts can shift.⁴³

The bellicose masculinism charging these ancient examples of spoliation has at times also characterized more recent critical debates about the artistic reuse of earlier aesthetic strategies, especially in the context of antiwar aesthetics reused for the purposes of nationalism and the deflection of the nightmares of the present. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, for example, forcefully condemns German neoexpressionism, and more specifically a "homogenist neoexpressionist style," for its apolitical and ultimately nationalistic (both German and American) "quotations of history" and for "keep[ing] at bay our worst fears about the present . . . by projecting them onto the distant historical reality of authoritarian politics in other countries."⁴⁴ Donald B. Kuspit responds to this charge in part with a critique of Buchloh's tone (but in a matching tone), describing Buchloh's essay as "a Marxist blitzkrieg" and dismissing his criticality and that of his fellow leftists as "impotent," "ineffectual," "directionless," and "vicious."⁴⁵ Though Reid Kelley and Kelley's work is littered with carnivalesque quotations of the past, it is not despairing, ahistorical, or invested in what Buchloh calls a "static view of history" that is nostalgic for "an obsolete code."⁴⁶ It does, however, fundamentally challenge how patriarchal historical authority is created and upheld.

While it is imperative to identify the ideological instrumentalization of past histories of violence in the present, anti-imperialist feminist scholars remain wary of rigid linear chronologies that generate "befores" and "afters," the "authentic" and the "mock," noting that such chronologies ultimately serve to protect imperial historiographic models and the linear and exclusive models of modernity that they sustain. Furthermore, numerous antiwar feminist scholars have warned against the rise of warlike criticism when war and other forms of political violence are in the picture. Rosalyn Deutsche, for example, in her response to the 2008 *October* "Questionnaire" about art and activism around the US invasion of Iraq, challenges the utility of this antiwar critical analogue to heroic military masculinism. Building on the work of Linda Nochlin, Deutsche suggests that "more important in the present context is the possibility that the idealization of earlier forms of

protest—and along with it, the paternal demand that younger generations identify with a supposedly authentic antiwar politics—might be part of, or at least go hand in and with, the contemporary regression to heroic masculinity that Nochlin warned against” (in a 2001 conference, “Women Artists at the Millennium”). Deutsche continues, “For such regression isn’t confined to pro-war forces. It extends to sectors of the Left opposition, which use the urgency of the war situation to legitimize a return to masculinist political analysis that disavows and sometimes ridicules the last few decades of feminist interrogations of the political and of the limits of knowledge.”⁴⁷

Reid Kelley has a long history of embodied feminist engagement with the structures governing knowledge about the past. While at Yale, she noticed how the built environment of the university immersed students in gendered memories of war and even shaped the very idea of the university itself. Each day, on the way to meals at “Commons,” she wandered past both the Cenotaph and the walls of Memorial Hall, into which are engraved the names of Yale faculty and students who died in war. Contrasting the masculinity of scholar-heroes with a feminized space of learning amid iconography that includes imperial eagles and garlands as well as guns and tanks, the Cenotaph stands “In Memory of the Men of Yale who true to Her Traditions, gave their Lives that Freedom might not Perish from the Earth.”⁴⁸

FROTTAGE AS (INTER)(IN)ANIMATING METHOD

While Reid Kelley was still a student at the Yale School of Art, she and Kelley began to make paper rubbings in Memorial Hall. They then experimented with using stop-motion digital animation to (inter)(in)animate the words extracted from Yale’s walls. In this way, Reid Kelley and Kelley’s early work can be usefully compared with the artist Krzysztof Wodiczko’s imaginative un-war making of architectural interventions that interrupt and symbolically destroy “a Culture of War” that sustains “the motivation to fight and die in war.”⁴⁹ For Wodiczko, this culture is evident in “uniforms, war games, parades, military decorations, and war memorials (including statues and shrines, triumphal arches, cenotaphs, victory columns, and other commemorations of the dead); the creation of war art and military art, martial music, and war museums; and the popular fascination with weapons, war toys, violent video and computer games, battle reenactments, collectibles, and military history and literature.”⁵⁰ In 1983, for example, Wodiczko projected images of grieving mothers from Jacques-Louis David’s *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons* (1789) onto the surface of Dayton, Ohio’s Memorial Hall, a 1910 building that now commemorates soldiers who fought in the US Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I.⁵¹ These projections activate an (inter)(in)animating relationship across painting and memorial architecture that results in “a highly critical reading of history and the ways of remembering it.”⁵²

