

**SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE**

# Proximity, wholeness, and animality: The case of Little Sorrel's repatriation

Jessica Landau PhD<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Committee on Environment, Geography, and Urbanization, Division of Social Sciences, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA

<sup>2</sup>Anthropocene Studies, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

**Correspondence**

Jessica Landau, Committee on Environment, Geography, and Urbanization, Division of Social Sciences, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA.

Email: [jlandaul@uchicago.edu](mailto:jlandaul@uchicago.edu)

**Abstract**

Frederic Webster, chief preparator at the Carnegie Museum (CM) from 1897 to 1907, is credited by some for “rescuing” Lion Attacking a Dromedary (LAD) from destruction by the American Museum of Natural History. Webster's work on LAD was not his only involvement with the preparation and display of controversial bones, however. Webster mounted the hide and bones of Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson's war horse, Little Sorrel and displayed the skeleton at CM. In 1949, Little Sorrel's skeleton were returned to Virginia, where it was eventually cremated and interred under a statue of Jackson in a public ceremony in 1997. This article compares the return and reburial of the bones of a Confederate horse to the continued display of the remains of a person of unknown origin in LAD to highlight the very differing treatment of these human and equine individuals. By considering the return of Little Sorrel's remains to be a repatriation, I argue that the horse was transformed from a museum specimen into a monument, leveling him as a symbol of the Lost Cause and further cementing the status of the individual contained within LAD as a specimen. Through a displayed proximity to animals, Jackson (and his horse) become more human, while the person whose remains remain on display in LAD is treated as less than human.

**KEYWORDS**

human-animal, repatriation, taxidermy, the Lost Cause

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## INTRODUCTION

When *Lion Attacking a Dromedary* (LAD—[Figure 1](#)) arrived at the Carnegie Museum (CM), now Carnegie Museum of Natural History, in 1899, it had been damaged on its train ride from the American Museum of Natural History in New York to Pittsburgh. Before it could be put on display in the new museum, it needed to be fixed by the museum's chief taxidermist, Frederic Webster. Webster cast the hands of his fellow taxidermist, Gustav Link, to replace the severely cracked original hands of the rider. In addition, he tilted the rider forward to cover a large rip in the camel's hide. While this was an effective strategy to veil otherwise impossible to repair damage, it altered the upward and more rigid stance of the rider, making him appear as perhaps more fearful and less in control, removing any shred of agency that a more upright posture may have presented. The subject of this article, however, is not explicitly LAD, or the repairs Webster made to the taxidermy group—but rather another taxidermy project he embarked on, the bones he took as payment for that work, and the very differing treatment that animal received when looked at alongside the individual whose skull and jawbone are encased within the plaster head of the rider Webster tilted forward in LAD.

In 1886, before he was employed by CM, Webster was called to Virginia on a request to taxidermy Little Sorrel, the favorite horse of Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, when the horse died after a long retirement at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). As payment, Webster accepted the horse's bones, which he eventually articulated, donated to CM, where the skeleton was displayed until being sent back to VMI in 1949. In 1997, Little Sorrel's bones were cremated and, following a military-style funeral procession, buried beneath a statue of Jackson on VMI's grounds. By comparing the display and treatment of Little Sorrel and the individual contained within LAD, it becomes clear that the display of human–animal proximity, used often to dehumanize human subjects, as it does in LAD, can also be used to further humanize the human subject, as can be seen with Little Sorrel and Stonewall Jackson. Through the process of repatriation (which I argue Little Sorrel's return and burial are), the horse transforms from a natural history specimen into a monument to the Lost Cause. The individual contained within LAD, on the other hand, through the continued display of their partial remains, is presented as a museum specimen. These parallel stories, which both mobilize a proximity to animals to uphold narratives of white supremacy, demonstrate how deeply museums in the United States are pervaded with systemic racism—and how challenging it is for museums to confront these entrenched histories in public displays without continuing to perpetuate the white supremacist views in which their histories are enmeshed.

