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Dear generals and used up men: War discourse and dissent in antebellum America

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Dear Generals and Used Up Men:

War Discourse and Dissent in Antebellum America

(TITLE)

BY

Kimberly Hunter-Perkins

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Introduction

On the eve of the ratification of the newly formed Constitution of the United States, an open letter to the citizens of New York circulated, expressing some of the dissenting opinions as to why the document was flawed. The writer, under the alias Brutus, who had disseminated numerous anti-Federalist opinion letters, took on one of the strong anxieties expressed by many anti-Federalists; the fears of amassing a federal, standing army. He opined

The liberties of a people are in danger from a large standing army, not only because the rulers may employ them for the purposes of supporting themselves in any usurpations of power, which they may see proper to exercise, but there is great hazard, that an army will subvert the forms of the government, under whose authority, they are raised, and establish one, according to the pleasure of their leader ("Brutus X," 1).

Beyond the anxiety that a standing army would maintain the order of the public and promote the retention of the congressional members within their offices ("supporting themselves in any usurpations of power,") Brutus elaborates on the fear of a powerful military becoming so well-established and powerful in its own right that military leaders would overthrow civil society and install a militarized government in its place. Further into his essay, he offers historical evidence of strong military leaders doing just that—in Rome under Julius Caesar and in Britain under Oliver Cromwell. Brutus points out how fortunate the new nation was in that it had for the "head of the army, a patriot as well as a general," explaining that if this had not been the case, the war could have turned out differently (1).
This moment, emerging so early in the history of American rhetorical dissent, offers a glimpse of an anxiety that will pervade the American conscience throughout war and peace alike: the relationship between civil society and its leadership is a tenuous one that must be navigated carefully in order to maintain a democracy and the institutionalization of the military threatens to undermine republican authority. Further, there is a strong, foundational philosophy that military leadership can not inherently be trusted, and it is only coincidence or vigilance that keeps the military and civil society in balance.

As the eighteenth century moved into the embattled nineteenth-century, the contention between civil society's distrust of the government's potential misuse of the military emerged in the anxiety amongst liberal dissenters over the role of the military within the public life of the young republic. As the United States move from a colony under British autocratic rule to a nationhood of republicanism, the anxiety of the colonized and the colonizer begins to play itself out; America begins to emerge out from under the oppressive thumb of an empire only to exhibit its own imperialist tendencies. As one critic contextualizes:

Nineteenth-century Americans' veneration for federalism did not easily square with a foreign policy designed to increase the potency and reach of Washington, DC, and citizens were loathe to conceive of themselves as complicit with outright imperialism—an idea associated with European (particularly British) monarchal rule (Lawrence, 374).

While it is certainly arguable that America venerated federalism (the reminiscences of
anti-federalist dissent still lingered within nineteenth-century discourse and, in a few short years, hot-button issues would move America into sectionalism, and, ultimately, secession,) the citizens were, indeed conflicted; the expansionist drive westward led to Indian removal, The US-Mexican War, and a rapid acquisition of land, and subsequently, a continual, substantial military involvement. In this, expansionism ignited anxieties of imperialism, and, with it, the fear of monarchy intersected with the anxiety of military hierarchy and political leadership only to be reflected in the dissenting discourse.

The following chapters attempt to explore the dissenting discourse surrounding war within these contexts, noting the fear of the military's interaction with civil society, the anxiety of appropriating imperialist tendencies, as well as the distrust of both political leaders and military leaders who are, as viewed by many, representing themselves, or the nation, falsely.

In Chapter One, eighteenth century ideas of sympathy function in conjunction with civil society in order to illustrate the way in which much dissent functioned within nineteenth-century war discourse. Often, such discourse surrounds ideas of militarism and imperialism, both of which were integrated into the rhetoric in ways that produce a sympathetic effect within the audience.

Through the lens of Lockean civil society, in conjunction with the rhetoric of dissent, foundational tenets emerge, most notably those that reiterate early anti-federalist anxieties of militarism and monarchical leadership. Further, through the rhetorical inclusion of individualism, patriotism becomes a personal, civic concept entwined with moral imperative and implied consent. As this individualism is reminiscent of early
Transcendentalism, the connection can not be ignored; however, while the early Emersonian Transcendental philosophy maintained that individualism could be best experienced by removal from civil society, anti-war dissenter were using the same call to the individual in order to redefine appropriate civic participation.

Further, sympathy becomes a rhetorical tool used in order to elicit dissent amongst the population. Adam Smith's basic concepts of sympathy are employed in nineteenth century rhetoric in ways that place the United States in the position of the aggressor and Mexico into the position of victim, and placed Mexico and United States into the conversation as sovereign equals. As Cary noted, “the ardor of patriotism warms us... (but) let us remember... that the Mexican, even, is our brother” (38). The result of these kinds of rhetorical maneuvers is that America became an imperialist nation, appropriating land for no other reason than because they wanted to expand towards an empire, and popular opinion condoned it through the concept of patriotism, which needed to be shifted back towards the individual, moral imperative.

Chapter Two focuses on specific texts that intersect with war discourse through the fictionalizing of it, rather than commenting on it directly. In Edgar Allan Poe's short story “The Man That Was Used Up,” the military man is explored through his satirical portrayal, as depicted through the lens of civil, social society. The character of General A.B.C Smith, an officer of the mythical Indian Wars, which are representative of the Second Seminole War, is shown to be created out of the conversations about him, as well as constructed, rather literally, from the prosthetic components that make him whole, all of which frame him as a product of his presentation and perception, rather than of his actions as a war “hero.” As a result, he represents a critique of the way military heroes
are imagined, as well as subtly questions the expansionist ideal that the wars themselves support.

In a similar way, James Russell Lowell's multi-genre text *The Biglow Papers* uses the construction of the military officer, as well as the average foot-soldier, as a way to examine the encroachment of the United States into Mexico. Further, through satire he explores the effect of the pomp of the military on the individual soldier, who is lured into service by the accouterments, without understanding the consequences. Lowell also levels the question of military experience as an imperative to becoming an elected official. Finally, patriotism is complicated by a morally duplicitous war, as the moral obligation of the individual within civil society is brought into conflict with the legal/pseudo-moral obligation of the soldier to participate without question.

With Chapter Three, the discussion moves from the early Seminole Wars and the US-Mexican War to the Civil War, in order to explore the way in which Nathaniel Hawthorne synthesizes some of these ideas of civil society, militarism, and the romancing of America itself. Through the essay “Chiefly About War Matters,” Hawthorne's ambivalence towards ideas of soldiership and militarism are exhibited, as he travels towards Washington, D.C. during the midst of the Civil War. As he encounters signs of militarism (predominately outside of the actual landscape of war) he describes the scene in ways reminiscent of his romances. Through this travelogue, he comments on the role of the soldier on civil society once the war is resolved, and expresses concern at the prevalence of military men within political leadership that the aftermath of war will bring. And, like Poe and Lowell, Hawthorne notes the disparity between the image of the soldier and the reality of war, although in a much less satiric way, often blurring the lines
of reality and romance with his descriptions.

For Hawthorne, the intersection between civil and military society frequently exhibits itself as ambivalence towards military leadership, as is seen through his essay from the collection *Our Old Home* entitled “Consular Matters,” as well as the introductory letter written to Franklin Pierce, former President, who was also his friend. Because Hawthorne wrote Pierce’s campaign biography many years early, and presents him in such a fond and pleasant light, his dislike of other presidents seems, on the surface, merely personal. However, through his language of description, the real image he presents of the military man turned civil leader is at once favorable then distasteful, as a man he can politically support who can still be “fierce and terrible” (*Consular*, 8).

Through the multiple rhetorical strategies, and evinced in satire as well as romance, war discourse and dissent play out in various ways over the course of the early nineteenth century, yet, the foundations of liberal, war dissent are often the same. Anxieties of a republican nation descending into a nation of autocrats and militarism, of an expanding empire moving away from democracy, ultimately pervade the rhetoric and literature alike.

In his 1847 address, Thomas Cary ended his contentious speech by saying with all the growth of our wealth and power, we have to show in yet bolder relief the virtues of integrity, justice, and forbearance, if we would prove to the world that men have learned to govern themselves (38).

Clad in the republican foundations of a new nation, Cary concludes that the virtue of America is within its ability to embody democracy by exhibiting the tenets of “integrity,
justice and forbearance,” which evokes the basic concepts of a Lockean civil society, as well as to focuses on the tasks of self-governance, in spite of having the “wealth and power” to expand into an empire.
Chapter One: “The Furious Behavior of an Angry Man:” Civil Society, Sympathy and Liberal Dissent

i. Civic ‘depth’ and the Mexican-American War

In 1849, Charles Porter published a book entitled *Review of the Mexican American War Embracing the Causes of War, The Responsibility For Its Commencement, the Purposes of the United States Government In Its Prosecution, Its Benefits and Evils.* While the title was long and weighty, it encompassed on its front page what was on everyone’s mind: what is the purpose of this war and why is it being waged? The answer has never been a simple one. For many writers and rhetoricians of the period, the answer was complicated by the issue of slavery; the annexation of Texas opened up the possibility for more slave states to be added to the Union. Furthermore, the way in which the United States entered the war was considered by many to be dubious, a trumped up defense of Texas that amounted to an invasion of Mexico. Ostensibly, for the first time, America was embroiled in a war where it was the invader rather than the invadee, the colonizer rather than the colonized. The result of these actions was a mass of rhetoric and writing defining the way liberal dissent functioned within discourse surrounding the war.

Christopher Castiglia argues that in Antebellum America “the reform of specific types of citizens’ interiority (…emanations of their ’deep’ self)” contributed to the making of antebellum civic identity, or a civic “depth” (32). He explains sympathy as an affective state particular to liberal whites allowed an identification mobility within the national symbolic only for the already enfranchised white
subject. White reformers took on blackness, not on the surface of the skin, but as a suffering interior, a civic ‘depth.’ (34)

While for Castiglia this interiority applies to the sympathetic rhetoric that allowed for liberals to become abolitionists, the same applies to other forms of liberal dissent.

Certainly, sentiment figured heavily in the way liberal dissent emerged in political rhetoric as well as literature and has been examined intensely by Americanist scholars. Novels like Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* relied heavily on sentiment in order to elicit a response in the reader, and subsequently, engender political action. Yet the traditional use of sentiment, in the way that contemporary readers are most familiar with, wherein the proverbial heartstrings are effectively tugged and an emotion is mirrored from the text to the reader, was not the only way that sentiment shaped the texts and rhetoric of the time.

In fact, Castiglia himself connects the concept of the civic self to sympathy as a way in which liberal dissent functioned, particularly in connection to abolitionist rhetoric. But there are still more connections to be made between the civic self and the sympathetic self in order to understand liberal dissent as it was reflected in antebellum rhetoric and literature. Importantly, these foundations are mirrored not only in the abolitionist discourse of the period, but in the dissenting rhetoric that surrounds war and militarism, particularly unpopular wars like the Mexican American War.

