Witnessing Empire: U.S. Imperialism and the Emergence of the War Correspondent

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Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

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WITNESSING EMPIRE: U.S. IMPERIALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE WAR CORRESPONDENT

a dissertation

by

NIRMAL H. TRIVEDI

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Abstract

Witnessing Empire: U.S. Imperialism and the Emergence of the War Correspondent
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Advisor: Christopher P. Wilson

Witnessing Empire is a cultural history of the American war correspondent. I trace the figure through various points of crisis in the making of U.S. sovereignty including the U.S.-Mexico War, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War. Locating correspondents like Herman Melville, Richard Harding Davis, and Stephen Crane in what Mary Louise Pratt terms “contact zones”—areas of cross-cultural exchange and contest—I show in this interdisciplinary work how the figure emerged through confronting U.S. state power with “on the spot” visual and textual witness accounts of the violence entailed by that power in a period of territorial expansion across the hemisphere, mass media development, and renewed aesthetic challenges to representing war. Revising critical appraisals of U.S. empire, including those of Amy Kaplan, that argue that the war correspondent is simply an apologist for U.S. imperialism through a facile use of romance, realism, spectacle, and sensationalism, I argue that the figure carves out a unique vision via such familiar conventions to unveil the contradictions of U.S. imperialism—particularly, its reliance on a narrative of liberation and protection through conquest. The dissertation thus unveils the correspondent as ambivalent towards this narrative as his witnessed accounts reveal subjects less protected, than abandoned by the state. I argue that through exposing the violence of this abandonment, the correspondent develops a new literary convention that exposes the consequences of modern war.
In Chapter 1, I historically situate war correspondence as an emergent form, comparing the writings of the New Orleans-based Picayune war correspondent George Wilkins Kendall, composed on the eve of the U.S.-Mexico War, with Herman Melville’s *Typee*. An unorthodox travel narrative, *Typee* can be more effectively read as an inaugural work of war correspondence in its challenging of “race war” as a discourse employed to cement state power in the contact zone. Chapter 2 takes up the “on the spot” pencil line drawings of the Civil War “special artists.” Comparing these artists’ works with the published engravings in the newspapers at the time and the illustrated histories at the turn-of-the-century, I address the visual rhetoric by which war correspondents depicted the crisis of sovereignty entailed by the Civil War. The second half of the dissertation illustrates the emergence of war correspondence as a unique aesthetic form. Chapter 3 looks at how Richard Harding Davis crafts war correspondence as a critique of U.S. imperialism’s spectacle-oriented “anti-imperialist” liberation narrative by opposing the production of an “imperial news apparatus” at the turn-of-the-century with the advent of the Spanish-American War. In Chapter 4, I show how Stephen Crane, like Davis, was inspired by the anti-statism and transnationalism of the antebellum filibuster. From his initial experiments in *Red Badge of Courage*, Crane was focused on the subjectivity of the witness in his correspondence and fiction, ultimately allegorizing the violence of U.S. imperial power and its abandonment of citizens and non-citizens alike in war zone.
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Living in Boston has given me the unique privilege of using this city’s seemingly limitless resources. Catherina Slatterbeck at the Boston Athenæum’s Civil War Prints and Photographs Department helped me locate several issues of Frank Leslie’s, listening patiently as I explained rather obscure details of my project. The Boston Public Library provided much-needed variety to the everyday work of writing. I also thank the archivists at the New York Public Library’s Special Collections for allowing me to spend as much time as needed examining the rare sketches in their possession.

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my dissertation only begins to explore. Kalpana, in particular, has been an ever-patient mentor and supporter throughout my graduate work, and I will be always grateful for her friendship. I would be remiss if I did not attest to the enormous debt of gratitude I owe to Chris Wilson. As my dissertation director, he guided me with such generosity of time and spirit across the many professional hurdles of completing the degree. As a friend, he listened with concern and provided perspective for problems that seemed at the time insurmountable. If this work contains any insights, they are largely due to his tremendous gift of teaching.

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Introduction

*If I was an Afghan refugee in Kila Abdullah, I would have done just what they did. I would have attacked Robert Fisk. Or any other Westerner I could find.* –Robert Fisk

*We're functioning with peacetime constraints, with legal requirements, in a wartime situation in the Information Age, where people are running around with digital cameras and taking these unbelievable photographs and then passing them off, against the law, to the media, to our surprise.* –Donald Rumsfeld

The impetus for this study of the war correspondent lies in two contemporary moments that share a common life in the modern, imperial history of war and media representation. The first is British war correspondent Robert Fisk’s account of being assaulted by Afghan refugees in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the wake of the U.S. invasion on that region in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks. The second is former Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld’s testimony before Congress on the photographic and video evidence of widespread prisoner abuse in the Abu Ghraib detention facility in 2004, shortly after the beginning of Iraq War. The questions raised by these two moments reflect long-standing intricate connections between representation and state power that I address in this work—connections between race, authority and violence that testify to the question of speaking to that which is unspeakable.

When Robert Fisk reported on his own beating, he engaged in a series of conflations that suggested the extent to which he would need to travel to speak to the violence of war. Writing that he “would have attacked Robert Fisk” as if he were in the
same position as the refugees, the correspondent writes himself into the place of those he has devoted his life to representing while paradoxically, writing the Afghans out. In an effort to empathize, Fisk cannot differentiate one “Afghan” from another, engaging in the kind of conflation of regions and peoples that has characterized so much of the reporting and writing about the world. Fisk, or course, is a subject of “the West,” available to be “airlifted” out of “unstable” situations, and saved by “good” Afghans who tend to his wounds. Nonetheless, in his brief moment of empathy, he hints at the fact that he, like the “Afghans,” has been abandoned by Britain and the supranational institution of NATO, which had authorized the attack on the region. But if Fisk struggles to accurately describe the lives of those displaced, Rumsfeld identifies the degree to which representations of the victims of violence—even if they get out—must be managed by the state to prevent them from becoming “radioactive” to the public (“Rumsfeld”). “Wartime,” in his view, cannot peacefully co-exist with “the Information Age.”

These two moments, both with deep histories and continuing implications, raise the central question that drives this present work: how does one testify to violence when the avenues to represent that violence are so forcefully managed, not only by state power, but by the very individuals responsible for representing that violence? This dissertation takes a “genealogical” approach in addressing this question in the hope that through following what Foucault calls the “lines of fragility in the present,” we can grasp, in his words, “why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is,” or as Habermas succinctly put it, “take aim at the heart of present”\(^1\) (Kelly 126; 149).

\(^1\) Habermas was here commenting on Foucault’s essay “What is Enlightenment?”
I trace the figure of the war correspondent from the earliest American reporters during the U.S.-Mexico War to the turn-of-the-century “professional” correspondents of the Spanish-American War. Locating the correspondent in what Mary Louise Pratt terms “contact zones,” I show how the figure confronted U.S. state power with witness accounts of the violence entailed by that power through the nineteenth century, a period that saw several crises in state formation generated by rapid westward and southern expansion across the continent, national dis-union and division, and outright conquest of overseas territories during the Spanish-American War. Of course, these historical developments coincided with equally rapid changes in the way wars were represented, from travel books to illustrated newspapers, to what we now understand as conventional war correspondence. Such a study has not yet been written as the historiography of war correspondence has been predisposed to romanticizing the figure, positing him as a dramatic instance of an individual man on the edge of civilization, alienated and insecure, finding his calling through a combination of luck, ingenuity and hard-nosed manly experiences. As Chris Wilson has written, this historiography “has been content to rehearse the logistical tensions and romantic exploits of battlefield reporting, deaf to literary conventions, immune to the unsettling possibility that what is called ‘news’ may only trace another ‘itinerary’ of ‘silencing’” (342).

Of course, I am not the first to write on the cultural history of U.S. imperialism. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease’s seminal book Cultures of U.S. Imperialism has done—and continues to do—what Said’s Orientalism has done for Postcolonial Studies:
establishing the subfield of U.S. Empire Studies, standardizing phrases like “cultures of U.S. imperialism” as a common signpost for questioning American exceptionalism through an internationalist, comparative analysis of literary forms, institutional structures, and forgotten histories. But as Russ Castronovo has alerted, the book with its collection of wide-ranging essays is important for the ways that it “haunts” our present age of wars on terror, Al Qaeda, and “smart bombs.” *Cultures* should be understood not simply as a historicization of the origins of American empire, Castronovo explains, but as a call to renew our analyses of the present with an attentiveness to the past. It is in this spirit that I approach my own history of the war correspondent.

Kaplan has been particularly influential for my work, as we both address a similar set of literary, legal, and ephemera, most notably the works of historical romance of Richard Harding Davis and Stephen Crane and the legal precedent of the *Insular Cases*. In *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Kaplan suggests U.S. imperialism is constituted in a byplay of the foreign and domestic through sentimental and historical romances that “re-constitute” the disembodied male—disembodied through the domestic threats on his identity—into something of a virile “Anglo-Saxonism” in imperial adventures abroad. Like the work of any ground-breaking author, Kaplan’s work has left many questions unanswered or unaddressed. As much as she has tried to differentiate herself from Said’s paradigm of cultural imperialism by focusing of popular texts rather than canonical ones and by explaining how U.S. imperialism is made in the byplay of the foreign and domestic rather than the domestic *upon* to foreign, she too often overlooks the dualities of the subjects she analyzes, their internal contradictions vis-à-vis
the imperial project, and their emergence from a dense field of developing professionalism. The war correspondents I focus on certainly partake in the cultural imperialism of the state, but they also produce trenchant critiques of state power as correspondents find themselves witnessing “on the spot” in war zones where state power is in a state of flux and, consequently, so are the forms of representation that would manage those accounts. While Kaplan—and readers in general, I would contend—look at war correspondents as reproducing some familiar discourses like “anti-imperial imperialism,” we also recognize something in their works that escapes the dominate frame and splits the discourses into pieces that are more varied and widespread than previously imagined.

Furthermore, it is fair to say that Kaplan, along with other notable critics of U.S. imperialism, take for granted the notion that U.S. imperialism was largely defined by the events of 1898 with the Spanish-American War. Indeed, this is a common conception among historians of U.S. empire, perhaps most significant among them Walter LaFeber, who in his 1963 paradigm-shifting book The New Empire, wrote that antebellum America was a “period of preparation for the 1890s” and that this earlier era “provided the roots of empire, not the fruit” (61, emphasis mine). If we look back to the antebellum period, as well as to the Civil War—which too often is skipped in histories of U.S. imperialism—we can more clearly see the emergence of U.S. imperialism as a transnational and hemispheric phenomenon from early in the nineteenth century. It fundamentally required

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2 Significant contributions to the field that center on the events of 1898 include Hoganson, Bederman, and Kaplan, who address the role of masculinity and imperial power; Streeby, and Harvey have made important inroads into the antebellum construction of U.S. empire and remain instructive for my own project.
new forms of writing like war correspondence to make sense of the rapid refashioning of state sovereignty from this early period onwards.

The conflicts I focus on—the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, and multiple international engagements in the 1890s including the Spanish-American War—are central events that reveal what I understand to be “crises in state sovereignty.” The question of sovereignty has certainly re-emerged as a central issue in questions about American nationalism. Of the theorists that have connected it specifically to empire, Giorgio Agamben has been for me the most central. In particular, the notions of “abandonment” and the “zone of indistinction” describe well the phenomena in the nineteenth-century dealing with shifts in the geographical markers of the nation-state and especially regarding the consequences of these shifts upon ordinary individuals. I would like to briefly explain how Agamben’s formulation of these concepts are particularly salient for my study.

Borrowing from Carl Schmitt, Agamben defines the sovereign as he who can call the state of exception, that is to say that the sovereign can suspend the law from applying at any given moment (State of Exception). This seemingly arbitrary, but ultimately scheduled suspension within an itinerary of state formation, illustrates how sovereignty is constituted by a doubleness: the absence of the law on the one hand, and the potential enforcement of it at any given moment on the other. What this doubleness exposes is a space that Agamben describes as a “zone of indistinction,” a zone where “techniques of

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3 Along with the events of the September 11, 2001, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and an English translation of Michel Foucault's lectures, “Society Must Be Defended” signaled the emergence of this interest in questions of sovereignty and American empire. Especially influential have been Agamben, and
individualization and totalizing procedures converge,” where the law is not in effect, but is in fact, in force (Homo Sacer 6). Abandonment is thus simply a way of describing the effect of the zone of indistinction upon a subject who finds himself in that zone, either by chance or force. This crossroads where subjectification and the law (or its absence) meets the subject is what I argue is the location of the war correspondent. The correspondent’s writing, in turn, attempts to grasp both the violence exposed by the withdrawal of the law and the violence entailed by its inevitable return.

Several exemplary moments in U.S. history detail the creation of the zone of indistinction by the state. For example, the famous 1901 “insular” case Downes v. Bidwell, which came in the wake of the Spanish-American War, “established” the newly acquired territory of Puerto Rico as “foreign in a domestic sense,” subject to U.S. law but ineligible for the rights of U.S. citizenship. The lasting consequences of the case is clear since Puerto Rico continues to remains in a zone of indistinction with regards to its status, making possible such biopolitical exercises as forced sterilization to manage the territory’s population (Briggs). Such moments of sovereign exceptionalism manifested themselves well before the events of 1898 in the United States—as Agamben himself points out—when at the outset of the Civil War, Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus and act as “commissarial dictator” (21).

Since war correspondents occupied this “limit region” between two fronts, facing battle without actually partaking in it, witnessing the subjective aspects and yet only reporting facts—their sympathies going in either direction—their location was powerful

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Hardt and Negri.
on the one hand insofar as they served the state and vulnerable on the other insofar as they could find themselves without protection, and thus abandoned. If war is the paradigm of the state of exception and the war correspondent is the “liminal subject” by which this state is defined, the correspondent—rather than the soldiers and their victims—is war’s protagonist.

*Witnessing Empire* attempts to tell the story of this protagonist and by extension, the nature of modern war. I focus on the ways that the war correspondent and his work was largely defined by the attempt to capture the realities at play in this zone of indistinction, even as correspondents often found themselves abandoned in the zone that testified to the lives of abandoned others. I try to capture how the correspondent renders this moment, showing how they are left to question the dominant discourses upon which they have relied, and to bear witness to the consequences of this abandonment.

The location of the war correspondent in the zone of indistinction puts the nation in a particularly vexed spot, for more often than not, the correspondent works in “contact zones,” transnationally, on “hemispheric terrains” and between “fronts.” Tracking his movements requires a flexible terminology that can point to the crisis of sovereignty entailed by the wars he covers. For that reason, I employ these geographical terms selectively when they can best describe the diverse set of spatial locations among nations, regions, and routes that the correspondent evokes.

One term, however, deserves special mentioning. “Witnessing,” as I employ it, refers to an integrated two-fold phenomenon of correspondents seeing “on the spot” and attempting to respond to what is seen in relation to the mediating processes of the generic
conventions and the professional pressures of the news apparatus. Conventionally, witnessing is understood as simply the first-hand transcription of an event that is communicated without any of these mediating pressures. Precisely because of this assumption, witnessing carries the badge of authenticity or truth via objectivity. The assumption effectively obscures the fact that testimony relies upon a vast array discourses, genres, and individual preoccupations that influence the shape of such testimony.

This is not to say that testimony of witnesses is somehow “inauthentic” or less truthful, but rather that in equating witnessing with the red herring of inviolable “truth,” we lose the opportunity to explore how the process of witnessing and the resulting testimony narrate the making of human subjectivity. As Kelly Oliver explains, such an exploration is vital to understanding the ethical questions that witnessing implies.

It is important to note that witnessing has both the judicial connotations of seeing with one’s own eyes and the religious connotations of testifying to that which cannot be seen, in other words, bearing witness. It is this double meaning that makes witnessing such a powerful alternative to recognition in reconceiving subjectivity and therefore ethical relations. The double meaning of witnessing—eyewitness testimony based on first-hand knowledge, on the one hand, and bearing witness to something beyond recognition that can’t be seen, on the other—is the heart of subjectivity. The tension between eyewitnessing testimony and bearing witness both positions the subject in finite history and necessitates the infinite response-ability of subjectivity. The tension . . . between subject position and subjectivity, between the performative and the constative, is the dynamic operator that moves us beyond the melancholic choice between either dead historical facts or traumatic repetitions of violence. (16)

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4 Two works have been uniquely helpful in my conceptualization of witnessing are Kelly Oliver’s *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* and Mark Sanders’s *Ambiguities of Witnessing*. 
To witness, then, is to both recount what has transpired, and to speak to that “inner witness” to whom a responsibility lies to tell a broader story that may be unverifiable in a traditional empirical sense, but is true insofar as it testifies to the fact of one’s subjectivity in the process of becoming at the moment of crisis. The artist-correspondents I focus on are interested precisely in capturing this doubleness of the witness, using the literary tools at their disposal to testify to the limits of dominant discursive formations and the possibilities of seeing otherwise—representing, in effect, what was previously unrepresentable.

If the war correspondent is often romanticized by historiographers as an “on the spot” eyewitness whose testimony is inviolable, literary critics and cultural historians have not taken into account the juridical connotation of witnessing when assessing how artists shape literary conventions. Works of war correspondence, I show in throughout the dissertation, are categorized in terms of genres like realism, romance, or sensationalism. Thinking of the witnessed account in terms of already-existing genre categories takes away from the way that “on the spot” witnessing was caught in an irreducible opposing forces of providing a sense of the immense pressures upon artists to at once communicate what is seen and see in a way that is singular, that is, unique to the gravity of the event in terms of their own subjectivity. The most challenging war correspondents are those who embrace the difficulties of rendering their witnessed accounts by reorienting them towards the themes and tropes most familiar to readers so as make readers “grasp why and how that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is.”

5 See Pfitzer, Trachtenberg, and Streeby, respectively.
Witnessing, neither equivalent to a specific genre or “above” genre, is the process by which one struggles via generic forms to make representable events in familiar ways that still testifies to the dependence of such an event on its cultural and historical moment and the response of an individual subject to such a moment. In this sense, “witnessing empire” refers to the individual response to the structural changes of westward expansion and the hemispheric-oriented imperialism of the American nineteenth century and to the discursive power of generic conventions (and indeed professional pressures) that frame the collective response to U.S. geopolitical realities. Witnessing Empire thus unveils two formative aspects of the war correspondent: the correspondent as ambivalent but conciliatory towards the preoccupations of U.S. expansionism; and, the correspondent as forceful critic of these state interests, who exposes the violence of the colonial encounter, the antagonisms that they produce within the state itself, and the state’s fundamental abandonment of the citizen in its ambitions for geopolitical supremacy.

The dissertation is organized by two parts. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the emergence of war correspondence as a unique form of representation in the 1840s and during the Civil War, respectively, in literature and the visual arts. In these periods, the form began to develop its rhetorical postures, differentiate itself from other genres like travel writing, develop a particular relationship with visuality, and hone in on the challenges of representing the abandoned subject. The second half turns to war correspondence as a unique aesthetic form as it became increasingly prevalent as a source of political authority. Correspondents, as a result as this new authority, found themselves
not only struggling to express what they witness, but against images of their own authority—a struggle that opened the possibility of correspondents becoming agents in the creation of a new politico-literary form. Each chapter contains a juxtaposition of a conventional writer or correspondent with a figure who functions “diacritically” to push the genre forward on to new terrains.

In Chapter 1, I situate war correspondence’s emergence out of travel writing, as the geopolitical pressures of competing empires inaugurated before the U.S.-Mexico War forced writers by 1848 to address readers’ expectations of the U.S. as a fundamentally transnational power. I present a close reading of Melville’s *Typee* to show how such travel narratives exemplified the cultural and intellectual work that war correspondents would perform in the coming century. Navigating familiar genres and public tastes, *Typee* and the intellectuals of the *Democratic Review* wove a political critique of race as a category created in the transnational extension of U.S. state power across the hemisphere and into the Pacific. I take *Typee*’s censorship by his U.S. publisher John Wiley as representative of the powerful ideological forces at work in the U.S. imperial state. The relationship between Melville’s witnessed account and the published/reported form marks a fundamental distinction in war correspondence that I take up in Chapter 2 where I present a comparison of witnessed and reported visual representations of the Civil War by “special artists”—artists who composed pencil line drawings “on the spot” only to have these images redeployed in the illustrated newspapers and especially in the illustrated histories of the war at the turn-of-the-century. The “specials” inaugurate, I argue, a legacy of war reporting that would need to balance the textual and visual aspects
of its form.

In Chapter 3, I move to the turn-of-the-century, situating the celebrated war correspondent Richard Harding Davis within an evolving “imperial news apparatus” that would culminate in the events of the Spanish-American War. This apparatus was primarily oriented towards the making of U.S. imperial sovereignty through a discourse of anti-imperial imperialism. A product of imperial news, Davis nevertheless reveals ambivalence about its conventions and in particular, reservations about the extent to which the state should command what should and should not be news. His concern, I argue, is that the indistinction between the imperial news apparatus and state power actively authorizes zones wherein the citizen either is subject to imperial violence or outrightly abandoned. While the war correspondent has the responsibility of alerting readers to this potential of abandonment, Davis points out that too often, he is simply the production of a figure of geopolitical authority rather than a critical observer of it.

Chapter 4 charts the development of war correspondent Stephen Crane’s journey into the making of an aesthetic out of war correspondence. He demonstrates the problems and possibilities of incorporating prevailing conventions of individualism and spectatorship into witnessed accounts of war in an effort to represent the unspeakable consequences of imperial violence. Crane pushes the form beyond the limits that fellow practitioners like Richard Harding Davis could not surpass, conventionalizing war correspondence as a form capable of representing the plight of abandonment across racial and national boundaries.

I conclude the dissertation by reflecting on how an understanding of this aesthetic
has been critical for future practitioners of the craft in pursuing an “internationalist” orientation to war correspondence. For those that followed him, Crane’s work signaled the beginning of a form that would lent legitimacy to war correspondence as not only a form of writing that deliberated on crucial questions of state formation at critical junctures, but also as a valuable mode of artistic expression.
Typee, Race War and the Making of War Correspondence

By the time Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846)\(^1\) appeared in print in 1846, newspapers were preoccupied with the crisis of sovereignty brought about by the U.S.-Mexico War.\(^2\) The United States had recently added 1.2 million square miles to its territories; the nation was moving westward, rapidly increasing its territory and “removing” Indians. It had admitted Florida in 1845 and was on the verge of incorporating Iowa into the Union; it was preparing to annex Texas with California and Oregon on the way and it was investing heavily in expansion plans in the Pacific Rim. As one editorial complained, what was inside and outside the domain of U.S. sovereignty had become increasingly vague:

> Polk says that the Rio Grande is the South-western (*sic*) boundary of Texas because the Legislature of Texas, in 1836, “so enacted.” If the same Legislature had enacted that the Marquesas Islands formed a part of Texas, Mr. Polk, by force of the same reasons which he now offers to sustain his measures, would have thought it incumbent upon him to station an army of occupation in the valley of Typee, and send a fleet into the bay of Nukuheva. (“Polk”)

While published in a partisan anti-expansionist Free Soil newspaper, this editorial signaled the anxieties shared by a range of U.S. citizens and politicians including Lincoln in the run-up to the U.S.-Mexico War—anxieties that centered on the potentially dramatic

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\(^1\) *Typee* was published in London by John Murray in his series “Home and Colonial Library” in February 1846, and in New York by Wiley and Putnam in March of the same year. Wiley and Putnam re-published a Revised Edition in August 1846 where a number of passages and the Appendix criticizing Methodist missionaries were deleted. All subsequent references come from the 1968 Northwestern/Newberry edition.

\(^2\) The war is alternately referred to as the “Texas War of Independence,” “La Traición” (“The Betrayal”), and the Mexican-American War (Olguín 87).
changes in the makeup of U.S. territory at mid-century. The border, it seemed, lay as much in discursive and imaginative notions as in juridical ones and the controversies leading up to the war, particularly regarding the annexation of Texas, portended the exposure of a rather disunited nation. Ostensibly raising questions over the status of slavery in the nation, the policy of westward expansion effectively revealed the fundamental instability of U.S. sovereignty since, as precedents since the early republic made clear, legal jurisdiction over a territory did not always correspond to control over that territory. U.S. sovereignty, it seemed, was from its inception and especially on the eve of another major imperial war, a rather flexible concept.

Charles Maier's concept of “territoriality” is instructive in delimiting this evasive domain of sovereignty as it pertained to emerging empires like the United States. Maier defines sovereignty in terms of “territoriality,” a concept which defines “the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space, which until recently at least created the framework for national and often ethnic identity” (Maier 2). Statesmen and publics of the late nineteenth-century empires believed reinforcing the frontiers anew would allow consolidation and expansion of the empire (Maier 21). Since

3 The Berkshire County Whig was started in 1840, edited by Henry Hubbard and published by his son, Douglas S. Hubbard, who continued his stewardship of the paper until it ended in 1849. The paper was a strong advocate of free soilism, particularly in 1848, when it wrote for the Whig candidate for governor, Henry Shaw of Lanesboro. (Holland 468-469).


5 As others have argued, the flexible domain of sovereignty is itself a constituent part of its structure. Notably, Hardt and Negri in Multitude explain that both historic and contemporary geopolitics is defined by sovereignty's “flexible boundaries and thresholds that are continually crossed, which is typical of U.S.
the U.S. had acquired and was acquiring significant territory by mid-century, the extent of “bordered political space” was itself in flux and as such, U.S. sovereignty was in a state of perpetual self-definition—that is to say, it needed to repeatedly re-inscribe and reinforce with violence the frontiers with new political and cultural meaning so that the nation-state’s territory would appear cohesive. The Berkshire County Whig’s editorial missive against Polk is thus not simply a case of political exaggeration, but in fact indicative that such possibilities of arbitrary borders creating new American territories and marking the limits of the state threatened notions of American national and ethnic identity. As Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik argue, by the U.S.-Mexico War, territories were imbued with new meaning so that the frontiers of a U.S. empire would appear more stable and well-defined than they actually were. U.S. territoriality was thus characterized by a double discourse of the nation-state: a flexible sovereignty with arbitrarily drawn borders on the one hand and a renewal of nationalism and an insistence on the cohesiveness of the nation on the other.

The development of this double discourse was occurring for some time before the Mexican War, most notably with the Adams-Onis Treaty (Transcontinental Treaty) in 1819, which aimed to juridically establish the border between Spanish America and the United States by having the States give up its claim on Texas. By 1846, however, it was clear that the United States was exceeding its borders and encouraging vast settlement in the Southwest and was planning to supply the necessary means for Texan independence ideology” (314).

6 In this sense, “the Pacific” was indeed a “contested construct,” a term figuring as a metaphor for “trade, conversion, conquest, and an East-West center-periphery struggle” (Wilson and Dirlik: 37).
from Mexico. With territorial expansion well underway, the question of slavery would become the divisive issue for those in favor and against the U.S.-Mexico War. Would new states be unequivocally “Free Soil,” or would the nation uphold the “balance of power” between the North and the South and be “Constitution Protectionist”?

In 1846, when Texas became the flashpoint for the crisis over the nation’s borders, the press initiated the first dedicated effort to send reporters to cover a conflict for a national audience. Before the war, newspapers had few foreign correspondents on staff. They would gather news instead from traders on transport ships disembarking from central port cities like Havana. Only by the late 1830s were technological innovations available for newspapers to begin employing their own correspondents and disseminate the news at the range and rate demanded by reading publics. With new technologies, space was no longer the obstacle it was at the beginning of the century. Distance had already been collapsing with the advent of the pony express and the steamship, which traveled along coastal and inland waterways. But it was especially the railroad that transformed the nature of distributing the news. As Mitchell Stephens writes, “railroad stations had become news organs for those too impatient to wait for the next day’s newspaper” (226). If technologies of distribution had reached new levels of sophistication, electronic communication revolutionized the way newspapers got their news. The inaugural moment came on the eve of the U.S.-Mexico War in 1844 when

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7 See Kendall and Cress onof James Gordon Bennett’s Charleston Courier (11).
8 Among the newspapers that became popular as a result of coverage of the U.S.-Mexico War include the New Orleans-based Picayune and Delta, the Philadelphia North American and William Lloyd Garrison’s Liberator (Ailanjian). Other influential newspapers include New York Sun, the New York Herald, and the Times of London.
Samuel Morse sent the first telegraphed message, announcing the nomination of the Whig candidate Henry Clay for president.  

With communication and distribution technologies at landmark levels, newspapers soon began to cover more than one column of telegraphed news, inaugurating circulation as a key concept of newspaper culture. Since educational reform was also increasing literacy, more people were reading just as more news was available to be read (Roth x; Emery and Emery 116). The editor and publisher of the *New York Herald*, James Gordon Bennett, recognized the political importance of the new compression of time between the event and the newspaper report, writing optimistically that the newspaper would enable news to unite the nation (Stephens 245).  

Technological limitations abounded, nonetheless. Few telegraph stations and unreliable cables prevented publishers from guaranteeing delivery of reports in a timely fashion. These lags in coverage about the ongoing war in addition to growing demand for books originally published in serial form gave publishers the opportunity to market other forms like travel narrative, as responding to growing needs of understanding the changing contours of the nation. Journalism in the 1830s and 1840s was thus characterized by a mixture of travel writing and “on the spot” reportage emphasizing the immediacy of an event. 

The war correspondent and newspaper publisher George Wilkins Kendall (1809-1867) was one critically important figure in bridging the new forms of writing created

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9 Eventually, transatlantic distance was bridged with a cable laid under the Atlantic in 1866 (Stephens 227).

10 Bennett embraced the increased influence of the newspaper. Of note was his notorious attempt to bridge the role of the police officer and detective in sensationalist coverage of the murder of Helen Jewett in 1836 (Stephens 245-6).
with the newspaper industry with forms like travel writing. Kendall was a well-known figure at the time—possibly the “first war correspondent”—who founded and published the New Orleans-based *The Picayune* in 1837. He participated in a filibustering expedition to revolutionize Texas in 1836 and later covered the U.S.-Mexico War for his newspaper. During the war, Kendall had limited access to the telegraph, prompting him to establish a system of couriers and steamships known as “Mr. Kendall’s Express” which carried his news reports and official dispatches from the Mexican front to the newspaper (Roth 164). With the speed of the news at a premium, and yet few reporters able to answer the challenge, Kendall’s dispatches arrived relatively soon after the events they covered.

While correspondents did not have a uniformly consistent position or rhetorical style concerning the U.S-Mexico War, reports typically tapped into the predominant discourse of the war as a staging ground for a struggle of civilization against savagery. A report by the war correspondent William Tobin of the *Philadelphia North American* represents a typical example of such discourse. In it, he describes Mexicans as “a queer

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11 Communication scholars have varying standards for qualifying reporters and journalists as war correspondents. According to Rowley and Hamilton as well as Phillip Knightley, a war correspondent is defined by his “resourcefulness and enterprising [character]in gathering the news,” sometimes, “becom[ing] a participant,” all the while delivering personal stories. While syndication of stories does not itself qualify one to be a war correspondent, it does “connote popularity, originality, and the means of dissemination that go along with war correspondence” (Knightley; Rowley and Hamilton 10). According to these limited criteria, Kendall is an emblematic war correspondent. Other early war correspondents include William Howard Russell, Edwin Lawrence Godkin, James Morgan Bradford, Henry Crabbé Robinson (covered the Napoleonic Wars from 1796-1815 in Northern Europe and Spain, but did not witness war first-hand), Charles Lewis Gruneison (covered the Carlist War in Spain in 1837, but did not concern himself with delivering his reports in a timely fashion).

12 *The Picayune* was a daily penny paper (Tuesday through Sunday) that published 214 dispatches written by Kendall, most of which appear in the *Daily Picayune*. Some dispatches also appear in the *Weekly Picayune*. Kendall founded *The Picayune* in 1837 in an effort to compete with Bennett's established *New York Herald*, which with the help of the steam-driven rotary press, could produce papers at an
people. The masses are ignorant, indolent, barbarous, treacherous, and superstitious; given to thieving, cheating, lying, and most other accomplishments that adorn civilized as well as savage humanity” (Tobin). Melville scholar Samuel Otter notes how this discourse was common not only with respect to the U.S.-Mexico War, but in other spheres of culture as well. In antebellum United States, Otter writes, “many observers saw the racialized human figure as embodying the answers to crucial questions about divine intervention, social structure, human origins and history, and national destiny” (14). Coded within the pseudo-scientific language of phrenology, the discourse of a battle between the “savages” and the “civilized” as a “race war” became a pervasive metaphor that war correspondents would employ to speak about geopolitical concerns.

Americans most commonly encountered this discourse of race war through forms of correspondence: letters from soldiers, military commanders, illustrated histories, geographical guides, textbooks, children’s books and, most prolifically, through travel writing.13 Newspaper-based war correspondence was still quite an inchoate form at mid-century and would develop in response to other forms of correspondence; travel writing, in particular, began to address the changing conditions of sovereignty.

Travel Writing and the Rhetorics of Political Authority

Mary Louise Pratt describes in her seminal study of travel writing, Imperial Eyes, how travel writers routinely employed a variety of rhetorical techniques to portray the state of international relations. Pratt parses the narrative strategies of travelers for what

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13 See Harvey for the vast range of under-analyzed antebellum material based on first-hand accounts of...
they reveal about the “contact zones” from which they emerge. She describes the contact zone as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (23). The Berkshire County Whig editorial is a paradigmatic representation of the contact zone as disparate regions like Mexico and the Marquesas come together in a common “social space” in which the writer questions the reach of U.S. sovereignty. Precisely because this space manifests competing claims of state authority, sovereignty is always in crisis in the “contact zone.” With the United States expanding across the continent, representation of such crises began to appear in American travel writing.

While writing that emerges from the contact zone varies greatly, travel writing like Melville’s Typee can be understood as a “powerful ideational and ideological apparatus” through which writers related the nation’s changing political climate (Pratt 23). Pratt terms this discourse “globalized vision” or “planetary consciousness” wherein “global scale meaning” produces a “natural history” of the land that parallels other natural histories existing in the archives of colonial encounters (15). This rhetoric of the globe as “knowable” for what it offers by way of material and cultural resources allowed travelers to codify the natural landscape as potential territory for industrialization. Yet, as Pratt and others suggest, this knowledge-making is characterized by a doubleness. “Planetary consciousness” is not always as objective as might be assumed given its roots in the Enlightenment tradition of encyclopedic knowledge formation (Pratt 15). Often, the discourse about the utility of foreign lands incorporated polemics on the geopolitical travel around the world beyond the U.S. and Europe (8-9).
risks of contamination and the potential “anarchy” within the nation associated with such contact.¹⁴ Travel writers thus projected not only a scientific authority by rigorously itemizing their observations, but also a political authority through editorializing about the nature of international relations. On the eve of the U.S.-Mexico War, writers began articulating their geopolitical visions in terms of the crisis of sovereignty besetting the nation-state.

Even Lincoln, a first-term Congressman in 1844, voiced his concerns with the seemingly arbitrary nature of the border in his “Spot Resolutions” speech in the House of Representatives on December 22, 1847. Long after official declaration of war, the resolutions called for clarification from Polk regarding the “spot” where U.S. citizens were killed in a cross-border skirmish that precipitated the U.S.-Mexico War in 1846. Suspicious that the ensuing war was simply a pretext for territorial acquisition, Lincoln attempted to determine the juridical status of the “spot”: did the “spot” belong to Spain at the time? Was it land that was “wrested from Spain, by the Mexican Revolution?”

Further venturing into the law, Lincoln asked whether the settlers on that “spot” were there before the Texan Revolution, and therefore “submitted” to the Texas government, or whether the people living in the settlement had fled “before the blood was shed.” Lincoln emphasizes with underlines in each of the resolutions the words “on our soil,” “citizens” and “our territory,” attempting in each gesture to concretize what was clearly intended by Polk to be as indistinct as possible. With state power as the arbiter of the meaning of such terms like “our territory,” notions like “citizen,” to Lincoln’s dismay,

¹⁴ For more on the discourse of contamination through “contact zones” see Kaplan Anarchy (11-2).
could potentially extend to non-U.S. citizens (Texan citizens, for example) or likewise, be retracted from those already citizens. Perhaps Lincoln was cautioning against the implication of an indistinction within the law precisely because of the potential of the law to be suspended from those already citizens.