## FREDERIC WEBSTER

Beyond his involvement with these two notorious displays, Frederic Webster was an accomplished and influential taxidermist, known particularly for his bird groups. These bird groups, often showing multiple specimens interacting as they might in the wild in a box decorated with elements from their natural habitats, were precursors to the habitat dioramas that would dominate natural history museum displays in the twentieth century. Primarily self-trained, in a biographical essay, Webster claims to have conceived of the idea of habitat groups (1947); however, so did many other taxidermists of the time, including England's Rowland Ward and Edward Thomas Booth, the United States' Carl Akeley, and perhaps even the Verreaux brothers in France (Morris, 2010). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to interrogate these multiple claims to the creation of the “first” habitat groups—it is clear that Webster's flamingo group, “The Flamingo at Home,” mounted in 1880 for the Milwaukee Public Museum, was one of the first habitat groups in a US public institution (Webster, 1947). LAD, created more than a decade before the flamingo group, would not have been considered a habitat group, even



FIGURE 1 Maison Verreaux, *Lion Attacking a Dromedary*, animal skin, human bone, fabric, and other materials, 1867, Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

though it displays species interactions, as it is a free-standing display and lacks the habitat representation of later groups, although it does share some of those ambitions.

Webster was well-known for his innovations of his craft. As early as 1869, he photographed his taxidermy groups to create and sell stereoscopic images. To make the images appear even more realistic, Webster pioneered the use of semicircular painted backgrounds, which would later be adapted to the curved backgrounds of dioramas to make the scenery appear as if it is receding into the distance. Additionally, Webster used manikin bodies, crafted out of excelsior, to stretch bird skins over, a method that would later be adopted into clay by William Temple Hornaday and then into papier-mache forms by Carl Akeley, and eventually into the fiber glass manikins used today (Webster, 1947). For Webster these stereoscopic views and habitat groups were not just educational, but possessed a healing power through their ability to bring “nature” to the city. He writes:

Owing to my consummatory feelings for nature in every respect, the deep magic proceeding from the voices of the birds, the swish of the sea, the moaning of the forest, the crashing of the lightning, and the growing realization of the spirit and power of an omnipotent force, it was not difficult for me to appreciate the high value and stirring appeal that habitat groups would bring to the museums of a great city, and the forceful and stimulating educational factor that they might become to city toilers cut off from nature and the out-of-doors.

(1947, pp. 100–101)

Like other well-known taxidermists of the period, Webster worked for Ward's Natural Science Establishment, in Rochester, New York, from 1877 to 1887. Unlike many others, however, Webster began working for Augustus Henry Ward not as an apprentice, but after already having made a name for himself in the industry. He was hired primarily on the strength of his stereoscopic images and his ability to mount bird skins that Ward believed were damaged beyond repair. After working at Ward's, Webster was hired by Andrew Carnegie in 1896 as the chief taxidermist of Carnegie's newly minted museum in Pittsburgh. In this role, Webster oversaw the restoration and installation of LAD when it arrived from New York in 1899, as described above. Despite the fact that the group became available to Carnegie because of its dismissal as nonscientific by AMNH, Webster likely understood LAD the way he viewed other taxidermy groups—valuable for its ability to communicate the power of nature to Pittsburghers otherwise cut off from wild animals and wild places.

This perspective on taxidermy displays was not unique to Webster, of course, but rather was a key feature of American natural history museums of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rader and Cain (2014) note how, by the early decades of the 20th century, habitat dioramas greatly increased visitation and charitable giving to museums, emphasizing both scientific and pedagogical innovation of the period. Museum curators, like those at AMNH or CM, believed that this new attention would also engender an interest in conservation in museum visitors, through their ability to create an emotional connection with the animals pictured, as Webster himself hints at (Rader & Cain, 2014). However, cultural critics such as Haraway (1984) have noted the ways in which these displays served not just to create empathetic connections to at risk species, but also perpetuated a hypermasculine, settler colonial ethos through the ways in which dioramas mimicked the encounter between hunter and animal that resulted in their collection. While LAD does not recreate this kind of hunter/hunted encounter, it certainly traffics in settler colonial stereotypes and violent collecting practices that reify settler colonial logics, as discussed by Coughlin (2023) and Hornstein (2023) in this issue. Additionally, while invested in conservation, natural history museums of the period were also proponents of eugenicist pseudoscience; displays like LAD helped perpetuate myths of racial hierarchies.