Wodiczko's temporary counterprojections are technologically "thrown" from a distance over institutional and national narratives that help to sustain and sanitize cultures of war, altering how such narratives are understood long after the projections have disappeared. By contrast, Reid Kelley and Kelley's interventions into war memorials involve manually unfixing the words of memory from their architectural sites of origin using the (inter)(in)animating and intimate movement of Reid Kelley's own body up against the wall. The artists then relocate and recombine letters and words in different media contexts. In a series of early experiments described as "mosaic poems," Reid Kelley and Kelley use stop-motion tactics to (inter)(in)animate words and letters by rubbing into being the potential for unforeseen lives, locations, and meanings, even as the text retains an indexical relation to the original site of the war memorial. The strong sense in the four World War I videos that violence is "graphic" has roots in these early frottage experiments, which use animated rubbings to visualize the paradox of how memorialization can operate as a force of erasure and forgetting. The later World War I videos build on these earlier explorations of the relationship between body, memorial text, and medium, which reveal war's violence as something that confounds divisions between the body and language. In *The Queen's English*, for example, a World War I nurse treating many conditions, including impotence, reports, "I write their letters for them, / Since they can't control their diction," linking war's destructive impact on both linguistic and sexual agency. Similarly, in *You Make Me Iliad*, the poet-hero is described as being "punctuated / By shrapnel that cruel fate has fated."

The mosaic poems simultaneously index and obscure histories of violence that exceed the official parameters of World War I, as if these minor works are in search of an appropriate aesthetic analogue for unremembered wars. And precisely for this reason these rubbings offer some useful friction to the later work. Reid Kelley and Kelley's experimental mosaic poems stretch the temporal and geographic parameters of interest in the memorialization of violent conflict beyond the World War framework that becomes more entrenched in later work. The minor works also lead to a differently (inter)(in)animated rubbing made by Reid Kelley at around the same time. These generative preludes to the World War I video series are worth considering in their own right since they unsettle the later work and illuminate the un-war-making potential of feminist frottage.

WHERE'S THE RUB?

The mosaic poems' experimental pairing, fragmentation, and (inter)(in)animation of words relocated from the walls of Yale's war memorial suggest entanglements of religious missions, research universities, sexual bodies, language, memory, and the technologies of war. One example combines two frottaged words that appear and disappear in alteration with each other: *Private* and *Island*. Another alternates the words *Missionary* and *Frolic* (video 3). Framed by a graphite oval, the



VIDEO 3. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *Private Island Experiment* (2007).

To watch this video, scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.228.3>



words themselves seem like islands floating in a white sea. In “Private Island,” this strange, incomplete, animated fragment links the university war memorial to narcissistic fantasies of land possession, notions of interiority inflected by military rank, and confluences of the self and physical space. These experiments model an easily accessible and valuable methodological, artistic, and political tool that can be adapted to other times and places, catalyzing future (inter)(in)animating community dialogues and creative practices. Yet as the words *private* and *island* come and go before my eyes, I wonder exactly what islands are registered in the stony memories of Memorial Hall. Curiosity sends me back to the original site of rubbing and this site-specific research alters my experience of the mosaic poems.

Walking through the space of Yale Memorial Hall, I find interspersed among the long lists of names of those who died in the World Wars a smaller number of names below the headings “War with Mexico” and “Spanish-American War & Philippine Insurrection.” These sit beside a large memorial dedicated to Horace Tracy Pitkin, “three years missionary in China killed at his post in Pao Tinc Fu by the Boxers 1 July 1900.” Photographs from the Reid Kelley and Kelley archive confirm that this is the source of the capitalized word *MISSIONARY* in the second mosaic poem, “Missionary Frolic.” A different wall reveals this “frolic” to be a gunboat used in the suppression of Philippine resistance to American occupation. The discomfort

caused by Reid Kelley and Kelley's playful and "improper" (inter)(in)animations of these memorial words spotlights the different and violent improprieties that catalyze the work's mood, such as the fact that a gunboat is named *Frolic*, as if to declare without shame that the US military takes pleasure in the death of its victims.

