

**University of Alberta**

**Genre and the Representation of Violence in American Civil War Texts by  
Edmund Wright, John William De Forest, and Henry James**

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the relationship between genre and the representation of war-time violence in five texts written during and shortly after the United States Civil War (1861-1865). The texts are *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* (1864), John William De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867), and three short stories by Henry James—"The Story of a Year" (1865), "Poor Richard" (1867), and "A Most Extraordinary Case" (1868). These texts deal with the theme of war violence through generic mechanisms associated with the spectrum of writings often dichotomized as romance and realism. The main theoretical approach to genre depends on a distinction between criterial theories of genre and contingency theories of genre. Criterial theories emphasize the shared characteristics of literary texts: that is, criterial theories of genre are classificatory in orientation. Contingency theories emphasize the ways in which social forces influence the act of classification: contingency theories of genre, in other words, concentrate on the notion that genres are social constructs. This dissertation maintains, in line with contingency theory, that genre is affected by the social, political and cultural circumstances of the period in which the genre operates; as a result, this dissertation uses documents from and about the American Civil War to substantiate its claims. The work of Alice Fahs, David Reynolds, and John Frow has influenced the approach to genre theory and to nineteenth-century American literary history.

## Preface

This dissertation began as a study of the representation of violence in the writings of Henry James. As time passed, I grew more interested in the Civil War period and in the ways that American fiction writers represented the war's violence, especially with respect to societal responses to war's physical destructiveness. Furthermore, I veered away from retrospective examinations of the Civil War, such as James's 1886 novel *The Bostonians*, in favour of writings composed during and immediately after the war. I thereupon broadened the scope of my primary materials from James to the work of other authors. Books by Alice Fahs and David Reynolds encouraged me to draw away from canonical writers of war—such as Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane—to the popular literature of the period.

My readings of and about popular literature exposed me to many nineteenth-century genres. These readings convinced me of the significance of genre for writers once considered to be beyond genre (such as James), as well as for writers who had evaded canonization (such as John William De Forest) and for writers who had contributed to the burgeoning literary marketplace without attracting any measure of fame (as perhaps is the case with the author of *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*). My research into late nineteenth-century American literary history naturally included the so-called Realism War of the 1880s and 1890s, which tended to treat both De Forest and James as realists. As I learned more about that debate, however, I noticed that romance, the putative enemy of realism, had generic significance even for seemingly anti-romance texts.

This admittedly eclectic path of investigation informs the content and structure of this project. At its core are close readings of five primary texts. I have chosen these texts to demonstrate the variety of materials available in this period, even if they were not necessarily the most popular or most obviously associated with violence. As well, all of them were composed in the throes and immediate aftermath of the war. I selected De Forest's novel *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* because of its association with realism and its reputation as a book that contains candid descriptions of battlefield violence. I chose *Edmund Wright* since it most clearly falls into the realm of popular literature. In contrast to the author of *Edmund Wright* and to De Forest, Henry James has achieved canonicity and has the most obvious association with high literary culture. At the same time, James's works have the reputation of being uninterested in violence; his three war-time stories, therefore, ought to provide a contrast with the kinds of violence found in the two longer works. In the end, I wished to examine literary texts as though through an experiment: how did the Civil War affect genres already in circulation? I decided to choose these five texts and to see what I could discover.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction: Genre, Violence, and the American Civil War

This project gathers up various threads—genre, the American Civil War, and Civil War literature—in an investigation of how America represented war-time violence to itself in the midst of the country’s deadliest war. Specifically, I examine *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* (1864), John William De Forest’s *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867), and three short stories by Henry James—“The Story of a Year” (1865), “Poor Richard” (1867) and “A Most Extraordinary Case” (1868)—all published in the United States during or shortly after the Civil War, and all, one way or another, with the war as their subject. All of them, in their own ways, deal with the theme of war violence through the generic mechanisms associated with the spectrum of writings often dichotomized as romance and realism. My project aims to investigate how these texts represent war’s violence and how genre, as a contextualizing mechanism, influences the texts’ representation of violence. I argue that a genre is contingent upon the social, political, and cultural circumstances of the period in which the genre operates. As a result, this dissertation refers a great deal to Civil War history, particularly literary history and American attitudes towards Civil War violence.

This first chapter explains those aspects of genre theory relevant to my analyses in the subsequent three chapters; in addition, this chapter gives an overview of American attitudes towards Civil War violence and summarizes the kinds of literary genres circulating during and shortly after the Civil War. In the first section of this chapter, I distinguish what I call criterial theories of genre

from contingency theories of genre. Criterial theories emphasize the shared characteristics of literary texts: that is, criterial theories are classificatory in orientation. Contingency theories emphasize the ways in which social forces influence the act of classification: contingency theories, in other words, favour the notion that genres are social constructs. The latter approach to genre theory, as influenced by John Frow's *Genre*, has proven most productive for my purposes. In this approach, genre acts as a contextualizing framework for a text's meaning, rather than as a "constraint" (Frow 73) on meaning. Genres, as social constructs, are sensitive to changes in a society and to concomitant changes in cultural discourse. As a result, generic studies of specific texts must consider the historical period that produced both the genres and the texts. Within a specific cultural context, genres frame the meanings of texts such that those meanings are shareable among members of a community. Genres have rhetorical force: they are mechanisms that writers and readers use to communicate ideas and feelings about their world. Genres thereby contribute to representation since, in order to signify at all, texts depend upon readers and writers having some shared understanding of the real world, even if the texts problematize the absolute validity of or congruencies in that understanding. Authors share their ideas by creating textual "projections" that model the real world, and genre permits these projections to be both created and read.

The next part of this chapter provides an introduction to the social and literary context out of which the five primary texts bring forth their projections of the real world. Some Civil War texts acknowledged the inevitability of death in

war and represented war violence through methods that would come to be associated with the term realism. Other Civil War texts, however, followed a mode of representation often associated with the term romance. American texts, like Americans themselves, responded differently to the war; for each text, then, some aspects of genre are more relevant and critically fruitful than others. Consequently, I will close this chapter by outlining what aspects of genre I have used in the following chapters to analyse the primary texts.

## **Genre**

### **Criterial and Contingency Theories of Genre**

For this study, the most fruitful models of genre acknowledge the pragmatic need for structure but also acknowledge that such structures adapt to specific communicative objectives and to social change. In this regard, two classes of genre—what I call criterial theories of genre and contingency theories of genre—have particular usefulness and applicability.

A criterial genre theory focuses on the categories to which texts belong based on shared features. This class of theory, which John Frow labels “Aristotelian” (52-54), regards genre as the outcome of criterial sorting; the aim of this sorting, at its extreme, is to “place any member of a given population into one and only one class” (Bowker and Star 62). The criteria that limit membership in a class of texts constitute the basis of the genre’s definition. Traditional Western classical and neoclassical views of genre have been criterial. A major

branch of this tradition, for instance, uses interpretations of statements by Plato and Aristotle to identify the lyric, the dramatic and the epic as “natural” genres with essential qualities (Frow 58-63).<sup>1</sup> Alongside this tradition operates a more inductive tradition—particularly Quintilian’s genres of epic, tragedy, Old and New Comedy, elegy, iambic, satire and lyric—that establishes generic classes based on the existence of genres that have actually been used by writers. These classificatory criteria are also supposed to reflect the Aristotelian natural genres (Frow 58).

A contingency genre theory focuses on the negotiations within a discursive community about the meanings of a group of texts. This kind of theory assumes “the fuzziness and open-endedness” of genre and presupposes a socially contingent process of meaning-making (Frow 54). Genres, in other words, are cultural constructs; they reflect the societies that create the genres, rather than describe naturally occurring elements. In this view, genre is best understood as a socially dependent reading and writing practice, one that stems from specific social phenomena, rather than as a formula or set of rules to which a text must conform.

The degree to which these two classes of genre theory have harboured critical favour has altered over time.<sup>2</sup> These critical reorientations have moved discussions away from concepts of universal or natural categories and towards concepts of culturally determined systems of knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Over time, then, theories of genre have shifted from a taxonomic approach to a systemic approach, from an emphasis on categories themselves to an emphasis on the dynamic social

processes that affect and depend on categorization. Adena Rosmarin summarizes these two approaches as being part of “[t]he general-particular debate,” a “conflict. . . between the individual reading and its generalization,” “between practice and theory” (7), and between “descriptive and prescriptive” criticism (50).

Some critics of language and literature have resisted the notion of genre altogether because genres seem to conflict with a belief in the intrinsic value of individual texts. Benedetto Croce argued for the extreme view of this resistance when he wrote, “All books dealing with classifications and systems of the arts could be burned without any loss whatsoever” (188). Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy identify such anti-genre stances with the Romantic conception of “the Literary Absolute, literature not as one genre or another but as at once the totality and the dissolution of kinds” (Frow 27). From this perspective, a hermeneutic focus on genre places a negative constraint on a text’s meaning; genre criticism clouds the interpretation of specific texts with generalized models and thus also potentially usurps a text’s ingenuity.

Rather than viewing genre as unproductive, my study treats genre as a productive limit on texts or, as Frow writes, “a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning” (10). In other words, genre enables meaning: as E.D. Hirsch puts it, “All understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound” (76). Genre works as a kind of social framework that allows texts to be understood. The concept of social frameworks was articulated in detail by Erving Goffman in his 1974 book *Frame Analysis*.



Frameworks are “principles of organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them” (10-11). Such social frameworks “provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being.” Because they are social constructions, frames “guide” human experiential behaviour: they “subject the doer to ‘standards,’ to social appraisal of his action based on its honesty, efficiency, economy, safety, elegance, tactfulness, good taste, and so forth” (22). As Hirsch argues, “A genre is less like a game than like a code of social behavior” (*Validity* 93). Walter Kintsch’s idea of knowledge nets is related to the idea of frameworks; knowledge nets are “associative networks” of knowledge that come into play when a node is activated by a context; the net is stable, permitting knowledge to be transmitted, yet it can modify itself in the face of new inputs (74).<sup>4</sup> Frow thereupon concludes that genre is a social framework, since genre “allow[s] us to move between knowledge given directly in a text and other sets of knowledge that are relevant to understanding it” (Frow 80).<sup>5</sup>

Since genre is a mechanism to facilitate comprehension, it is not a text per se, and texts are not “examples” of genre. Rather, texts are “*uses* of genre, performances of or allusions to the norms and conventions which form them and which they may, in turn, transform” (Frow 25). This conception of the relationship between text and genre follows Jacques Derrida’s approach in “The Law of Genre” in that “a text would not *belong* to any genre. Every text *participates* in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging” (230). Since

a text does not “amount to” a genre, this conception “works against a deterministic view of genre, in which every text is somehow predicated in its essence by its genre” (Frow 23).

A contingency model of genre does not, then, deny the existence of formal structures. Genres, as social codes, have structures, even if their structures are fluid. Like other social mechanisms, genres structure, or contextualize, knowledge and experiences to facilitate knowledge’s use. Contingencies exist in the creation and use of texts, just as they exist in the creation and use of all cultural artifacts. Contingencies include the historical period, the geographical location of creation and use, and the local circumstances under which people write, read, and transmit texts. A contingency theory of genre recognizes texts as things that humans create and use under particular, socially driven circumstances.

A contingency approach accounts for the varieties of genres and practices as well as for changes in genre and the ability of texts to reference multiple genres. This approach, however, leaves in abeyance the practical need for substantive definitions and terminology to facilitate communication among critics. A relevant case study on the difficulty of obtaining agreement about genre definitions is the demarcation between domestic fiction and sentimental fiction. I tend to view these two genres as distinct, even if they can co-occur in one text. Domestic fiction is fiction that focuses on the subject of the home and the family, the so-called private sphere in the private-public dichotomy of social life. Sentimental fiction subscribes to the tenets of sentimentalism, a moral philosophy of eighteenth-century Europe as expressed, for example, by Adam Smith and

David Hume, that valued feeling as a legitimate means by which people understand their world and thus countered rationalism's rejection of emotion as an epistemological tool (Radcliffe). Two examples from the war period seem to support my distinction of these subgenres. In its 15 December 1864 issue, the *American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular* called Timothy Shay Arthur "a writer of domestic fiction" ("Juvenile" 114), a suitable description for the publisher of *Arthur's Home Magazine*, who wrote numerous novels about home life for a presumed audience of middle-class women (Koch). Arthur's contemporary Henry James wrote against the other genre, sentimental fiction, in his 1867 review of Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict*, complaining of its "lachrymose sentimentalism." As June Howard notes, James's complaint contains an implied definition of sentimental fiction: an "association with tears, with humanitarian reform, with convention and commodification" (Howard 74).

Even though these examples support my view of these genres, other critics have had different ideas about domestic fiction and sentimental fiction. For instance, Helen Waite Papashvily in her 1956 book characterizes the domestic novel as "a tale of contemporary domestic life, ostensibly sentimental in tone and with few exceptions almost always written by women for women" (xv); she thus assumes domestic novels will also be sentimental. Decades later, Jane Tompkins's 1985 *Sensational Designs* treats the genre categories of domestic and sentimental interchangeably.<sup>6</sup> Richard Brodhead in *The Cambridge History of American Literature* defines nineteenth-century domestic fiction as writing aimed at a particular market, the middle-class home of the mid-century, "a home newly

exempted from heavy domestic production,” with a woman at home and the father out of the home at work. A woman’s “new work” was “to project a strong moral presence into this now-leisured home and to instill a strong religious and moral character in the children in her charge” (17); Brodhead thus links sentimentalism’s interest in morality with the domestic novel’s intended audience. By contrast, June Howard’s 1999 article cautions against automatically conflating domesticity and sentimentalism (73) on the basis of the moral philosophical roots of sentimentalism (71-72). Howard instead describes sentimentalism using three foci that address hermeneutic contingencies.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, she acknowledges that sentimental literature often contends with the personal and social conflicts that arise within “domestic culture” (Howard 76-77). Gregg Camfield goes further than Howard in maintaining a distinction between domestic fiction and sentimental fiction: “while domesticity was usually addressed through the terminology of sentimentalism, sentimentalism embraced almost every political, economic, religious, ethical, and aesthetic concern of American writers in the nineteenth century.”

The degree to which the genres of domestic and sentimental fiction are conflated or segregated depends on the difference between prescription and description. My own preferred definitions for these genres have a prescriptive orientation: they depend on denotative definitions of the word “sentimentalism” (in a primarily philosophical sense) and “domestic” (in a primarily etymological sense). Howard and Brodhead, however, consider in their definitions the sociohistorical implications of domesticity in nineteenth-century American

culture and how those implications affect the actual literary production of the period.<sup>8</sup> The perceived weakness in contingency theories of genre lies not in categorization per se but rather in the way the theories deal with gaps in definitions and in subsequent potential disagreements. But any lacunae or cruxes left by the failure of congruence between a general principle and a specific case, or of a specific case's contradiction of a general principle, are actually productive: such lacunae and cruxes signal the need to explore other avenues of investigation.

A contingency theory of genre should thus adopt a criterial theory of genre's attention to definitions and to the pursuit of clarity about generic distinctions, all while maintaining the contingency approach's emphasis on social use and on cultural context. As Frow states, "our concern should not be with matters of taxonomic substance ('What classes and sub-classes are there? To which class does this text belong?')—to which there are never any 'correct' answers—but rather with questions of use: 'What models of classification are there, and how have people made use of them in particular circumstances?'" (55). Contingency theories thereby demand that critical analyses acknowledge, and attempt to account for, a large number of criteria, all of which are at play and which themselves are subject to shifting circumstances. A communicable study of genre thereby benefits from (and indeed may rely on) what Slavoj Žižek calls a *point de capiton* or rigid designator, an anchor that permits analysis in the face of congenital instability.<sup>9</sup> As Catherine Schryer puts it, "Texts and genre exist in an unstable relation, but at any one moment this relation is 'stabilised-for-now' or 'stabilised-enough'" (107).

Various interests and attitudes enter into the communicative act (writing being one such act) and ought to be accounted for, even if the nature of these interests and attitudes are difficult to ascertain. Through his theory of intrinsic genre in *Validity in Interpretation*, E.D. Hirsch argues that authorial intention in the communicative act is something that readers can either note or fail to note but that nonetheless is present: “intrinsic genre is always construed, that is, guessed, and is never in any important sense given” (88). Frow interprets such construal as a “closing off” of “the multiplicity of interpretation” and thus for him it “seems like wishful thinking” (101-02) on the part of the reader or the author who insists such clear-cut evidence of intention is possible. Frow does not, however, address Hirsch’s own awareness of the idea of construal (Frow’s “wishful thinking”), and Frow thus himself threatens to “close off” the role of the author in communication. Hirsch’s point is that the author should not be erased from the communicative act, even if “certainty” or purity is not possible: “Since genuine certainty in interpretation is impossible, the aim of the discipline must be to reach a consensus, on the basis of what is known, that correct understanding has *probably* been achieved. The issue is not whether certainty is accessible to the interpreter but whether the author’s intended meaning is accessible to him” (Hirsch 17).<sup>10</sup> Messages have creators, even if the creators are unknown. Statements that authors make about their texts should have some bearing on interpretation, even if that interpretation determines that the texts do not exhibit the characteristics their authors claim; such a disparity may reveal something about the communicative acts to which the texts belong. In the end, Frow may not

differ much from Hirsch in this regard, for Frow contests what he calls the “nominalist argument” that “interpreters have license to read whatever generic form they please into a text” (109). Frow counterargues that since genre belongs to a community, “[r]eaders and writers negotiate the generic status of particular texts but do not have the power to make their ascriptions an inherent property of those texts” (Frow 109). Hirsch’s notion of intrinsic genre is as a “guess,” rather than a given, but for both readers and writers (not only for readers). A contingency theory of genre recognizes changes in generic categories, not simply in terms of what genres writers use, but also in terms of how readers define genres or what cultural credit such genres have at a particular time, in a geographical location or in a subculture.<sup>11</sup>

This formulation might make genre seem to be a utopia of mutuality, a place where no one can claim absolute control over meaning. Genres, however, are subject to the same power plays that all products and processes of culture contain. As Thomas Beebee states, genre “is a form of ideology” and therefore “the generic classification of a text determines its meaning(s) and exposes its ideology” (19). Genres do not have to be treated, however, as apparatuses that eliminate either the reader’s ability to exercise free will in interpretation or the writer’s ability to shape texts as the writer desires.

In this discursive situation, stability may seem illusory; that is, the permanent fluidity of identity may seem to prevent genre from being discussed at all. Practically speaking, however, stability is required and is also possible. Within the pragmatics of literary history and genre theory, if a genre maintains

itself long enough to be noticed, then it has a real-world existence. When, for example, as I discuss in Chapter Four, the anonymous author of an 1864 article entitled “Romances of the War” summarizes the characteristics of a new kind of popular writing, then that author has identified enough examples of that kind of text to offer a summary. When Alice Fahs writes in 2001 about a kind of Civil War fiction she calls war romance, she too is identifying a series of texts that resemble each other enough to warrant her identification of this set of texts with a single term. When I discuss the genre of war romance, I identify texts that contain the characteristics of war romance that the anonymous writer of 1864 and the anonymous writer of 2001 have identified (including three short stories by Henry James). By virtue of its use in writing in the real world, then, the genre of war romance has become an aspect of the real world.<sup>12</sup>

### **Genre as a Means of Textual Naturalization or Rekeying**

The idea of the real world versus the “unreal” world of literature has a bearing upon the idea of genre as a social framework that operates specifically upon texts. Certain literary genres, such as realist fiction or journalism, make a point of affiliating themselves closely with the real world, while others, such as fairy tales and romances, routinely distance themselves from ordinary human life. Two conceptualizations of literary genre relevant to the studies in the next chapter bear elucidation here, namely, Jonathan Culler’s idea of *vraisemblance* in *Structuralist Poetics* and Erving Goffman’s idea of rekeying in *Frame Analysis*. Both theories touch upon the concept of representation, an issue that lies at the



heart of literary studies, but both as well refine the idea of representation by expressing the ways in which texts invite readers to view their representations not as disconnected from the real world but rather as aspects of the real world.

Culler asserts that all texts can be “naturalized,” or made to signify, in ways that make texts seem to conform ontologically to the real world by putting the text into a suitable framework. Such a framework thereby permits the text to seem plausible or realistic, or as Culler calls it, *vraisemblable* (161-62). Culler invokes the Kristevan formulation of intertextuality as a way to explain the process by which a text can signify, that is, exhibit *vraisemblance*: “[a] work can only be read in connection with or against other texts, which provide a grid through which it is read and structured by establishing expectations which enable one to pick out salient features and give them a structure” (162). Culler proffers five means by which a text may acquire *vraisemblance* (164). The first is “the socially given text, that which is taken as the ‘real world.’” Culler does not argue that this world exists solely because of texts, in that “reality is a convention produced by language” (165) (though neither does he explicitly deny this idea). Rather, he argues that some texts do not complicate their references to the real world, such as through metaphor or irony, and instead describe what people come to expect from the real world. This kind of *vraisemblance* conforms to one of Tzvetan Todorov’s definitions of *le vraisemblable*: “the mask which conceals the text’s own laws and which we are supposed to take for a relation with reality” (“Introduction” 3, qtd. in Culler 162). The second category is “a general cultural text,” that is, “shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as

part of culture and hence subject to correction or modification but which none the less serves as a kind of ‘nature.’” This category of naturalization involves the cultural assumptions and stereotypes that people may casually or pragmatically treat as being real or true (that is, first-level *vraisemblance*) but that nonetheless can be revised if the pressure to do so arises.<sup>13</sup>

The third category is what Culler identifies as “literary genre” such as the term is commonly used: the “texts or conventions” of “a specifically literary and artificial” kind (164). Two of Culler’s main generic concerns in *Structuralist Poetics*, for example, are the lyric and the novel, two literary forms that together have occupied genre studies for centuries. Culler derives from this notion of literary genre two additional, self-reflexive means of associating a text with the real world. Culler formulates a fourth category, “the natural attitude to the artificial,” whereby “the text explicitly cites and exposes *vraisemblance* of the third kind so as to reinforce its own authority.” Such a citation often arises as part of the conventions of a literary genre, such as eighteenth-century novels that claim to be based on a discovered manuscript (173). But such a citation may also be a disavowal of the text’s participation in a genre; through such a disavowal, the text seems more congruent with the rules of the real world than with the genre to which the text appears to belong.<sup>14</sup> The last category refers to “specific intertextualities, where one work takes another as its basis or point of departure and must be assimilated in relation to it” (164). Parody and irony work within this category of *vraisemblance*, since both modalities require an acknowledgment of

conventions (as in the third category) but also require a distance from the workings of the techniques of *vraisemblance* (as in the fourth category).

All of Culler's categories permit a text to be treated as "real" or "natural" through a variety of cognitive orientations. The idea of orientation, or reorientation, resembles Goffman's elaboration of his theory of social frameworks in the concept of "keying." This concept of keying articulates the process of mimesis by explaining the relationship between the real world and a representation. Goffman postulates that human experience can be recontextualized from activities in the real world (which he calls "primary frameworks") to what he calls a "keying," "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (Goffman, *Frame* 43-44). Goffman argues that "keyings are themselves obviously vulnerable to rekeying" (*Frame* 79); for example, a novel, which is a keying of the primary framework for the real world, can itself be transformed (rekeyed) into a play (78), that is, into a different literary genre. Because of this multiple rekeying, Goffman believes it useful to think of "each transformation as adding a *layer* or *lamination* to the activity. . . . One is the innermost layering, wherein dramatic activity can be at play to engross the participant. The other is the outermost lamination, the *rim* of the frame, as it were, which tells us just what sort of status in the real world the activity has, whatever the complexity of the inner laminations" (Goffman, *Frame* 82). For example, play fighting is a keying of real fighting, such that all participants in play fighting are

aware that their fighting has been recontextualized so that participants are not intent on actually killing or seriously harming each other (Goffmann 40-41). Similarly, a fight scene in a stage drama is a keying of real fighting: the audience and the actors are all aware that the on-stage fighting is not the same as real fighting because of cues that indicate the boundaries of the keyed event in time and space to all participants (such as the space of the theatre itself), thus “bracketing” the experience. Goffman considers keying to “[perform] a crucial role in determining what it is we think is really going on.” Participants require access to “a schema of interpretation,” therefore, to make this bracketing readable (Goffman, *Frame* 45).<sup>15</sup> Goffman’s attention to the keying and rekeying of human experience in performance, including theatre, film and novels, makes the application of his notion of framing compelling for literary theorists. Indeed, Frow argues that “aesthetic practices” in general are “keyings of the real: representations of real acts or thoughts or feelings which are not themselves, in the same sense, real” (46). The “schema of interpretation” in keying, therefore, is genre: it is a specific orientation towards a specific event or text that makes the event or text understandable in a particular way.

Compared to Culler’s categories of naturalization, Goffman’s theory of rekeying is more explicit about the human acts of interpretation involved in making correspondences between the real world and the represented world. In particular, Goffman emphasizes the participation of message senders and message receivers in a speech situation as requisite to framing an event as a representation. Since Goffman assumes the existence of a speech situation, his theory makes

more explicit the idea that genre constitutes a social practice. But Culler's *vraisemblance* assumes the existence of "shared knowledge," and thus his concept depends on the presence of a community that together understands the real world in a certain way, such that deviations from these expectations are both detectable and explainable as belonging to a certain pattern of thinking or being. Such patterns, including the four categories that Culler does not label "genre" (namely, the social given, cultural stereotype, the natural attitude toward the artificial, and parody) are generic. Indeed, Carolyn Miller in "Genre as Social Action" claims that genres are at base rhetorical: she defines genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (31). Rhetoric, the application of language to influence others, is integral to the notion of keying and *vraisemblance*, just as it is integral to genre.

### **Formal, Thematic, and Rhetorical Dimensions of Genre**

The importance of rhetorical content in the study of genre stems from the circumstance that more than one person participates in meaning-making—meaning arises from the activities of a message sender and a message receiver (whether actual, assumed, or imagined), resulting in the sender and receiver being aware, if not personally then at least theoretically, of each other. In congruence with other genre theorists, Frow discusses the structure of genre through a tripartite schema of "thematic, rhetorical and formal dimensions" (64).<sup>16</sup> A genre's formal content "comprises the repertoire of ways of shaping the material medium in which it works and the 'immaterial' categories of time, space, and

enunciative position.” Concepts such as language sound and patterns, grammar and syntax, page layouts, length, figurative or literal use of language, and point of view fall into this grouping (Frow 74). Rhetorical content deals with “textual relations between the senders and receivers of messages,” namely, the “structured situation of address.”<sup>17</sup> Are “two speakers present to each other and speaking in their 'own' voice, or mediated by more or less complex projections of voices or perspectives from actual or implied speakers”? A speech situation “organises relations of power and solidarity between speakers (or their textual representatives), and organises the kinds of semantic intention they bring to it” (Frow 75).<sup>18</sup> This category deals with modality as expressed linguistically in the distinctions among truth, necessity, possibility, desirability, certainty, and belief (Frow 150). Finally, thematic content is “the shaped human experience that a genre invests with significance and interest” as expressed through “a set of *topoi*, recurrent topics of discourse, or as a recurrent iconography, or as recurrent forms of argumentation” (Frow 76). Frow insists that rhetorical and formal elements may have thematic content; he also maintains that in some genres, one type of content is more important than the others (76-77).

Frow’s tripartite model of generic structure thus permits genre to be determined not simply by theme but also by rhetorical stance and by form. For example, the theme of the 1861-1865 Civil War between the United States of America and the Confederate States of America dominates the texts that I examine in detail in Chapters Two, Three, and Four of my dissertation. The genre of Civil War literature thus is characterized by this specific thematic content. The

genre of the novel has the formal characteristics of being prose of considerable length; its rhetorical content includes the offer of a novelistic pact (an assertion to the reader that the author and any narrating characters are not the same people and that the events in the novel do not have a one-to-one correspondence with events in the real world)—it is fiction, in other words.<sup>19</sup> Other themes may constitute secondary yet significant aspects of a genre's thematic content, however; furthermore, the form and rhetorical stance of a text may be more important than its thematic content. The genre of war romance, for example (a subject of Chapter Four), has a particular content (the Civil War) as well as a general content (romance). The genre of polemic, on the other hand (a subject of Chapter Two), has as its major distinguishing feature a particular rhetorical content that positions its opponents as morally incapable of understanding its argument.

### **Textual Readability**

In accepting the roles of reader and writer in textual signification, genre theory profitably uses the linguistic theory of speech acts and rhetoric's emphasis on the meanings derived from the relationship between the speaker's position and the audience's position. In this view, all instances of language in use are structured around speech situations in some way. No utterance, however complex or simple, and no matter its semiotic medium, exists in isolation from a speech situation.<sup>20</sup> Genre can therefore be defined in terms of the intended readership of a text (the speech situation) as well as by formal and thematic properties.

The concept of metacommunicative cues is a significant contribution to genre theory from linguistics. To be readable, a text must contain metacommunication that indicates to the reader which genres are most appropriate for reading. Some of these metacommunicative cues are internal (a laugh track on a television program signals a situation comedy, for example) while others are external (such as advertising for that program) (Frow 104-05). A genre is accessible to members of specific discourse communities, “groups whose members recognise, use, and renew” specific “organised structures of meaning and value” (Frow 146). Metacommunicative cues may be readable for someone in a shared knowledge community, but less readable for those outside that community. People in a community can read a text when that text relates in some way to an aspect of the culture or world that people actually inhabit. A reader who does not belong to the appropriate discourse community will not make the same use of this knowledge as members of that discourse community. In cases in which the audience is unknown or uncertain, a text “must... strengthen those reflexive cues by which it signals its strategic intentions” (Frow 115). The extent to which a text’s creator might expect its readers to identify genre characteristics is a question of intentionality, one that can be approached only through strong evidence of intention for that particular text (whether internal or external to the text). Nonetheless, Frow’s point is that a text is readable because of such metacommunicative cues.

One way that a text’s genre is detectable is through repetition. As Rosmarin argues, repetition is key to generic analysis, for it is the similarity



between a particular and a general that makes the genre seem relevant to a particular text (24). Generic self-reflexivity, that is, a text that refers to the genres in which it participates, is another way that a text may signal the appropriateness of a specific genre for reading. A text may signal its generic content by referencing its own genre by its name or by its characteristics, such as a murder mystery that contains a character who writes murder mysteries or, to use an example related to Civil War literature, a war novel (*Miss Ravenel*) whose characters perform a stylistic analysis of a battle in a piece of war literature (Caesar's *War Commentaries*) and conclude that the author has concealed an important truth about the battle.<sup>21</sup>

The concept of speaking positions, as well as of Goffman's notion of rekeying, also helps explain the relationship between a representation and the real world and, more relevantly, how a genre can shape a "world" out of the real world. The speaking position of a speech situation is always a "projection": "The selves operating in any speech situation are projections in language rather than empirical actualities" (Frow 42). This projection arises from the difference between the subject of utterance and the subject of enunciation. The projected world is "any coherent organisation of meaning or experience which works as a schematically reduced version of the 'real' world." Frow defines 'real' world as "the sum of everything that there is, including unreal things such as fictions, and possibly—depending who you believe—possible things" (Frow 155). The idea of "projection" is key to the ability of genre to create a "truth effect" specific to that genre. A projected world is not a "*complete* world, the infinitely complex totality

of everything that exists. This is a schematic world, a limited piece of reality, which is sketched in outline and carved out from a larger continuum” (Frow 7). The participation of a text in a genre binds that text to a schematic organization of knowledge that functions as a subset of the knowledge available in the real world. The aforementioned “truth effects” are those aspects of the text that make manifest a relationship between the text and the real world.<sup>22</sup> Truth effects lend credibility to a text because the text more obviously seems to be a product of a real-world discourse rather than an arbitrary construct with no basis in any aspect of the real world.<sup>23</sup> Projected worlds are pieces of the real world that attain coherence based on the needs or aims of that genre: “some worlds claim a high reality status, others announce themselves as fictional or hypothetical.” Among the examples of projected worlds that Frow offers are “the world of the tabloid press,” “the world of the picaresque novel,” and “the world of the television sitcom” (86). In the following chapters of this dissertation, I will be addressing “the world of the slave narrative,” “the world of nineteenth-century American realism in fiction,” “the world of the war romance,” and so on, which result from the presence of genre in texts about the Civil War.

What is at stake, then, for my study, is the kind of projected worlds that literary genres produce in my primary texts. The immediate real world out of which these projections arise—the United States during its civil war—was a society at war with itself. How genre made sense of this real world affected how war’s violence was presented and explained.

## **American Literary Responses to the Violence of the Civil War**

### **War Violence**

Estimates for deaths in the Civil War are difficult to calculate because casualty numbers for the Confederacy, which was not as bureaucratically organized as the Union, are incomplete. Nonetheless, official U.S. government statistics cite a death toll of 618,222, or about 182 deaths per 100,000 of the general population and 13.96% of enlisted soldiers. The next highest war-time mortality rate in U.S. history is for the Second World War, with 405,399 dead, 29.6 deaths per 100,000 of the general population and 2.5% of enlisted soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

As Drew Gilpin Faust notes, Americans living in the period did not have the benefit of current, comprehensive statistics to contextualize the number of their dead (1997). Americans knew, nonetheless, that their sons, husbands and neighbours left home to fight in a war, and many of these men did not return alive. Those that did return alive often had injuries: of the 2.2 million soldiers who served for the Union, for example, over 281,000 had non-fatal wounds (United States Department of Defense). Technological developments such as breechloading rifles and carbines and the minie ball increased the damage that military weaponry had previously been able to inflict (McPherson 215-18). And despite both armies' attention to medical treatment and sanitation, disease accounted for two out of every three soldier deaths (McPherson 416).

The idea of a "destructive war," a war that targeted not only military objectives but also civilians' daily lives, was a concept held and promoted by civilians and soldiers in both North and South, though the Union was in a better

position to execute the ideal (Royster 39). Both citizens and soldiers considered the war to be a battle for moral and political existence. Gerald Linderman succinctly expresses the starkness of this stance: “The South meant to destroy the Union; the North meant to invade the South” (81). The average soldier, especially during the earlier, more optimistic years, was fighting to protect the ideals of the American Constitution, as interpreted separately by the Union and the Confederacy. Though Southerners tended to see slavery as at least part of the reason for the war, only by 1864 did the majority of Northerners identify the abolition of slavery as a goal (McPherson 184-87).

Beginning early in the conflict, many public and private voices in the North called for destruction (Royster 79-80). In December 1860, Senator Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio called for the secessionist southern states to be “[made] a desert” (Dixon). Judge Levi Hubbell, a pro-Union Democrat from Milwaukee, declared in April 1861, “We must starve, drown, burn, shoot the traitors” (Love 156). *Harper's Weekly* in September 1861 editorialized that attacks on civilians were a useful military strategy: “To molest their homes and jeopardize their ‘personal property’ is to attack them where they are weak” (“The Way to Put Down the Rebellion” 594). Once combat began in earnest, the Northern army at first refrained from sanctioning pillaging and destruction of property, but by the middle of 1862 soldiers began to defy orders for restraint, and General William Tecumseh Sherman's tactics soon changed to conform with popular attitudes that favoured destruction (Royster 85-87, 106-110). Indeed, General Sherman's ideas of warfare are often compared to Carl von Clausewitz's,

though neither Sherman nor other Civil War military men read *On War*.<sup>25</sup>

*Harper's Weekly* 31 May 1862 commiserated with those who favoured extreme force: "When the rebels invoked war they invoked despotism. War is the appeal to brute force. War reaches and maintains its ends by violence. . . . [W]hen the Government drew the sword to maintain its authority, it knew that it must use the sword according to its nature. It was not an instrument to tickle with, but to kill with" ("The End of Gingerbread" 338).

In the South, the invocation of extreme violence mirrored the rhetorical vehemence of the North. In August 1861, the Memphis *Avalanche* editorialized, "The bombardment of a few Northern cities would bring our enemies to their senses" (Moore 75). Sergeant James Adger Smyth of the Twenty-fifth South Carolina Regiment wrote on 7 August 1864 that "the universal belief" among Southerners was that "our burning & destroying Yankee Land" would accelerate victory and penalize the Union for its predations on civilians, as "[t]he golden rule does not apply to Governments at war."

Both Unionists and Confederates viewed the earlier American Revolutionary War as the means by which Americans had bestowed nationhood on themselves. Charles Royster argues that the circumstances of their freedom from imperialism substantiated the belief that war could maintain existing social structures and preserve the right of nationhood (153-56). For Unionists, the political and philosophical ideal of war as a tool of liberty meant that war was a legitimate means of keeping a nation together, while for the Confederates the ideal meant that war was a legitimate means of obtaining liberty from an

oppressive government (152). When the combatants begin to view unjust political authority as a barrier to individual liberty, violence becomes the only conceivable way of resolving conflict (191-92). For the North, war could thereupon purge the United States of the problematic interference of antislavery and aristocracy (79). In the meantime, the South needed to save face against Northern claims that the South was irremediably committed to uncivilized beliefs (slavery); for the South, then, war was in part a matter of preserving its honour and sense of moral integrity (Royster 174). Even before the war, the South feared that the North was willing to take up arms against the South for no reason but to proclaim that any political ambitions by Southern states were morally suspect. In 1860, George Bickley, leader of the pro-South Knights of the Golden Circle, claimed that the North was interfering with the expansion of the Southern states into the West by promoting settlement by northerners and by foreigners: “thousands of the worthless populations of the large Northern cities were armed and sent forth with instruction to ‘slay and spare not’ the Southern man who dared to settle there [Kansas] with his property” (*Address 3*). Bickley concluded that war was a necessary condition for republicanism: “No republic has yet maintained its integrity longer than it has maintained its slavery institutions and conquest policy” (*Address 5*).

In this morally oppositional climate, rationality and decision-making went into abeyance in favour of war, whose inescapable, uncontrollable force would deal with dissent one way or the other (Royster 293-94):

In this acceptance of whatever war might bring—as in the widespread expectation that war would produce a more secure and stable nation, a more competent government, a more public-spirited populace, a triumph for self-government—Americans turned to war to rescue them from the prospect of failure. Despite their differing aspirations, they often said in 1861 and afterward that they could not become the people they wanted to be except through war. The vicarious war was thus a civic necessity.

(Royster 295)

Unsurprisingly, few groups disagreed openly with the war. Fahs asserts that “most Civil War popular literature, both north and south, was patriotic—. . . it developed no sustained critique of the war.”<sup>26</sup>

During the war’s first months, then, many Americans viewed bodily injury as a necessity. As the war entered its combat phase, injury and death became an inescapable reality. Representations of the war in American culture appeared alongside the increasing evidence of war’s physical ramifications: ravaged terrains, maimed soldiers, and coffins. In the North, Mathew Brady’s studio in New York exhibited photographs of bodies lying bloated and disorderly on the battle field in public viewings that were well known and well attended.<sup>27</sup> A small number of Civil War correspondents, John William De Forest among them, reported the details of dead and injured bodies of soldiers to the public.<sup>28</sup> In poetry, Walt Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* contains details of the wounded soldiers Whitman tended at a hospital in Washington, as in “The Dresser”: “I dress the

perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet wound, / Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive” (33). In fiction, Louisa May Alcott represented in *Hospital Sketches*, through nurse Tribulation Periwinkle, Alcott’s own experiences as a nurse in a hospital ward, treating the “legless, armless, or desperately wounded” soldiers (28) and seeing how “the beds shook with the irrepressible tremor of their tortured bodies” (37). Many accounts of bodily damage, however, were private, in diaries and letters or told orally after soldiers returned from the front. In an 8 August 1863 letter to Elizabeth Peabody, Henry James, Sr., records his son Wilkie’s account of regaining consciousness after the disastrous attack of Robert Shaw’s Fifty-Fourth African-American regiment on Fort Wagner:

I woke up lying in the sand under my tent, and slowly recalled all that had happened, my wounds, my fall, the two men that tried to drag me to the rear, their fall one after the other, my feeble crawling to the ambulance—when memory slept, and I here woke up to find myself apparently forgotten by all the world, and sick & faint from loss of blood. As I lay ignorant of all that had happened meanwhile and wondering whether I should ever see my home again, a groan beside me arrested my attention, and turning my head, I discerned by the dim camp a poor Ohio man with his jaw shot away, who finding that I was unable to move, crept over me and deluged me with his blood. (qtd. in Aaron 112)



Despite the existence of private accounts such as this, the pressure not to represent war violence in public discourse was strong. The literature of the war generally “softened” death by “aestheticizing” it as a way to deal with “the fact of mass, anonymous death” (Fahs 99-100). In John Robinson’s novel *Scotto the Scout*, for example, the heroine walks through a field of Union dead after the First Battle of Bull Run with emotions “more of solemnity than fear” and of “patriotic sublimity.” For her, the corpses are “motionless sleepers” in “their last, quiet slumber,” while “a pure atmosphere of mild and softened light” falls on “her innocent and undefended head” and on the “white faces of the slain” (59). When a few pages later, another woman shoots two lecherous, drunken Confederate soldiers, their demises are singularly bloodless (61).

The contrast between these two attitudes towards violence’s representation—acceptance and denial—constituted a major conflict in Civil War fiction. The contrast also mirrors the conflict in the literary debate surrounding realism and romance that occurred after the war. The texts I discuss in the following chapters exhibit a range of these attitudes.

### **Civil War Literature**

Part of this study’s aim is to examine how genres operated in the special conditions of war. If genres adapt to changes in social situations, texts that use these genres should exhibit some evidence of this adaptation during this period. My studies of specific texts, bolstered by the work of others who study Civil War literature, suggest such development did occur.<sup>29</sup> The genres that I will be

discussing in detail are numerous—romance, exposé, slave narrative, history, biography, realist fiction, novel, short story, sensation fiction, conventional fiction, romantic fiction, subversive fiction, domestic fiction, sentimental literature—and I do not claim that negotiating the boundaries of these terms has been uncomplicated. Because I focus on the texts' historical context, I tend to use nineteenth-century concepts of genre, though I also use ideas about genres developed in later centuries. In Chapter Three, for example, I focus on nineteenth-century discussions about realism to examine how J. W. De Forest's *Miss Ravenel* conforms to its author's conceptions of realism. In Chapter Two, however, I use the categories that David Reynolds formulates in his 1988 book about the popular literature of the first half of the nineteenth century. David Fishelov has distinguished historical genres from theoretical genres in terms of induction and deduction. Historical genres are primarily inductive: the nature of the genre is determined by examining texts with commonalities in content, form, and historical period. A theoretical genre, on the other hand, attempts to match a definition to a variety of texts that seem to exemplify the definition (9). The distinction between a historical and a theoretical genre may be difficult to determine. Such is the case with the genre called war romance. The anonymous author of the "Romances of the War" discusses a subgenre of fiction that he or she has identified inductively; that is, the author has read some texts that share significant characteristics. Alice Fahs's term "war romance" seems to derive from the anonymous author's inductive identification of a genre the author calls "the

romance of the war,” and I subsequently use that term to analyse my primary texts (that is, deductively).

As it happens, terminological provenance constitutes a focus of Chapter Three. As that chapter discusses in more detail, the Civil War period occurred two decades before the so-called “Realism War” (Cady 166) that W.D. Howells participated in with supporters and detractors of realism. In these debates, realism was often pitted against its perceived antithesis, romance. My dissertation aims at studying the ways in which the war-time setting had an impact on genre’s manifestation in specific texts. The meanings of the terms have, rather notoriously, changed over time. In the twenty-first century, Pam Morris tries to distill a general idea of realism from literary history and concludes that realism constitutes “any writing that is based upon an implicit or explicit assumption that it is possible to communicate about a reality beyond the writing,” with the consequence that realism treats “language predominantly as a means of communication rather than verbal display” (Morris 6).

Realism has, however, been closely attached to the novel genre, such that some critics, particularly in the past two centuries, have used the term novel only to mean a work of *realist* fictional prose of considerable length. For instance, Ian Watt’s 1957 *The Rise of the Novel* predicates the development of the novel on the development of realism; that is, one does not exist without the other. Richard Chase goes so far as to use the term “novel” to signify realist fiction only, while “romance” signifies non-realist fiction (vii-ix). Romance, by contrast, “following distantly the medieval example, feels free to render reality in less volume and

detail. It tends to prefer action to character, and action will be freer in a romance than in a novel, encountering, as it were, less resistance from reality" (Chase 13). In his idea that romance has fewer restraints in the depiction of the real world than the novel has, Chase follows William Gilmore Simms, who, over one hundred years earlier in his 1835 *The Yemassee*, defined his own book as a romance, not a novel: romance, according to Simms, "does not confine itself to what is known, or even what is probable. It grasps at the possible; and, placing a human agent in hitherto untried situations, it exercises its ingenuity in extricating him from them, while describing his feelings and his fortunes in the process" (v-vi, qtd. in Chase 17). Chase's twentieth-century definition may also be following Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous nineteenth-century distinction between novel and romance in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*. The novel "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." The romance—"while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart— has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation," including the option of "manag[ing] his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture." For *The House of Seven Gables*, an association with romance is an "attempt to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us" (18).

The characteristics of realism and romance are certainly debatable, a circumstance that is not entirely unexpected considering the difficulty that genre

tends to accrue to itself in its criterial incarnation. Their distinction occupied the critical minds of the writers who participated in the Realism War and continues to occupy critical discourse today. Rather than fall into hermeneutical despair over the difficulty in bringing critical views into unanimity over the conceptualizations of specific genres, I engage these views for the purpose of critiquing specific texts. I clarify my own positions about the nature of the genres I discuss but will also defer at times to the ideas of others. As Northrop Frye argued, “The purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities” that a text has primarily and secondarily (248). I use definition and categorization not for their own sakes but for the sake of understanding the relationship between texts and the real world.

My choice of primary texts derives primarily from my interests in this period and in the subject of violence, as well as from a wish to choose texts that might provide surprising or non-intuitive results. The five primary texts all come from Northern publishers, though from time to time I will discuss Southern literature. More Northern novels were published than Southern novels during the war. The North already had a more dominant publishing industry, and as the war progressed the South’s weaker industrial base weakened even further and stifled the publishing industry. Furthermore, the texts in this dissertation offer points of analytical interest to me besides sectional conflict. I choose these Northern texts in part because they are in themselves interesting and in part because I wish to avoid a comparison that may result in having to make distinctions between North and South in the use of violence. As I discuss throughout, both North and South

offered violence as a solution to the country's political divisions, and for one text to show more perversion or cruelty than others does not mean that all texts from its respective section are more perverse and cruel than those from the other section. Indeed, the two sides' treatments of the war's political issues were at times so similar that oftentimes references to the Union could be switched with references to the Confederacy with little need for further editing.<sup>30</sup> Admittedly, some texts published in the mid-nineteenth century may seem more amenable to a discussion of genre and violence than the texts I am examining, such as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, which uses gothic, romance, religious, and scientific genres. But *Moby-Dick* is not about the Civil War, and therefore I did not select it.

### **Overview of Chapters Two, Three, and Four**

The following chapters examine their respective texts in terms of genre; they also examine the treatment of violence in those texts with the aim of determining the extent to which genre shapes the representation of violence. In general, I discuss the texts in order of publication; James's "The Story of a Year" was published before *Miss Ravenel*, but I discuss the three James stories together. Since I examine the historical contexts out of which genres arise, I draw on scholarly research related not only to the primary texts but also to social attitudes towards violence and towards soldiering, to literary trends related to popular literature, and to postwar genres in general.

Chapter Two focuses on *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*, a putative memoir of the years leading up to the Civil War, in terms of how that text

associates itself with both non-fiction and fiction genres. *Edmund Wright* offers itself as an indictment of a real fraternal organization called The Knights of the Golden Circle. To bolster its credibility and damage the reputation of both Southern secessionists and anti-government Northerners, the book uses non-fiction genres such as autobiography, slave narrative, testimony, exposé, and polemic. While *Edmund Wright* promises to unveil the secrets of the KGC to loyal Americans through its truth-telling autobiography, the book simultaneously uses the techniques of melodrama to convince its readers of the dangers of “dark lantern societies” that conceal their bloody rebelliousness with feigned loyalty. In fact, *Edmund Wright* exhibits characteristics of two subgenres of sensation fiction that David Reynolds’s *Beneath the American Renaissance* calls dark romantic adventure and subversive fiction. *Edmund Wright*’s deployment of both fiction and non-fiction genres seems contradictory, yet the co-occurrence of these genres make sense in the context of an American society struggling to reconcile its radical and conservative elements in the face of war’s social disruption. To explain how the book presents itself generically as autobiography, I look at Philippe Lejeune’s notions of the autobiographical pact and the referential pact, which are promises extended by a text to a reader that also equip the reader to frame the text with the correct generic structure. I suggest that *Edmund Wright* provides an autobiographical space within which readers can view the text as either fiction or non-fiction. Goffman’s notion of keying further explains how a text can adopt aspects of a genre to suit the text’s goals, which in *Edmund Wright*’s case is to make the book’s projected world equate to the real world.

Chapter Three turns to *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* by J.W. De Forest. I argue that the novel's participation in non-realist genres tempers the novel's proto-realism. I examine De Forest's association with William Dean Howells and compare contemporary statements about realism with De Forest's own statements about his writing philosophy, which I call "vraisemblance" to distinguish his statements from others' statements about realism. *Miss Ravenel's* method of representing battlefield violence conforms to De Forest's belief that writers ought to write about what they have personally experienced. Compared to De Forest's non-fiction, however, *Miss Ravenel* restricts some descriptions of violence. This limitation of verisimilitude manifests itself further through *Miss Ravenel's* recourse to non-realist literary genres. *Miss Ravenel* has characteristics of non-realist genres that predated the war, including mid-century humour writing and (like *Edmund Wright*) Reynolds's dark romantic adventure and subversive fiction. Furthermore, the novel deploys characteristics of a war-time subgenre of romance that Nina Silber calls romantic reunion; this use of non-realist genres is therefore not a decision to ignore the social turbulence of war. *Miss Ravenel's* generic uniqueness as a text was part of *Miss Ravenel's* problem as a publishing commodity. Using Culler's ideas about what he calls *vraisemblance*, I discuss how the absence of a well-defined, pre-existing genre (Culler's third category of naturalization) for nineteenth-century readers to contextualize *Miss Ravenel's* treatment of the Civil War affected the novel's popularity negatively. Furthermore, this missing third category affects the manifestation of Culler's fourth and fifth categories in De Forest's novel and thus



explains the novel's problematic relationship with the characteristics of realism. Ultimately, *Miss Ravenel* reserves De Forest's *vraisemblance* for those ideals with which the novel agrees and betrays a nostalgia for the romance that the novel asserts, with regret, is unreal.

Chapter Four examines how three short stories by Henry James ("The Story of a Year," "Poor Richard," and "A Most Extraordinary Case"), written during and shortly after the war, reshape the characteristics of the war-time fiction sub-genre that Alice Fahs labels war romance: stories of women in love with soldiers in spite of or because of the war's intervention. "The Story of a Year" features a young woman who, through a process that Elaine Scarry calls "wound transference," herself becomes a soldier, such that the story critiques the ideal of the masculine soldier. "Poor Richard" defies war romance's moral shapeliness through its indeterminate ending and its scepticism about war's societal benefits. In "A Most Extraordinary Case," the post-war community fails to heal the trauma that Americans hesitantly acknowledged as an outcome for thousands of men returning home from battle. The protagonist's mysterious ailment suggests a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder, which during the war period was (significantly) known by names such as nostalgia or homesickness. The story therefore questions the belief that the home front was not only the reason for war but also a sanctuary of healing once war ended. Together the stories express alienation from the war romance genre's rhetorical content. War romance assumes that the author and the reader share specific ideals about their country: that the Union embodied goodness, that an American soldier was resilient and

noble, and that the American family nurtured those who sacrificed their individualism for the common good.