A photograph, “A Peep into the Department of Preparation,” from the Director's report of 1899 shows the restoration of LAD in progress. The camel and one of the lions can be seen behind a preparator, likely either Webster or his assistant, Link, at work on the manikin for a full-body lion mount that was not part of this display (Figure 2). In the workshop background, the two animals are visible independent of their base, evidencing Webster's need to dismantle the taxidermy group completely and reinstall it, in addition to fabricating new elements, such as the cast of Link's hands. I find it probable that during this dismantling and reinstallation, Webster and Link would have discovered the fact that the figure's head was built around a human skull and jawbone, though they just as likely would have been unsurprised by this. The Verreaux brothers were well-known at the time, even in American taxidermy circles, and it is plausible that Webster would have been aware of their experiments in human taxidermy, especially the individual who became known as “El Negro of Banyoles,” discussed by Niittynen (2023) in this issue. Additionally, Webster's views on the civilizing potential of natural history displays suggest that he understood natural history through a lens, at least partially, formed by Social Darwinism, which would have easily accounted for the inhuman treatment and specimen status of the individual in LAD. From the mid-19th century, it was all too common for museums and even private collectors to amass collections of human remains, often in a haphazard way, without identifying individuals or specific places of origin. These bones almost always came from Black or Indigenous people and were used, by curators and researchers, to support a pseudoscientific and white supremacist belief that European-descended individuals were the most biologically advanced (Redman, 2016).

## LITTLE SORREL

In 1903, Webster donated a horse skeleton to the Carnegie Museum, listed in the accession records as “The Skeleton of General Stonewall Jackson's War Horse, Old Sorrel,” gifted on September 28. Little Sorrel was born in Connecticut and was purchased by the Union Army for use during the Civil War. In May of 1861, Jackson's forces captured a Union transport train at Harper's Ferry, and Jackson selected two sorrel horses for himself, probably because the unspectacular coloring of their coats would let him blend in with other cavalry forces. One of these horses was smaller than the other, stocky, and poorly proportioned; Jackson called this one Little Sorrel and intended him as a gift for his wife Anna. He planned to keep the other, Big Sorrel, as one of his war horses. However, the funny looking Little Sorrel soon demonstrated that he was much better suited for war. He rarely spooked at loud noises, had an extremely comfortable pacing gait, and, in fact, he is said to have shown an excitement or even preference for battles (for Little Sorrel's biography, see Smith, 2016).

Soon, Little Sorrel earned a robust reputation equal to his rider. Many stories about him claim that he would raise his head in pride in response to cheers from Confederate troops, that he would frequently lie down to sleep alongside Jackson wherever he was camping, and that Jackson would often been seen riding him without holding the reigns, sometimes even asleep in the saddle, trusting Little Sorrel to know where they needed to be heading. Of course, it is difficult to test the veracity of these stories, or even determine if the horse each one is referring to was indeed Little Sorrel, as Jackson rode several horses throughout the war. What is important, however, is that literary descriptions, visual representations, and contemporary newspaper accounts of Jackson are often intimately linked with those of Little Sorrel and rarely, if ever, his other mounts. In this way, Little Sorrel himself became a war hero and symbol for the South, and those who came in close contact with him, both during and after the war, often pulled out hairs from his tail as souvenirs, making his already shabby appearance even more ragged.



FIGURE 2 “A Peep into the Department of Preparation,” Carnegie Museum Director’s report, 1899.

Jackson probably enjoyed this notoriety, but it is unlikely that he had any special fondness for Little Sorrel beyond an appreciation for his usefulness in battle. As a devout Presbyterian, Jackson believed that man had dominion over animals and that animals, especially domesticated ones, were meant to serve humans. Believing that animals lacked the capacity for souls, it can be assumed that Jackson could not see Little Sorrel as anything more than a living automaton (Smith, 2016). This meant that he often pushed his horses on long treks and exposed them, along with other Confederate mounts, to harsh and unsanitary conditions resulting in bacterial infections such as greasy heel or mud rash that could lead to lameness. Jackson's devoutness also fostered a firm belief in divine providence, which resulted in Jackson putting himself and his horses frequently and directly in harm's way, more out of faith than bravery. This belief eventually led to Jackson's death, when he was shot by friendly fire in 1863, while riding Little Sorrel at the Battle of Chancellorsville. He succumbed to pneumonia a few days later. Historians do not have a clear record of Little Sorrel's whereabouts in the days immediately following Jackson's wounding, though newspaper rumors and some soldiers' accounts from the time claim he was either wounded as well or temporarily captured by Union forces and eventually recovered by the Confederate Army (Smith, 2016).