The foundation of liberal dissent emerged from the understanding of sentiment as illustrated by political theorists such as John Locke, Frances Hutcheson and Adam Smith and affected the anti-militarism of Antebellum America through the political rhetoric of the time, and, subsequently, its literature. Sentiment originated from differing loci for these philosophers, allowing for sympathy and dissent to emerge in differing ways.
through the discourse of orators such as Thomas Cary and contemporary politicians such as Abraham Lincoln and Henry Clay, each of whom negotiated the rhetoric of war with apparent attention to these distinct sympathetic foundations. So, too, did transcendentalists navigate a similar sympathetic space in their own discourse of dissent. As a result, antebellum liberal dissent is illustrated through a combination of sympathetic rhetoric and a call to civic duty, as well as by calling upon a shared national foundation of republican values.

**ii. Civil Society and Liberal Dissent**

In 1847, the Reverend Thomas Cary delivered an oration at a Bostonian celebration of the Declaration of Independence. He greeted the crowd with an opening homage: “the annual return of this day...can never fail to waken associations that move the heart to national sympathy. It reminds us we have assumed the rank and the responsibilities of a nation” (5). To “move the heart” as a means of effecting an audience response is indicative of a significant rhetorical shift for the American orator. When compared to the audience called upon by Thomas Paine, who was also in the midst of a war of conflicted public opinions, the tone and sentiment was vastly different. In 1776, Paine wrote, “tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph“ (11).

For Paine, the implied audience was one of would-be (or, perhaps, should-be) dissenters who were poised to fight the good fight against “tyranny” in a “glorious” war and the creation of an alternate nation. Yet, unlike Paine’s dissenters who were in pursuit of such opportunity, Cary’s audience had already acquired it. In the space of two lines,
Cary reminded the audience of this fact, by calling on "national sympathy" and reminding of the "responsibilities of a nation." For Cary, the greeting embraced the benevolent privileged, an audience gifted with a country, and with it certain obligations, which he reinforced further in his speech.

As Cary went on, he posed the dilemma of slavery in the United States as a problem of constitutional foundation, in essence a contradiction inherent in the nation itself. He ruminated, "let us dwell, then, for a moment on this new theory of the foundation of liberty" (11). In this moment, Cary called upon the rhetoric of the republic—liberty as a foundational principle of the nationhood of the United States—in order to question the contradiction of slavery, and, explicitly, the addition of new slave-holding states.

The contradiction of these principles and the obligations of citizenship were compounded by the invasion into Mexico which sparked the Mexican-American War. Cary explained, "we stand as freemen who delegate the power by which it (the war) is done" (27). Cary reminded the audience, again, that they were a part of the civic system ("freemen"), and possessed certain powers under that system (the vote), that obligated them to action as citizens. He also noted that there was a different class of citizen, the soldier, who also had an obligation at moments of immoral military action. But, Cary acknowledged the soldier’s competing moral claims when he queried “must the soldier of a republic forget he has responsibilities as a man and a citizen when he draws his sword?” (29). Again, Cary appropriated the rhetoric of nationhood, drawing on the strong verbiage of the “republic” to situate the soldier into a specific quandary; to be a good citizen was equated, for a soldier, with following orders, regardless of his opinion thereof.
yet being a good man necessitated a reflection on those deeds and the willpower to act on conscience, even if it conflicted with orders.

Cary’s speech, like many that would follow much later, and by more well-known dissenters, such as William Lloyd Garrison and Henry David Thoreau, epitomized antebellum liberal dissent, illustrating the use of “higher law” arguments and appealed to basic human sympathy. Importantly, though, Cary’s speech embodied the foundational tenets of anti-militaristic liberal dissent that begin to emerge with the discourse surrounding unpopular wars like the Mexican-American War and continued through the Civil War. Informing these rhetorical moves was a substantial history of philosophies that informed liberal dissent itself and that surfaced specifically in relation to anti-military rhetoric surrounding unpopular conflicts.

This liberal dissent in antebellum America relied on a combination of Lockean concepts of civil society with notions of sympathy that emerged from Adam Smith and Frances Hutcheson, each of which played out in complex ways within antebellum discourse. By paralleling specific concepts from each (Locke, Smith and Hutcheson) with specific antebellum texts, it becomes clear how these philosophical foundations are integral to dissenting discourse.

Sacvan Bercovitch pointed out that “the term ‘individualism’ was adopted by virtually all nineteenth century critics of liberal society” (111). But this definition of liberal society was meant to include only those most radical dissenters. For subscribers of a more liberal form a dissent, ideas of civil society were at odds with moral imperatives, the rule of human law at odds with higher law. For some, the Lockean concept of civil society was the model for civil society. As Locke explained
Those who are united into one body, and have a common established law and 
judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them, and 
punish offenders, are in civil society one with another: but those who have no 
such common appeal, I mean on earth, are still in the state of nature, each being, 
where there is no other, judge for himself, and executioner; which is, as I have 
before shewed it, the perfect state of nature. (235)

In Lockean civil society, a social contract exists, by consent of the participants to have 
"common established law" and the means to uphold it, as well as authorities who 
adjudicate disputes and provide a system of punishment for violation of the commonly 
agreed upon laws.

Ironically, one could read the latter part of the sentence through a Transcendental 
 lens as Locke having privileged the role of the individual; for this Locke, the "perfect 
state of nature" needs no political society but rather "each being where there is no other, 
Judge for himself, and Executioner." This Lockean individual existed in a "perfect state" 
as a free man, who had no power higher than himself. However, Locke recognized that 
this state of being was almost unachievable, and so individuals were more likely to be 
functioning parts of a collective society, to which they consented, either explicitly or 
implicitly, to participate within.

Further, Locke noted that the anxiety of an earthly judge of man "cannot mean 
there is no judge at all" and explained that "God in heaven is judge. He alone, it is true, 
is judge of the right. But every man is judge for himself in all other cases" (400). This is 
an important aspect that will come to permeate nineteenth century dissent as individuals 
try to find the balance between the rule of law and the rule of God, as well as navigate
their own consciences in order to determine what is morally correct, regardless of what is legally binding.

For antebellum thinkers and politicians, the argument was present amidst the issue of westward expansion and war, specifically in regards to slavery. Cary questioned the Lockean ideal of implicit consent to participate in society, even while he utilized the language and foundations of the society to question it. Further, he evoked the question of judgment and individual conscience. Cary denounced the Mexican-American War by calling upon the specific, personal beliefs of the individuals who made up American civil society. He opined “if the story of this war could be told anew throughout this country...our part in it would very likely be condemned by every man, woman and child” (7). Here, Cary’s American was the “judge for himself” and each individual, including women and children, was singled out as significant, dissenting parts of the whole. Much like the political arguments that divided the legislature with the rhetoric surrounding the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Cary called upon the individual to think for himself. For dissenters like Cary, individual conscience took precedence over idealistic “greater good” arguments designed to preserve the sanctity of the Union; the arguments for a virtuous ideal wherein slavery did not exist took precedence over preventing a national schism.

In essence, Thomas Cary used the language of republican nationhood, in conjunction with Lockean civil society, as well as the pivotal question of conscience, in order to tackle the issue of slavery as a contradiction to the foundations of liberty, as well as to indict the Mexican American War as a corrupt war that forced an individual to choose between his individual rights and his civic obligations. In much the same way that Cary tackled the issue of the Mexican American War, positioning the individual as an
active, obligated participant in the civic process, Abraham Lincoln took on dissent towards the Mexican-American War as an individual's obligation. In his 1848 "Speech on the Declaration of War with Mexico" Lincoln explained.

When the war began, it was my opinion that all those who because of knowing too little, or because of knowing too much, could not conscientiously approve the conduct of the President in the beginning of it should nevertheless, as good citizens and patriots, remain silent on that point, at least until the war should be ended...I shall be silent no more. (1)

The shift in the state of appropriate discourse becomes apparent in this early passage of Lincoln’s speech; he moved from the greater good, wherein “good citizens and patriots remain silent,” regardless of his personal opinion on the war to becoming educated on the subject and shifting to epitomize Locke’s ideal judge. The result was a move away from the silent citizen who was defined as a patriot because of his support of the government towards the individual “I” who spoke up and was a better patriot for questioning a bad decision made by the president himself.

In addition, the ideal of the individual was a hallmark of the Transcendentalists. Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” eschewed society as a whole remarking that “society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater” (52). For Emerson, society was likened to industry, in which the individual must give up something of importance in order to participate. The implication was that society itself was something that was manipulated, a system of barters back and forth between the parties that results in the loss of basic freedoms enjoyed by those who did not participate in such a
Similarly, in his 1854 *Walden*, Thoreau spoke against the idea of civil society and noted “no doubt they have designs on us for our benefit, in making the life of a civilized people an *institution*, in which the life of the individual is to the great extent absorbed” (52). Like Emerson, Thoreau saw society as something that consumed those within it. For him, the individual was “absorbed” into society, which for him was an “institution” rather than an industry.

Both Emerson and Thoreau rejected participation in Lockean civil society, choosing the “perfect state of nature,” wherein the individual was the end in and of himself, rather than the means to an end that both authors posited was the real relationship between society and individuals. And, unlike the politicians and orators who were using the power of the individual in order to affect change in the listener, the transcendentalists, at their early incarnations, were using individualism as a way to move farther away from participation in society. While critics like John Carlos Rowe have a problem reconciling this early transcendentalist with the later activist, explaining that transcendentalism “reveals itself to be at fundamental odds with (the) social reforms,” Len Gougen attempts to reconcile Rowe’s “Emersonian schizophrenia” by noting that the basic tenets of transcendentalism itself hinge upon ideals like freedom and self-reliance that “contributed substantially to the social reform ethos characteristic of the antebellum period” (21, 263). Gougen’s reading allows for the early transcendentalist to be seen in a continuum with the later one, even within the same self, and fits them within the contemporary rhetorical sphere of discourse; while Emerson and Thoreau did not use dissent in the same way as Lincoln and Cary, they did issue the same call towards the
efficacy of the self. However, where Cary and Lincoln saw the power of the self as a way to change society, Emerson noted, “I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility” (69). In lumping liberty and power together thus, he implies that his liberty, or freedom is his source of power. Much like Rowe’s insistence that Emerson’s lack of political agency is not “a failure of attention” but rather “endemic to Emerson’s transcendentalism,” it is clear that Emerson’s transcendental provenance is connected to ideals that are paradoxical to one another. The early Emerson cannot use the power of the individual to affect social change; to do so would be impossible within his own paradigm wherein participating in society initiates the loss of liberty and liberty is the foundation of individual power which is necessary to affect change.

The focus on the individual as a Lockean “perfect state” was not the only component to defining civil society for liberal political individuals during the antebellum time period. Civil society, as defined by Locke, was unable to exist within a monarchy. This was another substantial foundation for anti-militaristic liberal dissent. Locke posited that “absolute Monarchy…is indeed inconsistent with civil Society, and so can be no form of civil Government all” (308). Further, he pointed out that power was problematic more often than not. Locke wrote, “For he that thinks absolute Power purifies Men’s Bloods, and corrects the baseness of humane Nature, need read but the History of this, or any other Age, to be convinced of the contrary” (311). For Locke, the unchecked distribution of power, specific to a monarchical society was at the best an unsuccessful model for civil society, and at the worst, an abuse of responsibility.