This project does not offer a super-theory of Civil War literature and genre, since I have little doubt that such a theory lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. These chapters do not take the same approach or employ the same scope with respect to genre for such a theory to be feasible. Chapter Four, for example, focuses on a small subgenre of fiction, while *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* traces the presence of many fictional and nonfictional genres. Nonetheless, Chapter Five will conclude this study with a comparison of the primary texts in the context of the dissertation's major ideas and with some thoughts about the implications of these comparisons for further study.

## Notes

1. See Plato's *Republic* (392e-394c) and Aristotle's *Poetics* (1447a, 1448a-1448b).
2. Major modern studies of literary genre theory include Thomas Beebee's *The Ideology of Genre*, Rosalie Colie's *The Resources of Kind*, Jacques Derrida's "The Law of Genre," Heather Dubrow's *Genre*, David Duff's *Modern Genre Theory*, David Fishelov's *Metaphors of Genre*, Alistair Fowler's *Kinds of Literature*, Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway's *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, John Frow's *Genre*, Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, Barbara Lewalski's *Renaissance Genres*, Marjorie Perloff's *Postmodern Genres*, Adena Rosmarin's *The Power of Genre*, and Tzvetan Todorov's *Genres in Discourse*. See also Wai Chee Dimock's "Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge" in the 2007 special genre issue of *PMLA*.
3. For example, Beebee describes four successive critical orientations of genre after the Renaissance—"genre as rules, genre as species, genre as patterns of textual features, and genre as reading conventions." Beebee ascribes these changes to alterations in epistemological stances: "authorial intention," "historical or literary context," "the text itself," and "the reader" (3). Fishelov's list of twentieth-century conceptions of genre (which he calls "deep metaphors")—biological evolution, the family, the social institution, and the speech act (1-2)—resembles Beebee's in that the list demonstrates a growing theoretical acceptance of historical contingency.

4. Kintsch identifies a “schema” model, which is a top-down hierarchy (the imposition of structure on top of a specific case). He prefers a “construction-integration” model, which he characterizes as a bottom-up model (initial comprehension is rough and confused at first but is gradually refined by subtler rules); such a model acknowledges interpretive errors and ambiguous results. Kintsch argues that results are the same for both models (94-95).

5. Frow also argues that genres function like the framing mechanisms posited in linguistics and cognitive psychology. Linguistics has the notion of implicature, "a proposition that is implied by the utterance of a sentence in a context even though that proposition is not a part of nor an entailment of what was actually said" (Gazdar 38). Genre is therefore also a kind of implicature, "the unsaid of texts, the organisation of information which lies latent in a shadowy region from which we draw it as we need it; it is information that we may not know we know, and that is not directly available for scrutiny" (Frow 83). Genre is also comparable to the notion of schema in psychology, "a pattern underlying a surface phenomenon which allows us to understand that phenomenon" (Frow 83).

6. She describes her book's subject as “domestic, or ‘sentimental,’ fiction” (xiv). Later she uses these terms interchangeably in a lengthier passage: “But what this sort of commentary reveals, beyond an automatic prejudice against sentimental writers, is its own failure to perceive that the great subject of sentimental fiction is pre-eminently a social issue. It is no exaggeration to say that domestic fiction is preoccupied, even obsessed, with the nature of power. Because they lived in a society that celebrated free enterprise and democratic government

but were excluded from participating in either, the two questions these female novelists never fail to ask are: what is power, and where is it located?" (Tompkins 160).

7. Most broadly—when we call an artifact or gesture sentimental, we are pointing to its use of some established convention to evoke emotion; we mark a moment when the discursive processes that construct emotion become visible. Most commonly—we are recognizing that a trope from the immense repertory of sympathy and domesticity has been deployed; we recognize the presence of at least some fragmentary element of an intellectual and literary tradition. Most narrowly—we are asserting that literary works belong to a genre in which those conventions and tropes are central. But that does not undermine the importance of the recognition that sentimental works consistently engage us in the intricate impasse of the public and private, proclaiming their separation and at the same time demonstrating their inseparability. As emotion, embodied thought that animates cognition with the recognition of the self's engagement; as sympathy, firmly based in the observer's body and imaginatively linking it to another's; as domestic culture, in the peculiar intimacy of the print commodity; sentimentality at the same time locates us in our embodied and particular selves and takes us out of them. (Howard 76-77)

8. This treatment of sentimentalism can be characterized as the application of the concept of “mode”: see Note 16.

9. Žižek 87-88, 95-96. See also Lacan’s *Ecrits* 303.

10. Hirsch’s concept of determinacy elaborates on this requirement for certainty in interpretation:

Determinacy is a necessary attribute of any sharable meaning, since indeterminacy cannot be shared: if a meaning were indeterminate, it would have no boundaries, no self-identity, and therefore could have no identity with a meaning entertained by someone else. But determinacy does not mean definiteness or precision. Undoubtedly, most verbal meanings are imprecise and ambiguous, and to call them such is to acknowledge their determinacy: they are what they are—namely ambiguous and imprecise—and they are not univocal and precise. This is another way of saying that an ambiguous meaning has a boundary like any other verbal meaning. . . . (44)

Any theory of textual analysis that a theorist wants to share with others requires a belief in the inherent shareability of knowledge with others.

11. Frow’s formal definition of genre accounts for contingency:

genre is a historically specific pattern of organisation of semiotic material along a number of dimensions in a specific medium and in relation to particular types of situational constraints which help shape this pattern. Genre in turn acts as a constraint upon—that is,

a structuring and shaping of—meaning and value at the level of text for certain strategic ends; it produces effects of truth and authority that are specific to it, and projects a 'world' that is generically specific. (73)

12. By “real world” I mean the phenomenal world, the space where people perceive and objects exist, not only those perceptions and objects that are measurable quantitatively and qualitatively but also those perceptions and objects not easily measured or captured, such as thoughts and ideas. In other words, even if the author of “Romances of the War,” Fahs, and I are wrong about the existence of a war romance genre, any errors we may have made are not illusory: they exist.

13. Culler’s example of the second category is the relatively unproblematic acceptance of Balzac’s comment in *Sarrasine* that the Count of Lanty is “as gloomy as a Spaniard” and “as boring as a banker”; the reader accepts these characterizations as more or less plausible in Balzac’s novel, even though the existence of a cheery Spaniard or a thrilling banker would not be out of the realm of possibility in the real world (165-66).

14. In popular culture, a good example of such a disavowal is in Robert Rodriguez’s film *Desperado*, in which the bartender played by Cheech Marin comments that “the bartender never gets killed,” a reference to the presumably high survival rates of bartenders during shootouts in western films. Shortly thereafter, however, the bartender is killed in a shootout. The bartender’s self-affiliation with a stereotype does not protect the bartender from death.

15. In cases where some participants do not want others to be aware of the bracketing, the keying becomes a deception, or in Goffman's terminology, a "fabrication." The fabrication "contains" some participants in the recontextualized experience, while the fabricators watch from the outside. In both primary frameworks and keyings, all participants are aware of the framework's "rim." In a fabrication, however, only some people know where the rim is (Goffman, *Frame* 85). Fabrications can be benign (as in withholding contextual cues for the sake of social propriety) or exploitive (as in a financial scam) (87-103). See Chapter Two for more about fabrication.

16. This tripartite model appears in the work of other genre critics. For example, Ann Imbrie says that genre "expresses human experience (subject matter) through an identifiable form (formal character) that clarifies or discovers the values in or attitude toward that experience (generic attitude)" (60). Similarly, Heather Dubrow breaks down generic structure in terms of content, form, and tone (8).

Frow treats genre as part of a larger communicative structure such that genre is one of several "forms of organisation of texts" (67). For Frow, a second form of textual organization is "the *semiotic medium* in which a text is inscribed and presented (speech or writing, colour and line, three-dimensional mass, the tone and pitch of the human voice or of other sounds, recorded and projected light. . . ." (2); that is, a sign system constitutes a formal aspect of texts but is not a characteristic of genre itself. A third form is "the '*radical of presentation*' through which the text is presented to its receiver (first- or third-person narration,



dramatic narration, non-narrative address, song, and so on).” The “radical of presentation,” a term that Frow takes from Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (247), is related to the study of pragmatics in linguistics, and as such is close in meaning to the concept of semiotic medium, though with an emphasis on the circumstance of communication (singing, acting, writing, storytelling) (Frow 64); for more on the radical of presentation, see also Guillén 80-81.

A fourth form is “*mode*,” the “thematic and tonal qualification or ‘colouring’ of genre” (Frow 64). Borrowing his denotation of mode from Alastair Fowler (106-111), Frow calls a mode a tone, or an adjectival use, “the extensions of certain genres beyond specific and time-bound formal structures to a broader specification of ‘tone’” (Frow 65); “[t]he modes start their life as genres but over time take on a more general force which is detached from particular structural embodiments.” As an example, he notes the transformation of the term “tragedy” from “designating only a dramatic form” to a generalized use of the qualities of tragedy in other forms (thus making possible the texts known as the “tragic” novel or the “tragic” film or even real world events such a “tragic” death) (Frow 65-66). Interestingly, Frow treats sub-genre as a fifth category, rather than a subset of genre. A sub-genre differs from genre by having a more specific thematic content (64). The relationship among these forms of textual organization are not causal or predetermined; the forms “are discontinuous with one another, and they imply no derivation of one order of form from another” (Frow 67). An exception is the relationship between genre and sub-genre, which is “hierarchical” (67). I disagree, at least in theory, with the distinction between genre and subgenre being only

through thematic content, though in practice I cannot think of a counterexample.

My disagreement thus lies with only the logic of Frow's model, not on any practical considerations that affect my analysis.

17. Frow 74. The notion of the radical of presentation seems similar to this type of generic content, but the radical of presentation is closer in concept to semiotic medium (Frow 64). Frye states that the distinction between medium and presentation neutralizes the ease of reproduction in print form. He gives the example of the plays of Shakespeare. They are readily available in book form and thus can be read silently by one person or read out loud by a single voice, when in their design the plays were for public performance by many voices in front of an audience. Thus the plays are dramatic in their true orientation (they are "radically" or "ideally" dramatic), even though for many people the semiotic medium is the printed word (247). In the twenty-first century, digitalizing technologies that transform a text into different media make the distinction between medium and presentation more complex.

18. Frow defines speech situation as "the disposition of positions of speaking and any other relevant contextual circumstances which organizes an act of speaking or writing" (153).

19. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the following definition (4b) of the noun "novel" as the only one in modern use: "A long fictional prose narrative, usually filling one or more volumes and typically representing character and action with some degree of realism and complexity; a book containing such a narrative." See Chapter Two for more about the novelistic pact.

20. “[A]ll human communication is in some sense grounded in and can be derived from a base form of face-to-face conversational exchange between two interlocutors” (Frow 41). This is true even when people talk aloud to themselves or are reporting about themselves or someone else (“I was asleep” or “I am here” or “I said yes”). Reported speech (“He said to me, ‘I don’t understand’”) has a primary speech situation embedded in a secondary speech situation (Frow 41). In linguistics, subjects of enunciation are the people (i.e., in the real world) who actually do the speaking, while the subjects of utterance are the linguistic markers of speaking positions (the “I” in the statement, “I said yes”) (Frow 42).

21. See Chapter Three.

22. Frow defines truth effect as “[l]ike ‘reality effects’, a term developed to explain in relative rather than absolute terms the kinds of truths elaborated in and by texts (of any kind)” (155). Frow’s reference to “reality effect” likely points to the terminology in Roland Barthes’s “The Reality Effect.” For more on the reality effect, see Chapter Three.

23. This relationship between the text’s projected world and the real world is thus allusive, just as language itself is, at least, allusive to the real world as well as part of that world. The allusiveness of language as a whole does not, however, neutralize the specific importance and functionality of allusiveness in larger, discrete units of meaning. Allusions in the figurative sense of references to history or other texts, for example, or clichés of behaviour, function as truth effects. Language is, however, also part of the real world, as is the notion of allusion itself

(even if the referent for an allusion, such as to a character in a work of fiction, is not part of the real world).

24. Neff 20-21. Official casualty statistics are available from the U.S. Department of Defense's "Principal Wars in Which the United States Participated, U.S. Military Personnel Serving and Casualties." Similar statistics are also available from *Historical Statistics of the United States* edited by Susan Carter et al.

25. Royster 353. Among Clausewitz's well-known precepts from *On War* is that "[c]ombat is the only effective force in war; its aim is to destroy the enemy's forces as a means to a further end. That holds good even if no actual fighting occurs, because the outcome rests on the assumption that if it came to fighting, the enemy would be destroyed" (97). For Clausewitz, "War is a clash between major interests, which is resolved by bloodshed" (149).

26. Fahs 12. Not that some people did not express reservations about the war. The northern Peace Democrats disagreed with dismantling the Union for economic reasons and often were against emancipation (McPherson 295-98). True pacifist movements also existed in the North (see for example Thomas F. Curran's *Soldiers of Peace*). Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example, is well-known for not agreeing with the war (see Aaron 41-55). Other voices called for diplomacy rather than violence. Even Henry James, Sr., was diffident about the war until the Lincoln administration began to move towards abolishing slavery (Hoffmann and Hoffmann 536-37). See also Frederickson's *The Inner Civil War*.

27. Panzer 102-110. For newspaper coverage of Brady's photographs at the time, see for example the *New York Times's* "Brady's Photographs: Dead at Antietam" and "Brady's Photographs at the Seat of War."

28. Though De Forest is well known for his detailed depiction of war's violence, he was not the only war correspondent who wrote in that manner. In an 1864 article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, for instance, a Union staff officer harbours no illusions about the effect of weaponry on a body in this description of a dead soldier: "our artillery had crushed and mangled his limbs, and ground him into the mire. He lay a bloody, loathsome mess" (M'Cook 830).

29. Important surveys on Civil War literature include Daniel Aaron's *The Unwritten War*, Kathleen Diffley's *Where My Heart is Turning Ever* and *To Live and Die*, Alice Fahs's *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North & South, 1861-1865*, Ian Frederick Finseth's *The American Civil War: An Anthology of Essential Writings*, Sarah Gardner's *Blood and Irony*, David Kaser's *Books and Libraries in Camps and Battle: The Civil War Experience*, Robert A. Lively's *Fiction Fights the Civil War*, David Madden and Peggy Bach's *Classics of Civil War Fiction*, Lyde Sizer's *The Political Work of Northern Women Writers and the Civil War*, Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War*, and Elizabeth Young's *Disarming the Nation: Women's Writing and the American Civil War*. See also Albert J. Menendez's *Civil War Novels: An Annotated Bibliography*.

30. Fahs (132, 340-41n22) notes that four stories first published in 1863 and 1864 in New York's *Harper's Weekly* were reprinted, without attribution, in Richmond's *Southern Illustrated News* (three with their original titles).

## Chapter Two

### Non-Fiction and Fiction Genres in *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*

A text with uncertain authorship and an undocumented publishing and critical history presents a hermeneutical challenge for a genre theory that argues for the consideration of historical, social, and linguistic contingencies. *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* has no body of criticism, and its author is unlikely to be the person whose biography the book purports to describe. Generic criticism, however, can fill in the gaps that result from a context that otherwise is not well understood. Furthermore, generic criticism provides tools by which to pursue a specific critical objective, which in this case is the examination of the treatment of violence in Civil War literature.

*Edmund Wright* attributes ritualism and murderous conspiracy to the Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC), a real fraternal organization that in the early 1860s aggravated anti-secessionist anxieties in the North and bolstered sectional dissidence in the South. The book's violence ostensibly serves to warn naive Northerners about the traitorous infiltration of a Southern enemy that not even the Union command can combat. The book presents itself as pre-War history, not as fantasy, and by that perspective, the violence of the current Civil War comes to legitimize retrospectively *Edmund Wright's* claims. The book justifies its conclusions about the conspiracy by providing the kinds of arguments and evidence similar to those offered by popular non-fiction genres such as slave narratives and exposés. At the same time, *Edmund Wright* exhibits some conventions of sensation fiction, adopting that genre's literary strategies to

associate the Civil War with society's immoral undercurrents. Together the book's genres project a world in which the melodrama of sensation fiction explains the violence of the Civil War as much as does the documentary orientation of non-fiction.

*The Narrative of Edmund Wright* has received no in-depth scholarly attention, though its existence has been recorded in a few bibliographic sources.<sup>1</sup> In general, these sources do not demonstrate much awareness of the text's content; a handful of them, however, question the book's authorship and therefore cast doubt on the genre to which the book most obviously seems to belong.<sup>2</sup> For example, two WorldCat library catalogue records for *Edmund Wright* list the book's material type as biography (OCLC accession numbers 22529372 and 22529367) but three others (191274255, 51298979 and 2405230) designate its material type as fiction. No source identifies the name Edmund Wright with another book or with a specific historical person.

Little data exists about the book's two publishers, either. *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* was published by J.R. Hawley in Cincinnati and Benjamin W. Hitchcock in New York in 1864.<sup>3</sup> Both Hawley and Hitchcock were printers and publishers of popular literature. Their limited presence in the recorded histories of publishing in Cincinnati and New York suggests that they were minor publishers within their cities, both of which were centres of publishing for their respective regions.<sup>4</sup> As is the case with the author and the publishers, information about *Edmund Wright*'s marketing, sales and readership are scanty. J.R. Hawley advertised *Edmund Wright* in his own publications and indicated his company as a



source for its purchase. An advertisement in the *Republican Songster* seems to be a discount offer to booksellers, for it states that if ordered in bulk, *Edmund Wright* “will be furnished at a large reduction in price that will make its general circulation a very profitable investment,” adding, “There is no better text-book for the present campaign.” How many booksellers took Hawley up on his offer is unknown.<sup>5</sup>

J.R. Hawley and B.W. Hitchcock published some of the same books—John Wells’s two books *Illustrated National Hand-book* and *Every Man His Own Lawyer* and Ann S. Stephens’s *Pictorial History of the War of the Union*—in addition to *Edmund Wright*. Though evidence about the firms’ relationship is not definitive, the duplication in titles suggests possible cooperation between Hitchcock and Hawley.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the nature of their relationship, the careers of Hitchcock and Hawley indicate a kind of publishing venture that emphasized popular literature over literary high culture. The publishers’ production of texts on Civil War topics indicates an early willingness to capitalize on the war as a source of consumer goods, well before the surge in Civil War-themed publishing in the 1880s.<sup>7</sup>

As a memoir about events that would continue to affect the lives of wartime Americans, *Edmund Wright* is typical of the kinds of products that B.W. Hitchcock and J.R. Hawley sold. The categorization of *Edmund Wright* as fiction would make the book an outlier among its publishers’ merchandise, which tended to be non-fiction. This categorization also defies the assurances of both author and publisher that *Edmund Wright* is non-fiction. The book’s title page contains the

epigraph “Truth is Stranger than Fiction.” Chapter One begins with Edmund, the first-person narrator, pledging to contribute to the “imperfect history” of the KGC (15). In Chapter Two Edmund provides corroborating testimony from a nameless “intelligent friend” who summarizes his own experiences with the KGC (18-24). The J.R. Hawley advertisements for *Edmund Wright* participate in this categorization as non-fictional history and biography. The *Republican Songster* advertisement states that “[t]here is no better text-book for the present campaign.” In an advertisement on the back of J.R. Hawley’s *Assassination and History of the Conspiracy*, bold-face type proclaims the book’s “Astounding Disclosures!” and “Inside View” of the KGC, “that Infamous Organization, its Connection with the Rebellion, and the Copperhead Movement at the North.” The advertisement claims *Edmund Wright* as “certainly the most authentic work ever written on the subject, as Mr. Wright was a fully initiated member, and a man of reliable authority.” The advertisement in *The Republican Songster* likewise states that “Mr. Wright is Southern born, was for years connected with the thieving oligarchy whose crimes he exposes, and therefore speaks by the card.” The advertisement concludes that “[t]he man who is still a sympathizer with the rebels after reading this revelation must be wholly depraved.”<sup>8</sup>

Although the text and its advertisements attest to *Edmund Wright*’s historicity, arguably the book’s plot is so preposterous that only a generous or credulous reader could fail to question its historical facticity. But to conclude that this book is fiction, as some bibliographic sources have done, readers must subvert the book’s claims for a one-to-one relationship between the book’s

content and events in the real world. Readers would also have to deny the book's similarity to examples of historical and biographical genres. John Frow argues that when a text has "an unknown audience," the text must "[signal] its strategic intentions" via "forms of authority and plausibility" (115-16).<sup>9</sup> A genre serves as a vehicle for establishing authority and plausibility because it collocates various textual characteristics that provide strategies for interpreting texts by virtue of socially recognized congruencies in form and content, thus creating a sharable body of knowledge that can be verified by readers of that genre. Readers of *Edmund Wright* as history must minimize, if not ignore, those characteristics that suggest the book belongs to a fiction genre and instead emphasize characteristics congruent with non-fiction. For *Edmund Wright* to seem to be fiction or non-fiction, genre theory asserts that the book must contain cues for both non-fiction and fiction. *Edmund Wright* does contain both sets of cues. For nonfiction genres, the book demonstrates affinities with autobiography (including the slave narrative), testimony, and exposé. The book also contains the generic features of fiction, particularly with two kinds of nineteenth-century American sensation fiction that David Reynolds's *Beneath the American Renaissance* calls dark romantic adventure and subversive fiction. Being categorizable as both fiction and non-fiction does not, however, undermine *Edmund Wright*'s aim to tell the truth, nor does the genres' co-occurrence deny one or the other genre's ability to tell the truth. In their own ways, both categories of genre shape the book's approach to the Civil War and its violence. This approach reflects the social instability of the

American nation before and during the war.

### **Non-Fiction: Autobiography, Slave Narrative, Testimony, and Exposé**

Truth-telling is central to the genre of autobiography. Autobiography is supposed to represent real-world persons and events, but as Philippe Lejeune argues in *Le Pacte autobiographique*, autobiography more specifically offers a guarantee for the equivalence of a textual personage with a real person. *Edmund Wright*'s front peritext—the cover, title page, and table of contents—invites the reader to interpret the text as an autobiographical account of personal adventure and a memoir of the pre-war period.<sup>10</sup> Key to this generic invitation is the book's title and subtitle. As Jonathan Arac notes, "narration" in classical rhetoric is "the plain and manifest setting forth of the facts of the case" (661). The word "narrative" in the titles of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of exploration or escape signified a work of non-fiction.<sup>11</sup> Arac denotes this genre of exploration or escape narrative in the American tradition by the term "personal narrative." Popular in the beginning of the 1840s, texts of this genre have a first-person narrator (609) but "pay much less attention to the shifting nuances of personal, and especially interpersonal, feeling, than would be expected in a novel" (661). Instead, the impetuses of these adventures "arise from and depend on displacement": "their intelligibility and force depend on the difference between the world that the reader knows, and reads within, and the world that the narrator has experienced" (661).<sup>12</sup> *Edmund Wright*'s claim to reveal a truth otherwise hidden conforms to the drive behind this type of narrative.

The word “adventure” in *Edmund Wright*’s subtitle further emphasizes the action and exoticism such narratives promised. The subtitle also narrows the book’s subject to the KGC, an organization that for Unionist readers signified Southern treason and for Confederates a pro-South (if not pro-Confederate) stance. The KGC was a real organization. George Bickley, a Virginian and former member of the Know-Nothings (Klement 8-9), founded the KGC as a military organization whose aim was to annex Mexico for the South, fulfill the proclamations of the Monroe Doctrine, and free the South from the North’s economic influence (Crenshaw 30).<sup>13</sup> Bickley created rituals and secrecy around the KGC, perhaps in imitation of the Know-Nothings, which itself had adopted some of the ritualism and structure of Freemasonry (Crenshaw 36). In 1860 southern newspapers published Bickley’s statements and demonstrated sympathy for his aims (Crenshaw 33-34). In the summer of 1860, Bickley began to switch his interests from the acquisition of Mexico to self-government in the South. He claimed that prominent southern politicians in the slave states were members of the KGC, though these stated persons denied such membership (Crenshaw 40). Bickley’s reputation suffered when in 1860 some New Orleans Knights accused him of being a fraud (Crenshaw 39). Nonetheless, Bickley visited cities in the east, obtaining some newspaper coverage of his cause from the *New-York Daily Tribune*, *Cincinnati Gazette*, and *Cleveland Leader* in 1860 and 1861 (Klement 10). He was able to organize some branches of the KGC in Texas, the state most amenable to his message (Klement 11).<sup>14</sup> Bickley went to Kentucky in the spring of 1861 to promote the Confederate cause; there he attracted the notice not only of

secessionists but also of Unionists (Crenshaw 44). Two of these (Anthony A. Urban and Joseph W. Pomfrey) paid the five-dollar fee to join the Kentucky branch and used the information they gathered to expose the KGC in print. Urban published his information in the *Louisville Daily Journal* (18 July 1861), while Pomfrey published a pamphlet in Cincinnati entitled *A True Disclosure and Exposition of the Knights of the Golden Circle* (Klement 13).<sup>15</sup>

By this time, Bickley had gained the attention of the North. On 9 January 1861, the United States House of Representatives formed a Select Committee of Five to investigate the possibility of a secret organization infiltrating the government and planning anti-government activities. In its 14 February 1861 report, the committee found no evidence of any such plot by any organization, including the KGC (which was mentioned by name).<sup>16</sup> That spring, Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune* published a story about a KGC plot to set New York, Philadelphia, and Boston on fire ("Plots"). On 20 July 1861, New York's New Bowery Theatre opened a play about the KGC (Klement 14). Bickley and his KGC were well known in Ohio, Bickley's former home base (Klement 14); the Kentucky exposés, as well as *An Authentic Exposition of the K.G.C.* by Indianan James M. Hiatt, were popular in Ohio.<sup>17</sup> Bickley at some point joined the Confederate army as a medical officer,<sup>18</sup> but in 1863 he was arrested after crossing the Union line, his reputation having preceded him.<sup>19</sup> He subsequently denied any involvement in KGC activities in the North (Klement 30). Nonetheless, Bickley was imprisoned, first in Columbus, Ohio, on 18 August 1863, then at Fort Lafayette and later at Fort Warren, finally gaining his release in

1865.<sup>20</sup> Through 1864, accounts of KGC activities continued to appear in newspapers north and south, whether as part of anti-Democratic campaigns by Republican sympathizers or as streetside and countryside rumour (Klement 31-33).

Serious historians of the KGC doubt that Bickley's organization had the efficacy that denouncers of the KGC and of Bickley at times suggested. Roy Dunn warns against being "beguiled" by the KGC "ambitions rather than the accomplishments" (543n1). Though Bickley often claimed publicly that a KGC army was on its way to Mexico or that the KGC was preparing an army to aid the Confederate cause, no evidence exists of any KGC filibustering march or wartime manoeuvres (Crenshaw 40).<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the KGC was a potent enough locus of pre-war anxiety that a variety of hoaxes used the KGC to discredit both Republicans and Democrats.<sup>22</sup> Frank Klement maintains that the KGC "was a bogeyman devised for political gain" (33). Even while Bickley attracted unflattering attention personally, the organization itself was treated more seriously: for example, the *Continental Monthly* called Bickley a "miserable quack and 'confidence man'" ("Knights" 575) while simultaneously fretting over the threat of the KGC as reported in the 1862 re-publication of Anthony Urban's *Louisville Daily Journal* exposé ("Knights" 573). At a minimum, at least, Bickley and the KGC was a focus for Northern fears of Southern belligerence in the pre-war and early war years (Crenshaw 50).

The subject of *Edmund Wright*—the KGC—reflects contemporary anxieties about America's political cohesiveness and about the possibility of a

long, cruel war. These anxieties are reflected in the book's generic instability. The book's insistence on historicity clashes with scepticism about the ability to represent (and thus control) the war. Genres offer models of the world that readers are familiar with and therefore supposed to understand. Wright's book aims for control by mustering simultaneously various history subgenres in contemporary circulation. *Edmund Wright's* epigraph, "Truth is Stranger than Fiction,"<sup>23</sup> signals a lack of confidence over the ability to make mid-nineteenth-century America predictable. Real-world events, howsoever "true," nonetheless remain incomprehensible or foreign. By providing an account of the seemingly unaccountable, the book can make these events comprehensible and predictable and therefore make them "real."

"Truth is Stranger than Fiction" as a book's title or subtitle was not unheard of in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> *Edmund Wright's* epigraph is particularly evocative, however, both titularly and generically, of the most popular and well known of these books, the second and subsequent editions of the biography of Josiah Henson, an escaped slave who settled in Canada in 1830 (Winks 119). From its first page, therefore, *Edmund Wright* establishes a relationship with the slave narrative. The slave narrative is an autobiographical subgenre whose social and political influence arguably led to civil war and whose struggle for legitimization as history rather than fiction became a thematic characteristic of the genre itself. *Edmund Wright's* invocation of the slave narrative gives the book leave to absorb the same political worth and the same ontological legitimacy.



As a new genre, eighteenth-century slave narratives at first were absorbed through the reading practices associated with existing genres: “spiritual autobiography, the conversion narrative, the providential tale, criminal confession, Indian captivity narrative, sea adventure story, and the picaresque novel” (Gould 13). The slave narrative often combined physical and verbal cruelty and thrilling escapes with religious fervour and moral arguments against slavery, and therefore they had more than one focus of attractiveness for readers. As Philip Gould argues, many slave narratives “displayed an uneasy tension between evangelical didacticism and titillating commercial value” (13).

Bolstered by British and American success in ending the slave trade, American anti-slavery activists saw slave narratives as a way to prove that slavery was inhumane and should be abolished outright.<sup>25</sup> Since pro-slavery critics accused radical abolitionists of inventing tales of cruelty, the nineteenth-century slave narratives began to offer details about slave life in ways that would satisfy sceptics (Gould 19). Many slave narratives adopted the tactics of such full-blown antislavery documentaries such as Theodore Dwight Weld's *American Slavery As It Is* (1839) and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>26</sup> In an atmosphere of scepticism, the thematic content of the slave narrative also altered. It emphasized the brutal physical and sexual violence and hypocritical Christianity that comprised “strategic mechanisms by which the plantation maintains what [Frederick] Douglass called the ‘mental and moral darkness’ of enslavement” (Gould 19). Sales of slave narratives increased in the antebellum period as changes in the publishing industry increased literary production in

general and the support for abolition extended beyond the specific interests of church-based radicals.<sup>27</sup> Slave narratives therefore were popular enough to be clear points of reference for connecting *Edmund Wright* to the slave narrative genre.

One of these popular accounts was of Josiah Henson's life. His slave narrative first appeared in 1849, written with Samuel A. Eliot under the title *The Life of Josiah Henson*. The book was a fundraiser for various projects for black Canadians with which Henson was involved, particularly the Dawn community of southern Ontario (Winks 120). Henson's story garnered more public attention, however, after Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published serially 1851-52 and in book form in 1852 (Winks 121). Stowe subsequently wrote *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* to buttress her novel against critics who accused her of exaggerating the cruelty of slave life. She may have read Henson's biography while preparing *A Key*, not *Uncle Tom's Cabin* itself; however, once she did read *The Life of Josiah Henson*, she compared Henson to her characters George and Tom (Winks 122-23).<sup>28</sup> Stowe cemented the relationship between herself and Henson when she wrote an introduction to the second, 1858 edition of Henson's biography (Winks 124). This second edition of Henson's biography had a new title: *Truth Stranger Than Fiction: Father Henson's Story of His Own Life*.<sup>29</sup> From then on, Henson's life became associated with Stowe's novel.<sup>30</sup>

When *Edmund Wright* uses Henson's book title as a title-page epigraph, therefore, the title page invokes not only Henson's particular story but also Stowe and her blockbuster novel. Many biographies about slaves contain the word

“narrative,” *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and Olive Gilbert’s *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* being notable examples. More than the title page connects *Edmund Wright* the slave narrative genre, however. In some ways the book conforms to slave narrative conventions that James Olney outlines in “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature.”<sup>31</sup> For example, *Edmund Wright* has a poetic epigraph (even though it is not by William Cowper, the preferred source of slave narrative epigraphs).<sup>32</sup> In addition, slave narratives often have prefatory letters that attest to the author’s existence as a real person<sup>33</sup>; *Edmund Wright*’s second chapter contains a testimonial letter that corroborates the narrator’s assessment of the South’s designs on the North. KGC vigilantes pursue and kill anti-secessionists in much the same way that slaveholders hunt down escaped slaves in slave narratives (153).<sup>34</sup> The Little Jack episode in particular has characteristics of the narrative elements in slave accounts. Both Blair and Streeter are portrayed as corrupt, criminally self-serving, and cruel in the same way that slave narrative formulas portray slaveholders.<sup>35</sup> That cruelty is exemplified by Streeter’s separation of Little Jack from his mother ‘Liza and the book’s gruesome depiction of Little Jack’s murder (“The little fellow's brains and blood were scattered in the faces and on the clothing of those who stood near; and the scene presented at that moment was one of the most startling horror ever witnessed out of the infernal regions”) (65).

But if *Edmund Wright* is attempting to attract readers through cues that point to the anti-slavery literary formula, the book does not go so far as actually to be abolitionist. Edmund rejects his enemies’ labelling of him as an abolitionist,

calling the accusation “a base slander” (25). Edmund also makes clear that his wife is not an abolitionist (28); he excerpts a letter from his wife’s family that denies a one-to-one correspondence between Unionism and abolitionism: “the question of negro slavery is one of great delicacy, and . . . the people of the south are too apt to consider all citizens of the North as radical Abolitionists” (77). The book takes the anti-radicalist stance that considered calls for emancipation an encouragement of secession.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, the book is more sympathetic to the future prospects of whites than of blacks. Such a stance is curious considering that *Edmund Wright* borrows generically from pro-abolitionist slave narratives. The white Southerner Edmund, not a black slave, is the hero of this narrative of oppression. He is unfairly persecuted by Southern elites, “sold” into the KGC by his authoritarian father, betrayed by his KGC “masters” and imprisoned under threats of torture and death. He escapes death through disguise and deception, flees through the wilderness with his ex-captors in pursuit, and is aided from time to time by sympathizers he meets along the way.<sup>37</sup> Edmund’s life, in other words, better conforms to Olney’s outline of the slave narrative than does the depiction of slaves’ lives in the book.<sup>38</sup>

*Edmund Wright* borrows structurally from the slave narrative but its ideology prevents an unproblematic embrace of that genre’s activist origins. Part of what makes the slave narrative genre compelling, however, is its autobiographical nature, and *Edmund Wright* fully exploits that aspect of the slave narrative. To neutralize critics and sceptics, *Edmund Wright* must prove the factuality of its account of Southern secession, and just as slave narratives did,

includes documentation to corroborate its claims. Like the slave narratives, *Edmund Wright* offers itself as an autobiography and connects the life of one person with larger social and political forces.

The autobiographical pact forms part of the matrix of truth-creating structures in *Edmund Wright*. According to Lejeune, an autobiographical pact emerges when a text affirms an identity among author, narrator, and character (26). The autobiographical pact arises implicitly when a title includes the words “autobiography” or “my life” or a similar term or when the text’s opening makes clear that the narrator of the text, the “I,” is the same person as the author indicated on the title page (27). An autobiographical pact arises explicitly when the name of the character and narrator appears in the text, and that name matches the author’s name on the title page (27). Unlike fiction, autobiography and biography are referential texts: their relationship to the world outside the text is thus open to empirical verification.<sup>39</sup> The possibility of empirical verification leads to another author-reader pact, the “referential pact” (“pacte référentiel”).<sup>40</sup> Whereas the autobiographical pact is represented by the statement, “I undersign” (“Je soussigne”), a simple assertion of authorship, the referential pact is represented by the statement “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” (“Je jure de dire la vérité, toute la vérité, rien que la vérité” [36]), a legal-moral promise to represent events truthfully. The referential pact is not concerned with a reality “effect” but rather with a representation of the real (“Non « l’effet de réel » mais l’image du réel” [36]). Autobiography is a referential genre, as are history and journalism; for this reason, autobiography and

biography both offer a referential pact and an autobiographical pact.

Autobiography, however, has a lesser burden of proof of referentiality than a biography has (36-37). If an autobiography makes factual errors, for example, these errors do not necessarily mean the autobiography is “false,” since the author belongs to the narrative and cannot be separated from that narrative. By contrast, a biography with factual errors has diminished reliability since the biographer, who has not lived the represented life, has a professional responsibility to be accurate.

At a minimum, however, the author’s name in autobiography must point to a person outside of the text, someone who exists in the real world. Without this demonstrable authorship, the book might be something other than biography, such as a novel or a hoax. In this regard, a “novelistic pact” (“pacte novelistique”) arises when the author and the character have different names or when the text asserts its fictionality through a device such as the word “novel” on the title page (27). According to Lejeune, a hoax autobiography is not, however, a novel; it is an “abuse” of the autobiographical form (23n1).<sup>41</sup> If the author and the narrating character have the same name, then the text offers itself as autobiography. Even if the text turns out to be a fake, the lie alone does not exclude it from the autobiographical category (30). In other words, a hoax autobiography does not shift its genre and become, say, a novel; structurally, it is still an autobiography, albeit an autobiography with lies.<sup>42</sup> The non-fiction genre of autobiography is not clearly a source of historical facticity. In case of ambiguity, readers are left to read the text in whatever register they may (Lejeune 29). To recognize the slippery

category of “truth” in autobiography, Lejeune establishes the concept of the autobiographical space (“espace autobiographique”) (42). He arrives at this concept to theorize novels that authors offer as autobiographies.<sup>43</sup> A novel as autobiography problematizes the boundary between non-fiction and fiction:

It is no longer a matter of knowing which—the autobiography or the novel—would be truer. Neither one nor the other; the autobiography would lack the complexity, the ambiguity, etc., the novel the exactitude; it would thus be a question not of one more than the other, but rather of one *in relation to* the other. That which becomes revealed is the space in which the two textual categories are written and which is not reducible to one of the two. The effect obtained by this process is the creation, for the reader, of an autobiographical space.<sup>44</sup>

An autobiographical space permits the reading of both fiction and non-fiction as autobiography. In this way, a character in fiction functions as more than a general representative of human nature: it is a “phantom” of a specific individual. This phantom allows for the issuance of an “indirect” autobiographical pact, or what Lejeune calls a phantasmagoric pact (“pacte fantasmagorique”) (42). Lejeune hence makes conceptually possible an intermediate zone in which the representation of a narrating character may be either (or both) a fictional character based on a real person or a real person. The degree to which that indeterminacy becomes resolved depends on the reader. Nevertheless, as Lejeune makes clear, the reader has always been free to read fictional texts as autobiographical (43).<sup>45</sup> The reader may

very well choose not to take up the author's referential or autobiographical pact on the terms offered and instead accept only some aspects of the autobiography as real. The autobiographical pact, whether phantasmagoric or otherwise, therefore is better understood as a promise or as a prospectus of a genre that the reader, the second party to the pact, may agree to take up in full, in part, or not at all.

The ability of a reader to accept or reject an autobiographical pact has an important bearing on the treatment of *Edmund Wright* as a pseudonymous or even apocryphal autobiography.<sup>46</sup> According to Lejeune's definition, a text whose main character, narrator, and author share the same name is autobiographical. From its first leaf, *Edmund Wright* presents itself as an autobiography, since the title names Edmund Wright as the owner (or possessor, as the preposition "of" asserts) of the narrative.<sup>47</sup> Even if the book is not an autobiography (as some bibliographic sources have surmised), it is best described generically as a hoax autobiography, not a novel, based on the generic cues the text offers. It is true that the absence of information about the book's publication and authorship makes even its status as a hoax difficult to prove.<sup>48</sup> At a minimum, however, *Edmund Wright* creates an autobiographical space: though it does not necessarily have the force to offer an autobiographical pact explicitly, the book offers an autobiographical pact implicitly (which is what autobiographical spaces do). As far as the book's status as autobiography is concerned, then, *Edmund Wright* falls within the rubric of the broad generic category of non-fiction.

By offering itself as an autobiography, *Edmund Wright* positions other of its elements in ways that support its truth-telling (referential) aspects. One such



element is the open letter in Chapter Two by an unnamed “intelligent friend.” The book bolsters the terms of its autobiographical genre’s referential pact through the testimony of the intelligent friend. The intelligent friend provides evidentiary comprehensiveness to the book’s claims about the KGC via his own eyewitness accounts, which corroborate much of what Edmund claims. Just as in Edmund’s case, the friend’s wife and child are murdered by the KGC (Wright 18). The intelligent friend escapes detection as “a Southern traitor” by putting on a disguise (23), a method of concealment that later chapters reveal Edmund to have used more than once himself. The intelligent friend has the same political views as Edmund and employs similar language to express them. The intelligent friend exhorts at the book’s beginning, “MEN OF THE NORTH, be vigilant, watchful as the angels of the night that guard you when devils plot and plod through darkness and light” (19); Edmund exclaims at the book’s conclusion, “Men of the North, be not deceived, the wolf is now at your very door, and thirsting for the blood of those you love!” (149).

Just as Edmund does in Chapter Five, the intelligent friend of Chapter Two connects the KGC to specific wartime incidents. The intelligent friend tells the story of Reuben Stout of the Union’s Sixtieth Indiana, who in October 1863 was executed for treason after confessing to having joined the KGC under the influence of Copperheads.<sup>49</sup> The intelligent friend also mentions the case of the Union’s 109th Illinois, disbanded in 1863 for disloyalty, whose members the friend claims were full-fledged KGC spies.<sup>50</sup> The intelligent friend goes so far as to assert that the Northern losses at the September 1862 Battle of Antietam

resulted from collusion between the Southern army and some Copperheads among the Northern command (20).<sup>51</sup> Since General George McClellan led the Union forces against Robert E. Lee's Confederate army at Antietam, the friend is therefore suggesting that McClellan was a Confederate spy and Lee a member of the KGC. The intelligent friend's testimony so closely confirms Edmund's account of the KGC that the intelligent friend seems to be Edmund's double. The intelligent friend's letter becomes not simply testimony (evidence via an eyewitness) but rather a testimonial (a sign of approval for Edmund's project).

Frow argues that eyewitness testimony "possess[es] the authenticity of direct vision" yet "lack[s] the comprehensive view of the detached observer" (95). As a result, testimony is useful for evidence in institutional procedures such as legal proceedings but alone is merely "the raw materials of history" since it cannot alone address "questions of pattern" required to generalize broader historical themes from specific cases (95). Edmund, however, rectifies that weakness by acting as a historian himself. On its own, the intelligent friend's letter is a solitary piece of evidence, but with Edmund's own story, the letter helps establish the pattern that substantiates *Edmund Wright*'s self-identification as a purveyor of a referential pact. The book is not simply autobiography, then, but a full-fledged history.

Erving Goffman's concept of keying adds significance to the use of testimony in *Edmund Wright*.<sup>52</sup> When one text is incorporated into another, the first text is transformed into another framework and thus potentially into another genre. In keying, this transformation "suspends the primary generic *force* of the

text, but not its generic *structure*" (Frow 46). I would argue that the generic force does not necessarily become suspended. As Goffman himself says, "Keyings seem to vary according to the degree of transformation they produce" (78); in other words, transformations can vary in quality. In *Edmund Wright*'s case, the primary narrative redeploys the generic force of testimony—the friend's pledge to "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" in a legalistic sense—to reinforce the truth-telling features of Edmund's referential and autobiographical pacts. The text thus attempts to create a projected world of realistic depth, providing "proof" in an empirical way through multiple sources. This interest in providing realistic depth through multiple corroborating sources also characterizes slave narratives, especially those that include documentary materials to substantiate the claim about slavery's cruelty.

The slave narrative deploys the genre of autobiography, in other words, to expose social injustice. The exposé constitutes another significant element of America's non-fiction literary production in the nineteenth century. James Aucoin considers America's "first exposé journalist" to be Benjamin Harris, founder of *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick*, whose first issue appeared in Boston 25 September 1690 (19). When *Edmund Wright* adopts the characteristics of exposé, therefore, it not only borrows from the slave narrative genre but also borrows directly from the journalistic genre of exposé proper.

The exposé genre reflects the US's particular social and political origins. Aucoin argues that colonial Americans were prone to suspicion of their government because of their ancestors' experiences with government persecution

of their religious beliefs in Britain. Their Christian faith also predisposed them into believing that humans fell inevitably into sin; as a result, “[e]arly Americans expected reports that revealed the failings of government, and the printers who shared their vision obliged them” (20-21). The exposé tradition continued into the post-revolutionary period, bolstered by constitutional notions of freedom of the press. In Jacksonian America, the anti-elitist, pro-democratic mood lent reports of scandals among authority figures an additional political and philosophical tenor to the original moral one.

Improvements in print technology and increased literacy gave newspaper publishers a new market (the public at large) via a new mechanism (penny papers). Newspapers could also now depend on sales and advertising to support themselves, rather than through the earlier tradition of funding by political parties; for publishers, then, the desire and necessity to attract readers (and thus money) from competition became paramount (23). At the same time, reform movements began to call attention to social problems through their own special interest periodicals and, increasingly, through mainstream newspapers (23-24). Some newspapers turned to eyewitness accounts and court reporting to enhance their coverage of scandals (24). The cumulative result of these changes was a greater appeal for publishing stories that revealed intimate details of the world beneath the supposedly civilized surface of American society, whether to provoke calls for social reform or to appeal to a consumerist audience seeking sensational news.

*Edmund Wright*’s critiques of the KGC particularly resemble the exposés of American Freemasonry that proliferated in the nineteenth century. The

fraternal organization had already garnered a poor reputation early in the century by having become associated with debauchery (Carnes 24). But a specific scandal fuelled Anti-Masonry in 1826 when William Morgan, who had threatened to publish Freemasonic secrets, disappeared, and evidence pointed to Morgan having been kidnapped by Freemasons and drowned in Lake Niagara. The light sentencing of the suspects persuaded some Americans that, since the prosecutors and some jurors were Freemasons, Freemasons were protecting their own (Vaughn 6-8). Anti-Masonic sentiment rose, driven at first by religious leaders, but eventually spurred on by political forces, to the extent that an Anti-Masonic Party was founded, which consequently nominated a candidate for president.<sup>53</sup> The mood lead to a surge of Anti-Masonic publications, enough so that in 1852 Henry Gassett could publish his *Catalogue of Books on the Masonic Institution*, a list of Anti-Masonic books available in libraries in the United States and throughout the world.

A connection between the KGC and the dangers of Freemasonry, no matter how tenuous or crude, would be a way to discredit the KGC and thus secessionism in general. Anti-Masonry saw Freemasonry as a threat to American ideals. According to Lorman Ratner, Americans in the 1820s and 1830s were prone to “crusades.” The conditions for such a crusade—economic uncertainty, geographical population shifts, decreased interest in traditional religion, and perceived loss of the principles that led to the American Revolution—were present in the antebellum period (7-8).

*Edmund Wright* is not strictly speaking an Anti-Masonic text, but it uses some of the same criticisms against the KGC that were used against Freemasonry.<sup>54</sup> Some Anti-Masons saw Satan's influence in Freemasonry (Carnes 74).<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Edmund Wright calls the KGC an “emanation from the arch-fiend himself, when, in his bitterest mood, he would avenge his fall from the presence of the Almighty” (17). The hyperbolic descriptions of these groups’ transgressions sometimes adopt the same tone. For example, while the United States Anti-Masonic Convention sees the Freemasons as carnivalesque murderers, their “party coloured garments . . . dripping with the blood of innocents” (22), Edmund suspects that the activities of the KGC to date were “but the overture of a programme of blood” (137). *Edmund Wright* attributes to the KGC emblems that seem derived from Freemasonry. For example, the Northern colluders at Antietam shout “Red Rose! Red Rose!” (20) to signal their loyalty to the attacking Confederates. The red rose emblem, likely inspired by Rosicrucianism, forms part of the Rose Croix degree of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry (“Rosicrucians”).<sup>56</sup> Suns, moons and skulls are all common motifs in Freemasonic symbolism (Béresniak 22-24, 40, 80): these symbols appear in illustrations in *Edmund Wright* of the interiors of KGC castles, which in other respects resemble the interiors of Freemasonic temples; see Figure 1.<sup>57</sup>

The oath-taking of Freemasonry especially concerned Anti-Masons. The United States Anti-Masonic Convention worried about cross-loyalties, wondering how someone who gave an oath to Freemasonry could be counted on to follow the social and moral rules of society at large, including the U.S. constitution (12-18).



MURDER OF JUDGE FIRMAN BY KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN CIRCLE---See page 99.

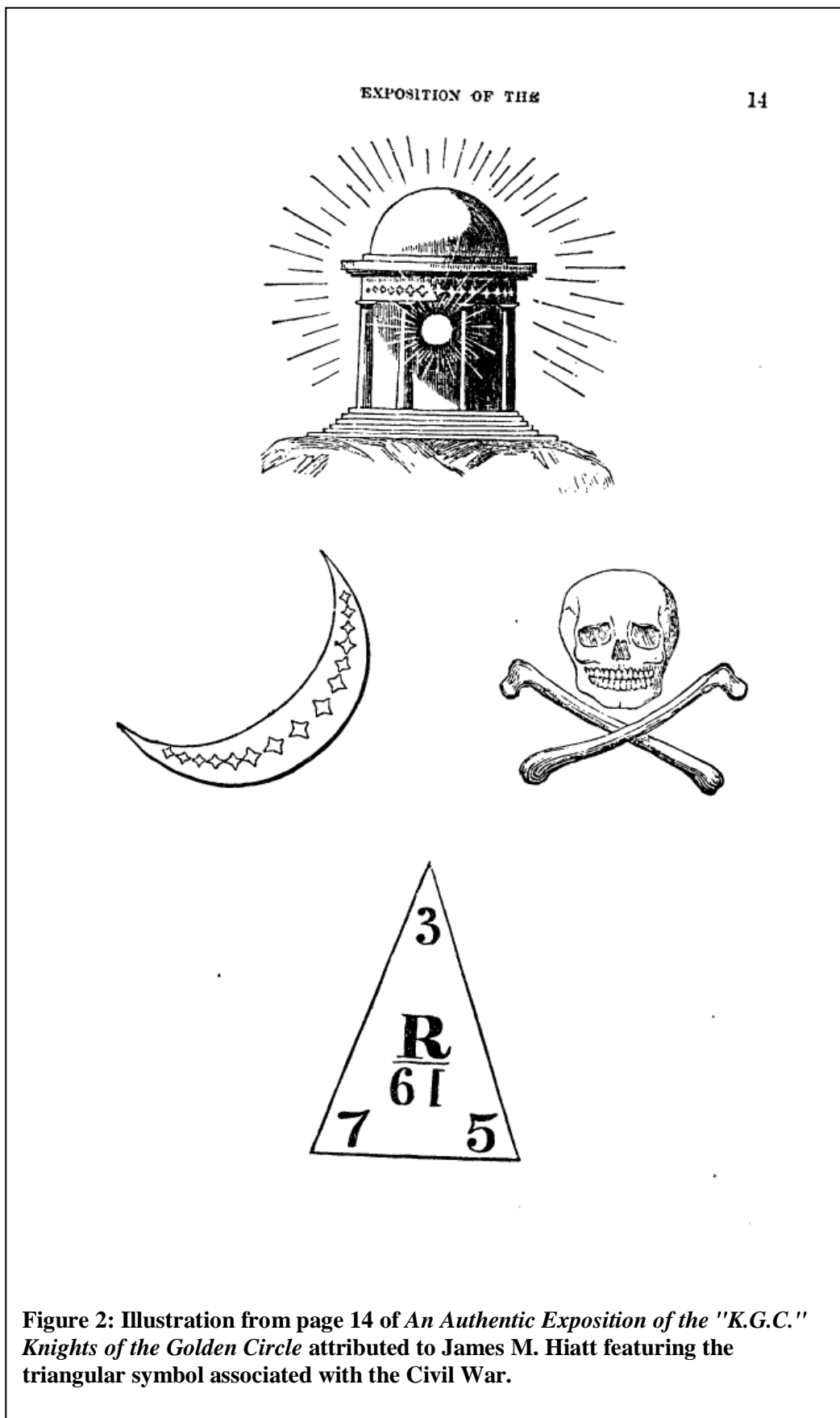
Figure 1: The interior of the KGC Castle in Galveston from *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* (title page facing illustration). (Source: *Wright American Fiction 1851-1875*.)