After Jackson's death, Little Sorrel was returned to Jackson's widow, Anna. She kept him on her family's property in North Carolina and tried to sell souvenir photographs of him to help make ends meet after the war. Eventually, he became too expensive for her to keep, and she sent the 33-year-old horse to retirement at the Virginia Military Institute in 1883. VMI also understood the connections Little Sorrel presented to the Southern nostalgia of the Lost Cause and sent him to county fairs and exhibitions as far as away as New Orleans, despite his old age (Faust, 2000). Even in his advanced age, Little Sorrel remained a performer, responding excitedly to the playing of "Dixie" or the sound of gunfire (Faust, 2000). After traveling to the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans in 1885, his health declined rapidly, and he began to have difficulty standing. Soldiers at VMI, albeit with good intentions, devised a contraption to hoist Little Sorrel to his feet, but it failed, and he was injured, prompting a preparatory call to Frederic Webster to come take measurements for his eventual taxidermy mounting. When the horse died on March 16, 1886, Webster traveled immediately to Virginia to mount his hide, which is still on display in an exhibit about Jackson at the VMI Museum. While reasoning for Webster's selection as Little Sorrel's taxidermist is not evident in the historical record, it seems he may have been personally sympathetic to the Lost Cause. In a later letter about this experience, Webster expresses his perceived honor at being chosen for this taxidermy task due to Little Sorrel's "record of having carried the famous and beloved General through the heat and blast of a desperate war; the only righteous war ever fought, [emphasis in the original]" (July 15, 1939).

## SPECIMENS AND MONUMENTS

Throughout its time in Pittsburgh, Little Sorrel's skeleton was met with ambivalence from curators and in public sentiment. It is unknown at what point Little Sorrel's articulated skeleton was put on display, but by 1939, according to a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article, Little Sorrel's bones were displayed in an almost too-small case, placed among cases "jammed with Indian head-dresses, Indian baskets, Indian tomahawks" (Bones of Stonewall Jackson Horse, 1939). Oddly exhibited as part of a cabinet of settler colonial curiosities, Little Sorrel had apparently no relevance for the Carnegie Museum of the 1930s. According to one curator quoted in the 1939 Post-Gazette article, "It's just an old horse skeleton here. It doesn't mean a thing to us. It should be given back to the South. It would mean something there" (Bones of Stonewall Jackson Horse). Rumors circulated in the press that plans were in place to remount Little Sorrel's hide on his bones upon their return (The Carnegie Magazine, 1939). The museum

proposed gifting the skeleton to the Confederate Museum in Richmond, VA, but “a wave of objections from local patriotic groups halted the procedure” (Richards, March 28, 1949a).

By the late 1940s, CM had reevaluated their exhibitions with a commitment to natural historical relevancy and had deaccessioned and sent the majority of their historical materials to the Western Pennsylvania Historical society (Richards, March 28, 1949a). Not only did the museum no longer have room to display the skeleton after this reorganization, but its connection to the Confederacy meant it did not fit the mission of either the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society or CM (Marshall, 1949). In 1949, Little Sorrel's bones were returned to VMI, a location which Wallace Richards, then director of the CM, deemed a more “historically and emotionally proper environment,” than the Pittsburgh museum (Richards, 1949b). The initial transfer was considered an indefinite loan, but became a permanent gift in 1960.

The deaccessioning of displays like this was not unheard, of course. The Museum's reevaluation of their collection for an overall relevancy to natural history went beyond just deaccessioning objects that could be considered historical artifacts. During this period, CM also sent taxidermy displays to other institutions that no longer fit the emerging scientifically focused conception of natural history. This included other domesticated animals, such as a birding dog previously mounted in a case with game birds on display in the bird hall. The mid-twentieth century started to see the shift away from a natural history imbedded with a hunting ethos to one that was embracing the biological sciences, particularly wildlife biology and the burgeoning field of ecology, and these domesticated and sporting specimens as well as historically significant objects no longer fit the popular model of natural history (Rader & Cain, 2014).