For important political leaders of the antebellum period, the aversion to non-republican values emerged frequently, particularly in conjunction with the presidential
decision to enter into the Mexican-American War. As Henry Clay illustrated in his 1847 “Speech on the Mexican-American War”

A declaration of war is the highest and most awful exercise of sovereignty…either Congress, or the President, must have the right of determining upon the objects for which a war shall be prosecuted…If the President possess it and may prosecute for objects against the will of Congress, where is the difference between our free government and that of any other nation which may be governed by an absolute Czar, Emperor, or King? (3)

Much like Locke himself, Clay questioned the ability of a civil society to function within the construct of a monarchy, beginning with connecting the act of declaring war with empire through the word “sovereignty.” In addition, he compared the powers being assumed by Polk, then president of the United States, to those of a “Czar, Emperor, or King.” Importantly, he used the word “absolute” to reinforce the definition of a monarchical leader, a redundancy that is symptomatic of how present the anxiety of the relatively fresh memory of the rule of an absent monarch on the colonial America still was nearly seventy years later.

This jealous guardianship of republican ideals was repeated in Cary’s oration as well. He subtly reminded his audience of the difference between an elected and non-elected leader by exclaiming, “we have received no commissions from the Commander in Chief. He holds his power from us” (30). Further, Cary reinforced the constitutional foundations of America, reminding his audience that the president’s power is not inherent but, rather, comes from the people. Similarly, Lincoln reminded his audience of the role of the President by calling upon him to answer questions about the incursion into Texas
and Mexico by the United States and the subsequent war. Lincoln said

    let the president answer the interrogatories I proposed... Let him remember he
sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer, as Washington
would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let
him attempt no evasion—no equivocation” (3).

By calling to mind George Washington, Lincoln recalled a leader who was, albeit a strong
Federalist, also the epitome of the republican leader and the foil to the King of England.
Furthermore, Lincoln slyly asserts that Washington would answer truthfully, whereas
Polk does not.

Interestingly, the early Transcendentalist’s mantra of selfhood required the
republican model of government in order to sustain itself. In order to withdraw from
society by choice, as the early Emerson and Thoreau promoted, it must be possible to
withdraw from society. In a monarchical form of government, such possibilities may or
may not exist, depending upon the whim of the king or queen. While Emerson in
particular exclaimed “I obey no law less than the eternal law,” it is the understood laws of
the republic itself that allowed him the freedom to choose the self-reliant path. In other
words, early Emersonian transcendentalism took the shape of antinomianism, and in
some ways, required a structured society to push against, in order to define itself.

iii. Sympathy and Liberal Dissent

In conjunction with Lockean ideals that informed American civil society, other
philosophical bases for liberal dissent were prevalent in antebellum American rhetoric.
For many critics, ideas of sympathy have long been associated with antebellum dissent,
particularly with abolitionist rhetoric. As Christopher Castiglia notes

In sympathetic abolition, for instance, the suffering of slaves might be shaped to correlate with texts white audiences had previously encountered: other slave narratives, white reports of slavery such as Theodore Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is; Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1852), or especially popular works of fiction such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (37)

But this sympathetic method of discourse was not tied exclusively to abolition rhetoric, although, as will be seen, it can be tied to multiple issues simultaneously.

Adam Smith’s 1759 *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* defined sympathy and the sympathetic response. Smith postulated that sympathy functioned because “whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator” (10). What he termed as a “fellow-feeling” was an empathetic response to any given situation that arose by putting oneself in the proverbial shoes of another.

It is easy to see how sympathy functioned so well in the antebellum abolitionist texts and rhetoric; however, it also had a strong influence upon texts that use it to denounce unpopular militaristic actions by the government. Thomas Cary often used sympathy as a rhetorical strategy; in the first paragraph of his address he spoke of moving the “heart to national sympathy” (5). Cary, an abolitionist who addressed the issue of slavery frequently in his speech, was no stranger to this tool of effective discourse and used it liberally. In one moment, he attempted to put the audience into the place of the Mexican soldier. He entreated the listener to
read again the descriptions, by eyewitnesses, of the disorders and cruelties that took place at Monterey and elsewhere, even after the battles were over, the robbery, murder and brutal violence to women…think of the brave Mexicans fighting for their native soil (32).

Cary’s call for a sympathetic “fellow feeling” was at odds with the early Lincolnian definition of patriotism; recall that Lincoln pointed out that he felt all should be silent on the issue of war, regardless of individual feelings as a way of bolstering patriotic consensus. Here, the sympathetic response functioned in two ways: first to call attention to the cruelties of war itself and second to cast the Mexican as a patriot in his own right, defending his “native soil.” This complex use of sympathy also complicated the way war was discussed.

Similarly, Henry Clay called upon sympathy to define the Mexican-American War for American citizens and voters. Clay stated “it is Mexico that is defending her fire-sides, her castles, and her altars, not we” (2). Like Cary, Clay put the listener into the position of an empathetic respondant to the Mexican citizen. He did so by eliciting specific, universal commonalities between the American, such as “fire-sides” (the equivalent of the proverbial hearth) and “altars,” which were a staple in every church on both sides of the border. The result was a recasting of the Mexican from the enemy into the patriot-defender.

Like Smith, Frances Hutcheson also attempted to locate the origin of sympathy, but unlike Smith, whose sympathy relied on the logic of empathizing with another person’s situation, Hutcheson posited that sympathy was the natural outgrowth of taking pleasure in the society of others. He surmised that
by some wonderful sympathy of nature, there are few or no pleasures, even physical pleasures, which are not augmented by association with others. And therefore, though they claim that it is his own pleasure or advantage that each man seeks, yet such is the nature of certain pleasures, including the greatest of them, and of most of our desires, that they prompt us to seek social life by themselves almost without any reasoning; and by themselves they make the duties of social life agreeable and delightful. (142)

Hutcheson’s version of sympathy was similar in many ways to Smith’s version, however in this moment, Hutcheson focused on sympathy as being a part of something that was shared. The Smithian version of “fellow-feeling” was, much like his foundations of the “perfect state of nature,” individual, evidenced through an individualized sympathetic response that emerged from within the imagination of the person who was being sympathetic. For Smith, depth of emotional feelings were also important; as he explained, “grief and joy inspire us with some degree of like emotions” (11). For Hutcheson, sympathy was most strongly associated with the collective, and the pleasures of this sharing of emotions “prompt us to seek social life by themselves almost without any reasoning.” This Hutchesonian concept of duty and sympathy was often at work in the discourse of dissenters calling upon the action of the audience. Unlike the self-reliant Emerson who exclaimed “thou foolish philanthropist...I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong,” the ideal dissenter with efficacy would see the participation in the system as “agreeable and delightful” (54, 142).

For Lincoln and Clay, the very act of political participation implied some
agreement with this notion. Rather than being an explicit part of dissent, it is, rather, an implicit foundation. For dissenting discourse to affect change, it must, by nature, have willing and active participants. For Cary, however, there was a more explicit use of this concept. While Lincoln and Clay were addressing an audience of political peers, Cary’s oration was delivered to the general Bostonian public. As a result, his gentle reminder that his audience had “assumed the rank and the responsibilities of nation,” functioned within the Hutchesonian model of sympathy, as well as the Lockean model of civil society. Cary called upon the collective audience to recognize the “responsibilities” that they each had as citizens within the society, reminding them of the tenets of the Declaration of Independence, which was read aloud prior to his oration, and calling upon them to be participating citizens who were critical of the current war.

iv. The Unsympathetic Response and Liberal Dissent

While included in Smith’s overall conception of individual sympathy, the unsympathetic response was also an effective rhetorical tool. He wrote,

> there are some passions which the expressions excite no sort of sympathy…but serve rather to disgust and provoke us against them. The furious behavior of an angry man is more likely to exasperate us against himself than against his enemies. As we are unacquainted with his provocation, we cannot bring his case home to ourselves…but we plainly see what is the situation with those with whom he is angry…and we are immediately disposed to take part against the man from whom they appear to be in much danger. (11)

This passage in Smith’s text was perhaps the most important foundation for anti-
militaristic dissent. While the same fellow-feeling was at work within the basics of the concept, the person with whom the sympathy was felt was determined by who appeared to be the most sympathetic. For Smith, the one who elicited the most sympathy was the one who appeared to be treated unjustly, who was in the most danger, and/or which party appeared to be the most reasonable. In other words, in order to feel sympathy with an individual in conflict with another, the onlooker must identify with one of the two parties more than with the other, and the one who appeared to be in the “most danger” was the most likely to be sympathized with. For the anti-war rhetorician, this was a concept that is at work consistently throughout the text, particularly in regard to wars or conflicts that were being presented as unjustified.

Cary used the unsympathetic response to further denounce war. To begin with, he pointed out that “the sympathies of the world are not with us” (6). The Mexican-American War was highly contested in the United States and transAtlantically alike, fostering a hostile environment against the war and the government that instigated it. In addition, he pulled together the Smithian concepts simultaneously in order to elicit the appropriate response in his audience. He exclaimed,

We are at war! Our armies are in the territory of a sister republic…was the country invaded by an overwhelming force? It was not…Were the institutions of the country endangered? They were not…if it had been ascertained that the acquisition of any part of Mexico, instead of aiding in the extension of slavery, would be the means of effecting its abolition in Texas, the war would probably have been avoided. (6-7)

This was clearly a use of an unsympathetic response in order to place two parties into
opposition and achieve the desired sympathetic response. The United States and Mexico became Smith's two parties. Mexico was first defined as a "sister republic," cast as both an equal and a sovereign state. Then, the lack of a clearly understandable action instigating the war cast the United States into the role of Smith's angry man. Further, the issue of expanding slavery as an impetus for war made the reason for war even more dubious, furthering the sympathetic response to Mexico.

Lincoln used similar, albeit, more straightforward rhetoric on the same issue with a similar result. In his 1848 "Speech on the Declaration of War with Mexico" he stated,

It is a singular fact that if any one should declare the President send the army into the midst of a settlement of Mexican people who have never submitted, by consent or force, to the authority of Texas or the United States, and that there and thereby the first blood of war was shed, there is not one word in all the which would either admit or deny the declaration. This strange omission it does seem to me could have not occurred but by design. (2)

He utilized the ostensibly hypothetical, peppering his scenario with "ifs" and "coulds" yet the effect was the same. In this case, the role of Smith's angry man was cast upon the singular leader rather than the whole country, and the President of the United States was called upon as the instigator. As a result, the sympathy lie with those who "have never submitted" and the unsympathetic response fell upon the individual whose "omission" was clearly deliberate.

Clay, too, cast the two parties at war into the justified versus unjustified mold, with the same result. He repeated the defense for justifiable war, and made the distinction that the War of 1812 was "a war of National defence, required for the
vindication of the National rights and honor” (2). He concluded, “how totally variant is the present war! This is no war of defence, but one unnecessary and of offensive aggression”(2). Again, like Smith’s angry man, the question of who was more visibly justified in their actions was what elicited a sympathetic response in the audience, and the party who appeared the least justified was the one who received the anti-sympathetic response.