When Mexican troops captured and imprisoned Kendall and his companions on the filibustering expedition in 1841 while reporting for *The Picayune*, Kendall began to express what he could not previously: the potential for the law, which should protect its citizens in such cases of captivity, not to apply. In his moment of captivity in the contact zone, the limit of sovereignty was exposed, revealing that the border was as much a juridical concept as one built upon discursive notions. Citizens of both nations could easily be caught within this suspended state of the law and become abandoned by the nation and its presumably protective laws.

Kendall did eventually survive his captivity, eventually publishing a memoir, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (1844). The account reflects what Kelly Oliver refers to in *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* as a survivor’s testimony of witnessing. The witness, according to Oliver, is often a generator of myths of experience wherein the subject invents a narrative that is often not empirically verifiable. Oliver recounts how Holocaust survivors often engage in mythologizing their experience, substituting “what really happened” with “what was imagined possible.” Rather than engaging in “false testimony,” Oliver argues that survivors represent their experience by narrativizing it. It is as if they say, “in light of all that has happened, this is still possible.” In the case of Holocaust survivors, “this” was the possibility of resistance against the
Nazi regime by the prisoners. As Oliver suggests, witnessing repairs damaged subjectivity even if it requires mythologization (8-9). Kendall’s recounting of his experience is replete with such moments of witnessing as he mythologizes the story of his survival without the aid of the state and in so doing, remakes his own national identity as one in which citizens must contend with a United States with zones where the law does not apply—zones within which a citizen could be abandoned by the state.

Kendall in his memoir shows how the changing conditions of sovereignty in fact changes the form in which one must write to speak about the contact zone. The travel writing discourse of savagery and civilization which normally “speaks out” to those at “home” about how civilization is “here” and savagery is “there,” begins to lose its political authority while “witnessing” gains ground. In light of these developments in the form of travel narrative, we can see how works like Melville’s *Typee*—also a travel narrative—changed around the time of the Mexican War to critique the discourse of race war while turning to consider the lives of those abandoned by the state. This “emergent war correspondence” focuses on what occurs in the contact zone, and in the case of *Typee*, how the discourse of race war loses authority in speaking about geopolitics while knowledge on how information is gained, transmitted and reproduced becomes the new discourse of authority. In other words, knowledge about the Taipi essence gives way to how that knowledge was made in the first place. As travel writing turned a spotlight towards the making of knowledge, the war correspondent was emerging on the scene as conveying that knowledge. With the syndication of Kendall’s reports from his ill-fated Texan Santa Fe expedition in 1841 and from the front during the war in 1846-1848, it
became clear that the war correspondent would become a central figure in the exposure of U.S. imperialism.

**George Wilkins Kendall’s Witnessing**

While British expeditionist and publisher John Murray was preparing to publish the first edition of *Typee* as a part of his *Home and Colonial Library* series, George Wilkins Kendall was reading other volumes from Murray’s series, admiring what he considered the traveler’s “love of adventure” (Kendall 76). Kendall invokes the expeditionist in his *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fé Expedition* as sharing his own desire for adventure, which he writes is “inherent in thousands of our race” (76). Attempting to confirm his own Anglo-Saxon prowess, Kendall set out to Santa Fé in 1846—the journey that became the source for the *Narrative*. Inspired by Murray’s own *Travels in North America*, published two years earlier in 1834, Kendall recounts in the *Narrative* his aim of satisfying his excitement for adventure while serving his political hope of having the United States annex Texas (Kendall and Nebel ix). In 1844, Kendall published an extended account of his captivity—three years after he embarked on his expedition—in a two-volume edition published by Harper and Brothers.

Invited by Major George T. Howard to accompany his party on a “commercial expedition to Santa Fé” designed to stage a showdown between the Texan Republic and

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15 In addition to referencing Murray and his series, Kendall refers to James Fenimore Cooper's Leather Stocking novels as exemplifying the “perfect character(s)” in describing his co-travelers (57-58). He also mentions Washington Irving as an adventurer whose motivations for travel he attempts to understand (76). Incidentally, Irving had introduced *Typee* to his American published Wiley and Putnam at the urging of Melville’s brother Gansevoort (Delbanco 67).

16 The first edition of the *Narrative* sold remarkably well, going through ten editions between 1844 and 1857. Publisher David Bogue also reissued it in London in 1846 when Harper printed a second U.S. edition.
Mexico, Kendall effectively helped to precipitate the U.S.-Mexico War. Shortly after arriving, the “commercial expedition” turned into a diplomatic controversy with Kendall becoming “personally involved” in the diplomatic “shell game” between Texas, the United States, Mexico, Britain and France, fighting to convince politicians and readers of the merits of annexing Texas (Kendall and Nebel ix). Much to British ambassador Charles Eliot’s dismay, Kendall spread the rumor that Britain was installing figures that were sympathetic to ending slavery in hopes of promoting Texan independence and eventually abolishing slavery in the United States. In fact, both Britain and France were attempting to establish the state as a buffer zone against U.S. expansion further south into the hemisphere.

The United States did eventually annex Texas in December 1845, accelerating the possibility of war with Mexico. Kendall wanted to assert to competing European colonial powers that the United States could be both a democratic republic and “organize to wage and win a foreign war” (Kendall and Nebel xvi). Such interest in developing an image as an imperial force on par with European empires is evident in revealing digressive moments as when Kendall casually mentions the Santa Fé region’s commercial potential: “[t]he road this day was over beautiful rolling prairies, the land rich, and susceptible of cultivation” (Kendall 85). This “planetary consciousness” reminiscent of European Enlightenment traditions permeates the Narrative. Kendall translates this consciousness and infuses it with a notion of racial superiority. When he comes upon another area fertile for farming, he observes that “[u]nder Anglo-Saxon cultivation, this region might support
five times the population it now contains; still, the want of timber and the immense
distance to a market, will always present obstacles to emigration in that direction” (537).
Kendall here assumes a racially inflected ownership of the land, foreseeing the logistical
problems of making Santa Fé a commercial center for the United States. Focusing on the
“interior” qualities of climate, custom, and historical context, he argues that the
“unsettled condition of the [city’s] frontiers” has caused it to become depressed despite
the lucrative Santa Fé trade, imagining that such a result would be different were the city
under U.S. control (537).

In connecting the ownership of the territory with Anglo-Saxonism, the *Narrative*
combines questions of race and sovereignty that characterize the geopolitical struggle at
the border, with Kendall becoming the producer and purveyor of a drama over the future
of the nation. Trafficking in the racial discourse in travel writing at the time, he
repeatedly refers to the Anglo-Saxon as “our race” boldly claiming, in another instance,
that “never since the discovery of America had such a journey been undertaken”
whereupon land “never had been trodden before except by the savage” (83-4). The
Anglo-Saxon, of course, only gains legibility in opposition to “savages” already living
and “under-utilizing” the lands being “explored.” The allusion to “others” on the land is
at once a foil necessary for Kendall to differentiate himself from Mexicans and Native
Americans who together embody the “savage” race against who “Anglo-Saxons” will
fight a race war.

In midst of observations such as these, the Mexican army captures Kendall and
his companions, forcing them to march south to Mexico City. Foreshadowing the
captivity shortly before the abduction, Kendall describes an incident during which he falls from an undefined elevated place, injuring himself on his descent (70). Prefiguring his literal fall into captivity, Kendall is left with a limp leg that would follow him throughout his ordeal (70-1). He represents himself both as defeated by the captivity, humbled by the Mexican troops, and yet prepared, in accordance to the conventions of the captivity narrative, for a defense of his deeply held beliefs and a regeneration of energies leading to his eventual freedom.

Within the frame of the captivity narrative, Kendall continues to report his observations, which increasingly reflect a consciousness of the transnational dimensions of his mission. Orienting the reader to the cultural differences of Texans, he describes the San Antonians as crowding the river, enjoying “the health and invigorating luxury of swimming” (51). He maps this observation to other familiar scenes in the traveler’s imagination: “I say all—for men, women, and children can be seen at any time in the river, splashing, diving, and paddling about like so many Sandwich Islanders. The women in particular are celebrated for their fondness of bathing, and are excellent swimmers” (51). Readers would have recognized the reference to the Pacific islands since the island-nation was itself a flashpoint for geopolitical conflict between Britain and the United States as well as a base for missionaries and American plantation owners (Wilson 74).

Midway through the Narrative, Kendall begins to express himself in the double-voice of the travel writer/war correspondent who witnesses. Abducted by Mexican

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17 This scene of the fallen man entering captivity would re-emerge in Melville's Typee, reminding us of the
general Dimasio Salezar, one of the crippled American prisoners is shot because of his inability to walk. Describing Salezar as “a bloodthirsty savage” (534), Kendall reinforces the discourse of “race war” relied upon by travel writers, sensationalizing the image of Salezar and the confrontation with presumably innocent American travelers. Kendall’s description of the event, however, illustrates ambivalence between the traveler’s voice and that of the war correspondent on the job. In witnessing the encounter, he writes that “a thrill of horror ran through the crowd of prisoners as the news spread that one of our men had been deliberately shot down in cold blood, and deep but whispered threats of vengeance for this most unnatural murder were heard upon every lip” (535). Kendall, with his melodramatic language advocating revenge, cannot repress the obligations of the war correspondent to provide an “insider’s” view on the inexpressible feelings of those in his party. He imagines the news spreading from one to another, circulating by virtue of its own narrative power. Imagining on the one hand the interests of the newspaper, Kendall intuits that such a story would not only lead the news for The Picayune, but would spread by being reprinted by other newspapers around the nation. On the other hand, the “thrill of horror” he imagines reveals a sense of excitement at being in a zone beyond the law and a terror because of the potentiality of being abandoned, that is, to not be protected by the law from Salezar.

Kendall explores the consequences of such abandonment by the law in individualized tales of his traveling companions. In the tale of “Stump,” a man lame in both feet gathers his will, “straightens up,” and “starts at a pace that would have

continued influence of captivity narrative in antebellum travel narrative.
staggered the fellow travelers Captain Barclay, Ellsworth, or the greatest pedestrian mentioned in the annals of ‘tall walking’” (540). A model of “Anglo-Saxon” strength, “Stump” betrays his name and his fate and pushes forward. In contrast to this figure, Kendall profiles Lewis, a soldier revealed to be responsible for the capture of party by Salezar. At one point, Kendall taps into the biblical resonance of the captivity narrative, referring to him as “the Judas of the nineteenth century” (439). The fact that Lewis was the only Spanish translator and yet he betrayed his party reveals to Kendall his own extraordinarily precarious position, in a position without recourse to the nation-state’s laws. He confesses to a sense of abandonment, consoling himself of his “dreary hope” of falling into more humane hands” as if to admit that such a possibility was remote (537).

Suspicious that the experience of captivity and betrayal by his own party might not be believable, Kendall steps back into the role of the travel writer, insisting on the verifiability of his story. He declaims the suggestion of being a false witness despite the possibility that, as he writes, “it may be difficult for many of my readers to believe that such an act of wanton barbarity could be perpetrated by a people pretending to be civilized—to be Christians! I should certainly be loath to hazard my reputation by telling the story were there not nearly two hundred witnesses of the scene” (556). Kendall’s insistence on the truth of his account carries with it the pathos at being abandoned by the state. In a poetic description of arriving at El Paso del Norte, Kendall describes the setting sun as “the broad face of the god of day, appearing of deeper yet more subdued red,” while next to him a man lies dying “without medicine, without the kind offices of relations, without the thousand charities and home-comforts that are not to be found in
such a wo-worn band as ours. . .” (568). With neither the redemptive death at the hands of “savagery” nor sacrifice in the course of battle, Kendall watches a man waste away in the context of the territory, the combination of which attempts to make sense of what only seems ironic.18

Towards the end of the Narrative, Kendall reflects on the “bright spots” of his experience, hoping to re-capture the possibilities of survival and kinship that sustained him in captivity. His audience clearly occupies his mind as he perceives the necessity for readerly uplift at the end of such a “gloomy vista of the previous five months” (575). Kendall here is interestingly in a position of understating his experience of captivity, its traumatic episodes and negotiated settlements in favor of the marketplace of readers with whom he sides in promoting the annexation of Texas and ultimate war against Mexico. Having undermined the possibility of a “humane” ending, he nonetheless stops short of decrying the Santa Fé expedition or his abandonment at the hands of the state, effectively foreclosing the possibility that witnessing might indeed enable him to capture the nature of the geopolitical shifts in the antebellum period. Left without an anchor for his experience at the end of the Narrative, Kendall relates the suffering of memory in light of the plenitude of El Paso where he is ultimately freed, writing that “even the fact that we were still prisoners was forgotten” (575). Despite Kendall’s professed relief from captivity by a Mexican general under U.S. control, the potential of abandonment remains, forcing Kendall into quickly forgetting his precariousness under a state that deliberates on

18 Such moments of witnessing would become the very subject of war correspondence by turn-of-the-century practitioner and novelist Stephen Crane.
the political worth of “rescuing” its citizens. What Kendall revealed signaled was the beginning of the subjectivity that assumed abandonment of the citizen in the contact zone.

Typee and the Suspension of Travel Writing

While Kendall, in the Narrative, adopts travel writing’s convention to “speak out” about the merits of “civilization,” he also suggests in his account that in the “contact zone,” even “Anglo-Saxons” can be abandoned by the state. Kendall, however, stops short of investigating the role of the very discourse of race war in the make-up of the border that preceded the conditions of abandonment that he was undergo, ultimately foreclosing exploration of the implications of this abandonment for the citizen. Melville, on the other hand, makes the investigation of race war the very subject of Typee; Melville’s intervention synthesizes what Kendall only suggests, namely, the deployment of the discourse of race war to the state’s abandonment of the citizen.

The first edition of Typee was published as part of a series of books that attempted to make the literary culture of America speak to the developing political ambitions of the nation. As Edward Widmer explains in Young America, Melville’s U.S. publisher, Wiley and Putnam was “an aggressive. . . publishing house eager to win some of the expanding literary market dominated by the Harper Brothers” (103). Under the guidance of the U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review and its intellectual leader Evert Duyckinck— the editor

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19 Kendall published his Narrative as a “stopping point” towards his larger goal of writing a longer history of Mexico. However, the more complete rendering of his witnessing was left incomplete, as he died before
who would help publish *Typee* and eventually become one of Melville’s mentors—Wiley and Putnam initiated a breakthrough series, entitled *The Library of American Books*. The collection attempted to produce an American canon of youthful writers eschewing the Whiggish tendencies of the older generation and complementing the nation’s burgeoning military ambitions with a sense of a uniquely American culture. As Widmer writes, the *Library* was intended to introduce a “literary canon” of writing affordable to the masses because in the view of figures like Duyckinck, “common sense, new technology, and democracy dictated it” (105). Representing “the coming of age of American literary culture” and “constructed on the common high ground between American cultural nationalism and literary expansionism in the 1840s” (Greenspan 678), *Typee*, by virtue of its place in *The Library*, represented to its readers the confluence of American cultural aspirations with geopolitical intrigue. It accompanied such books in the series as *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction* (William Gilmore Simms) and *Journal of an African Cruiser* (Horatio Bridge)—the latter a popular travel narrative introduced by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

In its first American edition in 1846, however, *Typee* went through only one printing before John Wiley excised significant sections for criticizing missionaries and “digressing” into the details of the French presence. As a writer attempting to gain

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20 Among the authors published in the series were Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller and Edgar Allen Poe.

21 Melville's sources for *Typee* also show how he was attempting to comment on broader debates on expansionism, imperialism and the limits of American sovereignty. See T. Walter Herbert on Melville’s sources. Both Rowe and Drinnon discuss Melville’s concern with “domestic” imperialism, especially Indian removal. Rowe writes that Melville had for some time challenged “the complicity of aristocratic privilege, artistic pretension, and the slave-master despotism” (n260).
acceptance into the coterie of “young Americans,” Melville capitulated to make the changes to what he unequivocally called in the preface, a “stirring adventure” (xiii). Melville’s capitulation to a field dominated by race war was ultimately his attempt to gain a readership accustomed to a deeply restricted discursive field. Melville was certainly aware of the audience for his book. He might well have understood that the unflattering commentary about missionaries could not survive what he considered the public’s “delirium about the Mexican War.” But even in reading the expurgated novel, it is clear that Melville was doing something different from simply exposing the rapacity of French colonialism or the blunders of American missionaries. His interest was rather in addressing the very discourse the enabled such phenomena to occur in the first place. A part of this strategy relied upon reproducing race war in order to illustrate its fallacies.

Scholars have been quick to point out Typee’s race war rhetoric, arguing that it is as self-assured as Kendall’s in conforming to travel writing conventions. Responding to critics like Milton Stern, who argue that Typee should be understood existentially, as “the story of a man’s discovery of his relationship to the world” and that “Polynesia could have been the Arctic Circle or the Belgian Congo,” Malini Schueller insists that the work reproduces familiar “colonial topoi” by representing “a conflicted subtext of colonial imperatives” that posits racial categories in familiar, binary ways (5-7). Likening the treatment of the Taipi to African-Americans in antebellum United States, Schueller writes that Melville reinforces the “paternalistic, epidermal alteriety” wherein non-white subjects are depicted as “more moral, if less intelligent,” “reinforcing the inferiority of the blacks by invoking images of sympathy rather than hatred” (11). I question this
typical critique of *Typee* as a conventional “cultural imperialism” to argue that the work, like Kendall’s *Narrative*, should be understood as emerging from the “contact zone” wherein the conventions of travel narrative are challenged as much as they are invoked.

If Kendall’s challenge relies on readers acknowledging the moments of witnessing occurring with the abandonment of the state in his memoir, *Typee* puts the conventions of travel writing and the corollary trope of race war under a microscope to explore its underlying assumptions. Certainly, Melville reproduces the discourse of race war, but he subsequently “suspects” it, holding it in abeyance to expose its assumptions, thus revealing a space that is beyond the law and beyond the discourse used to make sense of the contact zone. In this sense, *Typee*, written and published at the time as the U.S.-Mexico War, explicitly lays out what the war correspondent Kendall only begins to explore in the *Narrative*, that is, to employ witnessing in one’s own artistic practice. What the new narrative reveals in particular, is the way that a traveler’s return does not in fact occasion an end to the traveler’s alienation from “home,” realized by being abroad, nor does it occasion a moment to tell us the “truth” of what exists abroad. Rather, the new narrative tells us that knowledge gained in the contact zone is inextricably caught up with the transnational power dynamics of colonialism, its assumptions of racial hierarchies and its selective privileging of certain voices over others. The “suspended” narrative is effectively a representation of the contact zone in which the dynamics of transnational power formation are staged, where state power is shown to be missing, and abandoned subjects are on the one hand made susceptible to the violence this abandonment entails and on the other hand freed from the regulatory discourses that have dictated their
capacity for life.

Customarily, of course, we think of *Typee* not as war correspondence, but as travel writing. Janet Giltrow itemizes this common understanding by showing how *Typee* performs the pedagogical work of teaching its American audiences of the ideological consequences of immersion abroad and the beneficial aspects of return home. In arguing that critics have mischaracterized it as a novel and neglected to understand Melville’s artistic control over the conventions of travel writing, Giltrow writes that critics have been unable to account for work’s “formal properties” and “expository content,” [and] particularly its interest in “informing [its] audience” (22-4). Fundamentally, she writes, travel writing like *Typee* in the nineteenth century presents itself in letters and journals written home, “reclaiming the writer’s membership in the society from which he had been temporarily separated” (19). Self-conscious that his audience might suspect him “deracinated” on his return, the traveler “speaks out,” displaying himself as having overcome his “provisional alienation” (19).

Following this pattern, *Typee* is structured as a three-part narrative that recounts the traveler’s immersion into a foreign land, his ensuing alienation, and consequent “triumphant” return home. The first phase depicts the sailor/narrator, Tommo, who escapes a despotc captain by abandoning ship and immersing himself among the Taipi on the Marquesan island of Nuku Hiva. The middle portion of the account consists of the narrator observing and participating in Taipi society while comparing it with those of Europe and America. Tommo’s journey ends dramatically with his escape from the island, as his fears of cannibalism have grown stronger and the possibility returning home
appears threatened. More explicitly than Kendall, Melville adopts the captivity narrative to illustrate the conflict in the contact zone; but unlike in the *Narrative*, captivity functions in *Typee* as enabling a re-consideration of the discourse of race war as Tommo is unaware for most of his imprisonment that in fact he is a prisoner.22

In addition to not being an orthodox captivity narrative, *Typee* is neither a typical work of travel writing. While it is structured along the lines of a typical such narrative, its rhetorical authority does not lie in “the accuracy and completeness of information” (Giltrow 20) about foreign lands, nor do we find Tommo’s identity “reinstated” upon his return. In fact, from the time of its publication, the facticity of the account has been questioned. Associating “reality” with fact and “romance” with fiction, an early reviewer confesses that in the course of reading, “we cannot escape a slight suspicion that Melville has embellished the facts from his own imagination, in other words, that there is an indefinite amount of romance mingled with the reality of his narrative” (Dwight 263).

Richard Brodhead, in *Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel*, helps us disentangle these seeming oppositional meanings of realism and romance in Melville’s works, writing that the novelist presents less a dichotomy of realism and romance than a “rich confusion of a double legacy [of] an analytic or realistic and a projective or romance tradition” (19). Each tradition produces a distinct “style of vision” and Melville seeks to play them off each other, generating a “conflict of fictions” that interact and bring about a “reality of

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22 Otter describes the importance of race for Melville in *Typee* as a critique of the “American school” of antebellum ethnology, which “sought to divide the human body into significant features and to engrave character on its surface,” the face, skin, and head being the primary targets. Melville's anxiety about tattooing on these body parts reflects, in Otter's words, his “uneasiness about ... American obsessions with making the surface of the body speak eloquently of inherent human difference” (10). The captivity narrative essentially allows Melville the form in which to explore these concerns while tapping into the
their imagined world” (20). Given Melville’s penchant for writing “conflicting fictions,” it is no wonder that the central question that has preoccupied scholars of *Typee* from its beginnings has been its form: “[i]f the book is not history or ethnography or travelogue, but ‘literature,’ then what kind of literature is it?” (Thompson 3). The question merited a special issue of the journal *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, wherein scholars invoked again this difficult question of the interaction of the “aesthetically imagined with the presumed ‘real’ that seems to be ‘out there,’” conjuring the term “complex actuality” to signal the work’s ambivalent relation to physical locations (Thompson 2).  

Where does *Typee* take place? This has been the central question preoccupying critics of the work since its publication.

Well aware of the distrust of his authority, Melville (on his own accord and with the encouragement of his publishers) began to incorporate sources of former travel narratives to the Marquesas in order to certify its legitimacy as an authentic first hand account.  

However, in the process of developing this program of authentication, Melville began to contest the discursive treatment of Marquesas in the writings of travelers before geopolitical dis-ease of the status of the border.

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23 Writing in a manner reminiscent of Melville's own double discourse, G.R. Thompson writes in the introduction of the issue, “[w]e found ourselves in the South Pacific .... [w]e climbed to sacred tipis and saw decayed carved idols in the thick, humid jungles. We found ourselves among towering rugged cliffs and jutting rock formations,” claiming that Melville's images were as “real as being bitten by no-no flies” (9).

24 Charles Anderson, in *Melville in the South Seas*, details the history of changes in the text to show how Melville's additions of ethnographic detail and incorporation of travelogues of voyage to the Marquesas were both commissioned by Melville's London publisher and based on his own readings and embellishments of first-hand accounts. T. Walter Herbert's *Marquesan Encounters* argues that “instead of claiming, as Stewart had done, that possession of high culture and devotion to missions were complementary features of the civilized character, Melville uses the elevated style to suggest that they are opposed to each other” (154). The borrowing and redeployment of first-hand accounts has framed *Typee* as a work that documents the changing dimensions of travel writing at the time. See Bryant for a succinct framing of the challenge reiterated here, especially on the need to address memory and imagination in the
him, namely the expeditionary narratives and missionary accounts of Charles Stewart, David Porter and William Ellis. These narratives had historically fulfilled the pedagogical aim by titillating their audience with forays into licentious behavior only to temper it by an avowal of the truthfulness of their message of moderation (Post-Lauria 15). The American naval commander, David Porter, in particular, proved to be an important source of interest and revision for Melville. Having annexed Nuku Hiva in 1813 following the War of 1812, Porter recorded his experiences in his *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* (1815). The journal served as a source book for Melville, “enabling him to see the direct link between early American imperialism abroad and the politics of American Indian removal and dispossession that attended the territorial expansion on the continent” (Kardux 272). As John Bryant has shown, Melville “re-witnessed” his experiences in the Marquesas by reading these sources, reshaping *Typee* less as an authentic account of his own travels than as an amalgamated composite of firsthand witnessing and historical revisionism. The resulting form of *Typee* combined this unraveling of history past and present, drawn from first hand witnessing and a reading of secondary sources of travel to the Marquesas with a modified captivity narrative.

Melville’s composite text thus renders “complex actuality” in *Typee* by placing the narrator within the colonial history inherent in the Pacific imaginary just as the discourses that constitute that imaginary begin to decay. T. Walter Herbert argues that what Melville recounts, namely the incongruity of conquering civilizers, destabilizes the program for authentication in *Typee* (138).
notion of civilization and savagery without leaving an alternative framework in his possession. I argue, rather, that a framework does appear, but one that dramatically undermines the typical travel writing discourse of race war. Melville shows how race war, coded primarily through the opposition of savagery and civilization, governs the discursive field of travel writing. It determines how a traveler is beholden to a colonial frame wherein home is synonymous with civilization and extending the national borders across territory that enables the spread of the civilization. It is in this interest of extending power, Melville shows, that the traveler must make use of the rhetoric of race war and justify his actions.

The alternative, as he shows in Typee, is to enact a fundamental challenge to the discourse of race war by making itself legible as a travel narrative and temporarily suspending the logic that relies upon inherent and essential differences between cultures that will inevitably result a mutual aggression. The narrator of Typee ultimately stages the mechanics of travel as a historically-constituted battle over the very terms of this war, consequently unveiling and scrutinizing travel writing’s own procedures of authentication. Throughout, the discursive formation of savagery versus civilization threatens to become the sole justification for the narrator’s ability to return home. The rhetorical negotiation explored throughout the narrative certainly risks replaying the rhetorical authority of travel and return. However, in unveiling the dependencies and pervasive ambiguity of “complex actuality,” Typee does not ultimately succumb to travel

As Herbert writes, Melville casts himself as a “gentleman-beachcomber” who inhabits “a realm where self-definition is inherently unstable because the terms upon which it is possible have been disrupted from within” (156).
writing’s conventions, but rather exemplifies the process of witnessing that would become common in war correspondence.

**Typee and the Education of Fireside Audiences**

In an announcement of the first edition of *Typee*, the Honolulu-based temperance newspaper *The Friend* reported that the image of the Taipi represented by Melville “was evidently overdrawn. It is too beautiful; the young men never exhibit any signs of strife; the young maidens deck themselves with garlands; the little children frolic the live-long day without quarreling; and the veteran warriors are characterized by a ‘tranquil dignity’” (“A Residence in the Marquesas”). The same preview complained about the misrepresentation of the Taipi in the terms that signaled the conditions of legibility that the work was expected to uphold. As a narrative that relates an encounter with cannibals, the writer is surprised to find the narrative lacking “the fact that the Typean (sic) tribe of warriors file their teeth to resemble a saw, which gives to their mouths the appearance of ‘toothed steel traps’” (“A Residence”). *The Friend* was a temperance newspaper published in Honolulu (Sandwich Islands) meant for those sailors, traders, merchants who would endure long, often idle days. Worried that such idleness would result in heavy drinking or otherwise deprave behavior, these newspapers relied upon imagery like that of the “Typean warriors” to convince seamen of the irreconcilable difference between themselves and the Taipi. In the preface to the first U.S. edition of *Typee*, the publisher includes this potentially corruptible audience as among “those fireside people,” a generalized middle-class readership made up of armchair travelers who were to be
educated through immersion narratives to remote parts of the world as a form of entertainment and education. *The Friend* conveyed to its fireside audience this pedagogical function of the travel narrative as an elevation of the audience’s moral being—as a “benefit [to] their souls” (“A Residence”).

Perhaps aiming to counter reviews of the kind published in *The Friend*, Wiley and Putnam’s preface to *Typee* claims to “benefit the soul” through alternating images of “reality” to claim legitimacy for a text that appears to be exclusively interested in the romance of adventure. Continuing to set the stage for *Typee*, the publisher reiterates the message, explaining how the figure of the witness can be understood as a truth-teller: “sailors are the only class of men who now-a-days see anything like stirring adventure; and many things which to fire-side people appear strange and romantic, to them seem as common-place as a jacket out at elbows” (xiii).26 Romance figures in the preface as perspectival and relational rather than a style of writing in itself. From the viewpoint of an eyewitness, romance appears to be reality. But Melville’s “reality” is analogously always in relation to romance. The publisher prepares the reader with the genre-bending to come: “notwithstanding the familiarity of sailors with all sorts of curious adventure, the incidents recorded in the following pages have often served, when ‘spun as a yarn,’ not only to relieve the weariness of many a night-watch at sea, but to excite the warmest sympathies of the author’s shipmates” (xiii). Voyaging together with the author, the reader is to imagine the ensuing scenes as exciting accounts of travel, but less as escape than as “travel home” to all the realities of geopolitical crisis. As Brodhead explains,

26 Brodhead's analysis about the role of romance and realism in Melville's works as interdependent is
Melville turns “romance into an actual historical and geographical province” seeking “to individuate and ‘humanize’ the shadowy figures of romance by giving them complex personalities and by situating them in a complex web of social relations” (21). It is in this sense of a historically-grounded, fictional, romance that we should read *Typee*.

The narrator prepares the reader for a “historically-grounded romance” in the opening chapters of the work with a quasi-satirical scene of Marquesan women usurping the narrator’s ship from its owners. As the ship nears the shore and a group of “swimming nymphs” approaches, jokingly referred to as “a dashing and irresistible party of boarders,” the narrator prefigures his own captivity as he and his shipmates “yield [themselves] prisoners,” realizing that the ship is “completely in the hands of the mermaids” (15). While the takeover of the ship is satirized as an ironic reversal, the ensuing moral spectacle is not. As the narrator reflects on the scene as a “species of riot and debauchery,” he relates “[t]hrice happy are they who, inhabiting some yet undiscovered island in the middle of the ocean, have never been brought into contaminating contact with the white man” (15). The tone impelling the need to rescue the Taipi is here rendered as a war between the presumably savage residents of the Marquesas and the civilized colonial authorities. Sympathizing with the Marquesans and denigrating the French authorities, the narrator continues, “[t]he islanders looked upon the people who made this cavalier appropriation of their shores with mingled feelings of fear and detestation . . . . A valiant warrior . . . this same Rear-Admiral Du Petit Thouars. Four heavy, double-banked frigates and three corvettes to frighten a parcel of naked

instructive here.
heathen into subjection!” (16). If the “heathen” are so helpless, the narrator seems to ask, then why require all the force that the French employ?

The rhetorical question allows the narrator to announce the political intrigue unfolding before him in terms of the predominant discourse of savagery versus civilization. In a reversal of expectations, the French play the role of savage, “plum[ing] themselves upon being the most humane and polished of nations” while unable to “subdue our wicked propensities so much after all” (17). The use of “our” instead of “their” and the ironic use of “white man,” suggests that Melville’s criticism of the French does not stop at the national borders of one nation, nor to Europe or the United States. His target is broader and requires a transnational perspective: the discourse that lays the groundwork for race war in the first place. Summarizing his position, he hypothesizes that, “were civilization itself to be estimated by some of its results, it would seem perhaps better for what we call the barbarous part of the world to remain unchanged (17). There are passages such as this that remind us that Melville often wrote in the tradition of novelists like James Fenimore Cooper whose Leatherstocking novels were replete with the sentimental idiom of the noble savage. For example, Tommo observes the encounter between the French and the Marquesans as manifesting “an immeasurable distance” between “long centuries of progressive civilization and refinement” in contrast to which the islanders have not “advanced one step in the career of improvement” (29). “‘Yet, after all,’ quoth I to myself,” Tommo continues, “insensible as he is to a thousand wants, and removed from harassing cares, may not the savage be the happier man of the two?” (29). The use of the “noble savage” theme here is not distinct from the rhetoric of race war, but
rather a more specific use of the rhetoric to draw in the familiar image of Native Americans for those reading by the fireside. It is familiar to us now how the image of the noble savage did little to diminish Indian Removal, but Melville here hints at a “hemispheric vision” that was relatively new as it included Marquesans within a discourse that was presumably an American problem.

Loathe to reproduce a familiar image like the noble savage without challenging it, Melville goes further than simply casting civilization as moribund. As Tommo watches the movements of the French troops along the island coast, he alerts the reader to military power as nothing more than spectacle—entertaining perhaps—but ill-suited to reveal moral superiority: “there for hours [the French] went through all sorts of military evolutions, surrounded by flocks of the natives, who looked on with savage admiration at the show, and as savage a hatred of the actors” (17). In the narrator’s view, the civilizing mission of the French is little more than the pretense of a justice system: “prid[ing] themselves upon the beneficial effects of their jurisdiction,” in their “efforts at reform, they have slaughtered about a hundred and fifty of [Marquesans] at Whithoo.” Sarcastically diminishing the travesty of the assault, suspecting perhaps that he has transgressed a limit, he concludes, “but let that pass” (7). Certainly, Tommo praises the noble savagery of the Marquesans, but more insistent is he that the French employ a repressive military power that is meant to intimidate the islanders into surrender—contrary to the typical paternalism associated with the civilizing mission. As the narrator gains this analytical foothold in the scene of the war unfolding before him, he begins discover his own place within it.
With the canvas a war between savagery and civilization set before him, Tommo immerses himself into the life on the island, a move precipitating a crisis of positionality. He is unable to clearly differentiate his own place, as he is among “the savage race” of cannibals that would presumably be hostile to his presence. Invoking terms of legibility, he acknowledges that “[t]hese celebrated warriors appear to inspire the other islanders with unspeakable terrors. Their very name is a frightful one; for the word ‘Typee’ in the Marquesan dialect signifies a lover of human flesh” (24). While Tommo signifies an essential difference between himself and the “irreclaimable cannibals,” he begins to parse out another layer of differentiation, this time dividing the “savage” into other familiar categories in search of a more accessible framework of understanding. After having a gift rejected by a Marquesan, the narrator begins to debate the very term denoting the antithesis of civilization. “In my previous intercourse with the natives of Nukuheva and Tior,” Tommo complains, “I had found that the present of a small piece of tobacco would have rendered any of them devoted to my service. Was this act of the chief a token of his enmity? Typee or Happar? I asked within myself” (71). Confronted internally with the instability of his discursive knowledge, the narrator encounters a moment of equivalence between himself and the figure standing before him as the latter returns the same question aloud, “Typee or Happar?” The question, initially unexpected by the narrator, shifts the familiar language of savagery and civilization from classification of the other to mutual curiosity as his own subjectivity is interrogated with the same terms with which he is familiar:

I started, for at the same moment this identical question was asked by the strange being before me.... I paused for a second, and I know not by what
impulse it was that I answered “Typee.” The piece of dusky statuary nodded in approval, and then murmured “Mortarkee!” “Mortarkee,” said I, without further hesitation—“Typee motarkee.” (71)

The temporary moment of uncertainty of the relation between himself and his subject, revealed as the Taipi chief Mehevi, provokes an irrepressible utterance of communal understanding, “mortarkee.” Although the meaning of the term remains fundamentally unknown, it signals Tommo’s entry into the scene not only as a participant in a race war, but ironically as a “white” compatriot to the “savage” side.