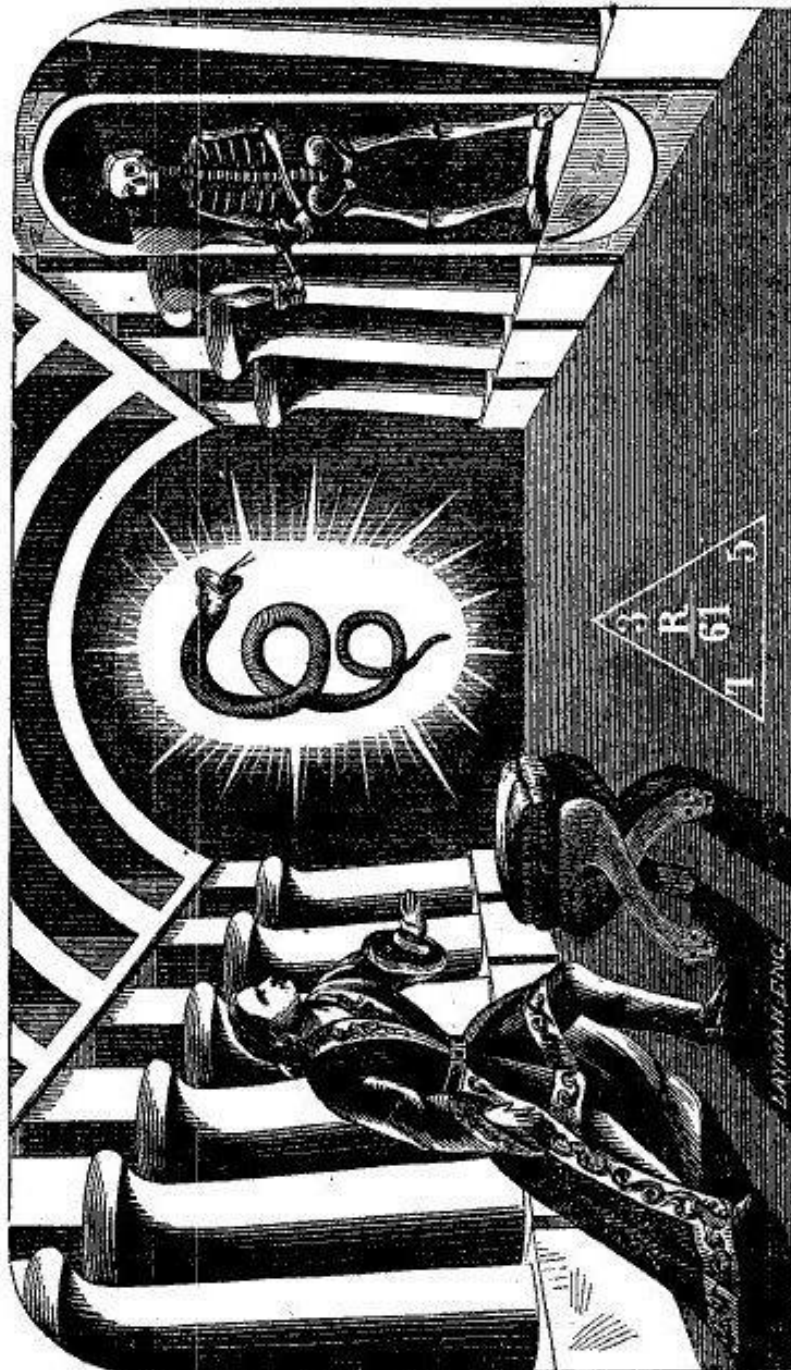
The U.S. Anti-Masonic Convention's *Address* thus focuses on Freemasonic oaths, symbolism and codes to prove that Freemasons pledge to defy social codes, including the strictures against murder, to protect the interests of Freemasonry (7-11). Chauncey Whittlesey's Anti-Masonic tract also gives attention to the transcription of alleged Freemasonic oaths (10-13). Similarly, *Edmund Wright* provides long excerpts of oaths and explicates KGC symbolism to illustrate how the fraternal society is both a promoter of treason, since it is plotting "to overthrow. . . the Union and the Constitution" (Wright 19), and a force of moral and social transgression. Any sign of sympathy puts the sympathizer under suspicion of being collaborationist. The United States Anti-Masonic Convention warns that anyone who disagrees with the right to overthrow Freemasonic institutions via elections might well "excite suspicion of being implicated" in Freemasonry (19), just as *Edmund Wright's* narrator warns against "saying, . . . doing. . . , or thinking" against the government until the war has ended (149).

Prior to and during the Civil War, so-called secret or "dark lantern" societies became a focus of Unionist fears (Klement 1) and thus became subject to the same crusading spirit marshalled against Freemasonry. The KGC was a frequent object of exposés, such as the aforementioned ones by Hiatt, Pomfrey, and Anthony Urban.<sup>58</sup> KGC historians tend to be wary of documents that make claims about the KGC. Noting the various hoaxes and politically motivated newspaper reports about the organization, Klement considers the KGC "a bogeyman" and the exposés in particular as containing "mostly. . . rumors, conjecture, and fancy" (33). One test for an exposé's credibility is to compare



“official” and “unofficial” KGC documents. Bickley-created documents are “official,” such as the *Rules and Regulations*, *Address*, Bickley’s correspondence, and depositions that arose from his 1863 arrest. Among the “unofficial” KGC documents, Pomfrey’s *True Disclosure* best reflects information and attitudes expressed in official documents.<sup>59</sup> The document that most resembles the KGC material in *Edmund Wright* is Hiatt’s *Authentic Exposition*. For example, Hiatt includes images of KGC emblems and uniforms (13-14), among which is a triangular symbol with the numbers 3, 5, and 7 in the corners, the letter R in the centre, and the number 61 below the R (14; see Figure 2). Hiatt states that the symbol is a secret reference to a planned insurrection against the Union; the three numbers in the triangle’s corners add up to 15 (which represents the number of secession states), the “R” stands for revolution, and the number 61 stands for the year 1861. Hiatt claims that these triangular symbols were circulated as “cards” in the North two months before the 1860 election (23-24). One of the illustrations in *Edmund Wright* (captioned “The Ante-Room of the Serpent”) shows the interior of Edmund’s KGC temple with the same triangular symbol on the temple floor (Wright 26, facing page; see Figure 3). In addition, the book’s text indicates that the rebellious castle in Texas has the figures 3, 7, 5, R, and 61 carved on a dais (86); this symbol also appears in an illustration captioned “Hanging a Recreant Knight in the Dungeon of an Arkansas Castle” (Wright 20, facing page; see Figure 4). The skull and crossbones symbols in Hiatt (14 and Figure 2) appear in “Hanging a Recreant Knight in the Dungeon of an Arkansas Castle” as well. Hiatt





THE ANTE-ROOM OF THE SERPENT—See page 43.

Figure 3: Illustration from page 26 (facing page) of *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* of the interior of Edmund's KGC castle in Florida. (Source: *Wright American Fiction 1851-1875*.)

explains that the skull and crossbones stand for “death to all ‘Abolitionists’ and opposers of ‘Southern independence’” (12); *Edmund Wright* similarly explicates the skulls’ meaning as “death to Abolitionists, and the crossbones death to traitors” (34). Edmund achieves the level of “Knight of the Columbian Star” (Wright 51), which Hiatt identifies as the KGC’s third, “political” degree (83). The oath that Edmund takes (Wright 45-51) matches nearly word for word the oath that Hiatt reports as belonging to the initiation of the third degree of the order (85-87).

Nonetheless, Hiatt’s version of the oath only *nearly* matches Wright’s. *Edmund Wright* lists ten “obligations,” or duties, while *Authentic Exposition* lists thirteen. The content of their first, second, third, seventh, and eighth obligations are similar, though the wording differs slightly since Hiatt uses codes for certain terms while Wright does not.<sup>60</sup> Other differences are more substantive. The fourth and fifth obligations in Hiatt have asterisks in place of text, as though the obligations’ texts are missing or have been deliberately omitted (85). *Edmund Wright*, however, has text for the fourth and fifth obligations where Hiatt has only asterisks. The fourth obligation in *Edmund Wright* instructs initiates to hand over any “abolitionists” they encounter in “a Slave state” to Third-Degree Knights, or, if that is not practicable, to “kill or maim” said abolitionists; the fifth obligation tells initiates to undermine the power of any U.S. president who threatens southern rights or institutions and to assist any southern state that seeks secession (Wright 46). The sixth and seventh oaths in *Edmund Wright* omit Hiatt’s references to Mexico and Bickley in instructions for initiates to report on or act

against suspect figures (Wright 46-47, Hiatt 85). In *Edmund Wright* the ninth obligation is a pledge to “reduce the condition” of poor whites (an instruction which Edmund protests) (47); in Hiatt the ninth obligation discusses the takeover of Mexico (86). In *Edmund Wright* the tenth oath is a general pledge to support secession and the KGC (51), while Hiatt’s tenth oath advocates for a government that will turn the Mexican peon system into true slavery and divide power to various KGC degrees (86). The remaining three obligations in Hiatt are absent in Wright: the establishment of a “limited monarchy” in slave states, a passport system for foreign entrants into a slave state, and a list of rules and obligations for George Bickley’s successor (Hiatt 87). In summary, wherever Hiatt’s document mentions Mexico, *Edmund Wright* either omits the entire passage or replaces references to filibustering in Mexico with references to secession. Unlike Hiatt’s document, *Edmund Wright* does not make Bickley central to the KGC’s leadership.

*Edmund Wright*’s representation of KGC does not conform completely to Hiatt’s exposé on the KGC; neither does its representation of the KGC conform to official or other unofficial KGC documents. When George Bickley was arrested in 17 July 1863 by the Union in Indiana, his wife was carrying “the great seal of the order bearing the emblem of a Maltese cross surmounted by a star and encircled by the inscription, ‘Great Seal of the K’s of the G.C., 1856’” (Fesler 186). This emblem does not resemble the KGC “mark” in *Edmund Wright*; there, the Confederate general at Antietam wears a badge of a “golden serpent coiled in a circle, and crested with jet enamel” with diamonds for eyes, an emblem that the

intelligent friend of Chapter Two identifies as symbolic of the KGC (Wright 20). *Edmund Wright* lists some of the degrees of the KGC (“Grey Cross,” “Raven's Plume,” “Master of the Rose of the Circle”) (37), but these degree names do not appear in KGC-related documents, whether official or unofficial. Whereas all KGC documents, minor or major, devote at least some attention to Bickley himself, often including biographical information, *Edmund Wright* mentions Bickley only once: the circumstance by which a “Robespierreian reign of terror” deposed Bickley and subsequently promulgated secession and ensured internal resisters were “summarily dealt with, even to taking of life” (137). This propensity for violence as policy appears elsewhere in *Edmund Wright*; for example, the book lists a “test oath” that calls for the “death and destruction of Northern Abolitionists” (42). Such explicit (and rather gleeful) support for violence is, however, absent from KGC documents. Finally, Edmund gives the KGC credit for key events in the Civil War, but KGC documents do not make such claims.<sup>61</sup>

All this evidence suggests that *Edmund Wright* reflects an anachronistic and self-serving distortion of KGC activities. The book uses Hiatt's exposé as a source but alters details to conform to contemporary circumstances and to build up the KGC as a secret arm of the Confederacy. *Edmund Wright* emphasizes the Civil War in place of the actual Mexican orientation of the KGC and de-emphasizes Bickley's involvement in the KGC, even though both Mexico and Bickley would have been important to the KGC in the late 1850s and early 1860s, which is when *Edmund Wright*'s events take place.<sup>62</sup> The KGC oaths in *Edmund*

*Wright* function as convenient reconstructions: just as Anti-Masonic writers published Freemasonic oaths to convince the public that Freemasonry could weaken American democracy, *Edmund Wright*'s KGC oaths provide ostensible evidence for the organization's threat to the Union and to morality in general.

The exposé genre aims at revealing concealed truths, but paradoxically, the exposé genre in *Edmund Wright* explains not simply the workings of the KGC but also the objectives of Edmund's activities on behalf of the KGC. Edmund maintains that having knowledge about the KGC is itself dangerous, which is why he advocates that loyal Unionists must refrain from criticizing (even in thought) the Civil War or the Unionist government. Yet despite his horror at the KGC's precepts, Edmund agrees to help establish castles in the North as a way to reveal ("unveil") the organization to loyal Unionists (73). Edmund's agreement to establish KGC castles is an agreement to provide a structure through which the KGC can expand its operations and become a greater social threat. Edmund's own tactics in his life thus model the art of exposure: he enhances the enemy's power to make the enemy a greater threat. Indeed, by being the subject of an exposé, the KGC, and by extension the support for secession, becomes not a crazy fiction or undocumented rumour but a documented truth.

The truth that *Edmund Wright* proffers is an awful truth: torture and death will come to those who ignore the power of the KGC and tolerate any ingress of the organization into legitimate American society. To better demonstrate what dangers lurk below the surface of southern gentility and northern civilization, the book alters or ignores history. It modifies the KGC's political agenda and even its

oaths to make it more bloodthirsty and ruthless. In other words, even though *Edmund Wright* uses the non-fiction genres of autobiography, slave narrative, testimony, and exposé, it willingly defies historical writing's insistence on the exact representation of real-world events.

In fact, some aspects of Edmund's reminiscences conform better to novelistic plot devices (albeit clumsy ones) than to the evidence of real human foolishness, courage, or serendipity found in non-fiction. For example, the Galveston Knights decide to transfer the kidnapped Edmund and Taylor to a hotel, rather than to the KGC castle's dungeon, for safekeeping (101). This circumstance allows Edmund to escape the hotel using his surprisingly convincing cross-dressing. Edmund happens to be in Charleston on the day of the fall of Fort Sumter and happens to see among the rebels the Soldan of Galveston Castle (148). Two members of Edmund's family call the protagonist "Edward" rather than Edmund (28, 70); is this a typesetting error, the autobiographer getting his own name wrong, or a novelist forgetting the name of his character? The biography and opinions of Chapter Two's intelligent friend are so similar to Edmund's that the friend functions not as a real person but rather as a device for literary prolepsis and parody. In the end, the book seems less a diary of historical events by a KGC insider and more a construction of pre-war and wartime events based on information about the KGC readily available to newspaper readers.<sup>63</sup> Lyle Wright's classification of *Edmund Wright* as pseudonymous fiction may be a sign of the ways in which the book reads more as a novel than as a history.<sup>64</sup>



Goffman argues that keying can be deceptive, that is, a “fabrication,” such that some participants have been bracketed into a different lamination of keying while others remain outside the bracket (*Frame* 85). Arguably, *Edmund Wright* fabricates the genres in which it participates by insisting that it is a historical account. Whether or not *Edmund Wright* aims to deceive through malicious motives is unknown, just as much about the book is unknown. Rather than ascribing such maliciousness to the book, a different way of looking at *Edmund Wright*’s truth claims is to look at the fiction genres it seems to use. To say a book “reads” like a novel is a way of saying that the book deploys those mechanisms of fiction genres that induce an audience to place the book within a knowledge framework associated with fiction. *Edmund Wright* not only contains formal and semantic cues belonging to non-fiction subgenres but also deploys strategies of popular fiction, particularly the types of sensation literature David Reynolds calls dark romantic adventure fiction and subversive fiction. By participating in both sets of genres, *Edmund Wright* establishes equivalencies between the melodrama of mass-market fiction and the polemic of war-time America.

### **Fiction: Sensation, Dark Romantic Adventure, and Subversion**

The genre of sensation fiction arose from the same social forces that influenced the development of the non-fiction reform genres that *Edmund Wright* also invokes. European literature undeniably constituted a significant source of inspiration for American writers; nonetheless, American literature arose from its indigenous social context, including the reform movements that spawned the

literature of slave narratives and exposés. In the first half of the nineteenth century, religious sermons altered their styles from Puritan restraint and theological density to imaginative storytelling and instruction via imagery and narrative exempla. These stylistic changes allowed religion to compete with the increased interest in secular literature in this period. Reynolds credits the Second Great Awakening (1798-1815) and revivalist preaching, in conjunction with the influence of European Romanticism, with initiating this trend in religious writings (17-19). At the same time, some secular writers—including Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman—adopted the techniques and subjects of religious sermons (Reynolds 15-16).

Reynolds classifies reform literature into two categories, conventional and subversive, based on a general division in nineteenth-century religious reform movements between the rationalists and evangelicals, respectively: “Both were based upon an interest in preserving moral and physical healthiness, a belief in the sanctity of the home, and an identification of religion with moral practice” (57).<sup>65</sup> However, conventional reform texts “[emphasized] the ingredients and rewards of virtue rather than the wages of vice” (58).<sup>66</sup> Subversive reform literature, by contrast, “deemphasized the remedies for vice while probing the grisly, sometimes perverse results of vice, such as shattered homes, sadomasochistic violence, eroticism, nightmare visions, and the disillusioning collapse of romantic ideals” (59). Reynolds associates subversive reform literature in particular with the rise of mass-market popular fiction (59). The work of Mason Locke (Parson)

Weems, a tract-writing travelling book pedlar of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, epitomized the tactic of subversive reform texts: “grotesque, blackly humorous examples of the effects of vice” are then followed by a “recoil to safe moral ground in a long concluding essay on such remedies as education and religious conversion.”<sup>67</sup> Some slave narratives exhibited the characteristics of the subversive approach to reform literature. William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, for instance, were both accused of contravening Christian decency by the graphic nature of their accounts of slavery and by their strenuous criticisms of American society (Reynolds 74-76).

This reformist material informed nineteenth-century American popular fiction, both in the sentimental and the sensational traditions. In the period during and shortly after the war, bestsellers (outside of religious, educational, and reference texts) continued to be novels of sentiment or sensation.<sup>68</sup> Reynolds’s typology in *Beneath the American Renaissance* divides antebellum popular fiction into three categories: conventional fiction, romantic adventure fiction (whether moral or “dark”), and subversive fiction (182-83). Reynolds’s term “conventional literature” encompasses sentimental and domestic literature, but his designation emphasizes the connection between conventional literature and the rationalist form of moral social reform. Best-selling sentimental novels such as Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* and Maria Cummins’s *The Lamplighter* typify the values promulgated by conventional reform fiction. Moral and dark romantic adventure fiction and subversive fiction belong to the category of sensation fiction (Reynolds 171). Sensation “emphasized bold action, striking effects on the

emotions, sharply drawn heroes and villains, and highly conventionalized, florid, even lurid language” (Fahs 226-27). The American form of the genre gained popularity in the 1840s after the rise of penny papers in the United States in the 1820s and 1830s (172-82). The genre derived from the same kind of scandal sheets and penny papers that fed the sensationalist genre in Great Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and that American religious reformers imitated to popularize their vehicles of moral transmission (Reynolds 82-84). Some of this reformist literature could be quite violent. In Drake’s *Revelations of a Slave Smuggler* (1860), for example, two female slaves are mutilated, one by having her breasts cut off and the other by having her breasts stabbed. The book’s intent was to promote the cause of abolition through a confession by a reformed slave smuggler; as it turns out, however, the text likely was heavily fictionalized in order to ensure slave owning and trading seemed nothing else but despicable (McCaskie).

James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, whose hero upholds traditional social and moral values despite his encounters with potentially subversive elements, typifies moral romantic adventure fiction (Reynolds 183). Romantic adventure literature had a “darker” variety as well. Unlike moral romantic adventure, dark romantic adventure has little (or merely feigned) interest in readers’ moral education (188-95). This genre focuses on robust adventure, but unlike moral adventure fiction (or even subversive literature), it fails to comment on the moral strictures that its antiheroes and villains defy. Common motifs in dark romantic adventure fiction are violent: blood drinking, cannibalism, orgies, and

satanic rituals (192-93).<sup>69</sup> J.H. Ingraham's pirate novel *Lafitte* (1836), whose title character Edgar Allan Poe said would instill “upon the mind of the reader no proper degree of abhorrence,”<sup>70</sup> exemplifies this subgenre of sensation fiction (Reynolds 183). Though this subgenre of fiction borrowed from British gothic and European dark romanticism, its engagement with local social tensions gives it a unique Americanness; for example, many dark romantic adventure stories are set in cities or on the frontier (190-91). Some reform-minded writers who foresaw a deterioration of democratic ideas—people Reynolds calls “radical democrats”—began to use the methods of popular fiction to promulgate their extreme views. Because these writers illustrated their zeal by revealing the darker side of life, publishers recognized an opportunity to attract a readership hungry for scandal (170). The scandals, however, were not commented upon as scandals in dark romantic adventure. In other words, mass publication of cheap pamphlet novels transformed the social aims of subversive fiction into the commercial aims of titillating entertainment (208-09)<sup>71</sup>.

Subversive fiction differs from dark romantic adventure fiction in two ways: subversive fiction is “*a literature of protest* with an ardently democratic *political* dimension” that “[takes] the side of the oppressed groups while exposing alleged corruption among respected pillars of society.” Secondly, subversive fiction is more experimental, both in content and style: it “[reproduces] the rebellious, savage forces of American cultures; and its unmasking of the social elite was enforced through extreme violence, sexual scenes ranging from the suggestive to the disgustingly perverse, and new variations upon ironic

stereotypes such as the reverend rake and the likable criminal” (Reynolds 183).

The concerns for moral reform, labour reform, abolition, temperance, and religious renewal led to the publication of books that addressed their specific movements.<sup>72</sup>

Each subgenre of subversive literature has motifs specific to its reformist focus (Reynolds 85).<sup>73</sup> Some themes, however, are common to all types of subversive fiction. One is “a conscious impulse to ‘tear away veils’ or ‘lift up masks’ to reveal hidden corruption” among authority figures (Reynolds 86). In A.J. H. Duganne’s novel *The Knights of the Seal* (1845), the narrator warns how “terrible, terrible will be the reaction, when the veil is torn aside, when the sepulchres, no longer whited, burst forth in their own horror and loathsomeness” (112, qtd. in Reynolds 86). Another theme is the stock character of the hypocritical moralist, or what Reynolds calls the “oxymoronic oppressor,” a person characterized by provocative labels such as “Christian slaveholder,” “churchgoing capitalist” and “pious seducer” (86-87). A theo-philosophical scepticism manifests itself in this genre through the contrast between a belief in God and the sinfulness of the world (88-89). Finally, a “post-Calvinist or mythic imagery” arise from the imposition of Calvinist theology onto profane reality.<sup>74</sup> Subversive fiction justifies its depictions of immorality as an act of moral instruction by counterexample (90); subversive fiction, in other words, disavows the immorality that it takes pains to expose. The popularity of subversive fiction is epitomized by George Lippard’s *The Quaker City*, which sold 60,000 after its first year and about 30,000 copies a year for five years, making it the biggest

bestselling American novel before *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (207).<sup>75</sup> Some critics considered the century's bestselling *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to be subversive (75-77). In Reynolds's typology, the conventional and the moral romantic adventure genres are the most explicitly moralistic while dark romantic adventure is the least explicitly moralistic. Subversive fiction has an ambiguous stance on morality, for though it purports to take a moral high ground, its attention to immoral acts opens up the possibility that it revels in, rather than simply recoils from, the immoral activities it represents.

In some minor respects, *Edmund Wright* has some features of conventional fiction and moral romantic adventure fiction. Most notable of these features is the death and burial of Little Jack, which follows the sentimental formula of mourning childhood innocence that made *Uncle Tom's Cabin* popular.<sup>76</sup> Overall, however, *Edmund Wright* generically resembles a combination of dark romantic adventure and subversive fiction. The book displays its generic credentials when it invokes the dark romantic adventure tradition of the pirate novel. When Edmund decides to head towards Lafitte's Fort after his escape, he admits he does not know why (119). The reason might well be generic, for pirates were a major topic of adventure literature and *Edmund Wright* borrows from that popularity. Jean Lafitte, the famous pirate, had a fort on Galveston Island until it burned down in 1821 (F. Turner); he is also the title character of the aforementioned 1836 dark adventure tale by J.H. Ingraham. A shift to Lafitte's Fort as a setting, complete with quicksand (120) and a boat chase through swamps, signals the entrance of the pirate fiction subgenre into a Civil-War

themed book. Edmund comments that when he and his fellow KGC dissenters march to the boat hidden near Lafitte's Fort, they act as though they are "raiding on the perturbed ghosts of those who, on other days, were followers of the Pirates of the Gulf" (125). When the kidnapped Edmund comments that he has been brought either to a KGC castle "or the stronghold of pirates, and it really mattered to me little which" (86), his statement could be a metafictional admission for the plot's need for a villainous stronghold to serve formulaic ends, whether the villains are KGC or pirates.

The book also contains the generic cues for gothic literature, another form of sensation. The KGC rituals share gothic literature's obsessions with memento mori (skulls and skeletons) and medievalism. Unsurprising, then, is the detail that the Galveston Castle to which the kidnapped Edmund is brought looks like "an immense warehouse" on the outside but has a strangely castle-like interior, with "damp and noisome air of subterranean passages, and . . . water drippings and dead echoes like those we hear in caves"; these hallways are like "winding labyrinths" such as are found in "dangerous and secret haunts of men-devils" (85). Even the book's passing anti-Catholicism serves as a reference to the gothic style. The KGC is a "jesuitical cabal" with "inquisitorial power" (Wright 79)—indeed, the book feels free to use anti-Catholic language even though it purports to counter the KGC, which was anti-Catholic. This anti-Catholicism is consistent with the novel's gothic imagery, since as Wendy Graham, among others, argues, gothic literature often depended on anti-Catholic sentiments.<sup>77</sup>



The book's similarity to dark romantic adventure does not, however, preclude an affinity with subversion. Although *Edmund Wright* lacks the stylistic uniqueness Reynolds associates with the subversive form,<sup>78</sup> the book exhibits the form's characteristic ambiguous moral stance and antiauthoritarianism in conjunction with the hyperbolic violence characteristic of dark romantic adventure. In conformance with dark adventure's casual bloodiness and with subversive fiction's disregard for the traditional association of nobility and goodness, both heroes and villains perform many bloody acts of violence using the same clichéd and overwrought language. Edmund and his group run their boat over a pursuing boat, leaving the men inside to drown with a "shriek of despair, a few spasmodic chokings as the salt sea foam entered the nostrils of the drowning wretches, and all was over" (127). When Edmund's crew shoots two enemy scouts on the ledge, "[t]he two scoundrels sprang from the ground with an unearthly howl, staggered blindly, and went whirling down that awful depth, occasionally torn by the jagged rocks, into the seething billows of the Gulf" (134). More pursuers are shot, their bodies "tumbling over the edge, each leaving the trace of a stream of blood in his wake" (135). Edmund himself shoots one "between the eyes" and sends him off "as another prize to the sharks of the Gulf" (134-35). Edmund gets a finger shot off (135) and is later shot in the arm by a stray bullet that emerges from a mob of brawling men at the docks in Florida (138). The deaths of his fellow KGC dissidents get similar attention. One of their scouts falls onto the cave ledge, mortally shot by the Knights: "A yell, shrill and cutting—, an unearthly groan, and right in our midst, among the jagged rocks,

there fell the body of a man, sprinkling those who stood near with his warm blood!” (132); the defectors pragmatically leave their scout’s body on the ledge “as a blind” to hide them from their pursuers (133). The book even exhibits mild forms of the cannibalism found in dark romantic adventure. Edmund accuses the KGC of mobilizing conspirators who are “drinking our blood” and who “feast on the life-current that flows from the patriot’s wounds” (55). (It is unclear whether or not this claim is supposed to be metaphorical, since Edmund’s low opinion of the KGC would admit literal cannibalism.) Edmund himself, however, participates in near-cannibalism when he and the Galveston KGC defectors strip the provisions off a dying scout and eat next to the body (133). Even though Edmund deprecates the bloodthirstiness, literal or not, of his enemies, in the end the book has no reticence about offering details of wounding and killing, no matter who exercises it.

The interest in KGC rituals further highlights the ambiguous morality characteristic of subversive fiction. Forty of the 136 text pages describe KGC rituals at the Florida and Texas castles. Some of these rituals are detailed with almost loving care, as when Edmund sees at Galveston Castle a triumphal entry, to the sounds of drums and horns, of “two hundred Knights in splendid armor, with helmets of a strange fashion, ornamented with silver crescents on the front and golden serpents couchant on the crowns” (86). Even though the book draws on Anti-Masonic propaganda to criticize the political and moral implications of the KGC’s ritualism, *Edmund Wright* expends a third of its pages describing these rituals. The pseudo-medieval attributes of the rituals may reflect the association of

chivalry with the South, which the South cultivated as a male code of conduct (Silber 614). But the dominance of fraternal orders and their rituals has considerable significance in a book about the Civil War and its causes. Both war and fraternal orders valued masculinity. Mark C. Carnes argues that ritualism allowed fraternal orders of the nineteenth century to resurrect the Calvinist–Puritan Christianity of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and thus to repudiate the Christianity of their own time, which had become, in the views of some, “domesticated” and feminized (56). The rituals were designed to weaken the feminine influence on male children and then to initiate them into masculine roles. Symbols of death (coffins, skeletons, enactments of torture and murder) at their most explicit level of meaning warned initiates against betraying oaths of secrecy and, at a less explicit level, aimed at inducing an emotional response to prepare members for the psychosocial changes that initiation implied (54). This obsession with death and suffering was also, however, a legacy of the fire-and-brimstone Christianity that had begun to wane in mid-nineteenth-century America (56-57). For the real KGC, the trappings of a fraternal society furnished a structure through which anti-Unionist men could show their loyalty to a cause in a homosocial environment. *Edmund Wright*’s version of the KGC also exhibits symptoms of this societal tension through the order’s obsession with ritual death and rebirth. Edmund partakes of rituals with blood and skulls and swords (31), with threats of death and torture if the society’s secrets are revealed (32), and with images associated with a legend about the execution of traitors (32-34).<sup>79</sup> Though

the book expresses contempt for the KGC, it seems to express less contempt for its rituals, or at least finds value in representing those rituals.

The book's emphasis on the male role of warrior and defender of civilization through KGC ritualism nonetheless has a paradoxical quality, especially with respect to the status of masculinity among Southern men. The KGC does not exercise stereotypical southern chivalry with respect to its treatment of women such as Lucy Wright and the wives of the Galveston Knights, even though the Soldan of the Texas castle exhorts his fellow Knights to ask themselves "are we still men . . . ?" (91). Edmund admits that his "ordinary manhood" does not withstand the fearsomeness of the mechanical serpent during the final initiation ceremony (45); despite these doubts, he successfully deters an aggressive knight with the threat that he has "manhood enough" to defend himself (47). Similarly, the intelligent friend of the second chapter states that his "manhood" forces him to reveal the truth about the KGC despite the threat to his safety (3). The anti-Union southerners are portrayed as hypermasculine, rather than masculine, and their propensity to violence, including sexual and physical attacks against women, is a symptom of that hypermasculinity. By this formulation, Edmund's inability to protect his wife and child does not suggest a failure of his own manly virtue but rather demonstrates a failure of masculinity in Southern society as embodied by the KGC.<sup>80</sup>

Wright describes the devil costumes he sees during one KGC ritual as both "ridiculous and diabolical" (42). This reaction of both ridicule and fear epitomizes the kind of work the book does: it denigrates the rituals (and by association the

KGC itself) as foolish and impotent, but it also associates the KGC with potent evil. Such a tactic is typical of subversive fiction, whose moral motive is to expose the secret social ills of authority figures in society; as a result, “bold criminality is preferable to the sneaking, covert villainy that reigns in civilized life” (Reynolds 200). For this reason, *Edmund Wright* treats the northern traitor as a greater threat than the Southern secessionist. The intelligent friend trivializes Northern sympathizers of secession by comparing their arguments unfavourably to the moral and political arguments of Southern secessionism: “Do we know the enemy? Is he merely the Southerner, who thinks his rights are assailed, and who fears the abridgment of some of his esteemed privileges? Is it the disciple of the true democracy, who takes a bold stand for the rule of the people?” (20).

Although they are not trustworthy or moral, the Southerners at least have specific motives behind their disaffection. Northern sympathizers, however, do not follow a cause: they are traitors for the sake of treachery. *Edmund Wright* thereby postulates the worst enemy of the war to be not an external one but an internal one. Through this line of thinking, the North’s botched battle at Antietam results from moral weakness among the Northern command, not the military strength of the Southern army.

As in subversive fiction, *Edmund Wright* postulates turmoil in the moral and social order beneath the veneer of righteousness and rationality. Edmund argues that Southerners mistake “love of country” for “sectional prejudice, the unreasoning enemy of all good, the destroyer of peace and arch-fiend of discord!” (41). The book does not define sectional prejudice explicitly, but it implies that

sectional prejudice does not arise from nationalism or patriotism, or indeed from a specific political ideology. For *Edmund Wright*, sectional prejudice is simply desire. The novel depicts this desire in a way that is amenable to post-nineteenth-century models of human biological and psychological drives, but desire in the novel is also associated with biblical notions of human sin, such as lust, hunger, and greed. Because the novel treats sectional prejudice as desire, the novel is able to conclude, for example, that secession's "love of country" is actually a product of the "arch-fiend," thus making the KGC knights not political loyalists but rather Satanic figures in the Miltonic tradition.<sup>81</sup> When the Soldan of Galveston Castle explains why he wants to torture and kill the three Floridians, his reasoning indicates that he fears not so much the loss of political power but rather the loss of pride: "[A]re we the poor fools of others' whims, to be knocked about as the shuttlecocks of their caprices?; or are we still men, freemen, with sacred rights dearer than life, and strength to maintain them, or courage to die in their defense?" (91). The Soldan characterizes the rights of the KGC as Southern rights in general, but the notion of "sacred rights" comes to mean, from the book's point of view, the maintenance of pride such as what motivates the Miltonic Satan, rather than the maintenance of state government's constitutional rights or of economic self-governance. The South's trumping of political ideology with desire functions as major evidence for the novel's assumptions about what caused the conflict that led to the Civil War: the absence of reason and morals. Without rationality and morality, sophistry and hypocrisy ensue. Peter Blair attacks the Andrews and Thompsons to avoid a fraud case, not to punish proponents of

antislavery. Edmund joins the KGC to obey his father, contravening his political beliefs for the sake of filial duty. *Edmund Wright* chastizes Southerners about their paranoid conflation of abolitionism to Northern society but responds with a complementary paranoia about all Southerners being traitors.

*Edmund Wright* might “unveil” the true sources of social evil, as the book’s advertisements proclaim, but it does little to explain how to react morally to the unveiling. Both its heroes and its villains employ similar tactics to achieve their ends, and the only general advice Edmund offers—withdrawal from dissent—mitigates against combatting immoral sedition in the first place. As a participant in fiction genres, *Edmund Wright* arguably is subject to the weakness of fiction. Subversive fiction takes an oppositional position to authority but does no more than call attention to misrule. In subversive fiction, violence and death calls attention to the eruption of forces that operate below the surface of civilization and that certain social groups control to the detriment of moral Americans. Subversive fiction, however, aims to unveil corruption, not necessarily to offer remedies to eliminate corruption, which is the provenance of conventional and moral romantic adventure.

### **Melodrama, Polemic, and Violence**

The generic cues of subversive fiction in *Edmund Wright* do not weaken its self-represented status as history or exposé, however. Non-fiction and fiction may have different strategies for representing events in the real world, but these strategies can reinforce each other. One specific example of this reinforcement is

the book's use of pseudo-Freemasonic medieval symbolism. In its exposé modality, the book uses this symbolism to connect the KGC to the social dangers implied by Freemasonry; in its sensation fiction modality, the book uses this symbolism to associate the KGC with the forces of evil according to the formulas of popular gothic literature. More generally, these two modalities aim to reveal the secret forces within American communities that have undermined the Union. *Edmund Wright* thus bolsters its claims for empirical veracity with emotional veracity: it deploys sensational melodrama to enhance its polemical argument.

*Edmund Wright*'s representation of the Civil War and its violence is partially a product of what Peter Brooks calls "the melodramatic mode." The melodramatic mode "comes into being in a world where the traditional imperatives of truth and ethics have been violently thrown into question, yet where the promulgation of truth and ethics, their instauration as a way of life, is of immediate, daily, political concern" (15). In this social context, the melodramatic mode "strives to find, to articulate, to demonstrate, to 'prove' the existence of a moral universe which, though put into question, masked by villainy and perversions of judgment, does exist and can be made to assert its presence . . . ." (20). For Brooks, the melodramatic mode "exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult" (5), that emotional and semi-mythic content of human life free from the social constraints of logic or propriety. In psychoanalytical terms, it "represents a victory over repression . . . . The melodramatic utterance breaks through everything that constitutes the 'reality principle,' all its censorship, accommodations, tonings-down" (41). In other words, the melodramatic mode is



a knowledge framework, a genre or a generic “mode” as John Frow and Alistair Fowler use the term, that organizes the contents of the moral occult without the interception of “civilizing” knowledge frameworks.<sup>82</sup> Melodrama unapologetically represents human emotional reflex. Good and evil are philosophically unambiguous; human expressions of hate and love are not social masks but rather represent hate and love themselves.

The moral arguments in *Edmund Wright* cease to be paradoxical in the context of the melodramatic mode. Motives derived from specific political ideologies (anti-slavery, constitutional rights) are mere surface features that conceal the true workings of human desire. Ideologies fall aside in the face of the struggle to restore good where evil has arisen. As a result, Edmund cannot, for example, recognize a paradox in wanting to destroy the KGC by promoting it because clearly Edmund is right and the KGC is wrong; Edmund’s motives and actions derive their morality from Edmund’s moral righteousness—at the same time, his enemy can only do wrong.

*Edmund Wright* does not, in other words, acknowledge the possibility of justifiable dissent against its position. This self-imposed moral infallibility also characterizes the non-fiction genre of wartime polemic.<sup>83</sup> The concept of polemic gained currency in traditional theological disputation and contrasts with irenic, a method of argumentation that emphasizes cooperation. Jonathan Crewe suggests that in contemporary settings the term polemic is indefinable in any pragmatic way: “it is not clear how a genre of polemic as such can usefully be defined given the multiplicity of its contexts, purposes, and functions, and given the range it

covers from *ad hominem* attack to aggressive intellectual disputation. It might more plausibly be regarded as a meta-genre than as a genre, or as a phenomenon too contextually dominated to lend itself to abstract rule-making.” Even though Crewe offers a list of possible “[l]oosely rule-governed subgenres,” among them satire, jeremiad, letters to the editor, and “works of transitory political and religious debate” (Crewe 149-50n7), polemic has no true thematic or formal strictures. I would refine Crewe’s analysis, however, and argue that polemic is a genre, one whose content consists only of a rhetorical stance. Polemic thus qualifies for the status of a generic mode as Frow and Fowler use the term, just as melodrama is a kind of mode when applied to non-theatrical forms.

Polemic is a speech situation in which the message assumes the receiver will not or cannot take an ethical position about the subject of discussion except for the one offered by the message sender. Because of polemic’s ethos, Michel Foucault disavows it as a legitimate means of argumentation:

The polemicist proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner in the search for truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat. For him, then, the game consists not of recognizing this person as a subject having the right to speak but of abolishing him, as interlocutor, from any possible dialogue. (“Polemics” 382)

In particular, the goal of political polemics (the kind of polemics that war invokes) is not to solve problems or acquire knowledge to the mutual benefit of all. Rather, it “defines alliances, recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party; it establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests, against which one must fight until the moment this enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears” (382-83). Polemic is a show of power rather than an attempt at reconciliation or at negotiation of a mutually beneficial position.

By these terms, *Edmund Wright* is polemical because of its treatment of the other, in this case the KGC and by extension all promoters of Confederate interests. The book routinely connects the KGC to actions that epitomize human vice. In addition, the book’s hyperbolic language works against the possibility of showing sympathy for the secessionists or of negotiating a peaceful resolution to the secession crisis. Polemic was common in the discourse of anti-South and anti-North writers throughout the war period. For examples, as southern states began to secede in 1860, Ohio Senator Benjamin Franklin Wade advocated “*making the south a desert*” (Dixon). During the war’s first years, the *Memphis Avalanche* proclaimed, “The bombardment of a few Northern cities would bring our enemies to their senses.”<sup>84</sup> In the war’s later years, O.T. Lanphear preached that the violence against civilians authorized by Union generals Sherman in Atlanta and Grant in Shenandoah Valley in 1864 was justifiable: “when a state insults the law of the land, by deliberate secession, it is like a withered branch cast forth from the national tree, to be gathered, cast into the fire and burned” (13). Lanphear’s simile

of the secessionist states as withered branches derives from John 15:6, in which Jesus reveals the fate of those who do not follow his father's commandments. In the meantime, South Carolina poet William Gilmore Simms categorizes the leadership of the Northern forces as "The Fiend Unbound" who "hurls around Satanic flame" in concert with Moloch and Mammon (lines 40-56).

Lanphear's sermon and Simms's poem constitute two examples of how the language of religious righteousness often permeated both Southern and Northern polemics and envisioned the war-time enemy as a devotee of the ultimate enemy.<sup>85</sup> In the same vein, *Edmund Wright* represents the KGC as an immoral, even satanic, force that cannot be negotiated with but only be destroyed or neutralized. The KGC is the "most damnable organization ever conceived of outside of the lowest depths of pollution" (15). It represents the "hell-engendered machinations, orgies and purposes of that disgrace upon civilization, Christianity and decency"; it is like an "emanation from the arch-fiend himself, when, in his bitterest mood, he would avenge his fall from the presence of the Almighty" (17). During his deathbed renunciation of the KGC, Edmund's father calls the fraternal order "a cabal conceived in Hell, nurtured by the arch-fiend, accursed of God, and soon to be by all honest men" (76). Edmund warns against criticizing the current administration until the war is over because, as with the forces of evil, even the smallest success can trigger total destruction: "we must make every sacrifice to resist its [the KGC's] encroachments, for it is great and powerful, and will carefully reckon our weaknesses for its profits" (149).<sup>86</sup>

Neither Edmund nor his intelligent friend is a moderate: they expect only the worst from anti-unionists. This expectation of the worst affects the text's attitudes toward the possibility of persuasion. When Edmund convinces a hostile mob that he is pro-South, he credits his success as merely "another instance to the instability of popular sentiment" and notes cynically that his persuasive skills are bolstered by the round of drinks he buys for the mob (27). Edmund's father waits until he is dying to reveal to his family the moral qualms he has about a group that he had insisted his son join—only death, it seems, can compel a change in opinion.

As Foucault suggests, polemic is an argumentative mode that denies the interlocutor its subjectivity. In the terminology of genre, polemic denies the audience's participation in making meaning. It thus denies the existence of any pact between message sender and receiver because a pact assumes the ability of the receiver to reject an offer. In polemic, a receiver who rejects the message cannot possibly belong to the same knowledge community as the message sender; as such, by virtue of that rejection, the reader is anathema to the community. The possibility that the reader might be alienated from or externalized from the text's message is something that the melodrama in *Edmund Wright* attempts to ameliorate. The novel uses melodrama—the human story of what lies below the social surface—to make the projected world (and therefore the real world) easier for everyone to understand and therefore expands the knowledge community to include nearly everyone.

Through the melodramatic mode, *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* posits a world of moral clarity that, if the book were mere non-fiction, it would not be so free to represent. It offer motives and intimate views of events that few authors of history could hope to obtain from the most self-revelatory testimonies. The book, like Drake's *Revelations of a Slave Smuggler*, takes no chances with leaving historical events to themselves. *Edmund Wright* offers a view of Civil War America that is neither fiction nor non-fiction, but rather something better, something "stranger than fiction."

## Notes

1. Edmund Wright is listed as the author of *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* in the *Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (1871) by S. Austin Allibone; the entry includes the comment “Large sale” (2859). *Edmund Wright* also appears in the U.S. Library of Congress’s *Catalogue of Books Added* series for 1872 (448). More recently, the book is recorded in the Library of Congress’s *National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints*, with one entry for publisher J.R. Hawley’s Cincinnati imprint and another entry for B.W. Hitchcock’s New York imprint (n.p.). Lyle Wright’s *American Fiction, 1851-1875: A Contribution Toward a Bibliography* includes the book. (The revised edition of Wright’s print bibliography lists only the J.R. Hawley imprint.) By virtue of this listing in Lyle Wright’s bibliography, *Edmund Wright* was microfilmed as part of UMI’s Wright American Fiction project. The microforms of these texts were subsequently digitized for the Committee for Institutional Cooperation’s and Indiana University’s Wright American Fiction Project (Brogan and Rentfrow 62-63); *Edmund Wright* is thus publicly available on the Internet with over 2800 other nineteenth-century American texts. (The Wright American Fiction project’s version of *Edmund Wright*, in both its microform version and Web site version, incorrectly lists the New York publisher as “R.W. Hitchcock.”) Lost Cause Press microfilmed a copy of the Hawley imprint of *Edmund Wright* in 1972. WorldCat lists four entries for 19 library holdings for the Hawley imprint and three entries for 89 holdings for the Hitchcock imprint. The book appears in print and Web bibliographies about the Civil War and bibliographies about secret

societies and rumours of lost treasure; see for example Floyd Mann's *Knights of the Golden Circle* Web site.

2. The Library of Congress's 1872 *Catalogue of Books Added* places "pseudon?" after Wright's name (448). *The National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints* also lists Edmund Wright as a pseudonymous author (n.p.). In the University of Minnesota Library's circulating copy of *Edmund Wright*, someone has penciled the word "pseud." on the title page. One OCLC WorldCat record for B.W. Hitchcock's edition of the book lists the author as "Wright, Edmund, pseud." Lyle Wright's *American Fiction, 1851-1875: A Contribution Toward a Bibliography* also calls Wright pseudonymous; indeed, *Edmund Wright's* inclusion in that bibliography depends on the book being treated as fiction, as does the book's subsequent inclusion in the Wright American Fiction Project's digitization of Lyle Wright's research. (The entry for *Edmund Wright* in the *Wright American Fiction* Web site does not label the author as pseudonymous.)

3. The version of *Edmund Wright* published by Hitchcock in New York is nearly identical to Hawley's Cincinnati version, as though they used the same plates. They differ in that the B.W. Hitchcock imprint's title page recto lists only B.W. Hitchcock as publisher and uses different typefaces than the Cincinnati imprint, as though the recto page had been typeset separately. The copy of *Edmund Wright* on the *Wright American Fiction* Web site, which lists B.W. Hitchcock on the title page recto, has an illustration facing the title page called "Murder of Judge Firman by Knights of the Golden Circle--see page 99." A copy



of the Cincinnati edition from the University of Minnesota Library that I examined lacks this illustration.

4. Cincinnati was the fourth-largest publishing centre in the United States until the 1880s (S. Ross 110), when it declined in economic significance after the Civil War (Sutton viii). When the railroad devalued Cincinnati's river connections as important transportation corridors and the Civil War severed Ohio's ties to southern customers, the rise of Eastern publishers meant the weakening of Western ones. As a result, "the regional publisher became a jobber and, eventually, a local bookseller" (Sutton 287).

J.R. Hawley's business may have followed this historical trajectory. J.R. Hawley was listed in *Williams' Cincinnati Directory* (1862-83) and its successor *Illustrated Business Directory and Picturesque Cincinnati* (1885-94), with Hawley's residential address listed as Covington, Kentucky, and the business address as 164 Vine Street in Cincinnati. In these directories the business is variously described as stationer and publisher (1862 and 1863), bookseller and stationer (1865), "bookseller and importer and jobber of stationery" with partner R.E.J. Miles (1866), "stationery, albums and news depot" (1867), and simply "news depot" from 1885. Walter Sutton's historical directory of Ohio publishers lists J.R. Hawley as a "bookseller and employer of agents" for 1865-79; the directory lists additional information that suggests the broader 1863-79 date range (323). Cincinnati Charles Urban, writing about a period prior to 1886, identifies J.R. Hawley and Co. as both "the principal news depot of the city" and "the booking office for seats of theatres, circuses, minstrel shows, etc." (19). J.R.

Hawley's business diversification is also evident in an advertisement the company ran in the 20 August 1866 *New York Times* about being the manager and general agent of a fundraising ticket sale for the Home for the Friendless German Orphan Asylum, Bethel Sabate School, "and other similar charities"—a lottery, in other words ("Opening Fair"). At some point the business moved to the "Arcade" district, and was still there when the J.R. Hawley business, then known as a "book, periodical and stationery store," wound up in 1902 (Notices [J.R. Hawley]). J.R. Hawley published other books besides *Edmund Wright*, mostly reprints and popular guides. Other J.R. Hawley & Co. titles listed in WorldCat include *The Unseen Hand* (1863) by Ruth Vernon [Stopford James Ram] (a reprint of an 1852 English title), *Wells' Illustrated National Hand-book* (1864) by John G. Wells (a reprint of a 1856 title by another publisher), *Scout and Ranger* by James Pike (1865) (with both Cincinnati and New York as places of publication), and the Civil-War-themed books *The Rebel Conscript* (in Cincinnati and New York, 1865), *The Assassination and History of the Conspiracy* (1865) (one of the first books about Lincoln's assassination), and *Pictorial History of the War of the Union* by Ann. S. Stephens (1863) (first published by J.G. Wells in 1862). J.R. Hawley's political orientation may have leaned towards the Union: an advertisement in the front endpapers of his *Republican Songster: For the Campaign of 1864* includes the statement "Agents always wanted in all parts of the Loyal States."

The New York publisher of *Edmund Wright*, Benjamin or B.W. Hitchcock, has a number of addresses for 1862 through 1875, with the business type listed

variously over the years as “publisher,” “cards,” “books,” “stationer,” “music,” “real estate operator,” and “real estate operator & music publisher, originator of dime music, and musical bouquet” (Redway 41-42). In the year of publication for *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*, B.W. Hitchcock is listed as operating from “14 Chambers,” the same address on the title page recto of those copies of *Narrative* that list a New York publisher (Redway 41). He was an editor of a serial called *The Young America*, whose aims were “the improvement of the mind” and “the cultivation of literary taste,” with co-editor David Crawford through agents Ross & Jones (“New Publications”). In 1855, Hitchcock recited *Hamlet*’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy on behalf of the Hamilton Literary Union, a performance of “exceeding tameness” preceded by the speaker’s introduction that was “in bad taste,” according to a *New York Times* reporter (“English Monopolies”).