For the antebellum audience, the foundations of sympathy and civil society were the bases for which rhetoricians and writers, alike, formed arguments that embodied liberal dissent. Liberal dissent utilized the idea of the individual, as well as his inherent efficacy, in order to posit that change could be effected in society. In addition, the republican foundations of American society focused anti-militarism and subsequent dissent as a reaction to those foundations. Further, sympathy played a role that forced the audience to identify with the appropriate wronged party and, significantly, to be able to be critical of the actions of the American government.

The result of laying this foundation for liberal dissent was in some ways a trial run for what was to come over the course of the next two decades. By using the basic principles of American society in conjunction with sympathy, the rhetoric surrounding war, particularly an unjust one, was formed into a tool of efficacy. The same kinds of rhetoric—positioning two parties in opposition and eliciting sympathy for the one most wronged, all in the context of American civil society—would be the hallmarks of the abolitionist movement’s discourse throughout the time period and until slavery came to an end.

In the preface of Review of the Mexican American War Embracing the Causes of
War, The Responsibility For Its Commencement, the Purposes of the United States Government In Its Prosecution, Its Benefits and Evils, Porter concluded

The responsibility of (the war) rests upon the people of the United States, the whole people, the mass of whom, without distinction of section or of party, either aided in its commencement or sympathized with its objects and united in its prosecution. (4)

The war, ultimately, was linked discursively to the nation as a whole, a republic of individuals who were at their own discretion to sympathize with the wronged party, or not.
Chapter 2: “Used Up Men”: War, Discourse and Satire in Works of Edgar Allan Poe and James Russell Lowell

i. “My Dear Friend—I sent you a brief poem for No. 2 with my very best wishes.”

Each letter from Edgar Allen Poe to James Russell Lowell begins much the same, and although the two were not friends, the cordiality of their conversations belies the awkward relationship the two held with one another. Each relied upon the other’s literary connections (and publications) in order to propagate his own work; Lowell’s poem “Rosaline” appeared in Graham’s while Poe was still editor in February 1842 and Poe’s The Tell-Tale Heart appeared in Lowell’s short-lived literary magazine The Pioneer in January 1843; “Lenore” appeared in The Pioneer in February 1843, and Lowell’s collection called “Poems” was reviewed by Poe for Graham’s in 1844 (Ostrom 223, 239). While the two apparently enjoyed a mutually beneficial professional relationship, at times, Poe was ambivalent concerning the body of Lowell’s works. He consistently flattered Lowell’s early poetry, once writing to him “I received your poem, which you undervalue, and which I think truly beautiful,” and on another occasion, opened his review of Lowell’s collection of poems with the glowing introduction

This new volume of poems by Mr. Lowell will place him, in the estimation of all whose opinion he will be likely to value, at the very head of the poets of America. For our own part, we have not the slightest hesitation in saying, that we regard the "Legend of Brittany" as by far the finest poetical work, of equal length, which the country has produced. (Graham’s 142)
So, on the one hand, Poe would compliment Lowell for his artistry in his poem, describing him as America’s finest poet. But when it came to Lowell’s prose, specifically his satires—especially those pursuing an abolitionist agenda—Poe could be scathing. In another review, Poe thoroughly panned Lowell’s “A Fable for Critics”:

"The Fable for the Critics," just issued, has not the name of its author on the title-page; and but for some slight fore-knowledge of the literary opinions, likes, dislikes, whims, prejudices and crotchets of Mr. James Russell Lowell, we should have had much difficulty in attributing so very loose a brochure to him. The author…could not do a better thing than to take the advice of those who mean him well, in spite of his fanaticism, and leave prose, with satiric verse, to those who are better able to manage them. (190-91)

The relationship between the quintessential southern writer and the yankee was complicated, for even if Poe imagined Lowell as America’s greatest poet, he was derisive of his abolitionist views, saying that he was

one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics; and no Southerner who does not wish to be insulted, and at the same time revolted by a bigotry the most obstinately blind and deaf, should ever touch a volume by this author…A fanatic of Mr. L’s species, is simply a fanatic for the sake of fanaticism, and must be a fanatic in whatever circumstances you place him. (Fable 190)

Politically, Poe could not have been further from this “most rabid of Abolition fanatics.” Yet both Poe and Lowell penned satiric tales with a surprisingly similar anti-military, anti-war theme. Like the authors, the tales make for a complicated fit. There are a great
many differences between the voice and manner in which James Russell Lowell attacks an unpopular war and the way Poe treats similar subject matter; Lowell is more up front, more openly satirical in his treatment of the military, and more vocal about his opinions on the Mexican-American War. In addition, Lowell was outspokenly political in “The Biglow Papers,” intertwining issues of slavery into his narrative on the Mexican-American War which, unlike Poe’s story relating to the Indian Wars, had direct correlation to the new Fugitive Slave Law.

Though ten years and two different wars separate the tales of Poe and Lowell, the two works share thematic concerns, evidenced in a series of moments that force us to examine the connection between civic patriotism and military convention. In Lowell’s work, the characters critique the Mexican-American War by juxtaposing the incongruity of war; the pomp of the uniforms and regalia; and the role that the former military hero plays within civil society. In Poe’s “The Man That Was Used Up,” war is presented via discourse tropes, examining the military hero and civil society in conjunction with the narratives of war itself. For instance, as Poe’s narrator dwells upon the initial image of General Smith, he notes his “primness…a degree of…rectangular precision [which] was readily placed to the account of reserve, of hauteur, of commendable sense” (67). Similarly, Lowell uses the initial image of a military man as a way of positioning the reader for what is to come by presenting him with “enuf brass a bobbin up and down…to make a 6 pounder out on” (24). Both use a satiric viewpoint, though Poe’s narrator is more subtle than Lowell’s. In the end, both texts intimate strikingly similar (and largely compatible) critiques of specific unjust American wars, while focusing critique upon the
military hero as anathema to civil society.

Originally published in 1839, near the height of the Second Seminole Indian War that was raging in Florida, “The Man That Was Used Up” details, through an unnamed narrator, the story of Brevet Brigadier General John A.B.C. Smith, who fought at battles against the “Kickapoo and Bugaboo Indians” and is hailed throughout all of polite society as a most “remarkable” man, a “desperado” “a great man” of “immortal renown” (203). John Smith, with alphabetically anonymous initials that make him no one and everyone at the same time, represents the quintessential military man. Even his accolades are spoken in generic terms, with the phrase “prodigies of valor” repeated by multiple characters to capture his character. Yet, each use of the phrase becomes disjointed and hence divested of significance when applied to him, as though it were what one person heard, and then repeated, in a long cycle wherein the phrase loses meaning. The impression left is that no one really knows the general and that his heroic deeds are only told at a vast distance from their reality; Brevet Brigadier-General John A.B.C. Smith is as much a legend as he is a man in the tale. For most of the story, the narrator encounters his myth through the voices of other characters, whose descriptions are often similar. Most tellingly, everyone, including the narrator, describes him as “remarkable.” The narrator explains

the kind of friend who presented me to General Smith whispered in my ear some few words of comment upon the man. He was a remarkable man—a very remarkable man—indeed one of the most remarkable men of the age. He was an
especial favorite, too, with the ladies—chiefly on account of his high reputation for courage. (199)

This repetition of the word “remarkable,” may, paradoxically, make Smith appear less remarkable in reality, drawing attention the ways in which discursive reality and fact diverge. For instance, the fact that his prowess with the ladies stems from Smith’s “reputation of courage” rather than actual “courage,” conditions the word “remarkable” to be read literally, an honest assessment of Smith’s transformation as a product of remarks, words and accounts. Poe’s subtle verbiage differentiates between the “perception of courage” and “courage itself” and thus yields a biting edge. He is aware of exactly what the difference is between real courage and public versions of accounts of courage, and is critical of it; each description creates the general out of the language of the community around him, making him a manifestation of discourse, rather than an authentic hero. The essence of Poe’s satire is to call out a decorated military as a mere construct of language.

Smith is also the very image of refinement. Beyond his war credentials, Smith is described as having an “air distingue...which spoke of high breeding” (195). Smith’s “breeding” is an aspect of the character that becomes important when we look at Poe’s own disdain for those whose privilege by birth allows them to succeed without talent. In his September 1845 “Marginalia,” Poe illustrates his antipathy for writers whose success is based upon advantages of the wealthy class. He complains

First, we have injury to our national literature by repressing the efforts of our men of genius; for genius, as a general rule, is poor in worldly goods and cannot write
for nothing. Our genius being thus repressed, we are written at only by our
‘gentlemen of elegant leisure,’ and mere gentlemen of elegant leisure have been
noted, time out of mind, for the insipidity of their productions. (46)

For Poe, himself a literary writer who felt excluded from the literary society and
establishments throughout his career, the suspicion that other writers had attained their
successes through privilege leads to a sweeping indictment of most of the literary field.
A working writer who made his entire living by the body of his work, Poe was painfully
aware of his lack of leisure to write when and what he wished to write. Instead, he was
at the mercy of deadlines in order to make ends meet. This gulf between the working
writer and the privileged author conditions Poe’s narrator’s reaction to General Smith, a
man who is created of privilege.

Certainly there is a pervading sense surrounding the tale that something isn’t quite
right, and the subtitle of the text, “A Tale of The Late Bugaboo and Kickapoo
Campaign,” offers insight into the satire with which Poe is playing. This juxtaposition of
the real, native Kickapoo with the mythical and horrifying “Bugaboo” outfits the story
with a complex dichotomy in which the non-existent tribe is created out of air and fear,
while the real tribe represents one that isn’t an enemy at all.

In 1837, the Secretary of War ordered 1000 Indians to be sent to Florida, of whom
100 were Kickapoo (ANC 142). These Kickapoo were considered to be of the “friendly

1 The Oxford English Dictionary, bugaboo means “a fancied object of terror.” While the usage in
this text denotes the imaginary as much as the terrible, the OED reference cites other contemporary usages
of the word in this manner, ironically, by Poe himself, which focus predominantly on the terror aspect to
the definition.
tribes” and were sent to battle the Seminoles during the Florida War (NNR 93). Much as war correspondence is disseminated in contemporary media, war correspondents and the military released information to the public during the conflict, keeping an eager readership abreast of the status and progress of each battle. Enough was printed about the conscription of “friendly” tribes into service for the U.S. forces that one contemporary article details that “the compensation of these Indians for six months’ service will be as follows: to the chief of each band four hundred and seventeen dollars, and to all others, each two hundred and seventy dollars” (NNR 98). The Florida War was the second conflict with the Seminoles to that point, and this time friendly tribes were put to military use.

Again, it is important to recognize the role language plays both in the tale and the media. Because the Seminole Wars were so widely covered, they became discourse events shaped by the language and rhetoric surrounding their coverage. Similarly, Poe constructs the general out of language, making him an object of discourse. The implication is that war itself, as with military officials, is embodied through public discussion.