This moment of common understanding produces in turn a break in the discourse of race war as the relationship between the narrator and the subject shifts from hostile to sociable as the Marquesans, now understood to be friendly, “leaped to their feet, clapped their hands in transport, and shouted again and again the talismanic syllables, the utterance of which appeared to have settled everything” (71). At this point, the discourse of race war subsides in favor of “panegyrics . . . consisting in the repetition of that name, [Taipi], united with the potent adjective “mortarkee” (71). The common language is enough to “conciliate the good will of the natives,” with whom Tommo and his companion Toby began to share a “congeniality of sentiment . . . inspiring a friendly feeling than anything else that could have happened” (71-2). Such an incident of communal understanding also occurs in Kendall’s Narrative, when for example, Kendall encounters the women of Mexico who offer his company food (Kendall 120). However, in Typee, there is not a sense that Tommo and Toby are captives at this point. Instead, they are closer to figures like Lewis who defect from the main party and gain the faith of the “enemy.”
The relationship between Mehevi and the narrator is so profound that the chief gives the narrator his name, Tommo (72). This reversal of the friend/enemy distinction that is staged in the travel narrative’s unique rendering of the colonial encounter undermines the customary epistemological position of the expeditionary narrator. The expeditionist’s identity is more typically rendered secure, as it is centered on an ability to “speak out” about the essence of one’s national identity on the return home. Instead, the narrator and Mehevi engage in a process of reciprocal subject-formation, exposing the conventional fallacies of the travel narrative. Instead of constructing difference throughout this initial meeting and thereafter, Melville blurs the subjectivities of the two, portraying each in the process of becoming—dependent on the response of the other.

Tommo narrates the moment of mutual subjectification as follows:

[o]ne of them in particular [Mehevi], who appeared to be the highest in rank, placed himself directly facing me, looking at me with a rigidity of aspect under which I absolutely quailed. He never once opened his lips, but maintained his severe expression of countenance . . . . Never before had I been subjected to so strange and steady a glance; it revealed nothing of the mind of the savage, but it appeared to be reading my own. (71)

Describing this figure as a “warlike personage” with “familiar lineaments on his face,” the narrator attempts to “to secure, if possible, the good-will of this individual,” as he “easily perceived he was a man of great authority in his tribe, and one who might exert a powerful influence upon [his and Toby’s] subsequent fate” (79). Through the chief Taipi, the narrator now perceives himself and his fate, “reading” his own face through the “lineaments” on Mehevi’s face. But the Taipi chief cannot, in his turn, reciprocate. The chief’s gaze, rather, exists as a pure gaze that is silent and empty, an object of terror and
fascination.

In Melville’s formulation, then, the new figure that witnesses war can be understood as a romantic, skeptical of Enlightenment practices that attempt to objectively catalog nature without being defined himself. In portraying subjectivity as a by-product, a self “becoming” in a war, Melville renders Tommo’s experience as a suspension of prevailing conceptions of savagery and civilization. Race becomes understood less in naturalized or scientific terms than as a condition produced through a political exchange of power: the powers to define, identify, and name. It is precisely this recognition that makes plausible war correspondence as a gathering and reporting of knowledge from the contact zone.

The internal disruption of self-definition along the poles of savagery and civilization that occurs as a result of the narrator’s challenge to absolute difference opens up the possibility for him to become a source of information about war against the French. As Tommo and Toby begin to communicate fluidly with the Taipi, answering “inquiries which the eloquence of their gestures enabled [them] to comprehend,” the two travelers eventually reply that they had come from Nuku Hiva, a place, “be it remembered, with which [the Taipi] were at open war” (75). Signaling the political interests of the Taipi, Tommo remarks that “[t]his intelligence appeared to affect them with the most lively emotions. ‘Nukuheva motarkee?’ they asked. Of course we replied most energetically in the negative” (75). Fully engaged in a dialogue based on only an ill-understood word and a series of gestures, Tommo and Toby begin to form an alliance with the Taipi oriented against the French and their colonial presence at Nuku Hiva.
Eventually, the Taipi “[look] at [them] despairingly, as if [they] were the receptacles of invaluable information; but how to come at it [the Taipi] knew not” (75). At the moment when Tommo recounts to the Taipi chief “information . . . little more than that we had seen six men-of-war lying in the hostile bay at the time we had left it,” the narrator becomes a correspondent for the Taipi, a source of intelligence. The chief, Mehevi, is seen to acknowledge the intelligence “by the aid of his fingers, [going] through a long numerical calculation, as if estimating the number of Frenchmen the squadron might contain” (79).

Tommo’s position as narrator and correspondent opens up for him moments of respite from the logic of the discourse of a race war so that he can observe and relate to the reader, as from a distance, the canvas upon which his perceptions are sketched. He sets the stage and then takes the fireside reader aside to describe the scenes before him. Entering the valley of the Taipi, the narrator imagines the city in the “Orient,” describing to the reader a special room with a “space form[ing] the common couch and lounging place of the natives, answering the purpose of a divan in Oriental countries. Here would [the Taipi] slumber through the hours of the night, and recline luxuriously during the greater part of the day” (82). Looking about himself, he signals to the reader, “now to sketch the inmates,” beginning the description of the tattoos that he would eventually use to differentiate himself from the Taipi in terms of national belonging. “[t]he entire body of my savage valet, covered all over with representations of birds and fishes, and a variety of most unaccountable-looking creatures, suggested to me the idea of a pictorial museum of natural history, or an illustrated copy of ‘Goldsmith’s Animated Nature’”
(83). Through this reference to nineteenth-century forms of phrenological study, Melville constructs a communal understanding with the reader in the familiar terms of racial classification. However, the narrator’s persistent efforts to enable his own security and authority only suggest to him a limitation in his graphic perception: “I wish that it were possible to sketch in words this spot as vividly as I recollect it” (91).

Rather than in exclusively attempting to decipher the facticity of the narrator’s accounts, we should read these moments of the traveler’s self-consciousness as enabling the reader to imagine a discursive field in a state of suspension. Melville effectively opens up for us the workings of control over the “bordered political space” that Maier refers to as the domain of “territoriality.” The narrator resists the working through of the rhetorical formulation of race war, effectively holding in abeyance this discourse that undergirds the construction of U.S. imperial sovereignty. Instead of reinforcing this rhetorical mechanism of state power through race war, the state of suspension reveals the potentiality of abandonment by the state—the characteristic that defines imperial sovereignty. Knowledge emerging from the zone revealed through a suspension of race war is represented as anti-foundational insofar as it interrogates the way in which knowledge is produced in the contact zone. In other words, the discourse of race war as mutually recognized in examples of phrenological study and conventional travel narratives is put under examination so that we may read the core of uncertainty in its claims.

For example, when Tommo begins to acknowledge his captivity with the Taipi, he also recognizes how the discourse of race war has begun to decay:
I began to distrust the truth of those reports which ascribed so fierce and belligerent a character to the Typee nation. Surely, thought I, all these terrible stories I have heard about the inveteracy with which they carried on the feud, their deadly intensity, of hatred and the diabolical malice with which they gluttoned their revenge upon the inanimate forms of the slain, are nothing more than fables, and I must confess that I experienced something like a sense of regret at having my hideous anticipations thus disappointed. I felt in some sort like a ‘prentice boy who, going to the play in the expectation of being delighted with a cut-and-thrust tragedy, is almost moved to tears of disappointment at the exhibition of a genteel comedy. (128)

Instead of writing from a position of colonial authority as did travelers before him, Tommo becomes skeptical of the “terrible stories” that assigned savagery to the Tapi. These fantasies, as in The Friend’s report of “saw-toothed natives,” provide the reading formation familiar to readers—even for travelers like Tommo—but they are in the narrator’s view fundamentally “nothing more than fables” (128). The borders that define territoriality are consequently exposed as fables themselves since the very discourse with which it is constituted has lost credibility.

The disruption of conventional discourses comes with an agonizing realization. As much as the narrator understands the manufacturing of the cannibal image, the discursive formation is not easily held at bay. In his role as witness to the absence of the law in the moment of abandonment from state power, the narrator attempts to remake the discursive field, reflecting on what is possible under conditions of seeming impossible resistance towards the prevailing myths of race war. This effort into “repairing

27 Melville scholars have argued that this process of resistance to discourse and the agonism of defeat to it underlie much of Melville's fiction. See Sanborn on the process as a staged game of illustration and substitution: “Melville calls up a common sense perception of an object by subjecting it to close examination, and finally draws the reader, if he is successful, into sharing the discovery that the common
subjectivity” allows the narrator to develop a special affinity to Taipi political figures who might, in their own effort to contest the myths of race war, and take up arms against French colonialism. Tommo discovers such a figure in Marnoo, who he describes as relating “circumstantially [about] the aggressions of the French” in an “exhibition of natural eloquence,” the narrator describes him as having “[t]he grace of the attitudes into which he threw his flexible figure, the striking gestures of his naked arms, and above all, the fire which shot from his brilliant eyes, impart[ing] an effect to the continually changing accents of his voice, of which the most accomplished orator might have been proud” (137). In the re-negotiation of race war, Marnoo might serve as potential ally or accomplice. The narrator fixates on his “clenched hands” and “his countenance distorted with passion,” as Tommo himself watches in admiration. At the point when the narrator suspends belief in the logic of race war, Marnoo becomes a proxy for the narrator’s own anti-colonial sentiments. Paralleling Tommo’s critique of the French annexation of the island, Marnoo “exhort[s] the Typee’s to resist these encroachments; reminding them, with a fierce glance of exultation, that as yet the terror of their name had preserved them from attack, and with a scornful sneer he sketched in ironical terms the wondrous intrepidity of the French, who, with five war-canoes and hundreds of men, had not dared to assail the naked warriors of their valley” (138). The discourse of race war at the level of the savage and civilized begins to decay in light of the narrator’s immersion into captivity, redeploying as a way to tether the narrator’s own criticisms of the French colonial incursion to those of the Taipi orator. The blending of the two figures’ sense perception of the object has insensibly decayed, and that the subject and the object of this
subjectivities is exemplified by the narrator’s insistence that Marnoo was “altogether unconscious of [his] presence” (138). The possibility that Marnoo might be using him as a proxy does not occur to him, despite the fact that this reversal is now possible given the suspended discourse of race war. Instead, Tommo is “[u]tterly at a loss how to account for [the orator’s] extraordinary conduct,” fully invested in differentiating himself from the French colonial presence.

It is critical for us to read this suspension of the discourse of race war since, as Melville shows, it is an exceedingly temporary vista, a brief window into new possibilities before the “inevitable” return to familiar discourses. The narrator’s need to “speak out” about his “provisional alienation” re-emerges as race war regains its foothold on his imagination. Looking again at Marnoo, Tommo “suspect[s] that he was making me the subject of his remarks, although he appeared cautiously to avoid either pronouncing my name, or looking in the direction where I lay” (139). This scene signals the return of the pressures faced by the narrator in assimilating his “American” identity with those of the “Marquesan,” who he suspects the fireside reader will imagine only in the image of the cannibal.

This closing of the suspension occurs at the end of the novel when the narrator attempts to escape from the island, convinced—despite all that has happened—that the Taipi’s hospitality was simply a pretense. Seeing a Taipi man swimming towards him, he acquiesces to the fears held at bay:

I felt horror at the act I was about to commit; but it was no time for pity or compunction, and with a true aim, and exerting all my strength, I dashed
the boat-hook at him. It struck him just below the throat, and forced him downwards. I had no time to repeat the blow, but I saw him rise to the surface in the wake of the boat, and never shall I forget the ferocious expression of his countenance. (252)

Tommo’s action becomes akin to those of the French officers who he, Mehevi, and Marnoo castigate as unjustly engaging in violence against the Marquesas. Such an action might have been imagined as heroic for Melville’s readers with its reminders of western expansion and Indian Removal. Still, Tommo’s recounting of the killing is haunted with uncertainty, with a feeling of “horror” at his act and an inability to forget the “ferocious expression” of his victim. Perhaps instead of returning home with a re-constituted American identity, the narrator-correspondent returns more alienated than when he left.

**Illustrating the Witnessing of War**

Published several years after the U.S.-Mexico War, after Texas was annexed by the United States, Kendall published *The War Between the United States and Mexico, Illustrated* (1851). The book contained high-quality color lithographs by illustrator Carl Nebel, each of which was accompanied by a detailed account of the major battles of the war, written by Kendall. Each report is programmatic in its content, including the assessment of why each battle was significant for the American side and a detailed description of the lithograph. Yet, Kendall introduces unexpected elements: a listing of all the American casualties, and a catalogue of “non-standard” sidelights. Furthermore, the lithographs, in contrast to the tradition of allegorical war painting since *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) (Figure 6) take a documentary approach, underplaying the role of
heroic figures and emphasizing the habitual activities of soldiers, commanders and bystanders.

Awed by the detail of the lithographs, reviewers claimed falsely that Nebel had been an eyewitness to the events. Like Henri Luce many years later whose *Life* magazine reproduced second-hand stories as if they were witnessed first-hand, the images exuded authenticity. The elevated point of view from which the lithographs are drawn mirrors Kendall’s narrative perspective, which incorporates accounts of the battles from those who witnessed them. It is difficult to determine whether the war correspondence was more authoritative given the fact-oriented style of the images or by the testimony of witnesses, including those from the army, who were given a prominent voice in the illustrated history by the correspondent. What underlies both, however, was awareness that the terms of race war were now being arbitrated by the war correspondent and the visual rendering of his reports were to be a new source of authority. As one reviewer wrote, it did not matter that people questioned the work’s facticity because the war correspondent showed how “the army testified to its accuracy” and showed “those monarchies and bastard republics” to be weary of America’s steely courage under fire. (Kendall and Nebel xxvi).

While one of the causes of the U.S.-Mexico War was clearly to take control of the Santa Fé trade, the economic incentives for waging war are largely understated in Kendall’s correspondence. The self-assured prose of the *Narrative* becomes more mechanical in the illustrated history, more concerned with questions of political strategy and less about the epic battle for civilization. Kendall does makes reference to deserters,
but instead of being the recipient of rage as was Lewis, Kendall rationalizes the soldiers’
desertion, noting that they were “volunteers” of Irish and German background: “why
should they feel patriotic?” he seems to ask. Opening the possibility that not all
inhabitants of the United States feel equally “American,” the text and images of the
illustrated history signal the beginning of a form that would again be called to make sense
of U.S. sovereignty in crisis.
Life of the Image/Text: Illustrating the News and the Challenge of the Civil War “Specials”

If the Marquesan conflicts of Melville’s *Typee* unveil the mechanics of knowledge formation in the contact zone, the Civil War provides an opportunity to approach those operations in a visual register. In the previous chapter, I showed how war correspondence emerged by borrowing the rhetorical features of travel writing and converting them to suit the political exigencies of race war and imperial encounters in the war zone. In this chapter, I am principally interested in demonstrating how the Civil War allowed war correspondents, or “specials,” into visually expressing the challenges of the war zone. The war saw a proliferation of imagery as a regular part of the news, inaugurating a new development in the emerging form of war correspondence. While before the war, correspondence was primarily text-based, technological developments and demand from readers brought images onto the newspaper page, opening a space in the national imaginary for illustrated newspapers like *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated News* and *Harper’s Weekly: A Journal of Civilization*. The central protagonist in this transformation of war correspondence was the “special”—artist-correspondents who were “on the spot” reporters of the war. They fueled the development of the pictorial press as they sketched in paper notebooks scenes from both the war zone and the home front, sending their pencil sketches from the field to metropolitan centers like New York. These raw depictions of the events of war set into motion a remarkable historicizing of the war as publishers like Henry Carter (Frank Leslie) proceeded to transform the sketches into
allegorical visions—that is, into memorializations of struggle even before the war was over.

The transformation of news from the war into the war’s memorialization began as the event communicated through the pencil sketch was redrawn and engraved by so that it could appear as a print in the published illustrated newspapers alongside a textual report of the depicted event. The resulting war report, however, conveyed much more than the event as it was imagined to have occurred. The report tapped into a yet evolving idiom of visually representing war, often re-staging the conventions of allegorical history painting, with its pyramidal and hierarchical composition of self-sacrificing generals, faithful orderlies, and admiring others. Engravings routinely insisted on proscribing a broad interpretation of the event, pointing to the image as an unfiltered and immediate reflection of a moment’s grandeur and nobility, all the while reinforcing rigid gender roles and stabilizing or renewing faith in a home front in solidarity with its soldiers. In the illustrated newspapers, in other words, a fetishistic substitution was gradually taking place, wherein a war report was undifferentiated from its representation as an image of the event. This substitution culminated in the illustrated histories published during and after the war.\(^1\) In these collections, publishers adapted the engravings from the illustrated newspapers while embellishing the ideological imperatives evident with the image. If the illustrated newspapers contemporaneous with the event had already begun to transform

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\(^1\) Several illustrated histories were published during and after the war, including, *History of the Southern Rebellion* (1861) by Orville J. Victor; *History of the Civil War in America* (1862-5) by John S.C. Abbott illustrated by F.O.C. Darley; *Frank Leslie's Pictorial History of the Civil War* (1861-2) edited by E.G. Squier; *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War* (1863-7) edited by Alfred H. Guernsey; *Pictorial History of the Civil War* (1866) by Lossing; *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, by the Century Company, (1884-1887).
the news into history, the turn-of-the-century illustrated histories effectively
monumentalized that history, elevating the dead as sacrifices to the state, and consigning
them to a symbolic existence as models of good citizenship at both home and abroad.²

The first person witnessing of the “specials,” in contrast, attempted to relate
incidents of the war as a contemporary events in an ongoing struggle without a
foreseeable end. The “specials” thus tell a different story than those collected in the
illustrated newspapers and illustrated histories. They often resist sanitizing the war as a
struggle over honor, exposing instead how participants of the war were often left
abandoned on the battlefield, where the state neglected the protection of their citizen-
soldiers or in some cases turned against them. The sketches displayed soldiers killed,
while attempting to understate the redemptive imagery upon which the eventual
engravings insisted; instead of noble sacrifice, the sketches would depict failures of
heroism, instances of extreme violence, “cowards” punished by fellow officers and
deserters executed by the army.

Certainly, the sketches vary in the degree to which they resist conventional
approaches to representing war. Precisely because the “specials” could invoke “unheroic”
moments of the war as a consequence of witnessing its violence first hand, they were also
pressured into “history-making” by the publishers. The “specials” effectively
“internalized” these pressures, representing them on the sketches in the form of notes that
outlined for the engravers what to filter, rework, and re-deploy as historical artifacts of an
event. In other words, the triangulation between the “special,” the publisher, and the

² On the memorialization at the turn-of-the-century, see Trachtenberg; Kaplan, “Spectacle,”; and Brown,
“special’s” internalized expectations of what was newsworthy delimited the boundaries of what kinds of images could be disseminated—of what was imaginable in wartime. The writing around and behind the sketch laid out for the engravers and publisher the subject of the image (as opposed to the image-as-subject) and how it might be aesthetically treated in the engraved version. This aesthetic vision—revealed through the artist’s paratextual writing—previewed the transformation of witnessing into memorialization, as these notes often included suggestions of how to revise the sketches in a more “marketable” fashion. “Specials” also sketched prototypes, meant for the publishers, of objects and figures that engravers could use to produce many permutations of the illustrated war report. The “special” in this sense provided both testimony of the unrepresentable aspects of the war and a seed for more heroic interpretations of the event. These notes and prototyping reveal that the “specials” were indeed conscious of the imperative of the pictorial press to turn the war reports into allegorical visions of heroism despite the fact that they were commonly witnessing the war’s unheroic moments. The “special” thus exemplified the entrapped position of the war correspondent, caught between what he witnessed and the rules of representation that guided what representations of the war were permissible. Ultimately, in reading the interplay between the sketch and the paratextual elements around the sketch, we can see how the engraved images gradually displaced the event itself, becoming instead the subject itself. We can, in turn, recover the process behind the knowledge production of the event itself to uncover the often messy war that remained the object of concern for the correspondents

_Beyond the Lines_.
Despite the imperatives of memorialization to insist otherwise.

To open up the process of illustrating the news and the role of the “special” in making and contesting the published news report, I will proceed in four steps. First, I will provide some background into the illustrated press, showing how the introduction of images bolstered the authority of the visualized war report and made war correspondence inextricably connected to the home front. Then, I will explain how one famous engraving by Winslow Homer, “News From the War” published in *Harper’s Weekly*, helps us to understand the relationship between image and text as it shows how such war correspondence reveals an ambivalence between the event-as-subject versus the image-as-subject. Homer’s engraving effectively provides a midpoint in the process of illustrating the news, between sketches on the one hand and illustrated histories on the other. Next, I will trace the three major moments in illustrating the news, taking the reporting of an early watershed moment, the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, as a case study. I will work backwards to show this three-part process, from the Civil War illustrated histories and engravings published around the time of the event in 1861, to the original “on-the-spot” sketch by Henri Lovie. I argue that while the illustrated histories and the engravings contemporaneous with the event broadly attempted to make the Confederate victory into an iconic moment of Union sacrifice, the sketch punctuated the military failure of the Northern general Nathaniel Lyon, suggesting the battle was less about sacrifice than about the abandonment of the state. I will assess Lovie’s aesthetic vision in his sketch, showing how it both connotes this notion of abandonment of the citizen while providing the means by which the image could be transformed into an icon of a noble
Finally, I will examine some additional pencil sketches by Henri Lovie and other notable “specials” to explain how by recovering instances of witnessing, we can begin to address otherwise forgotten episodes of the Civil War—particularly regarding the role of state power and representation. Ultimately, the image/texts of the “specials” represented the Civil War as more multivalent than the illustrated histories would suggest. While war as allegory for male heroism and triumph and female grief appear in the image/texts, important countervailing narratives also exist: narratives of generals dying without glory, of “specials” desperately trying to make sense of the chaos around them, and of a practice of war reporting that is concerned as much with first person witnessing as the pressures of producing an image. The image/texts thus less promote a vision of “good citizenship,” than open up the space to deliberate on the irreconcilable disjunctures of the war. By piecing together what David Blight calls a narrative of the war’s “enduring challenges” and “unresolved legacies” (124) through these sets of image/texts, I am attempting to recover an active debate about the visual representation of the Civil War—a debate sorely in need of revitalization. As Alan Trachtenberg writes in context of the Civil War photographic albums, we need to “win images away from the clutch of historicizing ideologies, to recover a connected history by restoring those vanished mediators who might reconstitute the image as one of our own” (29).

Illustrating the News of the War

Already a powerful presence in England with the Illustrated London News, the
illustrated newspaper was in the United States a fledgling enterprise at the onset of the Civil War. It lacked the necessary artist-correspondents and the skilled artisans prevalent in Europe. As such, when *Frank Leslie’s* and *Harper’s Weekly* began, they often “borrowed” imagery from the *Illustrated London News (ILN)* without attribution. It was not until the former *ILN* master engraver, Henry Carter, established *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Weekly* in New York that illustrated news became prevalent in the United States.

First published in 1855 in the vein of the *ILN*, *Frank Leslie’s* began to develop its own style as the Civil War approached. Joshua Brown’s seminal study of the pictorial newspaper, *Beyond the Lines*, emphasizes the degree to which relationships between the illustrated press, the war, and its citizens at home facilitated the development of the illustrated news aesthetic in the United States. He writes that “in concert with the nation’s daily press, [the illustrated press] discovered that civil war gave them a new stature and importance” in which “the press became an indispensable part of most citizens’ everyday life” (Brown 48). Images appeared to bridge the events of the war with the everyday lives of Americans. As expansionism and growing sectional conflict developed a gap between segments of society, the illustrated newspaper attempted to step in to fill the void. Soon after the onset of the Civil War, *Frank Leslie’s* became “inextricable from social networks of shopkeepers, clerks, merchants and industrialists pre-occupied by notions of

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3 By 1861, the *London Illustrated News* had covered the marriage of Queen Victoria, the Crystal Palace exhibition and the Crimean War with Roger Fenton’s photographs serving as the model for the newspapers’ engravings. Other popular newspapers were the *Le Monde Illustre* (Paris), *Illustrierte Zeitung* (Leipzig), *La Ilustracion* (Madrid), *Vsemirnaya Illyustratsiya* (St. Petersburg), and *Graphic* (London).

4 See David Henkin’s *The Postal Age* for an analysis on the interplay between domestic audiences and mass communication networks.
progress and self-improvement” (Hogarth 15). If there was a sense of isolation among different segments of the public, newspaper coverage of the war enabled readers an intimate connection with its developments, a connection that one scholar called a “lifeline to the outside world” (Coopersmith xv). Additional factors such as increased literacy, technological developments that allowed for better gathering and delivery of news, and a sense among many that they were witnessing a globally significant event all contributed to the early success of the illustrated newspaper. The “specials” began arriving from Europe to report on the American war, with many joining the American newspapers, signifying definitively that imagery would become a central medium through which Americans would experience not only the war, but their own experience as American citizens.

These image/texts, published periodically in the manner of today’s newspapers, depicted a variety of subjects including scenes of life away from the war front, in camp grounds and at home. The engravings were the images published in the illustrated weeklies and the form of image/text most seen during the war if not after its conclusion. Brown argues that these engravings documented the “transformation in representation” during the war as readers realized that the conflict was not going to be as brief as expected (56). Heroic narratives abounded at the onset, giving way to more harrowing depictions such as Frank Schell’s depiction of farmers visiting the Antietam battlefield.

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5 The fervent social advocacy aspect of the illustrated news exemplified by the “swill milk scandal” made it virtually impossible to have images that did not convey a sense of the responsibilities and discoveries of modernization. At the turn-of-the-century, this “muckraking” extended into reporting on Cuba and the Philippines. These images suggested that good citizenship at home meant “regime change” abroad.

6 See Diffley on the international provenance of Civil War illustrators working in the United States and throughout Europe.
Images such as these showed that even citizens would become witnesses to war, encountering the sobering realities of battle, no longer immune to its potentially destabilizing effects.

In addition to corroborating readers’ sense of the transformative experience of war, the engravings also demonstrated how the image/text of war correspondence was developing a connective link from the war zone to the home front. They began to depict the social impact of visualization on its readers, delivering images of “specials” sketching from the front. Often demonstrating the authenticity of the written report, the illustrated newspapers would provide portraits of “specials” themselves, who were visually recording scenes “on the spot.” Newspapers would further the image of the “special” by affixing to him a personality that one scholar has argued, formed a “relationship” with the reader (Pearson 90).

In these depictions of the artist-at-work, the “special,” in the vein of a soldier, would often appear as risking his life in the interest of the public. *Frank Leslie’s* was pivotal in furthering this “myth of the ‘on the spot’ reporter, who chose to put aside his
own well-being in order to have access to and sketch the most pertinent news” (Pearson 86). The self-representation of the “specials” bolstered the truth-claims made by the pictorial press, reinforcing the idea that readers were directly witnessing the war through the eyes of “skilled observers” (Pfitzer 108). These “skilled observers,” who the newspapers insisted delivered exactitude of representation, connected the distant war to the civilian at home, ostensibly staging the war as a vehicle through which the civilian could be a good citizen. The “special” was imparted a highly constricted role as a result, forced to represent the war as an opportunity for claiming moral victory on the one hand and honestly communicating what he witnessed on the other. Pfitzer observes that by the end of the war, the “special” had gained the kind of recognition that saluted “the art of depicting a battle scene or of describing a hospital recovery ward as a patriotic endeavor on a par with shouldering a gun” (108). Individual artists were to be “honored for their personal sacrifices as fully as any hero who distinguished himself on the field of battle” and as such, the “specials” were allowed as little flexibility in character as the soldiers (108). Even those artists who did carry out their duties were consistently accused of spying for the enemy. Such an insistence on the “special’s” heroism as an unfiltered link to the domestic reader was all the more vociferous since the material process by which the engravings were made indeed involved multiple layers of mediation that filtered testimony from the scene of a battle into a form “suitable” for publication.

To elaborate more specifically on the knowledge economy of the engravings in connecting the “front” to the home front, we should look closely at one image: Winslow Homer’s “News From the War” (Figure 2). This composite engraving recounts the
circulation of war correspondence from the illustration of an event to the distribution of
the news to its reception by civilians at home. Homer’s primary activity as a special
artist for Harper’s Weekly was between 1857 and 1875. At the beginning of 1861, he was
working for the newspaper as an occasional designer; illustrations like Boston Common
(1858) portended things to come with its emphasis of light, composition and quiet
dignity. Inaugural (1861) and
Procession (1861) hinted at the
coming conflict and proved to the
publishers of Harper’s Weekly that
he could be an asset in
communicating between the war
zone and the home front. Within a
few months, he became a special
correspondent, covering George B.
McClellan’s Peninsular Campaign. Homer scholar Philip Beam writes that the artist-
correspondent’s engravings from this period depict a view of life that is “panoramic,”
replete with contrasts of “corruption appear[ing] with idealism, and suffering, fun, and
bravery exist[ing] simultaneously if not side by side” (Homer and Beam 14). They
provide a “kaleidoscopic and piecemeal outlook” as well as one that is “collective and
personal” (13). While the time and urgency of producing the news left Homer’s own

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7 See Tatham for a discussion of the image (118); Beam refers to the image as illustrating the effect on the
“domestic front” (112:15); see also Cikovsky and Kelly (35n22); Ray (34); Fahs (138-9).
8 On the influence of Homer’s pre-1861 works on his sketches, see Homer and Goodrich, The Graphic Art
aesthetic concerns less weight, the “special’s” illustrations in this period create an interesting contrast between violent scenes alongside “hijinks” (Homer and Beam 13). Perhaps relating his own experience, Homer also depicted the uncertainties and restlessness of camp life, showing a special interest in the everyday experience of war rather than in the battles and the portraits of commanders. “News From the War” is particularly revealing of the way that Homer attempts to capture the contrasts in “national feeling” during the war. The image/text attempts to visualize the experiential effects of the pictorial press by self-consciously rendering the creation, dissemination, and reading of the new rhetorics of seeing. It demonstrates the diverse functions of image/texts in connecting the home front to the war zone as well as showing that while the image/text aims to describe the image rather than the event, it can also slip into opening up the self-contained system by unveiling a deeply-embedded disjunction between the proscribed message of the image/text and its potential meaning.

_Harper’s Weekly_ published the composite image on June 14, 1862, a few months before Antietam when the consequences of the war—as depicted in Schell’s image—were becoming more visible. While the early Confederate victory at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek followed by Union victories leading to their control of key cities Nashville and Memphis convinced many that the war would be quickly resolved in a series of rapid battles, “News From the War” told a different story that was beginning to make its effects known on the home front. The seven distinct panels of the composite engraving depict a war that would last long after the last battle, imprinting itself of the

_of Winslow Homer._
bodies and memories of its witnesses. Each scene recounts a moment in the making of the news. Alfred Waud, who is shown sketching two giant officers as others look on with curiosity, represents the “special”. Another figure is shown preparing sketches for delivery under the title “News for the Staff.” Another panel portrays soldiers on the battlefield rushing to read illustrated newspapers thrown out from a window of a passing train with *Harper’s* featuring prominently. An upper panel depicts two soldiers in the company of women who look on at one of the men, supported by crutches that substitutes for a lost leg. The dominant image, drawn emphasizing a darker light emphasizing its deep interiority, depicts a woman, grieving upon reading the news or perhaps a letter, her body hunched over her desk. Under her, unmistakably publicizing her pain, is written “Wounded.”

The text that accompanies this composite image begins not on the specifics of each moment, but on the general phenomenon of illustrating and reading the news. Eliding the subjects actually being represented, the report begins by celebrating such illustrated news as having a “thrilling effect” on the reader, insofar as it shows events that are “exciting and triumphant”: “news that fires the heart and makes the eye glisten” and “the cheek redden with patriotic ardor.” Without irony, the report continues, “we all live on it.” The writer then changes tone, as if concerned about the implications of celebrating news from the war that forces potential isolation. Asking about the pained woman at the center of the image, the writer speculates what she must be thinking, what grief and anger she must be expressing. Alice Fahs describes how this image testifies to a narrative

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9 On the role of the “writer” in terms of consolidating the authority of the image through written testimony
common in popular literature during the Civil War, but generally occluded in its aftermath. As women figured during the war as mediating public and private realms, their suffering was generally invisible as if to signal that good, patriotic citizens need not grieve or regret, but rather gather themselves up with a “fiery heart.” With images such as this one labeled “Wounded,” women were brought into the realm of the illustrated newspaper and the public eye by reports of casualties from the front. These melodramatic depictions co-existed with sentimental portraits of heroism and patriotism, potentially validating women’s emotions during a war in which women were generally excluded (Fahs 138-9; 129).¹⁰

What the illustration reveals is the extent to which illustrating the news was in an experimental phase, attempting to balance the effect of circulating stories from the war zone to the domestic front. On the one hand, the textual report belies its historical, memorialist position of good citizenship. On the other hand, the composite image signals the need to acknowledge witnesses of the war who experience it as personal, isolating, and destabilizing. While the impulse of the textual report insists on celebrating the phenomenon of illustrating the news, the larger subject of the composite engraving represents an interior story of pain and alienation. In light of the celebratory textual report as uniting disparate parts of the public, the injured soldier in the upper right panel interacting with two women appears as an intimate reunion between dutiful soldiers and nurturing women. The two come together, united despite the soldier’s injury or perhaps

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¹⁰ While I agree with Fahs’s assertion that the image does make visible women’s grief, I would contend that this “agency” is profoundly limited to acts of grieving.
because of it. The dominant image at the center of the composition, however, shows less unification than striking isolation. The writer of the report does indeed pause when describing the grieving woman, speculating on her interior life, but ultimately placing her within the context of the greater phenomenon of the pictorial press. Even as the textual report does not escape the self-referential system of the image as event, it does, if only to a limited extent, challenge the “good citizen” model of image/texts, raising the possibility of another story that escaped the circulating knowledge economy.

The writer ends by lauding Winslow Homer’s ability to capture the historical moment, signaling his presence as an authorized producer of the narratives of the war. Having already made a name for himself as a “special,” Homer would be called out by name in subsequent illustrations as having sketched these scenes. Recalling Pearson’s observation of the function of the artist-correspondent as patriotic celebrity, the engraving by Harper’s Weekly here creates a personality for the “special” as one who observes and is observed, who dutifully depicts scenes from abroad that reflect strength and grandeur but is kept under a watchful eye as reflected by the figure at the bottom left panel of the engraving who stands between the “special” and his subject.

The lingering sense of what is unrepresentable remains. What the woman is grieving over remains opaque, as does the nature of the interaction between the injured soldier and the passing women. In addition to the unveiling a dynamic of transforming sentiments and the production of authority, scenes generally left unseen, this illustration also exhibits how by the Civil War, war correspondence was undergoing a shift wherein reports moved from a documentary function into a “complex interplay between visuality,
apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, an figurality” (Mitchell 16). What this composite image and the description of it manifest explicitly is what is implied by Civil War reporting more generally, that is, that the image/text of the pictorial press shuttles between depicting the specific, experiential instances of individuals witnessing war and celebrating the image of war as a moment of undeniably unity.

**Thinking Through the Image/Text**

Historians have usually recovered the images provided by the “specials” through the illustrated histories published between the end of the war and in the late-nineteenth century, such as one published in 1895 by *Frank Leslie’s* elaborately entitled *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated History of the Civil War, the Most Important Events of the Conflict Between the States Graphically Pictured*. These illustrated histories, which are actually reassemblings of a second layer—the actual engravings and reports contemporary with the events of the war—memorialized the war before its end and again in another wave thirty years after its conclusion. The collections effectively produced the interpretation of the war that predominated at the turn-of-the-century and is arguably how the war is remembered today. The histories signaled the triumph of what Blight calls the “reconciliationist vision,” which “took root in the process of dealing with the dead from so many battlefields, prisons, and hospitals” (2). The illustrated histories fomented and capitalized on this sentiment. If the stereoscope allowed viewers to fashion themselves as “witness[es] to the entire palpable world, sedentary spectators of the outside now safely

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11 Contrast with Horace Greeley and others that the warring sides should put away their hatred and “clasp hands across the bloody chasm” (126).
and sedately brought inside” (Trachtenberg 6), the illustrated histories filled that interior life with “spirit,” entertaining and informing “fireside” readers of what happened on the war front—much like the manner of Homer’s image/text. They most clearly enacted the function of Civil War imagery as an internal system of self-reference that projected a vision bridging the war zone with domestic life through the prism of “good citizenship” that is patriotic in nature.