What is most remarkable about the removal of Little Sorrel's skeleton from CM, then, is not that the skeleton was deemed no longer relevant to the museum, but rather how relevant it eventually became for VMI. In 1997, a few members of the Virginia division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy found out about Little Sorrel's previously returned remains, which had been primarily used as a teaching tool for the institution's biology classes. Working with the museum, the Daughters planned a lavish military style funeral for the horse's bones, while his mounted hide remained on display in the museum. One of the organizers, Juanita Allen, told the Roanoke Times, “We petted his nose and told him he was going to be laid to rest,” and “I felt so sorry for him that he'd never been laid to rest. Everything should be buried. It's just the Christian thing to do” (quoted in Smith, 2016). For Allen, the taxidermy horse becomes a simulacrum of the living one, one which could be petted and spoken to, even as his skeletal remains were being prepared for burial. In this way, Little Sorrel can simultaneously be a displayed artifact, a contemporary link to Stonewall Jackson, and a celebrated war hero, deserving of a Christian burial—he is at once object, animal, and individual. Reuniting Little Sorrel's bones with his hide not only made him physically complete but constituted a spiritual wholeness for VMI visitors like Allen. Because Little Sorrel's remains had previously been separated as a taxidermy hide and articulated skeleton, the Daughters of the Confederacy and VMI could have their horse and cremate it too.

Following his cremation, the interment of Little Sorrel's skeletal remains received a full military procession of Civil War reenactors, a cavalry unit, fife and drum corps, descendants of Confederate soldiers, VMI officials, and a Presbyterian minister. As the box holding Little Sorrel was lowered into a grave dug at the foot of a statue of Jackson, reenactors fired a three-gun salute. Members of the audience came forward to toss handfuls of dirt from each of the battlefields that Little Sorrel carried Jackson on as well soil from Jackson's birthplace. After prayers from the minister, the museum hosted a reception at which members of the audience could also pay their respects to the taxidermy horse.

This celebration and funeral mark the transition of Little Sorrel's remains from specimen to monument and marks the return of his remains from being a simple transfer of ownership to a repatriation. Until this point, Little Sorrel's skeleton had been on display in a VMI biology



classroom and then in museum storage—maintaining his status as a specimen, either for the education of students or as a museum object (Robertson, 1979). While repatriations have been considered as long as objects have been looted or stolen—it only became a legal imperative for American museums in the 1990s, after the passage of NAGPRA in 1990. While NAGPRA only legislates Indigenous human remains, the law helped facilitate the return of thousands of native ancestors, whose reburials returned dignity and individuality to people whose remains had been treated as specimens or scientific curiosities for decades (Redman, 2016). NAGPRA has its many limitations, of course, including the fact that it only applies to human remains that can be linked to federally recognized tribes and the repatriation process can often be obfuscated through bureaucracy. While the law still may be considered controversial by some, in the years immediately following its passage, it received harsh, and sometimes overtly racist or settler colonial, criticisms claiming it to be anti-scientific or that tribal communities lacked the knowledge or resources to care for the remains of their ancestors or their cultural belongings (Babbit, 2011). Little Sorrel is obviously distant from the native communities covered by NAGPRA, but his funeral, while not a direct response, can be considered to have been influenced by the increased focus on repatriation in American museums. Like the many native people finally removed from the inhumanity of museum storage facilities to their ancestral resting places, Little Sorrel, it seems, was also given individuality and dignity through the celebration of his cremation and burial. But to what end?

More insidiously, his ceremonial burial can be considered a celebration of the Lost Cause, the Southern and pseudohistorical myth that claimed that the Civil War was a heroic act, fought over issues such as states' rights rather than slavery, and lost by the Confederacy because of Union advantages in resources. Horses, broadly, became important symbols of the perceived military brilliance of Confederate generals. As Faust observes, horses, like Little Sorrel, function as tangible connections to the past, as horses, and perhaps even human–horse relationships, have changed very little in the 150 years since the Civil War (2000). Additionally, according to Faust, horses like Little Sorrel, whether on display as taxidermy or buried beneath a statue of a Confederate general, “are participatory monuments,” aiding a connection to the Confederate past that, as the myth of the Lost Cause suggests, can be about something more than a militaristic attempt to preserve the institution of slavery (2000). Little Sorrel's funerary celebration reinforces the participatory nature of the horse as monument, not just through the public's ability to witness (and participate in) the ceremony, but also through the renewed emphasis relating to the horse as an individual and war hero either through visiting his grave or his taxidermy hide.