Hitchcock became a printer of valentines (1864), manager of the Gettysburg Asylum Association (whose aim was to fund the Gettysburg Asylum for Invalid Soldiers) (“Grand Popular Movement”—this venture quite likely was a money-making hoax: see Browne 580-81), vice-president of the New-York and Queens County Bridge Company (“City Improvements”), operator of Hitchcock’s New Third Avenue Theatre (see *New York Times* 11 Oct. 1875: 11 and 12 Feb. 1878: 2), organizer of a 1878 “Congress of Beauty and Culture” that at least one headline writer did not hesitate to call a “swindle” (“Very Like a Swindle”; see also “Mr. Hitchcock’s Congress of Beauty,” “A Disgusting Exhibition Ended,” and “The Congress of Beauty Swindle”), real estate speculator, and owner of Hitchcock’s Music Stores. Sheet music published by Hitchcock’s Music Stores

list up to four addresses. *Always?* by H.P. Danks, for example, lists 385 Sixth Avenue, 11 Park Row, 283 Sixth Avenue, and 294 Grand Street. Hitchcock was a music publisher who found himself briefly jailed for fraud, “who acquired notoriety by the sale of Flushing lots and by getting up the so-called Congress of Beauty and Baby Show” (“B.W. Hitchcock in Difficulties”), and who was a co-defendant with music publisher Spear & Dehnhoff for a Supreme Court suit by Gilbert and Sullivan to prevent the publication of the words or music for *The Pirates of Penzance* (“New-York”). Hitchcock’s weakening fortunes forced him to appoint an assignee on 4 August 1893 (“Hitchcock, the Publisher, Fails”) and to sell or auction off his assets; these assets included “Music, Sheets, Books, Musical Instruments, Music Plates, Printing Presses, Type, together with the lease and goodwill” of his “Music and Publishing business” at 385 Sixth Avenue (“Assignee’s Sale”). (For other coverage of B.W. Hitchcock’s failure, see “Legal Notices,” “In the Real Estate Field” and “The Real Estate Field.”) WorldCat’s B.W. Hitchcock holdings are mostly music scores, but the company did publish books, especially in the 1860s: non-musical publications include a republication of *Wells’ Illustrated National Hand-Book* (1863) by John Wells (co-published by J.L. Wilson of Williamsburgh, Long Island), *Hitchcock’s Chronological Records of the American Civil War* (1866), *Wells’ Every Man His Own Lawyer* (1867) by John Wells, *Pictorial History of the War of the Union* by Ann. S. Stephens (1866-67), *Sergeant Bates’ March, Carrying the Stars and Stripes Unfurled from Vicksburg to Washington* (1868) by Gilbert H. Bates, and *Everybody’s Law Book* (1893) by John Alexander Koonen. He had a limited-run serial, *Hitchcock’s New*

*Monthly Magazine: Choice Music, Art Notes and Select Reading for the Family Circle* (1869-70), whose subtitle suggests was a story paper. Hitchcock's personal political orientation might be signalled by his involvement with a 1876 meeting of the "United Sons of Toil" at the Third Avenue Theatre that, though supposedly was "non-political," nonetheless featured a speech by Patrick Logan, whom the reporter described as a "Democratic demagogue," in which Logan spoke in favour of the current Democratic presidential candidate ("Political Labor Meeting"). I could not positively identify this group. A *New York Times* article says that this was an organizational meeting, and the group may never have survived past this first meeting, if indeed the group was anything more than the front for a political meeting. The Democratic candidate, unnamed in the article, would have been Samuel J. Tilden of New York, whose controversial election loss to Rutherford B. Hayes later that year signalled the end of Reconstruction. For more on the 1876 presidential election, see Polakoff. For an apparent freebooter such as Hitchcock, however, Logan's presence at the Sons of Toil meeting does not prove that Hitchcock held strong political beliefs. The Civil-War related titles by Hitchcock are generally pro-Union; *Hitchcock's Chronological Records*, though generally neutral in tone, might be revealing its author's ideology when it calls the secessionist forces "rebels" (2).

5. The only information on sales comes from Allibone's *Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors*, which notes "large sale" for *Edmund Wright*. If any indication can be made based on the number of

surviving print copies recorded by WorldCat, J.R. Hawley put more copies into circulation than did B.W. Hitchcock (seventeen versus four).

6. B.W. Hitchcock may well have been a J.R. Hawley agent. In Cincinnati, subscription book sales, whereby agents (travelling salesmen) canvassed customers directly, were a significant marketing force, especially from 1845 to 1860 (Tebbel 1:481; see also 1:238-40). *Edmund Wright* likely was printed with stereographic plates. By the 1850s, most American books that had any hope of being reprinted were produced with plates. Plates were an additional economic benefit to a publisher, for they could be sold or auctioned (often with printing rights sold along with the plates) (Winship 46). The title page verso of J.R. Hawley's *Republican Songster* indicates that it was stereotyped by Franklin Type Foundry of Cincinnati; J.R. Hawley could have used the same foundry for *Edmund Wright*. B.W. Hitchcock may have had permission to print *Edmund Wright* with the plates, or Hitchcock may have purchased the plates from Hawley (B.W. Hitchcock's imprints have the same Ohio copyright notice as in J.R. Hawley imprints). B.W. Hitchcock's imprint does not seem to have been a resetting of the J.R. Hawley text, since their printings are identical, with the exception of the title recto.

7. Both publishers reprinted works by other houses, working with material that perhaps had already proven popular or were inexpensive to bring to market. B.W. Hitchcock's switch to music sheets and real estate and J.R. Hawley's apparent abandonment of publishing altogether indicate a retreat from a specific consumer good but a business commitment to the same group of consumers. Their

products were geared towards the same middle-class customers: popular recent histories for moderately educated readers, music sheets for middle-class parlours, photograph albums for personal photography, ticket sales for popular entertainments, and land speculation and get-rich-quick schemes for those seeking fulfillment of their desires for beauty and material well-being.

8. Interestingly, Chapter One of *Edmund Wright* begins with a headline, “Astounding Disclosures! The Temple of the K.G.C. Unveiled” (15). The phrase “Astounding Disclosures!” is part of the text for the *Edmund Wright* advertisement in Hawley’s *Assassination*. The book’s advertising slogan therefore has migrated into the text itself.

9. Readers of mass-marketed books are “unknown” since the books are not geared towards a specific person in the way that, say, a piece of correspondence is directed towards a specific addressee or an internal report to a specific part of an organization. Frow’s use of the term “intention” as an aspect of text may be problematic for those who do not consider texts capable of intention. The notion of “intention” does not, however, require the attribution to a text of a kind of sentience. Rather, “intention” here refers to the presence of communication cues that function as indices—pointers—to the systems of meanings that a text invokes. The identification of such cues can originate from authorial intention or from the reader’s interpretation of the text.

10. The term “peritext” comes from Gerard Genette’s *Paratexts*. Peritext is part of the paratext, “what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers, and more generally, to the public.” The paratext consists of the

peritext and epitext (text not part of the book proper, such as reviews and advertising). Genette discusses paratext in ways that make it a kind of generic cue: “More than a boundary or a sealed border the paratext is, rather, a *threshold* or . . . a ‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (1-2). Paratext is “a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies)” (2).

11. A text that calls itself a narrative but is really a fiction therefore transgresses a genre line. When Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* was first published in book form, Poe’s name did not appear on the title page. Instead, the book’s introduction suggested Poe was merely a ghostwriter for Pym. Although many readers found this device unconvincing (partly because the first two installments of the serialized version attributed Poe as the author), editor George Putnam, for one, at least initially believed the novel was non-fiction (Meyers 97). See also Gitelman, Silverman 137 and Kennedy 31-35. Similarly, Melville’s unfinished *Billy Budd: An Inside Narrative* exhibits “antifictional rhetoric” and “appeals to the documentary expectations of narrative” even though it is a novel (Arac 772).

12. Among the examples of personal narrative that Arac discusses are Richard Dana Jr.’s *Two Years Before the Mast*, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick*



*Douglass*, Francis Parkman's *California and Oregon Trail*, and Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (the latter as a special case; see Note 11) (662-78).

13. Bickley claimed the order was founded 4 July 1854 in Lexington, Kentucky (*Address* 17); evidence suggests the group operated in some form in the 1850s (Crenshaw 36-38; Dunn 546). The group's secrecy gave way in about 1859, in part by the founding of a newspaper, the *American Cavalier*, in Baltimore (Crenshaw 38) and a 12 September 1859 proclamation that offered "young men" some "new fields of industry and enterprise" in Mexico (Bickley, *K.G.C. Proclamation*).

14. Bickley visited Texas in late 1860 and early 1861, offering the KGC's services to the Confederacy (Crenshaw 40-43). For more on the KGC in Texas, see Dunn.

15. Klement identifies Joseph W. Pomfrey as "a draft dodger, forger, liar, and proponent of fraudulent claims against the U.S. government" (Klement 13n28). Another Kentucky exposé, *K.G.C.: An Authentic Exposition of the Origin, Objects, and Secret Work of the Organization Known as the Knights of the Golden Circle*, was published in 1862 by the National Union Club (Klement 22).

16. See page 2 of *Alleged Hostile Organization against the Government within the District of Columbia* for the report's findings. For references to the KGC, see pages 5, 32, 88, 112, and 116.

17. On 8 July 1861 the *Indianapolis Daily State Sentinel* reported that the pamphlet's publisher had received many orders from across the country (Klement 14).

18. Evidence suggests he served in 1863 (Klement 28). Bickley's medical credentials may have been forged; see Klement 7 and Crenshaw 24.

19. Bickley was arrested when he failed to report immediately to Cincinnati per the terms of his border pass (Klement 28-29); he possibly was under suspicion for involvement in a plot to aid General John H. Morgan with Confederate manoeuvres in Indiana and Ohio (Crenshaw 46). Upon his arrest, Bickley denied being the Bickley associated with the KGC, claiming instead to be that Bickley's nephew (Crenshaw 45). Nonetheless, KGC materials were found in his baggage. Some of those materials are among the George L.W. Bickley Papers at the U.S. National Archives.

20. Crenshaw 46. Bickley asserted in a 16 January 1865 letter to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that the KGC had not been treasonous: its ambitions were to expand the United States into Mexico (Bickley Papers, qtd. in Fesler 193). Bickley died in 1867 (Crenshaw 47). The *New York Times* reported an unnamed source who said that the "K.C.G.'s" [sic] planned to erect a monument for him and to raise money to support his children ("General Items"). I have found no evidence this monument was ever created.

21. Bickley claimed he had the support of the Juarez faction in Mexico's civil war, though Juarez's organization denied this claim (Crenshaw 30).

22. Ohio Republicans hostile to newspaper editor Thomas H. Hodder of the Marion *Democratic Mirror* forged documents that stated that Hodder was a member of the KGC; similar hoaxes occurred in other Ohio counties (Klement 15-17). In Detroit, Democrat Dr. Guy S. Hopkins forged pro-KGC documents and

sent them to the pro-Republican Detroit *Tribune* and Detroit *Leader*, hoping that these papers would publish the false documents so that Hopkins could subsequently discredit the papers; instead, Hopkins and two friends were charged with treason (Klement 17-18). The aides of Republican governors in Illinois and Indiana also falsely linked the KGC to prominent Democrats to stem a perceived rise in Democratic, anti-government sentiment in 1862 and 1863 (Klement 18-28).

23. The epigraph comes from Byron's *Don Juan*, Canto XIV, stanza 101 ("T is strange,—but true; for truth is always strange; / Stranger than fiction").

24. WorldCat, for example, lists fifteen different books in English before 1865 that use that phrase or a variant of it in the title or subtitle.

25. Abolitionist societies such as the American Anti-Slavery Society published slave narratives to garner public support for their cause. See Fanuzzi xi-xl.

26. For example, about one-third of *Narrative of James Williams* (1838) is editorial paraphernalia about documentary evidence for the poor treatment of slaves (Gould 19).

27. *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball* (1836) had nine U.S. editions plus two British editions and a German edition (Gould 23). Douglass's *Narrative* sold 5,000 copies in its first four months of publication and by 1860 had sold 30,000 (Davis and Gates, "Introduction" xvi). *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery* (1838) sold 20,000 copies in ten editions in twenty years,

and Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853) sold 20,000 copies in two years (Gould 24).

28. Robin Winks argues that Stowe and Henson did not meet before 1852, despite Stowe's and Henson's comments (often equivocal) to the contrary (123-28).

29. Winks contends that the reference to Byron's poem in Henson's biography was another attempt at capitalizing on Stowe, since readers would associate her with Byron (Winks 125). Like many of her contemporaries, Stowe read Byron with pleasure and respect, though he failed to meet her moral standards: she had a conversion experience after hearing her father's sermon in which he named Byron as an example of a lost soul (Robert Wilson 62-63). Although she wrote a brief article about Byron and other writers in 1842, it is unlikely a general readership would have connected her to Byron before her exposés of Byron's life, "The True Story about Lady Byron's Life" (1869) and *Lady Byron Vindicated* (1870), at least for the second edition of the Henson's book, which was published in 1858. On the Lady Byron scandal, see Michelle Hawley and Barbara White (150-54). Coincidentally or no, Harriet's sister Catharine Beecher used the same title for her 1850 book, *Truth Stranger Than Fiction: A Narrative of Recent Transactions, Involving Inquiries in Regard to the Principles of Honor, Truth, and Justice, Which Obtain in a Distinguished American University* (about a scandal involving her friend Delia Bacon).

30. Editions of Henson's biography after 1877 were edited by John Lobb, who rewrote parts of the book to give Henson a more heroic life and to connect

Henson more directly with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This tactic possibly helped bring sales of Henson's biography to a quarter million copies (Winks 126-27). The association between Henson and Stowe was long lasting; even today, Josiah Henson's family home near Dresden, Ontario, is called Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site. The association between the statement "truth is stranger than fiction" and slave narratives seems to have become a marketing cliché, for variants of the statement appeared in book advertisements in the antislavery periodical *The Liberator* in the 1850s (Rohrbach 745-47).

31. Olney lists his ironically titled "Master Plan for Narratives" on pages 152 and 153.

32. This requisite is per item B of Olney's outline (152).

33. Item C of the outline; see also Olney 154-55 and *passim*.

34. Per item E.9 of Olney's outline.

35. Per items E.3 and E.8 of Olney's outline.

36. In his annual presidential message of 3 December 1860, outgoing Democratic President James Buchanan blamed abolitionists and Republicans in general for fomenting secession through anti-slavery views that alienated Southern whites from the Union and agitated slaves into rebelliousness. Some abolitionists, such as Frederick Douglass and followers of William Garrison, argued that they would prefer to see the slave states secede so as to make their immoral social practices more visible to the world; see McPherson 147.

37. Compare with Olney's outline items E.2, E.3., E.6., E.8., and E.10.

38. Edmund has more freedom than a slave would have in these circumstances, yet the plot hinges on his betrayal and deception by authority figures, a situation that undermines the efficacy of Edmund's agency.

39. A historical novel may violate Lejeune's clean divide between fiction and non-fiction in terms of verifiability. Nonetheless, even though a work of historical fiction may turn real people into characters and real events into plots, the novel is freer to violate empirical data about those characters and events in a way that a history or biography is not.

40. Lejeune 36 (my translation).

41. It is an "abuse" because the autobiographical pact is a social contract. As such the reader treats this contract seriously—only the seriousness of this social contract makes a hoax possible (23).

42. The controversy over James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* and its authenticity as non-fiction demonstrates the complexity of this distinction between autobiography and novel. For a summary and analysis of the Frey controversy see S. Freedman.

43. He offers as examples André Gide and François Mauriac, who made statements to the effect that fiction can describe the essence of the self better than autobiography can (Lejeune 41). Gide makes such a statement in the last paragraph of Part 2 of *Si le grain ne meurt*.

44. Lejeune 42 (my translation). ["Il ne s'agit plus de savoir lequel, de l'autobiographie ou du roman, serait le plus vrai. Ni l'un ni l'autre; à l'autobiographie, manqueront la complexité, l'ambiguïté, etc.; au roman,

l'exactitude; ce serait donc : l'un plus l'autre? Plutôt : l'un *par rapport* à l'autre. Ce qui devient révélateur, c'est l'espace dans lequel s'inscrivent les deux catégories de textes, et qui n'est réductible à aucune des deux. Cet effet de relief obtenu par ce procédé, c'est la création, pour le lecteur, d'un « espace autobiographique».”]

45. As an instructor of literature, for example, I can attest to students' proclivities to read fiction autobiographically.

46. According to Lejeune (14), memoir is a different category than autobiography. Lejeune does not define memoir explicitly, but he implies that the scope of the story distinguishes memoir from autobiography: an autobiography principally concerns the author's entire life, not about specific incidents in that life (15). Lejeune does not provide an example in “The Autobiographical Pact” of a memoir, but by this definition, *Edmund Wright* is a memoir, not an autobiography, because it focuses on Edmund's perspectives about a specific time and place, rather than all aspects of his life. The reasons for Lejeune's distinction between memoir and autobiography are unclear; from what little Lejeune says about memoir, memoir does not have any characteristics that might disqualify it from the precepts of the autobiographical pact. Lejeune admits that some subgenres of texts related to autobiography (memoir, journal, essay) may fall into the category of autobiography at the discretion of the classifier (15). On a point that Lejeune himself allows flexibility, I prefer to consider memoir (and thus *Edmund Wright*) to be eligible for the autobiographical pact.

47. *Edmund Wright* lacks a clear statement such as “written by Edmund Wright,” but the title *Narrative of Edmund Wright* implies ownership, which is sufficient to indicate the offering of an autobiographical pact.

48. Of course, a student of literature in the present might detect weaknesses in empirical evidence that a casual reader of the past might not have noticed or have considered to be a weakness at all. A casual reader in the 1860s might have had knowledge about the author that time has erased for a present-day student of literature. Such a reader may also have chosen to accept the text’s narrator at his word and been uninterested in analyzing genre, historicity, or authorship.

49. Wright 22. The text of Stout’s confession that the intelligent friend reports in *Edmund Wright* matches closely the text of Stout’s confession in the *New York Times*: “After I had been there two weeks I was advised by various persons not to go back to the army; they said that this was only a vile ‘abolition war,’ and advised me to stay home and they would protect me . . . . The obligations of the order bound us to do all that we could against the war—to resist a draft, if one should be made, and likewise to resist and oppose all confiscation and emancipation measures, in every possible way. We were sworn to stand by each other in all measures of resistance. We were pledged to do all we could to prevent another man or dollar going from the State for the further prosecution of the war” (“A Military Execution” 4). The time of Stout’s execution is called “October last” in *Edmund Wright*, which dates the book’s composition from late 1863 to 1864.

50. Wright 22. According to George Parks, the regiment, which formed in 1862 in a pro-Democrat but pro-Union county in Illinois, was disbanded in 1863



because its officers failed to engage Confederate troops that overcame the town of Holly Springs, which was near the regiment's position. Reports circulating at the time suggested that the regiment was mutinous, but Parks suggests that the regiment was more likely a victim of faulty leadership and the federal command's preconceptions about Illinois's weak affiliation with the Union (Parks 291-93).

51. The battle was considered a Union victory, though a bloody and feeble one marred by General McClellan's reluctance to engage the Southern army (MacPherson 303-311).

52. For more on Goffman see Chapter One.

53. Carnes 25. In addition, Freemasonic membership declined from 100,000 in the 1820s to 40,000 ten years later (Carnes 25).

54. The similarity of attacks against Freemasonry and the KGC struck George Bickley himself. He wrote that the suspicions of the Kentucky legislature against the KGC "reminds one of [John Quincy] Adam's [sic] Anti-Masonic crusade" ("K.G.C. Open Letter" 1). John Quincy Adams's congressional and gubernatorial campaigns in the 1830s were partly supported, with mixed results, by Anti-Masonic sentiment (Vaughn 119-23).

55. For example, Henry Dana Ward's 1828 *Anti-Masonic Review* concludes that Freemasonry is "the synagogue of Satan" (34). The 1867 *Minutes of the Christian Convention* alludes to such a charge several times (15, 18, 22-23, 41, 47).

56. The book cover of the Hawley *Edmund Wright* microfilmed by Lost Cause Press features a skull flanked by stars (or suns).

57. Compare the *Edmund Wright* illustrations included in this dissertation with for example Béresniak 29.

58. At least one instance of actual confusion between the KGC and Freemasonry is extant from this period. A writer for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* mistook a Freemason funeral of 30 March 1860 for an invasion of the KGC (the Freemasons wore their insignias but also carried swords) (Weston and Jones 456).

59. In his *Address*, Bickley references two articles of the obligation of the first degree, which resemble in spirit (though not verbatim) the obligation on page 13 of Pomfrey's *True Disclosure* (Bickley, *Address* 21). Bickley recites a prayer that he says comes from the third-degree initiation of the order (*Address* 17); this same prayer is on page 35 and 36 of Pomfrey. Bickley's open letter to the Kentucky legislature prints the obligations of the order's first and second degrees: they match these obligations as reported in Pomfrey (13-14, 28). Bickley says that their rules and regulations allow a first-degree initiate to freely leave the order (*Address* 20); although the wording is not in Pomfrey, the freedom to leave the order without penalty is mentioned on page 8. Bickley acknowledges the dissent expressed at a New Orleans meeting that led him to resign at a Raleigh, North Carolina, meeting of 7 May 1860 (though he says calls of support led to his instatement as permanent president) (Bickley, *Address* 23). This threat to his leadership is the major subject of an 1861 Boston exposé, *K.G.C.: A Full Exposure of the Southern Traitors* (5-9).

60. For example, the first obligation in *Edmund Wright* reads: "I swear and promise to conceal the names of the Knights of this degree, the objects and

designs thereof, and never, under any circumstances, acknowledge that I am a member, except to such as can give me their sacred word in a manner to leave no doubt that they are true Knights” (Wright 46). The first obligation in Hiatt reads: “I vow and promise to conceal the names of the 57, the objects and character thereof, and never to speak of the same as though I was a member, except to those who can give me our sacred word in such a way as to satisfy me they are 57.” The previous paragraph in Hiatt explains that “57” is the code for “Knights of the Columbian Star,” the same name as the level in which Edmund is initiated (85).

61. *Edmund Wright* states that the “KGC broke up the Charleston convention” (55). Edmund also claims that “‘Red Rose’ Breckinridge” (that is, John C. Breckinridge) was a KGC who got on the Cincinnati Buchanan ticket via KGC interference; Edmund says Breckinridge openly wore the KGC emblem in Washington (55). Likewise, Edmund asserts that “Floyd, and Toombs, and Wigfall” and “Geo. N. Saunders” were KGC (55-56). These men were all pro-Southern figures (though none has confirmed relationships with the KGC). John Floyd of Virginia was Secretary of War under President Buchanan but became a Confederate general during the war (McPherson 146, 175). Robert Toombs of Georgia was a southern rights U.S. senator and became the Confederacy’s Secretary of State and a politically appointed general (Thomas). Louis T. Wigfall of Texas was involved in the Confederate capture of Fort Sumter and became Jefferson Davis’s aide (“Louis T. Wigfall”). George N. Sanders was a Confederate agent (Curti) and served as an ambassador to England for the South (“A Rebel Emissary”). Finally, Edmund alleges that Confederate General P.G.T.

Beauregard was a KGC who tried (but failed) to establish a KGC castle at the West Point military academy (Wright 56).

62. Even if the KGC had eliminated Bickley and dropped its interest in Mexico to reflect its new leadership, that policy change would have happened only after 1860 (and thus after the majority of events in *Edmund Wright*).

63. Thus while *The New York Times* reported on Bickley's temporary deposition from the KGC (see "Personal"), the newspaper did not report on his reinstatement (though his war-time arrest was ["Arrest"]). The information about his reinstatement would be unknown to a reader of that newspaper, which might explain why Bickley is not a significant figure in *Edmund Wright*'s account of the KGC.

64. That is, if the classification does not reflect a specific piece of information about the book's origins that I have not found.

65. Reynolds derives his categories of rationalist and evangelical reform from the work of Bruce Laurie and Sean Wilentz (57). Reynolds cites Wilentz's *Chants Democratic* in other parts of *Beneath the American Renaissance* (206, 463). He does not cite any specific work by Laurie, but Laurie's *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* contains a discussion of the impact of evangelicalism and rationalism on New England labour movements (33-52, 67-83).

66. Typical of conventional reform literature were the lectures and sermons of Horace Mann, William Ellery Channing, and Joseph Tuckerman, and the Ohio newspaper *The Moral Advocate* of the 1820s (Reynolds 58).

67. Among Weems's tracts are the pointedly titled *Drunkard's Looking Glass* and *God's Revenge against Adultery* (Reynolds 60). For more on Weems see Leary.

68. Reynolds argues that before 1831 sentiment and sensation had an equal share of the publishing market; in the period of 1831 to 1860, the "genteel" novel constituted only 20% of the titles while "adventurous or darkly humorous" books constituted about 60% of titles (Reynolds 183). See also Mott 143-48 and Tebbel 542-45.

69. For example, in Walter Graham's *Amelia Sherwood; or, Bloody Scenes at the California Gold Mines* (1849), a woman eats the tongue and heart of her newly dead husband during an orgy of cannibalism (49). In *The Female Land Pirate*, the heroine Amanda Bannorris uses the warm blood of a murder victim to write an oath in which she rejects "every holy thing," including God (14, qtd. in Reynolds 193).

70. 595. Poe reviewed *Lafitte* in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1836.

71. Reynolds (190) excerpts a poem read at a 1855 literary banquet that satirizes the enthusiasm of the publishing industry for sensation fiction (and in Reynolds's terms romantic adventure literature in particular). The poem describes the success of such books as

"The Sea of Blood!"

A work of wondrous power,

Of which we've sold ten thousand sets

Within the last half hour!

This is the new sensation book.

A work of so much force,

The first edition all blew up

And smashed a cart and horse!

.....

And here's a most astounding tale,

A volume full of fire,

The author's name is known to fame--

*Stupendous Stubbs, Esquire!*

And here "The Howling Ditch of Crime,"

By a Sapphira Stress,

Two hundred men fell dead last night

A working at the press! ("Authors Among Fruit").

72. Some examples of such books are William English's *Rosina Meadows, The Village Maid; or, Temptations Unveiled: A Story of City Scenes and Every Day Life* (1843) (anti-prostitution), Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures* (1836) (anti-Catholic), Maria Lamas's *The Glass* (1849) (temperance), and Fitz Hugh Ludlow's *The Hasheesh Eater* (1857) (anti-drug) (Reynolds 64-69).

73. Licentiousness literature has the motif of the voyeur, temperance literature the motif of psychopathology, anti-Catholic literature the motif of the perversion of nuns or priests, and labour literature the motif of the gap between the few rich

and the numerous poor (Reynolds 85). The *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk as Exhibited in a Narrative of Her sufferings During a Residence of Five Years as a Novice, and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal* was originally considered non-fiction but was quickly revealed to be invention; nonetheless, readers continued to thrill at Monk's putative revelations of clerically mandated prostitution (Reynolds 65).

74. Reynolds 89. As an example of this language Reynolds offers this description of whorehouses from John McDowall's *Memoirs*:

They are the forts of the devil; the mustering place of Satan's armies; the parade-ground of Beelzebub's legions; the campaign-country of Lucifer's allies; the pest-house of earth—the abode of blood. Over them hover the fallen angels flapping their wings of death. Throughout them shriek the souls of the pit, whose grating teeth, gnawing tongues, glaring eyes, horrify the virtuous spectator. The bursting fires of the nethermost hell light up the features of these caverns of despair, and roast the hearts of once doting parents. (McDowall 267)

75. The idea that subversive fiction revels in the depiction of immorality finds suitable substantiation throughout Lippard's *Quaker City*, as in this passage that describes the body of a newly murdered robbery victim: "And around his feet and over the heart[h], silently and slowly the blood of the murdered woman began to flow and spread, while the ghastly corse, with the hollow skull oozing with clotted flesh and brains, lay huddled in a shapeless heap, the hand contorted with the spasm of death, and the stiffened limbs flung along the bricks, in the crouching position peculiar to a violent and a bloody death" (142).

76. For an overview (and critique) of the function of children in sentimental fiction, see Levander.

77. Wendy Graham 34-55. For more on gothic literature and anti-Catholicism, see for example Susan Griffin and George Haggerty.

78. Reynolds possibly insists on this requirement in *Beneath the American Renaissance* because he needs to explain the presence of subversive elements in canonical writers such as Melville, Poe and Hawthorne, for whom he reserves a special place in the tradition of the late twentieth-century canon. *Beneath the American Renaissance* aims to distinguish these canonical writers from the writers of popular literature, who for Reynolds lack the ability to control the imaginative and linguistic forces unleashed by the often violent and taboo-breaking events they depict.

79. In the Texas castle, ritualistic objects include skullhead candelabras, serpent handrails, and, tellingly, a statue of a black man with a knife to a baby's throat (92); this last image invokes fear of the African-American slave with ritualistic killing (and child sacrifice). Firman's death is also couched in terms of human sacrifice, torture and, revenge (94-100).

80. Nonetheless, Edmund's masculinity is not as simply defined as it would appear. Edmund has no difficulty passing as a woman during his cross-dressing escapades. He admits that his "form, long hair, contour of my face, small feet and hands" has allowed him success in dressing as a woman as part of unspecified "madcap adventures" with his friends (102). His female disguise is so successful that he dons female disguises again as he travels out of Florida (148). These



episodes might be a citation to another subset of sensation literature, the kinds of erotic adventures Reynolds describes in *Beneath the American Renaissance* ( 211-224), particularly evident in the farcical scene where Edmund incognito shares a bedroom with Sary at Widow Kindercut's house (110-12). Another possible reading of these episodes, however, is one that implicates Edmund in the anti-masculine activities that the Southerners participate in, thereby making Edmund as another kind of suspect Northerner whose interactions with Southerners has eased him towards emasculation. Interestingly, rumours circulated that Jefferson Davis dressed as a woman to escape from Unionist forces at the Civil War's end. The truth of this rumour is in dispute, but Northern cartoonists and journalists perpetuated and exaggerated it in the Reconstruction years. See Silber 625-32, Bradley, and Mehney.

81. Milton's Satan, often called a "Fiend," is also called an "Arch-fiend" in Book I (lines 156 and 209) of *Paradise Lost*.

82. See Chapter One for a discussion of genre versus generic mode.

83. My use of the term "wartime" in "wartime polemic" is meant to indicate the specific time and place of *Edmund Wright* (the Civil War). However, the idea of war is already contained in the word's Greek etymology. A polemic is any disputative or combative style of discourse and the literary products of that discourse; see definitions B3 and B1 respectively in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

84. 21 August 1861, qtd. in Moore.

85. “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” by Julia Ward Howe demonstrates a Northern version of this association of Satan and the enemy in the third stanza: “Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel.” For information about the religious ideologies and debates surrounding the Civil War, see Aamodt, Moorhead, Noll, and Charles Reagan Wilson.

86. Both fiction and non-fiction of the period contained this kind of apocalyptic language. For example, Dr. Ravenel, in the pro-Union *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion*, proclaims upon surveying war-ravaged New Orleans, “I seem to have walked through Tyre and witnessed the fulfillment of the predictions of the prophets. I have been haunted all day by Ezekiel . . . . It is the hand of the Almighty, bringing to shame the counsels of wicked rulers and the predictions of lying seers. I ask no better proof than I have seen to-day that there is a Divine Ruler. I hope that the whole land will not have to pay as heavy a price as New Orleans to be quit of its compact with the devil” (135). He calls the southern people “imps of atrocity [who] pretend to be Christians. They are the most orthodox creatures that ever served the devil . . . . But God would not wait for them to reach this acme of iniquity. His patience is exhausted, and He is even now bringing them to punishment” (309). Pro-South novels could take the same approach against the North. In Augusta J. Evans’s *Macaria*, the South is in “Yankee-Egyptic bondage,” so that the Southerners are the chosen people (133); the heroine Irene offers a jeremiad on the evils of the north: “How long—how long will Almighty God withhold his vengeance from wolfish hordes who are battenning upon the blood of freemen? . . . . [I]f there be not a long and awful

retribution for that Cain-cursed race of New England, there is neither justice nor truth in high heaven” (172).

### Chapter Three

#### **“For the Sake of *Vraisemblance*”: Genre in J.W. De Forest’s *Miss Ravenel*’s**

##### ***Conversion from Secession to Loyalty***

Unlike *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*, the 1867 novel *Miss Ravenel*’s *Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* has a known author and a significant, though not voluminous, body of criticism and commentary. Among the novel’s criticism and commentary are John William De Forest’s own statements about *Miss Ravenel* in particular and his writing in general. De Forest’s work has been labelled “protorealist” (Fick 492) and the author himself described as America’s “first professed realist” (Spiller 879). The concept of a literary primogenitor is problematic in genre studies since genre studies posits a pre-existent knowledge base to which both author and reader refer. Nonetheless, claims for generic originality have arisen for De Forest; critics who identify De Forest and *Miss Ravenel* as realist do so retrospectively, since De Forest’s prescriptions for realism harmonize with ideas that William Dean Howells and other writers promoted later in the century. De Forest’s novel does not necessarily fit well either into the pre-existing literary marketplace of the Civil War years or with programmatic statements about realism of the Gilded Era. Indeed, *Miss Ravenel* contains some characteristics of romance genres. As a result, *Miss Ravenel* resembles *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* more than a purely realist text could.

## De Forest and Realism

As Pam Morris argues, the term “realism” is multivalent: it has currency in both general and specific academic discourses, is used both casually and specifically, and has at stake the ways people understand their relationship to the world (2). The definitional difficulties that arise from this multivalency have not prevented critics from associating *Miss Ravenel*, at least to some degree, with realism, whether the term is used as the period label for the self-conscious literary movement in the United States of the late nineteenth-century or as a strategy of representation unaffiliated with a particular place or time. These two uses are not necessarily oppositional, but critical views may emphasize the period label over the aesthetic one, and vice versa. Michael Schaefer’s comparative study of De Forest’s and Ambrose Bierce’s war-themed writings acknowledges the existence of the literary movement, but Schaefer chooses to focus on “what ‘realism’ actually consists of” (17), which he defines as having two components: “fact”—“the authors’ presentations of the soldier’s objectively verifiable actions, thoughts, and feelings in combat”—and “truth”—“the ways each author uses in his fashion various components—such as setting, action, character, point of view, the details selected for inclusion, and, perhaps most importantly, style—to create from battle’s commonly noted aspects his personal impression of conflict and its consequences for the participant” (18).

As for the use of the term as a period label, *Miss Ravenel* is associated with realism not simply by virtue of the novel’s strategy of representation but also by virtue of De Forest’s relationship with William Dean Howells. When Howells

and his supporters promoted literary realism, they were addressing a notion that in the American context had begun to gain currency in various cultural fields in the mid-century (Shi 3). The term was used in the early and mid-nineteenth century in France during that country's own realism debates (Pizer 10), propelled by Gustave Courbet's 1855 "Du Réalisme" exhibition mounted in response to Courbet's exclusion from the Paris Salon, as well as by Gustave Flaubert's obscenity trial for *Madame Bovary* (Morris 63-65). Realism entered American cultural debate with respect to painting but also with respect to French and Russian literature (Pizer 10).<sup>1</sup> By 1865 Henry James was recommending to American novelist Harriet Elizabeth Prescott that she "diligently study the canons of the so-called realist school" of French writers Honoré de Balzac and Théophile Gautier (Rev. of *Azarian* 272-75). The first major article on American literary realism was published in 1874 by George Parsons Lathrop, who argued that realism's descriptive fidelity differed from simple literalism: "[r]ealism sets itself at work to consider characters and events which are apparently the most ordinary and uninteresting, in order to extract from these their full value and true meaning . . . . In short, realism reveals. . . . It will easily be seen, therefore, that realism calls upon imagination to exercise its highest function, which is the conception of things in their true relations" (Lathrop 28). Howells's comments about realism gained force during his editorship of *Atlantic Monthly* from 1871 to 1881 and especially in the "Editor's Study" columns he wrote for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* from 1886 to 1892 (Pizer 11). The realism debate touched on non-literary concerns. It revealed postwar America's desire to stabilize the nation's

identity in a rapidly changing world (Pizer 3). Furthermore, realism was associated with democratic motives and scientific objectivism in opposition to the idealized subjectivity and traditional Christian morality of the pre-war era (Pizer 4-7).<sup>2</sup>

Howells's "Realism War" peaked in the 1880s and 1890s (Cady 166). De Forest wrote *Miss Ravenel* in 1867, well before even Lathrop's 1874 article on American realism. Nevertheless, critics then and now have associated the novel and De Forest himself with realism. Through his 1867 review of *Miss Ravenel*, Howells gave De Forest a species of critical attention that Howells later solidified into a promotion of realism. In that review, Howells calls De Forest the first writer to deal with the Civil War "really and artistically": "His soldiers are the soldiers we actually know,—the green wood of the volunteers, the warped stuff of men torn from civilization and cast suddenly into the barbarism of camps, the hard, dry, tough, true fibre of the veterans that came out of the struggle" (121). *Miss Ravenel*'s characters are "so unlike characters in novels as to be like people in life" (121). For years afterwards, Howells continued to affiliate De Forest, both privately in letters and publicly in his columns, with realism. In a 9 December 1886 letter to De Forest, Howells says that De Forest "did twenty years ago the kind of work which has just now gained full recognition. *Miss Ravenel* and *Kate Beaumont* are as good pieces of realism as I know of—the latter, as I remember it, is worthy of the greatest novelist living in any country." Howells admits that De Forest's "bold grappling with the fact of the robust lovemaking among three fourths of our nation. . . . gave me courage to deal with it in *Lemuel* [*The*

*Minister's Charge; or, The Apprenticeship of Lemuel Barker* (1887)], and *A Modern Instance* [1882]" (Croushore, "John William De Forest" 365).<sup>3</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, Howells still argued that *Miss Ravenel* was "one of the best American novels that I had known, and was of an advanced realism, before realism was known by name" (Howells, *My Literary* 223).

Scholarship from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century has continued to associate De Forest's novel with realism.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, not everyone has been convinced unreservedly by the novel's characterization as realist. James Light calls De Forest "a transitional writer" who "too often attempted a kind of artistic moderation, a little bit of Realism and a little bit of Romance, and this inconsistency of tone is the greatest cause of the weakness of so much of De Forest's fiction" (174). Robert Antoni detects a "metamorphosis" part-way through the novel from romance to realism (61). John Fredric Utz declares that "no one has declared it an unqualified break with the romantic or sentimental traditions of its day" (62).<sup>5</sup>

To debate the purity of De Forest's realism requires an agreed-upon understanding of the relevant genres. Even Howells's and De Forest's contemporary Arlo Bates complained that there was "much talk of the 'realistic school' nowadays, but seldom any very definite comprehension of what that phrase does or should mean" (241). Furthermore, this "school" shifted its terms, if not necessarily in practice then at least in perception, in the midst of its pre-eminence. At the turn of the twentieth century, Howells himself detected a change in realism since De Forest's time: "Finer, not stronger workmen succeeded him,



and a delicate realism, more responsive to the claims of the feminine over-soul, replaced his inexorable veracity” (*Heroines* 2: 162). Light argues that De Forest tried to make *Miss Ravenel* conform to ideas of realism as expounded by Howells and Henry James after the novel’s 1867 publication (Light 98). In 1887, De Forest edited his novel for re-publication.<sup>6</sup> Some emendations reflect the growing stance among realists such as Howells and James who argued against authorial intrusion and who desired more circumspect treatments of taboos.<sup>7</sup> As a result, De Forest deleted some intrusive narrative commentary, such as a moralizing interlude on alcoholism (Light 98), minimized the details of military life, and softened the sexuality (A. Turner xviii).

Indeed, De Forest’s statements about his writing shift over time. For this reason, Frank Bergmann is correct when he calls for caution over De Forest’s own statements about realism (9). De Forest’s prescriptions for writing bore enough resemblance to other types of writing that, late in the 1870s, De Forest identified himself with a “school” of writing that included Howells and Henry James. On 11 March 1879, De Forest wrote to Howells,

I don’t understand why you & I haven’t sold monstrously, except on the theory that our novel-reading public is mainly a female or a very juvenile public, & wants something nearer its own mark of intellect & taste, as, for instance, ‘Helen’s Babies’ & ‘That Husband Of Mine’. There is James, to be sure, who belongs to our school, & who yet seems to be forging ahead. But I think that is

because he has crossed the ocean & appealed to the maturer public of the old world. (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 355)<sup>8</sup>

Here De Forest demonstrates sympathy with James over their type of writing and also over the audiences that they do and do not attract. By the 1880s, De Forest still acknowledges a “school” but is ready to dismiss one of its primary members. In his 24 January 1887 letter to Howells, De Forest states that he prefers Zola and Howells as novelists over Henry James, George Washington Cable, and Mary N. Murfree (Charles Craddock), who are “good story writers” but “are not to me satisfactory & instructing novelists.” James has proved disappointing in the long run: “Isn’t it odd that the creator of *Daisy Miller* [sic] fails somewhat in larger paintings of human nature?” (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 369). What exactly a “larger painting of human nature” might be is unclear, but it could mean writing on a large scale, or what De Forest in his famous essay “The Great American Novel” names a “tableau” (such as James’s poorly received *The Princess Casamassima* of 1886), rather than the intimate scale of a “portrait” (such as the story of an American girl in *Daisy Miller* of 1879). *Daisy Miller* is subtitled “A Study,” which suggests some commensurability between the aesthetic qualities in that work and the type of writing that De Forest admired. By 1887, then, De Forest has refined his concept of good writing and of his school to exclude James.

More evidence for De Forest’s changing ideas about writing lies in an 1898 interview with De Forest in *The New York Times*. This interview contains much useful information about how De Forest may have formulated his role in the

realism debate in the years surrounding the publication of *Miss Ravenel*, but the interview also may betray a conceptualization of realism influenced by that debate retroactively. In this interview, De Forest comments on how his war experience affected his writing and speaks of Howells's participation in the realism debate:

. . . . for the first time in my life I came to know the value of personal knowledge of one's subject and the art of drawing upon life for one's characters. In my younger days everything was romance. A writer was praised very highly when it was said of him that he had great imagination. Novelists were expected to draw upon their fancy for their characters. The great body of novel readers preferred to have their characters fictitious and to believe that they could never really exist. Mr. Howells made a great mistake when he wrote on this point and told his readers flatly that they didn't know what they did like. You remember that what he said about realism ran all over the world of letters and stirred up a great amount of talk. He was risking a good deal when he did that, and Howells is a great realist. I believe that in fifty years his books will be taken for great pictures of New England as it is to-day and that people will study him. I have taken my personages from real life, and in one case at least painted them so accurately that I had to publish the book anonymously. But realism did not start with Zola, nor with Howells, though both have done a great deal in their different ways toward bringing it about. Realism is older than

either of them, older than I, as old as Tolstoi, and he dates back in his brain life to Jane Austen. And Chaucer in his prologue to the ‘Canterbury Tales’ is a great realist.<sup>9</sup>

De Forest associates the promotion of realism with Howells, and as Howells did, views Zola, Tolstoy and Austen as realists.<sup>10</sup>

The realism debate undoubtedly affected De Forest’s views on *Miss Ravenel*. De Forest’s conceptualization of realism, however, includes *The Canterbury Tales*, which other realist supporters of the nineteenth century did not mention as a model.<sup>11</sup> Though Howells influenced De Forest’s notions about realist writing, De Forest could have conceptualized realism under terms that differed from the Howellsian debate on realism. Furthermore, Howells admits that De Forest influenced his own novels *The Minister’s Charge* and *A Modern Instance*: De Forest possibly influenced Howells in his thinking about realism as well. This chapter therefore focuses on De Forest’s pre-1880 writings with the aim of filtering out De Forest’s later ideas about writing, which may have been influenced by the critical discourse surrounding realism during the 1880s and 1890s.

### **“Vraisemblance”**

The earliest of such statements occurs with the publication of *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion*. De Forest began writing *Miss Ravenel* in 1864. In October 1865, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* offered \$1000 for publication rights, but those terms soon changed. By December 28, De Forest was accepting new terms:

\$1250 payment for serial publication (illustrated) with Harper & Brothers having the option of publishing the novel in book form. In that acceptance letter, De Forest responds to what seems to be his publisher's complaints about the novel's content: "I make no objection to your reform of the story. If it goes into the *Monthly* of course it ought to be understood, for the sake of *vraisemblance*, that the Colonel did frequently swear and that the Louisiana lady was not quite as good as she should be" (Light 87). By October 1866, De Forest had agreed to a new contract with further alterations to the terms: Harper & Brothers would publish *Miss Ravenel* only in book form, and De Forest would have to repay within three years any royalties, plus interest, he received if sales did not cover his initial \$1250 payment.<sup>12</sup>

What "reforms" the publisher was seeking are unknown; furthermore, De Forest does not explain in the December 28 letter what he means by *vraisemblance*. De Forest knew French, having learned it when he lived in Europe in the early 1850s (Light 32), and thus he may have intended a French rather than English denotation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists this word as being used in English in the early and mid-nineteenth centuries to mean "verisimilitude" or the more material sense of "representation or picture." The French word *vraisemblance* has similar denotations.<sup>13</sup> In the letter's context, De Forest uses this term in reference to a representational strategy that allows a character to behave in socially non-ideal ways in spite of the editorial tendency for "reform," a word with moralistic connotations. I could find no other instance of De Forest using this word. But this usage resembles in part the sense in which De Forest's

novelist predecessor, William Gilmore Simms, used it in an 1845 article. In that article Simms argues that a novelist can “conform his writings more nearly to the form and aspect of events as they really happen” better than the playwright and poet can. The novelist thus “may contend with the painter in the delineation of moral and natural life,—may draw the portrait, and color the landscape, as tributary to the general *vraisemblance* which is his aim” (“Epochs and Events of American History” 261).<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the reference to “moral life,” Simms’s use of painting as a model of literary *vraisemblance* resembles De Forest’s own use of painting to explain his kind of writing. In a 1 February 1867 letter to *The Galaxy*’s editors, De Forest calls his story “Fate Ferguston” “a study from nature, & such nature as few of your other contributors see” (Hagemann 176). “Fate Ferguston” is the tale of a South Carolina Unionist who turns bandit and falls under suspicion of killing a local Confederate, for which crime he is murdered by a lynch mob. To what extent the tale is fiction or non-fiction is unclear. The narrator, as was De Forest at the time, purports to be a “bureau agent and military commandant of the military district of Anderson” in west South Carolina (87). The term “study from nature” was used in nineteenth-century painting to mean that the subject of a painting was not invented but rather something based on the real world.<sup>15</sup> The word “study” (French “étude”) as used in painting signifies a small detailed sketch of an element that will be inserted in a larger work or, especially in the nineteenth century, a detailed, stand-alone piece in the style of a sketch but viewed as complete on its own (“Etude” and “Study”).<sup>16</sup> De Forest uses the phrase

“study from nature” in a sense similar to how James, for example, uses the technologically current phrase “daguerrotyped from nature” in his review of *Miss Ravenel* to commend Carter’s characterization.<sup>17</sup>

De Forest’s use of the word “study” further indicates the importance of observational impartiality, of an objective detachment from its topic, to his writing methods. Such an emphasis on observation and objectivity during this period conforms to what David Shi calls “[t]he spectatorial sensibility” of the nineteenth century. This spectatorial sensibility became “associated with realism”; it “derived much of its legitimacy from the scientific spirit . . . . Just as scientists took visual facts and transformed them into knowledge, realistic writers and artists assumed that to see was to know. The gift for detailed and discriminating observation, for finding the exact words or pigments to represent some experience of the eye, became the most valued attribute of the realistic artist” (Shi 86). A study is a way of accessing a scene through the senses and thus is a way of accessing the real world in its physical sense. In the mid-nineteenth century, photography was becoming appreciated as a technology that seemed to facilitate visual verisimilitude. Photography captures first-hand visual experience, since the photographer must be present at a scene to photograph it, unlike painting, which allows the artist to work in a studio physically distant from a subject. (Thus for James to say “daguerrotyped from nature” rather than “study from nature” demonstrates his recognition of how technology was affecting visual art.) De Forest continued to associate the detailed study of the real world in terms of the older technology of painting. Nonetheless, De Forest’s writings from the 1860s

and 1870s reveal an interest in observational objectivity for the purpose of better understanding the real world.<sup>18</sup>

The insistence on observation also is reflected in his comment to his editor that “Fate Ferguston” was a product of what he had been able to “see” that “few . . . other contributors” could. These two themes—personal experience and objective representation—appear in other of De Forest’s statements about writing. In his December 1865 letter to Harper & Brothers about *Miss Ravenel*, for example, he refers to the “Colonel” and the “Louisiana lady” in the past tense, as though both characters were people whom De Forest had actually observed. De Forest also seems impatient with other writers’ depictions of war when those writers lack first-hand experience. In the version of “Port Hudson” published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, De Forest says that his approach to war representation comes from “one who has fought often enough to know the truth” and hence “is not the poetical view of battle, as you find it in [Charles Lever’s] Charles O’Malley and [George A. Lawrence’s] Guy Livingstone; but the author of Charles was never under fire, and the creator of Guy is reported to have run like an assistant-company-cook at Antietam” (334).<sup>19</sup> As a result, “[c]ertain military authors who never heard a bullet whistle” deem combat “delightful” when in reality, “It is not; it is just tolerable; you can put up with it; but you can’t honestly praise it” (340). A lack of real experience with war is a weakness shared by the untested soldier and by the writers of newspapers, as De Forest states in “The First Time Under Fire”: “I had a sabre and revolver all ready, for of course I expected a severe hand-to-hand struggle; not having yet learned that bayonet



fighting occurs mainly in newspapers and other works of fiction” (66). De Forest associates newspaper writing, which should represent the events in real world, with fiction, which does not represent events in the real world. As De Forest expresses in other statements about the representational aims of his work, direct experience improves a text’s ability both to predict events in the real world before they happen and to represent the essence of the real world. For that reason, his hypothetical program of military training in schools would use good military histories, “not the trashy, misleading ones which prattle of ‘billows of cavalry’ and ‘infantry standing like rocks’” written by “a host of ignorant romancers calling themselves historians; but books which show just what war is” (“Our Military Past” 572). “No rhetorical generalities, such as are produced by most civilian historians,” could serve as useful textbooks for military training (“Our Military Past” 573). Civilian authors’ inexperience with war constitutes a significant weakness in these histories, which are no more accurate than the work of “ignorant romancers.” The depiction of military actions requires truth-based details, no matter how they may call into question the ideals of heroism. Military histories should be willing “to show clearly that sometimes the best soldiers reel under blasts of destruction” (“Our Military Past” 572), just as his war novel should represent a cursing colonel and a morally fluid Louisiana lady.

In “The Great American Novel,” De Forest again valorizes objectivity and observation but, additionally, demands an openness to the representation of the working classes. For the “task of Painting the American soul” (32), De Forest favours as models not James Fenimore Cooper or Washington Irving but William

Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Honoré de Balzac, and George Sand. These European writers have the skills and orientation that could create the “tableau” or “portrait” that would constitute a truly “American” novel. De Forest concurs that fellow American Nathaniel Hawthorne can conduct “acute spiritual analysis,” yet Hawthorne has “only a vague consciousness of this life, and by graspings that catch little but the subjective of humanity” (32-33). Again De Forest asserts the value of the objective, rather than the subjective, for the task of representation. De Forest metaphorizes the literary form in terms of the visual: of painting portraits or larger-scale tableaux; subjectivity alone does not provide the scale of detail that a national literature requires. He concomitantly steps outside of his usual visual model to complain of “a curious lack of natural dialogue” (33) in American literature. Key to these representations is the inclusion of American people of all sorts. De Forest decries the absence in American literature of the country’s “eager and laborious people,” who “believes [sic] in the physically impossible and does some of it” (32). *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* comes close to being a successful American novel, yet though he admires its ability to reflect the communities of both the South and the North, he complains about the novel’s “faulty” plot and about its overly idealized characterizations: “there was (if idealism be a fault) a black man painted whiter than the angels, and a girl such as girls are to be, perhaps, but are not yet” (33). He has limits, however, regarding what subjects constitute suitable material for representation. In particular, he hedges on the inclusion of too many “poor people.” Writing about Rebecca Harding Davis’s *Waiting for the Verdict*, De Forest states that “[i]t is dreadful to have low, tattered, piebald, and stupid

people so rubbed into one” with the book’s “moral dwarfs, bearded women, Siamese twins, and headless calves” (35). For De Forest, characters in the great American novel must sample the breadth of American society, so long as the text does not focus too much on socially marginal characters.