But before the histories and the engravings contemporary with the event, a third layer exists as well: the original sketches made by the “specials” at the very moment of the event itself. These sketches depict the image upon which the published engravings were made and include the “special’s” first-hand writing that testifies to the meaning of the event in his view, relates his own impressions of the scene, and provides instructions to the publisher about how the sketch should be prepared for publication. As the “special” would create the sketch “on the spot,” often working in unpredictable and politically uncertain circumstances, the sketch alongside engravings can serve as another piece of testimony of both “what really happened” and open up a space between the war as “already-historicized” and as having multiple meanings. In reading this correspondence written on the back the sketches and then determining what was eventually published and

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12 The stereoscope was a viewing device inside which were two photographs, each image corresponding to what the left and right eye would see. When looking through the camera’s lenses, the popular device simulated three-dimensions. In his essay in the Atlantic Monthly, “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph” (1859), Holmes describes the device as generating a memory “solidified” by technology, making as Holmes writes, “solid matter” out of “vapor” (743), and producing an effect that is “so heightened as to produce an appearance of reality,” ultimately, “cheat[ing] the senses with its seeming truth” (743).

13 Alfred Waud, a “special” for Harper’s notes the difficult circumstances in a letter during the Yorktown campaign in July 1862 under General McClennan: “The government by wickedly withholding the reinforcements which little Mac has required for two months, has almost caused the annihilation of this army. The enemy has almost surrounded us two or three to one on the Chickahominy and the only chance
then comparing the sketch with the engraving, we can begin to understand with more specificity the selection process: the relationship between the artist and the publisher, the preferred thematic content, and the privileged aesthetic requirements. In other words, in comparing these requirements to their future memorialization, we can provide a better understanding of the role of the “special” as a witness.

The visual studies scholar W.J.T. Mitchell describes the kind of mutually interdependent form of visuality we see in the illustrated newspapers as an “image/text.” Mitchell defines the image/text as exhibiting “the heterogeneity of representational structures within the field of the visible and readable” (88). This distinction relies upon Roland Barthes’ notion of the connotative and denotative functions of language operating within the communicative power of the image. The “denotative” function of images, which signifies what the text literally says, was particularly marked in the early periods of image incorporation to ease what Pfitzer describes as the literary community’s inclination to believe that “deep truths [were] ‘imageless’” (3). History painting in the United States, too, suffered from development since the nation had as many of the cultural elite thought, a “lack of history to paint” (Pfitzer 11). As a result, publishers sought to produce images that literally depicted the news (Pfitzer 5). However, by reading for “language’s entry into the pictorial field” (Mitchell 98), we can better explore how images attached to news reports also drew readers into the linguistic and

left us was to fight our way to the James river and the protection of our gun boats” (quoted in Ray 35).

While historians rebelled against the use of imagery to describe history, reaffirming the value of the journal article and the monograph (Pfitzer xv), illustrated histories were just beginning to proliferate by the Civil War. By the turn of the century, a period Pfitzer characterizes as a “golden age of pictorial history” (xv), “nearly, every major publishing house marketed at least one pictorial history of the United States, inventing more and more elaborate and dramatic ways to affirm the relationship between historical
phenomenological aspects of the image. Both denotative and connotative functions of the image/text were indeed integral to the success of the illustrated press, especially in evoking deeper feelings of patriotism, which for *Frank Leslie’s* centered on bolstering support for the North. The caption, for example, while denoting what appeared in the image, functioned rather connotatively within the illustrated press, shuttling back and forth from describing the image and the larger historico-political context in which such an image was meant to be understood. Reciprocally, the war report reiterated the historicizing claims raised in the caption while further elaborating on the broader meaning of the event for posterity, as if to say that the image was the event that would (and should) be “remembered.”

The illustrated newspapers were certainly keen to raise nationalist feeling by relying on the denotative truth-effect provided by illustrations of the war. As Pearson argues, newspapers like *Frank Leslie’s* paved the way for the pictorial press to supplement prose pieces with illustrations ever since Henry Carter had discovered (while working on the *ILN*) that textual reports accompanied by images brought the story authenticity, seeming to make it more “accurate, concrete, and marketable” (82).\(^\text{15}\) The newspapers would not only include imagery, but frequently publish self-reflexive commentary on the image-making itself. For instance, Homer’s depiction of Waud sketching in “News From the War” is an exemplary instance of this self-consciousness. These illustrations *about* illustrations signaled a growing convergence between narratives and the pictorial elements used to embellish them” (xv).
engravings as representative of events and as events in and of themselves. By seeming to make the process of image-making transparent, publishers could build the reader’s confidence in the authenticity of the reports even if the image inaccurately depicted the facts of the event. This is not to say that the relationship between image and text was stable. The illustrated newspaper, rather, acted as a “testing ground” for the imagery that would be an intrinsic part of war correspondence. Venues like *Frank Leslie’s* would deploy varying combinations of images and texts, as if hoping that one would become iconic. Likewise, publishers used image-making scenes as a way to simultaneously exhibit the omnipresence of their correspondents and to beat their competition. With readers experiencing war correspondence in this new image/text form, textual reports became increasingly dependent on accompanying images to communicate the news, so much so that the text of the war report appeared to “feature” the image or images more than the event as it presumably occurred.

In terms of scope and scale, only the photographic albums of Matthew Brady and Alexander Gardner are comparable with the image/texts of the illustrated newspapers. These albums, too, exhibit “specific forms of heterogeneity” available in the illustrated newspaper’s images (Trachtenberg 100). They similarly contain within them the language of history and a program for memorialization. As Trachtenberg writes, they “historicize [the war] in an inventorial form,” representing the war as “already repressed [of opposing narratives] during the war itself” (5; 29). Photographs like Brady’s “Harvest of Death,” and the captions that dictate how such images should be read, represent the

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15 For more on Henry Carter, see Brown, *Beyond the Lines* (17-8).
dead as “monuments” and the war itself as “allegory.” The albums thus diminish any specificity that a single photograph might hold. Trachtenberg effectively reiterates what Oliver Wendell Holmes imagined about antebellum visuality, when he observed the emerging truth-effect of mimetic imagery with the stereoscope. The appearance of depth with the device masked the fact common with Civil War era imagery generally—that in seeing an image, the viewer was in fact seeing multiple images overlapping with each other, but made to trust in a flattening out of this dimensionality. While the stereoscopic image represented at least two different vantage points, two different perspectives, the viewer saw only one, as if the mediation behind its artifice had vanished.

In general, the pictorial press’ imagery also tends towards this stereoscopic vision, proscribing for images layered with multiple images and meanings, generic narratives typical for war—that of military heroism, male self-sacrifice and female grief. The illustrated histories in particular established what Pfitzer calls “the dominant form and perspectives that conditioned the visual memories of the war” (106). Like the albums, the illustrated histories (and the selected engravings that were reproduced in them) did not simply report the news and inform the public, but turned the news into memory. This notion of news as “pre-packaged” memory for Americans created a syntax with which audiences could represent themselves as “good citizens” at home—that is, as participants in the war who shared the experience of sacrificial soldiers and eyewitness “specials” on the war front.

Of all the forms of imagery during the Civil War era, we have the most detailed understanding of the image/texts of the illustrated press; specifically, we know how they
underwent several steps in order to become “solid.”\textsuperscript{16} More than depicting what “actually happened,” the engravings can be productively read as “part of complex social practice constituted by production methods and audience response” (Brown 34). The “compact narrative” of the engravings tells a story of subdivided labor practices in the Gilded Age when one class of reporters would sketch, another would engrave on woodblocks, and yet another would print and distribute (Brown 2). When the pictorial press started using woodblocks early in the nineteenth century, it was a groundbreaking shift in the making of war correspondence, since the process created a separation between the image and the textual report. Since the images required special paper for processing, the sketch became detached from the textual report, creating “perceptual incongruities” and “intellectual disjunctures” as it divorced words from images (Pfitzer 10). Furthermore, the sketch would be “reworked,” be made to have “consistent perspective” and infused with “greater detail” in order to heighten what the engraver believed to be the subject of the sketch (Brown 2). After redrawing, the sketch would be sent to an engraver, who would carve the re-drawn image in reverse on a piece of boxwood. This engraving would then be used as the basis for the newspaper prints. If the re-drawn sketch was too large to be speedily engraved by one artist, it would be divided into segments and sent to engravers who specialized in engraving a particular element in the image (trees, people, skies, and other background elements). The image’s segmented wood pieces would then be re-bolted together and a print could then be made. In exposing the mediated process of image-

\textsuperscript{16} Technical difficulties with photography prevented it from becoming a widespread technique for capturing battlefield struggle. Cameras were “large and cumbersome,” the wet plate process demanded that “plates be sensitized just before use and developed soon after exposure” (Pfitzer 105). Furthermore, images would be
making in addition to documenting the shifts in readership, the engravings differ from the illustrated histories in that they present an historical moment in the process of becoming memory.

In highlighting the multiplicity of these image/texts, in certain engravings—and especially the pencil sketches that begin the illustration of the news—we can see how, in addition to proscriptive and historicized image/texts of the illustrated histories, some engravings and most sketches depict *an event* of the war, not only its marketable or iconic version. The sketches in particular are testimonials of witnesses that are mindful of un-heroic killings, and pained recognitions of the war’s brutality. Self-referentially deliberating on the meaning of producing a visual and textual representation of the war, they show the pressures on the production of a restrictive knowledge economy. The “special artists” therefore intervene into the “‘public memory’ of the war” (Pfitzer 104), despite the fact that these memories were largely forgotten in the aftermath of the war and during the turn of the century celebrations of “reunion.”

By recovering these obscured instances of witnessing, we can contest the historicism of the photographic albums and the illustrated histories, highlighting instead the witnessing of the “special” and the multiplicity of Civil War imagery, fundamentally revisiting what it means to remember the war. As such, the image/texts of the illustrated press are less representative of the strategy of “historicism-by-photography,” (Trachtenberg 1)—that is, history as

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17 *Frank Leslie’s* produced about 1,300 sketches of the war with sixteen known artists in the field. *Harper’s Weekly* is said to have produced 750 images with ten artists, some of who were lured away from *Frank Leslie’s*. Illustrated newspapers, as a result, acted as catalogues for recovered memories of the conflict with the pictorial histories that they published during and after the conflict (Pfitzer 106).
inventory. In contrast to the albums, the “specials” produced different iterations over the period between the Civil War and the turn-of-the-century, showing how the memory of the war was a conflicted one. In the byplay between the image and the historico-political claims that it conveyed, we can discover how the event receded further into the horizon of the reader’s imagination, effectively “dropping out” of the rhetoric of seeing, while the evocation of nationalist feeling instantiated by the image was brought into more immediate view. *Frank Leslie’s* and Henri Lovie’s image/texts on the Battle of Wilson’s Creek helps us explore just such a process.

**Henri Lovie and the Battle of Wilson’s Creek**

The reporting of The Battle of Wilson’s Creek” provides a useful case study of the phenomenon of the image/text at work. While *Frank Leslie’s* typically had attempted to court patrons in both the North and South, the South’s dire financial state altered the illustrated newspaper’s political stance in favor of the North.18 Published in *Frank Leslie’s* on August 24th 1861, the engraving of Lyon’s death was published with the caption, “The charge of the first Iowa regiment with General Lyon at its head” (Figure 3). Based on a sketch by the artist-correspondent Henri Lovie, the engraving was one of the first visual representations of Union General’s death.19 As the first Northern commander killed in battle, the moment became one in which the newspaper attempted to shore up

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18 On the ideological content of the press and its influence on the mean for the journal’s politics, see Brown, *Beyond the Lines*.

19 Before the war, Lovie maintained a lithography business in St. Louis where he painted portraits and landscapes as well as developed prints for use in books and newspapers. His most notable work during the war reflected a deep sensitivity to the physical pressures of war reporting, a sensitivity that influenced his interpretation of the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862. As historian George Fredrickson writes, Lovie’s images from the battle destroyed early notions of the war as a “heroic picnic” (79).
faith in the Union cause, despite the fact that it signified a significant loss for the Union. Lyon’s death, as a result, became a rich moment in establishing the General as a symbolic sacrifice to the state, and to assert his fraternity with his soldiers. If Northern faith in the purpose of the war was waning as a result of this first loss, Frank Leslie’s was intent on defusing those concerns by promoting a notion of good citizenship that celebrated Lyon’s actions in Missouri as a bold, even intentional gesture of self-sacrifice. As the war was seen and experienced by this diverse group of “specials,” they continued the work of “imagining” what the Union cause meant and subjugating other, less palatable meanings.  

The caption associated with the image/text, entitled “Charge of the First Iowa Regiment,” ostensibly describes what happened at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, as if the reporter was on the scene, even though we know that such captions were actually written at the time of publication based on “field notes” gathered by the “special” (Figure 3). The accompanying report describes the battle as a “bloody conflict,” “fiercely contested, resulting in a Confederate victory.” Before elaborating on the scene, the writer first describes the actions of the soldiers as the subject of the report, describing how the First Iowa Regiment “especially distinguished itself” making as it says “a gallant charge upon superior numbers.” Then moving to Lyon, the writer describes the General in the throes of battle: “Although wounded in the head and leg and his horse killed, General Lyon quickly mounted another horse and dashed to the front of his regiment.” The opposing

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20 Alice Fahs has shown how popular literature of both the North and the South before and during the Civil War allowed the war to be “imagined into being” (4) as it helped to shape the “taste” and themes of interest before the war began and as well as unveiled “subjugated knowledge” during the war itself.
army is represented far off in the distance, aiming not at the General, but at his forces. Modeling sacrifice, the general turns his head towards these forces, as if he was concerned more with their lives than his own.

The textual report, based on this image and caption, fills out what was imagined to have happened during the fight: “we have taken occasion elsewhere to notice of the gallantry of the 1st Regiment of Iowa Volunteers,” the writer reminds us, guiding our eyes across the image as if any other interpretation were not possible. Continuing, he writes that in seeing a “numerically overpowering body of rebels” advancing, [Lyon] called out ‘wait boys, until they are close, then fire and charge with the bayonet!’” Imagining his speech moments before Lyon’s charge, the writer invokes the myth of the commander who, despite any retrospective questioning of his tactics, remains at heart a brilliant strategist, anticipating the enemy’s actions before others do. The writer then underscores the authenticity of this account, funneling the textual description into the image, writing that “[o]urn Artist, who was on the field, has spiritedly delineated this exciting scene. A moment afterwards the brave Lyon fell dead in the arms of his gallant soldiers, who

Figure 3: “The Charge of the 1st Iowa Regiment.” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated News, August 24, 1861, 31.
pressed on wildly to avenge his death, and dove the rebels in disorder from the field” (252). What “really happened” at the battle at this point seems of little concern for the writer, as he hopes it should not be for the reader. If the reader was already inclined towards believing in the self-sacrificing nature of the Union, this image/text turned that belief into fact. Despite the fact that the battle was understood as a Confederate victory (and would be, again, after the war), the Battle of Wilson’s Creek is depicted here as an exemplary instance of self-sacrifice and strategic brilliance on the part of the Northern General.

When the Battle of Wilson’s Creek took place in August 1861, Missouri was a self-declared neutral state, torn between allegiance to the Union and Confederacy. Lyon presumably sided with Unionist sympathizers of the region, refusing to “leave to their fate those who could not forsake their homes” (Battles 293). In Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, the Century Company’s turn of the century multiple volume retrospective on the war, writers portray Lyon as having “repeatedly expressed himself as having been abandoned by his superiors” (Johnson 293). More pointedly, Civil War historian, Christopher Phillips writes that Lyon began to wonder whether “for some inexplicable reason, he was being sacrificed” (232-3). Added to this suspicion was the fact that Lyon’s men had not been paid, “leaving the ranks daily as their enlistments ran out” (Phillips 237). The abandonment of Lyon and his soldiers on the battlefield, however, makes no appearance in the engraving published in Frank Leslie’s. What is emphasized, rather, is that the general instigated the battle to both recover his position against the Confederate armies and to prevent them from marching northwards towards St. Louis. When, on
August 10, he attacked the combined Confederate forces which heavily outnumbered his own, he fought (according to Phillips) with the realization that the Union General Fremont’s force—which were to supplement his own—would not indeed arrive; ultimately, Lyon was beholden to Fremont’s decision that he would fight “only on his own responsibility” (238; 244). During the pitched battle, Lyon was injured in the leg and then fatally shot. Capturing the moment just before Lyon’s death, the engraving (Figure 3) depicts a moment before myth that survived was of the general laying on the ground after having “slowly dismounted” and “fell into the arms of his faithful orderly, Lehmann” (Johnson 295; Phillips 256). Lyon’s legacy, therefore, remained conflicted between that of a savior who had sacrificed himself to prevent the takeover of the state by hostile forces, and a citizen-soldier abandoned by the state on the battlefield.

Rather than opposing claims, however, we can see this double legacy as in fact two views of the same event, the former represented by the engraving and the other represented by the sketch (Figure 9). Among Union sympathizers, particularly in ones upheld by the reported account in Frank Leslie’s, Lyon continued to be held as “the savior of Missouri” for having protected it against the Southern armies (Phillips 262). If, however, we think of the engraving of Lyon as exemplary of war correspondence as a single unit, the text elaborating on the image, the report of the battle tells us less about “what really happened,” than it does about such engravings should be read as part of the iconography of the war. In this sense, the engraving of Lyon functions as W.J.T. Mitchell writes about image/texts, as an example of the “minimal features of visual communication and representation,” that “provide a baseline from which to measure
more complex ... forms of visual representation” (26).

Other engravings of Lyon’s death in the pictorial press, of course, reiterated the image of Lyon as a noble sacrifice, revealing how this initial image gradually became iconic precisely by leaving the story about his abandonment behind. These other engravings, based on “The charge of first Iowa regiment” (Figure 3), demonstrated how the newspaper could become a financially lucrative business by producing an icon of the war, while showing how this icon could depict a dramatic moment without needing to develop any specific knowledge of the actual political or military conditions at the time of the event. The engravings ultimately rehearse the iconography of heroism and self-sacrifice of the initial engraving of Lyon, pursuing the theme of individual heroism and the pathos of death in the arms of his soldiers and companions.

In the same August 24th issue, for instance, Frank Leslie’s printed another engraving of Lyon leading a charge, with his characteristic gesture of raising his hat (Figure 4). This image, in contrast to “The charge...” (Figure 3), more pointedly shows Lyon in a heroic pose. At the pinnacle of a pyramidal composition, he is shown in profile, clearly leading his soldiers into battle. A soldier beneath him imitates his gesture, raising his hat less in defiance than in homage to Lyon. A Union flag is raised behind Lyon, underlining the
notion that his charge is carried out not for his own glory, but for that of the nation. When by the end of August, the figure of Lyon was clearly solidified as an icon, Harper’s published their own engraving one week later on August 31st, presumably in the interest of profiting from Frank Leslie’s initial reporting. Harper’s engraving also aims to capture the moment just before Lyon’s death (Figure 5). Without an accompanying report, this engraving clearly would have been identifiable as Lyon, evidenced by the figure’s raising his iconic hat in defiance and determination. The caption does nonetheless succinctly identify the subject of the image as “General Lyon at The Battle of Springfield.” While the image/text depicts Lyon more sparsely than Frank Leslie’s had, eliminating the peripheral elements of the previous engravings to center on the central figure, it also makes Lyon into a noble character sacrificed for the unity of the republic.

No image/text, however, epitomizes the pathos of heroism and sacrifice as fully as the cover image of Frank Leslie’s on that August 24th issue. This engraving, entitled “Death of General Nathaniel Lyon” (Figure 6) reproduces one of the most well-known images of military sacrifice, Benjamin West’s The Death of General Wolfe, which had portrayed a British general dying in the pietà form as a Christ figure at the Battle of Quebec (Figure 7). Composed in 1770, the painting, much like the multiple engravings of Lyon’s death, depicts what one art historian argues is the “culmination of a vast,
continuous, narrative depiction of the entire battle” (Montagna 73). The painting, less realistically attempting to authentically represent the events of the battle, depicts rather an “elevated truth of expression capturing the spirit of the subject” (Montagna 77). Like the West painting, the cover image of Lyon’s death moves in time both left to right and diagonally from foreground to background (Figure 6). It recites a historical narrative that encompasses Lyon’s falling from his horse, his death, and the Iowa regiment’s pursuit of the Confederates. Running counter to the dominant diagonal from right to left is a soldier laying dead with a countenance that mirrors Lyon’s own. The foreshadowing and the aftermath of his death are recounted here, placing Lyon in the deified position of existing between life and death.

Scholars of the pictorial press occasionally write that engravings such as these “[invest] bare facts with charm, and [vivify] them with spirit” (Pfitzer 108; Campbell 1961: 19). They aim, or so it is often said, to evoke the potentiality of life while understating the conditions of the event itself. In these engravings in the illustrated press at the time of the event, however, we can recover some slippage into anxiety of the drive towards “historicizing” even the event before its completion. As in the case with Homer’s “News From the War” (Figure 2), the report based on this engraving stages a moment of consideration of what the image is in

Figure 6: “Battle at Wilson’s Creek, Near Springfield, Missouri - Death of Gen. Lyon - From a sketch by our special artist.” Wood engraving based on a sketch by Henri Lovie. *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated News*, August 24 1861. Image courtesy of Webb Garrison.
fact hiding. The writer decries Lyon’s death, refusing to allow it to pursue the narrative of sacrifice well before readers have had a chance to consider the conditions of the event. The writer of this report, in contrast to the iconic image, denounces “the Government” for not providing enough troop support “against the greater numbers” of the Confederate army, referring to a corroborating report from a correspondent from the St. Louis Democrat. The anger and suspicion of the state unveils the potentiality of image/text published near the time of the event to critique the terms of the allegorical narrative that it itself attempts to communicate. The chasm between the two subjects being reported, Lyon’s sacrificial death and his “killing” and abandonment by the state, becomes clear when it is unquestioningly bridged in the illustrated history.

The image/text shows how it was nevertheless “primed” for later memorialization in its reproduction in 1895 in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated History of the Civil War. At the turn-of-the-century, the war was, as one scholar put it, “still fresh and painful in the nation’s collective history” (Lewin et. al. xi). The icon of the war that was Lyon clearly required rehearsing to guarantee its reading would not stray from its intended meaning, especially in light of the earlier reports that had suggested Lyon’s
death was expected by the state. The caption of the image/text (Figure 6) in the illustrated history—in contrast to the caption published in the illustrated newspaper at the time in 1861—noticeably changes the tone of the earlier message, moving from blame and anger towards an elegiac rendering of Lyon’s life:

General Lyon fell at the head of his little army of 5,500 men, in a desperate fight at Wilson’s Creek, Mo., on the 10th of August 1861 while leading a charge against the Confederate forces under Ben McCulloch, numbering 23,000 men. General Lyon was educated at the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he graduated with distinction in 1841 (71).

Gone are the pleas for his untimely and perhaps intended killing, substituted instead with a reiteration of the outnumbered Northern army. A narrative of a “little” army in a “desperate” battle against the now-named McCulloch, sets aside the previous critique and truly “clasps hands across a bloody chasm.”

Figure 8: “Great Battle at Wilson’s Creek, Near Springfield, Missouri, between 5,500 Union Troops Under General Lyon and Smegel and 23,000 Rebels Under Generals McCullough and Price.” Wood engraving based on a sketch by Henri Lovie. Frank Leslie’s Illustrated News, August 24 1861, 233, 1. Image courtesy of Webb Garrison.

In that pivotal issue of Frank Leslie’s on August 24th, however, a final re-iteration of the icon appears depicting the event. It is dramatically different from the heroic and elegiac narratives that permeated the other image/texts (Figure 8). The thematic nature of this image/text is in sharp contrast to the iconography
upon which the other engravings insisted upon. It puts into question the very making of
the heroic narrative itself. This new engraving, without any particular title, tells a very
different story than of Lyon leading a charge and raising his hat in defiance. In place of
the pathos of sacrifice, this engraving depicts Lyon ungraciously tumbling from his horse,
surrounded by a chaotic scene of death and violence. Horse and man are strewn on top of
each other as soldiers are carried off on stretchers while others lie silently suffering on
the side. The caption blankly states that Lyon had 5,500 troops and his opponent had
23,000, ending by confirming that the engraving came from “a sketch from our Special
Artist” (233). The sole redemptive icon in the engraving is a Union flag, raised in the
vein of other, more iconographic images of Lyon’s death.

Despite the proclivity for the illustrated histories to do away with more
ambiguous and less allegorical image/texts, this engraving is nevertheless reproduced in
the 1895 illustrated history. But as in the case with the caption of the image of Lyon in
pietà form (Figure 6), the textual report reframes the visual text as “illustrating” a
moment where Lyon had, instead, bravely fought against insurmountable odds. The
writer claims that despite the “general disparity of numbers,” the Confederates were
“driven” from their positions, their “camp burned,” with many of their soldiers “killed,
wounded” or taken as prisoners (72). Running counter to all historical claims, the writer
describes the Battle at Wilson’s Creek as a “victory” (73). The writer’s consolation for
the victory remains ideologically bound to the notion that the Confederate loss “was more
than double” those of the Union. The writer re-envisions the engraving to reflect what the
illustrated histories images/texts attempted to accomplish: that is, to generate a report that
removes itself from the event as it occurred, producing instead a hegemonic notion of good citizenship by which a soldier valiantly sacrifices himself for the good of the state. What in fact did occur vanishes; its trace in the form of the original sketch, however, can be recovered to show both the degree of the displacement of event and how the displacement might have occurred.

**Challenges to the Ideology of the Engraving**

The original source for these engravings of Lyon was the “special” Henri Lovie’s pencil sketch produced on August 10, 1861 (Figure 9). Since the conditions in which they created were not ideal for preservation, few sketches like this remain. In some cases, they were destroyed by commanders in the field, or by the “specials” themselves, to avoid the accusation of spying for the opposing army. Yet in those sketches that do remain, we not only have a rare privilege in tracing “what happened,” but crucially, an opportunity to explore the space between the events of the war and their representations in the pictorial press. The paratextual elements around the sketch are also valuable aids in resuscitating the
obliterated complexities of the war. The written field notes often consist of instructions to the publisher or commentary how to aesthetically treat the image when engraved. But more than offering these instructions, the writing reveals the “special’s” personal challenges in reporting on a war that was becoming increasingly taxing. Like other artist-correspondents, Lovie relied on the sketches as a “professional postcard,” documenting what he witnessed while inscribing his own suggestions as to how such his original vision could be reinterpreted if not reproduced. At the same time, the recommendations the “special” would make in these sketches about how to reshape the image’s aesthetic design reveal the tremendous pressures on the production of the illustrated news, ultimately underscoring the distinction between reporting the war and witnessing it. If the “special’s” witnessing is safeguarded within the sketch itself, in the form of graphic representation and marginalia, the newspapers’ reporting would be carried out through “reworking” this testimony, “correcting” its perspectives (sometimes using the “special’s” own recommendations), and introducing “heroes” and “villains” that made the image the subject of the war report rather than the event itself.

Lovie’s sketch of Lyon’s death is immediately striking for how similar it is to the less-than-heroic image/text published in the August 24th issue of Frank Leslie’s. Lyon is shown tumbling from his horse, the pained recognition of his twisted face facing the reader. Rightly, Pfitzer describes this image/text as countering the romantic idiom of “timeless and universal truths,” common to the illustrated histories, and instead depicting a “raw and unprocessed depiction of realism” (102). Unlike its engraved version, moreover, the sketched scene does not create a distinction between friend and enemy.
Whereas this engraving identifies the opposing armies with Union and Confederate flags flying on either side, no such symbol appears in the sketch. This engraving’s insistence of projecting a vision of the citizen’s dutiful act of fighting for the republic for which he will be amply rewarded is here noticeably absent. Instead of the “redden[ing] [of] the cheeks with patriotism” that we are told to imagine in Homer’s image/text and the iconographic image/texts of Lyon, this sketch portrays a man being killed without any particular “enemy” in view. In fact, the opposing army is nowhere to be found making it appear that Lyon’s death comes at the hands of an anonymous assailant. Lovie’s own writing on the sketch underlines this notion of the un-locatable enemy, writing in the passive that “Lovie had been wounded” and “shot in the head.”

The sketch also leaves indeterminate what the engraving portrays as the dutiful actions of fellow soldiers. In the engraving, soldiers comfort and assist injured compatriots; one carries another off on a stretcher. No one is left alone on the battlefield in these peripheral scenes. Those laying dead appear instead as sacrifices who will certainly be remembered for the flags for which they fought, or so it would seem. In the sketch, by contrast, no soldiers are comforted or carried off the battlefield. Instead, Lovie depicts soldiers killed and left alone on the periphery. While some are shown rushing towards the falling Lyon, it is decidedly unclear what will happen to the general’s body in the battle’s aftermath. Lovie’s notes only identify “Lamann,” Lyon’s “body servant,” as rushing, hat in hand, to the General’s aid, leaving the question of what will happen afterwards ambiguous.

Lovie’s sketch was prescient about the indeterminacy of Lyon’s legacy as the
struggle over the memorialization of the General began almost immediately after his death. The aftermath of the battle paints a far more ambiguous turn of events than the engravings show—an aftermath that is suggested by the sketch. Knowing that no support would arrive, and anxious to disguise Lyon’s death to the Confederate army—which eventually forced the regiment from its position—Lyon’s troops attempted to disguise his body in a captain’s uniform. When the Union army did finally retreat to Springfield, the general’s body was actually abandoned to the Confederates (Phillips 257). The Confederate troops, it so happens, also fought to control the body until it was eventually buried by a family friend of the General in Springfield, Missouri. But the story didn’t end there. When Lyon’s family in Connecticut received news of his death several months later, they disinterred the body and returned to their own state for re-burial. The sketch of Lyon’s death thus presages this indeterminacy of the General’s legacy by depicting the conflicted responses of his fellow soldiers. Some carry on their fighting oblivious to Lyon’s plight, while other rush to his aid. In both instances, however, his death is absent of the kind of iconic monumentality that would be projected by the illustrated newspaper and the subsequent illustrated histories.

As one of the most forthcoming of the “specials,” Lovie was particularly candid about the pressures of his role, revealing in his paratextual notes his struggle against perpetual fatigue and confusion in the war zone as well as his occasional surrender to the interests of the publisher in creating a “memorable” image, even if it contradicted the character of the sketch. His pencil sketch “Pontoon Bridge on the March” documents such a relationship between the image and text written on and around the sketch (Figure
10). While the image depicts no particular hardship, mostly documenting a common scene during the war—a regiment transporting a pontoon bridge for a river crossing—Lovie writes behind the image to the publisher: “[f]inish this as well as you can, I can only indicate effects. As you will see from the style my fingers are very cold and there is not a drop of ‘the crathur’ in all these piney woods.”

Referring to an Irish term for whiskey, Lovie reveals his own struggle to record a scene for the engravers in New York while forthrightly explaining his recommendations for what should be reported in the illustrated press.

The major turning point of the war for Lovie arrived not during the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, but rather one year later at the Battle of Shiloh (or Pittsburgh Landing) in April 1862. The battle became Lovie’s opportunity to make clear the distinction between reporting the war and witnessing it. His coverage of the conflict in Tennessee was presented as both a major coup for Frank Leslie’s and a moment of awakening for both sides of war as for Lovie himself, who more than earlier expressed his longing for calm and a quick end to the war. Shiloh was neither a Union or a Confederate victory, however, though both staked their own claims on it. Rather, it was a battle in which the Confederacy lost substantial ground in middle and west Tennessee after having gained early successes in staving off a Union offensive. The Union, likewise, understated the early losses and claimed the acquired territory as a sign of inevitable victory. Both sides
ultimately sustained heavy loss of life, forcing many readers of the illustrated newspapers to acknowledge that the war would last far longer than expected.

In a Lovie sketch of the battle at Shiloh entitled “General McClernand’s Second Defense,” the significant loss of life at the hands of an unseen enemy is recorded (Figure 11). In this partially-torn sketch, several soldiers are tended to in an open-air “hospital”.

If Lovie’s sketch of Lyon’s death is noticeably absent of kinship among soldiers, it does appear in this sketch, which starkly portrays the brutality of the war. The wounded do not display the “quiet dignity” of those wounded in Homer’s “News from the War.” Rather, Lovie depicts their great suffering: a soldier towards the center of the sketch, his arm amputated and bleeding, is held back as he looks with resignation at his companion whose own arm appears to be in the process of being amputated; another lies on the ground, face down while a doctor attends to him; a group a three soldiers next to these two are shown expressing their pain and seeming surrender. In the distance, a battle carries on among a handful of soldiers. Ironically, these far-off figures are the ones identified by the paratextual notes intended for the publisher, despite the fact that the
injured and dying soldiers are clearly the subjects of the sketch. Lovie’s own aesthetic vision in labeling the various regiments at battle in the distance appears to correspond to his obligations to the publishers. At the same time, they seem a futile attempt to untangle the war and its pre-existing narrative “template” of heroes and villains from the pained recognition of the war’s brutality. Whereas the image/texts published in the newspapers and illustrated histories narrowed the possible subjects of war correspondence to iconic imagery of friends and enemies, this sketch represents an underside of the war that the illustrated press attempted in large part to forget.

Henri Lovie was, of course, only one of many “specials” who testified to the unrepresentable aspects of the war. When another “special” Edward Mullen joined Frank Leslie’s in 1864, he found himself witnessing some of the most challenging scenes from the war including the explosion of a Confederate mine as well as the “burial squads” at Antietam and Petersburg. In an undated sketch entitled “Drumming out a Coward Officer,” Mullen unveiled one of the most unexamined phenomena of the war: the internal divisions among soldiers who maintained differing views on the meaning of good citizenship (Figure 12). The sketch profiles a soldier identified on the reverse of the sketch as “Pat Bullus” being forced to
march with a placard inscribed with the word “Coward” tucked under his arm. The shaming of Bullus between the rather expressionless faces of his fellow soldiers suggests the extent to which dissent within the ranks was suppressed. Even though the scene does not conform to the narrative of two internally homogeneous armies fighting nobly for their principles, the “special” commits to making known the event. In another harrowing image of the internal divisions within the army, Mullen’s sketch “Execution of Frank McIlhenney, Deserted to the Enemy” (Figure 13) depicts a summary execution of a soldier. The sketch takes a long view of the event by including what appear to be hundreds of witnesses who watch as McIlhenney kneels on wooden blocks and faces his executioners. Mullen indicates in paratextual notes that McIlhenney had defected from the Union army, joined the Confederacy, only to defect once again. Clearly illustrating the deep ambivalence of participants of the war, the sketch offers a testimonial of a central “enduring challenge” of the war: what it meant to fight for the nation, to be a good citizen, and to be patriotic. If the engravings of the illustrated press attempted to “clasp hands over a bloody chasm,” the sketches demonstrate that there existed many who chose to abide to neither side and found themselves abandoned or killed as a result. In reminding ourselves of the presence of
these forgotten figures of the war zone who appear in the pencil sketches, we have an opportunity to finally address the unresolved legacy of the war’s unending brutality.
Staging “Unincorporated” Power: Imperial News and the Critique of U.S. Imperialism by Richard Harding Davis

In war correspondent’s Richard Harding Davis’s farcical short story “The Reporter Who Made Himself King” (1891), U.S. imperialism is articulated through dissolving the distinction between diplomacy and conquest. The story profiles Albert Gordon, a young journalist from New York who craves a war to complement his ambitions of becoming a war correspondent. Taking on the role of secretary to the American consul for the imaginary North Pacific island of Opeki, he is ultimately abandoned by the consul, conveniently finding himself in the middle of an international war involving German colonization of the island on the one hand and an internecine battle between Opekians on the other. Imposing a “treaty” of unification upon the warring islanders, Gordon confronts a German captain to whom the island was abdicated, and announces: “I represent the King of this island. I also represent the United States Government, that does not tolerate a foreign power near her coast, since the days of President Monroe and before” (195). Ignoring the American’s warning, the German marines claim ownership of the island, prompting Gordon to claim sovereignty over the island for himself—making himself King—and precipitating the war that he so desired. “Don’t you see what that means?” he exclaims, “it means war. A great international war. And I am a war-correspondent at last!” (200).