The connection between Jackson and Little Sorrel, as horse and rider, also references the classic memorial form of the equestrian monument. Through invoking the equestrian monument, visual representations of Little Sorrel and Jackson treat the horse as both an individual and representative of a regional, mythic identity. As Savage explains, equestrian Civil War monuments, particularly of Confederate generals such as Lee, became not just a representation of military prowess through the display of power over animals, but of power in society more broadly, and more specifically white supremacy (Savage, 1997). One of the most repeated images of Jackson is of him, on Little Sorrel, meeting with Robert E. Lee, riding his equally famous Traveller, before the Battle of Chancellorsville. Everett B.D. Julio's 1869 painting, “[The Last Meeting](#),”<sup>1</sup> is one of the most cited visual examples of this event. Considered by art historians to be iconic of the Lost Cause, Julio's painting represents the two generals as commanding military strategists and shows Little Sorrel as a much more majestic figure than he was in life. Gesturing out toward the left of the frame, Lee's arm mimics the slope of the mountain ridge in the distance, presenting a sense of connection to and mastery over the landscape. While Traveller stands out, his white coat contrasting with the surrounding landscape, Little Sorrel's sorrel coloring connects him to the reddish leaves above Jackson's head and brown earth beneath his feet, grounding him, and therefore Jackson to the very lands of Virginia.

Paintings like Julio's and events Little Sorrel's funeral use Confederate imagery to memorialize not just the individuals represented, but also the white supremacy they have come to represent. Made after the end of the war, these depictions, "remark on the past to make intentional claims on history and to mold the ideological future" (Crankshaw et al., 2016).

The repatriation and burial of Little Sorrel's bones have an impact beyond just the display of symbolic white supremacy as an equestrian statue, however. In several other representations of Jackson and Little Sorrel, Jackson is not displayed purely in a position of dominance over the horse. Rather, he is often portrayed alongside him, in close physical proximity and in positions of vulnerability. Displaying humans in close proximity to animals, particularly in public displays such as natural history museums, was very often used as a dehumanizing tactic. As Wakeham identifies in her analysis of the Banff Natural History Museum, placing mannequins of First Nations people alongside taxidermy animals positions both as under the domain of nature, outside of time, and "under the hierarchies of anthropocentric white supremacy" (2008). This perhaps cannot be made any more obvious than in the Verreaux brothers' use of an actual human skull and jawbone alongside taxidermy animals in LAD. In LAD, the human, likely grave robbed from a yet to be determined African site, is completely disconnected from his home, culture, and humanity. The proximity between the human skull and the hides of the camel and lions explicitly animalizes this individual. In the display, the human and animal figures are locked in a perpetual battle, both equally "natural" rather than "civilized", and perennially under the white supremacist gaze of colonialism—first the French rule of the display's makers then later the United States, where the taxidermy is still exhibited.

As a consequence of his perceived animality, the person whose skull is contained within LAD has become a specimen, and therefore only a partial individual. This partiality happens across many planes. It is physical, as the skull and jawbones have been separated from the rest of their remains; geographic, as they were likely grave robbed and removed from their homeland; cultural as the remains are used to represent an imagined version of North African culture; and archival, as only traces of the numbers of human bones collected by the Verreauxes point to possible histories or homelands of this individual. These partialities are nearly impossible to rectify—and while it is feasible to uncover a likely region of origin for this individual, as Lans and Boza Cuadros discuss in their contribution to this issue (2023), reuniting them with the rest of their remains or their direct descendants is much less likely.

This partiality appears more violent as it is put in conversation with the wholeness allowed a horse. Little Sorrel was reunited, by the museums, not only with the rest of his physical remains, but also with the individuals and locations with which he was most closely associated in life. Not only is Little Sorrel made whole by this repatriation, Jackson, too, through the return of his horse's bones and the close proximity he is then allowed (or maybe re-allowed) with the animal, is made more complete as well. Contrary to the way in which the North African figure and the individual whose skull is displayed within it are dehumanized by being exhibited alongside animals in LAD, Jackson is in fact *more* humanized by his proximity to animals.

As a slave owner, staunch defender of slavery, and difficult military hero—he was, after all, killed by friendly fire—Stonewall Jackson could easily be classified as a villain of American history. To make him seem more human, more noble, and even more likeable, his relationship to Little Sorrel has been mobilized by supporters of the Lost Cause, particularly in the twentieth century, to show him as caring and vulnerable—not just the imposing and powerful general of the equestrian portrait. An 1872 Currier and Ives lithograph of "The Death of Stonewall Jackson," illustrates this vulnerability (Figure 3). After Jackson was wounded at Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, the concern over the general's health took precedence over concern for his horse, which meant that Little Sorrel was missing for a number of days. On May 10, Major Marcellus N. Moorman sent a letter to Jackson informing him that he had possession of Little Sorrel and asked what Jackson would like done with him (Smith, 2016). This was the same day Jackson died, meaning, Little Sorrel was miles away. Nevertheless, in