Through digital stop-motion animation, the letters of these alternating words magically appear through pencil rubbings made by an invisible hand, unfurling in different directions before retreating into invisibility again, suggesting a more elusive mnemonic mode. At times, only a fragment of a word appears, inviting viewers playfully to complete the meaning: *Missionary* becomes *ona*: On a mission? On an island? Onanism? *Frolic* becomes a bawdy *lic*, prefiguring the belligerent sexual punning later uttered by Sadie, the Saddest Sadist, who "want[s] to give the Huns a licking." The words appear jauntily in a variety of diagonal positions, as if they themselves were frolicking. These ribald and irreverent (inter)(in)animating experiments with relocation and fragmentation activate the body's movements in dialogue with the mediating technologies of paper, pencil, and camera to loosen fragments of engraved memory and unleash them into poetic, recombinatory, provisional motion.

It is also in the context of imperial wars and the suppression of resistance movements that the word *island* appears repeatedly on Yale's walls. We find it, for example, in the memorial to Joseph W. Alport, who was "mortally wounded . . . in a skirmish near Manghinao Samar Philippine Islands while rescuing a wounded comrade under a heavy fire," and again in the entry that Reid Kelley rubbed for "Private Island," which memorializes Augustus Canfield Ledyard (BA, class of 1898), a first lieutenant in the Sixth Infantry of the US Army, who "died on the Island of Negros, P. I., December 8, 1899 from wounds received at La Granja, P.I." This particular island, which comes and goes like a ghostly gray and white apparition in the mosaic poem, is haunted by a white supremacist and settler colonial history that imposes a black-and-white worldview on people and space.⁵³

(INTER)(IN)ANIMATING HEROISM:
THE AMERICAN SOLDIER (2008)

In *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (1992), Kenneth Gross suggests that the fantasy of bringing stone to life is fed by "the strange complicities of the living body and the dead monument."⁵⁴ Mobilizing stone with the living body, Gross suggests, raises questions, such as "What crisis does the animation of the unmoving statue thereby entail, what is lost or transgressed or restored in that abandonment of stillness and silence?"⁵⁵ Such questions pulse through Reid Kelley and Kelley's work, as well as through the untimely and disruptive appearances of (inter)(in)animating undeath considered throughout this book. Gross rightly identifies such unexpected (inter)(in)animating moments as transgressive and potentially destructive, as "a kind of substitute for iconoclasm."⁵⁶ The outcomes

of such unruly liveliness are unpredictable, he warns, and “may entail a violation rather than a recovery of the world.”⁵⁷

If the stillness of war memorials serves to help people living on in the wake of war to “overcome their problems” in response to societal expectations, as Carden-Coyne argues they do, then the act of animating memorials runs the risk of returning public attention to what Deutsche calls “the war-wrecked body.”⁵⁸ For Deutsche, “The censorship of the wounded body resurrects the very condition that, according to Sigmund Freud, makes war possible: regression to the fantasy of the invulnerable body, or, as Freud calls it, heroism.”⁵⁹ Perhaps refusals to turn away from the hurt and the dead challenge the inevitability of future wars? Reid Kelley and Kelley seem willing to take the risks that enlivening stone through touch involves, a touch that, for Gross, brings the taboo subject of necrophilia to mind, in order to render more available to thought the phantasms that sustain war making and that are otherwise, by definition, hard to grasp.⁶⁰

Energized by having rubbed Yale’s white walls of war memory, Reid Kelley and Kelley pursued further embodied and collaborative responses to Yale’s intertwinement with World War I. With the help of a 1920s Yale memorial book, the two went to Europe and visited as many graves of alumni who had died on the Western Front as they could find. Reid Kelley read war poetry to the fallen, describing the futility of her effort to commune with the dead as a “wild goose chase on the western front.”⁶¹ Though most passersby had ignored her when she was rubbing Yale’s walls, Reid Kelley recalls that at the European graves and war memorials, people sometimes stopped to ask “if that was my grandfather,” implying that only a familial relationship would warrant such intimate, physical attention. She continues, “When I was making a rubbing at a place where it was obvious I was not doing a personal act of remembrance, it was more tense,” creating a sense that she was rubbing memory in the wrong way.⁶² Nevertheless, the taphophilic Reid Kelley and Kelley gathered images and text along the way, producing new image-texts that I argue we can usefully read as (inter)(in)animations, deliberate feminist acts involving rubbing the female body against official war memorials in ways that refuse to accept the white, heteronormative, masculinist, and nationalist war narrative as necessarily protected, untouchable, and unmovable, even when literally written in stone.