De Forest’s reaction to a positive review in *The Galaxy* (May 1872) for his later novel *Kate Beaumont* demonstrates continuing concerns with painting and objectivity. In a letter to F.P. Church of *The Galaxy* 18 April 1872, De Forest writes, “I am especially gratified by the fact that the critic has taken the pains to discover my purpose of painting the Southerners dramatically, with impartiality & without lecturing” (Hagemann 188). The terms “painting,” “dramatically,” “impartiality,” and “without lecturing” suggest the possibility of reconciling painting, and perhaps even drama, with moral neutrality, particularly with respect to characterization.

The qualities that De Forest expresses as typifying his own writing or writing that he admires resemble the precepts of realism that late-century writers promoted. To distinguish realism in general from De Forest’s prescriptions before the 1880s, I will use the term *vraisemblance*, the term he used in 1865 in discussing *Miss Ravenel* with his publisher. According to statements he made before the 1880s, *vraisemblance* permits the representation of characters that do not obey commonly accepted moral codes. It values objectivity in representation, in the sense of observation of detail, in sympathy with the scientific approach to the physical world. It underlines the importance of an author’s first-hand experience in representation. The representation of people should not necessarily

exclude members of any social class but should not allow either social elites or social pariahs to dominate. This kind of representation is similar in quality to painting in its ability to record the details that make up the material world. The dominance of the visual is mitigated by his respect for “natural dialogue.” Impartiality and objectivity include the need to maintain moral neutrality. The notion of a study or a portrait as a model for textual representation suggests an appreciation of a supposed coherence in the representation, which on a large scale might aid in capturing the essence of a nation. The goal of making such a capture might well be a fantasy, yet the fantasy of coherence in some (if not all) forms of realism exists just as the fantasy of coherence exists in some forms of nationalism.

The idea of realism in visual art and in literature was already a part of the literary discourse in mid-century: in this respect De Forest’s attraction to this aesthetic was not revolutionary. Perhaps his years in Europe in the early 1850s led him to fall under the influence of European realism directly.<sup>20</sup> The intellectual climate in the United States itself was full of calls for veracity and honesty in representation, and in that sense De Forest was subject to the same influences as was the author of *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*. At the same time, De Forest’s articulation of what would become the central tenets of American realism predates the voluminous discussion of these tenets and their informal codification by writers such as Howells and Hamlin Garland, and quite possibly, in the case of Howells at least, influenced them.<sup>21</sup> De Forest’s pre-1880 comments do not necessarily contradict later statements, though as years pass his preference for socially sophisticated (that is, middle-class) characters and his impatience with

writers often associated with realism (such as Henry James) suggest a narrowing of his criteria for good writing. Questions remain, however, over the extent to which *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* adheres to the tenets of *vraisemblance* that occupied De Forest in the 1860s and 1870s, and whether De Forest found the generic influence of “ignorant romancers” difficult to withstand.

### **Miss Ravenel and *Vraisemblance***

For De Forest, a writer's first-hand experience lends a text the ability to represent the real world. In that respect, De Forest certainly applied his theoretical ideas to his own practice. De Forest did not go as far as French realist Alphonse Daudet, who took notes about the effects of syphilis on his body for a possible book project,<sup>22</sup> but De Forest used his personal experiences as sources of his literary material. De Forest was commissioned captain of Company I of the Twelfth Connecticut on 1 January 1862 (Light 65); when he went to Ship Island under General Benjamin Butler in 1862, De Forest wrote detailed letters to his wife and asked her to keep them. In 1864 De Forest was appointed aide to General W.H. Emory of the Nineteenth Army Corps (Light 70); in October he was assigned the task of writing about the Nineteenth Army Corps. He subsequently became a war correspondent for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1864, writing for them until 1868 (Croushore, “Editor's Preface” xi). De Forest began work on *Miss Ravenel* while convalescing from his Virginia campaign on a four-month furlough in the first months of 1864 before returning to Louisiana (Light 69; A. Turner viii). He was discharged in 2 December 1864, rejoined as a

captain in 20 February 1865, and was stationed in Washington as a captain with the Veteran Reserve Corps and then as acting assistant adjutant general of the Provost Marshal General (Light 74). He was awarded a brevet major in 15 May 1866 and joined the Freedman's Bureau at Greenville, South Carolina, where he remained until he left the military in 1 January 1868 (A. Turner vii). In 1868 and 1869 he wrote nine articles about Reconstruction for *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. The posthumously published *A Volunteer's Adventures* (1946) collects De Forest's correspondence of 1862 to 1864 and articles De Forest published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and *Galaxy* from 1864 to 1868 about his civil war experience. (De Forest reworked some of the previously published materials found in *A Volunteer's Adventure*.) His Reconstruction materials from 1868 and 1869 were published as *A Union Officer in the Reconstruction* (1948) (Light 76-77).<sup>23</sup>

The life of soldier-writer De Forest constitutes some of the material out of which *Miss Ravenel's* characters and plot elements developed. Both De Forest and his hero Colburne married daughters of professors in mineralogy with a dual appointment in Amherst in New England and Charleston in North Carolina; both were captains of companies they recruited, and both served under Butler at Ship Island, subsequently fighting in Louisiana and Virginia. Both took a break from battle in Virginia to recover from exhaustion, and both were discharged without promotion because of presumed political barriers (A. Turner x). The novel also contains episodes that De Forest wrote about in his non-fiction (Light 65). Just as De Forest complains in "First Time Under Fire" about the way war is reported in

“newspapers and other works of fiction,” Colonel Carter questions the views of war held by “old grannies of congressmen and some young ladies of newspaper reporters...none of whom had ever seen either a victory or a defeat before” (De Forest, *Miss Ravenel* 89). Evocative of De Forest’s decision to turn down the colonelcy of a black regiment (“More Camp Life” 50-51), Dr. Ravenel refuses to take a military colonelcy to lead a regiment of ex-slaves—though Ravenel does agree to head a black hospital as a civilian (*Miss Ravenel* 169-72). Like Carter (*Miss Ravenel* 393), De Forest grew to favour ex-slaves being put into war service (Light 66-67). Just as De Forest complains about nepotism and political favouritism in the selection of officers by state governors (“Our Military Past” 567), both Carter and Colburne have difficulties obtaining their deserved promotions from the military bureaucracy. De Forest reported on corruption among the military command, such as a weak general being promoted to another regiment, senior officers selling supplies to junior ones for illegal traffic with the South (“Our Military Past” 568), and corrupt food commissaries (Light 69-70). He also complained about the poor discipline of officers and soldiers in New Orleans, who availed themselves of the food and goods in abandoned Confederate homesteads (“More Camp Life” 48-50; see Scharnhorst 489n1). Such experiences reappear in the novel and form around the major characters Carter and Colburne and some minor characters, notably the coward Captain Gazaway and the drunk Lieutenant Van Zandt. Just as with Colburne, De Forest’s health was poor after his discharge in December 1864 (Light 70-71). Colburne’s epistolary accounts of the Battle of Cedar Creek impress Dr. Ravenel enough to suggest to Lillie that

Colburne write a book on the war (*Miss Ravenel* 472-73); De Forest published his account of the Battle of Cedar Creek as “Sheridan’s Victory of Middletown” in an 1865 issue of *Harper’s*. Some of the content of *Miss Ravenel* derives in part from known De Forest correspondence. A comparison of the letters printed in *A Volunteer’s Adventures* and the letters in *Miss Ravenel* reveal broad similarities among them. The 2 May 1862 letter about the arrival of De Forest’s regiment in New Orleans (*Volunteer* 17-19) covers some of the same incidents reported by Colburne about his arrival in New Orleans (*Miss Ravenel* 124-25), including a closing remark about the unlikelihood of “a popular insurrection.” In this letter De Forest reports seeing a “grey-whiskered gentleman and a very handsome young lady, evidently his daughter [,] . . . salute the flag with an expression of solemn joy” (*Volunteer* 19). These people may very well be precursors to Dr. and Lillie Ravenel.

Some of the representations of war violence in *Miss Ravenel* that have captured critical attention originate in De Forest’s periodical writing, sometimes nearly intact and at other times rewritten. Arlin Turner (x) notes that an incident in *A Volunteer’s Adventures*’s version of “Port Hudson” appears in *Miss Ravenel*: “[A] color corporal near me dropped his musket and spun around with a broad stream of blood dribbling down his face. I supposed for a moment that he was a dead man; but the ball had merely run along the upper edge of his leathern forepiece, driving it through the skin, there was nothing worse than a shallow gash from temple to temple” (*Volunteer* 109). This episode appears in *Miss Ravenel* only slightly rewritten: “I saw a broad flow of blood stream down the



face of a color-corporal who stood within arm's-length of me. I thought he was surely a dead man; but it was only one of the wonderful escapes of battle. The bullet had skirted his cap where the fore-piece joins the cloth, forcing the edge of the leather through the skin, and making a clean cut to the bone from temple to temple" (283). The *Harper's* version of "Port Hudson" describes the death of "[a] brave, handsome boy of our Company D": "a ball traversed his head, leaving two ghastly orifices through which the blood and brains exuded, mingling with his auburn curls" (337). This incident is distributed between two different places in *Miss Ravenel*: when Colburne sees two "artillerists, stark dead, one with his brains bulging from a bullet-hole in his forehead, while a dark claret-colored streak crossed his face" (289) and when Colburne sees Major Scott's "brains following the blood from a hole in the centre of his forehead" (316). The incident of a soldier being shot and killed while lifting up a glass of beer is transported from "Port Hudson" (*Harper's* 339) to *Miss Ravenel* (374) almost identically, while a lieutenant's report that a stray bullet passed through the editorial of the newspaper he was reading (*Harper's* 338) appears in the novel as the story of a soldier shot dead through his newspaper (*Miss Ravenel* 302-03).

This freedom to describe extreme bodily injury is consistent with another characteristic of *vraisemblance*: the willingness to depict social impropriety.<sup>24</sup> The novel does not veer from a discussion of sexuality, even though its treatment of the subject seems guarded compared to the work of French realists and naturalists and to later American fiction, whose openness to representations of sex and sexuality led to accusations of vulgarity (Shi 121-22). In general, the earliest

American proponents of realism, including William Dean Howells, were able to rationalize an avoidance of sexuality in their writing (Pizer 7-8). By contrast, De Forest's novel boldly acknowledges Lillie's and Carter's sexual attraction to each other. *Miss Ravenel* explains the sudden marriage of Carter and Lillie while Carter is on leave as a case of lust: "The tropical blood in the Colonel's veins drove him to demand it, and the electric potency of his presence forced Miss Ravenel to concede it" (243). Regarding the later affair between Carter and Mrs. Larue, Mrs. Larue's social charms are frankly sexual: Carter is unable "to forget that she was a bodily, as well as a spiritual presence" (376). Neither does the novel conceal the presence of prostitutes (or at least women seeking sex) among Union soldiers.<sup>25</sup>

The novel also conforms to the conditions of *vraisemblance* through its detailed depictions of life. For example, the novel often foregrounds the dull minutiae of a soldier's daily routine. Chapter Nine of *Miss Ravenel* devotes much detail about the paperwork surrounding the return of military property (115-118), while a large part of Chapter Seventeen describes activities related to the minutiae of maintaining camp discipline (235-41). Details are reserved not only for daily routine but also for the psychological description and analysis of the special conditions of war. This analysis does not occur in internal monologue but rather in character dialogue or narratorial commentary. For example, the narrative notes that the hospital workers' physical appearance shows "the fatigue of their terrible industry" (293). A dying soldier tells his physicians he does not believe he will die because he is too strong and has not disgraced himself in battle (294). One of

Colburne's letters to the Ravenels suggests that war is in fact mostly dull, with most signs of military action heard from a distance (De Forest 123-24). The recourse to dialogue or letters and narrative analysis, rather than to internal monologue, demonstrates the text's preference for objectivity: the communication to an interlocutor or to a letter-reader and the observations of an outsider (the narrator), rather than a character's self-analysis. The rare recourse to internal monologue is focussed outward, on what Colburne sees and his reaction to those sights. For example, during one skirmish Colburne has to remind himself that it is against orders to help the wounded (285). He grows faint at the sight of a soldier "with half his foot torn off by a round shot, the splintered bones projecting clean and white from the ragged raw flesh" (283). While being transported in a hospital wagon train of "heavy, springless army-wagon[s]" Colburne "almost forget [sic] his own sensations in pity and awe of the multitudinous agony" of his fellow wounded soldiers whose suffering during their bumpy ride was "nearly supernatural in its horror" (296-97).

*Miss Ravenel's* depictions of violence on the battlefield constitute the novel's most striking examples of detailed writing. Some of these details concern the effects of weaponry on soldiers' bodies. De Forest notes the small actions of bodies struck by weaponry, as on one of Colburne's soldiers: "Throwing up both hands he fell backward with an incoherent gurgle, pierced through the lungs by a rifle-ball" (*Miss Ravenel* 286). Other moments focus on the sounds of the injured: "Then a little Irish soldier burst out swearing and hastily pulled his trousers to glare at a bullet-hole through the calf of his leg with a comical expression of

mingled surprise, alarm, and wrath. And so it went on: every few minutes there was an oath of rage or a shriek of pain; and each outcry marked the loss of a man” (286). The reactions of soldiers to their wounds are a particular focus, as in this summary of Port Hudson wounded:

None of the wounded men writhed, or groaned, or pleaded for succor, although a sweat of suffering stood in great drops on their faces. Each had cried out when he was hit, uttering either an oath, or the simple exclamation ‘Oh!’ in a tone of dolorous surprise; one had shrieked spasmodically, physically crazed by the shock administered to some important nervous centre; but all, sooner or later, had settled into the calm, sublime patience of the wounded of the battle-field. (289-90)

Colburne’s arm wound gets described in all its physical and psychological ramifications, a treatment that Edmund’s arm wound in *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* does not receive.<sup>26</sup> De Forest reserves space as well for a remarkably candid description of a Civil War field hospital, which “was simply an immense collection of wounded men in every imaginable condition of mutilation.” The candour in this section derives from the novel’s predilection for sensory details both visual and aural:

In the centre of this mass of suffering stood several operating tables, each burdened by a grievously wounded man and surrounded by surgeons and their assistants. Underneath were great pools of clotted blood, amidst which lay amputated fingers, hands,

arms, feet, and legs, only a little more ghastly in color than the faces of those who waited their turn on the table. The surgeons, who never ceased their awful labor, were daubed with blood to the elbow; and a smell of blood drenched the stifling air, overpowering even the pungent odor of chloroform. The place resounded with groans, notwithstanding that most of the injured men who retained their senses exhibited the heroic endurance so common on the battlefield. One man whose leg was amputated close to his body uttered an inarticulate jabber of broken screams, and rolled, or rather bounced from side to side of a pile of loose cotton, with such violence that two hospital attendants were fully occupied in holding him. Another, shot through the body, lay speechless and dying, but quivering from head to foot with a prolonged though probably unconscious agony. He continued to shudder thus for half an hour, when he gave one superhuman throe and then lay quiet for ever. An Irishman, a gunner of a regular battery, showed astonishing vitality, and a fortitude bordering on callousness. His right leg had been knocked off above the knee by a round shot, the stump being so deadened and seared by the shock that the mere bleeding was too slight to be mortal. He lay on his left side, and was trying to get his left hand into his trousers-pocket. With great difficulty and grinning with pain he brought forth a short clay pipe,

blackened by previous smoking, and a pinch of chopped plug tobacco. (*Miss Ravenel* 292-93)

The narrative goes on to point out that the Irishman will likely die since “nearly all the leg amputations at Port Hudson proved fatal” (293).

As his “Our Military Past and Future” demonstrates, De Forest admired such clarity in war writing. In *Miss Ravenel*, the ability to analyze military writing constitutes a skill that amounts to direct military experience. As Schaefer notes (50), Carter begins to respect Colburne when Colburne suspects that Julius Caesar’s hazy depiction of the battle of Pharsalia in Caesar’s *War Commentaries* was written to conceal a military rout (*Miss Ravenel* 36-37). This ability to detect discrepancies in a written military history marks both Carter and Colburne as good soldiers, even though Colburne lacks actual experience.

The details in *Miss Ravenel* may serve as proof that its author has the experience to describe what happened during the war. But such details also serve a generic purpose: to establish a “reality effect.” Roland Barthes uses the term reality effect as the title of his examination of *Madame Bovary* as a new kind of verisimilitude developed through detailed description. Rather than simply depicting a familiar (and therefore recognizably real) setting, this type of description functions rhetorically to announce the text’s participation in a specific mode of literary aesthetic (realism):

The truth of this illusion is this: eliminated from the realist speech-act as a signified of denotation, the ‘real’ returns to it as a signified of connotation; for just when these details are reputed to *denote* the

real directly, all that they do—without saying so—is *signify* it; Flaubert’s barometer, Michelet’s little door finally say nothing but this: *we are the real*; it is the category of ‘the real’ (and not its contingent contents) which is then signified; in other words, the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity. (Barthes, “Reality Effect” 147-48)

These detailed descriptions, in other words, are generic cues: a text that contains such details participates in the genre of realism. *Miss Ravenel* does not, surprisingly, expend as much space on description for its own sake as found in, for example, a George Eliot novel. Yet the details of items that do not seem to further the plot, such as the details expended on the Carter’s activities in camp, work in this way: they show war “as it is.”

*Miss Ravenel*’s references to scientific innovation are in-keeping with an interest in objectivity that *vraisemblance* also deems important. Colburne, for example, limits his exposure to newspaper coverage of the war to “the editorial summaries and official reports, and did not seem to care much for ‘our own correspondent’s’ picturesque particulars. Give him the positions, the dispositions, the leaders, the general results, and he knew how to infer the minutiae” (489). Colburne’s ability to synthesize the raw data of battle marks him as a good soldier but also intimates that he prefers inference from quantitative data rather than the

qualitative data of “picturesque” newspaper reports. Furthermore, the novel uses evolutionary theory in an interesting way. Colburne associates the teaching of geology and of Darwin with Barataria’s modernization; at the same time, Carter reveals his ignorance of modernity when he admits he doesn’t know who Darwin is (*Miss Ravenel* 43). When Colburne moves upriver from Ship Island to New Orleans, he compares the geographical shift to a temporal one, of now living “a few millions of years since yesterday” by moving “out of the marsupial period into the comparatively modern era of fluvial deposits and luxuriant vegetation” (124).<sup>27</sup> Dr. Ravenel’s approach to the war includes a doctrine of societal evolution through warfare. He describes Southern culture as something to “be razed and got out of the way, like any other obstacle to the progress of humanity. It must make room for something more consonant with the railroad, electric telegraph, printing-press, inductive philosophy, and practical Christianity” (*Miss Ravenel* 59). The connection between biological and geographical innovation and change is made more explicit later when Dr. Ravenel says that the Southern enemy’s time has ended: “The world had got to be too intelligent for them. They could not live without retarding the progress of civilization. They wanted to keep up the social systems of the middle ages amidst railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, patent reapers, and under the noses of [Alexander von] Humboldt, [Urbain] Leverrier, [Charles] Lyell, and [Louis] Agassiz” (254). Light and Aaron have gone so far as to see the novel’s social analysis as wholly dependent upon an evolutionary approach to society and human behaviour.<sup>28</sup>



The novel's references to breakthroughs in basic science are mirrored by the novel's references to social change. Miss Ravenel places the middle-class in focus, discounting the "aristocratic" heritages of both Unionists and Confederates. Some evidence exists that De Forest, at least for some of his life, had socialist or democratic sympathies. In a 28 December 1851 letter to his brother Andrew, De Forest commented favourably on Eugene Sue's *Mysteries of the People* and its "democratic tendency, being written to show the sufferings which the people have in all ages suffered from the hands of the great" (Light 33). De Forest's knowledge of the idea of class struggle did not come from Karl Marx directly, whom De Forest may not have heard of, but may have come through his association with the *New York Daily Tribune*, whose editorial writers knew Marx through Marx's work as the newspaper's foreign correspondent.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the source of this orientation, Miss Ravenel reveals sympathy for democratic or populist movements when it suggests American society should turn away from an aristocratic ideal to a democratic one. The narrator comments that "the war was a struggle of the plain people against an oligarchy, and that the plain people had, not very understandingly but still very resolutely, determined to lead the fighting as well as to do it" (92). Though the novel does not broach the subject of suffrage, the novel's overall acceptance of abolition is aligned with the philosophy of democracy. Dr. Ravenel calls the Union's fight against slavery the apotheosis of the "struggle for the freedom of all men, without distinction of race and color; this Democratic struggle which confirms the masses in an equality with the few" (495). Miss Ravenel mocks characters with social pretensions. The perpetually

drunk Van Zandt, for example, claims to be descended from “aboriginal Peter Stuyvesant Knickerbockers” and as such considers himself to be a type of American aristocrat. Van Zandt admires his commander Colonel Carter as “a judge of old blue blood” since Carter “comes of an ancient, true-blue cavalier strain himself; what you might call old Virginia particular” (131-32). When this defender of aristocratic America later vaunts the adulterous, swindling Carter as “a gentleman born and bred” and “not one of those plebeian humbugs whom our ridiculous Democracy delights to call nature’s gentlemen” (433), Van Zandt inadvertently is connecting this “gentlemanly” class with immorality.

Over time, however, De Forest did not retain this class sympathy. In his 6 December 1886 letter to Howells about the newly published *The Minister’s Charge*, De Forest says, “You spare neither manhood nor womanhood, & especially not the latter, though it furnishes four fifths of our novel-reading public. It is a wonder that the females of America, at least the common born & bred of them, do not stone you in the streets.” In this hostile environment, Howells’s work is an act of “heroism”: “You are exposing to view the base metal and & coarse clay of which nearly the whole American people is fabricated; and meantime this slag & half-baked mud is so conceited of itself, & and so shopgirlishly touchy in its conceit!” (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 361). De Forest goes on to comment about the lower-class characters in *The Minister’s Charge* and extrapolates from these characters the state of real-world lower-class people. Amanda Grier and Statira Dudley are examples of “born, unfathomable lowness” (361). He notes that nineteen out of twenty “sons of toil” have an

“original lack of refinement of soul” that dooms them to the fate that Lemuel Barker experiences (363). In his replying letter (9 December 1886), Howells gently notes De Forest is harsher with these characters than Howells is: “I see rather more in Barker, of fruitful goodness and work than you do, and I suspect that I have a softer heart for the vulgarity of those poor, silly, common girls” (365). De Forest seems to believe that his readers have had their “conceit” enhanced by their representation in fiction (Amanda and Statira are both “shopgirls”), so that Howells has made the “common” class even less likely to appreciate their novels.

*Miss Ravenel* bears evidence of some impatience with lower-class persons. Dr. Ravenel often uses “crackers” as the source of jokes about drunken and uneducated lower-class Southerners.<sup>30</sup> When Colburne asks Dr. Ravenel, “But what are we to do about punishing the masses?” Dr. Ravenel suggests that the leader (“the planter”) be executed so that the follower (“the cracker”) be liberated from bad leadership in the same way that a hermit crab leaves the shell it drags behind (496). *Miss Ravenel* hesitates to include the social margins in the new America at the war’s end. Colburne’s and Dr. Ravenel’s ideas about democracy and unity in America may actually exclude a large portion of society.

In keeping with the tenets of *vraisemblance*, the novel limits the social and financial success of its main characters, thus eliminating the possibility that they form a new elite, but the novel does not allow the characters to slip into penury or extreme marginalization. Colburne considers himself and Lillie to be “blighted blooms,” the flowers on the tree of life that did not bloom (De Forest 498).

Colburne's and Dr. Ravenel's postwar lives seem unsuccessful compared to people such as Lieutenant-Colonel Gazaway, who becomes a wealthy businessman despite his cowardice (De Forest 482). Gazaway's social success does not mark him as a moral success; by contrast, his success with the upper echelons of society calls into question the validity of the moral qualities of the American ruling classes. Similarly, Mrs. Larue's ability to rise above the South's vicissitudes signifies how corruption can masquerade as success. At the novel's end, Dr. Ravenel associates the democratic spirit of the North with the abolitionist spirit and the aristocratic spirit of the South with an imitative aristocracy: "The pro-slavery South meant oligarchy, and imitated the manners of the European nobility. The democratic North means equality—every man standing on his own legs, and not bestriding other men's shoulders—every man passing for just what he is, and no more" (De Forest 506). But Colburne and Dr. Ravenel never tumble into crackerdom: Colburne starts his own law practice and Dr. Ravenel starts a medical practice. By nature, they are middle-class people. The notion of "passing for just what [one] is" resembles De Forest's desire for writers to represent war "just as it is." Authenticity in identity, not wealth or upward social mobility, is the moral grace conferred on *Miss Ravenel's* protagonists in the face of social mediocrity.

The desire for authenticity in its characters' identities also affects another aspect of *Miss Ravenel's* deployment of *vraisemblance*. The novel does not contain lengthy descriptions of landscapes, persons, or objects, and in that sense, the novel does not use a great deal of detailed imagery—with the exception of the

military scenes—for its effects. The novel instead depends on what the word “tableau” suggests, a scenic structure.<sup>31</sup> Abundant dialogue is a sign that the novel records interactions among characters rather than summarizing them. The dominance of dialogue conforms to De Forest’s later assertion about *Kate Beaumont* that he aimed for “dramatic” representation of Southerners. *Miss Ravenel* depends on dialogue to depict interactions among characters and to reveal the novel’s attitude towards its subject. The dialogue, therefore, constitutes an important contravention of *vraisemblance*’s call for neutrality. In his lengthy speeches, Dr. Ravenel makes moral pronouncements that match those of the book’s self-reflective narrator. For example, the narrator prefers Colburne over Carter for Lillie (224), just as Dr. Ravenel does (76). American drinking habits are chastized by both Dr. Ravenel (58) and the narrator (350).

The novel’s promulgation of ethical and moral judgements seems to be a noticeable deviation from *vraisemblance*. In the end, De Forest mitigated *vraisemblance*’s ideals. In the midst of the realism wars, De Forest admits to having held back in his representation of war. In a 24 January 1887 letter, De Forest responds to a preview of a February 1887 “Editor’s Study,” in which Howells calls De Forest “a realist before realism was named” (484), and to Howells’s letter of 9 December 1886 in which the editor calls *Miss Ravenel* and *Kate Beaumont* examples of realism. In his letter, De Forest states that Tolstoy’s accounts of warfare in *War and Peace* were more accurate than his:

Let me tell you, for you can hardly know it yourself, that nobody but he [Tolstoy] has written the whole truth about war & battle. I

tried, & I told all I dared, & perhaps all I could. But there was one thing I really did not dare tell, lest the world should infer that I was naturally a coward, & so could not know the feelings of a brave man. I actually did not dare state the extreme horror of battle, and the anguish with which the bravest soldiers struggle through it. . . . Nothing is more confounding, fragmentary, incomprehensible, than a battle as one sees it. And you see so little, too, unless you are a staff officer & ride about, or perhaps a general. No two spectators ever fully agree in their story of a battle. (Croushore, "John William De Forest" 368-69)

De Forest returns to the motif of direct authorial experience as literary ideal: Howells, having never been a soldier, cannot *know* the truth behind De Forest's statement and therefore must be told the truth by someone who does. De Forest also admits here to a limitation (and perhaps an irreconcilable dilemma) in his preference of objectivity over subjectivity: If "[n]o two spectators ever fully agree in their story of a battle," then objectivity is difficult to achieve.

To some degree, De Forest misrepresents his own lack of daring in his descriptions of real-world warfare, at least with respect to his journalism. Some of his magazine writing contains accounts of the fear and confusion he claims to have omitted. In "The First Time Under Fire" he describes a colour sergeant running from battle at the George Landing engagement in Louisiana in 1862:

This last man, on hearing the Rebel bullets, faced about and started rearward. I never saw anything done more naturally and promptly.

He did not look wild with fright; he simply looked alarmed and resolved to get out of danger; it was the simplest and most persuaded expression of countenance imaginable. He was not a thorough coward, and never afterward turned tail that I know of; but he was confounded by the peril of the moment and thought of nothing but getting away from it. (*Volunteer* 63)

De Forest responded to this errancy by striking the soldier and spinning the man around by the shoulder in the proper direction (64). As Arlin Turner notes (xi-xii), this incident of “natural” fear becomes in *Miss Ravenel* a conventional trope of cowardice that heaps scorn on the fleeing soldier and compels the heroic Colburne to push the soldier back into line: “One abject hound, a corporal with his disgraced stripes upon his arm, came by with a ghastly backward glare of horror, his face colorless, his eyes projecting, and his chin shaking. Colburne cursed him for a poltroon, struck him with the flat of his sabre, and dragged him into the ranks of his own regiment” (282). The character of Lieutenant-Colonel Gazaway emphasizes in more detail the contempt with which the military views cowardice, as well as suggesting the rarity of it. De Forest’s concern in the 1887 letter that he not seem a coward may have been reflected in the uneasiness in his fiction for showing justifiable fear and confusion among soldiers. Only in passing does *Miss Ravenel* note the confusion of battle (280, 288); by contrast, in his *Harper’s* “Port Hudson” article De Forest drily notes, “On reflection it is a wonder that any assault succeeds” (335). He also allows himself to comment that his orders from

his superiors were “simple madness” (340) and that “I wish the person who gave the order had to execute it” (341).

Compared to the non-fiction, however, *Miss Ravenel* limits some of the descriptions of violence such that the novel sometimes truncates De Forest’s own war experiences. Whereas De Forest participated in the Port Hudson battle until the Confederate garrison surrendered, *Miss Ravenel*’s Colburne is slightly injured early in that battle and, after fainting, he is sent to the field hospital.<sup>32</sup> In consequence, the field hospital gets only passing mention in “Port Hudson” (335) but is featured prominently in the novel. The forced march that De Forest alludes to in *Miss Ravenel* (276-77) formed one article for *The Galaxy* and an entire section in *Volunteer’s Adventures* (“Forced Marches”), which details the daily sufferings and tactical confusions of the war more fully. “The First Time Under Fire” contains memorably graphic images of death in battle: “Color Sergeant Edwards [fell] slowly backward, with blood spirting [sic] from his mouth and a stare of woful amazement in his eyes. A bullet had shattered his front teeth and come out behind his left jaw” (64). De Forest comes across the body of a dead Confederate commander, shot in the head, “his handsome face grey with death, and one eye lying on his cheek” (69). In addition to minimizing some of De Forest’s war experiences, the novel relates real Civil War incidents that De Forest did not personally witness. Carter fights and dies at the Cane River crossing during the Red River Campaign on 23 April 1864, but De Forest did not participate in that campaign (*Volunteer* 160). The Fort Winthrop defence is a fictionalized account of the Fort Butler defence of 27 June 1863, in which a



garrison of 200 soldiers at Fort Butler weathered an assault by 800 Confederates with the help of three Union gunboats (Scharnhorst 488, n3); De Forest did not participate in this battle, either.<sup>33</sup> The representation of these two battles contravenes De Forest's preference for direct experience, a keystone of *vraisemblance*. Ultimately, the novel devotes very little space to military life, and even less to actual battle.<sup>34</sup> Even in the sections devoted to military life, more pages are used to describe the routines of daily life and meetings between Carter and various military officials. Such a de-emphasis on warfare in a war novel is characteristic of popular early-century works such as the medieval adventures of Walter Scott and the eighteenth-century satires of Thackeray (such as *Vanity Fair*), whose soldiers are not shown on the battlefield (Solomon 82-83).

Finally, even though the battles may be described using the kinds of detail that other texts at the time feared to depict, they are used as structural elements in the novel to propel the story towards the creation of a fairly conventional domestic fiction. The novel's three threads of battle description all serve this purpose. The first battle episode (281-88) takes Colburne from the military field and wounds him so that he can return to the domestic scene as a wounded soldier. The Fort Winthrop episode (333-46) shows Dr. Ravenel, normally associated with the domestic scene, revealing his manliness in the field of battle (in contrast to the cowardice of Gazaway). Finally, the Cane River episode (452-58) depicts Carter as a disgraced husband who rescues his reputation as a soldier by his death but whose death clears the way for Colburne to take his rightful place in the domestic

scene as Lillie's husband. These battle episodes do more than show "just what war is," in De Forest's words. They are plot devices in a predictable love story.

The novel's *vraisemblance* exhibits weaknesses in the execution of the literary ideal of realism. These weaknesses also reveal how the text participates in more than one genre.

### ***Miss Ravenel's* Genres**

When De Forest's biographer comments on "the Romantic-Realist dichotomy" of De Forest's work (Light 48), he is identifying the perceived clash of De Forest's *vraisemblance* with other literary values. The difference between realism and romance formed a main focus of the realism wars of the mid-1880s, but the terms of the discussion were taken up before those years. In 1870, Carl Benson used the terms romance and realism oppositionally when he argued that "the natural tendency of the romance is to melodrama, of the novel proper is quiet realism" ("Things of To-Day" 415). Here, Benson follows the contemporary use of the word "novel" as being something different from "romance," a usage some writers of this period followed.<sup>35</sup> In 1877, Henry James attributed George Sand's falling popularity to the conflict between her tendency for romance and the upsurge of realism in France ("George Sand" 23). In 1879, Clara Barnes Martin noted Zola's participation in the "realism and romanticism" debate (650). Howells did not necessarily always juxtapose these genres as though incompatible. In 1882, he complimented Mark Twain's power of invention in both the "romance" and the "realistic story" ("Mark Twain" 783). In May 1886, however, Howells

noted that Balzac at times was a romantic, rather than a realist (“Editor’s Study” 973); later that year James Lane Allen could title his entry in the current literary debate as “Realism and Romance.”

As is the case with the term realism, the term “romance” has a complicated critical and cultural history.<sup>36</sup> De Forest’s statements in other writings cast some light on his interpretation of the term. De Forest’s 1859 novel *Seacliff* calls attention to the romance genre explicitly. The novel’s love interest, Miss Westervelt, comments that her home, Seacliff, is “well situated for a romance, bloody or otherwise. . . . It is so lonely, that strange things might happen” (206). Pirates, violent storms, and superstitious townsfolk—tropes common to the “tragedies” of moral and dark romantic adventure—would be at home at Seacliff.<sup>37</sup> As it happens, the novel ends with the bloodiness and tragedy that Miss Westervelt predicts: the matron of the Westervelt family jumps out of her bedroom window, stabs her long-time blackmailer to death in the garden, and drowns herself in a nearby creek. The book’s narrator, who happens to be a writer, is inspired by events at Seacliff to begin his own “bad romance” novel, “a skeleton, indeed: a thing to frighten women and children; one of the ghastliest, wofullest dramas conceivable” featuring “a woman of problematical virtue, but fascinating manners” modelled after one of Seacliff’s guests (268). Commenting on this “bad romance” in retrospect, the narrator says that “the embryo Scott is not yet aware that true portraiture of character,—just analysis of human nature,—is the gem which lends practical value to a romance, gives it the power of fact under the grace of fiction, and places it among those kingly gifts that the world

rejoices to receive” (272). A “gem” of a romance should have “the power of fact” conjoined to a “true portraiture of character” in an analysis that gives justice to its subject. What is noteworthy about this description of a good romance is that these ideas differ little from De Forest’s precepts of *vraisemblance*.

Later in the novel, the narrator characterizes the story of the Westervelts as something other than melodrama: “is it my fault that I live in a degenerate age, when there are no dragons, nor enchanters, nor hardly any pirates, and when fathers do not immure their recusant daughters in sloppy dungeons? On second thoughts, moreover, I am thankful that the incidents of my life at Seacliff were no more melodramatic” (341). In the narrator’s view, melodrama is related to supernatural events and to medieval settings. Although the narrator here denies his novel is a melodrama, the next paragraph characterizes the mysteries of the Westervelts as “a secret romance, of a painful character, within that simple country life of Seacliff” (341). “Romance” is something other than melodrama, in other words. Yet the narrator’s subsequent delineation of the characteristics of the romance corresponds to the key psychic qualities of melodrama: fear of a hidden evil:

It crept invisibly yet perceptibly, beneath all our hours of innocent talk and laughter, like a serpent writhing unseen among fresh grasses and flowers. It was so inaudible that it seemed far off, in-existent, impossible, and yet might spring upon us at any moment, stinging some to death, and others to lifelong anguish . . . . It was just so that I hearkened to the undertones of

that mystery which pervaded the life of Seacliff. That some strange drama, or possibly tragedy as enacting, I knew; but what it exactly was, how it would end, and when, I could not be sure. (341-42)<sup>38</sup>

This association of romance with otherworldliness also occurs in De Forest's 1877 poem "Romance." The poem's persona uses his "fancies" for an unresponsive woman to construct "romances / Man never yet uttered nor heard" for himself "which open the portals / Of Eden, and admit my soul" (lines 31-40). The persona wishes he were "[t]ranshuman" (8) because a story that joined him with his beloved would be "too splendid for mortals" (37). In "Romance," the idealized world is a place of psychological escape from the rejection that the narrator seems to expect. For De Forest, then, "romance" has a close affiliation with supernatural elements, medieval settings, and the adventurousness of pirate tales, close to what David Reynolds calls in the nineteenth-century American context romantic adventure and what Barbara Fuchs calls "a privileged mode of access to an idealized past, a vehicle for nostalgia, magic, and the imagination" (100).

De Forest's "Chivalrous and Semi-Chivalrous Southrons" reveals mixed feelings about the romance. De Forest complains, "The romances of Dixie, produced under a mixed inspiration of namby-pambyism and provincial vanity, strong in polysyllables and feeble in perception of character" are "powerful weak" (347).<sup>39</sup> At the same time, however, the South itself is "a land of romance" whose people remind De Forest of characters in the novels of Sterne, Fielding, Thackeray, Dickens, and Sue, all writers that De Forest admires (356). The

absence of common speech and of perceptive characterization, combined with sentimentalism and a reticence for self-criticism that “provincial vanity” would promote, would remove such books from the purview of *vraisemblance*.

De Forest’s writings before 1880 tend to treat “romance” and “novel” as separate but related genres. The narrator of *Seacliff* calls his book in progress a “novel” that resembles the “inexhaustible human fountains” of the “romances” published in the *New York Ledger* (256). The narrator comments on the “romance, fictitious and real,” that his experiences at Seacliff have inspired in him (262) (as though romance is not necessarily a fiction genre). In an extended discussion of his work, the narrator calls his book both a novel and a romance (270-72). In “Chivalrous and Semi-Chivalrous Southrons,” De Forest calls the writers of Southern romances “novelists” (347). In *The Wetherel Affair*, Miss Jones is at once a “veteran devourer of romance” and a novel reader (22). For De Forest, romance is either the subject of a novel or the novel as prose fiction is a vehicle for romance.

De Forest’s idea of romance allows the adventurous nostalgia for time past to coexist with “true portraiture of character”; it does not define romance as necessarily antithetical to the precepts of *vraisemblance*. This attitude is manifest in *Miss Ravenel*. The narrator comments on the civil behaviour of Colburne and Lillie after seeing each other after a separation: “This is not the way that heroes and heroines meet on the boards or in some romances; but in actual human society they frequently balk our expectations in just this manner. Melodramatically considered real life is frequently a failure” (De Forest 151-52). This statement

suggests that “actual” or “real life” lacks the melodrama of theatre (“the boards”) and certain types of stories (“romances”). Not all romances, in other words, eschew realistic depictions of character, an idea that *Seacliff*’s first-person narrator also holds. A romance, an adventure tale set in a past or invented world, can have the kind of detailed characterization that tends to mark *vraisemblance*.

Two years after *Miss Ravenel* was published, De Forest seemed to be declaring the end of realism as a viable literary aesthetic. In 28 September 1869 De Forest wrote to the editors of *Galaxy* that

the story of ordinary life no longer excites remark, no matter how well done. The day for easy success of commonplace subjects & good writing is over. What I try to do is to sketch realistic characters and put them through a series of extraordinary & even grotesque circumstances. Such things excite remarks; some people like them and some don’t; they may be sharply criticised by the commonplace or hurried or jealous people who ‘review’ for the papers; but they are pretty sure to make talk & that brings readers. As far as I can learn, the story of mine which has drawn the most attention was the Flying Dutchman sketch, called ‘A Strange Arrival,’ printed some time ago in the Atlantic. Yet it is the wildest fancy, barring only a character or two, which are realistic.

Moreover, it takes all sorts to make a magazine, & suit a public. Suppose fanciful tales are generally not taking, it is wise

surely to have one now & then, for the sake of the queer readers.

(Hagemann 183-84)

Here, De Forest admits that his literary production at this time indeed contained supernatural elements that his earlier statements link with romance.<sup>40</sup> The “story of ordinary life” is falling out of favour and in ascendancy is the story of “the wildest fancy,” “fancy” being a word that De Forest associates with romance. Though De Forest suggests that ordinary life no longer captures the average reader’s attention, he nonetheless hedges on this conclusion and suggests that “queer readers” might take to this kind of writing if the majority of the public does not. A few years later, De Forest wrote to Howells (27 May 1871) that the readership for romance is larger than the kind of writing that the Brahmins who read *The Atlantic Monthly* prefer: “It seems to be that the Atlantic has generally laced on this point; not sufficiently considering the great herd of young people, eager to browse upon romance; editing too much for Mr Emerson & other select Bostonians; forgetting that our ‘select few’ is a very few” (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 347-49). De Forest seems to be discussing his literary work in terms of its saleability. But in his letter to *The Galaxy*, the issue also seems to be an aesthetic one.

In the midst of the realism wars, De Forest made a case for “two kinds of fiction” in his 6 December 1886 letter to Howells. One type of fiction is the “realistic” type about “common people” (such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Howells’s *The Minister’s Charge*) and the other is the type with “heroes & heroines of the highborn type” (such as *Julius Caesar* and *Ivanhoe*). De Forest



says that though he prefers books about common people, he is nonetheless sympathetic with readers, such as the “old gent” in De Forest’s unpublished novel *A Daughter of Toil*, who do not like the “realistic novel”:

At the same time I do believe, unlike yourself apparently, that the two kinds of fiction are equally allowable, & in a certain sense equally true. Each is the result of a selection; for we cannot tell the whole life, even of a country village; we must choose some characters for our painting, & shut our eyes to others. Now we may select the Othello and Desdemona of the place, who go together to flashing ruin; or we may select the Lem [Barker] & Stira Dudley who fizzle out like the mass of vulgar-born people. Let each one select what he can best paint. (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 363)

De Forest, who incidentally may be underestimating Howells’s flexibility in accepting different genres, recognizes that all genres of storytelling require elimination of detail and simplification of focus. Both genres of fiction are “equally true” because, for De Forest, both represent aspects of the real world.

Romance, which might seem out of step with De Forest’s aesthetic program, thus becomes simply another option for a writer interested in literature as “a study from nature.” As Leo Levy notes, De Forest’s other novels experimented with different genres.<sup>41</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, other non-realist genres manifest themselves in *Miss Ravenel*. One of these is popular humour. Joseph Rubin comments that some episodes in the novel have the feel of mid-

century humour writing (133). American humour of the nineteenth century had a conventional mode and a subversive mode, mirroring the conventional and subversive modes of reform literature and popular fiction (Reynolds 443). Frontier humour of the Southwest “brought together all the dark aspects of nineteenth-century popular culture—gory violence, universal chicanery, the likable criminal, republican attacks on authority figures—and, by exaggerating them, made them ridiculous” (Reynolds 448). This type of humour was transferred in the 1840s to the urban environments of the Northeast, such that “the twisted idioms of frontier humor began to be fused with working-class sensationalism” into a “subversive humour” that “became a favorite weapon of the radical democrats in their effort to unmask what they regarded as the corruptions of American’s ruling class” (Reynolds 458). By mid-century, this radicalization of humour softened into what Reynolds calls “urban humour.” Urban humour arose “among more conservative writers who were more aware of, and self-conscious about, genre and of shifts in social structures that faced the nation” than the subversion humour that arose from the labouring classes. This urban humour was “sophisticated and self-consciously stylized” and “treated with wry detachment many of the problematic phenomena of popular culture.” Humour permitted these shifts to “be confronted directly but could be stripped of terror through comic exaggeration. When depoliticized and parodied through extreme caricature, they often seemed downright zany” (Reynolds 466).

De Forest’s use of humour seems to come from this type of urban humour. A case in point is the character Van Zandt, whose sole purpose is to deflate the

prepossessing self-aggrandisement of American aristocracy as well as call attention to the vices prevalent in the military establishment. He enacts this role in his drunken self-introduction to Dr. Ravenel (128-33) and his “ludicrous” drunken wanderings in the field hospital (294-95). Other minor characters and incidents function that way as well; particularly noteworthy is an “All-Fool’s evening” in Colburne’s camp (363-67), with drunken speeches, an argument among four “irrepressible Hibernians” (who among other things joke about how a dead Confederate soldier they saw might have lost his eye<sup>42</sup>), and a terrible pun about a tailless camp dog (“an army dog should be detailed”) (367). Even Dr. Ravenel’s clumsy efforts during the assault of Fort Winthrop are more humorous than thrilling (334-40). While Dr. Ravenel struggles with loading and firing his gun at the correct targets, he has to step over Lieutenant-Colonel Gazaway, who lies on the floor under a blanket, feigning illness. The incidents reported in Chapter 19 about the freed slaves in Dr. Ravenel’s experimental farm and about Colburne’s aide differ from the scoundrel stories typical of the mid-nineteenth century only by the relative mildness of their misbehaviour. As Rubin notes, “Dr. Ravenel’s anecdote of the drunk led by a goose [*Miss Ravenel* 77] reminds us of [southwest humourist Joseph G.] Baldwin or [Augustus Baldwin] Longstreet” (Rubin 133). Dr. Ravenel tells other “cracker” stories of a similar nature.<sup>43</sup> These stories put in their places Southerners who claim moral superiority by birth as well as Reconstructionists who perceive the “rehabilitation” of the Southerners, black and white, to be a simple matter. The purpose of this humour is satirical in the sense that it aims at correction (or at least identification) of social ills through a

distortion of real-world behaviours. Via this formula, the novel's Southerners distort real-world behaviour simply because of their natures. In "Chivalrous and Semi-Chivalrous Southrons," De Forest argues that Southerners have such "individuality" that they constitute "one of the most interesting, or, at all events, one of the most amusing" peoples in America (340) and thus should be represented in literature so as to provide "vast amusement and some instruction" (341). De Forest thus produces caricatures even under the rubric of a studied "perception of character."

Another genre that appears in *Miss Ravenel* is the genre of sentimental literature. This is another genre that seems out of step with *vraisemblance*. But as Light points out, despite De Forest's complaints about the dominance of the female audience in the literary marketplace,<sup>44</sup> De Forest's novels are often pitched to exactly that audience (Light 108-09). *Miss Ravenel* contains sentimental tropes, such as the outdoor excursion during which a love triangle is launched or developed (44-54), the parental death-bed scene (80-83), and the recurring banter between father and daughter that contrasts paternal pragmatism and authority with filial naïveté and obedience. The popularity of sentimental fiction remained constant during the Civil War, yet De Forest suggests that such literature is fading in popularity. For example, the narrator asserts that "popular reading" discourages the narrator from revealing details of Colburne's thoughts about Lillie: "[L]overs' reveries not being popular reading in these days, I shall omit all the interesting matter thus offered, notwithstanding that the young man has my earnest sympathies and good wishes" (De Forest 121). This comment suggests that the

subject of love, for some reason (perhaps the war), has fallen out of favour, and the resultant omission of the details of this love talk means a loss of “interesting matter.” By the same token, when the novel comments on the dullness of conversation among courting lovers (De Forest 47), the omission transgresses a norm for sentimental novels. The narrator thereby admits to self-editing for the sake of popularity. The extent, however, to which this statement is meant to be satirical is unclear. After all, the novel contains other “lovers’ reveries.”<sup>45</sup> The omission of this particular reverie actually permits the novel to shift away from Colburne’s thoughts (that is, his subjectivity) to that of the details of his voyage from Ship Island to New Orleans (an objective episode). The narrator is thereby disingenuously attributing “popular reading” to a structural as well as an aesthetic decision.

Many critics have also noted the ways in which the novel works as allegory rather than as verisimilitude. L. Moffitt Cecil argues that De Forest imitates John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to develop the moral issues surrounding the war, with Lillie being the pilgrim and the men around her being the allegorical figures that shape her character. De Forest chooses a symbolic naming for Gazaway (who prefers to look in the other direction when he is supposed to take up his military responsibilities). *Miss Ravenel* conforms to a type of allegorical war literature popular in the 1880s, which Nina Silber calls “romantic reunion.” This genre—perhaps a descendent of the “war romance” that Alice Fahs (131) identifies as common in the war years—features a northern man who marries a southern woman who renounces her southern loyalties (Silber 109-

23).<sup>46</sup> Silber singles out *Miss Ravenel* as an early example of the romance of reunion (112-13).<sup>47</sup> The marriage of North and South at the war's end is thus reified in the marriage of Colburne and Lillie, so that the novel's conclusion applies both to the country and to the couple: "For the last four years they have sailed separately over stormy seas, but now they are in a quiet haven, united so long as life shall last" (De Forest 519).

The reunion plot in *Miss Ravenel* works, however, only through the odd circumstance of a love triangle with two male protagonists who are both pro-Union. This Union-heavy courtship allows Lillie to be converted but also requires that one protagonist, in the formula of romance, be clearly more desirable. By belonging to the same side of the war, both suitors can socialize with Lillie without scandal, since her father knows about them and since neither fight for the Confederacy. Otherwise, one of the men would have to defy parental authority and court Lillie in secret, whereas as the novel presents it, both men can be party to her "conversion." One man must still be the poorer choice, however, to remove any unseemly pathos from his ultimate defeat. Carter's unsuitability as a husband stems from his drinking, fraud, and adultery. His unsuitability is also enhanced by his Virginia heritage. Colburne is superior because he comes from an upstanding Baratarian (that is, New England) family. Dr. Ravenel is a Southerner, but he has disavowed Southern culture almost entirely, excepting those masculine qualities that the novel promulgates as essential to successful American nationhood. Indeed, Lillie's "conversion" is formulaic in the sense that it occurs without motivation. Because the conversion has no psychological, or interior, motivation,

the conversion cannot be “real”: that is, it has no correspondence to human behaviour in the real world. Lillie considers turning loyal to the Union “for very spite” over her mistreatment by the locals in New Orleans (146). She hangs on to her loyalty until her father is attacked on the street by a secessionist (158). Lillie continues her turn to Unionism when the Southern women in New Orleans spurn her because of her father’s Unionist sympathies (De Forest 173). Her anti-abolition beliefs linger even when she is “a firm loyalist” (De Forest 250), but by the time she falls in love with Colburne, “her conversion . . . is complete” (507).<sup>48</sup> Lillie’s conversion appears easily won and completely non-ideological. Such psychological simplicity resembles the qualities of allegory rather than *vraisemblance*.