Poe, a newspaper man, was well-versed in current events and it can be no coincidence that the chosen tribes of his “campaign” were a mythical one along with one that was considered heroic and which, by military strategy and decree, fought in a very real campaign against a “hostile” tribe. In fact, Poe’s hero fights in the midst of an extremely unpopular war. As one senator in early 1839 exclaimed to Congress,

Three years have been consumed in military operations, and at what costs and
what results? At the cost, in money, of near twenty million dollars; in lives, of
...four hundred soldiers killed in the regular army; besides heavy losses among
the militia and volunteers...The results are, four counties in Florida
depopulated—the Indians ravaging the country...and all cultivation suspended
over a large district of country. *(PBR Liberator, 64)*

So on the one hand, “The Man That Was Used Up” explores the role that
discourse plays in war, through rumor, newspaper accounts, propaganda and other forms
of public discourse. But on the other hand, the tale codifies discursive effects upon the
way we imagine war by writing about the effects of war upon the physical body. In fact,
those effects upon the General’s body have the further effect of interrupting his own
discourse concerning his experience of war. When the general speaks specifically of the
Kickapoos and Bugaboos, he is continually interrupting himself with parallel
commentary meant to guide the replacement of his missing body parts. He exclaims

Now, you nigger, my teeth! For a *good* set of these you had better go to Parmly's
at once; high prices, but excellent work. I swallowed some very capital articles,
though, when the big Bugaboo rammed me down with the butt end of his
rifle...O yes, by the by, my eye — here, Pompey, you scamp, screw it in! Those
Kickapoos are not so very slow at a gouge — but he's a belied man, that Dr.
Williams, after all; you can't imagine how well I see with the eyes of his
make...D—n the vagabonds!” said he, in so clear a tone that I positively started
at the change, "d—n the vagabonds! they not only knocked in the roof of my
mouth, but took the trouble to cut off at least seven-eighths of my tongue. There
isn't Bonfanti's equal, however, in America, for really good articles of this
description. I can recommend you to him with confidence, (here the General
bowed,) and assure you that I have the greatest pleasure in so doing. (199-200)

Certainly, this interrupted discourse, wherein the prosthetics that secure Smith’s body
enter into the General’s account of the war itself has the effect of associating a great deal
of violence with the natives, since the general is permanently disfigured from his every
encounter with them. But the focus of his wounds is to direct his accounts of each
wound and each native encounter to the place where he purchased the replacement body
part in question.

Simultaneously, the general also mixes his contempt for his slave with the
language of the privileged man. As a result, the general’s heroism is undone and his
commercialism is heightened, creating a post-war construction of the military man who
is an end product, made rather than born. While the general is assembled before the
narrator's eyes, perhaps the most complicated character in the tale, Pompey, the general's
slave, enters after the general admonishes “Pompey, bring me that leg!...Pompey, you
scamp…Pompey, you black rascal” (209). The general barks orders at his slave, using
words, which serve only to emphasize the subservient position of the slave in the
Antebellum South.

But Pompey itself refers to Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, or Pompey the Great, a
Roman leader of the First Triumvirate of the Roman republic (with Caesar), and, most
notably, a military general and rival of Caesar's. A few moments before Pompey is
introduced, the narrator explains
My curiosity, however, had not been altogether satisfied, and I resolved to
prosecute immediate inquiry among my acquaintances touching the Brevet
Brigadier-General himself, and particularly respecting the tremendous events
*quorum pars magna fuit*, during the Bugaboo and Kickapoo campaign. (210).

The narrator quotes Virgil, in Latin, a line that translates to “in which he himself acted so
conspicuously a part” (395). While this is a well-fit line, it is also carefully placed. By
being textually associated with the slave, and by being a Latin line, the connection
between the name and the Roman general is emphasized. Poe often quotes in other
languages; however in this text the other references are in French, not Latin, but here,
Poe’s lapse into Latin amplifies the text’s apparent interest in Romaness. The intention is
emphasized by the language he chooses to quote.

In 1839, Poe offered some strong opinions about ancient Rome in one of his
*Marginalia* titled “Intemperance.” He explains that

The luxury of the Roman nation consisted not in the extravagance of her citizens,
the costliness of her shows, and the magnificence of her palaces alone; but in the
excesses of the table, and her bacchanalian indulgences, producing a state of
morals indicated by scenes of lewdness and debauchery, the details of which, no
one possessed of one feeling of delicacy, could peruse without sensations of the
most unqualified disgust. (300)

Interestingly, this is the same feeling that General Smith elicits in the narrator, with
“sensations of the most unqualified disgust.” But the notion of the “extravagance” of the
life surrounding the general is played out through the discourse leading up to the
narrator's fateful meeting. This part of the drama of the general's character takes place at the theater, at a widow's soirée, even at a church where the focus is more on the gossip and intrigue of the general than the sermon itself. The ridicule of the military man in conjunction with the extravagances of society creates a robust disdain for this aspect of war, and what follows after war is over.

Still, Pompey the slave (and surely it is an interesting note that the Roman empire, like the America Antebellum South, was slave-holding society) is also important beyond his name alone. He is the sole person responsible for the assembly of the hero, Smith. Without Pompey, Smith cannot stand, or speak, or present himself as the war hero. He is only a bundle on the floor.

It would be too much, I think, to view Pompey enjoying some form of real empowerment in relation to the General. However, the narrator leaves the reader with a potent sentiment: “Smith was the man—was the man that was used up” (209). For the narrator, the man himself is gone, more or less permanently. The war—a false and artificial one—has produced an artificial man. There is no glory suggested here, nor exoneration of this process that has produced him; there is only an acknowledgment of the grotesque nature of it all, along with the implicit commentary on the troublesome relationship between the discursive and violent process of creating a military hero and the uses to which such “remarkable” figures are put in civil society.

Another moment from Poe's “Intemperance” reflects this contempt for the excesses and blindness of society in conjunction with the military man. Still speaking of Rome, Poe explains
That proud and independent nation who, having by her military discipline, her
capacity to endure fatigue and hardship, and above all, her high sense of the value
of freedom, —not only drove back the armies of the foreign invader, but extended
her conquests so far as to be denominated the mistress of the world. After
accomplishing all this, and in effecting it, enduring without a murmur, the
scorching heat of the torrid, and the chilling cold of the frigid zones,—by the
withering influence of luxury and excess became the willing dupe of the
designing and ambitious, and tamely submitted to the yoke of tyranny. (300-01)

Here, Poe Places Rome’s ascendency to its military prowess while condemning societal
excess as the society’s ultimate downfall. So, as society becomes more decadent it
becomes less stable and, even though he registers a certain respect for the discipline of
the military, he also recognizes some great flaw in what the military hero has become in
contemporaneous American civil society. So, too, there is here a subtle hint that Poe is
concerned with the growth of an “independent nation” to an empire, driven by greed and
ambition. Poe's general is not glorious and disciplined—he is no Pompey Magnus; rather
he is as excessive as the society which he keeps; the war he fights in is driven by
ambition and results in excesses of greed. Much like Lowell's Biglow who emerges a
decade later, Poe's general is the epitome of what Poe finds wrong with the military and
war and their discursive functions in American public society during the time.
iii. "Thet's whet them fellers told us thet stayed to hum and speechified an' to the buzzards sold us..."

Set amidst the divisive war with Mexico that lasted from 1846 to 1848, Lowell’s *The Biglow Papers* is fiercely opinionated on the political interests that drove this war. The story, told in a series of letters and verses, highlights the disconnect between the average enlisted person and the decorated military officer, as well as the gulf between public opinion and government policy. Illustrated through privileges of rank, the average citizen is duped by the elite military class until the realities of war enables the average American to see through the charade.

The first letter introduces the eponymous Ezekial Biglow who uses his opinionated preface to a letter from his son, the fictional but representative intermediary for the foot soldier Hosea, in order to satirize the pomp of the military official. This first portrayal emerges as Ezekial relates Hosea’s first encounter with a sergeant and his entourage, jabbing at the military pageantry that surrounds the military leaders. Ezekial explains:

Our Hosea was down to Boston last week and he see a cruetin Sarjunt a struttin round as popler as a hen with 1 chicking, with 2 fellers a drummin and fifin arter him like all nater...but Hosy wouldn’t take none o; his sarse for all he hed much as 20 rooster’s tales stuck onto his hat and eenamost enuf brass a bobbin up and down his shoulders and figureed onto his coat and trouisis...to make a 6 pounder out on. (24)
Ezekial emphasizes the sergeant’s “strutting,” demeanor, his chest puffed out, presumably with pride, much like that of a hen who is proud of her chick following behind (in this case, a minor processional of a drummer and piper who herald his movements with quintessential military pomp and circumstance). The sergeant boasts multiple feathers in his hat and displays his medals and brass buttons in order to present a resplendent portrait of the military for the townspeople who are all potential recruits.

Unlike the townsfolk of Poe’s “The Man That Was Used Up,” Hosea is not completely drawn into the portraiture and pomp surrounding the sergeant. Instead, Hosea “wouldn’t take none o’ his sarse,” in spite of his fine outfit and composure.

Later, when Hosea brings in the character of the young soldier who was “cussed fool enough to go strottin inter Miss Chiff arter a Drum and fife,” he describes why the young man volunteered, explaining that “I never heered nothing bad on him let Alone his havin what Parson Wilbur calls a pongshong for cocktales, an he ses it wuz a soshiashun of idees sot him agoin arter the Crootin Sargient cos he wore a cocktale onto his hat” (37).

Like the first sergeant, Lowell’s “Sarjunt” is made into the ridiculous, outfitted for appearances rather than functionality. In fact, to the civilian and foot-soldier alike, the sergeants become like birds preening for mates, with Ezekial’s earlier allusions to “strutting” “roosters” and “hens” mirrored in Hosea’s references to the soldier’s enamor of the military and who follows the “strottin” “cocktales” more than the cause of the war. In addition, the brass adornments of buttons and metals are piled upon the first military man. The second “Sergient” is presented in a similarly mocking tone so that the
sergeants together become representative of those in the upper ranks of the military who are focused upon the "show" of what a military man looks like, and thus, inherently, less focused on the substance required of a serious military endeavor. Importantly, the young "feller," identified as Private B. Sawin, who follows into the military service does not do so because he understands the war or subscribes to the political motives behind it. Instead, he follows the rooster's feathers, mesmerized by the attractive military affectation as displayed by those in the upper ranks of the service; he chases after the proverbial beat of the drum and call of the pipe, plunging himself directly into the path of war.

Unlike Poe's narrator, who is disillusioned by the general's performative identity at the culmination of his tale, the disillusionment of the young Sawin becomes a necessary exploration for Lowell early in the work. He begins with the reality juxtaposed with the fantasy of war:

This kind o' sogerin' aint a mite like our October trainin',

A chap could clear right out from there ef 't only looked like rainin'

An' th' Cunnles, tu, could kiver up their shappoes with bandanners,

An' sen the insine skootin' to the bar-room with their banners...This sort o' thing aint jest like thet—I wish that I wuz furder—

Nimepunc e a day killin' folks come skind o' low fer murder (38).
Here, the private is forced to reconcile the image of the military with the day-to-day realities of war. The colonels in charge of the brigade train their soldiers by dressing themselves up and playing, as children do, at war, with bandannas indicating which “side” they are on. In inclement weather, practice ends for the day and the combatants retreat inside; winning is as simple as waving a flag in the face of the enemy. The harsh realization the private later confronts is that during real war, when the weather turns bad, there is no retreat and no commiseration over a pint of ale. Hardest of all to reconcile is the far more painful realization of recognizing that the enemy does not retreat to the visage of the flag, but dies at the private’s own hand.