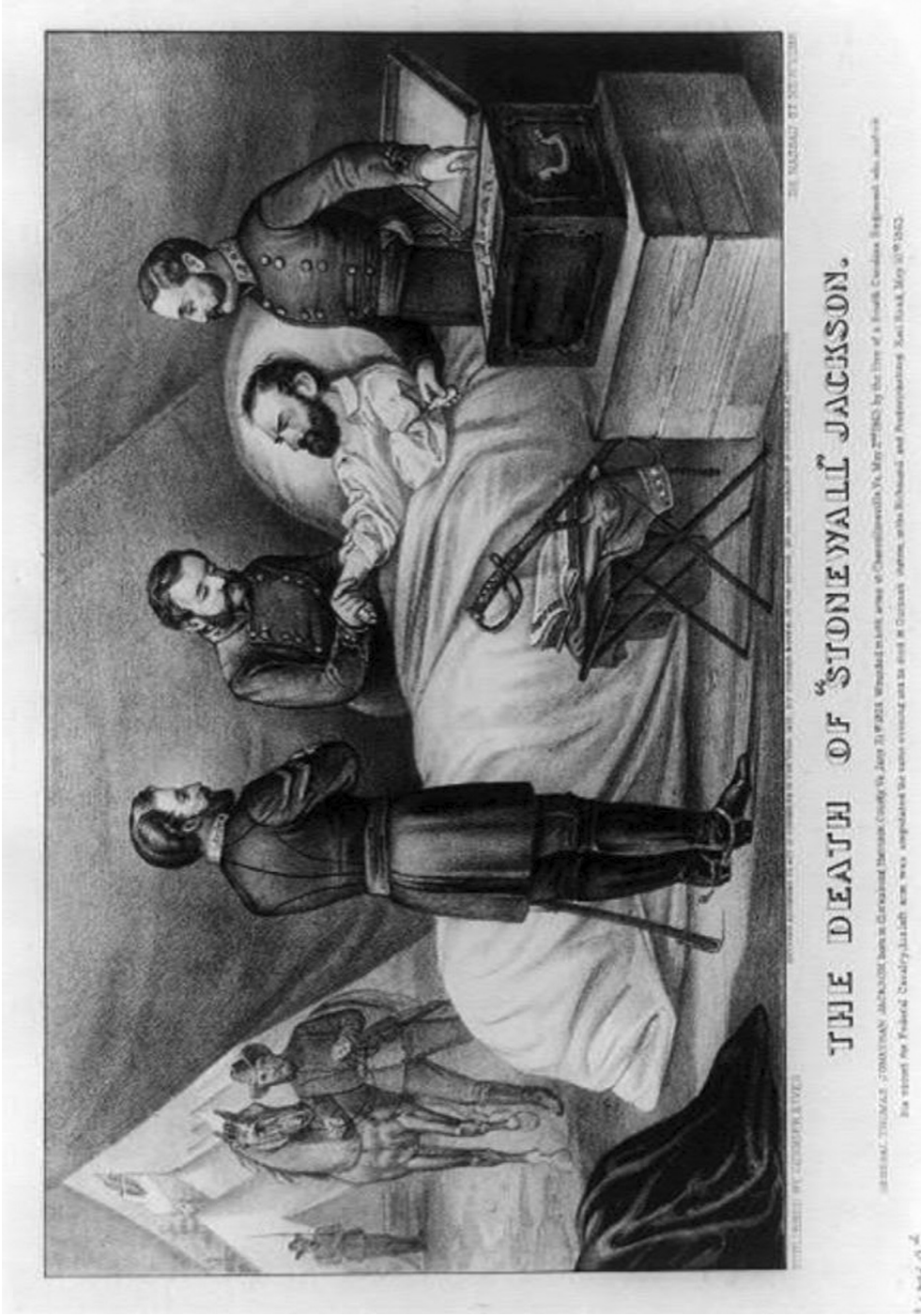


FIGURE 3 Currier and Ives, *The Death of "Stonewall" Jackson*, 1872, lithograph, Library of Congress, <https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/search?searchCode=LCCN&searchArg=91794822&searchType=1&permalink=y>.