The romance of reunion is an allegory of nationhood insofar as it places on a set of characters the aspirations that the novel ascribes as belonging to the North and South. The superposition of such ideals on the schema of a love match seems a simple enough conception. Nonetheless, this superposition has additional implications when combined with other, non-realistic genres. *Miss Ravenel* manifests some of the same dark romantic adventure and even subversive traits that characterize *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*. David Reynolds notes in *Beneath the American Renaissance* that although the genre of dark romantic adventure fiction derives in part from British gothic and European Dark Romanticism, the genre’s Americanness comes from its engagement with contemporary social issues (190-91): in *Miss Ravenel*, the social issue is the war and the related controversies of slavery and sectional economics. *Miss Ravenel*

deploys the characteristics of the dark romantic adventure genre in ways that reflect the war. One characteristic De Forest's novel shares with *Edmund Wright* is that the villains—the southern secessionists—are associated with evil. The Misses Langdons and Mrs. Larue engage in tropes of cannibalism, “metaphorically tying Beast Butler to a flaming stake and performing a scalp dance around it, making a drinking cup of his skull, quaffing from it refreshing draughts of Yankee blood” (146). Dr. Ravenel uses the same trope when he says slave-owning Southerners “have fed on the poor blacks until they can’t abide a man who isn’t a cannibal” (15). Dr. Ravenel in particular routinely associates the Confederates with Satanic forces. Colburne says he concurs with Dr. Ravenel that Louisiana “is where Satan’s seat is” (De Forest 125). Upon re-entering his former hometown of New Orleans after Union occupation, Dr. Ravenel sees the fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy: “I have been haunted all day by Ezekiel. Business gone, money gone, population gone. It is the hand of the Almighty, bringing to shame the counsels of wicked rulers and the predictions of lying seers. I ask no better proof than I have seen to-day that there is a Divine Ruler” (135). He chastises pro-slavery religionists as “the most orthodox creatures that ever served the devil. . . . But God would not wait for them to reach this acme of iniquity. His patience is exhausted, and He is even now bringing them to punishment” (309). Ravenel sees the victorious Northern armies as righteous armies since “‘the hand of God’ is identical to ‘the heaviest battalions,’” concluding that “I have beheld Heaven fighting with Hell” (495-96).



Although the novel suggests that the South has experienced a kind of social evolution, the region has failed to evolve in concert with what the novel conceives as a shift towards modernity. Overall, the book's Southerners are more predisposed to violence than Northerners.<sup>49</sup> Dr. Ravenel speculates that Southern men are outwardly civil because all the rude ones have died in duels (De Forest 65); in other words, a kind of social Darwinism has bred out the ill-temper of the South. At the same time, however, the sub-culture of the Southerners has developed a "spiritual preparedness for slaughter" (68). The South's moral code does not coincide with civilization's overall evolution towards liberty. This evolution does not work on the basis of biology or geography alone; it has God on its side. The novel therefore expresses a Christian triumphalism, the assurance that God will sweep aside any force that fails to change with this new order. When Carter shows ignorance of Darwin, the novel is arguing that Carter's inability to keep up with scientific developments is symptomatic of his fellow Southerners' inability to evolve morally and socially.

The novel's representations of violence do more than depict the war with the sensorial accuracy that the Howellsian realism of the next two decades would idealize. The novel manifests important characteristics of subversive fiction. The novel's depiction of violence surpasses *Edmund Wright*, and it matches in detail and grotesqueness in some of the violence in George Lippard's subversive novels.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the novel contains the kind of language, especially from Dr. Ravenel, that embraces the "post-Calvinist or mythic imagery" that arose from the imposition of Calvinist theology onto profane reality that marks subversive fiction

(Reynolds 89). As the previous chapter explains, this revelatory impulse is reflected in the motif of “a conscious impulse to ‘tear away veils’ or ‘lift up masks’ to reveal hidden corruption” among authority figures (Reynolds 86). *Miss Ravenel* contains enough criticism of the official government control of military affairs to constitute an exposé of the war department and government sycophancy (De Forest 29). Indeed, Congress began to investigate illicit trade between Union and Confederate soldiers in February 1865 while De Forest was still writing *Miss Ravenel* (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 293). The novel’s critique does not condemn soldiering per se, which the novel admires; but as the novel points out, there is a difference between governmental wisdom and military wisdom (*Miss Ravenel* 96-97). In addition, just as subversive fiction suspects political leadership as complicit in social corruption, De Forest’s novel harbours similar anxiety about the military and political organizations of the North. Carter harbours contempt for the upper military command (101), but even he is not above trading illegally with the South for his own profit. Long before the novel’s conclusion, Dr. Ravenel comments that the North has been complicit with the South’s “compact with the devil”: “The North thought that it could make money out of slavery and yet evade the natural punishments of its naughty connivance. . . . It hoped to cheat the devil by doing its dirty business over the planter’s shoulders. But he is a sharp dealer. He will have his bond or his pound of flesh” (135-36).

The imagery of revelation (actual lifting and removal of veils and masks) concomitant with the idea of revelation in subversive fiction (and as present in

*Edmund Wright*) does not exist in *Miss Ravenel*. Instead, the novel goes further. It does not offer metaphors of revelation. Arguably, *vraisemblance* itself, as a narrative technique, constitutes the means of revelation. *Vraisemblance* is unafraid to approach taboos, whether sexual or political. In that regard, the novel seemed revolutionary compared to other American texts of the period. When in 1886 Howells noted that De Forest “did twenty years ago the kind of work which has just now gained full recognition,” he was labelling De Forest’s work as avant-garde. For Howells, and for those who agreed that De Forest was ahead of his time, De Forest was experimental. Subversive fiction, by Reynolds’ typology, contains the experimentalism in language and syntax that distinguishes it from dark romantic adventure fiction. In that regard, *Miss Ravenel* exhibits an aspect of subversive fiction that *Edmund Wright*, with its clichéd and mannered language and plot, lacks.

Nonetheless, subversive literature clashes with *vraisemblance* in a significant way. Subversion depends on a critique of social structures: subversion cannot maintain neutrality. Where *Miss Ravenel* resembles *Edmund Wright* is the absence of neutrality that J.W. De Forest, in other pieces of writing, insisted on maintaining. For example, *Miss Ravenel* is itself anti-slavery, as De Forest himself was.<sup>51</sup> Lillie Ravenel’s “conversion” from secession is not “complete” until she has converted from slavery as well (507). Yet the novel does not veer away from noting failures in Reconstruction and from showing reticence towards radical reconstruction projects. Colburne complains about the work ethic of his freedman servant Henry to the point where Colburne half-seriously wonders if he

should change his mind about abolition. Dr. Ravenel makes the argument that slavery has ruined Southern character, both of whites and blacks, and that rehabilitation of that character will be time-consuming (De Forest 206-07). Whatever ideals Colburne may have, he decides against joining a freedmen's regiment. When Dr. Ravenel's model farm is attacked by Confederate soldiers, he does not return to it at the war's end. Subversion's moralism conflicts with *vraisemblance*'s ideal (as De Forest describes his objective for *Kate Beaumont*) to depict his subjects "with impartiality & without lecturing" (Hagemann 188). *Miss Ravenel*, in making clear its stance on its characters and their society, stops being realist when it is subversive.

### **Culler and De Forest**

De Forest's *vraisemblance* calls to mind Jonathan Culler's discussion of *vraisemblance* in *Structuralist Poetics* (see Chapter One). Both writers use the term in reference to the relationship between a text and the real world, though the contexts of their respective uses differ. Culler uses the term *vraisemblance* as part of an examination of how texts can acquire stable meanings in the face of linguistic indeterminacy, while De Forest uses the term to defend his novel's integrity as a work of realism and, it seems, to convince Harper & Brothers to publish the novel according to their previous agreement. Culler's theory serves as a useful hermeneutical tool for explaining how *Miss Ravenel* negotiates its relationship to the real world. De Forest's use of the term *vraisemblance* in his 1866 letter to Harper & Brothers resembles the first category of Culler's

formulation of textual signification. In the letter, De Forest does not suggest anything other than a desire for his novel to represent the behaviours of Civil War captains and widowed Southern women as they occur in the real world.<sup>52</sup> For him, his characters follow the same rules of behaviour that people in the real world follow; this congruence of rules, as far as De Forest is concerned, alone justifies the way the novel represents people and events.

Nonetheless, *Miss Ravenel* manifests the third, fourth, and fifth Culler categories, which concern (respectively) literary genre, acknowledgements of fictionality, and relationships between specific texts. For Culler, literary genre (his third category) is a “series of constitutive conventions which enable various sorts of novels or poems to be written.” Such conventions operate less as theories and more as “myths” or “formal devices” (170). These conventions are artificial in the sense that they are cultural practices, rather than “universal” or “natural” forces. Such a cultural practice must be recognizable, however, for anyone to refer to it. For Howells and others to consider *Miss Ravenel* as “protorealist,” the literary genre of realism cannot have been well established in literary discourse. De Forest was not a well-known writer, and therefore *Miss Ravenel* would not necessarily represent for Harper & Brothers an example of a body of work that would be generically “De Forestian” in the way that, to use Culler’s example, an exaggerated character in a Balzac novel makes sense “in terms of the laws of the Balzacian universe” (169-70). Neither could De Forest invoke other kinds of American Civil War novels like his; indeed, his publisher seems to have reconsidered its plan to buy De Forest’s novel because, despite its topicality, the

book represented soldiers and widows differently than did other Civil War novels. The commercial marginalization of De Forest's novel therefore correlates with the absence of an easily perceivable third category of *vraisemblance*.

A text without this type of *vraisemblance* is certainly readable. However, to read *Miss Ravenel* outside a literary genre requires dependence on other categories of *vraisemblance*. Such an absence requires a willingness to participate in what Culler calls "the adventures of meaning" (306) , or what Roland Barthes calls "le plaisir" of working through a text to find meaning in unfamiliar places (*Le Plaisir* 10-15). Not all readers are willing to do such work. De Forest's letter indicates that Harper & Brothers wondered if its periodical readers were up to the task of participating in the creation of a new textual code. Since the novel did not receive a thorough proofreading, the publisher may have believed that even its book readers would not do this work.

The absence of a well-defined third category of naturalization with which to contextualize *Miss Ravenel*'s treatment of the Civil War affects the nature of the fourth and fifth categories of *vraisemblance* in De Forest's novel. The fourth and fifth categories create meaning through their recognition of writing itself, including the recognition that texts signify because they have a relationship to a discourse; as Culler says, a reading of the fourth category "[proposes] a project of illustrating or enacting the practice of writing" (177). *Miss Ravenel* also contains elements that function as Culler's fifth category of *vraisemblance*, which Culler says can be treated as a "local and specialized variant" of the fourth category (178). In the fifth category, a text refers to a specific literary text, rather than a

literary genre. Yet because *Miss Ravenel* resists signification in the third category, its metaliterary statements do not refer to a well-understood literary genre. These metatextual statements must refer to something else, namely, to the first and second category of signification. Such statements would be in keeping with De Forest's preferred means of establishing naturalization. Yet when *Miss Ravenel* engages in meta-statements, the effects can, as a result, be obscure, because the novel has not easily accommodated a genre for which such meta-statements can be made.

Culler's fifth category of *vraisemblance* permits a text to seem real, or natural, when associated with another text that itself depends on *vraisemblance* to signify. Dr. Ravenel's reference to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* works as this means of naturalization, since it refers directly to a specific text rather than to, for example, the slave narrative genre (which would be Culler's third category) that I discuss in Chapter Two. Yet the novel deprecates the "realism" of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with respect to the representation of African-American slaves. By naming that representation a "fiction," the text's fictional character distances itself from its own fictionality and therefore moves *Miss Ravenel* closer to the kind of naturalization that depends more directly on the real world.

This aspect of *vraisemblance* also comes into play with respect to the influence of William Makepeace Thackeray on De Forest.<sup>53</sup> The most explicit allusion is the phrase "Vanity Fair" that appears in *Miss Ravenel* (226). In addition, Thackeray's novel has a similar love triangle—Osborne, Dobbin, and Amelia—to *Miss Ravenel*'s Carter, Colburne, and Lizzie. Mrs. Larue seems to be

a type of Becky Sharp: both women deploy their self-serving machinations to ascend the social ladder. The influence of *Vanity Fair* extends beyond characterization and plot, however. Like *Miss Ravenel*, *Vanity Fair* contains extranarrative commentary in which the narrator anticipates audience reactions to its characterization and plot as well as to generic expectation. *Miss Ravenel* contains statements very similar to those in *Vanity Fair*. For example, Thackeray's narrator comments that "[t]here is no need of giving a special report of the conversation which now took place between Mr. Sedley and the young lady; for the conversation, as may be judged from the foregoing specimen, was not especially witty or eloquent; it seldom is in private societies, or anywhere except in very high-flown and ingenious novels" (36); *Miss Ravenel*'s narrator also comments on the mundanity of lovers' conversation (De Forest 47). Like Lillie Ravenel, Amelia Sedley lacks the physical perfection usually required, asserts the novel's narrator, of heroines in novels—"her nose was rather short than otherwise, and her cheeks a great deal too round and red for a heroine" (7)—but her personality renders her imperfect beauty immaterial.

Arguably, *Miss Ravenel*'s recourse to audience-related metacommentary arises more from a stylistic allusiveness to Thackeray rather than to a desire to examine critically the nature of a specific literary genre. This allusiveness, however, has a more problematic effect. Though Thackeray features the Napoleonic Wars in *Vanity Fair*, representations of battle are non-existent. *Vanity Fair* treats warfare in the way that De Forest criticizes in "Our Military Past and Future." For De Forest, however, the representation of war "just as it is" functions



as his novel's reason for being and serves as a distinguishing characteristic of the novel as a work of realism. *Miss Ravenel* thus cannot convincingly acquire readability through *Vanity Fair* on the terms in which De Forest's mode of realism demands.

Culler's theory of *vraisemblance*, which describes ways in which a text is made readable through different means of contextualization, illuminates the nature of *Miss Ravenel*'s realism, or more specifically that form of realism that De Forest promulgated in his writings. The novel deploys the fiction and non-fiction genres prevalent in its era's literary discourse, but its use of these genres leads to internal contradiction. At play in the novel, therefore, is the desire for a certain mode of representation that is at odds with the novel's other goals.

### **The Real World**

Like *Edmund Wright*, *Miss Ravenel* makes conflicting claims about its treatment of the real world. *Miss Ravenel* does not strive as strongly as *Edmund Wright* does to assert itself as non-fiction history. In terms of its peritextual material, Harper & Brothers did not attempt to identify the book as non-fiction, as did the advertisements for *Edmund Wright*. For example, Harper & Brothers lists *Miss Ravenel* in its "List of New Novels" in a second-page advertising insert in its publication of Queen Victoria's *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*. Yet early in De Forest's novel the narrator states, "I flatter myself that I am publishing the very truth of nature" (54). The self-deprecation about the success of this objective is only false modesty—the narrator wants to be flattered

about its treatment of the “truth of nature” because it presents itself as such. The narrator claims that the book is a biography of Lillie (218-19), rather than an invented narrative about an invented character. The novel makes another claim for its proximity to the real world when the plot moves towards the details of Carter’s Southern money speculation. The narrator says that the details of the scandal are difficult to trace, yet the narrator “[feels] bound to state that the entire series of alleged events may be a fiction of the excited popular imagination, founded on facts which might be explained in accordance with an assumption of Carter’s innocence, and official honor” (417). Fear of maligning the “official honor” of a fictional character suggests the novel complies with a social contract that conforms to the characteristics of what Philippe Lejeune calls the referential pact (see Chapter Two). The narrator feels obliged, as though bound by a promise, to admit that evidence for Carter’s guilt remains slight, so much so that it might very well be “a fiction.” The narrator, in other words, positions the narrative outside of the genre of fiction, thus denying the book’s own use of genre as a means of signification. This circumstance resembles another moment in the novel that invokes fiction as something different from the real world. Dr. Ravenel argues that Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* “is a pure fiction” compared to real African-Americans, upon whom “the degrading influences of bondage must always have some taint of uncommon grossness and lowness” (269).

To make sense of a text with a fictional character who castigates a real writer for creating a fictional character who is “pure fiction” necessitates reading *Miss*

*Ravenel* so that it does not seem self-contradictory or random (that is, so that the text can be naturalized or readable). William Empson argues for a literary generic element that he calls a “pseudo-parody,” a type of irony in which one plot element of a text parodies the genre or generic element of another, while another plot element of the same text participates in that genre or generic element without parody (Empson 57). The pseudo-parody has a specific rhetorical function: it reveals “what the opponent might say” (56) and thereby can “disarm criticism” because the text seems aware of counterarguments (57). With regard to its use of fictionality, *Miss Ravenel* behaves as a pseudo-parody of fiction: it gives negative criticisms of its own literary genre (fiction) to distance itself from that genre and thus draw itself closer to the real world (non-fiction).

At the same time, the narrator often comments on writerly decision-making and admits that the novel shapes its narrative according to its understanding of audience expectations. The narrator argues that readers “demand” women in stories to be attractive, even though in real life “most of us fall in love . . . with rather plain women” (De Forest 13).<sup>54</sup> The narrator states that the quality of Lillie’s beauty is a matter of “different opinions” (as though Lillie is a real person and not a character in a novel). Any dispute, as the narrator acknowledges, could be “settle[d]” by its own “tyrannical affirmation” (13)—that is, by the narrator’s assertion that she is beautiful. The narrator does not make any such “tyrannical” statements. Nothing in the novel’s description of Lillie, however, or in other characters’ reactions to her, suggests that Lizzie is unattractive.<sup>55</sup> This circumstance raises the question of why the narrator would insist on withholding

its judgment. Such reticence suggests the novel's interest in maintaining a close relationship to "our own lives" (13), but such a stance belies the novel's conventional treatment of Lillie as the female centre of a heterosexual love triangle.

The narrator also claims to appeal to reader expectations. After describing Lizzie and Carter's marriage in a chapter titled "Domestic Happiness, in Spite of Adverse Circumstances," the narrator asserts that since domestic happiness is difficult to write about and is in fact "tiresome to the reader," the plot will shift to a less agreeable aspect of the newlyweds' daily lives, namely, Carter's financial problems and adultery (371). The novel claims that it changes the subject to accommodate reader's tastes, as though the entire plot hinges on the audience's assumed preferences; yet the novel has never presented Carter as a moral vanguard, and therefore the claim that the novel offers "domestic happiness" is disingenuous. Later, the narrator reveals that Whitewood's proposal to Lillie has failed before Colburne himself learns this information. The narrator gives this information, it claims, so "that the reader may be spared the trouble of turning over a few pages here" (508); the narrator professes, therefore, to anticipate a reader's habit of assuaging uncomfortable suspense by looking ahead in the book! The narrator wants to intervene in a reader's habits for the reader's sake and will change the narrative, even in slight ways, to do so.

Such contradictions may in part be a formula derived from *Vanity Fair's* influence on *Miss Ravenel*. But these contradictions may also have a moral, if not philosophical, cause. What the novel treats as "real" depends on the social issues

with which its realism sympathizes. Most striking is the novel's attitudes towards Southern secessionists. In *Miss Ravenel*, Confederates are not "real" in the way Unionists are. By comparison, De Forest's non-fiction achieves more objectivity about the Southern people than *Miss Ravenel* does. In *A Volunteer's Adventures*, De Forest reports on a pro-secession village cut off from supplies by the Northern army: as "these poor people were on the verge of starvation . . . . They looked famished and every way miserable . . . . I can't imagine what the people ate next day, unless it might be each other. If the war does not end soon, the South will starve to death" (*Volunteer* 33-34). In *Miss Ravenel*, the Ravenels come upon a similar village, but the people are described less sympathetically: "all, white as well as black, ragged, dirty, lounging, listless hopeless; none of them hostile, at least not in manner; a discouraged, subdued [sic], stricken population" (210). In the novel, these Southerners constitute a permanent class of social outcasts, rather than being bystanders in the contingent, war-induced economic isolation that the non-fiction account describes.

Furthermore, *Miss Ravenel's* detailed descriptions of war injuries do not include descriptions of victims in the Confederate army. In his non-fiction, De Forest describes injured Southerners, such as a dead Confederate commander, shot in the head, "his handsome face grey with death, and one eye lying on his cheek" ("First Time" 69). De Forest also notes the bodies of two soldiers, one Unionist and one Confederate, lying together: "After the battle was over we found corpses here with their skulls crushed by the blows of musket-buts, and with their life-blood clotted around the triangular wounds made by bayonets," their faces

and bodies so damaged it was difficult to identify which side the soldiers had fought for (“Sheridan’s Victory” 355). In De Forest’s novel only Union soldiers are casualties worthy of detailed description. The novel finds occasion to pay attention to Southern casualties only during an exchange among Colburne’s Irish soldiers at the “All Fool’s evening,” who joke about how the dead Confederate soldier they saw might have come to have his eye dislodged (366-67).

Representational realism, if expressed as a willingness to reveal the details of life as they exist in the real world, is reserved for Unionists. Southerners are represented as simplified figures of evil out of a romance or as dim-witted bumpkins in a humour serial. The association of Southerners with villains of dark romance or subversion, or with figures in humour writing, bars them from *vraisemblance* and its support for objectivity devoid of ideology. The novel’s references to evolution function to exclude Southerners as suitable subjects for realist representation. Changeability is an aspect of the real, not the ideal. The Southern people, in resisting change, fail to be real. Southerners hence cannot be represented through realism but only through other modes of representation.

Thomas Fick argues that realism and romance are *Miss Ravenel*’s “subjects”: the novel “does away with Southern claims to cultural superiority by demolishing the historical romance and its hero the cavalier gentleman, and realism is the means to this end, rather than the end in itself” (Fick 474). Fick’s argument explains the co-existence of the tactics of realism and romance in *Miss Ravenel*, but I further submit that De Forest applies motifs normally associated with romance to his heroes as well as to his villains. De Forest’s ideas of

*vraisemblance* do not negate the power of adventure and tradition that romance invokes. A striking metafictional moment in the novel illustrates a co-occurrence of romance and realism. At the end of Chapter 24, after describing the Fort Winthrop battle, “the author of this present history” reverts to the present moment, where he is standing outside and looking across a bay. The narrator hears noise from a quarry across the bay, sounds that remind him of the explosions of weapons during a battle. He offers tribute to the sounds of war he expects never to hear again: “No more groans of wounded, nor shouts of victors over positions carried and banners captured, nor reports of triumphs which saved a nation from disappearing off the face of the earth” (345-46). He contrasts those memories with the shallow political and commercial content of the daily newspapers and of the empty rituals of the “kid-glove call” and church attendance of his civilian life (346).

The narrator admits that this disjuncture leads to “sadness,” but not because of the peace that is disrupted: rather, the sadness comes because the war has ended. This disjuncture, the narrator acknowledges, is evidence of how “strange is the human heart” (346). This episode bridges the farcical-heroic Fort Winthrop episode with the next chapter, “Domestic Happiness, In Spite of Adverse Circumstances.” That chapter features Carter’s drunkenness and presumed adultery with two women at his camp, Lillie’s pregnancy in the face of her naïveté about her husband’s vices, and Carter’s growing debt. This passage at the end of Chapter 24 signals a preference for the high moral and political stakes of battle over the trivial routines and failed ideals of civilian life.

If romance and realism can be roughly dichotomized, romance is about what was or what should be; realism is about what is. *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* marries depictions of the moral and psychological particularities of Americans and America during a nation-defining catastrophe and at the beginning of nation-constructing turmoil. The turmoil seems to have greater appeal than the denouement, as though the denouement, and thus the social ideals that denouement aims to support, has been disappointing. Such disappointment was not limited to the soldier J.W. De Forest. The failure of war-time idealism is also a subject of three early short stories by the civilian Henry James.



## Notes

1. In 1850, *The Living Age* reprinted an article from the *Edinburgh Review* that expresses scepticism about claims for Goethe's "objectivity" and "realism" ("Göthe's [sic] Festival" 373). In 1855, a reviewer for *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* complains of "the inflammatory realism" of contemporary French theatre ("Drama in France" 10). For other early uses of "realism" in the United States, see Falk 401n54.
2. For example, T.S. Perry wrote that "Just as the scientific spirit digs the ground from beneath superstition, so does its fellow-worker, realism, tend to prick the bubble of abstract types. Realism is the tool of the democratic spirit, the modern spirit by means of which the truth is elicited, and Mr. Howells' realism is untiring" ("William Dean Howells" 683). A typical counterpoint to Perry's type of argument was the argument of William Roscoe Thayer: "The lamp of Art differs from the lamp of Science; confound not their uses. Think not by machine or tool which is material, to discover the secret of the heart of man, who is spiritual. The Real includes the Ideal; but the Real without the Ideal is as the body without life" (166). Thayer, as did others, conceived of the literary debate in terms of the theological debate over realism (associated with the body and the secular world) and idealism (associated with the soul and God's sacred plan) (Pizer 7).
3. Croushore thinks that, in the last statement, Howells may be referring to Carter's and Mrs. Larue's relationship in *Miss Ravenel* (366n47).

4. Representative across this span of time are the criticisms of Clarence Gordon, Arlin Turner (vi), Robert Spiller's *Literary History of the United States* (2:879-81), Robert William Antoni (61), and Todd Thompson.

5. Two of the earliest reviews of *Miss Ravenel* comment on the absence of qualities associated with realism, though neither review uses the term "realism" explicitly. In his anonymous review of *Miss Ravenel* in *The Nation*, the young Henry James criticizes negatively the book's authorial interventions and weak characterizations, though he makes an exception on that score for Colonel Carter, who seems "daguerrotyped from nature" ("Miss Ravenel's" 49). Otherwise, the characters generally are "the old familiar figures" (50) whose creator "fails to give his personages so much life and separate individuality as to make us accept them for real . . ." (49). James does, however, write favourably of the novel's satire of New England society and of military corruption, finally concluding that "it is a poor novel with a deal of good in it" (51-53). In his review, T.S. Perry says De Forest is not able to produce a great American novel because "the real story lies beneath the hats and bonnets of those concerned, not in the distant cataracts that wet them, nor the bullets that scar them"; for De Forest, although "[w]hat he can see he can write down for our reading, . . . his eye is stronger than his imagination" ("American Novels" 81).

6. This edited version was published in 1939 by Harper.

7. Howells's best known statement of this latter idea is his call for an emphasis on "the smiling aspects" of American life in September 1886's "Editor's Study" (641) and his discussion of sexuality in June 1889's column.

8. Both *Helen's Babies* (1881) by John Habberton and *That Husband of Mine* (1877) by Mary Andrews Denison are comic novels in domestic settings.

9. Oviatt 40-41. The anonymous books De Forest mentions are *Justine's Lovers* (1878) and *Irene the Missionary* (1879); see Light 153-60.

10. Zola's and Tolstoy's influences on nineteenth-century American literary realism are well known, but Howells also counted Austen among the "truthful writers" in "Palacio Valdés, Realism, and Effectism" (98). V.L. Parrington views Austen's influence on Howells's realism as central to developing a style different from that of French and Russian naturalism (3: 150).

11. In his 1895 *My Literary Passions* (108-113), Howells admits that though he loved Chaucer, Chaucer's work reflects "the grossness of the poet's time" and at times offends Howells's sensibilities: "I am not going to pretend that there are not things in Chaucer which one would be the better for not reading" (110). In 1902, Howells would go on to list Chaucer as one of the "profane masterpieces" that young women should be permitted to read ("What Should Girls Read?"). *The Canterbury Tales*'s freedom in discussing social and moral taboos might well qualify Chaucer as a realist, as the nineteenth century came to define the term, as would the work's broad social representation, but Howells does not anywhere name *The Canterbury Tales* as realist in the way that De Forest does in the *New York Times* interview. George Kittredge in his *Chaucer and His Poetry* (1915) was one of the first critics to consider Chaucer a realist (Shilkett 3-4).

12. The book was published under these terms in May 1867 (Light 87).

13. According to *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, Pierre Ronsard was already using the term in the sixteenth century with respect to notions of representation in art.

14. In 1864 Henry James uses “vraisemblance” to mean verisimilitude in his account of a stage performance whereby an off-stage prompter interrupted the performance, “at the cost of all dramatic *vraisemblance*,” to castigate two audience members who were laughing inappropriately during the show (Rev. of *Essays on Fiction* 587). (Leon Edel identifies this anonymous review as James’s [*Life*, 1:206, 208].) This American usage of *vraisemblance* mirrors that used in *The Living Age*’s reprint of George Stott’s 1869 English *Contemporary Review* article “Charles Dickens,” which compares “the imaginative grasp of the idealist” versus “the sensitiveness to *vraisemblance* of the realist” (709).

15. Robin Hamlyn and Anne Lyles, for example, call John Constable’s Willy Lott’s House a “study from nature,” a painting of a real house painted outdoors, rather than a theoretical house imagined and painted in the studio (3).

16. For “study” see especially *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definitions 10.a. and 10.b.

17. See Note 5.

18. De Forest’s father-in-law worked in scientific fields, and the novelist’s own interest in science grew in later years. In his insistence that war be represented accurately, De Forest maintains that war yet has a “giant mechanism and sublime logic” despite the chaos that may surround it (“Our Military Past” 573). He published a theory of human geographic origin, “The Cradle of the

Human Race,” in 1878 (Rubin 130-132). Some years later, he commented during Oviatt’s New York Times interview that his interest in fiction had been replaced by an interest in ethnology (Oviatt 42): he wrote to Howells in 5 May 1890 that he spent all his time reading “ethnology & other kindred dry matter” (Croushore 381). His later forays into ethnology continued an interest in human culture that De Forest revealed in his first book-length publication, *History of the Indians of Connecticut from the Earliest Known Period to 1850*.

19. Both Lever’s and Lawrence’s books feature military heroes whose exploits are represented using comic and romantic traditions. Lever was an Irish physician who never served in the military (Meredith and Dematteis). Lawrence was an English lawyer and novelist who, after the outbreak of the American Civil War, volunteered for the Confederate Army; he was captured by the Union before reaching Confederate lines and subsequently released through the intervention of the British government on the condition he left the country (Cousin 473; Kunitz and Haycraft 371). Lawrence relates his Civil War adventures in *Border and Bastille*.

20. De Forest’s travel writing of this period, *Oriental Acquaintance* and *European Acquaintance*, do not mention realism (or much about art and literature at all).

21. For Garland’s ideas on realism, see “Productive Conditions of American Literature” and the introduction to *Crumbling Idols*.

22. The book was published in 1930 as *La Doulou*. Daudet may not have ever planned to publish these notes as a book, although he talked openly about it as an ongoing project and had a title for it (*La Doulou*) (Barnes x-xii).

23. De Forest gathered various materials into a manuscript, "Military Life," and in about 1890 named one volume *A Volunteer's Adventures* (Croushore, "Editor's Preface" xii). A second volume, "The Bureau Major," was published as *A Union Officer*. For a description of these manuscripts, see Robillard.

24. On taboos regarding the depiction of violence, see Chapter Four.

25. *Miss Ravenel* 140 and 347. For information on prostitution during the Civil War, see Clinton's *Public Women and the Confederacy*.

26. "His arm was swollen to twice its natural size from the knuckles to the elbow. Nature had set to work with her tormenting remedies of inflammation and suppuration to extract the sharp slivers of bone which still hid in the wound notwithstanding the searching finger and probe of the Surgeon. During the night previous . . . neither whiskey nor opium could enable him to sleep, and he could only escape from his painful self-consciousness by drenching himself with chloroform" (*Miss Ravenel* 296-97). Edmund Wright has a much easier time with his wound: "The bullet had shattered a bone, slightly, and was lodged in the fleshy part of the forearm, making it quite easy to dress the wound; and I was soon comfortable" (*Narrative* 138). The finger that was shot off in a previous incident (135) does not bother Edmund enough to be worth mentioning again.

27. One conceptual development from evolutionary theory was that humans were viewed as part of nature rather than as outside of it. This development might

explain the narrator's suggestion in *Miss Ravenel* that women are instinctual rather than rational and especially fall under nature's influence when they give birth (*Miss Ravenel* 401). But as Rosalind Rosenberg points out, the association between biology and femaleness was common before Darwin's research was publicized (141).

28. Light argues that "[u]sing Darwinian doctrines of evolution as his justification, De Forest asserts that the Union victory was inevitable, for the Civil War was a Holy War, and its results were foreordained by Heaven and justified by Heaven's evolutionary laws" (Light 88). Similarly, Aaron says De Forest has "an environmentalist or Darwinian interpretation" of the black slaves as "a race warped by its long servitude yet capable of slow improvement if not betrayed by white misleaders or sentimental visionaries" (169).

29. Marx was a foreign correspondent for the *Tribune* from 1851 to 1862. His complaints about the paper's copyediting led to his articles being published anonymously after 1855 (Alsen 226). The *Daily Tribune*'s editorials by Charles A. Dana and Sidney H. Gray were influenced by Marxism, since these men were sympathetic to Marxist ideas. Eventually even Horace Greeley himself adopted these views (Alsen 226-28). Marx himself characterized the Civil War as a class struggle in articles he wrote for the Vienna newspaper *Die Presse* (Alsen 224).

30. See pages 14-15, 74-75, 228, and 496.

31. "Tableau" was often a shortened form of "tableau vivant," or living picture, in which people used costumes, props, and sets to create scenes, such as from classical or historical episodes or famous paintings, during which they

remained still, and thus combined drama and painting (see Chapman and Elbert on this art form in the American context). The characters in De Forest's *Seacliff*, for example, spend an evening creating these scenes for their entertainment (31-35).

32. In the *Volunteer* version of "Port Hudson" De Forest admits that he nearly fainted, but he did not *actually* faint (110).

33. De Forest might also be transposing the night-time manoeuvres he writes about in "Port Hudson" to the night-time defence of Fort Winthrop, with the heroes being in the defensive position and defeating the attacking Confederate Army.

34. Of the 515 text pages, 170 pages (thirty-three percent of the novel) deal at all with military life (112-142, 191-98, 210-213, 218-19, 235-42, 275-303, 319-46, 346-54, 360-71, 385-92, 414-427, 446-58), with only seventy-four pages (fourteen percent) devoted to battle activity (including marches towards and movements from) (275-303, 319-46, 446-58). Actual skirmishes take place on twenty-nine pages (five percent) (281-88, 333-46, 452-58).

35. Howells distinguishes "novel" and "romance" in his 1865 review of Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*: the novel is "a portraiture of individuals and affairs" and a romance is "a picture of events and human characteristics in their subtler and more ideal relations" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 1:55). Subsequently, Howells uses the word "novel" and "romance" as though they are two different genres of fiction as in his review of books by E.W. Howe and E.W. Bellamy in which he calls Howe's book a novel and Bellamy's book a romance: "Not the



least interesting thing about them was the witness they bore of the prevalence of realism in the artistic atmosphere to such degree that two very differently gifted writers, having really something to say in the way of fiction, could not help giving it the realistic character. This was true no less of the romance than of the novel; and I fancied that neither the romancer nor the novelist had theorized much, if at all, in regard to the matter” (“Two Notable Novels” 633). The distinction between novel and romance was not completely clarified (in English literature, that is) even in the nineteenth century; see Fuchs 9-10 and 105-17.

36. See for example Fuchs.

37. [Seacliff] is by the side of the sea, so that pirates could land at it and mysterious boats put out from it laden with dead or living victims. Then what grand nights we have for tragedies! Such nights as this, for instance, with the wind and the sea conspiring to drown every cry for help! roaring, foaming nights, when the waves rush on the rocks like murderers! There is one thing more. The house is conspicuous, so that the country people could point it out from a distance, and strangers could get a view of it without taking the trouble to leave the cars. (206)

38. What De Forest means by “melodrama” is another question. Here he seems to connect the term with a type of drama (as distinct, for example, from the connotation of “overwrought”). De Forest titles Chapter Twenty-Six of *The Wetherel Affair* as “Romance in the Face of Reality” (739), the chapter in which Nestoria meets Imogen Jones, reader of cheap serials, who “like an actress in a fourth-rate theatre” speaks in a “melodramatic” way (739). This admittedly small

piece of information suggests that De Forest uses melodrama in the conventional sense of a type of popular, emotion-ridden drama.

39. De Forest does not name any specific author, but the novels of John Esten Cooke might typify the type of novel he describes.

40. De Forest published other stories of the supernatural in 1869: "The Duchesne Estate," "The Drummer Ghost," "A Night at Sea," "The Taillefer Bell-Rings," "The City of Brass," and "Lieutenant Barker's Ghost Story" (Hagemann 193n30).

41. De Forest's first novel, *Witching Times* (1856-57), is "a mixture of historical, sentimental, and realistic modes," *Overland* (1871) is "pure melodrama," *Kate Beaumont* (1872) has "realism, . . . much reduced" compared to *Miss Ravenel*, *Playing the Mischief* (1875) is "political satire that foresakes realism for the exaggeration of caricature and lampoon," and *Honest John Vane* (1875) is naturalism (Levy, "Naturalism" 139).

42. Reynolds notes how jokes about gouged eyes were popular in Crockett almanac-style humor of the frontier (450-51). The casual eye-gouging joke here may be a descendent of this kind of humour.

43. See 14-15, 228, and 497.

44. *Miss Ravenel* sold poorly: 1608 copies of the first edition still remained in 1884 (Light 88). In a letter of 2 September 1887, Howells writes consolingly to De Forest, "I do believe the public has been growing towards your kind of work. The novelist is less woman-rid than he once was, and your masculine tone would be better liked; certainly there is a better chance now for your realism. Good

Lord! When one thinks of [Robert Louis] Stevenson and [H. Rider] Haggard selling their tens of thousands and you lacking a publisher, it is hard to be patient” (Croushore, “John William De Forest” 377-378). Even at the turn of the century, Howells continued to hold the view that such “realism,” despite its literary value, turned away readership. De Forest, Howells claimed, was “a man’s novelist” against whom the market eventually imposed “a delicate realism, more responsive to the claims and appeals of the female oversoul” at the expense of “his inexorable veracity” (*Heroines* 2:162). David Shi reports that early twentieth century sociologists “assumed that a ‘manly’ disposition entailed the dispassionate analysis of social facts. By contrast, a ‘feminine’ perspective avoided or idealized harsh truths” (Shi 72). Shi cites Frances Amasa Walker and A.G. Keller as two proponents of this view. (See also Robert Bannister’s *Sociology and Scientism* and William Sumner’s *Earth-Hunger* [73] and “Sociology as a College Subject” [408-10]). Other writers—among them Henry James and his friend Constance Fenimore Woolson—complained about the female market of the late nineteenth century and the perceived restrictions that this market placed on their writing (Shi 110-111).

Twentieth-century critics continued to credit De Forest’s marginalization to the unpopularity of realism among female readers. In his survey of Civil War fiction, for example, Robert Lively writes in mid-century that De Forest was unread “because his realistic comments on the weapons and tactics of women proved too strong a dose for his squeamish contemporaries” (*Fiction Fights* 78). Lively here is invoking in part the characterization of Mrs. Larue, who seduces

Lillie's husband and whose political loyalties shift to accommodate her financial and social interests (see also Light 88). The novel also contains comments in passing that castigate minor female characters and women in general for moral and ethical weaknesses, such as the Southern women who like "female hyenas" celebrate the deaths of Union soldiers at the Port Hudson field hospital (*Miss Ravenel* 296) and the general class of scolding women (*Miss Ravenel* 259). Also in the mid-twentieth century, Alexander Cowie (513) and Edward Wagenknecht (106) cite Lillie Ravenel's attraction to the morally loose Colonel Carter as repellent to female readers who were unable to feel sympathy for the novel's female protagonist. In the later twentieth-century, Spiller's *Literary History of the United States* comments that "De Forest was a pioneer realist too honest for his own good in an age that expected conventional falsifications in works of imagination. In particular his habit of treating his women characters as responsible human beings who must make their own decisions and abide by the consequences was not popular" (Spiller et al., eds. 2:571).

45. See for example pages 72-73 and 511-12.

46. Both Fahs and Silber use the word "romance" in the sense of love plot, rather than in the sense of adventure-filled stories of heroic figures (a definition that this dissertation favours), although their examples do include texts that fit that latter definition as well. See Fuchs 124-30. For more on war romance, see Chapter Four.

47. *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* uses the reverse formula of the Southern man marrying the Northern woman, which Silber says is more characteristic of

the later period of the romance of reunion's presence in the marketplace. In this period, men of the North and South manifested masculine characteristics to cement reconciliation and to combat labour and women's movements (Silber 186-87). See also Chapter Five.

48. Buinicki notes how little Lillie sympathizes with Mrs. Langdon, whose son died in the war (51). For this reason, Buinicki calls Mrs. Larue's "conversion" and eventual wealth at the hands of a Reconstruction department "a cynical echo of her young relative's" (Buinicki 55). See also Chapter Five.

49. De Forest's "Chivalrous and Semi-Chivalrous Southrons" asserts that the Southern people have fewer modern virtues than Northerners, but Southerners have more "primitive . . . natural virtues," the ability to fight being one of these.

50. *The Quaker City*, for example, describes the murder of Widow Smolby by the villain Devil-Bug and his henchman, who smash her head against an andiron: "He raised her body in the air again to repeat the blow, but the effort was needless. The brains of the old woman lay scattered over the hearth, and the body which Devil-Bug raised in the air, was a headless trunk, with the bleeding fragments of a face and skull, clinging to the quivering neck" (141).

51. In a 16 December 1855 letter to his sister-in-law, De Forest contested his brother George's suspicion that he had become pro-slavery, affirming he was anti-slavery.

52. The first and second categories of Culler's *vraisemblance* can seem indistinguishable, since representations in texts may be stereotypes that readers would only tolerate in texts (second category) but reject as absolutes in the real

world itself (the first category), De Forest does not suggest he is conforming to textual stereotypes.

53. Alfred Guernsey of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* mentions Thackeray as a predecessor in his review of *Miss Ravenel*. Likewise, Cowie says Thackeray is “the writer with whom [De Forest] seems to have the most in common” (518), while George Haight, in his introduction to the 1887 revision of the novel, claims that in *Miss Ravenel* “[De Forest’s] admiration of Thackeray is apparent from the table of content to the last chapter” (106). See also the previously cited Solomon 82-83.

54. Through this statement, the narrator reveals its assumption that the reader is a heterosexual male.

55. The novel introduces Lizzie as “very fair, with lively blue eyes and exceedingly handsome hair, very luxuriant, very wavy and of a flossy blonde color lighted up by flashes of amber. She was tall and rather slender, with a fine form and an uncommon grace of manner and movement” (12). Despite her crude anti-Unionist views, Colburne becomes infatuated with “the lovely advocate of secession” the day he meets her (18). Carter also “liked the appearance of the young person” he had just met (30); even though he adds later that she is “not beautiful, exactly, but very charming” (43), her appearance is non-repulsive enough to distract Carter’s soldiers at Thibodeaux from their drills when she rides past on her horse (353).

## Chapter Four

### War Romance and Henry James's Civil War Short Fiction

When in his twenties, Henry James wrote three short stories with Civil War settings: “The Story of a Year” (1865), “Poor Richard” (1867), and “A Most Extraordinary Case” (1868)—all published at the end of or shortly after the war.<sup>1</sup> Henry James's war-themed writings do not contain the physical adventures of war as do *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession* and *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*. There are no Jamesian battle sequences; murderous fraternal orders do not infiltrate Northern cities to foment treason. Instead, James's three war stories return Civil War soldiers to the home front as participants in marriage plots. “The Story of a Year,” which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* a month before General Robert E. Lee's surrender, concerns Lizzie Crowe and John Ford, who secretly become engaged before John leaves to fight for the Union army.<sup>2</sup> In John's absence Lizzie falls out of love, ostensibly because, in her foster mother's words, she is “shallow” (28), and she becomes engaged to businessman Robert Bruce. John comes home mortally wounded; upon his death, she breaks her engagement with Bruce. “Poor Richard,” published in *The Atlantic Monthly* from June to August 1867, is about Richard Clare's courtship of childhood friend Gertrude Whittaker, who is by virtue of an inheritance “a power in the land” (“Poor Richard” 133). Gertrude does not take his suit seriously: he has lived a spendthrift, alcohol-driven life. Gertrude soon is courted by two Civil War soldiers, one of whom, Major James Luttrell, wants to marry Gertrude for her fortune. Richard tells Gertrude the lie that her favourite, Colonel Edmund Severn,

has returned to the front without saying goodbye; Severn is aware of the lie but does not contradict it. Gertrude becomes engaged, in despair, to Major Luttrell. After recovering from a serious illness, Richard reveals to Gertrude his lie about Colonel Severn, who has since been killed in battle. Gertrude breaks her engagement with Luttrell and leaves for Europe, while Richard enlists. In “A Most Extraordinary Case,” published in *The Atlantic Monthly* April 1868, the protagonist is Colonel Ferdinand Mason, an ailing Civil War veteran. His aunt by marriage, Mrs. Augustus Mason, learns the orphaned Ferdinand is recuperating alone in a hotel, and she invites him to recover at her home. Ferdinand falls in love with Mrs. Mason’s ward, Caroline Hofmann, but she becomes engaged to Ferdinand’s doctor, Dr. Horace Knight, also a Civil War veteran. Ferdinand’s illness, never satisfactorily diagnosed, worsens, and he dies.

As these plot summaries suggest, James’s stories resemble popular domestic and sentimental stories of the period, specifically what Alice Fahs calls “war romance”: stories of women in love with soldiers in spite of or because of the war’s intervention.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, James’s stories resist the war romance subgenre in many ways. Though the stories do not form a unit in any formal sense, all of them work against the conventions of domestic fiction and sentimental fiction, much more so than does *Miss Ravenel’s Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*, which also participates in the domestic and sentimental genres. Like De Forest and *Edmund Wright’s* author, James treats violence as an inevitability of war; unlike *Miss Ravenel* and *Edmund Wright*, the short stories



critique the ideal of the harmonious relationship between soldier and community that Americans held as a sustaining truth during the chaos of war.

### **James and the War-Time Community**

Unlike De Forest, James did not fight in the Civil War. James's absence from the battlefield proved to be a source of anxiety for both James and some of his critics. James's own non-participation in the war resulted from what James in his autobiography *Notes of a Son and Brother* called an "obscure hurt" incurred while helping put out a fire in Newport, Rhode Island, shortly after the war began (298). Biographers have followed Leon Edel in connecting the "obscure hurt" with a back injury.<sup>4</sup> James's own circumspection about the exact nature of the "obscure hurt" subsequently led some critics to interpret the injury psychologically, if not psychosomatically.<sup>5</sup> Records of James's reactions to the war during and immediately after the conflict are limited.<sup>6</sup> One such record is a letter to T.S. Perry of 28 October 1864. Commenting on the funeral of Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., killed in action, James exclaims, "I hope it may be some comfort to his poor wife. By Jove, what an awful thing this war is! I mean for wives, &c." (*Letters*, ed. Edel 1:56). James redirects his assessment of war as being "awful" away from himself and towards women (and whoever "&c." might be), thus intimating that war is not "awful" for everyone.

His fiction, however, contains some details that reflect the lives of the soldiers he knew. John Ford in "The Story of a Year" is injured at the 1863 Rappahannock battle in Virginia, the same battle in which James's cousin Gus

Barker died (Edel, *Life* 1:220); Barker was killed by guerrillas, which is how Severn dies in “Poor Richard” (LeClair 397). Edel argues that the circumstances for “Poor Richard” mirror a rivalry between James and the war veterans Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and John Gray for James’s cousin Minnie Temple (*Life* 1:232-36). In “A Most Extraordinary Case,” Dr. Knight’s medical rival, Dr. Gregory, lost money in the South during the war (232), just as James’s brothers Garth Wilkinson (Wilkie or Wilky) and Robertson (Bob) were in the process of doing in their Reconstruction Florida cotton plantation (Kaplan 85-87).

Indeed, criticism often reads James’s three Civil War stories as reflections of “the author’s state of mind during the War years when, in uneasy isolation, he observed his peers en route to battle or returning from it, all gallantly accoutered and bursting with a self-confidence and energy notably missing in himself” (Aaron 113). For “A Story of a Year,” Saul Rosenzweig associates the injured Ford with the injured James (95-99), while Peter Buitenhuis suggests Lizzie’s dream about the wounded Ford manifests the guilt over her renunciation of responsibility that James may have felt (19). Edel argues that Richard in “Poor Richard” expresses the same insecurity as James felt in 1865 about his ability to compete for Minny Temple against veterans Holmes and Gray (*Life* 1:236-38). Christina E. Albers summarizes various critiques that have connected James’ “obscure hurt” with Ferdinand’s “obscure” illness in “A Most Extraordinary Case” (592-93).

The biographical detail of the “obscure hurt” is relevant to this study of genre because through his injury James explicitly engages with a theme in Civil

War literature that the soldier suffers and triumphs for the sake of his community and his country. In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, James states that his injury, though an “infinitely small affair in comparison” to the “great public convulsion” of the war, nonetheless was for him “a huge comprehensive ache, and there were hours at which one could scarce have told whether it came most from one’s own poor organism, still so young and so meant for better things, but which had suffered particular wrong, or from the enclosing social body, a body rent with a thousand wounds and that thus treated one to the honour of a sort of tragic fellowship” (296-97). The terms “huge comprehensive ache,” the wounded “social body,” and the “tragic fellowship” make his injury part of, not separate from, war’s tragedy. After recounting his visit in August 1862 to a soldiers’ rest camp in Portsmouth Grove, Rhode Island (Hoffmann and Hoffmann 540), James expands on this theme, saying that “measuring wounds against wounds, or the compromised, the particular taxed condition, at the least, against all the rest of the debt then so generally and enormously due, one was no less exaltedly than wastefully engaged in the common fact of endurance” (*Notes of a Son* 317-18). Such comparisons of his lingering back injury and the Union soldiers’ military injuries, James admits, “threatened ridicule if they are overstated” (318). Indeed, a major cost of his nonparticipation was that his war-minded community could question his manliness. In his description of the Newport fire, James notes that when “the willing youths” in the community “were mostly starting to their feet” to work the pumps, for James to “have trumped up a lameness at such a juncture could be made to pass in no light for graceful” (*Notes of a Son* 297). James

therefore felt the pressure to leap to action himself. The importance of action, James argues, characterized the early years of the war: “the hurrying troops, the transfigured scene, formed a cover for every sort of intensity, made tension itself in fact contagious—so that almost any tension would do, would serve for one’s share” (*Notes of a Son* 298-99). James’s injury thus was not a coincidence, or bad luck, but rather the product of a general enthusiasm for physical action after war’s declaration, an enthusiasm that affected James. As a noncombatant, James sensed a gap between his experiences and the experiences of soldiers, yet he still found a point of connection with soldiers, since the “contagion” of war permitted “any tension” to “serve for one’s share,” James’s share being his back injury.

The idea that the whole community participated in a war ethic valorizing energy and suffering, even among those who did not fight, as James suggested in his autobiography, was one that other Americans at this time expressed. This war, as in all wars fought by civilians on behalf of their sense of nationalism, afforded ordinary men the opportunity to participate in activities once associated with the aristocracy or with the professional soldier class (Braudy 265-66). At stake were not simply the ideological and political ramifications of the Civil War, but also the social and personal goals that war could help further. For Americans of both North and South, the war gave an opportunity to both young Americans and the young American nation to improve themselves via the masculine qualities of strength and stoicism. According to Gerald Linderman, soldiers for both the North and the South considered “manliness” to be a near-synonym for courage (7-8), and both soldiers and civilians assumed the war would provide men an

opportunity to measure their courage by proving they could be unflinching under fire or attack (20-21). War also would provide a rite of passage from childhood to manhood, especially for those many Civil War soldiers who were in their teens.<sup>7</sup> In his wounded teenaged son Wilkie, Henry James, Sr., noted “so much manhood so suddenly achieved.”<sup>8</sup> When Bob considered quitting the army, his father chastized Bob’s “passing effeminacy” and advised his son “to be a man, and force yourself to do your whole duty”.<sup>9</sup> One way to prove one’s manliness was with a wound. The desire of Stephen Crane’s novelistic hero Henry Fleming for “the red badge of courage” reflected the beliefs of civil war soldiers that wounds were a visible sign of manliness that has been put to the test (Linderman 30-32).