It is not surprising to find turn-of-the-century narratives that tell of U.S. involvement in the political affairs of nations in its hemisphere. Perhaps the most
persistent (if disputed) legend of the era was war correspondent James Creelman’s claim that William Randolph Hearst eased artist-correspondent Frederic Remington’s worries about the lack of war in Cuba in early 1897 by telling him that—despite the absence of battles at the moment—he should simply “furnish the pictures” since “[he] will furnish the war.”¹ What is unusual is that Davis represents the war correspondent as clearly using the law to rework international relations. Gordon’s appeal to the law is in fact what distinguishes him, and—in his view—Americans in general, from the German “monarchical pirates” who simply steal the land (“The Reporter” 186). He creates “treaties” and agreements between island leaders to consolidate power. He refers, in particular, to the Monroe Doctrine, applying it in a way that presaged the Roosevelt Corollary by almost fifteen years.² Ultimately, Gordon conceives of the war correspondent as the figure most capable of clarifying the vagaries of the law and its indistinction in the colonial contact zone.³ Yet he does so only in order to further a model of U.S. imperialism that is, paradoxically, anti-imperial.

Davis’s story is a satire, a cautionary tale in the spirit of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) and, most obviously, the latter’s “The Man Who Would Be King” (1888). Like his British contemporaries and more than other U.S. war

¹ See Creelman (177-8). W. Joseph Campbell refutes that such a telegram was ever sent (Campbell 2001: 74-77). Nonetheless, the mythology remains in popular memory as defining the role of the press concerning the Spanish-American War as well as war in general, most notably in Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* (1941). See also Brown (78). Milton provides a contrasting view of the legacy of the telegram (xii-xiii).
² The Roosevelt Corollary extended the Monroe Doctrine by asserting the right of the United States to use “police power” to intervene into the financial affairs of states in the Caribbean and Central America by making sure they fulfilled their obligations to international creditors. In practice, the policy was used to keep European empires from annexing nation-states like Venezuela while justifying U.S. intervention.
³ On the “ethical impulse” of Giorgio Agamben’s notion of a “zone of indistinction” in the context of U.S. imperialism, see Hebard (808).
correspondents at the time—with the exception of Stephen Crane, as I will show in my next chapter—Davis was concerned about the growing presence of U.S. imperial power, and particularly critical of its alliance with a news apparatus in fomenting the kind of imperialism that would use the rhetoric of the civilizing mission to justify state-sponsored military conquest and economic monopolization of a sovereign nation’s natural resources. Such a model was precisely the mold of U.S. imperialism as defined in the *Insular Cases* that followed the end of the Spanish-American War and which continue to define U.S. relations with its island territories. These cases were a series of Supreme Court decisions, concentrated in 1901, on the constitutional status of the insular possessions gained in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War: Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, and Cuba. The new possessions were to be treated as colonies, or as Amy Kaplan notes, “unincorporated territories” belonging to the United States, but whose people would enjoy fewer constitutional rights and protections than would the inhabitants of the United States.⁴ Like the status of the islands as “unincorporated,” Davis’s Opeki belongs to the United States, but only insofar as it remains firmly within the sphere of American influence as a buffer against the encroachment of other empires in the

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⁴ In the months leading up to the Spanish-American War, the United States attempted to impart a model of imperial governance onto Spain, recommending that it treat Cuba as an “unincorporated territory.” Secretary of State Richard Olney argued that Spain maintain sovereignty over the island, while offering Cubans “all such right and power of local self-government as they can reasonably ask” (Brown 1967: 59). Kaplan cites how the *Insular Cases* created a “new legal category of the ‘unincorporated territory,’ a classification . . . . that positioned Puerto Rico in a liminal space both inside and outside the boundaries of the Constitution, both ‘belonging to’ but ‘not a part’ of the United States . . . in a state of limbo in space and time, where [Puerto Ricans] were neither citizens at home nor aliens from another nation” (3). The failures of the United States attempting to establish “unincorporated territories” make up the body of the *Insular Cases*. See Sparrow; Burnett and Marshall on the origins and enduring legacies of the court cases.
hemisphere. The juridical Janus-face of “unincorporated territory” is not a case of legal “confusion,” but rather a recognition of the fact that U.S. imperial power lay in the legal articulation of an anti-imperial imperialism, a formulation that allowed a nation like Cuba to remain both foreign and integral to U.S. sovereignty.

Critics have thus conventionally framed Davis squarely within the imperial cause, associating him with his admirer Roosevelt and naval admiral Alfred T. Mahan. Reading his novel Soldiers of Fortune (1897), Amy Kaplan argues that Davis constructs a vision of imperialism that depends on a reliance on historical romance’s spectacle to reconstitute a kind of American (meaning Anglo-Saxon) manhood threatened by the “anarchy” of incorporating foreign lands into the republic (100-6; 111-7). But contrary to this reading—and, let it be said, most conventional readings of Davis as an apologist for U.S. imperialism (as anti-imperial)—I contend that he fully understood how such a contradictory expression of U.S. imperial power relied heavily on an information apparatus to communicate to an increasingly media-conscious American public through culture, that is, via familiar narratives, symbols, and objects, what I will call “imperial news.” His war correspondence and fictional work effectively stage U.S. imperialism as “unincorporated power”: that is, as power reliant on a developing news-making apparatus that deploys particular discursive strategies to validate its political claims. It is this staging that can become a dissenting voice against the strategies of U.S. imperial

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5 Germany under Otto van Bismarck was popularly understood as having imperial ambitions on Samoa that paralleled those of the United States. Grover Cleveland—whose administrations were beset by struggles for hemispheric domination—in 1880 dispatched warships to stall German intervention. Multiple arrangements between Britain, Germany, and the United States were established between 1879 and 1887 to negotiate control of the island (Seelye 64-7).

6 For conventional readings of Davis, see Kaplan; Hoganson; Sundquist; Wesley. For an alternative...
sovereignty, specifically against its “privatization of knowledge” and its promotion of the war correspondent as nothing more than a spectator and purveyor of massacres. Davis exposes the news apparatus as generating the justifications for U.S. anti-imperial imperialism—a form of intervention, that is ironically made in the name of protection against imperialism; not incidentally, it is this news apparatus that supplements the state’s regime of violence, a problem that Davis attempts to address with debatable success. Kaplan, in her astute reading of Davis and the news industry, too readily accepts the “soldier of fortune” as equivalent to the historical romancer, when the figure merits further elaboration in terms of its debts to the filibusters of the antebellum period. The filibuster, I will argue, becomes the inspiration for Davis’s reservations about imperial power; moreover, the figure allows Davis to recuperate an aspect of critique buried in the notion of “anti-imperialism” in turn-of-the-century anti-imperial imperialism.

The “soldier of fortune” remained an inspirational figure that appeared repeatedly throughout Davis’s works, most obviously in the book by that title (1897), but also in the set of biographical essays, Real Soldiers of Fortune (1906), as well as in his reportage and short fiction. Admittedly, the “soldier of fortune” would seem to have more in common with U.S. imperial power than with a critique of it. The term was a familiar expression for and amongst filibusters themselves, who were private soldiers, international mercenaries, or as commonly referred to—”pirates without a country”—who were popularly imagined as anti-authoritarian, solitary, and ideologically committed

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7 On the provenance of the term, see Thomson, Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe.
to usurping “weak” nation-states into “strong” independent republics. However, as recent scholarship has shown, the filibuster was more often than not a problem for the state than in league with it. Filibustering was generally an unwelcome interruption to the workings of the juridical and market-oriented geopolitics, becoming (as one scholar put it) “the State Department’s Albatross”; in practice, no secretary of state “dared defend filibustering” because of how it defied diplomacy-oriented public policy and the regulatory functions of international law (May 217). While the U.S. was concerned about the treatment of filibusters by foreign powers, defending them with rhetoric about fair trials and asking for leniency from other nations when captured, U.S. officials were hesitant to disrupt legal precedents and vouch for the “pirates” (May 220).

Certainly, as well, this “soldier” was a romantic figure of “rugged individualism,” making his mark “on the spot” rather than in newsrooms as such. Yet being “on the spot” resulted in an engagement in precisely that zone of indistinction where power was “unincorporated,” either in the process of becoming a part or apart of U.S. sovereignty, most often becoming both. In this zone, Davis himself represents the tensions between individuals and the project of transnational empire-building where “the soldier” is simultaneously in a position to exceed the imperial state—being more imperialistic than the state by calling for annexation of nations with which the U.S. was at peace—and, yet also undermine this work of conventional empire-building. While this interest in extraterritoriality allowed Davis to leverage his criticisms of U.S. imperialism, the state used

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8 On the use of the term, “pirates without country” see May 210-18.
9 At one point, Zachary Taylor warned adventurers that they should not expect U.S. federal protection “no matter to what extremities they may be reduced in consequence of their conduct” (qtd. May 220).
the same interest to open a space “beyond the law,” in which it could turn against “the soldier,” enforcing its power to maintain indistinction in the contact zone by making sure it remained, precisely, indistinct. For Davis, the “soldier” represented an alternative to the juridical and market-oriented model of empire touted by Mahan and Lodge: geopolitical domination of local economies not by occupation or military colonization, but by control of trade routes through a management of spheres of influence.

While essentially privately “contracted,” the “soldier of fortune” was a figure of a public sphere that often extended beyond governmental oversight. His adventures were organized, for example, through advertisements in newspapers and even in community meetings. Working transnationally outside the lines of conventional boundary-making by imperial powers, “soldiers of fortune,” like their name indicated, did not belong to any particular army, but to those hundreds of individual backers and volunteers who wanted to partake in the adventure of reshaping the geopolitical landscape. Davis capitalizes on the dissident and populist character of this “soldier” to pivot away from the state claims of imperial domination made with the increasingly “professionalized” language of imperial news—the official statements of politicians and the military, advertised declarations of intent to occupy, and the war-mongering claims to a collusion between empires to consolidate power between them.

Organizing filibustering through newspapers, of course, created a particularly awkward situation for publishers who ran advertisements supporting these mercenaries while encouraging war correspondents to support a state-sanctioned discourse of anti-imperial imperialism. As a result, the modern version of the filibustering reporter created
a fissure in the newsmaking apparatus between “imperial news” by conventional war correspondents on the one hand and the “staging” of imperial news on the other hand by writers like Davis. In his writings, Davis casts a spotlight on this fissure by exposing two central phenomena that affected popular representation during the Spanish-American War: first, he demonstrates war correspondence as not simply a vehicle for spectatorship, but rather as work forged through the self-conscious of the occupational pressures of producing such spectacle. Secondly, Davis shows how the violence of the colonial encounter witnessed by the correspondent chastened his pursuit of spectacle, as he was loathe to compromise the gravity of this violence by underwriting the aims of the imperial state with jingoistic journalism. As a result, the correspondent-as-filibuster, by virtue of his own precarious position in the face of state power, exposed the precariousness and the violence of imperial sovereignty, revealing in the process how U.S. sovereignty was rife with gaps in its structure where citizens could easily find themselves in the contact zone without recourse to state protection, thus exposing the violence of imperial sovereignty precisely in not applying. In other words, in Davis’s rendering, correspondents, particularly during the Spanish-American War but also generally in war zones, showed how the violence of sovereignty lay as much in the application of power as in the sovereign’s ability to “unincorporate” power—to withdraw from the arenas that might in fact have been protected.

In this chapter, I situate the war correspondent Richard Harding Davis within the imperial news apparatus at the turn-of-the-century, a system that was primarily oriented towards the making of U.S. imperial sovereignty through a discourse of anti-imperial
imperialism. Like the professionals working in the newspaper industry, he was shaped by the turn-of-the-century pressures of news production, particularly a view of war correspondence as “non-ideological” despite its adherence to the conventions of imperial news—advocating interventions into the affairs of Latin and South America, pitting American imperialism against French, Spanish and British imperialism, and abashedly cheering the advent of U.S. as a world power. Despite his formation within this news apparatus, Davis reveals a deep ambivalence about its conventions and in particular, reservations about the extent to which the state should command what should and should not be news. His concern, I argue, is that the indistinction between the imperial news apparatus and state power actively authorizes zones wherein the citizen either is subject to imperial violence or outrightly abandoned. While the war correspondent has the responsibility of alerting readers to this potential of abandonment, Davis points out that too often, he is simply the production of a figure of geopolitical authority rather than a critical observer of it.

*Imperial News: Privatizing Empire-Building*

“Imperial news” can be understood as a Foucaultian apparatus that effectively aligns the press with imperial power through narratives and a system of communications that can produce and disseminate those narratives. At the turn-of-the-century, a story began to spread in newspapers that narrated the decline of the Spanish empire, which

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10 Foucault elaborates on “apparatus” or “dispositif” as a matrix of devices, institutions and discourses that is made intelligible by the force of law: “it acts in a uniform and comprehensive manner, it operates according to the simple and endlessly reproduced mechanisms of law, taboo, and censorship” (Foucault 1977: 84).
could open the possibility of the acquiring overseas territories through the occupation of Cuba and the Philippines. While antebellum era discursive formations like “race war” re-emerged, news was increasingly positioning the United States in relation to other empires, which were vying for influence over colonial states worldwide, most notably in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and economically emergent centers along the Pacific Rim.\footnote{On the antebellum discourse of “race war,” see Chapter 1.} While the “yellow journalism” of Hearst and Pulitzer is most often criticized for having fabricated the news in the interest of greater circulation and profits, newspaper reporters for various newspapers abided by the same rules that governed what was newsworthy at the turn-of-the-century.\footnote{W. Joseph Campbell writes on how the yellow press, while usually confined to the newspapers of Hearst and Pulitzer, influenced many other “non-yellow” papers in Chicago and New York alike. In 1900, for example, Chicago newspapers tried to increase circulation by adopting yellow journalism’s characteristic large headlines color Sunday editions (Campbell 2001: 52). Among many business-related reasons, one explanation for the spread of yellow journalism’s graphical and typographical innovations was to appeal to an increasing non-English speaking immigrant population in metropolitan centers (53).} Such “imperial news” characteristically conveyed what appeared to be essential truths about people and cultural attitudes while diminishing if not ignoring the violence necessary to sustain these attitudes.

While my notion of “imperial news” is obviously indebted to Edward Said’s formulation of “cultural imperialism” as projecting a particular “structure of attitude and reference” (Culture 380) towards foreign lands and their “usefulness” to the imperial nation-state, it is distinct from Said’s template in several ways.\footnote{On the continuing importance of Said in framing studies of U.S. empire, particularly in relation to the...} My interest is in war correspondence specifically, and in the system of news production that shaped and structured both this form of representation and the mode of witnessing it claimed to transmit. War correspondence often claimed to emerge unmediated, and from a single
correspondent—titles of war correspondent memoirs such as H. Irving Hancock’s *What One Man Saw* (1898) or Julian Ralph’s *The Making of a Journalist* (1903)—evoke this obsession with the individuality of the reporter. But these visions were in fact shaped by intense occupational pressures that customarily reformed narratives of witnessing into glorified, spectacle-oriented accounts of individuals in war zones. That is to say that within the genre of imperial news, accounts of witnessing do exist; and, more often than not, imperial news staged its individualized heroes within genre expectations of spectacular battle scenes. Embracing these tensions of imperial news, I will contrast this genre with more familiar ideas of cultural imperialism by emphasizing how, paradoxically, the imperial news genre—as exemplified in the writings of war correspondents Julian Ralph and James Creelman—contained an unstable, more flexible, anti-imperial strand. Focusing on Creelman’s writings, I will also expand our understanding of imperial news by showing how much of it was staged within non-U.S. theatres of war. In so doing, we can discern a potentiality of anti-imperialist critique within Creelman’s work—a promise largely unfulfilled—that becomes more prominent in the works of Davis.

Said’s central critical method involves reading canonical British and French literary texts that tacitly sanction British and French imperialism, contrasting these texts with non-canonical works that expose and critique the hidden ideologies of these...
European empires. While foundational to analyses of imperialism, Said neglects to address how systems of production contribute to the construction of literary form. By opening windows into mediated production, we can see how texts that seem to manifest imperialist ideologies are revealed to contain within them embedded political critique. In the case of imperial news, this critique aimed to capitalize on the currency of a state-centered imperial discourse while constructing a parallel and intersecting discourse that rivaled U.S. “cultural imperialism.” Imperial news was thus constituted by a particular “attitude” wherein an assumption of social, cultural and military dominion over distant and not-so-distant lands was both tacitly accepted and a foundation of artistic production and a mode of writing that pointed out the limits and social consequences of this attitude. Further distinct from cultural imperialism, imperial news cannot be defined by any single form of representation. The Spanish-American War inspired numerous travelogues, personal histories, juvenile fiction, film, historical romances, and of course war correspondence. And while these forms are important for what they “say” about the attitudes towards other nations, equally important is the apparatus that allowed them to function—that system of possibilities that defined the conditions under which such work was represented in the first place.

Central to the imperial news apparatus was the profession of journalism itself.

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16 Cultural imperialism is more frequently attributed to the work of British and Victorian novelists and Orientalist scholars at the height of British imperialism.
17 On this archive of popular work on the Spanish-American War, see Seelye on travelogues and war correspondence, Constanguay on film, and Kaplan’s Anarchy on historical romances. No definitive work on juvenilia related to the war has been written. War correspondent memoirs and collections proliferated between 1898-1920. Notables include those by Davis, Creelman, and Ralph. Others works not discussed here include Charles A. Page Letters of a War Correspondent (1898); Grover Flint, Marching with Gomez (1898); Murat Halstead The Story of the Philippines (1898); William G Shepherd Confessions of a War
When considering the occupational pressures of turn-of-the-century journalism, imperial news emerges as distinct from the dichotomous conceptualization of cultural imperialism. The pressures reveal tensions between public, state-sanctioned claims of U.S. imperialism and war correspondents who were generally, but not uniformly, accommodating partners. Correspondents routinely objected to several aspects of the profession: the rise of private enterprise in controlling the means for both gathering and disseminating the news, the drive towards “professionalization” of war correspondents, and the emphasis on “facts” over narrative in producing “stories” about global events. As such, imperial news represents less what Said terms a “consolidated vision” of empire or an unequivocal “resistant” or “oppositional” model, than a political orientation formed in relation to a particular system of news production dealing with the making of a professional class. The war correspondent is thus neither an orientalist nor a cultural imperialist in the sense of one “who could not or would not see that he or she was an imperialist” (Culture 162). Rather, he was often aware of the political implications of his reporting as well as the conditions of imperial news under which he was writing, weaving his correspondence in relation to these forces.

With the U.S. publicly asserting itself as a global financial and military power, imperial news was facilitating the production and dissemination of information primarily through the channels of private enterprise. Hearst was the symbolic head of this development, as he owned the telegraph agencies and ships that would serve as transport vehicles for war correspondents. Likewise, Pulitzer and Cornelius Vanderbilt financed

Correspondent (1917); and Francis Reynolds The Story of the Great War (1916).
newsgathering expeditions across Central and South America. These financiers invested not only money, but also a staunch belief in an image of the war correspondent as a professional who knew better how to construct an empire than the empire-builders themselves. These private ventures revealed that imperial news was less an arm of cultural imperialism than a parallel power than sometimes intersected with state power in revealing and productive ways.

For news reporters, the imperial news apparatus, especially its adherence to the marketplace, was an equal and sometimes more imposing force than statist cultural imperialist narratives. Certainly common, these latter narratives related sensational reports of mass killings by despotic regimes, abductions of Westerners in foreign lands, and journalistic “stunts,” which dominated the headlines whether or not the journalist belonged to the “yellow press” standards *Journal* or the *World.* These narratives, however, competed with “non-narrative,” fact-based news that less embellished events than reported what reporters witnessed, even if that meant not providing the “raw materials” for spectacles. This fact-based journalistic style characterized by non-narrative details ahead of interpretation—the “inverted pyramid” model—appeared in textbooks on journalism in 1894, signaling the convergence of the writing style and marketplace pressures that judged that which appeared empirical as “new” as authoritative (Mindich 65; 109). The telegraph hastened this trend towards fact-based reporting as non-narrative reporting was transmitted from around the nation to publishing centers, which in turn, sought to “produce a commodity that would be palatable to all” (Mindich 9). War correspondents did not easily resolve these challenges to authentic witnessing posed by
the marketplace. But as I will show, Davis was cognizant of marketplace pressures on foreign news journalism. He tried to undermine the industry’s faith in facts as authority—especially in cases where these “facts” were manufactured to generate appeal for a story. He complemented this critique with efforts to restore the war correspondent’s place as a witness whose role it was to report first-hand accounts and contextualize the conditions that made such moments possible.

In conjunction with market pressures, newsroom organization and especially the advent of the deadline steered power away from reporters and towards professionalization. An assignment system required reporters to transmit their stories to “rewrite men,” who would then compose the stories to be published in the newspapers. The system disenfranchised reporters who were given fewer opportunities to cover events that took more than a day to develop just as they given more of same kinds of events to cover in an effort to promote specialization (Wilson 1985: 28). In other words, correspondents were asked to cover the maximum number of events as possible without following up on any particular one, hastening the production of a “template” approach to the news. To promote “newness,” many reporters resorted to “faking” stories when unable to make deadlines; newspapers would often sponsor these stunts as they were also competing with other news outlets. As the privatization of news production was turning news into a commodity to be reused and redeployed in a variety of different contexts, reporters within the imperial news regime became increasingly marginalized players. Correspondents, as a result, developed a dual awareness of being both the spokesmen for imperial power and subjects of it.
These occupational pressures and the growing self-awareness of correspondents coincided with a proliferation of international wars. The United States was entrenched in several international arenas of interest to newspapers and war correspondents, most notably in Cuba where the confrontation with Spain took the United States into the Philippines among other sovereign states along the Pacific Rim. In addition, several non-U.S. theatres of war were covered by newspapers, namely the Franco-Prussian War, multiple wars involving the dissolving Ottoman Empire (Turkish-Serbian Wars, the Graeco-Turkish War, the War for Bulgarian Independence), and the Sino-Japanese War (Knightley 49-63; Beisner; Roth). This increase in the number of international events might have countered the push towards specialization as the complexity of these events contained the potentiality of development of the industry towards having more experienced reporters in specific regions of the world for longer durations in order to develop a deeper understanding of a region. International news, however, did not proliferate in variety. Instead, it became increasingly centralized: more reports emerged, but more of the same kinds of reports. Syndication and the institutional establishment of centralized repositories like the Associated Press (1848), the German Wolff Telegraph Agency (1855), and Reuters (1858) facilitated this “template-ing” of the news as they became standard organs of a news apparatus—local, national, or international—that were made available for general (rather than targeted) consumption. Just as local newspapers would emphasize “exclusives,” the same set of war correspondents and their publishers would promote the “inventiveness” of their stories, even that meant the same stories were told about different regions of the world or journalists resorted to “faking” through
exaggeration or outright fabrication (Wilson 1985: 33-8).

Imperial news was thus becoming its own “empire of news” ruled by private enterprise, professionalization, marketplace dynamics, all processes that contributed to the marginalization of war correspondents. In other words, the news apparatus was internally consolidating what could represent culture, and beginning to distinguish itself from state-centered discourses of empire—developing into a rival power to statist-oriented imperialism that targeted the correspondents themselves as the problematic subject. As a result, unlike the cultural imperialist, the war correspondent was beginning to challenge rather than conflate the narratives of state power with the occupational pressures of imperial news.

Two of the most notable war correspondents of the imperial news apparatus, Julian Ralph and James Creelman, characterize a mode of writing that Amy Kaplan calls the “narrative of liberation” that “legitimated the exercise of imperial power” (Anarchy 92), what I will refer to as a narrative of “anti-imperial imperialism.” Ralph and Creelman re-produced and trafficked in this narrative. They advocated a non-ideological “instinct”-oriented model of war reporting, disguising American exceptionalism as a natural outgrowth of “facts” gathered on the spot, namely of brutality at the hands of “monarchical” empires. Both represented themselves as professionals, certainly responsible to their publishers, but responsible more so to informing the reading public of the primacy of U.S. power.

Julian Ralph’s memoir The Making of a Journalist (1903) is a kind of “how-to”
manual that introduces youths to the profession through the eyes of an established journalist writing for an established newspaper. The journalist’s goal, in his view, is to be completely faithful to the newspaper. The reporter is best when he bypasses education, the professions of “learned” classes, and reports what he thinks will “make the story,” even if that means that he must break international laws. A renowned war correspondent, Ralph wrote primarily for *Harper’s Weekly* and *Harper’s Monthly*. He bridges the era of European high imperialism with the turn-of-the-century professional journalist, writing that newspapers perform the most elite cultural work a society can offer:

> Newspaper life, with its prizes and disappointment, is not a narrow field or a little subject—not if one realizes how wide one can stray without losing touch with it. Napoleon not only depended upon the press to prepare France for his plans and to execute many of them, but he directed and worked the newspapers in a way which was instinct (*sic*) with the spirit and genius of journalism. (2-3)

Otto van Bismarck and Napoleon, Ralph contends, tapped into “newspaper methods” and manipulated the news to suit their “genius” (3). In lauding these two sovereigns, Ralph puts himself and his profession in the company of unabashed imperialists. He even cites the archetypical cultural imperialist narrative as a model for modern journalism: Henry Morton Stanley’s expedition to find David Livingstone in the “Dark Continent,” privately financed by *New York Herald* publisher James Gordon Bennett (20).

Ralph’s vision of the journalist is one of the diligent professional who fundamentally follows the adage “get what you’re sent for” no matter the customs, laws, or other prohibitions. This is not to say that Ralph imagines turn-of-the-century journalism as an “equal-opportunity” profession. He likens his task to the cowboy
dragging his steer through a dusty plain without water or any foreseeable end, writing that only figures like himself, pioneers, had a “calling” to endure and, most importantly, write without any particular ideological imperative—or so he claimed. Distinct from ideology, journalists must have a “sixth sense,” an innate ability to detect what is newsworthy or what will be newsworthy, making sure that they are in the appropriate place at the right time. Ralph’s notions of innate journalistic sense and “un-learned” ability permeate his memoir, providing the intellectual justification for delivering his salvific narrative.

For example, Ralph admires Émile Zola, who in his open letter “J’Accuse…!” in 1898, accused French authorities of falsely persecuting and sentencing the Jewish artillery captain Alfred Dreyfus. The event called into question French jurisprudence and revealed deeply embedded anti-Semitism in French society. A self-taught crusader for social justice who failed out of school, Zola models for Ralph a figure without a formal education, but nonetheless teaches himself with a beaux arts education. What is fundamentally essential for Ralph is a journalist’s ability to write an effective letter (hence, correspondence) by learning from the classics (Johnson, the Bible, Defoe, Balzac). Journalism schools and classes as such are “nearly worthless” as they cannot teach the uncontrollable impulses to pursue a story (Ralph 72). Ultimately, Ralph advocates a turn-of-the-century take on professionalism as defined by an antagonism towards career advancement through the traditional routes of education and patronage.\(^\text{18}\)

Ralph’s “non-ideological” professionalism serves to displace awareness of the

\(^{18}\) See Jennifer Cognard-Black’s *Narrative in the Professional Age* (2004) on transatlantic influences in the
geopolitical circumstances of the United States as an empire with stories of citizen-journalism where he portrays himself providing a service to the public presumably left undone by the state. These stories tell of mistaken identity set right, an investigation corrected, a criminal caught and others (60-63; 69). Journalists are morally superior, wiser, and more savvy than the police, detectives, noblemen, or government officials. In a chapter appropriately titled “The Power of a Reporter,” Ralph describes the dual contradictory tendencies of the imperial news correspondent: on the one hand, he produces narratives of liberation predicated on a notion of American exceptionalism—the anti-imperial imperialist narrative; on the other hand, he refuses to sensationalize his witnessed accounts. Writing for *Harper’s*, Ralph describes how his war correspondence in the lead up to the Sino-Japanese War instigated a Senate investigation of U.S. policy in China. He wrote in December 1894 of an incident in which several Japanese students were arrested as spies in Shanghai, tortured and then beheaded. Since the U.S. was meant to protect all Japanese citizens in China, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee took up the matter because, as Ralph writes, he “never abused [his] opportunities by writing mere sensationalism, or untruths of any sort” (130). Ralph’s recounting of the incident elides how U.S. market-oriented imperialism conditioned why the U.S. was responsible for the protection of Japanese citizens in China in the first place; and yet, in his international muckraking, he undermines the authority of U.S. state.19

Much like Ralph in his steadfast faithfulness to the newspaper, James Creelman

19 By “international muckraking,” I mean the extension of the domestic developments in social advocacy journalism exemplary in works of Jacob Riis, to an international arena. On the social missionarism of Riis,
devoted his adult life to the profession during the height of yellow journalism. In 1876 at the age of seventeen, he joined the *New York Herald*, ultimately landing at Pulitzer’s *New York World* in 1893, where he accompanied the Japanese Army and wrote on the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, covering the Port Arthur massacre. By 1897, William Randolph Hearst, in his frequent raids on Pulitzer’s staff, recruited Creelman to his newspaper, the *New York Journal*, and assigned Creelman to cover the war between Cuba and Spain, which broke out in 1898 (Roth 70-1).

If Ralph acknowledges the professional war correspondent as defined by his unique “anti-ideological” identity, made from “on the job” training without outrightly laying out an alignment vis-à-vis imperial power, Creelman makes the connection explicit. On a trip to Cuba to report on tensions brewing between the island nation and Spain, Creelman famously had himself exiled by the notorious Spanish governor of Cuba, Valeriano Weyler in the lead-up to the Spanish-American War.

Creelman’s *On the Great Highway* (1901) exemplifies the ethic of anti-imperial imperialism that Kaplan illustrates is central to romances at the turn-of-the-century and that constitutes a central part of the imperial news genre. *On the Great Highway* is a collection of war correspondence and memoir of Creelman’s time as a war correspondent. In style and form, it recalls travel writing in its reliance on a Manichean logic in assessing global politics and in insisting on manufacturing facts that substantiate that logic. Like in antebellum travel memoirs, images are interspersed through the pages, grounding the polemical writing with an impression of authentic witnessing, providing

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see Gandal; Stange.
seemingly irrefutable testimony that is meant to legitimize the ideology of a report. Creelman recounts in the work some of his “exclusives,” from interviewing the Pope to covering the Sino-Japanese War and the Spanish-American War, writing in a manner that is at once authoritative, unfettered by questions about his credibility, and devoutly attached to the U.S. mission to liberate nations from so-called despots. His coverage of the Port Arthur massacre in China during the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 is particularly exemplary of how Creelman deploys a sensational mode of writing to underwrite a narrative of national liberation.

Creelman’s method of commenting on “domestic” problems through the “foreign” echoes Kaplan’s observation that the “cultural phenomena we think of as domestic or particularly national are forged in a crucible of foreign relations” (Anarchy 1). For example, in the collection’s first report, he recounts an interview with the Pope. He relates seeing in the Vatican an image of cowboys and Native Americans, “a rude group,” together being “blessed . . . again and again” (Creelman 30). The visceral foreignness of the Pope described throughout the report is made familiar by exporting onto a foreign stage a scene legible within an American context. This scene, a fantasy of a Native American and “cowboy” reunion, is less real on domestic U.S. soil for Creelman. If only the simplicity of the conflict were made clear, he seems to say, such problems would cease to exist. A history of violence and imperialism in the U.S. is overwritten with a narrative of reconciliation via a foreign land. The Pope stands in as a civilizing force and Creelman posits himself as an informant about proper governance. While the piece on the Pope explicitly aims back to a domestic U.S. context, Creelman’s
other pieces do so implicitly via conflicts that seemingly do not involve the U.S. at all.

Creelman’s coverage of the Sino-Japanese War is a case in point of the rhetorical formation of anti-imperial imperialism as he couches a salvific narrative within a fetishistic attraction to massacre. In general, his Sino-Japanese War writings are marked by a sense of duty to the profession and lessons for the American reader about the role of nationalism in an emerging American empire. In geopolitical terms, the war signaled an occasion for the United States to further involve itself in the region after having already “opened” Japan up to trade. With the U.S. state having a historical relationship to military and diplomatic presence in both China and Japan, newspaper reports might have remained resolutely non-committal with patriotic overtones so as not to disturb the balance of opinion. However, with the establishment of the U.S. navy and the growing awareness of the weakening of the German and Spanish colonial possessions in the Pacific with the Philippines and Samoa, correspondents could take a different approach. Siding with the Koreans, correspondents could demonstrate that Korea represented an exemplary government with a homegrown insurgency against foreign domination, fighting in the spirit of the American Revolution (despite the fact that, ironically, the impetus of the war was an anti-foreigner—including anti-American—movement in Korea). In Creelman’s praise of the Koreans, he ends up criticizing the Chinese for their colonization of Korea while at the same time, lauding the Japanese.22

20 The Sino-Japanese War of 1894 was fought between China and Japan over the control of Korea.
21 The 1854 Kanagawa Treaty established the Japanese ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to United States trade, guaranteeing the safety of shipwrecked U.S. sailors and establishing permanent consul. This unequal treaty imposed on Japan by the U.S. exemplified how American interests were developing at the turn-of-the-century.
22 The influence of the travel narrative is most evident in these moments. In his depiction of meeting the
The depiction of the Port Arthur Massacre details the alignment between imperial power and the discourse employed in imperial news wherein moral authority relies upon one becoming a spectator to the world’s tragedies. Creelman complains about the lack of U.S. intervention into what appears to him a humanitarian crisis. In describing the moments before the event, Creelman provides a fantastical portrait of the Japanese commander, Yamaji. Standing above a battlefield, he describes him: “the battle seemed to bore him; it was too easy. There was not enough bloodshed” (103). The spectacle of the battle as overseen by an unaffected “Asiatic” who was “cold” and “stoical,” subscribes to the racial fear rampant in turn-of-the-century America—a fear that trafficked in the discourse of “Yellow Peril.” Such a depiction would suit the style of Hearst’s Journal, for whom Creelman was writing at the time, in that it posited the dangers of an imperialistic military officer embodying the kind of diplomat who could rule with the sheer force of charisma.

The scene of the massacre itself is highly visual, written with attention to dramatic conventions. Writing that the “most dramatic scene in the battle was yet to come,” Creelman clears space upon his theatrical stage for the killing (105). Watching his play from a hilltop alongside British and American attachés, he claims to see all the details of the battle that ensued. As Creelman’s watches with fascination, it is clear that he is less bearing witness to the brutality of state power, its actions turned upon unsuspecting

Korean king, for example, Creelman pontificates on how racial differences between the Japanese and Korean peoples lead to different if not opposite characters. Like travel writers, Creelman depicts a traditional tension between the war correspondent and the artist. When traveling through Manchuria, Creelman insists that he “would not dare to stop. An artist might tarry on the road and gather materials for his pencil, but a correspondent, responsible for the news, must not halt” (77-8).
civilians, than rendering the scene as a spectacle. A typical scene portrays “one trembling old woman, and only one, in that great scene of carnage, her wrinkled face quivering with fear, and her limbs trembling as she wandered among the slain.” How from a hilltop on the edge of the city Creelman was able to see the old woman is unclear. Journalism historians show that the U.S. State Department investigated the claims of the massacre, concluding that Creelman’s narratives were “sensational in the extreme and a gross exaggeration of what occurred” (Campbell 2001: 75). But it is in fact precisely because he cannot see the scene at such close proximity that he is able to imagine what happened—the imagined scene was vivid to such an extent that Creelman could see the wrinkles on the woman’s face. Rhetorically, Creelman asks, “Where was she to go? What was she to do?” (112). The questions function as a call for action, for U.S. involvement in the conflict, if not militarily, then at least discursively.