The American Soldier (2008, figure 11) is a crayon rubbing made at the World War I memorial in Montfaucon, France, which was completed in 1933. On the northeast wall of its vestibule, a monumental ornamental colored map, prefiguring the animated propaganda maps of World War II, is carved into polished marble. Each color indicates the operations of various divisions, as if the war had been petrified and suspended permanently in process. The monument is distinguished by its 180-foot “imposing” “massive shaft” atop whose tip “Liberty” stands.⁶³ For this project, Reid Kelley unfixed and rearranged the words of a text from the southeast wall that celebrates General of the Armies John J. Pershing (1860–1948)



FIGURE 11. Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *The American Soldier*, 2008.

and his men, generating a new text that discombobulates the memorial narrative. The relevant sections of the original passage read: “THE MEUSE-ARGONNE BATTLE PRESENTED NUMEROUS DIFFICULTIES SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE. SUDDENLY CONCEIVED AND HURRIED IN PLAN. . . . THIS BATTLE WAS PROSECUTED WITH AN UNSELFISH AND HEROIC SPIRIT OF COURAGE AND FORTITUDE. . . . PHYSICALLY STRONG, VIRILE AND AGGRESSIVE, THE MORALE OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIER DURING THIS MOST TRYING PERIOD WAS SUPERB.”⁶⁴ Through the back and forth rubbing of Reid Kelley’s hand and crayon against the monument, words are set afloat to reframe military masculinism and heroism with the spoliating technique that Barnes brilliantly names “inappropriation.”⁶⁵ The new text reads: “THE AMERICAN SOLDIER IS PHYSICALLY STRONG AND VIRILE, AGGRESSIVE AND VIRILE, LOYAL AND VIRILE, VIRILE AND VIRILE, HURRIED AND VIRILE, AND SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLY VIRILE.”

For the *American Soldier* frottage project, Reid Kelley could not have selected a more apt or contemporary “hero” than General John J. Pershing on whom to focus her discombobulating attention. While Pershing, a white man known as “Black Jack Pershing” because of his command of the Tenth Cavalry, a regiment of Black troops, is best known for his leadership of US troops in Europe during World War I, he rose to prominence through his leadership of settler colonial expeditions. A *New York Times* article from 1917 entitled “Pershing Won Fame in Moro Campaigns” and subtitled “FOUGHT SIOUX AND APACHES” celebrates

Pershing's service. The article lauds his leadership of "the fierce border campaigns against the Apache Indians of Arizona"; the "turbulent Sioux wars of the early nineties"; resistance to "the Spaniards in Cuba in 1898"; the "pacification of the Moros" in the Philippine Islands (1909–1913), which included the brutal murder of approximately five hundred people from the Muslim-majority community of Bagsak cotta, up to 10 percent of whom were women and children; and the US punitive expedition into Mexico of 1916 to suppress the Villista soldiers.⁶⁶

Pershing's impact on the national landscape of the United States, and indeed his vision of the United States and its relation to the world, loom large in a history that is both selectively memorialized and in the process of being expanded. This expansion makes a return to Reid Kelley's 2008 rubbing particularly timely. It is not just the Pershing II ballistic missiles that are named after this figure, missiles that, in 1981, catalyzed the UK's Greenham Common Peace Camp's successful feminist antimilitarism campaign.⁶⁷ Daily life in the United States of America seems to be mediated through Pershing's ubiquity, whether one is passing through Pershing Square on the way out of Grand Central Terminal in New York City; attending one of the eighteen K-12 schools named after him; learning, residing, or healing in one of the many college, dormitory, or hospital buildings that bear his name; relaxing in one of the seven Pershing parks; climbing Washington State's Pershing Mountain; driving down one of the seventeen roads named after him; or having academic freedom and DEI efforts at your university threatened by the founder and CEO of Pershing Square Capital Management.⁶⁸ In 2014, the World War I Centennial Commission, in collaboration with the National Park Service, proposed to "enhance" the area around what had been known as "Pershing Park" to create a new, national "World War I Memorial" with an estimated cost of \$42 million, after the efforts of a private group wanting to expand D.C.'s own World War I memorial on the National Mall into a national memorial were refused.⁶⁹