Americans further connected this striving for personal development to a striving for national development. As David Shi notes, “Prominent New Englanders predicted that the war would do more than end slavery and nullify secession; they saw in the struggle a catalyst for societal regeneration and masculine revival” (47).<sup>10</sup> In 1862, for example, John Weiss wrote that the war could “restore attributes and prerogatives of manhood,” for just as men privately fought against their “habits and deficiencies” so as to return to “the pure manlike elements of his nature,” a nation could “go to war” against its deficiencies and restore its “unity,” which would give “the largest freedom” for all and which would destroy “poverty and misery” (680). Henry James, Sr., was another who “interpreted the onset of fighting as a natural transition in the life of the nation” (Shi 49); according to him, war would move America “from youth to manhood, from appearance to reality, from passing shadows to deathless substance” (“Social

Significance” 117). The war would allow morality and revolutionary ideals to surge again after years of corruption caused by the North’s growing commercialism and industrialization (Paludan 22-25). As Horace Greeley wrote in one of his editorials, “yesterday we were esteemed a sordid, grasping, money-loving people, too greedy to gain to cherish generous and lofty aspirations. Today vindicates us from that reproach, and demonstrates that beneath the scum and slag of forty years of peace, and in spite of the insidious approaches of corruption the fires of patriotic devotion are still burning” (“Uprising” 4).

In this project to protect and revive the ideals associated with the nation, Civil War soldiers were acting on behalf of the community, not simply themselves. Their individual experiences constituted an experience for the towns and cities out of which they came. This close relationship between military and civilian life was in keeping with a trend in the nineteenth century in the Western world towards “normalizing” the soldier by emphasizing his connections with everyday society, especially the family, rather than his exclusion from it (Braudy 297-301). Some enlisted soldiers believed that the personal qualities that made them strong members of the community, such as moral purity and innate courageousness, predicted success on the battlefield more than military training did (Linderman 83-87). In terms of the actual organization and execution of Civil War battles, the home front was both a base and a target. The states, not the federal government, organized the bulk of enlistments, with governors often appointing officers based on local political favouritism and appeasement of local elites (Paludan 18-20). Recruitment and training was locally organized, and

civilians often lived and worked among the military (Linderman 39-43). Initially, both sides of the war viewed attacks on civilians and their property as immoral, but within a couple of years, the need for supplies, as well as the accumulated hostility against the enemy, made confiscation and destruction of civilian property on the battlefronts commonplace. The guerrillas of the South, many of whom had official recognition as Confederate troops, specialized in destructive raids and sniper attacks against both Union soldiers and pro-Union civilians in the border states (McPherson 210-11; Paludan 291). By 1864, the Union Army was deliberately attacking and occupying southern communities as a military tactic, the burning of Atlanta and the expulsion of its citizens being a well-known example (Linderman 180-215). The home front was therefore both a source of the military's offensive strength as well as an enemy target that required defence. Attachment to home was a quality that soldiers cultivated and of which American society approved. As Fahs notes in her study of war-time popular culture, "the soldier's imagined longings for home were . . . deemed highly appropriate" (106).

James's war stories directly address this relationship between the home front and the soldier; as I shall explain below, the results of this examination are pessimistic. This pessimism is in keeping the deflation of war-time ideals as the war progressed and its human costs were counted. The Civil War killed and injured more Americans per capita than any other war has before or since.<sup>11</sup> The presence of medical personnel at battlefields, the organized attempt at rescuing the injured that occupied both North and South, meant that battle-scarred men, many with amputated limbs, returned home, constant reminders of the war—

almost 30,000 amputations took place (Paludan 324-26). By late 1862, the North was having difficulty getting recruits. Rallies, speeches, and patriotic poetry were meant to boost the apparent wane in patriotism (Maher 27), but even so, 1862 militia recruitment resulted in fewer enlistments than expected, so that the Union government called four conscription drafts in 1863 and 1864 and introduced \$300 bounties for volunteer enlistment in 1863 (McPherson 384). A soldier with money could avoid enlistment by finding a replacement or paying \$300, so that “of the 776,829 names called in all three national drafts, only 46,347 men were actually held for military service” (Maher 28). Reports of devastating battles and the hardships of daily life in war camps reached the civilian population through soldiers’ correspondence and newspapers (Paludan 328). War’s ideals, such as the notion that courage was sufficient for success in war, quickly became suspect (Linderman 156), since the “courageous” soldiers tended to die while the “cowardly” soldiers lived.

Some critics have found the Civil War setting extraneous to James’s three short stories, betraying what they see as the author’s lack of engagement with the war, a sign of squeamishness,<sup>12</sup> compared for example to De Forest.<sup>13</sup> But as everyone else did in this period, James read the newspapers and magazines, which were full of war news, as well as correspondence from soldiers in the field.<sup>14</sup> In *Notes to a Son and Brother*, James publishes letters from Wilkie and Bob about their war experiences, which include mild depictions of violence,<sup>15</sup> and he includes an August 1863 letter by his father describing Wilkie’s injury.<sup>16</sup> James also reviewed some of the early Civil War literature, including *Miss Ravenel’s*



*Conversion* and Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps*.<sup>17</sup> As Avent Beck makes clear, contemporary readers could find references in James's stories to specific names and dates related to the war. Beck dates "The Story of a Year" from May 1862 to May 1863,

the year of the Union's nadir in the East, beginning on the heels of Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign and ending about the time of Chancellorsville, in early May, 1863, the last great Confederate victory before the Union triumph at Gettysburg that July. James's audience would have remembered the serial failures of the Army of the Potomac during that span and what those failures had meant to the national mood as well as to the families whose sons were casualties in them. (Beck 225)

As Beck also notes (227), Lizzie in "The Story of a Year" has a portrait of General McClellan near her bed ("Story" 30), but later the story mentions General Halleck ("Story" 33) as the military leader, the change in leadership being the result of the Union's early defeats.<sup>18</sup> Luttrell in "Poor Richard" arrives in the story as a recruitment officer for the Army of the Potomac; it was common practice to send soldiers back to the home front as recruiters (Linderman 42). In "Poor Richard," Gertrude is a "great radical" and Luttrell a "decided conservative" (156).<sup>19</sup> These terms have specific meanings at the time, suggesting that Gertrude aligned herself with those Republicans in favour of immediate abolition, for some to the point of political revolution, while Luttrell aligned himself with those who

favoured a slow, voluntary phase-out of slavery based on state preferences (McPherson 290-91).

Though he was not a soldier, James had personal experiences of war. They were based on visits to camps and knowledge of war gathered from the community. This is the experience, the homefront experience, that his work represents. Unsurprisingly, then, James's work has affinities with the subgenre of fiction that reflected the homefront experience.

### **War Romance**

As Chapter Three discusses, realism as a literary ideal had begun to work its way into the discourse of the United States at mid-century. The shattered ideals of the Civil War may have been a factor that led to the increased valuation of realism, including literary realism, in the United States at this time (Shi 11). James took to the aesthetic of realism early. Already in 1865, the young reviewer was recommending that Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford "diligently study the canons of the so-called realist school" of French writers (Rev. of *Azarian* 272-75). In his support for realism, James was allied with William Dean Howells. Howells joined *The Atlantic Monthly* as associate editor in 1866 and therefore was James's editor for "Poor Richard" and "A Most Extraordinary Case." Howells and James were friends before this professional relationship developed (Davidson 36); their conversations about literature were workshops for the literary ideals that American literature grew to promote.

But even if James anticipated (or in fact helped precipitate) the realism war of the 1880s (Cady 166), the mid-1860s was still the era of sensation and sentiment. Soldier-authors did not automatically become realists: *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*, insofar as it was realist, was an exception. John Esten Cooke, for example, author of *Surry of Eagle's Nest* and its sequels, was a career writer who joined the Confederate Army, yet his novels are neo-medieval adventures, preoccupied with, on the one hand, the machinations of sinister villains and mysterious anti-heroes whose coincidental meetings and intertwined destinies resemble the novels of Walter Scott, and, on the other hand, with accounts of troop movements and exempla of the moral and military superiority of the Southern cause, rather than on actual bloodshed in battle. Texts such as *The Narrative of Edmund Wright* demonstrate how a text could be graphic in its depiction of violence not under the aegis of realism but as part of the sensational tradition. In Sarah Palmer's *Six Months Among the Secessionists*, for example, a pro-Union Southerner is beaten to death, and a slave slits his own throat rather than be tortured and killed by his master. Its physical acts of danger are tangential to battlefield action, rather than part of battle proper, and it does not attempt to associate violence with a pre-history of war in the way that *Edmund Wright* does.

In the meantime, sentimental fiction took its own approach to war. According to Alice Fahs, works of American sentiment “celebrated sympathy, not self-communion; they portrayed experiences of emotion as social events rooted in human relationships, legitimized through being witnessed by or communicated to another” (94-95). Consequently, Fahs argues, this sub-genre of popular literature

featured not battles but rather the emotions and thoughts of soldiers, particularly the soldier's longings for home (103). This concern with the home front led to a new genre, which Fahs calls "war romance," which was intended for women (130-34). In the standard plot of the war romance, the heroine sees her beloved off to war, though under her protestations. News of a battle reaches the heroine, one in which the lover is reported killed. At the story's end, the lover appears unscathed, news of his death being exaggerated, and the two lovers marry.<sup>20</sup>

*Harper's Weekly* alone published fifty-six of these war romances during 1862 and 1863 (Fahs 131). A simple form of this story is "Surprised," which involves nothing more than the soldier's train trip home and his unannounced night-time entrance into the home of his family.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the characteristics that Fahs identifies, other aspects of the war romance formula quickly become evident after reading some of these stories. Sometimes the war romance establishes a love triangle, including a rival for the man or woman who is affiliated with the enemy; often the female protagonist has to choose between two brothers who are fighting on opposite sides of the war. In the pro-Union atmosphere of Northern publications, the Unionist prevails. In "Special Service," an unusually action-oriented war romance, the Confederate suitor of Emma leads a group of guerillas into attacks on pro-Union homes, killing the father and brother of the Unionist suitor Bradford. The Confederate tries to force Emma into marriage but is thwarted by the sudden arrival of Bradford, who shoots the Confederate in the head. Individual examples of the sub-genre demonstrate varying degrees of ingenuity in deploying the elements in this formula. In "A Leaf from a Summer,"

for example, the female narrator forms one part of the love triangle: she conceals her love for the male protagonist and watches silently while the male protagonist falls in love with an undeserving woman. He subsequently dies in hospital after his lover rejects him because he has had a limb amputated. Normally, however, if the war romance soldier is seriously injured, his beloved stays by him, not only despite his wound but also because of the wound (in “Aunt Hepzie’s Warning,” the female protagonist assists the doctor with her beloved’s amputation). The rarer case of the soldier being rejected by the beloved, as in “A Leaf from a Summer,” signals the betraying woman’s ultimate unsuitability as a wife for the noble soldier and thus bears a moral implication with respect to proper domestic behaviour. Though Fahs notes that war romances were written by women for women, exceptions did exist. The author of a critique of war romance in *The Round Table*, for one, does not assume the authors of war romances are women: “we sincerely implore all young ladies and gentlemen of budding talent and limited experience to refrain, henceforth from doing feeble violence to our noble language in their frantic endeavors to gild the fine gold of heroism . . .” (“Romances of the War” 59).

*The Atlantic Monthly* published all three of James’s war stories. That magazine, along with *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, *Scribner’s* and *Century*, published writing that had an audience well acquainted with high culture, both European and American. Generally, these magazines did not cater to readers of domestic and adventure fiction (Brodhead, “American Literary Field” 34-35). Glazener suggests that *The Atlantic Monthly*, published by Boston’s Ticknor &

Fields publishing house, was a significant voice of New England's Brahmin culture (Glazener 36). (As such, the magazine would promote realism as a national literary genre in postwar America [38]). Nonetheless, *The Atlantic Monthly* did publish war romances. January 1864 saw the publication of "Ray" by Harriet B. Prescott: the title character is a Union soldier who courts a farm girl, Vivia, and who reveals, while convalescing from a wound, that he has killed his Confederate brother Beltran (the man Vivia prefers) in battle (19-40). March 1864's "Ambassadors in Bonds" by noted sentimental writer Caroline Chesebro features an organist in Union territory who has left her Confederate husband and lives in semi-secrecy. She falls in love with a local artist, who goes off to war for the Union. The artist ends up in battle against the husband and the husband is mortally wounded; husband and wife briefly reunite before he dies in the makeshift hospital in the church. The June 1866 issue contains Mrs. C. A. Hopkinson's "Quicksands," the story of Amy Percival, illegitimate daughter of an English earl, who while living in Europe marries the American Charles, who subsequently disappears on business in the West Indies and is presumed dead. In the meantime, a local man, Robert, is in love with Amy, but since Amy is married (a secret she keeps from her American foster family), she turns down Robert's proposal. Charles, now a Union soldier, shows up at Amy's village to bring the news that Amy's suitor Robert has died in battle.

The war romance formula allowed for variants, as the plots of these three stories show, but they always maintained the values of the North by the outcome of the romance. James's stories therefore were published in a context in which his

particular magazine's readers would expect a war romance and would expect that romance to conclude formulaically.

James's attitude towards war romance specifically is unknown, but his views on sentimental literature are clearer. In his 1867 review of Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict*, James complains of the novel's "lachrymose sentimentalism" (221). Sentimentalism, James argues, counters the ideal of representations of the real world: "it is impossible to conceive of a method of looking at people and things less calculated to elicit the truth" since it "goes dripping and trickling over the face of humanity, and washing its honest lineaments out of all recognition" (222) and thereby prevents "a study or an intellectual inspection" (221). Here James is focussing on the writing style rather than on the plot, which he more or less approves of; nonetheless, he suggests that sentimentalism exaggerates characterizations and creates a cast of "ghastly, frowning, grinning automatons" that puts "a strain upon [the reader's] moral sensibilities" (222). For James, then, Harding's sentimentalism works against sentimentalism's purported aim, which is to champion moral sensibility.<sup>22</sup>

Despite James's disagreement with sentimentalism, James's three stories nonetheless use the war romance sub-genre as their primary generic constituents. The use of that sub-genre does not act simply as a critique of sentimentalism as James offers in his Davis review: the critique extends into a broader examination of the society that can produce both sentimentalism and war.

### **"The Story of a Year": Communal Wounds**

Of the three James stories, “The Story of a Year” most closely follows the war romance formula with respect to the plot element in which the woman’s beloved, presumed dead, returns home alive. In fact, Fahs lists “The Story of a Year” as being within the war romance tradition (131). In other ways, however, “The Story of a Year” profoundly fails to follow the pattern of the war romance: the beloved dies, and a marriage engagement is broken off with no clear indication of the subsequent fate of the female protagonist. The first sentence of “The Story of a Year” explicitly refers to the effect of the war on storytelling and to the effect of war’s violence on storytelling: “My story begins as a great many stories have begun within the last three years, and indeed as a great many have ended; for, when the hero is despatched, does not the romance come to a stop?” (“Story” 20). The tone is arch (“despatched”) with respect to the death of the hero, an unusual stance to take in a war romance, since the fact of the war constitutes the moral framework in which the love relationship develops and since the death of the hero is a serious matter. The archness, however, signals the story’s rupture with the genre expectations of war romance. At first the question seems merely rhetorical, since without context the answer would have to be “yes.” As the story unfolds, however, the question increasingly begins to require a considered response. Lizzie’s love for John transfers to Robert Bruce once John is away at war—Lizzie may have simply gained a new “hero” in place of the old one. In addition, Lizzie’s feelings for John seem to rekindle, rather than disappear, when she discovers John is mortally wounded.



The difficulty in treating the question simply reveals the problematic nature of “The Story of a Year” as exemplary war romance. The “stories” to which the first paragraph refers may point out of the world of the narrative to the real world, to the lives of real soldiers who were newly married or engaged when they died in battle.<sup>23</sup> But “stories” also refers to war romances themselves. The use of the words “story,” “romance,” and “hero” and the archness of “despatched” thus serves not as a critique of the lives of real Civil War soldiers but rather as a critique of literary representations of the war.

The critique of war romance arises from the story’s invocation of other genres, particularly folkloric narrative and drama.<sup>24</sup> The conflict between the expectation of these genres and the war romance genre calls attention to the way genre generates a specific projected world. This conflict foregrounds the fictionality of the story and concomitantly the social constructiveness of culture’s narratives, including those surrounding the sensitive subject of the social function of the soldier in war-time.

Allusions to folkloric narrative illustrate how the characters have expectations that do not arise from the circumstance of Civil War society. When John is compared to Hector of *The Iliad* (“Story” 20), the initial association may be the conventional one of Hector as warrior of virtue and honour, but a secondary association is Hector’s death, a circumstance that foreshadows the story’s end. John also uses folklore when he compares the gossiping widows and lovers of dead soldiers to the “peddler in that horrible murder-story, who carried a corpse in his pack” (23). This story is an inexact reference to the “long pack”

legend popularized (if not invented) by James Hogg.<sup>25</sup> In the story, a peddler leaves a large, heavy pack at a residence and a suspicious servant stabs the pack, out of which pours the blood of the peddler's accomplice, who was going to unlock the door and let in the peddler so they could rob the residence. The folk story reflects John's expectations of the macabre social use women at the home front make of dead soldiers; in this version, the corpse is already dead, as though the future act is contained within the fact of the peddler's plan and is being peddled as a ware before any outsider can intervene, thus making the peddler (like the overly enthusiastic widows and childless women in John's version) the de facto murderer.

As these two examples demonstrate, folkloric expectations are mismatched with the contemporary American war setting. This pattern continues with Lizzie, whom the story associates most closely with non-war romance genres. Lizzie keeps secret her engagement to John with the same difficulty as would the "damsel in the fairy-tale whom the disguised enchantress had just empowered to utter diamonds and pearls" ("Story" 24-25). The referenced fairytale here is "The Fairies" from Charles Perrault's *Stories of Tales of Past Times* (Zipes 150); again, the original fairytale's moral weight (the virtue of fine speaking and of courtesy [Zipes 150]) is overshadowed by James's use of the fairytale to indicate the temptation Lizzie feels in having to suppress her altered social status as a betrothed woman. When Lizzie decides to visit John at the camp hospital, she conceives of herself as the magical healer of the folk tale tradition, perhaps specifically of the heroic prince who awakens Cinderella or Sleeping

Beauty: “She would stanch his wounds; she would unseal his eyes with her kisses; she would call till he answered her” (“Story” 40).

James’s story not only references existing folkloric narratives but also invents some narratives to connect Lizzie further with the fantastic plot elements of folkloric tradition. When Lizzie walks through the countryside that John loves and sings the ballads that John used to sing, she imagines she hears a response to her song, a “faint sound of a muffled bass, borne upon the south wind like a distant drum-beat, responsive to a bugle” (“Story” 31). The change of season from summer to autumn, like the traditional association of the seasons to moral and temporal states, signals a change in Lizzie’s devotion, a “silent transition” (33). Soon, Lizzie finds John’s letters “too good” and puts aside the “rough camp-photograph of Jack’s newly bearded visage” (34). In this seasonal change she becomes jealous or resentful of his virtues: “[H]is heart is younger than mine,—younger and better. He has lived through awful scenes of danger and bloodshed and cruelty, yet his heart is purer” (34). His eventual mortal wounding, which the passage presages, at first seems to jar Lizzie from the fictionally shaped world into the real world: “She had been aroused from a dream into a waking nightmare. It was like hearing a murder-shriek while you turn the page of your novel” (39). Yet she does not divest herself of the supernatural associations of folklore. She attempts to deny death by creating, as counterpoint to the traditional personification of death, her self-personification as a figure of Love: “Even if Death had already beckoned, she would strike down his hand; if Life had already obeyed, she would issue the stronger mandate of Love” (39-40).

Lizzie has transformed the war experience and war's violence into a dream world of the supernatural and of surreal fantasy. This surrealism manifests itself strongly in her waking and sleeping fantasies. After she learns John has been wounded, Lizzie dreams about a "man of the wounds":

It seemed to her that she was walking in a lonely place, with a tall, dark-eyed man who called her wife. Suddenly, in the shadow of a tree, they came upon an unburied corpse. Lizzie proposed to dig him a grave. They dug a great hole and took hold of the corpse to lift him in; when suddenly he opened his eyes. Then they saw that he was covered with wounds. He looked at them intently for some time, turning his eyes from one to the other. At last he solemnly said, "Amen!" and closed his eyes. Then she and her companion placed him in the grave, and shovelled the earth over him, and stamped it down with their feet. (42)

As the narrator asserts, "He of the dark eyes and he of the wounds were the two constantly recurring figures of Lizzie's reveries" (42). The "dark-eyed" man is Robert Bruce, whom Lizzie has recently met. The "man with the wounds" is John, with whom she has already begun to fall out of love. The dream-vision implies that John has acquiesced in her decision to abandon him for Robert, an event that John had anticipated before he left for the war. Even before she sees John's wounds, she imagines them as a vehicle through which he releases her from any obligation she has towards him. The dream wounds are both Lizzie's imagination

of what his actual wounds look like and the psychological wounds she believes she has inflicted on him.

The second fantasy of wounds occurs when Lizzie, facing both her failure to continue to love John and her anguish over John's wounding, fantasizes about killing herself:

She roamed about the empty house with her footsteps tracked by an unlaid ghost . . . . Suppose Mrs. Ford should come back and find her in an unswept room, pallid and insane? or suppose she should die of her troubles? What if she should kill herself?—dismiss the servants, and close the house, and lock herself up with a knife? Then she would cut her arm to escape from dismay at what she had already done; and then her courage would ebb away with her blood, and, having so far pledged herself to despair, her life would ebb away with her courage; and then, alone, in darkness, with none to help her, she would vainly scream, and thrust the knife into her temple, and swoon to death. And Jack would come back and burst into the house, and wander through the empty rooms, calling her name, and for all answer get a death-scent! (43-44)

This fantasy of wounding constitutes the story's most explicit description of physical violence. The language and circumstance, however, belongs to sensation fiction, specifically of gothic literature, with a young woman in a large, dangerous house. Lizzie's fantasy of suicide depicts transference of the bodily violence

inflicted on John onto herself as remorse or self-punishment, already expressed in her dream, at having replaced him with Robert Bruce.

Since Lizzie's fantasy of suicide constitutes the only description of acts of physical violence in the story, the story oddly replaces the expected setting of violence in a war story (the battlefield) with the domestic setting. In this way, the transference of wounds on herself suggests that she is herself a soldier. In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry devotes much attention to the re-representation of wounds as part of the cultural work of war. Scarry asserts that such transference of wounds tends to work in favour of the ideological forces surrounding war but to the detriment of the people who place their bodies at those forces' disposal. Scarry identifies the process of "unmaking" in war with symbolic processes, in the omission, redescription, or marginalization of wounds in writing or speech so as to designify the wounded body and limit war's association with death and injury. This process affects not only the circumstances that begin war and that deny the centrality of wounding, but also the ability of language to communicate as it once did. This "de-realization of verbal meaning" is evidence of how war calls attention to the social construction of culture. One result of this disintegration is a reliance on "fictions, or, more drastically, 'lies'" in war (Scarry 133). Code, camouflage, bluffing, and misinformation all are key elements in military strategy, as is misrepresentation in reportage and in every-day conversation (133-36). Scarry theorizes that an absence of representation of violence not only contributes to a de-emphasis of war's violence and minimizes ethical problems but also serves the aim of war, namely, to facilitate the

temporary fictionalization of the combatants' culture so as to permit the losing side's permanent cultural deconstruction. War "requires both the reciprocal infliction of massive injury and the eventual disowning of the injury so that its attributes can be transferred elsewhere, as they cannot if they are permitted to cling to the original site of the wound, the human body" (64).

Injury becomes disowned when its representation makes the injury seem absent. Scarry categorizes different ways in which disavowal can occur: omission, redescription, and marginalization (80). The first two categories deny that any damage to physical bodies occurs, the first by ignoring the existence of wounds altogether, the second by euphemizing the act of injury, the weapon, or the injured body.<sup>26</sup> Scarry further subdivides marginalization, the process by which injury is acknowledged but treated as secondary in importance to other war goals, into four sub-categories: injury as by-product, as a point towards a goal, as a "cost," or as a prolongation of another event (80). For example, John participates in de-emphasis when he compares the sunset sky to a football game and then to a battle (21). As Scarry points out, the use of war metaphors in sports (and vice versa) is common because both sports and war have the quality of a contest (82-83).<sup>27</sup> Such similes are a type of redescription, however, since they falsely compare two different types of contests: unlike war, sports do not require death to determine their endings. While John sees in the sunset an optimistic "allegory" in which the light will return "stronger and brighter than ever," Lizzie finds the optimism in that redescription inappropriate (21-22). The redescription of a wound divorces it from

the physical reality of the human body and facilitates its redeployment to the task of determining the outcome of war.

Based on Scarry's typology, wounds are neither omitted nor marginalized in "A Story of a Year": John acquires wounds in battle and dies of them at the story's end; Lizzie dreams about a man with wounds; and Lizzie fantasizes about wounding and killing herself. The wounds are, however, euphemized: they are redescribed as fictions (events that did not occur in the real world). This redescription occurs at the level of character and at the level of narration. At the level of character, Lizzie turns wounds into objects in dreams or romance. As I will discuss, the narration also participates in this redescription, not only through the characters but also by calling attention to the contrast between the war in fiction and war in the world through references to performance and to literary genre. Through the wound's transference to Lizzie, she makes a social use of the wound: namely, she marks her social responsibility to loyalty and to promise-making by inflicting upon herself, in her fantasy of suicide, the wounds that John physically has on his body.

The theme of transferring wounds is one that Alice Fahs notes in popular literature of the war period. One theme of sentimental literature in particular is how a soldier's wounding or death affects the women at the homefront (136). For example, in a July 1862 *Harper's Weekly* story, "Wounded," a woman notes how soldiers are not the only people who are injured in war: "From every battle-field . . . go swift-winged messengers that kill or wound at a thousand miles instead of a thousand paces; bullets invisible to mortal eyes, that pierce loving hearts. Of the



dead and wounded from these we have no report. They are casualties not spoken of by our commanding generals” (442). Here, the wounding is presumably psychological. By contrast, Lisa Long notes how in Alcott’s *Hospital Sketches*, Trib absorbs not psychological trauma but a camp illness of a dead soldier. This transference gets represented by a visual sign: a dying soldier grasps Trib’s hand, so that “four white marks remained across its back, even when warmth and color had returned elsewhere” (65). Trib sickens immediately, infected with the sickness of battle in the form of typhoid. Long, following Elizabeth Young (84-87), sees in *Hospital Sketches* an attempt at making an equivalence, through wounding, between men’s and women’s war experiences.

In “A Story of a Year,” Lizzie establishes such an equivalence. The passing of the empty signifiers of the wounds occurs once Lizzie learns about John’s injury. The signifier is transformed via the redescription process outlined earlier, which permits the disavowal of the world’s reality. Once his wounds are empty of signification, they can be freely read in multiple ways.<sup>28</sup> Scarry’s theory that the body of the dead soldier is empty of signification is echoed in John’s proleptical declaration, “What rights has a dead man?” (23). At her last visit with him before his death, Lizzie notes that John’s pain “refined,” “not weakened,” his face, and she concludes that he was “strangely handsomer: body stood for less” (52). The phrase “body stood for less” is puzzling; arguably, its meaning is irretrievable. Yet the phrase makes sense in conjunction with Scarry’s notion of wounds and wounds’ ability to designify their owner’s body. Because John was injured in battle, his wounds have implicated him in the resignifying activity of

war. His body “stands for,” or means, less. His body has lost the signification that formed part of John’s identity. The body of the injured John has opened up to Lizzie’s resignification, a process that begins in her dream about the man with the wounds and that completes itself when Lizzie is resignified as a wounded soldier. Soon after she learns of Ford’s injuries, she begins to imagine herself as being not merely witness to war’s mortal blows but indeed as the object of them: “A tragedy had stepped into her life: was she spectator or actor? She found herself face to face with death: was it not her own soul masquerading in a shroud?” (39). When Mrs. Ford’s assistant commends Mrs. Ford’s meticulous instructions by saying he would apply for a brigadier-generalship under her, Lizzie comments that she would “apply to be sent South” as though she were enlisting (41).

And where once Lizzie was too “tired of war” to hear a lecture called “A Year of the War” with her friends the Crowes (47), she puts herself into the war as a combatant. The only battlefield scene in the short story is an imaginary one. Lizzie is standing vigil outside John’s deathbed on the porch, and wraps herself in an army blanket (51) with a “strange earthy smell” and “a faint perfume of tobacco”: “Instantly the young girl’s senses were transported as they had never been before to those far-off Southern battlefields. She saw men lying in swamps, puffing their kindly pipes, drawing their blankets closer, canopied with the same luminous dusk that shone down upon her comfortable weakness” (52). Her imagination causes her to become, temporarily, what she has imagined. As Robert Bruce approaches her during her reveries, she stands up; he is startled and does not recognize her for an instant. “Are you one of Mr. Ford’s watchers?” he asks

(52). Robert's misrecognition of Lizzie suggests that for a moment, she has been transformed into a soldier on watch, as though she were a Union army picket approached by another picket.<sup>29</sup>

In this scene where she sees (and perhaps becomes) a soldier, the statement that she has a "comfortable weakness" is a narratorial comment about her narrow life until that moment of imagination. Lizzie's earlier imaginings invoke romance, even gothic, sensibilities. Indeed, Lizzie suffers from a type of bovarysm, a state of being constructed for her by the narrator and by the narrative's allusions to literary and theatrical production.<sup>30</sup> The story thus presents the circumstances in which she could gain insight into her own shallowness or even free herself from it by connecting her with the concept of the veteran. In fact, the text explicitly makes that connection: "John Ford became a veteran down by the Potomac. And to tell the truth, Lizzie became a veteran at home. That is, her love and hope grew to be an old story" (33). The concept of the "old story," and its resultant associations with fictionality, does not make this acquisition of insight automatic or easy. War romance itself seems to have been a vehicle for gaining insight into life's truth. Fahs suggest that the war romance had an "educational" value for its intended audience. Through war romance, "women learned the patriotic lesson that they must sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of the nation." War romance also taught women that "the granting or withholding of women's love was a life-and-death matter, and represented women as having enormous power over men's well-being" (Fahs 130-31).

In other contexts, Lizzie's withdrawal of love may be interpretable simply as a plot-driven circumstance under which she can deliver a "killing blow"—the story implies that Mrs. Ford tells John that Lizzie has been involved with Robert Bruce, because after her conversation with a neighbour, Mrs. Ford gives Lizzie a "hard, "reproachful," and "cold" look and shortly thereafter locks herself into John's room, as though she is telling John about Lizzie and Robert ("Story" 54). Lizzie's education is, however, a key issue in the story overall. Her withdrawal of love constitutes more than a plot device: it positions the character so that both she and the narrative can later react to and examine the implications of her previous choices. Between the incident where the narrator notes that Lizzie's life is like a performance and the incident where Lizzie fantasizes her own death, the narrator comments, "Let us hope that her childish spirit was being tempered to some useful purpose. Let us hope so" (43). When Lizzie withdraws her acceptance of marriage to Robert, she renounces, in imitation of John, her bond with her fiancé and thus attempts a restoration of the honour she associates with John. Nonetheless, the narrator's earlier scepticism about Lizzie's success in making this transformation suggests that, even here, the education of Lizzie may not succeed. Even though Lizzie flees into the house at the story's end, Robert pursues her, and this continued pursuit, not Lizzie's flight, ends the story. The ambiguity of the story's ending both divorces the story from the war romance genre, which does not have indeterminate ends to love stories, and makes suspect Lizzie's adherence to her renunciation.

In the end, wounding does not confer moral superiority in “A Story of a Year,” as wounding was supposed to do in the discourse surrounding the Civil War. John is the same person before and after his wounding: his insistence on maintaining the pledge he and Lizzie made at the story’s end makes this clear. Lizzie’s assertion that in his wounded body “she could read the justification of all her old worship” (53) further intimates his unchanging moral quality. Lizzie’s ability to “read” the body to justify her earlier attitudes toward him is telling. His body becomes a text that she can interpret; her interpretation constitutes an appropriation of his wounded body.

The story’s metafictional opening (the reference to the roles of characters and to the expected outcomes of romance) is thus one among other metafictional elements in the story. Another such element is the narrator’s linking of Lizzie to theatricality. The narrator seems concerned that Lizzie is “prone to fancy”; such a fancy is represented by her association with theatre and fiction. After John’s departure, Lizzie tries to overcome her fear of nature by going for walks alone: “Might she not play the soldier, too, in her own humble way?” (31). She is acting a role, rather than becoming a soldier. With John wounded and Robert Bruce on scene, Lizzie becomes an actor “who finds himself [sic] on the stage with a half-learned part and without sufficient wit to extemporize” (42). The narrator holds out the possibility that Lizzie may have “exhausted the lessons . . . of these awful events” but shows uncertainty about its own optimism: “[T]he curtain had not yet fallen, yet our young lady had begun to yawn. To yawn? Aye, and to long for the afterpiece. Since the tragedy dragged, might she not divert herself with that well-

bred man beside her?" (43). Thus "Lizzie's fortunes became old stories to her before she had half read them through. Jack's wounds and danger were an old story" (43). Since the story is "old" to Lizzie, the narrator suggests that the conclusion for Lizzie is not clear: at this point the narrator reveals her aforementioned gothic dream of suicide that suggests Lizzie's remorse over her emotions. After the narrative describes her dream of burying John, the narrator comments that Lizzie has not even read *Romeo and Juliet*, a fact both "creditable and discreditable" to Lizzie (44). This paradox is solvable by assuming the discredit goes to Lizzie's lack of interest in reading and the credit to Lizzie's imagination. Even though Lizzie does not read drama, her imagination allows her to serve both as an audience (though an easily distracted one) and more emphatically as an actor. When Mrs. Ford seems to have discovered Lizzie's interest in Robert Bruce and ominously shuts the door on John's sick room, the narrator comments, "The plot of her little tragedy thickened. Be it so: she would act her part with the rest" (54-55). Lizzie's self-created tragedy defines her as a character in it, but she, like those around her, is also a contributor to its performance.

Additionally, not only are Lizzie and the other people in the story "actors" in the drama of their lives, they are also structures in the narrated story. Besides linking Lizzie to culturally constructed literary genres, the narrator makes general statements that critique textual modes of understanding the world. At the beginning of the story's second section, the narrator justifies the story's approach to the Civil War tale: "I have no intention of following Lieutenant Ford to the seat

of war. The exploits of his campaign are recorded in the public journals of the day, where the curious may still peruse them. My own taste has always been for unwritten history, and my present business is with the reverse of the picture” (30). The narrator is not saying the text is history but rather that the narrator prefers “unwritten history” and consequently will not relate battle sequences. On the one hand, avoiding “the seat of war” may signal an avoidance of violence. But on the other hand, this statement suggests a specific approach to the war that sees battle description as common, particularly in periodicals (“public journals”) and thus as readily accessible. The narrator’s story operates outside the standard discourse of Civil War reportage. In particular, the phrase “unwritten history” suggests that the narrator is concerned with “unwritten” or unadvertised stories, and therefore the narrator has produced a different type of history. It offers itself up both as an exception and as a contribution to the existing narratives about the Civil War. Furthermore, it presents itself as a “reverse of the picture.” Edel says this statement resembles statements in Balzac’s preface to *Comédie Humaine*, in which Balzac says he aims to capture ordinary life, or, as one of the books in that series was titled, “l’envers de l’histoire contemporaine” (Edel, “Introduction: 1864-1868” 18).<sup>31</sup> This terminology further suggests, however, the caption written on a back of a photograph that clarifies the image’s meaning. The word “reverse” may also mean “inverse”, or an alternate history, so that the photograph is analogous to the written history, and the story is the unwritten history on the back of the photograph. The story, in other words, is a supplement to the more common depiction of war, a depiction that by itself is lacking. The reference to “pictures”

is interesting in the context of the impact of image reproduction during the American Civil War, a manifestation of what David Shi calls the “spectatorial sensibility” of the late nineteenth-century United States.<sup>32</sup> Print periodicals regularly reproduced illustrations with Civil War coverage, and the photography of the Civil War was a major means for people to “see” the war. The Civil War was a moment where the idea of technologically mediated representation became a part of the discourse of history, memorialization, and realism that existed during this period. What this story claims to do, then, through the narrator’s assertion about the limits of the story’s scope, is to deal with such issues of representation. That Ford calls Lizzie’s memento of a photograph “a text for my meditations” during battle also hints at the readability of images (23).<sup>33</sup> The story’s insistence on its mastery over genre suggests that genre is an issue that the story aims to explore.

When the short story invokes specific genres, then, these genres form the story’s argument about genre itself. One such genre is that of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel of medieval romance. Robert Bruce, one of the many businessmen in James’s corpus, is a “Scottish chief” (38) whose “firm of Bruce and Robertson does an immense business” (36). When Miss Crowe commends Lizzie for her “conquest” of Robert Bruce (36), she is alluding to the Scottish dissident-king Robert the Bruce. Indeed, the only book Lizzie has read to the end is *The Scottish Chiefs* (30), the nineteenth-century medieval-revival romance by Jane Porter that features Robert the Bruce. Edel interprets this reference to *Scottish Chiefs* as James’s way of invoking the idea of civil war, since the stories



of Robert the Bruce were part of the medieval wars for Scottish independence. The allusion also calls attention to the issue of “the reading about these wars rather than the participation in them”; this allusion directs Edel to the notion of a failure to participate and thus to James’s biography, since James did not fight in the Civil War (“Two Libraries” 10). But this detail also invokes the romance genre to which the story has associated Lizzie in various ways. Lizzie has read *The Scottish Chiefs* (James, “Story of a Year” 30) and tries to read a German-language *Faust* (31). The first book foreshadows her relationship with Robert Bruce, and the latter book references the bargain she and John make in the event of his death. The story does not explain why Bruce has not enlisted, and no characters seem to chastise him for his civilian status (his wealth, good looks and good manners are what count). His name is therefore ironic (he is not a revolutionary adventurer-patriot like Robert Bruce).

The phenomenon of invoking romance genres reoccurs when the story cites lines from Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s *The Princess, a Medley* upon John’s arrival home (“Home they brought her warrior dead, / She nor swooned nor uttered cry”) (“Story” 51). This reference to Tennyson, as well as the one to Porter’s *Scottish Chiefs*, is at the level of the text (or, to put it another way, through the communication of the implied author).<sup>34</sup> As a result, its association with Lizzie in particular is problematic: unlike the external narrator’s comments, the allusions to Porter and Tennyson are not clearly interpretable as ironic. Nonetheless, the story’s turn to the romantic figure of the war hero contributes to the text’s representation of the redescription of wounds as *objets d’art*.

One could attach to the narrative a biographical interpretation whereby James, a non-combatant, transforms real war wounds into his own participation in war via the production of narrative, which Lizzie appears to do as well. But the need to make sense of war wounds goes beyond the events of one person's life. The resignification of wounds in the story resembles James's own resignifying of his "obscure hurt" into a Civil War wound, transforming two stay-at-homes, Lizzie and Henry James, into members of the "tragic fellowship" of the Civil War. The desire to reinvent himself as a soldier demonstrates the significance of war in the community. The story may in part engage with Wilkie James's war wounds specifically, but it also engages with all the wounds that James would have heard about or seen. Even though fiction interprets reality, not all fiction necessarily participates in disavowal. Disavowal works because all human culture is constructed by human imagination and thus can be unconstructed ("unmade" in Scarry's terms). But "unmaking" does not automatically characterize all acts of human imagination and production of cultural artifacts. "The Story of a Year" does not condone the redescription in which Lizzie and some literary genres engage.

What marks James's stories as interesting with respect to their relation to war violence, then, is how war wounds are linked with the process of identity. Wounds signal an emptying of signification and subsequently are transferred ("lifted" in Scarry's words) to someone else. "The Story of a Year" is not a re-enactment or microcosm of the entire process of transference. Rather, the story shows aspects of the process—disavowal— but does not itself participate in the

disavowal. This difference between the demonstration of disavowal and the resistance to participating in that disavowal creates an ironic split. Such transfers have ethical implications: is Lizzie's psychological suffering commensurate with John's physical (and possible concomitant psychological) suffering? To go further, does the narrative's use of the war wound in the production of literature, a product of human imagination, constitute a redescription of real world wounding? "The Story of a Year" withdraws from making simple judgments about the participation of civilians in war through a proxy within the domestic sphere. Such a withdrawal of judgment does not hold so easily in "Poor Richard."

### **"Poor Richard": Domestic Heroism**

"Poor Richard" begins much as "The Story of a Year" does, with a young man and woman walking outdoors together, the way many war-themed love plots (including "A Story of a Year") in sentimental stories begin. But "Poor Richard" quickly defies the war romance formula. Instead of two suitors vying for the female heroine, "Poor Richard" has three suitors. As in "The Story of a Year," the love plot ends against type: the heroine lives in self-imposed exile in Europe, the near-villainous suitor has married into comfortable wealth, the preferred suitor is dead, and the male protagonist is living life much as he had before the story began. More than the other James war stories, "Poor Richard" exhibits some of the aesthetic values of realism that James and like-minded writers had begun to propose. "Poor Richard" depends heavily on internal monologue and stage-like scenes to represent its world, that is, on psychology and characterization. The

story's ending does not bear the moral shapeliness of idealism: good persons do not attain their goals, and bad persons, even if Luttrell can be considered as such, seem to prevail. A key sentence points to the story's main interest: the problem of "the actual existence" of Gertrude's "heroic possibilities" (113). The extent to which all the characters exhibit heroism constitutes a significant deviation from war romance. Not only does the story offer heroism as a "possibility" for a female character, but the story also suggests that the battlefield does not offer the only (or even the best) setting in which to test and exhibit heroism, an unconventional stance to take in a war-themed story published so soon after the Civil War's conclusion.

In the Civil War, roughly half of the population—women—were excluded from combat duty, but they contributed to the war through the production of garments, maintenance of homes and businesses (Young 2), and the encouragement of men to enlist and remain enlisted (Linderman 85-97).<sup>35</sup> Women's nursing was seen, at least in the North, as a significant material contribution to the war effort (Fahs 139-42). Mothers were important figures in civil war literature (Fahs 103-109), and women's struggles, both physical and emotional, were considered legitimate war-time experiences (Fahs 128-31). John Weiss suggested women's emotions during wartime were more stirring than the battles themselves: "Drums do not throb like these hearts, bullets do not patter like these tears" (684). Women were "the face of our country, waiting to suffer and be strong for liberty, and to put resolutely the dearest thing where it can serve mankind" (684).<sup>36</sup>

Women's roles in the Civil War therefore focussed mainly on caretaking. Gertrude thereby follows these expectations when, for example, she visits the injured Captain Edmund Severn and takes him for rides in her carriage. Her caretaking role extends beyond the care of soldiers, however, for she also attempts to help "improve" Richard by introducing him to a role model, namely Severn (138). When she hears of the unnamed bloody battle in Virginia, Gertrude argues with Luttrell over it, revealing her "radical" sympathies and also her emotional engagement with the war. She sends her male visitors away so she can grieve because "her heart was too heavy with her country's woes, and with the thought of so great a butchery," to entertain guests (156). One of the story's few discussions about the war itself derives from Gertrude's argument with Luttrell: "War is an infamy, Major, though it *is* your trade. It's very well for you, who look at it professionally, and for those who go and fight; but it's a miserable business for those who stay at home, and do the thinking and the sentimentalizing. It's a miserable business for women; it makes us more spiteful than ever" (166).

The idea that Gertrude could have "heroic possibilities" might arise from these activities, considered by the North to be as important as combat. Nevertheless, the idea of heroism gains an additional coloration from the story's allusion to romance as a cultural genre. Gertrude's statement about her own heroism does not relate to her home-front support of soldiers, however. Instead, she decides to avoid heroism when she realizes that, with Severn gone from her life, she could quite easily marry Richard: "Heaven preserve me from the heroics, especially the economical heroics! The one heroic course possible, I decline"

(150). “Economical heroics” refers to her possibility of marrying Richard: it is “economical” because she determines that she has been seeking a “sensation” through Severn and that such a sensation could be got “cheaply” via the eager Richard (149-50). A kind of magical thinking convinces her that she must not love Severn because if she had, he would have offered love to her: “Love gets love, and no-love gets none!” (150).

The magical thinking that depends on a ritualistic annunciation of love, rather than a real dialogue between two people, is in keeping with the story’s references to motifs from romance genres that themselves contain motifs of the fantastic and the supernatural. Most of these motifs are associated with Richard. Richard views the possibility of a successful courtship of Gertrude in terms of the tests given heroes in myth or legend, “some continuous muscular effort, at the end of which he should find himself face to face with his mistress.” Richard, “instead of being a Pagan hero, with an enticing task-list of impossibilities,” is simply “a plain New England farmer, with a bad conscience, and nature with him and not against him,—as, after slaying his dragon, after breaking with liquor, his work was a simple operation in common sense” (137). Nonetheless, Severn associates Richard with such a hero of adventure. Severn calls Richard a “woefully wounded knight,” too socially inexperienced and heartbroken to compete with Severn and Luttrell for Gertrude, and he thereby elects not to fight so as to “restore the equilibrium of his self-respect by an immediate cession from the field.” Severn admires Richard for his desire to fight (in this case for Gertrude): “Whether he wins her or not, he’ll fight for her” (“Poor Richard” 144). One such fight takes

place when Richard tests himself by breaking into the conversation between Severn, Luttrell, and Gertrude as though it were “a desperate sally into the very field of their conversation” (“Poor Richard” 142). After the failure of his social skills to compete with the other two men, Richard tests his valour in simulacra of folkloric feats of physical strength. Working his farm is one such test; he also tests his valour by riding past the taverns in the countryside to tempt his sobriety, which the narrator remarks is “a course of such cruel temptations as were likely either to shiver it [his valour] to a myriad of pieces, or to season it perfectly to all the possible requirements of life” (147). The phrase that he could “shiver” his resolve “to a myriad of pieces” replays Severn’s metaphor of John as a medieval knight, the temperance replacing the jousting weapons of Arthurian romance. Richard’s various “temptations” recall the temptations that knights in medieval Arthurian legend must endure to prove their adherence to the chivalric code. In the end, Richard’s interest in Gertrude stems from his interest in improving himself, a “work of self-preservation” that renders “his passion for Gertrude . . . but a fiction” (147).

Richard’s project to improve himself takes on the qualities of a person attempting to develop the “heroic possibilities” in himself. During the walk with Gertrude and her suitors, he gains confidence and “[is] soaring most heroically” when he decides to talk (“Poor Richard” 145). When that attempt at making a good impression fails, Richard has a “heroic struggle with himself” (146).

The story offers a critique of the moral expectations that accrue to soldiers. All three men fight for the Union Army, but not all men acquire the

positive associations soldiering was supposed to confer on men. Severn was not a career soldier but a volunteer, a “mathematical tutor in a second-rate country college” who “transferred his valour to a more heroic field”—that is, a volunteer Civil War regiment (“Poor Richard” 138). Yet Severn’s skills are modest, “solid rather than brilliant. He was not destined to be heard of at home, nor to leave his regiment; but on many an important occasion in Virginia he had proved himself in a modest way an excellently useful man” who after being wounded is nursed by his sister (139). When he returns to war, he dies quite soon afterwards, not in battle per se but in a guerrilla attack. Luttrell is an example of the career soldier, and if the story has a villain, he is it. Luttrell’s speech in “Poor Richard” is the closest any of the three James Civil War stories come to mentioning an ideological analysis of war: “War is certainly an abomination, both at home and in the field. But as wars go, Miss Whittaker, our own is a very satisfactory one. It involves something. It won’t leave us as it found us. We are in the midst of a revolution, and what is a revolution but a turning upside down? It makes sad work with our habits and theories and our traditions and convictions” (167). This speech might be referring to Southern secession and the North’s drive for abolition (“revolution”). But Luttrell gives this speech just before he proposes to Gertrude, which he does just after he tells Gertrude of Severn’s death. His use of the term “revolution” thus constitutes a self-serving pandering to her political ideology, if Gertrude is as closely aligned to the revolutionary leanings of Radical Republicans as she seems.<sup>37</sup> His discussion of the war, therefore, is an attempt to convince Gertrude to marry him.



Luttrel is a career soldier in more than one way: he is expert at careerism. He is a soldier-diplomat, always ready to negotiate. For example, he explains that he wants to keep Richard close in order “to renew that anomalous alliance” that allows him to use the lie about Severn so as to use Richard’s guilt to keep him away from Gertrude (170). Severn judges Luttrel as “not handsome, but he looks like a soldier.” Richard says Luttrel “looks like a rascal” (142), a judgment that proves correct. Luttrel parodies the masculine ideal perpetuated by the valorization of war. Even the name “Luttrel” emphasizes his involvement in combat (“lutte” means “fight” in French).<sup>38</sup> Luttrel is also physically aggressive in his response to Richard’s anger over Luttrel’s scorn: “Do you want to pick a quarrel with me? Do you want to make me lose my temper? . . . Strike me, and I’ll strike you in self-defence, but I’m not going to mind your talk” (159).<sup>39</sup> Luttrel’s matrimonial activities are at times described as though they are military manoeuvres. Luttrel describes his decision to relay Severn’s message to Gertrude as a “shot” (162). When he finds out that Richard is ill, Luttrel is “very glad to find Richard a prisoner in bed” (162). The story’s upshot is that Luttrel loses an arm and marries a wealthy woman, achieving the goal he failed to achieve through Gertrude (178). For Luttrel, war is a means to gain a rich wife, not to fight for political or moral ideals. A psychoanalytic approach would see his amputation as a kind of castration and thus a degradation of his masculinity. But the story’s approach is not that clear-cut. Rather than deny that Luttrel represents a masculine ideal, the story calls attention to the weaknesses of that ideal. This is made clear when Luttrel, having convinced the grieving Gertrude to marry him,

stands over her “an image of manly humility, while from his silent breast went out a brief thanksgiving to favouring fortune” (“Poor Richard” 169). He is a mere “image” of “manly humility,” because his true nature is one that takes advantage of opportunities such as the death of Severn, the illness of Richard, and the despair of the grieving and self-loathing Gertrude. To give the villain Luttrell victory with both a wound and a wedding is a profoundly cynical response to the war romance tradition and to the concomitant tradition of the war wound’s moral and masculine-inducing qualities.

The conflation of heroism and manliness in war does not follow in this story. Indeed, Richard gains his masculine qualities and improves his moral sense before becoming a soldier. Severn notices his qualities as a medieval warrior, a knight, soon after meeting him. Richard senses that by not belonging to the military, he is disadvantaged socially. Richard feels inadequate in the two veterans’ presence; he “writhed and chafed under the polish of tone and the variety of allusion by which the two officers consigned him to insignificance” (142). The Civil War was considered a means to acquiring both the credibility of manhood but also the “polish” of a higher social status that officers garnered. As a poor farmer, Richard could hardly hope to compete with an officer. Richard decides that “if he was not worthy to possess Gertrude, he was yet worthy to strive to obtain her” (137); in other words, his self-improvement is for its own sake. The idea of “self-improvement” may relate to the title’s reference to *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, which, as Leo Levy argues, associates Richard’s goal to achieve self-regulation with the self-help ideology of Benjamin Franklin (552-54).

His means of “making himself a man” will be “by learning to think” as well as to work, stay sober, regain the title to his land, and clear his debts. “Then let her refuse him if she could—or if she dared!” (137).<sup>40</sup> His first act of “thinking” is to engage Gertrude and her suitors in conversation, which gives him the “feeling that he had given proof of his manhood” (145). For Richard, speaking, not fighting a war, can prove his masculinity. While Severn and Luttrell experience battlefield violence, Richard experiences one of the illnesses that killed more soldiers than combat did.<sup>41</sup> He develops typhoid (162), one of the major camp diseases of the Civil War (Steiner 10).<sup>42</sup> For him to fall ill with that particular disease in a story with two soldiers has more significance, therefore, than if he contracted some other disease. Richard has contracted a camp disease as though he were a soldier himself, similar to how Lizzie in “A Story of a Year” temporarily becomes a soldier. Richard’s trials in “Poor Richard” temper Richard in ways that soldiers were supposed to be tempered in war.