FIGURE 4 N.C. Wyeth, *Stonewall Jackson or The General*, 1910, oil on canvas, Virginia Military Institute.

the 1872 lithograph, Little Sorrel is clearly present at Jackson's deathbed, being led into his tent by another soldier. Here, Jackson is represented as weak, barely able to sit up on his own, his amputated arm attended to by doctors. Yet, following his line of sight, his eyes lock with those of Little Sorrel, an expression of concern on the horse's face as he peers in on the general in his deathbed. Their heads on almost the same plane, Little Sorrel and Jackson are presented as equals with Jackson appearing as a kind and compassionate master.

N.C. Wyeth's 1910 portrait of "Stonewall Jackson," portrays a similar link between the general and Little Sorrel, (Figure 4). In Wyeth's portrait, Jackson is given horse-like features in his large frame and elongated face. The color of Little Sorrel's mane perfectly matches the color of Jackson's beard. The visual affinity between the two is so strong that, like in the Carrier

and Ives lithograph, Little Sorrel is presented as far more than a living machine, but rather an equal despite the species difference. While it can be tempting to mark this kind of relationality as a sensitive portrayal of species difference, Jackson's connection to Little Sorrel is not used to advance issues of animal welfare, but rather to present him as the caring and benevolent master, harkening to one of the main and most problematic arguments of the myth of the Lost Cause, that enslaved people were better off in slavery.

The comparison of the treatment of Little Sorrel's bones and the bones of the unknown individual within LAD reveals the ways in which a horse has been treated with more direct ethical consideration than a human due to histories of institutionalized racism and white supremacy. However, the comparison is not useful only for the ways in which it further highlights the injustices represented by the display of LAD. It also exposes the different humanizing or dehumanizing impact the proximity to animals can provide. For Jackson, who was historically linked to narratives of white supremacy, his visual and symbolic closeness to Little Sorrel makes him a more sympathetic character to supporters of the Lost Cause. For the person who was used as the raw materials of LAD, their proximity to the lions and camel makes them, and the African peoples they are purported to represent, as more animalistic and less human. The "hierarchies of anthropocentric white supremacy," as Wakeham names them, work both ways – to humanize and dehumanize, almost simultaneously (2008). Because of his connection to Jackson, Little Sorrel was afforded more rights in life and in death than individuals deemed racialized others and made into partial humans by natural history institutions.

## CONCLUSION

In December of 2020, in part as a response to demands for racial reckoning following the murder of George Floyd earlier that year, VMI took down the statue of Stonewall Jackson under which Little Sorrel's cremated remains are buried. The following year VMI decided to remove the embossed stone lettering from a building on campus bearing his name. The many reasons for these decisions included Jackson's legacy as a slaveholder, his role in the Civil War, and the fact that cadets were expected to salute the statue as they walked past. Thinking through their history as the last public institution in the state of Virginia to integrate and recent reports that exposed the explicit racism experienced by cadets of color, VMI decided this forced reverence for a figure like Jackson was no longer in line with their stated values of honor, respect, and civility (Shapira, 2020).

The Jackson statue was moved to the Virginia Museum of the Civil War, where it is recontextualized as an artwork representing a Civil War general, made by the artist Moses Ezekial, the first Jewish cadet at VMI and veteran of the Battle of New Market. While many, including myself, still question the ability of a museum to contextualize Confederate monuments properly (see Brown, 2015), removing the statue and creating attempts at robust reinterpretation does some work to de-monumentalize the memorial. The statue is placed within a broader historical context that can consider not just its memorializing links to the history of the Civil War, but the racist aftermath of the Jim Crow South and the myth of the Lost Cause that produced such monuments to white supremacy.

While the 1997 celebration of Little Sorrel's interment might be looked back on unfavorably from a 21st century perspective, VMI's quick response to calls to address institutional racism symbolized by the Jackson monument must be applauded. More than that, the removal of Confederate monuments like this one should be used as a model for CMNH as the museum looks at curatorial options to reckon with their monument to white supremacy and imperialism, LAD. Speaking about the decision to remove the Jackson statue, Major General Cedric T. Wins stated, "Though change can sometimes be difficult, it is time for our beloved Institution to move forward," (VMI, 2020). Change has proved difficult in

Pittsburgh as well – but it is time for the Carnegie Museums to move forward. This means, at the very least, removing the human remains in LAD from display and finally providing that individual the humanizing dignity they have been denied for so long. But this also means moving the diorama from its place of prominence, or better yet, removing the whole thing from display altogether.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> See image on American Civil War Museum website. Museum would not allow publication of image.

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