The lesson for Creelman’s American readers is oriented towards making a vociferous and patriotic citizenry that is led by a sovereign who is deeply involved in the everyday practice of living. In true travelogue style, Creelman posits the ideal, presumably American ideal, as between the two counter models for the United States, China and Japan. The two nations, he writes, are a part of vastly different civilizations. Nonetheless, the Japanese are victorious in Creelman’s mind because they are more patriotic in comparison with the Chinese who are “cold,” “passionless,” and who abide by “abstruse” systems and rule via an imagined connection to the sovereign (61). The implication is that while the massacre was a tragedy, it is better to be patriotic so that one is on the side carrying out the massacre rather than a victim of it.
In a war zone more directly related to the United States—the Spanish-American War—Creelman carries his proclivity to manufacture a spectacle of war to Cuba, where U.S. interest was of course more overt than in China. Focusing on the “terrible Captain-general” Valeriano Weyler, Creelman unabashedly describes the complicity of war correspondents with generating disdain for the Spanish in the run-up to the war. “American newspaper correspondents,” he writes, “tread the secret precincts of insurgent activity, in the shadow of the royal palace, seeing to it that the lamp of American sympathy was kept trimmed and burning brightly” (158). Weyler, for Creelman, as was the case for many others at the time subscribing to the reporting of the imperial newsmakers, was “the most sinister figure of the 19th century” (158). Creelman goes on to produce a highly caricatured vision of Weyler complete with physiognomic detail. The psycho-sexual imagery of the despotic ruler subjugating foreign peoples with intolerable cruelties is of course a familiar trope from the Orientalist canon.  

If the rendering were an example of cultural imperialism, one might assume that such self-consciousness in creating the textual attitude towards the Spanish leaders would be more implicit. Rather, Creelman states outright that he and other correspondents created a spectacle of massacre to outrage readers and motivate them to action.

Modeling such brazen action, Creelman ultimately finds himself participating in fighting during the Spanish-American War. In characteristic dramatic fashion, he writes that he became involved in the Cuban cause by uncovering dead civilians killed by Weyler’s local military commanders. “I made a vow,” he writes, “that I would help

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23 See Said (1979) and Grosrichard.
extinguish Spanish sovereignty in Cuba, if I had to shed my blood for it. That vow was kept” (167). As Campbell reminds us, yellow journalism is the “journalism of action,” a kind of advocacy writing that sheds light on examples of global misdeeds, and galvanizes to action individuals and nations.24 In reiterating the activist role of the yellow press, Campbell’s argument alerts us to the increasing separation between the imperial state and the empire of news—imperial news—which was far more adept at generating motivation for a cause than the state. Creelman at one point memorializes the yellow journalists, writing that they were unfairly accused [by the state] of pandering to the fears of its readers and “dishonoring international law,” when in fact, they (happily) “banished Spain from the Western hemisphere” and “released the Philippine archipelago from her tyranny” (176). Ultimately, Creelman’s anti-imperialist imperialism clearly accommodates U.S. state power in the case of the Spanish-American War.

When this rhetoric is transposed on a non-U.S. related war zone, the separation between the imperial state and the empire of news becomes more evident. This potential within Creelman’s writings, albeit brief and eclipsed by assertions of U.S. interests in the region, is suggestive of the gradual turn among correspondents of the imperial news apparatus against the alignment of a news apparatus as an arm of state power. For example, in a moment when Creelman sympathizes with the Korean predicament, particularly their subjugation as a colonized state, Creelman portrays the king and the nation as simply wanting to be “left alone.” Rather than pose a threat to neighbors or vie

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24 The “journalism of action” was not limited to foreign causes as Creelman points out, referencing the World’s providing of a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty by organizing immigrants, and the same newspaper’s resolution of the “bond conspiracy” under the Cleveland administration (Campbell 2001: 193;
for international prominence, he asserts that the state is cornered between two imperial powers—China and Japan—and thus left without adequate means for self-advocacy. Insisting on the validity of interviewing the Korean king, Creelman claims that such an assignment serves a noble purpose of unveiling Korea to the world: “[t]he American public must be allowed to see the inmost throne of the royal palace; American journalism must invade the presence of the hermit monarch—to touch whose inmost offence was punishable by death—see his face, question him, and weave his sorrow into some up-to-date political moral . . . . It may be intrusive, it may be irreverent, it may be destructive of sentiment, but it gradually breaks down the walls of tradition and prejudice that divide the human race” (62). Rather than converting or colonizing, Creelman’s mission involves making known the culture that is presumably foreign to Americans, opening it up to the sphere of visibility.25

While Creelman’s language of invasion and breaking down walls is telling of his willingness to pursue any means to fulfill his (and presumably American) interest, he does articulate an anti-imperialist critique that is ambivalent about the necessity for U.S. intervention. Perhaps concerned that the imperial news apparatus would not condone such anti-imperialist insinuation without an accompanying statement of American power, he complains that he must ultimately write for a “shrieking newspaper-worshipping American multitude” that he feels necessary to please (63). Creelman, rather resigned at the end of his report on the Korean king, complains that whether Korean independence is achieved or not, the nation will inevitably become westernized since “the gods of eternal

Milton xii).
calm cannot live with the god of the useful” (73). When he reports the king appeals to him for American protection against the Chinese, the discourse of appealing to racial solidarity with the king through war correspondence seems to find its practical solution, all the while providing confirmation to readers of American exceptionality.

Through the production of imperial news, Creelman is thus not simply a cultural imperialist—or a mouthpiece for the imperial state—but rather one who *doubly* denounces imperialism as a modern form of governance *and* asserts U.S. moral supremacy. This contradictory discursive formation leads him to express horror at mass killings, and to celebrate for the decline for empires around the world, opening up the possibility for an anti-exceptionalist critique just as he seeks to consolidate such exceptionalism. At the conclusion of his memoir, he recounts a visit made to a crypt of dead monarchs in Spain where a companion says, “‘Dead glory riseth never’” (173). During the Sino-Japanese War, the rise of China was the object of his obsession. During the Spanish-American War, he frequently reported on the decline of the Spanish empire. Creelman’s own motivation to “extinguish” the light on Spanish sovereignty mirrors this sentiment to do away with not only the Spanish, but also empires in general—a promise left unfulfilled when it came to American imperialism.

**Staging Imperialism**

Like more conventional readings of Richard Harding Davis that argue that the pinnacle of his career as a war correspondent was in popularizing the romantic myth of Teddy Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War, Amy Kaplan’s argument in *Anarchy*
depicts the romance of war in Davis’s historical romances as providing a spectacle of reconstituting the domestically disembodied white male body through imperial adventures like the Spanish-American War. With masculinity restored in these adventures, the violence of the colonial encounter is displaced, she argues, by a spectacle of a re-embodied American masculinity performed for domestic female viewers: “these novels enact not just the lust of the spectator but the lust for a spectator” (113). Davis’s *Soldiers of Fortune*, in this reading, dramatizes how a “self-contained white male body” emerges through a rejection of “feminization and racial otherness” while maintaining its mobility and flexibility “to make itself at home anywhere in the world” (106).

If Said’s model of cultural imperialism inadequately addresses the potential of imperial news to rival empire—as exemplified in Creelman’s rendering of non-U.S. theatres of war—Kaplan also insufficiently addresses this potential of anti-imperial critique in war correspondence. While she effectively points out the accommodation of imperial geopolitics through the anti-imperial salvific romances of war, she thoroughly elides the flexibility of the anti-imperialist discourse. That is, in the hands of correspondents like Davis, anti-imperialism is simultaneously a critique of imperialism and a call to be *more* imperialistic than the state, and only sporadically an accommodation, or equivalent, to statist imperial geopolitics. Her model falters on three specific grounds. First, Kaplan fails to consider correspondents’ varying stances on spectatorship, particularly its reproduction on the one hand, and its staging on the other. For example, Davis reproduces the spectacle in his description of Roosevelt in Cuba, writing that “[Roosevelt] was without doubt the most conspicuous figure in the charge . .
mounted high on horseback, and charging the rifle-pits at a gallop and quite alone, [he] made you feel like you would like to cheer” (*Notes* 96). And yet, in his description of the Battle at the San Juan Hill, Davis stages the limitations of newspaper renderings of the battle as far too “regular” and “heroic,” incomprehensibly depicting “men running uphill and swiftly . . . their eyes aflame . . . hair streaming . . . invincible” (*Notes* 97). Far from Kaplan’s notion that Davis blithely reproduces a spectacle of masculine heroism, Davis actually writes that the battle seemed rather a blunder, a “terrible mistake,” characterized by men “blindly following out some madman’s mad order” (*Notes* 97). This limitation in Kaplan is largely due to the second fact that she emphasizes historical romances rather than news memoir, arguing that fictional texts better provide “a cognitive and libidinal map of the geopolitical shift from continental expansion to overseas empire” (95).

Kaplan’s model, finally, also elides a third important point: the ways that much of turn-of-the-century imperial news was often founded on a distinction between state power and the power of imperial news. Correspondents like Davis only partially constructed spectacle to legitimate state power; more often, they opposed that power as it did not accurately represent what correspondents witnessed when in the war zone.26 As John Seelye has put it, if Davis is a cultural imperialist, he is an unconventional one: he “debunks contemporary myths, including those which licensed the imperial excesses of the day” (11-2). I would say, even more emphatically, that Davis undermines the collusion of the spectacle of the imperial news apparatus with state power.

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26 The slippage in Kaplan’s argument about the journalist’s non-ambivalence towards imperial power is most evident when she refers to Stephen Crane’s criticism of the role of war correspondence in his novel *Active Service* (1899). A war correspondent himself, she quotes Crane’s notion that a “war correspondent
Davis is distinct among war correspondents because he subscribes less to the generic codes of turn-of-the-century spectatorship and more to the character of the antebeellum filibuster. In modernizing the filibuster—in a manner more explicit than either Ralph or Creelman—Davis brings to our attention to the complex relationship between the news and the state, representing it in various ways through fiction and non-fiction, reportage and memoir. The filibuster allowed Davis to articulate the correspondent as internally conflicted about his relation to U.S. imperialism, supporting on the one hand the aims of expansionism, but antagonistic on the other hand to the negotiated settlements of geopolitical diplomacy and the culture of spectatorship inherent in the consolidation of empire. One might argue in Said’s terms that the correspondent is internally “contrapuntal,” afflicted by discrepant experiences, “each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its own internal coherence and system of external relationships” (Culture 32). Ultimately, Davis’s affection for the filibuster allowed him to address a hitherto missing aspect of war correspondent’s work: an interrogation of the imperial sovereignty that allows for the acts of violence necessary to sustain an empire. Davis demonstrates how the desire for a convergence of imperial power and the news forces the correspondent to face the limits of the imperial news they are meant to produce. When crossing borders, as a result, correspondents render witnessed instances of violence that put in question the usefulness of the generic elements of imperial news to consolidate narratives of U.S. imperialism. Imperial news can thus be understood as formed in a struggle between the pressures what is witnessed against the

arises, then, to become a sort of cheap telescope for the people at home…” (Kaplan Anarchy 113).
exigencies of spectatorship.

If we turn our lens to how Davis himself contributed the making of the profession of war correspondence, we can better read Davis’s writings, which aimed in large part to comment on his professional colleagues. At the center of his critique is his fascination with the filibuster.

A popular figure in 1840s at a climactic moment in westward expansion, the filibuster was largely forgotten by the time Davis invoked it in the 1890s. The figure’s relationship to the state has a long and complicated history, as well as a particular connection with the Americas beginning at least as far back as the seventeenth century when piratical adventurers pillaged the Spanish colonies of the West Indies. Since that early period, the filibuster has been an agent who navigated the public activity of empire-building with private industries like the press. Robert May emphasizes this notion of the private adventurer, defining the filibuster as an “American adventurer who raised or participated in private military forces that either invaded or planned to invade foreign countries with which the United States was formally at peace” (xi). In the 1840s, American newspaper publishers, while sponsoring expeditions, were pressured, often relentlessly, by the government to abandon their efforts as they interfered with empire-building projects of the state.27 At this earlier moment, westward expansion was at its height and momentum towards the U.S.-Mexico War was building. Travelers and

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27 Despite protestations by the U.S. government, Several newspapers sponsored filibustering expeditions on which correspondents would both participate and cover as news for the newspaper. See Brown 1967: 63-83.
adventurers participated in expeditions from the United States, in violation of international regulations like the Neutrality Law of 1818, for the purpose of revolutionizing certain states in Mexico, Central America and the Spanish West Indies.\textsuperscript{28} At the time, there was a need for someone to challenge what appeared to many, especially pro-slavery Southern Democrats, as a state-building bureaucracy that had run its course.

Since in the lead up to the Civil War, filibustering was a constant interruption to the workings of juridical and market-oriented geopolitics, no politician “dared defend [it]” (May 217). In an effort to control the adventurism through the law, foreign governments would constantly reiterate the facts that filibustering “violate[d] U.S. and international law, as well as specific treaties” (May 217). The law was in fact the mechanism for protecting imperial interests as competing empires vied to consolidate power by agreeing upon an “appropriate” division of colonies or spheres of influence. For example, when Polk in 1848 dispatched his minister to Spain to persuade the fading imperial power to sell Cuba to the United States, he had to first prevent filibusters from forcefully taking over the island-nation themselves and thus disrupting the negotiations. Working with U.S. commanders in Mexico and the Spanish government, Polk found himself in the awkward position of conspiring with the rival imperial power of Spain to prevent U.S. citizens from safely traveling across the Gulf of Mexico. Inspired by the bravado of the filibuster, war correspondents would accompany them, participating

\textsuperscript{28} The Neutrality Law of 1818 prohibited all military expeditions against “territories,” “dominions,” “princes,” or “states,” including its people with whom the United States was at peace (May 7). For an example of such a filibuster, see my reading of Kendall in Chapter 1.
themselves in filibustering expeditions. Returning from foiled expeditions or expeditions that simply failed, filibusters became first hand witnesses to the perils of being in the middle of a power struggle between the news industry and imperial power (constituted by the collusion of empires with the help of the law). Often, when filibusters would re-enter the United States in hopes of being welcomed as fellow citizens, they would find themselves in limbo, having broken international law and having transgressed an assumption that citizens would do nothing to disrupt the calculated empire-building apparatus of the state.

More than fifty years later at the turn-of-the-century, the state would again be a target for filibustering. At the time, many former military officers from the U.S.-Mexico War and the Civil War banded together to usurp Central American nations for the purpose of incorporation into the United States. These “soldiers of fortune,” as Davis wrote in *Real Soldiers of Fortune* (1906), frequently found themselves without recourse to protection of the nation-state of their birth. Describing Major-General Henry Ronald Douglas MacIver, he writes that he fought “not for a flag, nor a country, but as one fights a wild animal, for his life” (2-3). The lack of protection is evident in MacIver’s case when “returning from an expedition in Cuba he was cast adrift in an open boat and for days was without food” (5). Davis reflects on the filibuster as defined by his irreconcilable relationship to the state: “indeed, sometimes the only difference between a filibuster and a government lies in the fact that the government fights the gun-boats of only the enemy while a filibuster must dodge the boats of the enemy and those of his own

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29 This phenomenon of being abandoned on the battleground or at sea, would become the central point of
countrymen” (13). The state, as he writes, bans filibustering only to carry out the same activities on their own terms as Davis acknowledges occurred during the Spanish-American War.

Of the antebellum filibusters that inspired Davis, William Walker is the clearest example. Like Gordon in the “The Reporter,” Walker represents the challenge that the “soldier of fortune” brought to empire-building projects in his exploitations of the fissures between state and imperial state-formation. Walker was a particularly notorious filibuster who in 1855 organized to overthrow the Nicaraguan government of Patricio Rivas by allying himself with the opposition party. He eventually deposed Rivas, executed the secretary of foreign affairs, and rigged elections that crowned him president of the nation (May 48-51). Walker’s unpopularity with imperial powers was so acute that when he organized a second expedition to Nicaragua (after he was deposed for a first time), he was captured by British authorities. Instead of releasing him to the U.S. or making him a British P.O.W., the British handed him to the Honduran military, which promptly executed him for having disrupted the hemispheric and transatlantic trade routes between Central America, North America, and Europe.

In *Real Soldiers*, Davis frames Walker as a forgotten hero of the American republic who by undermining U.S. empire-building also revealed the potential of the United States to be more globally influential than it is. Symbolic of the American zeitgeist, Walker is depicted as popular among broad section of the public as well as among prominent writers like Bret Harte. Also, Walker’s filibustering activities reflect interest in Stephen Crane’s war correspondence.
for Davis a dislike of the “learned professions” that mirrors Julian Ralph’s notion of the war correspondent as defined by his rejection of the professions of politics, law, military or business. The “red tape of the law,” Davis writes, halted Walker’s pursuit of the law, making him realize that the “professional career did not appeal to him” (Real Soldiers 148). Walker’s anti-empire, anti-professional position enabled Davis to articulate a reversible anti-imperial position that could accommodate two opposing positions, one that was critical of empire and the potential for abandonment of the citizen by the state and another that was more imperialistic than the state.30 This latter position is manifested in Three Gringos in Venezuela and Central America (1896) where Walker represents the “spirit of get-up-and-go” that Davis believed was needed in the Central American republics (Seelye 210).31

Davis was not only dismayed by how Walker was seen in Central America, but by the U.S. as well. When the filibuster failed to create an independent state of Sonora between Mexico and the expanding United States as a pro-slavery state in late 1852—to create “an empire of slaves”—he, like MacIver, ended up in an unfortunate position of “crawling” back across the border, “footsore and famished” (159). Davis writes, “the little band that had set forth to found an empire of slaves, staggered across the line,

30 This is the essence of Seelye’s point that Davis surpasses the image of the filibuster when he writes that Davis adopts the “postfilibustering principles of the new imperialism” wherein “filibustering was no longer associated with the extension of slavery but the reverse—namely, lifting the heavy yoke of Spain from long-suffering Cubans” (211-3). The filibuster in this sense is not interested in establishing “an empire of his own” but rather to be a “representative of the new American imperialism” (213). Rather than surpassing the filibuster, however, I argue that the filibuster is himself a figure that Davis channels to enable this double discourse.

31 When Davis finds a statue “of the Republic [Costa Rica] in the form of a young woman standing with her foot on the neck of General Walker, the American filibuster (Three Gringos 146-7), Davis is scandalized by the rejection of someone who seems to him to embody the best of an independent, revolutionary ethos.
surrendering to the forces of the United States” (159). Walker’s demise ultimately came through “his own people” (Real 178), specifically against “his people’s” reliance on transnational capital flows and U.S. privatization of international markets by capitalists like Cornelius Vanderbilt.32 Walker’s attempts to hold the financier accountable for what he owed Nicaragua in unpaid transit fees owed to the nation created an enemy out of the man. In retaliation, Vanderbilt promptly proceeded to arm Walker’s neighbors in overthrowing him. Having disrupted American and British moneyed interests, Walker found himself handed over to Honduran authorities for execution (187). Davis took Walker’s liminal position, both as representative of state power and abandoned by it, as inspiration for his protagonists in several works, most notably, Soldiers of Fortune.

It is surprising that Kaplan would not address the prominent role of the filibuster—especially Walker—in relation to transnational empire-building or in Davis’s corpus more generally since the figure is central in his romantic fictions. On the one hand, Kaplan justly places the novel in the tradition of other romantic fictions that utilize the salvific narrative in relation to discourses of U.S. imperialism. The novel takes place in an imaginary South American town Olancho, like Opeki, that is ultimately usurped by the American engineer Clay, who is shown rescuing the city’s people from its resident dictator. Davis models Olancho after Santiago de Cuba, the city where the Rough Riders fought against the Spanish, connecting Clay to the Rooseveltian ideal analyzed by Kaplan. However, Clay is also the son of filibustering father, a mantle he undertakes in his own adventures, effectively placing the romantic hero in the same tradition as

32 Vanderbilt controlled the Accessory Transit Company, which shepherded ships across the isthmus that
filibusters like Davis. But on the other hand, in positioning the filibuster in contention with empire-building, Davis implicitly raises the question of both the legal and discursive forces that outlined the parameters of state sovereignty. Exposing these points of pressure, Davis articulates war correspondence as a platform from which to comment on U.S. imperialism by turning attention to scenes where state sovereignty is noticeably absent. Because of his sympathy with this role that navigates at the edges of state power, Davis found his own work as a war correspondent generally amenable to the subjectivity of the filibuster, precisely because he witnesses that which eludes the jurisdiction of the state.

But how did Davis’s use of the filibuster to leverage his disagreements with U.S. imperialism shape his conception of the modern war correspondent? Moreover, how was the “soldier of fortune” more than just the figure of romance that Kaplan insists upon? In Notes of a War Correspondent, Davis suggests that the fundamental challenge of modern war correspondence was to resist re-producing a spectacle. Giving in to marketplace demands would result, in his view, to an abrogation of both the realities of war and the subjectivity of the war correspondent as a witness. The most famous moment that highlighted Davis’s dislike of spectacle came with his famous resignation from the Journal when Hearst changed a story about a strip search of Cuban women by women to one conducted by Cuban men, publishing the story alongside suggestive illustrations by divided the Atlantic from the Pacific.
Remington (Figure 14).\textsuperscript{33} The incident represents a larger pattern in Davis’s work where he satirizes how his fellow correspondents rely on spectacles in their war correspondence and criticizes the foolishness of the manufactured image of the war correspondent as a romantic hero.

For Davis, this critique was not only important in sustaining war reporting as a noble calling—as he certainly believed it was—but also in ensuring that witnessed accounts of the violence of the war zone, its colonial contexts and geopolitical import, were not effaced. The representation of such violence is evident when, for example, Gordon’s manufactured news reports in “Reporter” cause Opeki to be bombarded by imperial powers competing for dominion over the land and enacting retribution for massacres against their citizens. It is this violence made possible by the correspondent’s reliance of spectacle that fundamentally disturbs Davis.

False representation by war correspondents was indeed the inspiration of much of Davis’s critique as it appeared to him as a simple prelude to (unfocused) military aggression. In his elegiacal memoir “The Passing of San Juan Hill,” Davis writes of the

\textsuperscript{33} This moment of contesting the producers of imperial news reminds us of a defining characteristic of was correspondence; that since its onset in the 1840s with Melville, it has been formed through a distinction
deterioration of Cuban land since the Spanish-American War. His hope for a better use of the farms implies his underlying antagonistic relationship towards U.S. state bureaucracy, which had taken control of the nation’s finances and foreign affairs. The criticism additionally slights the American-instated puppet government of Cuba as Davis writes as if longing for a “return” of the land. Yet, despite his best efforts, Davis cannot celebrate past glories. Not only is the idealism of the Rough Rider campaigns lost, but so is the romanticized struggle between the despotic Spanish and the noble Cuban insurgents. Ultimately, Davis refuses to reproduce the story that the correspondents reported during the war as he bears witness to the failure of the drama rendered during the war to instill any lasting change in U.S.-Cuban relations. Some places “are meant for war,” he writes. “San Juan is not one of those places.” It looks more to him like a “sunny New England orchard” (Notes 115). Implicit in this observation is Davis’s rejection of the popularized reports of war and victory by fellow correspondents like Creelman.

In a different, quasi-satirical essay, “A War Correspondent’s Kit,” Davis takes aim at his fellow correspondents. The essay describes, as he writes, equipment useful for domains beyond those of war correspondence, “a kit,” he says for hunting, fishing, or exploring (Notes 239). Instructing correspondents for “what to bring” on a commission, Davis mocks popularized images of the war correspondent as a “rugged individual,” working under intense personal duress in the interest of delivering “the news.” Davis’s kit makes war correspondence akin to leisure activities. Anyone interested in “roughing it” can take his advice on what to bring to the war zone and use the same gear for the next
camping trip. Ironically, rather than promoting an attitude of “roughing it,” Davis consistently recommends against the conventional wisdom to “pack light,” since for him that only means being in “discomfort”: “[a]ny man,” he exclaims, “who suffers discomforts he can avoid because he fears his comrades will think he cannot suffer hardships is an idiot” (Notes 245). In sharp contrast to popularized images of the war correspondent, Davis’s correspondent cannot do without his modern luxuries. He goes on to mock a General during the Spanish-American War for choosing hardship over comfort a night before a battle (Notes 247). Davis ultimately restrains himself from editorializing about his own “kit,” instead presenting the reader with a catalogue of options, including brand names. Most likely commissioned by a newspaper to write in support of certain advertisers, Davis is reluctant to give in to the exigencies of popular images of the war correspondent, knowing that they do not sufficiently characterize the critical stance the correspondent maintained vis-à-vis state power.

This is not to say that Davis’s war correspondence was uniformly anti-imperialistic. It is the fluidity of Davis’s position in relation to U.S. imperialism that is compelling about his writings—a fluidity that Kaplan refuses to acknowledge in her attempt to categorize Davis as an apologist for the imperial state. In fact, Davis often vacillates on the question of advocating imperialism or not in his reporting. His anti-imperialist critique is clearest when he invokes the legacy of the filibuster insofar as these instances reveal a critique of spectatorship with the workings of the imperial news apparatus, while rejecting both spectatorship and imperial news models for war correspondence. Instead, he embraces personalized portraits of individuals ensnared by
the workings of modern geopolitics.

Davis’s portrait of the Cuban insurgent Alfonso Rodriguez is a case in point of how Davis’s critique of spectatorship and the revolutionary spirit of the filibuster create a conflict of representational practices in Davis’s own war correspondence. The famous piece, “Death of Rodriguez,” reflects the kind of “intimate storytelling” that Davis and other war correspondents would employ to pivot around the trappings of spectacle-oriented correspondence. In this case, however, Davis relies on an image of Rodriguez to glorify the anti-Spanish insurgency that ultimately served to incite support for annexation of Cuba. In the portrait of Alfonso Rodriguez, Davis puts himself in the position of an “unwilling spectator” to Rodriguez’s execution, struggling to reconcile the fact that he is indeed a spectator and as such prevented from having adequate insight into Rodriguez’s internal plight. Neither sensational nor sentimental, Davis writes that “although Rodriguez could not know it, there was one person present when he died who felt keenly for him” (Notes 3). Davis here seems resigned to being a spectator, and yet one who is self-conscious of the fact that such a position is thoroughly bereft of political agency. Davis is both rendering a spectacle and implicating himself within it, aware that his only capacity for political critique lies in generating common “feeling” for Rodriguez.

Kaplan is partially correct when she argues that in such works as “Death of Rodriguez,” Davis constructs a recuperated masculinity in imperial adventures abroad which, through “triangulat[ing] with the reporter and the domestic audience, [Davis] denies the existence of political resistance to imperialism, even in the act of war against those resisters . . . . This invisibility also had to be produced ideologically, to deny
Cubans and Filipinos representation as equal contestants in political struggle . . .

denying [the colonized soldier] political agency and by extension masculinity” (Anarchy 115). However, one can argue that Davis recuperates his masculinity via his depiction of Rodriguez. However, because Davis is insufficiently convinced that spectatorship—his own included—can lead to political action, I would argue that the colonized soldier in this circumstance is not denied political agency. In fact, opposite of what Kaplan argues, it is through Rodriguez’s masculinity that he maintains agency. Davis repeatedly emphasizes Rodriguez’s body throughout the piece: his “gentle face,” “wistful eyes,” and “curly black hair” (7). Imbued with “bravado” and “fearlessness,” Davis compares him, somewhat scandalously, to Nathan Hale, an American spy executed by the British during the Revolutionary War. Linking him to an anti-colonial legacy across the hemisphere is less akin to the salvific narrative exemplified in the conventions of imperial news than in a common filibustering sentiment that Davis shared with the insurgent.

Davis’s reporting on the Second Boer War (1899-1902) is another case wherein his war correspondence was forged by negotiating his views on spectatorship with those of his critique of state power inspired by filibusters. During the war, he converted his political positions based on the admiration he gained for the spirit of private armies. For most correspondents covering the war, the conflict was a classic underdog parable where

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34 Conventional readings of “Death” characterize Davis as “de-racinating” Rodriguez for his American readers. Chettle argues that such statements like “[he] looked more like a Neapolitan than a Cuban” indicate how Davis was attempting to speak to and in contention with “his readers and their prejudices” (94).

35 The conflict was mainly a struggle for land between the Boers, who were Dutch immigrants from the 18th century who established republics in South Africa in the nineteenth century while the nation was a British colony. The discovery of gold in the two republics (Orange Free State and the Transvaal) led to massive immigration by the British and a fight for control over the land.
a large imperial army, of the British, was fighting a small insurgent force of the Boers. Davis accompanied the British general Buller, writing his initial dispatches from the British perspective. As the war progressed, however, Davis grew weary of the dominant perspective. The “obvious and dramatic side” of war, he writes, “is the one that most people see.” On the dramatic sides, he explains “aides gallop on and off the stage and the night signals flash from both sides of the valley” (Notes 195). The “other” side consists of private struggles of individuals in the war zone: a proprietress of the hotel who cannot leave the country, or a correspondent writing to his loved ones at home, and scrounging for supplies for the “ponies” (Notes 196). Davis pivots away from the theatrical dimensions of war correspondence and profiles these personal struggles as the real subject of war correspondence.

Such a subject arises as he learns more about those involved in the fighting for the Boer cause. In a hotel scene with war correspondents, Davis represents a party of foreign volunteers who joined in the Boer effort against the British. The foreign volunteers, Davis describes, “were from every capital of Europe, and as each took his turn around the crowded table, they drank to the health of every nation, save one” (Notes 189). The hotel, owned by an American, is the venue for housing in and supporting the volunteers, providing Davis with an image of anti-imperialists contributing to an independence movement, a cosmopolitan scene that reflects the “safe space” for those who are outsiders in their own nations. The hotel scene further connects the war correspondent to the filibuster, as they both occupy the same precarious relationship to the state.

The Boer War, while instructive for Davis in teaching him how to resist the
theatrical aspects of battle, also leaves him with an unfulfilled longing for action. Davis insists that the foreign volunteers are not “soldiers of fortune,” filibusters, who “fight for gain,” but simply “liberty-loving” adventurers who have an ideological stance against empire (Notes 190). Differing from the cosmopolitanism of the foreign volunteers who discuss the relative merits of the Boer cause, Davis nonetheless seeks to “act” in the vein of a filibuster, working less in the idiom of geopolitical debate than revolutionary action. He fully acknowledges such desire when he confesses at the onset of another battle when he writes that he is resolutely thankful for the chance to be a reporter, even if he refuses to relate his reports through the idiom of spectacle. Even when he is made prisoner, he admits that “nothing could be more satisfactory” (Notes 204). Davis’s inclination to action rather than debate makes him attentive to both the practice of war correspondence and what he might witness as a result of this practice.

Ironically, some of the most compelling instances of Davis’s practice occur when he ironizes what is unavailable to him as a war correspondent. These moments of “resistance” on the part of the subjects he aims to report on demarcate the boundaries of what is possible to say or represent in a time of war. Instead of manufacturing a spectacle, Davis ironically titles his report from the Sino-Japanese War as “Battles I Did Not See.” As exampled from the title, the piece acknowledges the failure of the reported, spectacular accounts to explain the conditions of war. It is clear from the writing that Davis is constrained by the mandates of the newspapers for which he works to relate something spectacular regardless of the conditions on the ground. In the case of the Sino-Japanese War, Harper’s asked him to follow the rules set up by the Japanese. Davis’s
discovery that this would entail outright censorship of the battle most strikingly stages his entrapped position between the newspaper and his sources. He resolved to not report since he was only allowed within four miles of the scene. Relating that he “never went on a campaign in a more delightful country nor with better companions,” Davis asserts, “but his newspaper is not paying for a “camping trip” (221). The entrapped position between needing to produce something “magnificent” in the vein of Creelman and something he actually witnesses results in a vitriolic diatribe against the Japanese who he dismisses as duplicitous for misdirecting the correspondents away from the war. No doubt aware of the spectacle-oriented nature of imperial news at the turn of the century, the Japanese authorities successfully thwart U.S. and British war correspondents from covering the war. Davis, however, does manage to produce a witnessed account. Upon finally leaving the Japanese authorities, Davis describes how he ventured to Hai-Cheng, where he along with other correspondents were imprisoned: “[w]e found the compound glaring in the sun, empty, silent, filled only with memories of the men who, with their laughter their stories and their songs had made it live” (Notes 225). This story that portrays the correspondents’ own reflections of imprisonment does not make it into the body of war correspondence’s template of imperial news. It does not fit the needs of the newspapers, but Davis certainly senses the fact that it is the real story of the war.

More so than his fellow war correspondents, Davis wrote in a manner that challenged the convergence of journalism and state power. Like early antebellum practitioner George Wilkins Kendall, who in his late war correspondence overtly criticized the army during the U.S.-Mexico War, Davis complains in “The Battle,” that
officer casualties were too often caused by a commanding officer’s neglect (Notes 86).

“The Reporter”

Of all his work, however, the “The Reporter Who Made Himself King” most effectively warns of the union between the imperial news apparatus and state power by staging the consequences of such a convergence. The satirical tale presents us with a dense node of meaning about the nature of cooperation between U.S. war correspondence and the imperial state. Discursive, technological, and cultural: the pressures that the short story unveils through the protagonist’s witnessing helps us better understand the divergence between Davis’s own hesitations about U.S. imperialism and imperial news apparatus’s turn towards making correspondents agents of empire. While placing the war correspondent in the transnational context of the filibuster, the story ironizes that which imperial news celebrated—in particular, the coming together of technologies of communication with private enterprise and its corporate obsession over profits. The tale exposes the role of the imperial news apparatus in manufacturing corporatized news, showing the extent to which the news understates if not elides the violence of imperial power. The war correspondent is both a witness to the violence and blissfully oblivious of it—it is this latter ignorance that Davis seems to acknowledge as the underside of a profession that was becoming less interested in living up to its potential of providing anti-imperial critique and more interested in becoming a news gatherer for state.

The narrator of “The Reporter,” much like Davis at the time, is a youthful, ambitious, sardonic journalist who seeks to move beyond what appears to him as the
provincialism of old journalism. Contrasting Victorian notions of apprenticeship with the global perspective of journalism in the rapidly changing political world of the late nineteenth century, the narrator of “The Reporter” distinguishes what he calls the “Old Time Journalist” from the new journalist. While the former works his way up the ranks, from “office boy” to typesetter, to stenographer, until he becomes a “real reporter” the new journalist enters the fray of reporting without much training, but rather simply with a desire to work—not for pay—but in the vein of Julian Ralph, “for the paper”: “[h]e gives his time, his health, his brains, his sleeping hours, and his eating hours, and sometimes his life, to get news for it” (“The Reporter” 142). This amateurism exemplified by Davis’s idols, non-journalists like MacIver and Walker, is in fact what qualifies the turn-of-the-century correspondent as a “professional.” Precisely by being an outsider to the profession, the “soldier” defines what does and does not make a professional.