Lowell’s notions of what constitutes a patriot emerges early in *The Biglow Papers*. Attempting to capture a colloquial image of what constitutes an American everyman, Lowell chooses to use variations of yankee dialect, which embodies the average enlisted character as average citizen. As one critic explains, Lowell's use of the dialect in order to “figure linguistically” the problems of American politics (Jones, 40). Further, Lowell himself reworked an introduction to *Biglow*, in order to address the use of dialect, “explaining the roots and qualities of Biglow's Yankee speech” (Jones, 41). While the dialect can appear humorous, the dialect is taken seriously by Lowell and this dialectic connection between the yankee and the enlisted man allows the sympathetic reader access to the characters, allowing them to brook, in new ways, concerns over what constitutes patriotism during a time of warfare. The character of Hosea begins to emerge through his own first person narration, shared via the letters he passes to Mr. Biglow. Hosea explains “Call me coward, call me traiter, Jest ez suits your mean idees./Here I
stand a tyrant hater, An’ the friend o’ God an’ Peace” (33).

This is a signal moment within the text that makes patriotism continuous with anti-war dissent. As Jaime Javier Rodriguez puts it, “Biglow opposes the war, but he does so as a cultural essentialist” (12). Hosea is at once opposed to the war itself, and the very embodiment of all that is “American,” with his Yankee dialect and his references to the Christian god. For Lowell, the average citizen is the one who is victimized by the war and the system the military has in place. The reader then must grapple with the idea that a patriot and an anti-war dissenter could possibly be one in the same man.

This facet of The Biglow Papers belongs to a context of public deliberation during the war with Mexico over the role of dissent in deliberative democracy. The changing face of patriotism would later emerge in a “higher law” rhetoric espoused by writers and rhetoricians, as well as through constitutional patriotism, wherein the citizen was responsible to understand the foundations of the democracy and rely on the constitution for guidance, rather than politicians. Orator Thomas Cary of Massachusetts, in a Fourth of July speech, given in 1848 exemplified this to his audience. Cary opined the constraining effect of the war upon public discourse.

But, of late, an indomitable will, without regard to right, seems to be admitted as the standard of spirit; and he who dares to enquire whether we are just to the Mexicans is met with the imputation of treason of our own cause. The principle of this is fraught with greater danger to a republic than any coalition that is likely to ever be formed against us in the world. (27-28)
Lowell, like Cary, also recognizes implicitly this connection between patriotism, or, more specifically, blind patriotism, the hero and the definition of treason. For Lowell, the result is that Hosea is aware of the tenuous position he occupies upon the patriotic spectrum by voicing his displeasure over the war. Yet, Hosea also vocalizes his opinion with a devil-may-care attitude that indicates that he is aware of what some will call him, but is also aware of his unique ability as an American to do say as he pleases. In doing so, a unique American patriot emerges, one who exercises his unique rights guaranteed by the Constitution, who embodies a national identity via his dialect and his understanding of his constitutional rights, but does not lose sight of his tenuous position as an anti-hero.

While the portrait of the patriot emerges here as a thoughtful interrogator of government policy, so too does the savvy nature of the American everyman become essential to American society. While his speech is decidedly American in dialect, the substance of what he says is complex. Hosea explains “they may talk o’ Freedom’s airy...They just want this Californy So’s to lug new slave-states in” (28). Here, Hosea shows his understanding of the very complicated reasons behind the Mexican War, one of which was, as he understands, to add more slave holding states into the union. But Hosea also articulates the public rhetoric surrounding the war, drawing that rhetoric into tension with his perception of the motivations of the war. By doing so, Lowell helps to establish a distinctly American, non-aristocratic identity as one that, much like Poe, allows for the upset of the traditional notion of the “educated gentleman” and, in its place, allows room for a distinctly American identity, which, for Lowell at least, includes
a dialectical American Everyman without traditional education, but who thinks critically about complicated public policies. Unlike Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up," whose average citizen becomes both the dupe and the perpetuator of the military hero, Lowell's use of dialect and discourse illustrates the average American whose use of language is an integral part of his citizenship, allowing him to voice opinions contrary to those of the status quo.

Beyond the commentary Lowell makes upon the war and the position of the military in American democracy, Lowell also critiques American government by presenting various political figures alongside the military ones and their positions within and on the war. The first politician Hosea mentions is "Guvener B," who is admirable to Hosea because he "stays at home and looks after his folks...An' into nobody's tater-patch he pokes" (54). In this simple moment, Hosea expresses a great deal about the Mexican War in principle; he finds it admirable for a politician to be concerned primarily with domestic affairs, and to not provoke international incidences.

On the other hand, there is a third party at play within the verse, John P Robinson, who represents a politician who is not running for office, but who, rather, is campaigning on the behalf of another. Robinson declares he "wunt vote for Guvener B," to which Hosea points out the other option in the election is to "come round...an' go for thunder and guns" (54). Robinson thus endorse Gineral C, who "goes in for the war" (55). So on the one hand, we have Guvener B, described for his interest in domestic concerns; on the other is Gineral C, most notable for his military standing and rank, promoted for his experience in the military and advocacy of warfare.
Lowell obviously finds such military qualifications for civilian leadership troublesome. In this section, Lowell focuses his character decisively on the politics surrounding the war, and, not surprisingly, lands again on the notion of patriotism. Hosea notes "the side of our country must ollers be took. An’ President Polk, you know, he is our country" (56). Hosea’s satirical voice indicates he does not agree with this monarchical conception of a body politic to be identified with the head of state, and, in fact, brings to mind earlier moments where Hosea defies the idea that the president solely represents the country as a whole. Again, all of this is in keeping with Hosea’s understanding that patriotism calls upon our dissenting impulses. In addition, it calls upon the average citizen to think beyond the military man as politician, to question leadership outside of a military framework of experience, and to specifically reject the monarchical ideal of one man being synonymous with the country as a whole, the implication being that the average citizen must understand democratic ideals as well as participate in the democracy itself.

As Lowell returns to the earlier enlisted man from the war, another similarity with Poe emerges. The second letter from Sawin presents the after math of war. Sawin explains

I spose you wonder ware I be; I can’t tell, for the soul o’ me/Exactly ware I be myself—meanin’ by that the holl of me/ Wen I left hum, I hed two legs, an they worn’t bad ones neither/...Now one on ‘em ‘s I dunno ware; they though I was adyin’/. An’ sawed it off because they said twus kin’ o’ mortifyin’;/...There’s a good thing, though, to be said about my wooden new one,—/../ I’ve lost one eye,
but that’s a loss easy to supply! Out o’ glory that I’ve got... Ware’s my left hand;
O, darn it, yes, I recollect wut’s come on ‘t;/ I haint no left arm but my right, an’
that ‘s gut just a thumb on ‘t. (120-21)

Like Poe’s used up man, Sawin comes back from warfare as something broken, someone to be reassembled. But rather than being a commentary on the artificial nature of a person, Lowell’s Sawin marks the sad conclusion of the enlisted man after a war. The young man who had been blinded by the pageantry of enlisting into the military, is now left in pieces, having lost a leg to infection after being wounded, having lost an eye to presumably a similar incident, and having lost not just one arm, but most of the fingers on the other one as well. He, too, is used up, but he is not presented as an object of revilement. Instead, he serves as a caution, as one to be pitied, his livelihood used up, as he is unable to return to an agricultural means of living, having lost the ability to physically work the land. Wryly, Sawin explains “glory...(is) all I shall ever git by way o’ pay for losin’ it...(but) off’cers...git paid for all our thumps and kickins, du wal by keepin’ single eyes arter the fattest pickens” (120). Sawin notes that even after everything he has lost, Sawin will see little or no financial compensation for his service and his loss of future revenues, other than the “glory” of having lost it in service to his country. However, he also notices that those who are ranked military men seem to reap a greater benefit from losing a single eye (rather than two limbs, an eye, and more).

In the end, Lowell’s satire consistently portrays the military, and specifically the officers within the military, as lacking authentic ability at warfare, and as using the pomp and fanfare surrounding military uniforms and parades to lure the average American into
enlisting. Even the civilian government falls prey to the decorated “hero,” who is an officer and stands in stark contrast to the authentic hero, embodied in the enlisted man. So, too, does Lowell reject the militarism of his own moment, though it has an uncomfortable fit between those who oppose war and those who espouse patriotism as connected directly to where the county stands at any given point. So, too does he attempt to define the average citizen’s role within a democratic society, by encouraging a thorough understanding of the political issues of the time, as well as encouraging the use of rhetoric in order to express opinions contrary to the status quo. Ultimately, Lowell’s ideal citizen emerges as one who can see through the gloss of the military and the rhetoric of the politician, to become a participating member of a society.

It is surprising, in some ways, to realize that Poe and Lowell conceived their opposition to militarism in such compatible ways, especially given the political gulf separating the two. Both treat the issue of military pomp with disdain; both equally spurn cultural import placed upon those artificially decorated results of warfare. Both choose to prove their points through the use of satire, and, both have characters who have undergone prosthetic reassembly.

In the end, the two agree that some wars are not in the best interests of the country, particularly those that are provoked against other nations for unapparent reasons, hidden behind the glories of war for the sake of itself.
Chapter 3: Hawthorne's “Shattered Dream:” Military and Civil Society in “Chiefly About War Matters” and Our Old Home

i. “My Dear General”: Hawthorne, Pierce and Ambivalence

In the preface to “Our Old Home: A Series of English Sketches,” Nathaniel Hawthorne dedicates the book to Franklin Pierce, whose campaign biography he had penned in 1852 and who had been his friend since his college days. Clearly, Hawthorne thought highly of Pierce as a man, as he extended his dedication in the introduction to the text, addressing him as “my dear General” though Pierce had already served as president more than a decade before (3). While this might appear to be merely an expression born of the familiarity of a long term relationship, Hawthorne was conflicted about the prevalence of military men, and generals in particular, in positions of political leadership in America, and most importantly, in the position of president. Even in the earlier biography, he had expressed his ambivalence to the public reaction to political leaders, noting that Pierce was being “misrepresented by indiscriminate abuse, on the one hand, and by aimless praise, on the other hand, [and] he should be sketched by one who...is inclined to tell the truth” (849-50). Hawthorne expresses the problematic nature of the relationship between political leaders and the public reactions to them, troubled even by the public's consistently polarized reaction to Pierce, ranging from “indiscriminate abuse” to “aimless praise,” neither of which he considers close to the truth.

Furthermore, in the introduction to Sketches, he points out that

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2 Certainly the campaign biography itself was propaganda, and Hawthorne's declaration of fitness to write it is suspect. However, by the time Hawthorne penned Our Old Home, the need for influencing opinion on Pierce has passed, indicating a genuine fondness on his part for the former president.
The Present, the Immediate, the Actual, has proved too potent for me. It takes away not only my scanty faculty, but even my desire for imaginative composition, and leaves me sadly content to scatter a thousand peaceful fantasies upon the hurricane that is sweeping us all along, possibly, into a Limbo where our nation and its polity may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance (4).