The original park, which had been deliberately designed as an open, multiuse modernist space, was the site of mass protests against the World Bank and the IMF, as well as over four hundred, sometimes illegal, arrests of protesters in 2002. (One of the people arrested was a high school student filming the protests.)⁷⁰ Pershing Plaza sits adjacent to Freedom Plaza, named to honor of Martin Luther King Jr., and one of the two main sites inhabited by the Occupy D.C. movement. These two spaces, Pershing Park and Freedom Plaza, were realized in relation to each other as part of a design competition in the late 1970s, with M. Paul Friedberg winning with his design for Pershing Park and Venturi, Rausch, and Scott Brown and George Patton winning the Freedom Plaza commission.⁷¹ The competition guidelines for the recent so-called enhancement of Pershing Plaza described the existing park in vague, coded terms, such as "uninviting" and "problematic," suggesting anti-urban bias; discouraged use of the space; and failed to recognize the modernist design significance of the original park. Landscape architect Laurie Olin, one of



FIGURE 12. Placeholder for Sabin Howard's bronze relief in progress, *A Soldier's Journey*, June 2022.

the judges for the project, resigned after seeing the planned demolitions for the site, stating simply, "I don't approve of this project."⁷²

Sculptor Sabin Howard, considered "a master of modern classicism," was commissioned to make *A Soldier's Journey* as the final component of the Pershing Park "enhancement."⁷³ While Reid Kelley's (inter)(in)animations set the rigidity and singularity of war memory in motion, Howard describes turning to a frame-by-frame animation logic in what would otherwise be "static forms." Howard explains, "The sculpture mimics film, going from image to image to image. . . . It's very kinetic and emotional."⁷⁴ Yet for all its implied mobility, there's nothing provisional or transient about the sixty-foot bronze relief, which the Doughboy Foundation declares will be "the largest freestanding high relief bronze in the Western Hemisphere" (figure 12).⁷⁵ Planned for installation in 2024, the relief will depict the journey of a single American hero, starting with his departure from home, wife, and daughter, through battle, until his return home. The US National Park Service presents World War I and Howard's sculptural reflection of it as uniting a diverse nation through war, all under the watchful gaze of Robert White's eight-foot bronze statue of Pershing, field glasses in hand. Echoing Pershing's own view that universal participation in the military would unify the body politic and reduce "talk of hyphenated Americans," the US National Park Service celebrates

Howard's project by noting that "the parade, and the work as a whole, includes African Americans and other ethnic groups who answered their country's call."⁷⁶

The American Soldier's rearrangement of Pershing's words prefigures Reid Kelley and Kelley's later rearrangement of letters using stop-motion animation—*anagranimation?*—instead of frottage to reorganize the language of official war memory. Such reorganizations challenge a particular type of respect for loss and suffering that is designed primarily to suppress historical and political thinking about the forms of violence and war in question. The resulting silence constitutes a collective form of collaboration with past violence as well as with present and future inflictions of mass death. Though this type of (inter)(in)animating friction does not guarantee that the histories of violence suppressed by fixed nationalist war narratives will come into view—and they do not in Reid Kelley and Kelley's World War I work—this work effectively draws attention to the role of social etiquette in both sustaining and erasing the atrocities of war, imperialism, and heroism.

PROVISIONAL MONUMENTS

If, as Winter suggests, World War I memorials aimed symbolically to mark a definitive end to a devastating war, allowing mourning to begin and life to go on, Reid Kelley and Kelley's animating acts of frottage catalyze a bawdy curiosity regarding what exactly war memorials remember, honor, forget, and fix in place. Their feminist (inter)(in)animations suggest the need to chip away at authoritative petrified histories in order to prepare the ground for different narratives and otherwise-imagined monuments. Any rubbing is an intimate mode of text and/or image (re) production requiring the artist to move a pencil or other mark-making tool, as well as the hand and arm that hold the tool, back and forth across an original surface. Without the presence of the thin veil of paper, this repetitive physical movement over the surface of a grave would border on defacement if the hand holds a writing implement, and on obscenity, a too-physical encounter with the memorial, if it doesn't. Even with the presence of paper, there is a sense of transgression encapsulated in the French term used to describe this form of image making—*frottage*—which also describes the practice of rubbing one's body through clothing against another for sexual pleasure. In its bridging of sexual pleasure and grave rubbing, frottage's desire to touch or possess something of the dead is haunted by necrophilia. Some graveyards prohibit frottage altogether as an art that harms the grave; others simply find the practice disrespectful to the dead, leading one knowledgeable member of the "usurnsonline.com" community to advise "gravers": "The best rule of thumb is *to ask before you rub*."⁷⁷