When Davis draws inspiration from transnationalist figures like the filibuster, he does so with the understanding that domestic nation-centered models no longer fulfill the needs of modern reporting. In “The Reporter,” figures from the Civil War, for example, are ineffectual and unable to adapt the changing geopolitical conditions. When the former Civil War hero and newly-appointed American consul to Opeki, Captain Travis, complains about the boat ride to the island, Gordon responds with a racialized fantasy of reunion after the Civil War: “‘Oh, it won’t be so bad when we get there,’ he claims; ‘they

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36 Davis himself could not maintain an apprentice-based professional education. Having dropped out of Leigh University and Johns Hopkins, he followed his father’s profession as a newsman. Lempel Clarke Davis, editor of the Philadelphia Public Ledger. He eventually moved to Charles Dana’s New York Evening Sun where he would begin to write in what became a characteristic melodramatic style, covering such controversial subjects as abortion, execution, and suicide. When he began to cover the foreign wars that occurred later in his career, he retained his attentiveness to the domestic. In his war correspondence, as
say these Southern people are always hospitable, and the whites will be glad to see anyone from the States’” (149-50). Gordon projects the racialized Reconstruction reunion narrative of whites and blacks working together for the unity of the nation, upon an international arena, where the narrative is marshaled to create a sense of hemispheric solidarity. Far afield from Travis’s notions of modern politics, these new ideas compel Travis to leave the island. He bluntly summarizes the reasons for his departure: “Opeki,” he says, “is just a bit too far from civilization to suit me” (159). With the representative nation-state-centered politics taken off stage, Davis sets Gordon up to exemplify the “real soldier” of modern wars: the filibuster-journalist.

If the Civil War hero is ill at ease with the new, anti-imperial transnational model, the British are also too antiquated in their conception of global politics. Bounded by geographical concerns and undemocratic monarchical rule, the Bradleys, an English couple, become servants to the American Stedman. Vehemently against monarchical rule, Gordon embodies the new correspondent as filibuster with roots in an imperial state, seeking to govern as an anti-imperialistic imperialist. Stedman aptly iterates this militaristic anti-monarchical sentiment, claiming, “[d]emocratic simplicity is the right thing at home, of course; but when you go abroad and mix with crowned heads, you want to show them that you know what’s what” (163). Davis demonstrates that the goal of the Americans is not to usurp the island’s government, but to unseat imperial power more

a result, he is especially concerned with showing the interwoven spheres of the foreign and domestic. Gordon takes up this narrative of reunion in “Battles I Did Not See” in the context of the Sino-Japanese War, depicting “white men and colored men, veterans and recruits and volunteers, each waiting for the battle to begin or to end so that he might be carried away to safety…” (Notes 91).

Knowledge comes not from national forbearers, but the legacy of British colonial adventurers like Henry Morton Stanley. The invocation of Stanley places Gordon firmly within the tradition of imperial news,
generally.

In addition to representing the new war correspondent as antagonistic to Victorian models of professionalism and European imperialism, Davis depicts Gordon as shockingly detached and uncritical about violence. As Davis writes, before Gordon’s arrival at Opeki, he covered domestic events with a lust for violence, “dream[ing] of shattered locomotives, human beings lying still with blankets over them, rows of cells, and banks of beautiful flowers nodding their head to the tunes of the brass band in the gallery. He decided when we awoke the next morning that he had entered upon a picturesque and exciting career…” (144). Unable to grasp the extent of the violence “on the spot,” Davis paints Gordon as reflective—not about the human costs of the tragedies he covers, but the potential of these events to be rendered visually, as Remington must have imagined when illustrating for *The Journal* (Figure 14).

Davis portrays this desensitization to violence ironically as the training needed to become an arm of the imperial state. The war correspondent, distinguished from past models and from the interests of European monarchies, should act as if neither violence nor race were a part of his mission. When a German warship arrives on the scene claiming the island as a colony, Gordon is drawn out of his diplomatic and literary pursuits into a bombastic anti-colonial warrior poet, protecting the island from foreign invasion. Davis depicts him as rapidly becoming sovereign ruler of the island by protecting one tribe from the other; mirroring the colonial misadventures of Conradian

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although, he discovers such acts of trade are ineffectual in garnering the good will of the Opekians. The only significant mention of race shows the Opekians admiring in fascination the white skin of the Americans: “Messenwah was more impressed by their appearance, and in the fact that they were white
heroes, Gordon’s protection of the island becomes a conquest of it. He lambasts the Germans, reinvoking domestic metaphors in an international arena: “‘that’s just like those monarchical pirates, imposing upon a poor old black’” (186). Davis stages Gordon’s own piratical lawlessness onto the Germans, showing how this reversal allows Gordon to simultaneously be anti-imperial and more imperialistic than the Germans. When Gordon discovers that one of the kings had previously sold the island to the German ship of war, his anti-imperial bravado ratchets up, vowing to usurp German rule. Davis renders Gordon as arrogantly oblivious to the irony of anti-imperial imperialism, mocking the correspondent as glibly stating that the mission is simple: “all we want to do is to, improve [the island], and have the fun of running it for them and meddling in their affairs of state” (“The Reporter” 186).

When recounting the news of this “transition” of power over the telegraph wire to a domestic newspaper office, Davis describes the two kings as having relinquished control of the island to Gordon, after the kings bestow on correspondent the name of “Tellaman,” meaning “Peacemaker”—a name that ironizes Gordon’s actions. The German ship fires a shot, dislodging an American flag. As soon as Gordon wires a message about the damage to the “home office,” the office proceeds to receive “over two hundred queries for matter from papers all over the United States and Europe” (“The Reporter” 209). The correspondent quickly realizes that the night editor has rewritten his relatively bloodless account, embellishing it to describing a great massacre. The night editor, a product of the assignment system, becomes the filter through which imperial men, than with any threats of immediate war” (Notes 182).
news is communicated. Davis proceeds to satirize the process by which these events become news via transmission through the professionalization of journalism and the privatization of the means to disseminate the news via telegraph companies. Knowing that such sensationalism would drive up the stock price of the Yokohama Cable Company, the editor embellishes news stories with one hand and invests in the company stock with the other. He explains: “I killed off a hundred American residents, two hundred English, because I do not like the English, and a hundred French… and then I waited anxiously to hear from you to substantiate what I had said” (“The Reporter” 216). Davis describes Gordon as nervous about fabricating a massacre—though he is unclear about the precise reasons for his disapproval. Without recourse to undo the editor’s exaggerations, Gordon wonders if he should “kill a few people [himself]” (“The Reporter” 209).

Incensed by news stories of German, French, and American deaths, warships proceed to bombard the island under the pretense of protecting imperial interests. On the one hand, Davis illustrates how the convergence between imperial news and state power effectively “professionalizes” Gordon as a war correspondent, becoming for him “a tremendous chance for descriptive writing” (“The Reporter” 205). On the other hand, Davis shows how the manufacturing of a massacre on the island makes Gordon nervous about the implications of his actions. Ruefully, he claims that he “never wrote more and said less in my life . . . . I had to pretend that they knew all that had happened so far; [the editors] apparently do know more than we do, and I have filled it full of prophesies of more trouble ahead, and with interviews with myself and the two ex-Kings. The only
news element in it is, that the messengers have returned to report that the German vessel is not in sight, and that there is no news” (“The Reporter” 211). Despite the fact that Gordon is committed to propounding war if only to further his career as a war correspondent or to make a name for himself as a real professional, he is reluctant to manufacture the news. He is here portrayed as a victim of the editor’s need to promote a war and the telegraph company’s need to increase its stock value.

In this satire, Davis exposes several different historical phenomena of the nineteenth century: the use of the Pacific islands as client-states, the stealing of Native American land by the U.S. government, transnational competition to gain spheres of influence, the fluidity of sovereign control during the rise of U.S. imperialism through the juridical logic of “unincorporating” territories, and the convergence of finance capital and the making of imperial news. Throughout the story, Gordon is concerned about the rightful ownership of the land, from both the rival king and the Germans, using this cause to support his own interests in taking control of the island via a sovereignty that is relinquished. The travel to Opeki becomes a proxy for waging an anti-imperial imperialist war that attempts to retain the Pacific islands as either friendly client states or American colonies.

At the same time, Davis shows how war correspondence at the turn-of-the-century too often compromised eyewitness accounts with spectacles that presumably counted more as news. Davis reveals both in the mixed-genre work of collected dispatches and memoir, Notes, and “The Reporter” reservations about the role of war correspondence to tell the story of the complicated terrain of contemporary geopolitics with its interwoven
relationships between information, technology, finance capital, the occupational pressures of war correspondence and political discourse in the 1890s. In “The Reporter,” he conveys much of his anxiety through the parody of the relationship between the correspondent and the publisher, putting on stage the latter’s religious adherence to the laws of market capitalism and the consequent constriction of the correspondent’s ability to witness. Such an interrogation of a major organ of the imperial state at the turn-of-the-century could not easily be digested even by Davis’s hagiographers. An homage written in 1906 could not but categorize “The Reporter” as exemplary of “a humor of a high level” (Maurice 145), hardly testimony to Davis’s more pointed staging of professional war correspondence and the U.S. imperial state.
Stephen Crane and the Aestheticization of War Correspondence

At the beginning of Stephen Crane’s Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), the newspaper takes a leading role as the context and imaginative center of the soldier’s experience of war. Written at the turn-of-the-century, at a watershed moment for U.S. imperialism, and at a pivotal moment for the newspaper industry, Crane introduces a war correspondent-in-the-making with the “youthful private” Henry Fleming. Locating the soldier-volunteer in his camp, Crane imagines Henry awaiting “on the spot” action, lying on his bed in a room with “cracker boxes” on one side and dishes on the other. Writing several years before he became a war correspondent, Crane presciently places Henry in a scene that would foreshadow his own long waits for battle when he covered the Graeco-Turkish War two years later in 1897. If waiting at all evokes calm for Henry, Crane shatters this serenity with the reality of imminent violence: “three rifles were paralleled on pegs” against a log wall and a makeshift chimney of “clays and sticks” threatened to “set a-blaze the whole establishment.” Meanwhile, overlooking the scene, a “picture from an illustrated weekly hung” on wall,” framing the soldier’s experience in the present and presaging the battles to come (*The Red Badge* 4). Interrupting the calm of the soldier’s camp, the illustrated newspaper hangs seemingly unobtrusively, but as we are not informed as to what the newspaper depicts, it effectively intercedes into Henry’s experience as a history waiting to be written, or in this case, illustrated. It warns of the fact that the soldier’s experience is constantly in the process of being documented and
potentially memorialized as an example of military bravery even before the soldier has been to a battle. As he waits, Crane explores Henry’s mind, finding it burdened with chivalric “thought-images” (5) of war, a formulation that recalls the illustrated histories of the Civil War as well as the production of the imperial news apparatus at the turn-of-the-century. As he explores Henry’s inner struggle, we see that Crane is effectively holding in abeyance this memorialization of Henry’s imminent battlefield—but to what end, one may ask.

In this first major work of his war fiction, Crane begins to imagine a way to get beyond the limitations of wartime representation—its reliance on spectacle, romance, and sentimentalism—not by rejecting these genres, but by exploring the making of them through the subjectivity of the witness to war. Generic models of war narrative emerge in the novel, but not as anathema to his imagination: rather as productive avenues to animate life “behind the scene” of an engraving. In Crane’s vision, the dominating themes of representing war at the time—race war, chivalry, and imperial triumph—are omnipresent. They can neither be dismissed, nor refuted with alternative forms of narration alone. Rather, they act as a canvas upon which he paints the living history of the witness to war and his testimony.

On the one hand, this opening scene represents the centrality of discourses like memorialization to contextualize the soldier’s experience. On the other hand, it documents and tells the story of a war witness’s subjectivity in the making—a

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1 In his research for The Red Badge, Crane had consulted with Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (1887-8) and the illustrated monthly, The Century Magazine (1881-1930). See Levenson (xxxviii) and Kaplan (“Spectacle”).
subjectivity that Crane would develop into an aesthetic form that, if incorporated with an honest rendering of what is witnessed, could become a narrative form that could cross racial and national boundaries. The strategy is apparent in the description of Henry’s room with its “cluttered floor” giving rise to a “square of whiter lighter,” that mingles with the smoke from the fire to create an effect of a burning white hot haze that clouds the youth’s mind—initiating a “little trance of astonishment” (4). Blood-like “crimson blotches” appear as “pages of the past,” newspapers with “thought-images of heavy crowns and high castles” (4). Henry’s subjectivity consists of a deeply conflicted imaginary space where he must negotiate what he witnesses as a soldier and the “large pictures extravagant in color” that cloud his mind; as Crane puts it, “his own picturings” (The Red Badge 5-6). The novel shows how the witness battles not with an “enemy”—a Confederate or another—but with the “thought-images” of glory, representations that would risk compromising the witness’s claim to the agency of a first-hand witness through his ability to testify to what he has seen. This scene that inaugurates Crane’s most famous novel renders witnessing as a process by which a figure testifies or is depicted as testifying—through narratives of interior struggle with prevalent discourses and representational patterns in a manner that forestalls the power of these discourses to constrain what is imaginable. Through testimony, Crane seems to say, the witness can finally contend with our discursive baggage and show that which we could not have

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2 Christopher Benfey articulates this paradigm of writing of “thought before action” as central to Crane’s aesthetic process (6).
3 Admittedly, Henry’s agency results in a return to chivalric heroism, an outcome that arguably reverts to Davis’s model of simply undermining spectatorship as leading ordinary soldiers to commit acts beyond their ability to understand. However, my argument is that at this early stage in Crane’s development as a war correspondent, Crane begins to experiment with a style that pushes beyond limitation and into a new
previously imagined possible.

My conceptualization of Crane’s witnessing aesthetic is indebted to Mark Sanders, who theorizes witnessing as opening the door to what was previously unimaginable, or in his words, “unanticipated.” Sanders contextualizes witnessing in terms of the law that established the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in 1995. When the TRC allowed the airing of accounts of violence that afflicted apartheid South Africa, it signaled a state coming to terms with its own unresolved history at a specific moment of national crisis. For Sanders, the TRC accounts compel because they have the potential to return and revise the original notions of the law and by extension, the meaning of justice—notions that had previously been unimaginable. As he writes, witnessing provides both evidence and acts as a “switch for directing legal proceedings toward goals not anticipated by the framers of the laws that instituted them” (4). This is to say that the law cannot comprehensively constrain the possibilities and implications of such testimony; with its “surplus meaning,” testimony can “shape transition” with new forms and transform the law’s “own anticipated ends” (1). Like Sanders, I see the capacity of witnessing to return and remake powerful discourses—genres and themes—at specific moments of crisis in nation-state formation. These discourses that have defined war correspondence from its beginnings get redefined in light of witnessed accounts. Serving partly as evidence, witnessing also narrates enough individual and collective struggle that they are never fully encapsulated by those powerful discourses. It is this process that Crane focuses in on to form his own aesthetic formulation.
paradigm.

Because Crane is interested in the processes of witnessing in general, he addresses a different problem than the specific power of particular discourses. Admittedly, he was sensitive to his contemporary obsession with imperial news and its reliance of spectatorship, but his interest was more with dealing with the challenges of being a witness in the first place. Witnessing, as he imagines it, allows an exploration of the internal processes that go into the creation of dominant discourses. It narrates the *interior struggles* of an individual trying to apprehend that which he sees before him, self-conscious of the discourses that have stifled former representations, and insistent that a new form must exist to represent what he sees—all in the interest of forming a claim to modern subjectivity. If representing the realities of war had been perpetually plagued with the problem of unspeakability, witnessing allows Crane to understand why, and subsequently shape his own narratives that seek to speak what must be spoken (Oliver).

Through an “openness” to existing representational models, Crane was better able to get at the narrative appeal of popular practices like celebrating the soldier-volunteer as the paragon of American bravery and self-sacrifice. In such a case in *The Red Badge*, Henry’s testimony of the fear in battle and the desire to flee shows Crane stepping behind the conventional representation of the volunteer to engage in an epistemological questioning of the popular image. Instead of disregarding the narrative power of discourses like imperial spectacle, he frames his war stories—whether they were fiction or war reporting—with sensational or spectacular themes, while incorporating witnessed accounts that infused the themes with an often disturbing irony. A consequence of this
practice is that while the witness may be “on the spot,” he is effectively embedded in the experience of his own witnessing—never quite physically within nor beyond the purview of the object of interest. As I will show, this liminal subjectivity yields the witness a status of both a mental outsider and physical outsider, that is, one who is dislocated as a result of his subjectivity, but also open to representing something quite radical by virtue of this position.

While much war correspondence throughout the nineteenth century functioned implicitly through this manner of incorporating witnessed accounts with existing representational strategies—including that of Crane’s contemporary Richard Harding Davis—Crane makes this process explicit and in so doing, conventionalizes the aesthetic. Like those who followed him, Crane recognized that this new aesthetic style permitted him to grasp the present through the unresolved legacies of the past, which were typically insulated within protective mythologies. Davis had implied that war correspondence could retain its authority by disassociating itself from the representational strategies of spectatorship and by tapping into the rugged individualism and anti-statist claims of the filibuster. Crane understood that this was a false choice. Both spectatorship and the image of the filibuster were a part of the same structure of modern geopolitics, and therefore both were necessary to incorporate in the new form of war correspondence.

What I am calling Crane’s witnessing aesthetic has typically been understood as indicative of his prescient literary “modernism.” In the introduction to Crane’s collected works, for example, J.C. Levenson argues that The Red Badge was the product of a “mature artist” with a unique ability to render “elusive” narration to produce an anti-hero
Crane sought to “inhabit inner life,” to become a “psychological novelist” who would contend with modern urban realities (xxviii-xxix). A subset of this argument declares that Crane’s journalism and war correspondence were central in developing his modernist sensibilities. These readings, too, see Crane as writing through the lens of the epistemological shifts in perceptions of reality at the turn-of-the-century—a phenomenon that Miles Orvell associates with Crane’s interest in the breakdown in the culture of replication exemplified by the advent of photography (104). Perhaps the most significant of Crane critics with respect to the role of journalism is Michael Robertson, who argues that the writer’s aesthetics developed out of his early newspaper sketches and continued throughout his career as a war correspondent when he began to mix “a boyish romanticizing of war and fighting men” with “a wide-ranging irony and an impressionistic attention to the process of perception” (142). While it is true that Crane was a pivotal figure in the development of a “modernist” war reporting aesthetic with all its epistemological interrogations, he was actually at the tail end of the making of this aesthetic process that had begun at least as far back as the antebellum period with George Wilkins Kendall.

Crane’s contribution is not simply that he plays with knowledge-formation in the war, or that he portrays an individual’s psyche in a time of war, though these are absolutely crucial to our understanding of Crane. Rather, it is that he conventionalized war correspondence into a literary form that both investigated the epistemological questions of war reporting and brought readers in contact with the lives of those in war

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4 See also Levenson on how the dual roles of journalist and novelist were a good combination for Crane’s
zones at a critical point in U.S. imperialism. In other words, Crane encapsulated what had been to this point an emerging, slowly forming phenomenon that began with travel writing, transformed into a visual medium during the Civil War, and became aligned with an “imperial news apparatus” at the end of the nineteenth century. As I will suggest in my reading of Crane’s writing after *The Red Badge*, and especially with the Graeco-Turkish War writings, the lives of those in the war zone in the transitional years that led to the twentieth century included those not previously depicted with such complexity—Greek war correspondents and Spanish peasants, individuals who were caught in the interstices of state power in general, not simply that of the United States. Ultimately, what modernist readers of Crane’s war works must contend with is the fact that the central context of U.S. imperialism and state power more generally is *central* in the making of Crane’s aesthetics, not a subordinate issue.

After all, shortly after he completed *The Red Badge*, Crane joined a filibustering expedition in 1896 to Cuba in the lead up to the eventual Spanish-American War (1898). The failed expedition resulted in his monumental short story “Open Boat” (1898). Crane subsequently journeyed to Greece to cover the Graeco-Turkish War (1897) as a war correspondent for Hearst’s *Journal*. This trip was only possible because the U.S. was concerned with its spheres of influence in light of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and entry into war by Europe. Furthermore, like Davis, Crane was fascinated by the filibuster who defined the limits of state sovereignty and by the same token, defied the legitimacy of imperial sovereignty. Largely overlooked or subordinated in critical

modernist imagination (xxxv).
appraisals, this context of state power can elucidate why Crane was so attentive to the trope of abandonment. As correspondents like Davis were just becoming aware of the lives of those in war zone as regularly abandoned by the state, Crane considers this phenomenon as the most pressing contemporary issue for war reporting. More than those who came before him, he witnessed how common it had become for ordinary people be caught in the interstices of imperial sovereignty while belonging to neither. And more than previous writers, he chose to make this the central theme of his reporting and fiction.

If critics have neglected the geopolitical context of Crane’s works, scholars who do place it at the center of Crane’s aesthetics tend to focus too exclusively on equating Crane with the ideological imperatives of the imperial state. Amy Kaplan, for example, reads both *The Red Badge* and his war correspondence as productions of imperial spectacle. I have previously shown (in Chapter 3) how Kaplan’s notion of spectacle is limited because it too quickly equates war correspondence and the workings of U.S. imperialism, effectively ignoring the complexities of newspaper production and embedded narratives of self-consciousness, attentiveness to suffering, and dissent within war correspondence. Here, I want to further contend that Kaplan, by virtue of this equivalence, essentially forecloses a discussion of war correspondence as having its own

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5 Kaplan’s recognition of Crane’s use of his contemporary culture of spectatorship to portray the Civil War reflects the standard reading of the novel as a critique of the war’s memorialization. While the novel is largely a parody of revivalist reunion narratives, with a critique of forgetting the promises of emancipation and the subordination of domestic subplots, Fleming is represented as desiring the martial ideal that the war was said to have invoked in the 1890s. For Kaplan, Fleming’s realization of this transcendent moment reinforces the power of the turn of the century mythography, although she also writes that the novel undermines this mythography by depicting the war as a spectacle (“Spectacle” 100). Kaplan reminds us of the scene of Fleming’s defection, where he sees a dead man next to a crumpled newspaper (“Spectacle” 101). Stallman on him as a satirist. Kaplan proposed in *Social Construction of American Realism* that Crane subsumed the anxieties of the late nineteenth century and its culture of imperial chaos.
aesthetic value—a problem that effectively excludes an understanding of the emergent internationalism within Crane’s aesthetic. Distinct from both the displaced political claims of Crane’s literary modernism or the spectacle-dominated reading of Kaplan, Crane is better understood as conventionalizing war correspondence into a form with a unique aesthetic form that emerges from an incorporation—not rejection—of prevailing conventions that conditioned war correspondence.6

In this chapter, I chart the development of Stephen Crane’s aesthetic of witnessing in his war works in three parts. First, I explain Crane’s imagining of the problem—its challenges and possibilities—in his early novel The Red Badge of Courage. I move then to discuss the development of Crane’s vision in his actual experience during the Graeco-Turkish War and the Spanish-American War—both experiences that responded to conditions of U.S. imperialism, the influence of the filibuster, and suggested a new, internationalist dimension to Crane’s aesthetics. I then turn to the realization of the aesthetic in Crane’s fictional works, concentrating specifically on the short story “The Open Boat.” This aesthetic, I argue, entails an incorporation of the prevailing conventions of race war, memorialization, and spectatorship with witness accounts of war in an effort to represent the unspeakable consequences of imperial violence through an allegory of abandonment by the state. In conventionalizing the presence of the abandoned subject in the narratives of war correspondence, Crane pushed the form beyond the limits that

6 My understanding of Crane and his witnessing aesthetic is most akin to what Andrew Hebard assesses is a link between turn-of-the-century artistic production and late nineteenth century questions of governmentality. Borrowing language from Giorgio Agamben, Hebard writes that at the turn-of-the-century, “literary history [entered] into [an] ambivalent ‘zone of indistinction,’” wherein this “ambivalence was conventionalized” (809).
fellow practitioners like Richard Harding Davis could not surpass.

I will conclude by reflecting on how an understanding of this aesthetic has been critical for future practitioners of the craft. For those that followed him, Crane’s work signaled the beginning of a form that lent legitimacy to war correspondence as not only a form of writing that deliberated on crucial questions of state formation and international relations at specific moments of geopolitical crisis.

**Witnessing before War**


No other war correspondent understood the problem and the potential within the spectacle of the heroic correspondent than did Stephen Crane. In a humorous memory of Crane in Richard Harding Davis’s *Notes of War Correspondent* (1910), Davis complained that the inexperienced correspondent at the Battle of San Juan Hill was posing. Crane, with his “long India rubber rain-coat” was “smoking a pipe” and perched at the crest of the hill, standing “as sharply outlined as a semaphore” drawing fire of the opposing army (Davis 125). Perhaps providing some friendly fodder for Davis—a consummate professional—Crane was likely parodying the gallant war correspondent-as-imperialist: the one romantically standing at the summit of the hill in the spirit of Caspar David Friedrich’s *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818) (Figure 15).

When Crane’s early war writing is put in relation to the imperial wars at the turn-
of-the-century, as scholars like Amy Kaplan have done, Crane’s use of spectacle is generally assumed to be uncritical—a view that is at odds with such parodies. In an influential essay on *The Red Badge*, Amy Kaplan writes that the novel traffics in the culture of spectatorship that was permeating the American mass-circulation press at the turn-of-the-century. As newspapers like Hearst’s *Journal* and Pulitzer’s *World* staged far-flung “exotic battles in European colonies,” creating a world that lacked geographical coordinates or historical specificity, Kaplan reads *The Red Badge* as similarly divorcing specific “political, military, and geographical” details from turn-of-the-century realities (“Spectacle” 78-9).7 Kaplan’s emphasis on the cultural context of spectatorship in the novel is certainly important as Crane was greatly influenced by prevailing representations of the war in his research for the novel. His central interest, however, was less in reproducing or even undermining the influence of spectacle than imagining how one experienced war rather than what one experienced.

What he began to explore in *The Red Badge* was what I will refer to as the “complex interiority” of the witness that began with raising the issue of authenticity or verifiability in dominant modes of representation like the spectacle by imagining what it meant to actually experience military conflict.8 His interest in the experiential nature of an event was partially related to the fact that Crane wrote *The Red Badge* without having

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7 Kaplan of course maps this “new arena” onto a domestic stage, arguing that it was important for Americans trying to make sense of social violence of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the Haymarket Riot of 1877, and the Great Pullman Strike of 1894 (“Spectacle” 88).
8 The term “complex interiority” comes from my adaption of “complex actuality” that I discuss in Chapter 1 when referring to Melville self-consciousness of the facticity of his witnessing and its more discursive elements. Here “complex interiority” connotes a similar phenomenon by which Crane self-consciously validates the interior struggle of the witness via familiar discursive formations—in his case, that of spectacle, memorialization, and American exceptionalism.
had first-hand knowledge of war. Far from a limitation, this “inexperience” allowed Crane to experiment with rendering the witness’s mind—the process by which he made sense of events in the war zone. One of the first pressing questions that he raises by speculating on the work of witnessing occurs in the novel as mental ruminations on the issue of authenticity. How does one authenticate the gravity of what one witnesses to others? When “the cheery man” tells of men “sawin’ off [a] leg” an injured soldier (The Red Badge 120), Crane shows Henry’s own knowledge of the incident as indirect, clouded by his fascination with his companion’s ability to “beat the ways and means out of sullen things” (121). This indirect testimony recalls the sketch by the “special” Alfred Waud, “Carrying off the Wounded after the Battle” (Figure 16), which depicts an uncensored “on the spot” amputation of limbs common during the war. Waud’s witnessed account is sanitized when reported in the engraved version in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated History—and so too is Henry’s testimony, which is obscured by his desire for the clarity and confidence of “the cheery man.” Crane is here narrating, or exposing, the process that had been made seamless with the reported version of the amputation. Crane “slows down” the

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9 See Benfey on Crane’s aesthetics of “writing before experiencing.”
mediation from witnessing to reporting, delineating with measured steps the youth’s perception—that is, his initial steps in making an incident such as the amputation representable. In Crane’s aesthetic vision, the witnessing that was only available to the cheery man “on the spot” has now become an integral part of Henry’s own developing subjectivity.  

What Crane was imagining was that “authenticity” consisted of the incorporation of first-hand experience with popular conception. The volunteer was one popular figure that Crane adapted to address common perceptions of war. As Crane well knew, the Civil War saw the beginnings of the modern American volunteer army where an unprecedented number of ordinary civilians joined the army. Their stories in newspapers and popular novels would tell of patriotism and an overriding sense of duty instilled in them through tales of military success on the frontier. In contrast to these stories where the volunteer is seemingly at home in any environment in which he finds himself, Crane depicts Henry as both physically and psychologically “outcast.”

Ridden with feelings of great responsibility for who and what he represents, Henry first militates against the perceptions of his imagined reader. When he is overcome with the desire to flee the war zone, his most pronounced fear centers not on the act if desertion itself, but the inner thoughts that may lead to unsightly representations—what his family might read in the newspaper if they were to know the inner-most thoughts of the witness. Expressing the

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10 Crane would have been aware of the intensity of editorial expurgation, even at this early stage in his career. A good part of these visceral moments that capture the plight of the witness were eliminated when The Red Badge was originally published in serial form in the Bacheller syndicate in 1894. (Johanningsmeier 41; 109).

11 See Robertson for an explanation on how Crane generally directs irony against volunteers who he perceived as upper-class, brave, but incompetent men in the vein of the Rough Riders (155-167).
fears, desires, and contradictory impulses generated by being on the battlefield, he denies willing involvement in the war, railing instead against the government that forced him into serving (*The Red Badge* 17). The youth’s perspective, ultimately, is not simply that of a participant, but that of a witness who is attempts to communicate his fear, struggling mightily to contain his own horror.

Crane shows the extent to which the witness is an outsider not only in terms of identity, expressed as Henry’s sense of being a “mental outcast” (*The Red Badge* 15). Contrary to modernist readings that would posit this self-alienation as a testament to individual development be later overcome in adulthood, the individual ironically becomes in fact less and less important in Crane’s vision. Whereas previous representations of the war zone involved individual personalities and portraits singled out as representative of the whole, Henry belongs to a universe of collectives rather than individuals. Just as war is allegorized into a “monster,” an unnamed and unnamable entity that represents something greater and more terrifying than any single experience can relate, so is the witness a product of multiple stories: “he became not a man but a member. He felt that something of which he was a part—a regiment, an army, a cause, or a country—was in a crisis” (*The Red Badge* 26). The ambiguity of “something” is telling insofar he cannot differentiate these delimiters of collective identity, all of which he feels like he should be a part.

The gradual move towards the collective identity is an agonistic one since, as I am suggesting, what this entails is the loss of the much of the basis for what war correspondence in an age of empire prizes, namely, the image of the heroic, “rugged”
individual trailblazing a path for conquest. One the one hand, Crane works against this model, describing Henry as discovering that war requires the “singular absence of heroic poses” (27). On the other hand, the individual as witness is prized as a kind of heroic figure, but one that denies himself an individual presence, disappearing into a body of episodes that he hopes will give substance to his stories. In the process of outlining the subjectivity of the witness as a collective one, Crane captures the inexpressibility of revulsion, anger, and horrors of war experienced by the figure—at multiple points in the narrative, these emotions run up against the limits of what is speakable. If such feelings were unimaginable much less unspeakable in previous iterations of the witness to war, the process of narration through the eyes of this witness who see himself as part of a collective makes them at least possible.

Certainly, Crane stops short in The Red Badge of transitioning these imaginative ruminations into a lasting representation—something that he would develop in his actual experience as a war correspondent. Henry effectively loses his capacity to witness his own wartime experience as his subjectivity turns to an enchantment with war. What Crane imagines possible, however, is central to understanding his future career as a war correspondent. Such possibility is most evident when compatriot Jim Conklin dies before Henry. The witness animates the sensational and yet, immanence of what lies before him, asking, “[w]as he to be the tortured witness of another grim encounter?” (47). In a passage that eloquently and persuasively communicates Henry’s subjectivity as a witness and his pervasive guilt at not being able to be more, Henry reflects while standing at the threshold of battle: “his mind pictured the soldiers who would place their defiant bodies
before the spear of the yelling battle-fiend and as he saw their dripping corpses on an imagined field, he said that he was their murderer” (53). If spectatorship allowed viewers to distance themselves from the object being represented, the witness acknowledges a degree of complicity drawn from a sense of collective guilt in inflicting violence on others. Like in the opening moment of the novel when the haze rises and clouds Henry’s vision, the witness’s sight is tinted with the possibility that he may in fact be nothing more than another killed and abandoned subject on the battlefield—a possibility that always haunts the war correspondent as Crane discovered when he traveled to Greece.

“Majestic Commonplace” of War

If Davis implies that Crane was a naïve war correspondent who put himself and the army in harm’s way simply to prove a point, Crane’s own experiences reveal how he had good reason to want a new way of being a war correspondent. He had just returned from covering the Graeco-Turkish War and before that, he survived the failed filibustering expedition to Cuba, in which several of his crew drowned off the coast of Florida. Both of these experiences opened him to the internationalist dimension of war correspondence and to the possibility that the form had not sufficiently addressed the complex interiority of the witness in the context of modern state power. In other words, war correspondence needed to represent more accurately the realities of war.

When Crane set out to cover the Graeco-Turkish War in 1897, newspapers already were attuned to the conflict’s connection to other anti-imperial struggles. What turned out to be a brief struggle over the status of Crete, the war pitted the Ottoman
Empire against a Greek “insurgency,” which the press generally supported. The Greek revolution garnered much interest in the United States at the time for reasons not in the least to do with advocating an anti-imperial imperialism that mirrored the kind of revolution many newspaper proprietors supported in Cuba against Spanish rule. Crane captures some of this feeling in his late novel *Active Service* (1899) when the owner of a popular sensationalist newspaper requests the war correspondent Coleman to gather a “Cuban volunteer battalion,” in response to which Coleman asks to go to Greece (*Third 144*). The proprietor’s exuberance does not abate since as he claims, the Graeco-Turkish War is predicted to be the “biggest war of modern times—a war that may involve all Europe” (144). As this passage suggests, the struggles in Greece and Cuba were imagined to be caught up in a common geopolitical struggle. When during the war itself, reports showed Turkish forces clearly winning, one U.S. newspaper wrote in lamentation over the Greek losses, insisting that the world would have “had more respect” had the Greeks chosen to do “as the Cuban insurgents have done, turned guerilla and take into the woods and hill” (“Record and Review”). Not only did newspapers connect the two political struggles against imperialism, but acknowledged the international audience for news of the war.

Of course, the manner in which these two conflicts generally were reported did not address the differences in the political struggles, trafficking instead in a common idiom of spectacle. In the summer of 1897, for example, several New York newspapers including the *New York Times* announced “Manhattan Beach carnivals” of the Graeco-
Turkish War complete with “fireworks” and re-enactments (“Pain’s”). Another announced that “new specialty acts [would] be introduced in the Graeco-Turkish war spectacle this evening in Pain’s Open-Air Theatre” (“Graeco-Turkish War Spectacle”).

Unsurprisingly, Hearst’s own reasons for sending Crane to Greece relied on this culture of an international spectacle of war that had less to do with the political complexities of the conflict than with advertising to his readers the Journal’s coup of having the famous “author of The Red Badge of Courage” as a staff correspondent. The publisher was essentially capitalizing on Crane’s earlier failed filibustering experience to garner readership for coverage of the Graeco-Turkish War. In an indicative story of Crane’s celebrity status at the time, the Atlanta Journal published a story that hailed Crane as Henry Fleming:

The “The Red Badge of Courage Won”: Crane’s conduct in the perilous situation in which he found himself in the sinking of the Commodore is more than original, noteworthy and interesting. If Stephen Crane can in any way be associated with his novel, it can well be said that the proving of his courage has been as satisfactory and complete as in the case of the young soldier who won “The Red Badge of Courage.” (“Lost”)

It is of course ironic that Henry is considered courageous insofar as his “red badge of courage” is simply an accidental wound from a fellow soldier’s rifle, not to mention that Henry’s struggle throughout the novel is not with a Confederate enemy, but with his own fear of death.

This irony would not have been lost on Crane as his experience with Hearst taught

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12 The show was primarily about interweaving U.S. military might as a way to continue the legacies of Manifest Destiny. Gunboats would fire 500 shells at once and “blow up of a man-of-war in the ocean.” The spectacle also reached out other “frontiers” of the American geopolitical imagination as it included a “fire
him that the heroic figure in the war zone was productive, whether or not he existed. That is, Crane recognized that the heroic, individualized correspondent was a powerful symbol of American bravado under fire. For example, Hearst assigned correspondents to report on Crane himself (Levenson lxxii). John Bass produced one such report in which he wrote, “I was greatly interested to see how the Journal [sic] correspondent, the well-known novelist Stephen Crane, would act in a real battle. Your correspondent followed him …” (War Dispatches 42). Whether he knew he was being reported on or not, Crane seems to have used the opportunity of being watched to parody the correspondent by displaying an unnatural calmness in the war zone, lighting a cigarette while “seated on an ammunition box” (43). Just as he would later be a subject of derision by Davis for the same kind of carelessness, here he is projected as enviable and courageous for his casual self-endangerment.