The substitution of Our Old Home for the “unwritten Romance” itself is representative of a peculiar moment in Hawthorne's career. Unable to successfully finish works The Ancestral Footstep, Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, or Septimus Felton, he turned instead to Our Old Home in order to continue writing. For one critic, the locus for doing so resides in Hawthorne's “need to resolve his sense of transatlantic dislocation” (Hanlon, 13). However, Our Old Home, when viewed in conjunction with ""Chiefly About War Matters," also provides an insight into Hawthorne's unsettled feelings about the war, American leadership, and the future of the nation. Coming at the height of the American Civil War, this short letter contains one of Hawthorne's most telling statements; the reality of the war-ravaged America was simply “too potent” for him to contend with. Further, his disillusionment with the state of a fragmented union was so great that it was impossible for him to be creative inside of its confines any longer; he is dispossessed by it, reduced to a “scanty faculty” and “sadly” put in the position of letting go of his own “fantasies” of peace. Ultimately, the nation at war and his unwritten novel become synonymous with one another, both representing a “shattered dream.”

This short letter to Pierce serves to mesh some of the most critical ways in which
Hawthorne deals with these conflicted feelings towards an America at war, from his ambivalent view of the problematic nature of a president descended from a military hierarchy ("my dear General") to his fear for the continuation of the civil government itself ("a Limbo where our nation and its polity... [become] fragments of a shattered dream,") as well as his penchant for shifting the reality of his factual narratives into the terms of a romance, much like his "unwritten" one.

Hawthorne's works "Chiefly About War Matters," written in 1862 while he was traveling the nation, seen in conjunction with "Consular Experiences," penned a year later through the lens of his earlier time abroad, show that Hawthorne attempts to navigate his own ambivalence towards a militarized America, wherein soldiers and ranking officers, military and civil society, and, ultimately, the romance and reality, evince uncomfortable tension with one another.

i. "Chiefly" at Home: Hawthorne's Militaristic Ambivalence

In the opening to Hawthorne's 1862 "Chiefly About War Matters," he prefaces his own qualifications to speak on the subject by noting "I make no pretensions to state-craft or soldiership, and could promote the common weal neither by valor nor counsel" (299). In this moment, Hawthorne is making the connection between national, political leadership (state-craft) and the military (soldiership), ostensibly because he is speaking at a moment in the midst of the Civil War and the two appear to be the most qualified positions from which to speak about the subject of war. But Hawthorne is making a connection between leadership and the military that he himself finds problematic, and he
evinces that connection throughout his writing in various, and often subtle ways.

Unlike the satiric jibes used by Russell a decade earlier in *The Biglow Papers* to denounce the disparities between the foot soldier and the officer, as well as indicting a body politic that was inundated with military men, Hawthorne took a more subtle approach. Equally disdainful of the inequalities between the enlisted men and ranked officers, Hawthorne was writing across different, and often more problematic political climates than Russell, whose satire attacked an unpopular war, rather than engaging in discourse on the highly polarized American Civil War.

As Hawthorne continues in “Chiefly,”

In the cities, especially New York, there was a rather prominent display of military goods at the shop windows,—such as swords with gilded scabbards and trappings, epaulets, carabines, revolvers and sometimes a great iron cannon at the edge of the pavement, as if Mars had dropped one of his pocket pistols there, while hurrying to the field” ("Chiefly", 301).

Here, Hawthorne shows some disdain for the commerce of war, beginning his description with the “gilded” sword-sheath and “trappings” of the military life, a list which, interestingly, begins with “epaulets,” which, like the gilding on the scabbard, have no function other than to denote rank and ornament the uniform of the wearer. The list of the “trappings” of warfare precede the functional accoutrements of war, such as the revolver, making it seem that the appearance of the soldier is more important than his function. Even then, the inclusion of the revolver is indicative of a specific rank, as the rifle and revolver, up until 1862, were not being mass-produced on a level to make them
available to all foot soldiers, and revolvers, in particular, were associated predominantly with officers and mounted soldiers (Thomson, 132; Shaw, 242). Finally, Hawthorne ends his description with the cannon displayed outside of the store, which complicates further this apparently benign description of war commerce. First, the cannon mounted on the sidewalk has no functionality whatsoever, being located in the center of the city, outside of a shop that is unlikely to see any proximity to war; it is contextually out of place. Its only function, in reality, is to induce commerce, enticing soldiers to make purchases that may or may not be useful on the battlefield. In addition, Hawthorne likens the cannon to “Mars’s pocket pistols,” both deflating the cannon to the status of the small, somewhat ineffectual weapon, as well as alluding to the handgun, yet again, which has little to no functionality for the average foot soldier.

This passage evinces Hawthorne’s problematic relationship with the military and war, a relationship that often appears ambivalent but is clearly much more complex. As Hawthorne continues:

As railway-companions, we had now and then a volunteer in his French-gray great-coat, returning from furlough, or a new-made officer traveling to join his regiment, in his new-made uniform, which was perhaps all of he military character he had about him, —but proud of his eagle-buttons, and likely enough to do them honor before the gilt should be wholly dimmed. (301)

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As Shaw explains, “The Federal Government purchased fewer than 400,000 handguns during the American Civil War for officers of all branches, cavalry troops, and mounted artillery personnel... The total purchased, officially did not include, of course, the private purchase of handguns by individual officers and enlisted men. However, the infantryman, after a long, forced march, quickly realized he did not need the extra encumbrance of a handgun, no matter how small, and such weapons were promptly sold, sent home, or discarded. Therefore, handguns we used in relatively limited numbers, compared to the longarms of the infantryman, who made up the great bulk of the army.” (242)
Here, Hawthorne portrays the virgin officer in a sympathetic light while still taking note of the external trappings of the military officer. The regalia of militarism is noted as the officer appears in his “new-made uniform” with gilded “eagle-buttons,” but the new officer’s state is contradictory; he is inexperienced, his uniform being “perhaps all of the military character he had,” indicating that the image of the soldier-officer is a false one, presented through accouterments rather than through experience or actual military prowess. But Hawthorne does not indict the soldier-officer for his inexperience, and instead points out that he will most probably remedy this disparity and do his buttons “honor” soon enough.

Hawthorne’s sympathetic but bemused tone extends to other soldiers he describes on his journey, as he depicts the scene of an encampment in romantic terms, noting the tents having peaks “blackened with smoke...[that] indicated that they had been made comfortable by stove-heat throughout the winter” (302). The addition of the term “comfortable” in conjunction with “stove-heat” effectively transforms the tent. Much like the opening of “The Ambitious Guest,” the scene is set of a cozy retreat, where the “family is gathered round their hearth” (31). The winter tent, which is not comfortable or cozy in the cold of a North-Atlantic winter, is transformed into a stand-in home and hearth, effectively distancing the reality of war from his narrative.

Once the lines between reality and romance blur within the landscape, the soldier, too, begins to take on an air of romance. Hawthorne notes that “we filed out of the station between lines of soldiers, with shouldered muskets, putting us in mind of similar spectacles at the gates of European cities” (302-03). Here, Hawthorne calls to mind the
“similar spectacles” that occurred outside of the gated cities and castles of medieval Europe, where an armed presence was continual. This allusion to the distant past connects the romantic tropes of the past to the present reality of war.

Yet, this romance is interrupted by a longing towards peaceful nationhood. Hawthorne laments,

It is not without sorrow that we saw the circulation of the nation’s lifeblood (at the very heart, moreover) clogged with such strictures as these, which have caused chronic disease in almost all countries save our own... Will the time ever come again, in America, when we may live half a score of years without once seeing the likeness of a soldier, except it be in the festal march of a company on its summer tour?” (303)

For Hawthorne, the external, visible evidence of warfare is a reminder of democratic nationhood that is so different from “almost all” other nations, “save our own,” most of which have monarchical foundations, which Hawthorne connects with a required military presence “at the gates” of those nations, a presence which “clogs” the “heart” of this nation. Further, he laments this military presence, wondering whether there may ever come a time without a need for soldiership, beyond the image of the soldier by actors presenting a “summer” play.

Hawthorne identifies the military presence as a threat to civil society. He exclaims

One terrible idea occurs in reference to this matter. Even supposing the war should end to-morrow, and the army melt back into the mass of the population
within the year, what an incalculable preponderance will there be of military titles and pretensions for at least a half a century to come! (303)

The idea of a post-war, civil society inundated with military experience is "terrible" for Hawthorne. The military, in many ways, functions similarly to a traditional, aristocratic society, with a set hierarchy based on rank and position. Hawthorne specifically uses the term "military titles" rather than rank, aligning it with an aristocratic, and subsequently, autocratic society that would be at distinct odds with civil democracy within the republic. The addition of the term "pretensions" fully aligns the military with a system that is lacking a value based in reality, and instead is rooted in perception and the image of the military hero. Further, his exclamation and alliteration (preponderance...pretensions) invest an element of satire into the moment, reminiscent of Lowell's satire in Biglow.

The anxiety of a civil society inundated with military men is brought to full fruition in his narrative as he goes on to note that

Every country neighborhood will have its general or two, its three or four colonels, half a dozen majors, and captains without end, —besides non-commissioned officers and privates, more than the recruiting offices knew of, — all with their campaign-stories, which will become the staple of fireside forevermore. (303)

In this textual moment, Hawthorne provides a glimpse of a stand-in aristocracy, wherein ranked, former soldiers fill the place of dukes, earls and barons, each having an inherent status because of that former rank. With the addition of the side note interjected that these former officers and soldiers include "more than the recruiting offices knew of," the
falseness embodied by the military, in this case, by those who purport to have been officers or soldiers but were not, is indicated. Further, the civil life will suddenly be inundated with “campaign-stories,” which are, by nature, a retelling, or a “story,” which may be suspect, subject to the same “aimless praise” and “indiscriminate abuse” that inhibited the telling of Pierce's “true” biography.

The crux of Hawthorne’s solicitude towards the infiltration of military society into civil society is evinced by his ultimate (and ironic⁴) anxiety, which rests with the leadership of the democratic nation. He points out

Military merit, or rather, since that is not so readily estimated, military notoriety, will be the measure of all claims of civil distinction. One bullet-headed general will succeed another in the Presidential chair; and veterans will hold offices at home and abroad, and sit in Congress and the state legislatures, and fill all the avenues of public life. (303).

Here, Hawthorne is more explicit than he has been to this point, locating his distrust of the military within the concept of “military merit,” which he, like Poe and Lowell before him, recognize as constructed through image and discourse, because it, like the veracity of the soldier’s claim to soldier-hood, is often not confirmable. With the problem of veracity so predominant in determining worth, the idea of prominent, military officials (bullet-headed generals, as it were) taking the ultimate position of president is doubly problematic; the elected leader may be unworthy of the position inherently and the military indoctrination of said leader is, at best, a complicated fit with civil society and

⁴ It cannot be ignored that Hawthorne’s own campaign biography of Pierce itself conflated the image of a military man onto a political leader who was determined to be the leader of the democratic nation.
civil leadership.