Exceeding this already risqué way of being intimate with the nonfamilial dead, Reid Kelley and Kelley's further transgression lies in rearranging or (inter)(in)animating the inscriptions being rubbed, moving each word to alter its

relation to the other words, producing new meanings to comical effect.⁷⁸ Reid Kelley and Kelley refuse not to see and not to speak about nationalist war heroism's erotic attachment to death. Frottage is an indexical art in which works on paper possess a one-to-one relation to the engravings from which they are taken, and one of the unspoken rules of rubbing is that the "rubber" will hold the paper that is receiving the marks in a fixed position. Reid Kelley and Kelley refuse what I'll call the Rule of Obedient Transmission (ROT). Their refusal takes the form of a defiantly mobile piece of paper that sculpts meaning as it rubs, recalling the way that Onyeka Igwe uses her body to physically animate the cinematic apparatus and the projection screen to expand the possibilities of (inter)(in)animating feminist media practice in the face of world-destroying violence in which cinema has participated.

Just as the images found in frame-by-frame filmmaking may be indexical and profilmic in nature without giving an isomorphic imprint of the world, so Reid Kelley and Kelley mobilize the words of official war memory in a different order, asking, if not answering, "What other sense might be made of this?" In this way, the paper rubbing might be read almost like the animator's dope sheet that lists each individual shot, a storyboard for an animated history in progress, memorial narratives examined word by word, even letter by letter. Through the transforming energy provided by one hand's manual back-and-forth and the other's shifty sleights of hand with the paper, Reid Kelley and Kelley create a mobility across the monument's surface that becomes Ouija-like in its unexpected revelations of new derisive meanings and suggestions. Frottage brings a feminist frame-by-frame attitude and attention to stone-faced history, discombobulating the memorial's fixed elements to examine, disrupt, and reconfigure its components, investments, and occlusions. Animated embodied feminist rubbing rejects efforts to mobilize the war dead in order to silence the living's questions about, critiques of, and thoughts about militarism, monuments, history, and nationalist memory. Feminisms' (inter)(in)animations risk being charged with disrespecting the dead in the service of life. In place of the script as given, Reid Kelley literally puts her body on the memorial's lines, activating obscenity in a way that brings the graphic throbbing of flesh—both its life-affirming, bawdy eroticism and humor and its life-destroying appetites—into the entrenched, carefully controlled linguistic, cognitive, and material realm of official war histories. Through such actions, she and Kelley cultivate flexible mental spaces that encourage people to adopt experimental approaches to how we write and live in relation to landscapes that seem to be automatically and inescapably structured by war. These acts of frottage model nonsubmissive ways of living with and against these monuments, un-shafting freedom with a flick of the wrist.

Such unfixings of monumental, nationalist war narratives do not articulate the suppressed histories and experiences of war, but they do loosen or till the ground of nationalist memory, contributing to the possibility of what Angela Davis describes as "a more thoughtful, a more radical, feminism."⁷⁹ In this sense, Reid

Kelley and Kelley's earliest war projects share some common ground with the collectively enacted challenges to public monuments articulated a few years later by the Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter movements, the Mellon Foundation's "Monuments Project," and Salamishah Tillet and Paul Farber's exhibition *Pulling Together: New Perspectives on the National Mall*, which featured "prototype monuments that respond to the question, 'What stories remain untold on the National Mall?'"⁸⁰ These later projects both refuse the respect demanded by a discriminatory memorial landscape and begin the work of developing multiple, alternative, and more uncertain (inter)(in)animating mnemonic repertoires.

In August and September 2023, coincident with the development of the massive World War I national memorial, six artists working with Tillet and Farber's "Beyond Granite: Pulling Together" project were invited to install nontraditional monuments that question what Tillet describes as "a particular story of American unity at the expense of our very difficult history of segregation, of colonization, of LGBTQ discrimination, and of slavery."⁸¹ For example, in *For the Living*, Tiffany Chung used colored rope to create a world map on the grass near Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Like Reid Kelley, Chung riffs on the speculative futures diagrammed by ornamental and animated war maps, but Chung does so by tracing, not the movement of battlefronts, but rather the routes traveled by Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian refugees displaced by the Vietnam War. In doing so, the artist visualizes the impact of the Vietnam War on the living as well as on the dead and highlights the Vietnam Veteran Memorial's exclusive focus on American deaths, occluding the nearly two million Vietnamese war deaths from the North and South of the country.⁸² (Inter)(in)animating each other, these provisional memorials challenge the social utility of silencing, fixing, and/or separating entangled histories of violence and insist upon the inescapable contemporaneity of supposedly bygone acts of war.