If Crane’s attention to interiority aimed to show the challenge of rendering the effects of war on ordinary people—his witnessing—in light of the pressures of conventional reporting, Hearst’s projection of Crane as a heroic correspondent doubled that challenge. Bass’s pursuit of Crane suggests that not only were the reports under scrutiny by the imperial news apparatus, but so was the correspondent himself. Several parodies of Crane published at the time added to the coercive management of Crane. One mocked the adaptation of his contemporaries, “Richard Harding Kipling and “Rudyard Davis.” Another satirized his self-consciousness through the use of “I”: “I have seen a battle / I find it is very like what / I wrote up before.” Such self-awareness could have

picture descriptive of Klondike” (“Pain’s”).
been construed as acknowledgement of the subjective nature of reporting. The writer suggests otherwise. Even Frank Norris produced a parody:

A Mere boy stood on a pile of blue stones. His attitude was regardant. The day was seal brown . . . . The Mere Boy had been struck with seventy-seven rifle bullets. Seventy had struck him in the chest, seven in his head. He bore close resemblance to the top of a pepper castor. (*War Dispatches* 50-3)

Crane’s attention to the banality of death in the war zone, the sympathetic response to the lives of those abandoned in the power play between imperial states, is here turned into a grotesque assault on Crane’s aesthetic. In the idiom of the imperial news apparatus that glorifies the individual war correspondent, Crane himself is abandoned. The war zone is turned into a zone of imperial news that leaves Crane alone with his desire to witness the violence upon ordinary people.

This abandonment of Crane in Greece in addition to his theorization of the witness in *The Red Badge* sensitized him to the local struggle in Greece as a geopolitical one with real victims. Writing in the aftermath of *The Red Badge* and his failed filibustering expedition, Crane connected the bloodshed from the Civil War to the culture of spectatorship of foreign wars at the turn-of-the-century. In a passage that was missing from the works of the Civil War illustrated histories and those of Davis, Crane writes about a soldier who he finds dead on a battlefield. He invents a story about a young “foreign” man driven by patriotism to fight simply because he could, all to be shot without much drama, and whose body was lifted and “laid to the rear in order to get it out of the way” (*War Dispatches* 70). For Crane, meaningless killing presents a moment to witness—by weaving a story common across time and national boundaries that can be
told to connect the lives of those whose deaths would have been otherwise meaningless. In his own war correspondence, Crane thus incorporates elements of spectatorship into his war correspondence to reflect on what was first necessary to reproduce these romantic myths.

Race war is another popular discourse upon which spectatorship relied and Crane chose to put in terms relative to broader questions of violence. This discourse was of course one that percolated into all forms of war correspondence throughout the nineteenth century, from George Wilkins Kendall onwards. During the Graeco-Turkish War, even anti-war newspapers spoke of the “barbarous Turk” and the “freedom-loving” Greek (Trueblood 133). Such terms were indeed dominant throughout the short war, framing the conditions in which the one could imagine the conflict. The peace activist and Quaker, Benjamin Trueblood wrote that the conflict was defined by the “Greek will to freedom, Turkish atrocities and ‘the powers’ selfish, greedy, exclusive, barbarous spirit which ruled European international politics” (133). Indeed, as one critic put it, “hyperbolic Orientalist propaganda was the dominant discourse in America in the face of the alarming, but almost inevitable, defeat of the Greeks by the Turks and their German allies by the end of May 1897” (Boxwell 3). Contrary to reproducing the jingoistic tenor of these reports, Crane “steps behind” the representation to portray himself as a reflective war correspondent who does not glorify war as redemptive in the civilizational terms of race war. In describing the battle of Velestino, the major event of the war and the battle that Crane knew best, he wrote, “[t]he mind returns to the wonder of why so many people

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13 See Chapter 1 for an elaboration on “race war.”
will put themselves to the most incredible labor and inconvenience and danger for the sake of this—this ending of a few lives like yours, or a little better or a little worse.” He might well have been asking himself the same question about his filibustering experience which failed dismally and which he would eventually return to as the defining experience of his career as a war correspondent.

In a strikingly honest passage about the battle at Velestino, Crane returns to the theme of authenticity that he broached in *The Red Badge*. He writes as if exasperated by the obligation of the war correspondent to inform the audience of facts.

> Naturally, one wants now to be informed of the complexion of the battle. Who was winning? Was victory with the blue field and white cross of the Greeks? Or was it with the crimson banner of the Moslems? If a reader of a casual article of this kind wishes to know, depend upon it that there were men present upon the field who considered the question to be one of surpassing importance. But none knew. How could he know? The battlefield was spread over miles of ground. It had a multitude of phrases. *(War Dispatches 68)*

Crane narrates here from the self-consciously subjective position mocked by fellow correspondents to bring together the subjects of the report and the readers by interpolating the audience. He calls out the reader’s need to fulfill a template for understanding the conflict and then proceeds to undermine that satisfaction. If finding the proper language is the correspondent’s concern, he is all the more challenged by the “multitude of phrases” on the battlefield itself.

What is perhaps unsurprising but nonetheless revealing of this reportage is that these moments that step behind the representation are edited out in the version published in the *Journal* but maintained in their original form in the British paper for which Crane
was also writing, the *Westminster Gazette*. What does make it into the U.S. version of the article is the description of the Turkish army: “this army on the plain was a majestic thing. It expressed power – power – power.” In another passage, describing the flow of the forces, Crane is reported as writing “[w]hat was this thing? And why was it? Of course, Turks, Turks, Turks; but then that is a mere name used to describe these creatures who were really hobgoblins and endowed with hobgoblin motives” wearing “the black velvet mask of distance” (*War Dispatches* 71). In the *Westminster Gazette*, this latter passage reads like an ironic reference to what the readers knows about the Turkish army through the sensationalist news of the time, itself a satire of what the audience (and his fellow correspondents) want to read. In the version in the *Journal*, the “hobgoblin” Turk is the story.

While central to Crane’s aesthetic vision, genre play is only a part of what can be learned from Crane’s correspondence. His greater goal of incorporating the genres and discourses he did was to demonstrate the potential of abandonment of ordinary civilians—including non-Americans—in the war zone. A forceful reminder of the struggles of those abandoned, not only by memory, but also by the state, is presented in the story “Death and the Child” (1898). As Crane scholar James Colvert suggests, the story reads as if the author had set *The Red Badge* in Greece and had made Henry into a war correspondent (lxxviii). The story is about a young Greek correspondent, Peza, attempting to find his way into the Greek army to fight against the Turks. Crane imparts on Peza an awareness of the correspondent culture at the time, with its predilection towards spectacle. When Peza witnesses wounded soldiers being bandaged, his
observations elicit a hint of the changes taking place within the form. He notices the “triangular kerchief” used to bandage the wounded has on it “explanatory pictures illustrating the ways to bind the various wounds – ‘Fig. 1,’ ‘Fig. 2,’ ‘Fig. 7’” (War Dispatches 91). The figures remind us the images in illustrated newspapers signifying the meaning of the textual reports. Like the images, the schematics on the handkerchief serialize the pain of individual soldiers, providing a clinical treatment of what Peza can only comprehend as, in his words upon witnessing the killing on the battlefield, “‘these poor souls! – these poor souls!’” (War Dispatches 91). Crane juxtaposes the clinical manner in which the wounded are represented with the unspeakability of the witnessed account—an unspeakability that in fact speaks to a deeply conflicted subjectivity.

Desperate to join the fight and to show his patriotism in defending the Greek cause, Peza is also deeply afraid of war—like Henry—personifying it as a tyrannical sovereign. “He endowed it with the intelligence of barbaric deity . . . . [He] wished to surprise war, this terrible emperor, when it was only growling on its throne” (War Dispatches 96). Like Henry Fleming, Peza is internally fearful, but unable to act to allay the fear, caught instead in a state of perpetual postponement of his inevitable breakdown. In reiterating that he wants to fight, for example, the narrator reflects that “[his] voice surprised him by coming from his lips in even and deliberate tone” (War Dispatches 96). About to fight, Peza loses control of his body as the bandoleer attached to him “gripped him tighter; he wished to raise his hands to his throat, like a man who is choking” (101). Out of place and incapable of commanding his reporter sensibilities much less his emotions of fighting on behalf of his people, he embarks on what will certainly be a
failed expedition. In the end, Crane gives Peza a less generous outcome than he himself experienced in the beach in Florida. The young war correspondent’s efforts are hardly rewarded as his life ends before the eyes of a “sovereign child,” as he thinks only of the larger insignificance of his actions (War Dispatches 103).

War is allegorized as a “tyrant,” a “bad sovereign” that at once taps into the anti-imperialist imperialism prevalent in American political discourse and displaces the need for an overthrow of a foreign government with the need to conquer war itself. Crane’s aesthetic here reveals the international dimensions of abandonment, and places the war correspondent in a privileged position to witness these developments. The “monster” of war imagined in The Red Badge, is in “Death and the Child,” developed into a complete rendering of a political structure as well as a theological one. Here, the sovereign is the source of the correspondent’s fear and the one who watches as the correspondent dies. Putting aside theological influences—which were of course important to Crane imagination as the son of a Methodist preacher, I want to suggest that Crane was including in his observation the question of abandonment by political sovereignty that had permeated conceptions of the modern U.S. imperial state, and which he directly encountered in his Spanish-American War experience.

Crane’s involvement with the events surrounding the Spanish-American War allowed him to apply his developing witnessing aesthetic to the concrete conditions of U.S. imperialism. Like Davis, Crane connected the correspondent to the filibuster. In the

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14 See Benfey on the influence of Methodism on Crane’s work and character (21-38). See also Rowan.
lead up to the war, he joined a filibustering expedition in 1896 when he was commissioned by the Bacheller syndicate to cover the Cuban Revolution. Boarding the *Commodore*, Crane left from the filibustering port of Jacksonville with a group of Cuban insurgents and munitions. The doomed voyage would be the source for what many scholars believe to be Crane’s masterpiece, the short story “Open Boat” (1898), which tells the story of survival of four men at sea, including Crane, upon the sinking of the ship. The story, as well as Crane’s Spanish-American War experience, details the collapsing distinction between the filibuster, correspondent, and the abandoned subject. These three figures pivot off conventional renderings of individual heroism to highlight the human cost of imperial warfare.

Before “The Open Boat” was published, Crane recounted the details of the episode aboard the *Commodore* in the *New York Press* on January 8, 1897 in a piece entitled “Stephen Crane’s Own Story.” Already famous from his novels, *The Red Badge* and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), the *Press* could lead with the author’s name in the headline. In the report, Crane reminisces about the beginning of the voyage as a celebratory moment for him, ironically, not as a war correspondent: “[a]t last we began to feel like filibusters,” he writes, unequivocally associating himself with those around him despite the fact that the *Press* commissioned him to report on filibusters rather than be one of them (*Reports* 86).

Distinct from Davis and his implication of the filibuster’s disruptive potential, Crane explicitly lays out the figure’s influence over imperial politics. He writes that the figure was no longer someone who the correspondent aspires to be, but rather one from
whom the correspondent cannot be differentiated. When Crane takes up the topic in the fictional sketch “Flanagan and His Short Filibustering Adventure” (1898), he exposes how the practice was more than the efforts of a few adventurers to gain fame through a spectacle of U.S. power. The “flourishing filibustering industry,” he writes, is marked by an antagonistic relationship between the filibuster and the state: “[filibusters] can make the dome of the Capital tremble and incite the Senators to overturn benches” (Reports 94). If Davis opened up the possibility of a convergence between the filibuster and the correspondent, Crane’s writing in this period made this connection explicit by exploring the imaginative possibilities on the common ground of these positions. He not only illustrates how the war correspondent and the filibuster share assumptions about the inability of spectacle-oriented representations to speak about contemporary geopolitics, but also how the two operated at a unique vantage point at the edges of state power. In linking the two subjectivities, he connects the liminal position occupied by the filibuster in relation to state sovereignty to that of the war correspondent in a manner more fundamental to the writing process than did Davis, thus putting himself in a position to articulate witnessing in ways other correspondents could never express.

The aesthetic values that Crane privileged emerge more fully in his late work “War Memories” (1900). This collection of loosely tied episodes of a correspondent’s engagement in the Spanish-American War reinvokes the variety of issues that shaped Crane’s aesthetics since The Red Badge, namely, the question of authenticity in witnessing, the challenge of spectatorship in representation, the influence of the filibuster, and the international nature of modern geopolitics. He begins the sketch along the lines of
his developed interest in the subjective nature of war correspondence, profiling the limitation of war reporters knowing to what they bear witness. This beginning articulates the impossibility of a correspondent ever getting at the object of his profession: “But to get the real thing! It seems impossible! It is because war is neither magnificent nor squalid; it is simply life, and an expression of life can always evade us. We can never tell life, one to another, although sometimes we think we can” (Wounds 229). The uncertainty leads inevitably to fear, both emotions which Crane shows beleaguer war correspondents far more often than they are willing to admit.

Later, about to enter battle, the reporter Vernall, like Henry, relates his desire for injury to both authenticate his experience and prevent him from actual battle: “all that night I was afraid. Bitterly afraid. In the morning I wished for some mild attack of disease, something that would incapacitate me for the business of going out gratuitously to be bombarded” (Wounds 16). Finding companionship in the war zone turns out to be the correspondent’s strategy of coping with his fears. However, even companionship has its limit; when the correspondent discovers that he newly befriended companion, the surgeon Gibbs, has been shot, Vernall relates that he was “dying hard. It took him a long time to die…. I thought this man would never die. I wanted him to die” (237) Like Henry in The Red Badge, Vernall is ridden with guilt about what he sees as the war and its consequences was his complicity.

More conscious than previous correspondents about the very experience of making sense of the war around him, Crane focuses in on the correspondent’s need to address the language of spectacle the piece. During a battle of the Spanish-American
War, Vernall claims, “you could really find wounded men who exhibited all the signs of a pleased and contented mood. When thinking of it now it seems strange beyond words. But at the time—I don’t know—it did not attract one’s wonder” (Wounds 274). Crane juxtaposes the casualness of the fight, which in typical renderings of the war from the artist Remington might have elicited “wonder,” with the lack of marvel the correspondent actually feels in revisiting the memory. In light of the dominant discourse of spectacle that determined what was imaginable, the witnessed account of the “wonder-less” wounded, is unconceivable, but in Crane’s aesthetic, possible. Crane does not dismiss spectacle journalism that the imperial newsmakers exhibited during coverage of all the late-nineteenth century wars, but rather contrasts it through the interiority of the witness that recalls the kind of witnessing performed by the Civil War “specials” who saw the wounded through the noise of spectacle. That is, communicating what is unconceivable “after the fact” of its occurrence is precisely what Crane’s aesthetic performs. It is the dilemma of the witness and his most lasting contribution. Witnessing is the act of speaking to the phenomenon of the unimaginable, while acknowledging all the while that much more exists “between the hyphens,” in Vernall’s honest admission, “I don’t know.”

Later in the memoir, Vernall names the kind of life he sees on the battlefield and on the camp grounds that Winslow Homer so often depicted, as a “majestic commonplace”: undeniably grand, but not in ways that one might assume. What is particularly “spectacular,” or unbelievable, is the ways the wounded are perpetually overwritten with the language of triumph and sacrifice wherein they actually partake in a crushingly common scene of meaningless killing.
Crane’s openness to that which lies prior to the spectacle allows him in “War Memories” to reveal an abandoned subject never before attended to in war correspondence of the Spanish-American War: that of the Spanish peasant fighting on behalf of the empire.

Lying near one of the enemy’s trenches was a red-headed Spanish corpse. I wonder how many hundreds were cognisant of this red-headed Spanish corpse? It arose to the dignity of a landmark. There were many corpses but only one with a red head. This red-head. He was always there. Each time I approached that part of the field I prayed that I might find that he had been buried. But he was always there -- redheaded. His strong simple countenance was a malignant sneer at the system which was forever killing the credulous peasants in a sort of black night of politics, where the peasants merely followed whatever somebody had told them was lofty and good. But, nevertheless, the red-headed Spaniard was dead. He was irrevocably dead. And to what purpose? The honour of Spain? Surely the honour of Spain could have existed without the violent death of this poor red-headed peasant? Ah well, he was buried when the heavy firing ceased and men had time for such small things as funerals. The trench was turned over on top of him. It was a fine, honorable, soldierly fate -- to be buried in a trench, the trench of the fight and the death. Sleep well, redheaded peasant. You came to another hemisphere to fight because -- because you were told to, I suppose. Well, there you are, buried in your trench on San Juan Hill. That is the end of it, your life has been taken -- that is a flat, frank fact. And foreigners buried you expeditiously while speaking a strange tongue. Sleep well, redheaded mystery. (Wounds 281-2)

Crane’s aesthetic of rendering the “majestic commonplace” is fully exhibited in this passage. The Spanish peasant is neither a representative of the Spanish imperial state, a “liberated” Cuban, nor a martyred insurgent that Davis depicted in “Death of Rodriguez.” Still, Crane raises him to the status of a “landmark,” a symbol that would memorialize him in a manner that the American forces might have found anathema to their notion of
the Spaniards as all imperial “monarchical pirates.” This anonymous death is made into a monument in both physical and linguistic terms. On the one hand is the trench into which he is thrown by “foreigners.” The “landmark” is not a testament to sacrifice to the state, with its assumption of a common language and religion, but to the enduring costs of war. On the other hand, is the peasant’s “red head,” a symbol of boyish sacrifice perhaps, but also resonant with a haunting presence of blood and violence. These elements monumentalize the peasant while they fundamentally undermine the dominant discourses that had formed the image of the Spanish-American War at the time. Furthermore, Crane makes explicit the international and hemispheric roots of the war, further undermining the exceptionalism that the war was a strictly American phenomenon. He connects the peasant’s death to an inter-imperial matrix of war wherein citizens of all states are pawned off by empires that put ordinary civilians in war zones wherein they can be abandoned at any given point.

“The Open Boat”

Perhaps the most ambitious of Crane’s tales of adventure is the short story “Open Boat,” in which one critic explains was his first real attempt to be a war reporter (Robertson 138). The short story is most often read under the auspices of modernist readings that privilege abstraction, or as a rendering of the “beauty and terror of natural forces” (“Stephen”). In these readings, Crane is largely imagined to have transformed the experience of war into a stage to dramatize man’s struggle against the indifference of nature in the vein of his friend and contemporary Joseph Conrad and as Hemingway

15 This phrase comes from Davis’s *Reporter Who Made Himself King* (1891).
would during World War I in his own war correspondence. Bowers explains that the central issues of the tale are the impossibility of objectivity, man’s relation to nature. Fiction, for Crane, was presumably about “the interpretation of reality and in the strictest sense a criticism of life” (*Tales of Adventure* lxii).

However, these readings obscure the cultural and political context of the work, particularly its meditation on the role of state power in the abandonment of citizens. Indeed, critical opinion of the story has not spoken of the filibustering expedition itself or the relationship between the war correspondent and filibustering. After all, the story does narrate the circumstances aboard such an expedition, although critical commentary has done little to elaborate on the purpose of the voyage much less the missionary zeal with which such expeditions were undertaken.\(^{16}\) Certainly, abstraction is central to Crane’s meditation on the subjectivity of the war correspondent, but the source of this abstraction can well be understood as having fully materialized when Crane meditated on the interiority of the witness to war, incorporating both the subjectivities of the soldier and the filibuster. Crane’s short story in fact shows us the response of state power to a witness who operates without regard to the limits imposed by the sovereign. The narrative thus speaks more to the concrete conditions of the turn-of-the-century war correspondent than is normally assumed.

Crane wrote about some of the concrete conditions of the filibustering expedition in a syndicated story “Stephen Crane’s Own Story” (1897). The report debunks the romance of the filibuster by showing how the *Commodore* inauspiciously began its

\(^{16}\) See May. Also, Also compare Kendall in Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition (1844).
journey by running aground several times as it disembarked from the “center of the filibustering industry,” the port city of Jacksonville (Reports 94). When the ship eventually sank in the Caribbean, it was later discovered that the ship’s hull was irreparably damaged when the naval “revenue cutter” U.S.S. Boutwell ran too close to the Commodore. The patrol boat, designed to stop filibustering expeditions that left from American bases, was an early sign the tension between the state and filibusters would not change despite U.S. interests in Cuba (Reports lviii). Unbeknownst to the filibusters, the U.S. ship created the conditions for what was to follow.

These fleeting clues signal how Crane was tapping into the anti-state ethos of filibustering that centered its sights on Cuba from the 1840s until the 1890s.\(^\text{17}\) At the turn-of-the-century, Jacksonville, Florida was the hub for such activity. As Crane wrote, it was hard to tell whether ships leaving from the city were “bound for Cuba or bound for some stranded schooner” (Reports 95). In Crane’s piece, “The Filibustering Industry” (1897) for the New York Press, he frames the industry as an international conflict between the nation-states of the North and those of the South. Recalling of course the antebellum and Civil War legacy of filibusters as attempting to marry Manifest Destiny with the extension of slavery, Crane internationalizes the domestic drama as one between the imperialist North against an independent Southern state:

A Jacksonville attorney being in Washington held a talk with a certain prominent government official.” So you come from Florida, do you?” said the official. “Why you fellows aren’t in the United States at all down there, are you? “I never hard that, exactly,” said the Jacksonville attorney, “but I have heard that you fellows up here are all Spaniards.” (95)

\(^\text{17}\) As Robert May shows, the first major expedition took place the 1840s with Narcio Lopez. In the 1890s, the filibusters were straining relations that were already frayed (“Article 1”)
Crane’s reproduction of the banter between the attorney and the official demonstrates how Jacksonville was becoming in the popular imagination a renegade Southern state acting against the sovereign’s laws. In this discussion, internal divisions of the Civil War are put on a hemispheric stage with the United States—represented through Washington—as an imperial state pitted against the independence struggles of Southerners, Cubans and their filibustering allies. Cuban exiles, of course, “occupy” the Jacksonville coastline in hopes of embarking on filibustering expeditions of their own. In between the parties, Crane sees the war correspondent as operating beyond the bounds of the imperial state’s law in favor of reporting on the actions of the filibuster: “‘Break a law to keep a law’ is the precept which newspaperdom unconsciously thrust down the throat of a national administration” (Reports 99). Where breaking the law depending on becoming himself a filibuster, Crane oblige and bears witness to the full force of the imperial state when abandoned at open sea. Sovereign power, as Crane discovers, is exemplified at this instance in the contact zone that Agamben articulates as a moment when the law is not in effect, but in force (precisely in not applying).

In contrast to Crane’s newspaper report of the incident, “Open Boat” begins with the Commodore sinking. It takes along with it the munitions and the hopes for the filibustering expedition. At the onset, the narrator of the story does not name the reporter, referring to him as simply “the correspondent.” Already dislocated from the role of the conventional correspondent, he is doubly dislocated with the name—in the same way that the parodies of Crane would isolate him—since “the name” is normally the defining mark
of the war correspondent as exemplified by the news report, “Stephen Crane’s Own Story.” Imagining what the scene of the four men shipwrecked would have looked like from the domestic fireside, he writes that “it was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emerald and white and amber” (Tales of Adventure 730). “Probably” gives away the fact that indeed this was not the case as for the men; none even knew the “color of the sky” (Tales of Adventure 723).

If unable to access the language of objectivity obligatory for war correspondents, Crane does indeed show that the men find the necessary expressions to depict their abandonment at sea. This is precisely what the expedition dramatizes for Crane and his companions. Like the filibuster who operates at the edges of state sovereignty, often finding himself in opposition to it, the correspondent too is subject to state power on the one hand and the abandonment by the state on the other. It is realizing that the state has the power to not enforce its power that the filibuster/correspondent realizes in the open boat: “It is fair to say here that there was not a life-saving station within twenty miles in either direction, but the men did not know this fact and in consequence they made dark and opprobrious remarks concerning the eyesight of the nation’s life-savers. Four scowling men sat in the dinghy and surpassed records in the invention of epithets” (Tales of Adventure 732). The contentious relationship to the state is reiterated here as the men open themselves up to a permanent state of potential abandonment. The speculations begin about the absent “life-saving people”: Maybe they think we’re out here for sport! Maybe they think we’re fishin’. Maybe they think we’re damned fools” (733). No one in particular is identified to pose these questions. They are instead collective and rhetorical,
asked in hopes of a response they know will not come.

At the threshold of death, they exchange the only thing that makes concrete the unbearably inaccessibility of protection: addresses to notify loved ones of their death. The sense of abandonment is certainly theological in nature, resonating with Peza’s final moment in the face a “sovereign child”: “If I am going to be drowned,” the correspondent pleads, “—if I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods, who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees (Tales of Adventure 740)?”

But perhaps more profoundly and more pertinent to rendering the interiority of the witness, it is not if the relationship between those actually on land and those in the boat that cannot be resolved. Crane shows rather that it is precisely language that makes the abandonment complete. While the correspondent and his companions are waving for their rescue, a man on the shore waves his coat as if to call for something or someone himself. The signs given by the man on the coast are meaningless to the men: “He must think we like to see him do that. Why don’t he quit it. It don’t mean anything” (Tales of Adventure 734). The desperation of Crane’s vision is complete when the abandoned see figures on land who instead of rescuing them, turn out to be tourists being taken on an “omnibus” to a hotel (733). When the tourist group leaves, the narrator describes the lingering feeling as that of being “branded,” imprinted with sign prohibiting protection from the “life-savers,” nature, the sovereign, and the state. The scene is followed by the final recognition of the reality that they will need to save themselves: “The land had vanished, and was expressed only by the low and drear thunder of the surf” (734).
The Jacksonville-Cuba space/location becomes evident at this moment of abandonment as a zone of indistinction in both a literal and conceptual sense: literally because of what happens to Crane and his shipmates, and conceptually by virtue of representing how U.S. state power in fact “employs” the filibuster and those Cuban exiles at the state’s “disposal,” only to casually disposing of them arbitrarily in a moment when they are no longer politically expedient. If such an “enforcement” of the state of exception is in fact the paradigm of modern sovereignty, as Agamben would concur, what Crane witnesses at this moment is the culmination of American imperialism in its most terrifying form.

Here, in Crane’s final statement on the subjectivity of the witness, the trope of abandonment takes on an analogous role to the newspaper in *The Red Badge*: as the context and experiential center of the witness’s subjectivity. It is noteworthy that the imperial situation that the abandoned ones inhabit is pushed to the subtext of the narrative, as if to say that colonialism had by the turn-of-the-century reached to the point of general acceptability. What remained important to point out was the harrowing possibility of war zones as proliferating as imperialism became the *rule* and not the exception. The war correspondent admits as much when he is reminded a verse spoken by French soldier in a colonial territory. Dying, he confessed that he “shall never see his own, his native land” (*Tales of Adventure* 736). The men do swim to land and a group does attend to them. But this “rescue” is no longer on “native” land for all, as it is tempered by the fact that one of the men, “a still and dripping shape,” meets the same fate as the Spanish peasant sent to fight on for the empire, the “hospitality of the grave” (74).
Epilogue

If, after more than a century after Crane alerted us to the use of “private armies” that are subsequently abandoned, we continue to find instances of such employment by the U.S. in Vietnam, throughout Mexico and South American, Cuba, and Iraq, it is because U.S. imperial sovereignty continues to make its presence felt on the world stage. If the current “volunteer” army is any indication, the imperial state continues to maintain a “special relationship” with ethnic communities and exile communities that shows no sign of abating.¹

Such a conversation that extends to the role of the ethnic press in the U.S. throughout the nineteenth century, while not explored in this dissertation, may well be taken up in an investigation of José Martí’s conceptualization of “Our America.” Stephen Crane’s certainly raises the problem of the abandoned subject across international borders and thus signals a potential internationalism “lurking” in the war correspondent’s imagination through a sympathetic response to the lives of the Spanish peasant, the French soldier, and the war correspondent lost at sea. In response, Martí may better clarify what that internationalism means for twentieth-century relations in the modern zones of distinctions. After all, the Cuban pan-Americanist, revolutionary, and poet, had a deep sense of the power of journalism and networks of communication to influence public opinion. The promotion of what he saw was a burgeoning anti-racial, international unity of “the oppressed” is clear in some of his representative journalistic writing:

¹ I thank Chris Wilson to alerting me to exploration of this phenomenon in Didion's Miami, in which she argues that the CIA, in conjunction with exile communities and “orbiting zones,” mutually constructed
It was imperative to make common cause with the oppressed, in order to secure a new system opposed to the ambitions and governing habits of the oppressors. But the tiger, frightened by gunfire, returns at night to his prey . . . . The colony lives on in the republic, and Our American is saving itself from its enormous mistakes. (Martí 90)

Martí recognized that the United States stood at a crossroads at the turn-of-the-century—a diverging point that either posed the nation as a beacon for a “hemispheric America” that recalled a history of internationalism in the making of the republic or as an imperial United States that risked falling into the “tiger trap” of colonialism in the vein of European empires.

If Martí signals the beginning of a new conversation embarked from a crossroads this dissertation raises, but does not explore, the role of women and war correspondence is another such crossroads. Clearly, as technological possibilities increased throughout the nineteenth century, a wider range of reporters filled out the many positions and made possible an ushering in a greater presence of women in war zones as reporters. Crane certainly hints at this emerging phenomenon in *Active Service* with the depiction of the female war correspondent, Cora Black, who regularly usurps the male protagonist in his adventures in Greece. Cora of course was not the only woman to travel or place themselves imaginatively in war zones to leverage their political stake at critical junctures in U.S. state formation. Antebellum figures Lucy Holcombe and Cora Montgomery both placed themselves in the same discursive terrain as Richard Harding Davis and Crane as filibusters (Greenberg). What their works offer and what legacies they reveal merit much each other.

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2 Cora was almost certainly based on Crane’s own partner, who reported from Greece under the pseudonym
further investigation.

What I hope this dissertation does do is plant a seed for framing how to understanding the writings of twentieth-century war correspondents from John Reed, Hemingway, and Michael Herr. These writers saw their work as providing testimony of the perils of the correspondent’s own position, paralleling that precarious position—often problematically so—with that indigenous populations, or abandoned military subjects and soldiers. Reed, for example, literally followed the Mexican leader Pancho Villa during the Mexican Revolution of 1911, imbuing him with a “pacific” romanticism that conflicted with depictions of a “ruthless” “bandit” prevalent in representations North of the border. And yet, Reed’s own sympathies seem to downplay or obscure Villa’s own ability to manage “public relations”—to appear less savage to the American media that he might employ to consolidate power at home.³ Perhaps content to revel in a reverie of intertwined interests of the correspondent and his subject, the geopolitics of World War I seemed to push Reed into that zone of abandonment he sought to intellectualize. When Reed covered the Eastern Front during World War I, his antiwar sympathies put him at odds with newspapers that previously published his work. Then immersing himself with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Reed eventually produced the treatise Ten Days That Shook the World (1922) on the event—but not before his papers were confiscated for a year upon re-entry to the United States.

Certainly, this “internationalist sympathy” has preoccupied war correspondents from its beginnings. Melville traveled to the South Seas to “report” on the Taipi, George

³ Imogene Carter.
Wilkins Kendall to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, Richard Harding Davis to the Caribbean and Central America and of course Stephen Crane to Greece and then Cuba and Puerto Rico. But it wasn’t until after Crane that war correspondence explicitly differentiated itself as a unique form of knowledge that could surpass the simple notion of reporters traveling across borders to report on the conflict of “others.” The “others” and the war correspondent began to become inextricably connected. The implications of this co-habitation, I would argue, is the line of inquiry that helps us to understand how, for instance, during World War I, correspondents became “foreign correspondents” rather than “war” correspondents (Lande 172). Was this simply “semantic,” or rather indicative of a broader cultural shift in the relationship between the subject and the reporter?

This tension between the subject and the reporter was perhaps a new iteration of an old phenomenon in the relationship between the correspondent and the state through a return of an older anti-imperial imperialism. As Knightley writes, during World War I, the press “wrote jauntily about life in the trenches, kept an inspired silence about the slaughter and dallied themselves to be absorbed by the propaganda machine” (Knightley 81). The aging Richard Harding Davis made his way to Brussels to cover the war and advocate a strident anti-German sentiment, perhaps finally capitalizing on his hatred of German “monarchical pirates” articulated in “The Reporter Who Made Himself King.” What he found, however, was that the “day of the war correspondent was over” (Lande 173). Made aware of the “disposability” of the correspondent (again), he was captured by the Germans as a suspected spy, and later arrested by the French for the same reason. It

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3 Wilson, esp. p. 344-350.
would seem that the new “foreign correspondent” would need to contend with the ratcheting up of state power through more “diplomatic” means.

The obstacles set against the correspondent were certainly accelerating as well. Stricter regulations and increased censorship permeated the industry during the First World War. Soldier letters were routinely vetted for seditious material. In Britain, the Defence of the Realm Act was instituted, giving the government broad powers to confiscate land for the war effort and criminalize a wide range of behaviors in the name of maintaining national morale and “prevent invasion,” thus limiting the geographical area in which war correspondents could work—or admit to working. Furthermore, no German reporters were allowed to the front and Russian reporters were only permitted to review the aftermath of fighting. Concurrent with these silencing measures, however, was the increasing global reach of the news through “wire services” like the International News Service established by Hearst in 1909, the United Press Syndicate, and of course Reuters and the Associated Press, both of which had begun in the Civil War period. The wire was based on the notion that anyone could purchase the news, no matter his or her power to distribute it. This “democratization” of the news suggested the possibility—if not reality—of more international circulation of reports and reporters of all levels of access.

Access could go “both ways” of course. It seemed to become clearer that war correspondents were perpetually between “foreign correspondence,” in the sense of being political ambassadors of national culture and “on the spot” war journalists. In light of increased censorship, it became common for reporters to have one foot on the front and
another in the government. Certainly, Winston Churchill, who bridged war and foreign relations, suggested this model. Born to a family of wealth and political stature, he witnessed elements of the Spanish-American War, covered the second Boer War as a correspondent, and became a part of the Admiralty during World War I. Perhaps most compelling was Granville Roland Fortescue, an American “soldier of fortune,” former White House aide, “military observer during the Russo-Japanese War, an explorer in Venezuela, and a war correspondent in the Riff Wars” between Morocco and Spain (Knightley 87). Fortescue’s dispatches from the Battle of the Somme exhibited a Crane-like suspicion of reliable narration, and suggested that a single witness “could not possess the comprehensive knowledge of a drama so gigantic” (Farish 283).

The current relevance of such an analysis for the meaning of U.S. state power today cannot be overstated even though this figure of the journalist-politico is familiar to us today mostly in the Hollywood-ized idiom of espionage. Most recently, Thomas Bass’s *The Spy Who Loved Us* (2008) tells such a story, profiling Pham Xuan An, a highly-regarded *Time* correspondent who was also a North Vietnamese intelligence officer. An, however, was not what we might assume to be a “traditional” spy; he “loved America, and Americans, democratic values, and objectivity in journalism”—he was, as Bass put it in summoning Graham Greene, “A Quiet Vietnamese” (3). These correspondents, while operating in terms and within discursive formations familiar to us, also seemed to be embarking on a new kind of internationalism that itself requires what American Studies scholars have termed a “critical internationalist” approach.4

4 Desmond and Domínguez define critical internationalism as a “conceptual orientation that resituates the
United States in a global context on a number of terrains simultaneously: in terms of the scholarship that gets read, written, and cited and, most importantly, in the ways scholars conceive of new directions for formulating research” (475).
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