Aware of the polarized atmosphere of America in this moment, Hawthorne does not use this problem to take up the battle against patriotism, as Lowell did, but, rather, is sure to temper this anxiety with the qualification

I do not speak of this deprecatingly, since, very likely, it may substitute something more real and genuine, instead of the many shams on which men have heretofore founded their claims to public regard; but it behooves civilians to consider their wretched prospects in the future, and assume the military button before it is too late. (303-04)

While this is ostensibly an endorsement of the military society and its involvement in civil society, Hawthorne navigates the approbation in a way that leaves doubt to his commitment to this belief. On the one hand, Hawthorne points out that his observation on military presence in future American civil society is not “deprecatingly” told, he also states that it “may substitute” for something “real and genuine,” which does not necessarily mean that it does substitute for veracity, but rather might be better than the alternative. Further, he points out that the influx of military presence in civil society is inevitable, and indicates that civilians will not have a chance to participate in civil government by nature of being civilians, and should “consider their wretched prospects” for the future and “assume the military button” now in order to be able to have that voice later. This appeal comes in the form of a warning to act now, before it is “too late.” Again, Hawthorne's anxiety of military rule in a civil society is so marked that he encourages those civilians to enter into the military in order to maintain a voice in future
political leadership.

This opening narrative of Hawthorne’s discussion in “Chiefly” ends as he turns the conversation to Washington, reinforcing his separation between military and civil society in America. He notes:

The troops being gone, we had the better leisure and opportunity to look into other matters. It is natural enough to suppose that the centre and heart of Washington is the Capitol; and certainly, in its outward aspect, the world has not many statelier or more beautiful edifices, nor any, I suppose, more skilfully adapted to legislative purposes, and to all accompanying needs. (305)

Here, Hawthorne indicates that the presence of the military is a distraction to their journey, and that the return to a picturesquely unpeopled landscape is a return to the “leisure” of perusing the capital city, itself a stand-in for the nation as a whole. For him, the two don’t coincide easily in the same space, and therefore create a tension within him that he readily admits. Yet, the representation of civil government is itself flawed, with an “outward aspect” that is beautiful and stately, indicating its “skilful” adaptation to “legislative purposes.” In other words, the “appearance” of the Capitol is like the military man; created of an image rather than reality, inferring that the business that it has been “adapted to” may also be equally distrustful.

iii. Consular Distance: Hawthorne’s Transatlantic Dissent

The opening to “Consular Experiences” provides valuable insight into Hawthorne's militaristic ambivalence through his writing at a distance from the war then affecting America. The essay attempts to recount his experiences as the consul, to which
he was appointed during the presidency of Franklin Pierce ten years earlier, yet is written through a lens tainted by the reality of the Civil War. As a result, frequent moments in the text remind the reader of the sectional conflict while the distance of time and place allow Hawthorne to reflect in a way that he is unable to do when writing either from a position closer to the Civil War itself or, as Hawthorne admits, through the medium of fiction.

The opening line frames the text within the context of a war-torn America, rather than positioning it in its own time and place. Hawthorne describes the building housing the consulate, noting that the it was “a shabby and smoke-stained edifice of four stories high, this illustriously named in honor of our national establishment” (6). While there is certainly a bit of sarcasm in this description, so, too is there a note of irony that the “smoke stained” and “shabby” exterior should house the representation of a nation that itself was also in a similar condition. Unlike the smoke-stained edifices of the tents housing the soldiers in “Chiefly” that evoke hearth and home, the smoke on the consulate becomes a stain that evokes decay and lack of respectability.

His anxiety over the war in America creeps in again in his depiction of the building, the interior of which he describes in specific detail, noting that a map hung on the wall of the “United States (as they were, twenty years ago, but seem little likely to be, twenty years hence” (8). While the use of the term “the” indicates a plurality of states that privileges the states themselves over the federal institution, Hawthorne is clear to describe America as the “United States,” though, in this precise moment, they were not united at all, which points towards some optimism. However, he belies optimism with
his parenthetical skepticism that the way the states were drawn in the past are unlikely to remain the same, which is already precisely factual, as new states had entered in the previous twenty years (and some had left as result of the war.) Still, his overall indication is that the possibility exists that the "United States" could remain un-united. The combination of an un-united America, with the state of war distress Hawthorne enough that his ability to write the romance is crippled. Like the Transcendentalists who required the specific brand of democracy that America afforded in order to operate as Transcendentalists, Hawthorne appeared to require an America united in peace in order to write the romance.

Shortly into the narrative, it becomes clear that no amount of distance can disguise Hawthorne’s issues with former military men in positions of power. While describing the interior of the consulate building, in what seems to be an innocent depiction, his views become clear. He notes that

farther adornments were...a colored, life-size lithograph of General Taylor, with an honest, hideousness of aspect, occupying the place of honor about the mantelpiece. (8)

It is well known that Hawthorne lost his position at the custom house, and thus, his living, with the political shift of the presidency of Zachary Taylor in 1849, so certainly no love was lost towards the man. Most likely, the “honest, hideousness” of the portrait is a Hawthornian jibe at Taylor, who was placed in an ironic position being over the mantel, in a “place of honor.” Beyond the personal, however, the association with Taylor as a General, rather than a president is something that Hawthorne does repeatedly, both in
respect to presidents he admires (like Pierce) and those he disdains (likely Taylor). The result, however, remains the same; Hawthorne was deeply anxious about the use of military men in positions of power like the presidency and felt that the “president” would almost always be a man who had once been a “General.”

Taylor is certainly not the only president included in the loaded description of the consulate; Andrew Jackson also gets this Hawthornian treatment. He describes that

On top of the book-case stood a fierce and terrible bust of General Jackson, pilloried in a military collar which rose above his ears, and frowning forth immittigably...I am afraid that the truculence of the old General’s expression was utterly thrown away on this stolid and obdurate race of men [Englishmen.] (8)

In this description, Hawthorne treats Jackson more thoroughly than Taylor, describing him as “fierce” and “terrible,” which are not particularly complimentary coming from Hawthorne, who previously used “terrible” to describe the notion of an America governed only by military men, as though it were both a bad idea, as well as a horrifying one. Still, like Pierce, it is an ambivalent description; Hawthorne evinced no outward disdain for Jackson and belonged to at least one organization that politically backed his presidency. Yet, Hawthorne's personal opinion of a politician did not interfere with his deeply rooted issues with the militarism of politics. As can be seen further, the description of Jackson’s collar as “pilloried” evinces a certain critique, as though his collar itself functions to frame him as though he were upon the pillory, fully revealed to the public for all of his deeds and misdeeds. His collar itself is a “military” collar, perhaps serving as an indictment of his military misdeeds, for which he is now being
exposed. So, too, does Hawthorne reinforce Jackson's military identity, referring to him not once, but twice, as “General,” yet again reinforcing this connection between the presidency and the military as one that is problematic and fraught with mistrust. Finally, Jackson is portrayed as utterly ineffectual, “frowning” upon the English who are completely unaffected by it.

Hawthorne’s ambivalent disdain towards these two men is completed when he notes that his “patriotism” keeps him from clearing them away. Of course, this is not done without a little humor, which creeps into this work written from the perspective of abroad in a way that it could not from home, and he notes that he keeps these ornaments around because they “remind [him] so delightfully of an old-fashioned American barber’s shop (8).

In “Consular Experiences,” Hawthorne also takes ample time to explore the relationship between America and England, which manifests itself for him in an anxiety towards the aristocratic foundation that England represents. He notes, “after all the bloody wars and vindictive animosities, we have still an unspeakable yearning towards England” (18). As is his usual style, there is a romantic air to his prose, evinced through “bloody wars” and the “unspeakable yearning,” but there is still a condemnation of such desires. He observes that

the American...feels a blind, pathetic tendency to wander back again, which makes itself evident in such wild dreams...about English inheritances. A mere coincidence of names (the Yankee one, perhaps, having been assumed by legislative permission,) a suppositious pedigree, a silver mug on which an
anciently engraved coat of arms has been half-scrubbed out...rubbish of all kinds...has been potent enough to turn the brain of many an honest republican

(19-20)

This condemnation of the American moving towards English values is connected inherently with the notion of lost inheritances which itself is most often connected to the aristocracy, to which Hawthorne refers with "suppositious pedigree" and "anciently engraved coat of arms," all of which he affirms as "rubbish." Indeed, he positions these desires towards the trappings of the aristocracy as in opposition to a true American identity, noting that these "wild dreams" are enough to woo more than one "honest republican.” By juxtaposing the "honest republican" with the aristocratic "pedigree,” Hawthorne makes an explicit condemnation of the English system, placing a value on republicanism as honest, with the aristocratic system of England being flawed. He furthers this condemnation with his assertion that he "might fill many pages with instances of this diseased American appetite for English soil” indicating that the American leaning towards England is something so at odds with Americanism that it is “diseased” (20). Much like his disdain for military “titles” in "Chiefly", the aristocratic titles are a folly that should be rejected in favor of citizenship.

Of course, while Hawthorne turned away from war descriptions for a while in "War Matters,” he could not help but come back to them. As he traveled the countryside, again and again, war matters intruded on the scene, and with it, the military man would appear. Even in the middle of America, the military and the aristocracy were momentarily united. During one memorable moment, Hawthorne encounters a
commander of the “fortress” whom he describes as “a small, thin old gentleman, set off by a brilliant pair of epaulets—the only pair, so far as my observation went, that adorn the shoulders of any officer in the Union army” (332). Further along, he notes that a demonstration had been arranged which “afford[ed] us a vivid idea of the disciplinarian of Baron Steuben's school” (332). Rather than refer to an American “fort,” Hawthorne uses the romantic, European version of “fortress,” evoking a different time and place, effectively distancing himself inside of his own land. So, too, does Hawthorne, again, remind the reader of the trappings of rank and how ineffectual they are, noting that the “epaulets” were not seen on any other officer they had thus encountered. Still, this is another ambivalent description on Hawthorne's part; the commander is a veteran of an earlier war and is old, which he admits means he may not be fit for another position. So, too does this mean that he may have earned his rank in an earlier war and wears the remnants of that through his uniform's décor. Finally, the evocation of “Baron Steuben” complicates the description of the moment. Baron Steuben was a military strategist who was successful in training Washington's troops during the Revolutionary War. Stueben's nationality was never really determined, although he appears to have won his earliest accolades in Prussia, and then moved throughout Europe before being enlisted by Franklin to the American cause (Doyle, 18.) Steuben is the harbinger of military ambivalence in Hawthorne's text, embodying the foreign aristocracy (a sort of baron—every nation) while fighting for democratic nationhood. By recollecting the baron, Hawthorne complicates the old-gentleman commander, muddying his character by making him both a hero and dubious, simultaneously. As he explains, “valor and martial
skill are so evanescent a character (hardly less fleeting than a woman's beauty)” and that the “gallant officer, though distinguished in former wars, [had] no more active duty than the guardianship of an apparently impregnable fortress” (333).

Near the end of “Chiefly About War Matters,” Hawthorne ruminates, “the ideas of military men solidify and fossilize so fast,” crystallizing his view of the military man as a political leader; he is a man who is constantly suspect because his ideas are too easily set in stone, while his character is often less secure and solid (333).

Hawthorne's inability to write his romance allows him the space to explore the reality of the Civil War, both from within the nation itself, as well as through the transatlantic lens through “Chiefly About War Matters” and Our Old Home. In the end, his “unwritten Romance” is written through the non-fiction, allowing Hawthorne to explore the war, the military man, and civil society—things he couldn't have done inside of the confines of his own fiction.
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