The effects of this tempering become clear to Gertrude, who has previously complained about Richard’s immaturity. After he begins to devote himself to his farm and to engage in his romance trials of temperance, Gertrude finds that Richard has become more masculine. Whereas initially she considers him “an unhappy boy” (150), she later comments, on seeing him work on his farm, on the “manliness” that accrues to him: “The truth is that, in this rough adjustment, the native barbarian was duly represented. His face and neck were browned by a week in the fields, his eye was clear, his step seemed to have learned a certain manly dignity from its attendance on the heavy bestial tramp”

(151). His final act of manliness is to tell Gertrude about the lie he and Luttrell shared about Severn's visit to her home to say goodbye. Once he rectifies his ethical weakness, Richard gains an appreciation of his own worth and thus achieves what is likely the real goal he set for himself when he decided to pursue Gertrude: "She felt that he was abundantly a man, and she loved him. Richard on his side felt humbly the same truth, and he began to respect himself" (178).

Thus the story of "heroic possibilities" may really be the story of how Gertrude stimulates the heroic possibilities of others. For her own part, Gertrude tries to inhibit heroic possibilities in herself. When Gertrude sees Richard on his horse on his farm, Gertrude warns herself, "This is not romance, it's reality," and she controls her conversation, "divesting it of romance," as though trying to control her depiction of Richard as a knight on his horse (153). In a story that appears to borrow from war romance, the expectations of romance do not easily disappear, as her self-castigation over her economical heroism reveals. Thus when Gertrude ends her life in celibacy, her fellow expatriates imagine a past "romance" in her life (179), just as the adored lady in medieval romance ideally maintains her chastity from her adoring knight. Gertrude, who once envisioned herself as the saviour of wounded men, whether soldiers at war or alcoholic farmers with typhoid, ends up as an expatriate curiosity (179).

"Poor Richard" contradicts the war romance genre, ending as it does with a broken engagement, the villain's prosperity, and the indeterminate status of the male hero. The kind of magical thinking that persuades Gertrude that love depends on a formula and convinces Richard that he killed Severn (175) does not,

however, lead good fortune to proceed automatically to Richard once he volunteers for the Union army. Even though Richard eventually enlists, the story does not bestow heroism on him as a further reward for the moral growth his truth-telling and labour would seem to have incurred. Richard “saw a great deal of fighting, but he has no scars to show” (178). The scar, the “red badge of courage,” is not destined for Richard, because in “Poor Richard” war cannot give such courage or any other expected benefit. Richard ends the story with little money, now working for his former rivals in farming and having returned to moderate drink, with a desire but no means to emigrate west.

### **“A Most Extraordinary Case”: The Dying Soldier and the Killing**

#### **Home Front**

Richard witnesses the ways in which a soldier’s wounds do not automatically create a hero. The break in the assumed relationship between wound, morality, and the soldier re-appears in “A Most Extraordinary Case.” As is the case with the other two stories, “A Most Extraordinary Case” both invokes and thwarts the war romance genre. Its most obvious contravention of the genre is that the male protagonist dies shortly after the two other figures in the love triangle become engaged. Another contravention of expectation is less obvious, by contrast, and ultimately leads to a critique of the expectation that soldiers benefited from their association with the home front. At the beginning of the story, Ferdinand Mason has no community: he is an orphan who has also lost track of his remaining collateral family on his aunt’s side. As a soldier, therefore,

Ferdinand has no home front. His war-time work ethic is grounded in his personal habits, on what his doctor calls “tak[ing] things too hard (241),” rather than on his desire to fight on behalf of a family and country. When the war ends, Ferdinand comes into a family for the first time—but even with its presence he cannot re-integrate himself into his community. The home front does not sustain the ailing veteran.

“A Most Extraordinary Case” in many respects focuses on the popular theme of the wounded soldier, an important motif in Civil War literature. Alice Fahs dedicates one chapter of *The Imagined Civil War* to the theme of the “sentimental soldier.” Civil War soldiers in sentimental literature “were highly conventionalized and typologized,” rather than delineated with the individualized consciousness that realism, for example, valued, or with the “solitary rapture” and “intimate communion with nature” that Romanticism valued. Instead, “[s]entimentalists celebrated sympathy, not self-communion; they portrayed experiences of emotion as social events rooted in human relationships, legitimized through being witnessed by or communicated to another” (94-95). Such sentimentalism led to the representation not simply of a parent’s or spouse’s fear and grief over a child or husband fighting in the war but also of a soldier’s emotional attachments and of his articulation of his social obligations.

The motif of the dying soldier was especially popular in the songs, poems, and stories of war-time sentimental literature. Americans realized that even if soldiers did not die of their wounds in battle, they might still face tremendous suffering from their wounds in the nineteenth-century hospital. Consequently,

even soldiers who were not on the battlefield reminded Americans of their self-sacrifice for their communal and national ideals (Fahs 115). As Anna Holstein wrote in her *Three Years in Field Hospitals of the Army of the Potomac*, hospitalized Union soldiers endured “suffering with a heroism which exceeds even the bravery of the battle-field” (47). Though the representation of mothers’ and wives’ sentiments were common, soldiers themselves were allowed to participate in the social commemoration of the emotional toll war took, whether in the real world or as part of a literary theme. As Linderman notes, in this period men in wartime could express feminine qualities, provided that they made clear through acts of courage their pervasive masculinity (27). Men could, for instance, show their manliness by showing emotion, even weeping, over the death of a soldier (Fahs 106). William Howell Reed records how he witnessed soldiers in a hospital ward sit up in their beds, some in tears, when they heard a nurse sing the popular war-time song, “Just Before the Battle, Mother.”<sup>43</sup> Civil War nursing literature, such as Walt Whitman’s poetry about his hospital experiences and Louisa May Alcott’s *Hospital Sketches*, invokes this common motif of the dying soldier, which validated the heroism of those soldiers who could no longer exercise bravery in combat but did so in their recovery or in their drawn-out, painful deaths. If soldiers themselves did not write sentimental literature, others allowed themselves to imagine soldiers participating in the recognition of war’s hardships. For instance, the opening lines of Mary Nealy’s poem “Dying in the Hospital” demonstrate how emotion was expected from a soldier:

I am dying, mother, dying in the hospital alone;

With a hundred faced round me, not a single one is known;  
 And the human heart within me, like a fluttering, wounded dove,  
 Hungers with a ceaseless yearning for one answering word of love.

The tenderness he expresses indicates his loyalty to family and community and thus signifies a soldier's virtue.

Like all Americans, Henry James knew people who had died or been injured during the war. Among these were his younger brothers Wilkie and Bob. Wilkie enlisted September 1862 (Maher 33) and voluntarily transferred to Robert G. Shaw's African-American regiment, the 54th (Hoffmann and Hoffmann 542); during the regiment's disastrous assault on Fort Wagner 18 July 1863, Wilkie was seriously injured on his torso and foot (Hoffmann and Hoffmann 549-50). Bob enlisted May 1863 (Maher 23), and though he did not have the same serious injuries as Wilkie received, in 1864 Bob became incapacitated, as did many soldiers, from the camp disease of dysentery (Maher 66-67). In addition to the brothers, many of James's cohorts died during the War, including his cousins William Temple and Gus Barker and family friends Theodore Wheaton King and Cabot Russel (Hoffmann and Hoffmann 539, 551); among these injured friends was Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who received serious wounds in three separate incidents (Shi 50-51). The motif of the wounded and dying soldier in literature was also a motif in the real world. James himself saw his brother Wilkie lying unconscious in a cot in the hallway of his parents' home because he was too ill to be moved to a bedroom (Buitenhuis 18; Edel *Life* 2:186-87). James says this



image of Wilkie is one of his profoundest memories: he includes William James's sketch of the ailing Wilkie in *Notes of a Son and Brother*.

Like Wilkie, Ferdinand begins his convalesce on the main floor of the family home because his injury required he be moved as little as possible. But while Wilkie was injured in battle, Ferdinand had not been: "it had been his fortune never to receive a serious wound" (234). Ferdinand's illness is never specified, though he does have physical symptoms. In the first scene in the hotel room, he is an "invalid" who is "feverish" with "enfeebled perception" (227). Dr. Knight notes that the "disorder was deep-seated and virulent, but there was no apparent reason why unflinching care and prudence should not subdue it" (233). The implication is that Ferdinand has caught a disease. A Civil War story that focuses on a diseased soldier, as opposed to the injured soldier, may seem like an evasion of the reality of violence in war. In fact, during the Civil War, a soldier was more likely to die of disease than die in combat.<sup>44</sup> Commonly used statistics on death in the Civil War tend not to distinguish between these two causes of death.<sup>45</sup> The outcomes of battles were influenced dramatically—and some battles did not even occur—because disease had killed or debilitated significant numbers of soldiers in regiments.<sup>46</sup> The crowded and unsanitary camp conditions made disease a greater threat to soldiers' lives than disease did to civilians' lives (Steiner 6).

Sentimental war literature was not much interested in soldiers suffering from typhoid or malaria. Nonetheless, Caroline obeys the precepts of sentimental war-literature in her insistence on sitting with Ferdinand while he recuperates. She

rebukes him for showing embarrassment over her attendance to his illness: “Who do you take me for? The hero of a hundred fights, a young man who has been reduced to a shadow in the service of his country,—I should be very fastidious if I asked for anything better” (239). At times, however, Knight suspects that Ferdinand’s illness has lingered unnecessarily. Knight tells Ferdinand that he has “opposed no resistance; you haven’t cared to get well” (233); later Knight threatens his patient that if he doesn’t get well, “I shall tell people that you were a poor spiritless creature—that you are no loss” (242).

Knight does not suggest that Ferdinand is not ill. Yet Knight’s comments reflect a co-existence at this time of the recognition that war has psychological effects on soldiers and of an old-fashioned suspicion about malingering, the feigning of illness so as to escape military duty. Shellshock was not medically recognized until the First World War,<sup>47</sup> but during the Civil War medical and military staff recognized that war could affect the soldier mentally (Dean, “We Will All Be Lost and Destroyed” 143). The condition of *nostalgie*, or “homesickness,” was an accepted medical condition in the Napoleonic wars. In the United States, “nostalgia” became an accepted category of disease and was included in Roberts Barthlow’s *Manual of Instructions for Enlisting and Discharging Soldiers* issued to medical officers in the Union army.<sup>48</sup> Nostalgia was grounds for military exemption (Barthlow 22-23). Nostalgia was considered a mental disease, a type of stress or depression, that could arise from overall military conditions, though mixed with some belief that nostalgia particularly developed after battle (Dean, *Shook over Hell* 129-30). A related ailment,

“irritable heart,” was another attempt at diagnosing war-time stress (Dean, *Shook over Hell* 130).<sup>49</sup>

The vagueness surrounding the symptoms of these ailments may have been a result of the conditions under which soldiers lived. Camp life was so difficult that at times doctors could not distinguish causes of physical ailments from causes of mental ailments (Dean, *Shook over Hell* 132-33). At the same time, the chance that a soldier was malingering was a major concern for both combat and medical officers. According to one major treatise of the war period, “The great majority of malingerers consist . . . of men who exaggerate real maladies of trifling character, or who feign disease outright. Of the two classes, the first is larger” (Keen, Mitchell, and Morehouse 367).<sup>50</sup> After all, a malingerer was an affront to the codes of morality by which soldiers were expected to live. Though nostalgia, according to Barthlow, could be fatal, a diagnosis of nostalgia required “decided and pronounced” manifestations before exemption would be granted (22). Symptoms of stress short of a total breakdown were often viewed as cowardice or as an attempt to shirk duty (Dean, “We Will All Be Lost and Destroyed” 143). Nevertheless, the medical acknowledgement of nostalgia and similar illnesses signalled the recognition of a soldier’s emotional (if not broadly psychological) reaction to war. William Howell Reed, for example, describes with sympathy a young soldier from Vermont, hospitalized six months, against whom “[h]omesickness had done its work”: “He said to me, ‘Do you know how many men die of homesickness in the army? O,’ said he, ‘I feel it so much *here*,’ pressing his fingers over his heart, ‘and I think it will wear me out’” (141). Reed’s

and the nurse's sympathy for the soldier suggest that "homesickness" was a real effect of war as far as many Americans were concerned.

In "A Most Extraordinary Case," war trauma seems a possible diagnosis for Ferdinand. He does not fit the profile of a malingerer, since he did not shirk his duties; instead, he seems to have been a workaholic: he is someone who "always worked" (234). A soldier who has already gained a discharge does not need to fake illness. Ferdinand has symptoms of depression when in the hotel: he had lost interest in his favorite pastime of reading, and had decided that his ailing "carcass had become quite too miserable to be an object worth living for" (233).

At the same time, the story suggests motifs consistent with the literary theme of the sentimental dying soldier. When Caroline calls him a "hero of the thousand fights," Ferdinand chides her, saying she is sitting with him only "on theory" (239); that "theory" could be the notion of the wounded or dying soldier promulgated through war literature of the period. The attention that Ferdinand attracts from the women at the Stapleton party strikes Mrs. Mason as macabre, as if he is a character in a sentimental story: "[t]hey like a man to look as if he were going to die—it's interesting" (259).<sup>51</sup> Ferdinand also exhibits the tearfulness that models of masculinity in war-time permitted, especially if associated with the emotions that home's nurturing environment was supposed to inspire. "Finally, after the lapse of years, he too was being cared for," the emotion of which make him cry "like a homesick school-boy" (230). While on a ride through the countryside, his relief that "[d]etestable war was over, and all nature had ratified the

peace” causes him to look up at the sky “until his eyes began to water, and you would have actually supposed he was shedding sentimental tears” (237).

The sentimental soldier literary motif, war trauma, and malingering exist in different discursive fields. The first of these motifs belongs to the literary discourse that arose from the perceptions (true or not) of the experiences of Civil War soldiers, and the other two motifs belong to medical discourse. For Knight to suggest that Ferdinand is not trying to get well suggests a weakness of will, a characteristic of malingering, not a characteristic associated with the dying soldier motif, which insists on a soldier’s moral worth. Furthermore, the story’s ending suggests that Ferdinand dies of “a broken heart,” grief over his love for Caroline, but the story also suggests that his physical exertions lead to his condition worsening, namely his assistance with Caroline’s glove and shawl (244), his river walk with Caroline (247), and his attendance at the Stapleton party (this last preceding his death). Considering that Ferdinand is grateful for his new family, a medical diagnosis of nostalgia may yet be relevant to Ferdinand’s case, but in reverse: Ferdinand’s “ailment” derives from the negative effects the home front can exert on a soldier.

Early in his stay at Mrs. Mason’s home, Ferdinand explains why his aunt had found him in the state he had been in: “I had become demoralized by solitude. I had almost forgotten the difference between sickness and health. I had nothing before my eyes to remind me in tangible form of that great mass of common human interests for the sake of which—under whatever name he may disguise the impulse—a man continues in health and recovers from disease” (233). This absent

connection with “common human interests” derives from Ferdinand’s personality and life before the war. He is “a singularly nervous, over-scrupulous being” who was “a very accomplished scholar, as scholars go, but a great dunce in certain social matters,” namely those matters related to “being somebody’s son, brother or cousin.” But his rediscovered aunt “was to teach him the meaning of the adjective domestic” (235). In his new surroundings, Ferdinand enjoys the security and luxury of upper middle-class life (239). Yet even though his doctor is generally optimistic about his prospects for recuperation, Ferdinand “feared to inquire too closely, because he had a sickening apprehension that he should discover that in one or two important particulars he was worse” (240).<sup>52</sup> Although the story does not elaborate on the nature of these “particulars,” the implication is that Ferdinand has not prospered in his new environment as he might have wished. Ferdinand admits to Knight that he “is afraid of dying of kindness”: “There’s nothing here but women. Heaven reward them! I am saturated with whispers and perfumes and smiles, and the rustling of dresses. It takes a man to understand a man” (241). On his outing at the river with Caroline, Mason confesses, “I wish to get well, on the whole. But there are moments when this perpetual self-coddling seems beneath the dignity of man, and I am tempted to purchase one short hour of enjoyment, of happiness, at the cost—well, at the cost of my life if necessary!” (249). The desire for being manly is worth the risk of death, just as the desire to fight in the war and die is a cost of acquiring manliness. After his walk, he falls into a three-week fever punctuated with unconsciousness. When he recovers, he is not as well as he once was (251). Ferdinand’s health

deteriorates when he engages more fully with the social life of his adopted home. His outing with Caroline requires “a bold resolution” (247) that he expresses in words and action. The text calls attention to the moment when Ferdinand notices a rip in Caroline’s skirts: “And Mason extended his walking-stick, and inserted it into the injured fold of muslin. There was a certain graceless *brusquerie* in the movement which attracted Miss Hofmann’s attention” (248).<sup>53</sup> It is certainly difficult to avoid a psychoanalytic interpretation of that moment. The “injured fold of muslin” is the only “wound” in the story. The eroticism of his “graceless *brusquerie*” suggests that Ferdinand is exerting his sexuality in an effort to express his masculinity.

But Ferdinand comes to believe that Caroline’s suitor needs a stronger constitution than the one he has. Knight notes admiringly, if not clinically, “She has a magnificent organization.” Ferdinand concurs: “He must be a strong man who would approach her” (245). Unlike Ferdinand, Caroline isn’t a “sentimentalist” (237). At one point her loyalty to attending his sickbed is metaphorized as military loyalty: Caroline “remained true to her post” (239). She exhibits the strength that a soldier ought to exhibit but that Ferdinand thinks he lacks. A proper suitor “must be able to forget his lungs and his liver and his digestion. To have broken down in his country’s defence, even, will avail him nothing. What is that to her? She needs a man who has defended his country without breaking down—a being complete, intact, well-seasoned, invulnerable” (245). He is not a suitable suitor because he is not “intact”, manly. As he tells Caroline, “It takes more than half a man to fall in love” (237).<sup>54</sup> Ferdinand thinks

he has lost his manhood; in other words, war has affected his manhood in a way opposite to what war is supposed to do. That his doctor is the source of this isolation is ironic, especially as the doctor is himself a veteran (232). Knight's surname signifies the idealization of a war hero. Indirectly, this war hero has contributed to Ferdinand's eventual deterioration.

The knowledge of Caroline's engagement with Knight hurts Mason but he tries to take it stoically: "Ferdinand had not been a soldier for nothing. He had received a heavy blow, and he resolved to bear it like a man" (255).<sup>55</sup> Yet Mason compares himself unfavourably with Knight: "He had been a besotted daydreamer, while his friend had simply been a genuine lover." Thus Ferdinand "deserved his injury, and he would bear it in silence. He had been unable to get well on an illusion; he would now try getting well on a truth. This was stern treatment, the reader will admit, likely to kill if it didn't cure" (255). Being an ineffective soldier-lover leads to an "injury" to his sentiment: the solution is to be "genuine," real, not a "daydreamer," to engage in the habits of the community that returned soldiers are expected to take up again, to be a domestic man, not a soldier or a scholar. His model, therefore, is Dr. Knight, the young healthy doctor, and this is the person that Caroline chooses as her husband. The ultimate effect of this modelling resembles Lizzie's situation in "A Story of a Year": since her moral worth is lower than John's, she rejects him. In Ferdinand's case, his moral inferiority causes him to connect with the world in the only way he believes his present situation will permit. This situation, however, is unsatisfactory and unhealthy, and he dies in the attempt.



Only Mrs. Mason expresses the broader implications of the war on people, “lamenting the numbers of young men who are to enter upon it with lost limbs and shattered health” (228). She says to Mason that “you’ve had the war and a hundred dreadful things” (228) and notes that the war “had already made light, in its own grim fashion” of “his future” (257). She attempts to provide him with a comfortable future, promising him trips to Europe. The physical exertions that lead to increased illness are Ferdinand’s follow-through on his statements that some things are worth dying for. In the end, he would rather die than become a European exile at his aunt’s expense.<sup>56</sup> His predilection for workaholicism extends to his life as a scholar, then to his life as a soldier, and finally to his new “career” as a member of a family.

Ferdinand watches the women of the household as a “spectacle” and “with the indolence of an invalid, the sympathy of a man of taste,” making him a theatre-goer, a spectator of life, not a participant (238). He does not see himself as someone who can act in the domestic surroundings of Mrs. Mason’s life. Ferdinand deprecates his manhood and his ability to function as a man in post-war life. Looking in a mirror, Mason sees himself “very thin and pale, and utterly unfit for the business of life” (242). Ferdinand is the opposite of a malingerer: he pretends to be well, rather than ill. Knight reminds Ferdinand that during military service he “took things too hard. You had scruples and doubts about everything. And on top of it all you were devoured with the mania of appearing to take things easily and to be perfectly indifferent. You played your part very well, but you must do me the justice to confess that it *was* a part” (241). Ferdinand continues to

play this role, even after he learns of Caroline's engagement. The part he wishes to play relates to his ability to fit into the norms of the social class to which he is supposed to belong. He is an object of awe even to himself at the party because he is so successful at acting. Ferdinand is able to spend two or three days "to play at feeling well" and then he starts to die (259). His "act" as a well man—"well" in the physical and social sense—finally disappears. The beginning of his dying phase is described as "shattered fragments of his long-resisting will floated down its shallow current into dissolution" (260). This excess of domesticity causes his downfall.

Ferdinand's Civil War injury is an occupational disease and a social disease. The story thus describes a character who is suffering from trauma; the cause of the trauma, however, is linked not with the tumult of warfare but rather with the tumult of the intersection of his social responsibilities to the family, the community, and the war. De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* mentions in passing the idea that returned soldiers can "die of civilization" (486). Ferdinand's may be an example of such a death. "A Most Extraordinary Case" problematizes the idea of a home front as a place of healing, whether physical, social, or moral.

James's sentimental soldiers may begin by longing for home but discover that home does not always support the ideals they expect to find. James's stories do not offer simple solutions to their heroes' problems. In this regard, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* has a more optimistic view of the home front than do James's stories.<sup>57</sup> Like Ferdinand, De Forest's orphaned Colburne is recuperating in a hotel alone until well-wishers (Dr. Ravenel and Lillie) discover him by

accident. De Forest's novel expresses a similar theory of the beneficial relationship between work and mental health; hard work has spared Colburne "that enfeebling melancholy which often infects sensitive spirits upon whom has beaten a storm of trouble" (De Forest 276). The idea that work prevents melancholy occurs as well in James's story, for Ferdinand does not work after his discharge and he develops melancholy. Colburne, however, has a better sense of his place in the new America than Ferdinand does, for Colburne is a "soldier citizen": "[H]e could face the flame of battle for his country: he can also earn his own living. He could leave his office-chair to march and fight for three years; and he can return to peaceful industry, as ennobling as his fighting." Such a person is "the strength of the Republic" (De Forest 521). By contrast, Ferdinand is not a soldier citizen; he is a soldier, but he is less of a "citizen" than the war romance genre expects him to be.

Using Frow's typology of generic structure,<sup>58</sup> the break between James's war stories and the war romance genre arises mainly from a difference in rhetorical content. War romance assumes a speech situation in which the message sender and the message receiver share a belief system about their society: the affiliation of Unionists with goodness, the nobility of the soldier, and the family's positive role in social happiness. The three war stories problematize this presumably shared belief system. If war romance genre, like other genres, attempts to make readable the real world by the formation of a projected world, then these short stories project a world slightly different from the one the war romance genre projects. James's stories critique that projected world in ways that

some Americans in the later years of the war themselves came to critique the theory that war had conferred social benefits on the nation. After all, the community that sent forth its soldiers to fight in the Civil War was the same community that was supposed to heal its soldiers after the fighting ended. In this sense, the James stories question the easy equation of family life with the good life: family and community can also break one's heart, just as they can send one off to war and death.

## Notes

1. The publication dates for the stories are for their first publication, which for all was in serial form. My source for the texts is Maqbool Aziz's *The Tales of Henry James: Volume One, 1864-1869*, which reproduces the serial versions of the stories. Leon Edel's edition, *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, uses the versions of "Poor Richard" and "A Most Extraordinary Case" published in their first book edition, *Stories Revived* (1885), for which James revised the serial versions (Edel, "A Note on the Text" 429-30). "The Story of a Year" was not published in book form in James's lifetime, and James did not revise it for publication. In cases where I refer to the 1885 versions of the other two stories, I give the date of their book publication (1885) for clarity. The differences between the 1885 version and the 1867 versions are minor, but I will mention differences when significant for this analysis. For example, in the 1885 version of "Poor Richard," James changes Richard's surname from "Clare" to "Maule" (a word perhaps more suggestive of physical violence).

2. Aziz argues that James was writing "The Story of a Year" in March 1864 because in a letter dated 23 March 1864 to his friend T.S. Perry, James comments that he planned to send a story to the *Atlantic Monthly* shortly. James acknowledges the story's publication acceptance in a 28 October 1864 letter to Perry (Aziz xxxi-xxxiii).

3. Fahs's use of the term "romance" designates a love plot, as the term tends to be used today, rather than the idea of heroic adventure intermixed with historical and supernatural elements as this dissertation tends to treat the term.

The war romance genre here is treated as a genre of *sentimental* literature as it developed during the war years, rather than as a form of sensation literature (or what David Reynolds calls “romantic adventure” and others call “romance”). See also Chapter One and Chapter Three.

4. Edel, *Life* 1:183. Charles and Tess Hoffmann have found evidence of a fire in 18 April 1861 in Newport, a few days after the April 12 firing on Fort Sumter and the president’s April 15 call for army volunteers, which substantiates James’s account of his war-time life in his 1914 autobiography *Notes of a Son and Brother*. James was drafted in 1863 but was exempted due to physical disability (Hoffmann and Hoffman 529-31). In his highly influential biography on James, Edel found evidence only of a Newport fire in October 1861, which led Edel to believe that James conflated the beginning of the war with the injury incurred in the later fire in order to “minimize his failure during the first six months to spring to the colors with other young men” (*Life* 1:177). But Hoffmann and Hoffman’s discovery of an April fire suggests that James’s recollection of events in *Notes* is not necessarily distorted.

5. James helped nourish skepticism about his injury by his admission that his Boston doctor offered “a comparative pooh-pooh” as a diagnosis, that there was “nothing to speak of the matter with me” (*Notes* 300-01). But as anyone with a back injury can attest, back injuries are difficult to diagnose and treat, even with the benefit of twenty-first century medicine, and the doctor’s “pooh-pooh” does not prove that James was not injured. Critics have nonetheless detected a psychological component, principal or secondary, to this injury and subsequent

exclusion from war service. Paul Eakin comments that the fire that precipitated the injury in *Notes* “was principally a psychological event” (108). Edel suggests James felt guilt and fear because of his war-time exclusion: “James found himself a prey to anxieties over the fact that he might be called a malingerer . . . and had a feeling that he was deficient in the masculinity being displayed by others of his generation on the battlefield “ (*Life* 1:183). Fred Kaplan argues that the injury allowed him to stay home and concentrate on writing, as well as creating an equivalence with his father, who in childhood had lost a leg in a fire (55-56). The idea that James feared an absence of masculinity in himself because he did not enlist prompted critics to interpret James’s “obscure hurt” through Freudian analysis. Adrian Hunter suggests that James experienced Freudian conversion, transforming his “disabling anxiety” about his relationship to masculinity and to war into a physical injury so as to “better manage it” (283). In another Freudian interpretation, David McWhirter sees in some of James’s writings “masochistic restagings of the hurt,” leading, for example, to characters with masochistic tendencies as well as to masochistic tendencies in James (478). In the early twentieth century especially, some critics speculated that the “obscure hurt” was accidental castration, and they therefore used this injury to explain James’s presumed celibacy (Edel, *Life* 1:175-83).

6. Other writings address the Civil War retrospectively: the novel *The Bostonians* (1886), the travel writing collection *The American Scene* (1907), and the autobiography *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914).

7. During the first year of the war, eighteen-year-olds constituted the largest age group for both the North and South (Linderman 26).

8. Henry James, Sr., to Samuel G. Ward, 1 August 1863 (qtd. in Habegger, *The Father* 442).

9. Henry James, Sr., to Robert James, 31 August 1864 (qtd. in Shi 50).

10. See also George Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union*.

11. See Chapter One.

12. Maxwell Geismar calls “The Story of a Year” “a romantic melodrama of passion and the martial spirit—both of which the young Henry knew very little about” (14). A 30 May 1867 review in *The Nation* considers “Poor Richard” a love story, rather than a Civil War story (“The Magazines for June” 432). About “Poor Richard” F.O. Matthiessen speculates that, “looking back at it, James no doubt would have held that it was not immeasurably better than the stories by the literary ladies who then graced the *Atlantic*” and that “James’ triangle against the background of the war is certainly conventional enough, and it would seem unwise to read into it any deep personal significance” (*The American Novels and Stories* vii). James Kraft consistently sees the Civil War setting to be symbolic of the difficulties of everyday life, rather than an attempt at representing the war for its own sake. In “The Story of a Year,” Kraft argues, John’s facing death in war is a metaphor for the danger of “his being ‘killed’ at home in the battle for his soul, sought by his mother and her ward” (23). In “Poor Richard,” “The Civil War is only a symbol for the harsh reality they must contend with” (Kraft 11). In “A



Most Extraordinary Case,” Kraft says “James perceptively sees war as that which accentuates the human condition, releasing our weaknesses in ‘wounds’ “(18).

13. Not that such an absence from the battlefield prevented other writers from depicting physical violence on bodies; Stephen Crane, who was born six years after the Civil War ended, gives details of battles and bodily injury in *The Red Badge of Courage*. This detail is not from personal experience, however; Stephen Crane was able to reproduce his “realistic” scenes in part by reading the *Century Magazine’s* series *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (Sundquist 4).

14. Although no evidence exists that James saw Mathew Brady’s Civil War exhibits in New York, James comments on Brady in general in his review of Thomas Carlyle’s translation of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*. On Brady, see Shi 54-57 and Panzer. See also Chapter One.

15. James excerpts several of Wilkie’s letters (385-401) that contain a few such details of violence. For example: “many a bullet and shell whizzed over our heads in that longest half-mile of my life. We seemed to be nearing the fun, for wounded men were being carried to the rear and dead ones lay on each side of us in the woods” (*Notes* 387). Later,

All along the road from bridge to town Rebel equipments, guns and cartridge-boxes lay thick, and within the place dead men and horses thickened too. We were taken ahead through the town to support the New York 3rd Artillery beyond, where it was shelling the woods around and ridding the place for the night of any troublesome wanderers. The Union pickets posted out ahead that

night said the shrieks of women and children further on in the wood could be heard perfectly all night long, these unfortunates having taken refuge there from the threatened town. That night we lived like fighting-cocks—molasses, pork, butter, cheese and all sorts of different delicacies being foraged for and houses entered regardless of the commonest dues of life, and others set on fire to show Kinston was our own. She belonged to our army, and almost every man claimed a house. If I had only had your orders beforehand for trophies I could have satisfied you with anything named, from a gold watch to an old brickbat. This is the ugly part of war. (388)

Wilkie continues, “God grant the battle may do as much harm to the Rebels as Waterloo did to the French. If it does the fight will be worth the dreadful carnage it may involve, and the experience for the survivors an immense treasure. Men will fight forever if they are well treated. Give them little marching and keep the wounded away from them, and they’ll do anything” (389).

16. James, Sr., writes:

He is very severely wounded both in the ankle and in the side—where he doesn’t heal so fast as the doctor wishes in consequence of the shell having made a pouch which collects matter and retards nature. They cut it open yesterday, and to-day he is better, or will be. The wound in the ankle was made by a canister ball an inch and a half in diameter, which lodged eight days in the foot and was

finally dislodged by cutting down through (the foot) and taking it out at the sole. He is excessively weak, unable to do anything but lie passive, even to turn himself on his pillow. He will probably have a slow and tedious recovery—the doctors say of a year at least; but he knows nothing of this himself and speaks, so far as he does talk, but of going back in the Fall. If you write please say nothing of this; he is so distressed at the thought of a long sickness. He is vastly attached to the negro-soldier cause; believes (I think) that the world has existed for it . . . . Poor Wilky cries aloud for his friends gone and missing, and I could hardly have supposed he might be educated so suddenly up to manhood altogether as he appears to have been. (*Notes* 241-42)

17. The twenty-two-year-old James was not impressed by Whitman's *Drum-Taps*, his main objection being Whitman's self-referentiality ("Mr. Walt Whitman"). Later in life, however, James embraced Whitman's work. In a retrospective piece on "The Wound Dresser," James said "[t]he good Walt" had held a "jagged morsel of spotted looking-glass to the innumerable nameless of the troublous years, the poor and obscure, the suffering and sacrifice of the American people," "without unhappy verbiage or luckless barbarism," and with a quality, perhaps its pacifism and its depiction of wounded bodies, that made it "not such a document as the recruiting-officer, at the beginning of a campaign, would rejoice to see in many hands" ("Whitman's *The Wound Dresser*" 221). For more on James's changes in opinion of Whitman, see William White.

18. At one point both general in chief and commander of the Army of the Potomac, George McClellan was replaced by Henry Halleck as general in chief in 11 July 1862 (McPherson 276), and lost command of the Army of the Potomac in November 1862 (McPherson 324).

19. In the 1885 version she is a “rabid Republican, and he in cool opposition” (“Poor Richard,” *Complete Tales* 227).

20. Fahs notes two statements about the war romance in periodicals of the time: “Romances of the War” in *The Round Table* and in M.G. Snow’s “A Gossip about Novels” in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (called “war stories” [696]). The term “war romance” was also the name of a column that *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* began running at the war’s outbreak (Fahs 6).

21. As it turns out, his family has moved out of the house and the woman he is in love with has moved in: she is the person he ends up surprising, thus the story quickly effects the formula of the lovers’ post-war reunion.

22. Brian Artese argues that James deprecates sentimentalism in his later novels.

23. In James’s circle, both Robert Shaw and Charles Russell Lowell were newly married when they died. For Shaw see Duncan 83; for Lowell see Bundy 345 and Habegger 440.

24. Jack Zipes distinguishes among three kinds of folklore: myth (narratives about gods and supernatural beings in a world that is generally outside the realm of the human world), legend (narratives about supernatural events that have affected specific (and presumably real) humans in their world but have a

questionable real-world validity), and fairytale (narratives of fantasy that humans understand to be fictional) (165-68). My use of the adjective “folkloric” embraces all kinds of folklore. On fairytales and folktales in the work of Henry James, see for example Fincham and Gulotta. The term “romance” causes problems (once again) potentially: but in “The Story of a Year” the war romance (a sentimental subgenre as named by Alice Fahs) of James’s fashioning invokes romance (a sensation genre as traditionally treated in literary studies) and folklore.

25. James Hogg wrote of the Long Pack legend in his *Winter Evening Tales* (see 509-11).

26. Scarry offers among her many examples the terms “neutralizing” for killing and “Day of Harvesting” for the First World War’s Battle of Tannenberg that killed almost 50,000 people (66).

27. James makes this connection between war and sports many years later in *Notes of a Son and Brother*: “There could be no mistake about Gus Barker, who threw himself into the fray, that is into the cavalry saddle, as he might into a match at baseball” (120).

28. Arguably John controls his signification at the story’s beginning when he asks Lizzie to find another lover if he dies in battle; thus Lizzie’s dream about the man of the wounds reflects John’s sanctioning of her new relationship, a sanction he repeats before he dies. He does not, however, control the meaning of his wounds or Lizzie’s use of them for her own identity.

29. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “watcher” means a person keeping vigil over a dying person (def. 1.d.), but it can also mean a guard (def. 1.e and 1.g).

30. “Bovarysme” was Jules de Gauthier’s term for the process of creating an identity for oneself in contrast to the identity relevant to one’s real circumstances. For more on bovarysm see Girard 4-8 and Gaultier.

31. Cooke’s *Surry of Eagle’s Nest* contains a statement similar to this one in “A Story of a Year.” Cooke’s narrator defers a detailed discussion of the Second Battle of Manassas by arguing that “memoirs” are an unofficial record versus official record, and that unofficial records are less interested in “great public events”: “See the histories. The writer of memoirs deals in colors, incidents, and ‘trifles’—not in the great public events about which so much is said in ‘official documents.’” The narrator goes on to imply that a “battle-piece” is far different from the “blurred and confused idea of dust, smoke, uproar, blood—dead men and horses, breasts riddled with bullets, color-bearers grasping their flags with forms torn in two by round-shot—bodies deficient in legs, deficient in heads, deficient in arms—groans, yells, shouts, cheers; and then a ‘glorious victory.’ A glorious victory is no doubt a glorious thing; but it is a brutal and bloody affair—this war-making—under the glory and the laurels” (308-09). Although Cooke fought in the Confederate army, this “memoir” is highly fictionalized in the tradition of Walter Scott’s romances: this passage is the only one that contains any hint of violence. Nonetheless, this excerpt makes possible the notion that James’s apology in “A Story of a Year” may be conventional in some respects.

32. Shi 86. See also Chapter Three.

33. For the role and implications of photography in the Civil War, see for example Trachtenberg. In general, James was critical of the ability of the photograph to record the truth; for overviews of this subject see Bogardus and Sonstegard.

34. On the implied author, see Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*. For a summary of the concept, see Bal 18.

35. Several hundred women, however, disguised themselves as men and enlisted as soldiers. See Elizabeth Leonard's *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*.

36. For a discussion of gender and the Civil War, see Clinton and Silber's *Battle Scars* and *Divided Houses*. For the role of women in the Civil War North, see Leonard's *Yankee Women* and Jeanie Attie's *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War*.

37. On beliefs in favour of revolution among Radical Republicans, see Margaret Shortreed's "The Anti-Slavery Radicals" 77-85.

38. In the story's 1885 version, while Gertrude is using a doctor to treat Richard, Luttrell is busy: "During this fortnight Major Luttrell carried on his siege" ("Poor Richard," *Complete Tales* 239).

39. The 1885 version says, "Touch me and I'll kill you, but I propose not to notice your animadversions." (*Complete Tales* 231).

40. The 1885 revision makes Richard's identification of the means by which he gains Gertrude more abstract: in that version, he must be "learning to live" and he must "find some use for his valour" ("Poor Richard," *Complete Tales* 203).

41. Critics such as Edmund Wilson and Patricia Marks associate this illness with psychological turmoil. Wilson states that Richard's illness is possibly a manifestation of "neurotic guilt" (660), while Marks says Richard's sickness "is a purgative illness" which "functions successfully on the level of symbolic catharsis: once Richard recovers, he has lost his romantic infatuation and comes of age linguistically and morally at the same time" (64). Both Wilson and Marks have plausible explanations; however, what is also significant is the specific illness Richard acquires.

42. Typhoid was the fourth most prevalent contagious disease that afflicted civil war soldiers (after diarrhea/dysentery, malaria, and catarrh and bronchitis) (Steiner 10). Edel sees in Richard's illness an autobiographical element, calling typhoid "an illness Henry James was well qualified to describe" (Life 1: 238). Edel may have confused "typhoid" with "typhus," however. In August 1857 in Boulogne-sur-mer (Kaplan 30-31), James contracted "an all but mortal attack of the malignant typhus of old" (James, *A Small Boy* 398). Typhus is a different disease: it is lice-borne, while typhoid is a salmonella strain transmitted through fecally contaminated water and food (Freemon 205-06). Henry Senior called it "typhus fever" (Life 1:133). The description of the disease by William in a January 1858 letter to Edgar Van Winkle suggests typhus, however, because James's hair was shaved off (Groskopf). The terms typhoid and typhus "were



sometimes used interchangeably” (Steiner 222), as the two diseases had similar symptoms and could be confused with one another; they were not clinically differentiated until the early 19th century (Freemon 206). Evidence thus points to James having typhus, not typhoid.

43. Reed 140. The chorus to George Root’s song explicitly connects family, death, and memory:

Farewell, mother, you may never  
Press me to your heart again,  
But, oh, you’ll not forget me, mother,  
If I’m numbered with the slain.

44. McPherson says that two soldiers died of disease for every soldier who died in combat. Disease mortality was 10 percent for the Union, 20 percent for the Confederacy (416-17).

45. Steiner says that a commonly used figure for Union deaths, 359,528, combines death by disease (199,720) and death by combat (110,070) (8).

46. Most of Steiner’s book is a case study of battles that were affected by the presence of disease in soldiers of one or both sides.

47. Post-traumatic stress disorder was official recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 (Leys 2). Eric Dean’s *Shook Over Hell* examines the incidence of postwar trauma in the Civil War.

48. Dean, *Shook over Hell*, 128-29. See George Rosen’s “Nostalgia: A ‘Forgotten’ Psychological Disorder” and Donald Lee Anderson and Godfrey

Tryggve Anderson's "Nostalgia and Malinger in the Military During the Civil War."

49. See for example Long's *Rehabilitating Bodies* for an extended discussion of other ailments possibly related to war trauma.

50. Another work on the subject was the book *Gunshot Wounds and Other Injuries of Nerves* by the same authors (Mitchell, Keen, and Morehouse) (1864). In their article "On Malinger," Keen, Mitchell, and Morehouse identify "back cases" as a symptomatic category that needs to be monitored for malinger (377-79), a possible source of the skepticism surrounding James's back injury.

51. The reference to the "interesting" man is reminiscent of a statement that a critic in the January 1864 issue of *The Round Table* makes about the hero of war romance: he "is pale and interesting, needs attention and gets it; and the story ends with a wedding on the part of the couple, and a yawn on the part of the reader" ("Romances of the War" 59).

52. The 1885 version says "he was not what he should be" (*Complete Tales* 339).

53. The 1885 version adds that what attracts Caroline's attention is the action's "certain unexpected violence" (*Complete Tales* 350)]

54. The 1885 version says "To fall in love a man must be all there, and you see I am not" (*Complete Tales* 335).

55. In the 1885 version the blow is "as sharp as a sabre-cut" (*Complete Tales* 358-59).

56. The notion that Ferdinand commits suicide is not an outrageous one in the war context. Of 339,681 Federal dead, 391 are recorded as having committed suicide (Wiedmann 147).

57. The extent to which the novel influenced the short story is unknown, though James reviewed De Forest's novel in 1867, two years before James published "A Most Extraordinary Case" in 1869. A minor coincidence that might be a result of such influence is the personal name Van Zandt, the name of Carter's alcoholic aide, which appears in "Most Extraordinary" as the name of the woman who tells Mrs. Mason about Ferdinand's presence in the hotel.

58. See Chapter One.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

*The Narrative of Edmund Wright, Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*, “A Story of a Year,” “Poor Richard,” and “A Most Extraordinary Case” all participate in an American literary genre called Civil War fiction. These texts constitute an early phase of a long-lived genre whose significance to American publishing has continued through such representative novels as Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and Charles Frazier’s *Cold Mountain* (1997). The preceding chapters examine how specific genres affect the texts’ representation of the Civil War’s violence. To conclude this dissertation, I examine the primary texts’ vision of postwar America in the political and literary context of the 1870s and 1880s, for after the Civil War, literary culture, including genre, continued to change, even as violence continued to exist. I will also suggest further areas of research that this dissertation implies.

### Postbellum America: Its Violence and Its Literature

The popularity of war literature remained steady through late 1860s, but in the mid- to late 1870s interest dropped. *Harper's Weekly*, for example, published more than one hundred Civil War stories during and immediately after the war, but the magazine published only two such stories in the 1870s (Fahs 313). Gerald Linderman identifies a period of “hibernation” from the war’s end to 1880 during which Americans stopped talking and thinking about the war.<sup>1</sup> *Miss Ravenel's* publisher, Harper & Brothers, claimed that war-themed books of 1865 to 1866 did

not sell well, though Harper & Brothers published many of them. Joseph Harper concluded that “the public was tired of reading about the war, which had been the all-absorbing subject for four years, and other important topics now demanded their attention” (244). In the 1880s, however, a few years after the federal government’s withdrawal of Reconstruction policy in 1877 (McPherson 642-46), Americans became re-interested in the Civil War (266-97). For example, Richard Watson Gilder of *The Century Magazine* began to publish heavily about the Civil War in the 1880s. Part of Gilder’s motivation was to encourage the mood for reconciliation of North and South.<sup>2</sup> His war series, published from November 1884 to November 1887 and repackaged as the book *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (Johnson and Buel), proved popular with readers and perhaps led to the increase in the magazine’s circulation in the series’ second year (from 127,000 to 225,000) (Fahs 314). The series included standard battle memoirs by generals, but Gilder also published more literary material, including Mark Twain’s “Private History of a Campaign That Failed” and Walt Whitman’s accounts of his experiences as a nurse.

The mood for post-Reconstruction reconciliation reflected the failure of government Reconstruction policy to reunite the nation. Historian George Rable argues that, in the end, “The Confederacy never surrendered beyond the mere laying down of arms” (188). Since violence continued after the war’s end, arguably some Confederates did not even lay down arms. Reconstruction aimed to reconcile the South with the North politically and socially, but such reconciliation was compromised by resistance not only from civilians but also from politicians.

Abraham Lincoln's successor Andrew Johnson resisted the Republican Congress's reconstruction bills and sympathized with fellow Southern Democrats' calls for restoration of their political power, to the point where Johnson was impeached in the House and barely escaped impeachment in the Senate (see McPherson 555-81). The political conflicts were matched by social ones. The post-war period experienced an increase in interpersonal violence in general,<sup>3</sup> and some of that violence derived from the war's unresolved social and political tensions. For example, in May 1866 race riots in Memphis between African-American soldiers and locals led to forty-eight deaths (two of them of whites), seventy to eighty persons wounded, and burnings of over one hundred homes, churches and schools (Rable 39). Race riots in New Orleans in July that same year left thirty-eight people dead and one hundred thirty-six people wounded (Rable 54). In the years that followed, violence became more explicitly political. Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan prospered in a mood of resentment towards freed slaves, Republicans, and Northerners in general. Such groups committed acts of terrorism to discourage Southerners from voting for Republican candidates in state and federal elections. During the 1868 presidential election campaign, anti-Republican and anti-Northern groups killed two hundred people in Arkansas (including a Republican congressman). Similar violence in Georgia turned a 7,000-vote majority for the Republicans in the April state election into a 45,000-vote majority for the Democrats in the November federal election (McPherson 586). Louisiana experienced a similar political reversal when ad-hoc mobs and semi-cohesive bands of assassins used murder and assault against blacks and

suspected Republicans to keep those groups away from the polls (Rable 74-79).

Even after the 1868 elections, extreme violence continued in some states; for example, the U.S. attorney in west Texas estimated that 2,000 people had been murdered in Texas since 1865 (Rable 86).

Just as their nation continued to be affected by war, the authors of this dissertation's primary texts craved the end of sectional conflict but also anticipated a continuation of that conflict. Although I cannot attribute other texts to the author of *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*, both De Forest and James wrote about their post-war experiences in other texts. De Forest was an official in the military arm of the Reconstruction government and wrote about his experiences in periodicals, published together as the posthumous *A Union Officer in the Reconstruction*. In *Roderick Hudson* (1878) James identifies both the protagonist and the brother of the title character as Civil War veterans, but James's first full treatment of Reconstruction themes was 1886's *The Bostonians*, which features a Southern war veteran courting a Northern women's rights activist.<sup>4</sup> *The Bostonians* is an early example of the subgenre Nina Silber calls "romance of reunion," "a reconciliation literary tradition of the later 1890s that celebrated the American man, whether Northerner or Southerner, as a "product of the 'new nationalism' and 'new patriotism', a figure who unified essential, masculine character traits that could be called 'American'" (Silber 186-87). Silber's "romance of reunion" seems to be a postwar antecedent of Fahs's "war romance." In its earlier manifestations, romances of reunion feature a Unionist man's courtship of a Southern woman who renounces her Confederate loyalties

upon their marriage (Silber 109-23). *The Bostonians* belongs to this earlier tradition, even though it reverses the gender roles (the male protagonist is a Southerner).<sup>5</sup> In fact, *The Century Magazine* published *The Bostonians* serially during the magazine's *Battle and Leaders of the Civil War* period. Herbert Smith and Michael Peinovitch convincingly argue that James altered his original plan for the novel to accommodate *The Century*'s interest in the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> James's turn-of-the-century memoirs *Notes of a Son and Brother* give his account of the war years, ones in which he did not himself participate as a soldier but to which he was a witness. He was even able to witness a fairly common story of Northern idealism about economic Reconstruction through his brother Wilkie and Robertson's failed attempt at operating a cotton plantation with former slaves in Florida (Kaplan 85-87).

James's three war-time short stories, along with De Forest's war novel and Edmund Wright's memoir express expectations about what might happen to their country, to paraphrase George Rable, after the laying down of arms. *Edmund Wright* suggests that violence is to be expected after war's end since social circumstances—namely the nature of Southerners and of human nature in general—guarantee the continuation of violence. The idea that the highest authorities in the North and South were complicit in murder and treason clearly overstates the truth, but the rise of pro-slavery and racist fraternal organizations in the South, such as the Ku Klux Klan, suggests a durability in racial and social antagonisms that *Edmund Wright*'s author warns is difficult to counteract.<sup>7</sup> As well, *Edmund Wright* shows suspicion over the government's ability and will to



maintain political and ethical ideals. Unsurprisingly, then, the exposé genre, which informs *Edmund Wright* as well as *Miss Ravenel* to some degree, did not cease with the cessation of war. Indeed post-war documents surrounding the Ku Klux Klan resemble, in content and rhetoric, the types of exposés to which the Knights of the Golden Circle were subjected and which likely served as sources for *Edmund Wright*.<sup>8</sup>

*Miss Ravenel*, whose composition began before the war's end but was published two years later, makes the most explicit analyses and predictions of early Reconstruction. As Silber states, the novel assumes "the superior wisdom and national vision of the northern man" (113), but the novel does not ignore the defects of Northern society. Lillie and Colburne's marriage conforms to a key characteristic of the romance of reunion sub-genre, but the optimism of that plot element coexists uneasily with the novel's scepticism about a fruitful reconciliation of the Union and the Confederacy. The bureaucratic corruption that leads to Carter's and Colburne's marginalization in the military shows no signs of disappearing with Union victory. Through his previous political connections, the cowardly Lieutenant Colonel Gazaway gets posted to a conscript camp and soon finds wealth as a saloon owner and civil servant in New York (481-82). Mrs. Larue achieves her social and financial revival through her flirtations with federal army officers and the influence of a Reconstruction department official, who gives her a permit to sell cotton, which permit she subsequently sells to a New York speculator (487-88). Dr. Ravenel foresees that the North's economic complicity with the South over slavery will lead to future problems: "[n]one of us

ought to get off easily, and therefore I conclude that we shall not” (De Forest 135-36). Though he does not specify what these problems might be, Ravenel’s Christian belief in retribution would be familiar to real-world Americans in both sections after the war’s end.<sup>9</sup>

In Henry James’s war stories, tension lies between the public duties of fighting on the battlefield for one’s community and the personal demands of the home front, with the wound serving as a point where these spheres of action meet. Although James’s stories do not criticize the rationale for the war, they nonetheless bear no illusions about what war does to its soldiers as well as to its non-combatants. The war wound functions as the locus of re-integration, even to the extent that the injury, and its various implications, transfers from the veteran to the civilian, as it does in “The Story of a Year” and “Poor Richard.” The state operates as a black box that turns a civilian into a soldier and then into a veteran who must re-integrate into civilian life. The task of re-integration falls to the family unit and its immediate community, neither of which is always able to accommodate to the difficulties of the transition. James’s stories view this re-integration pessimistically. Beset with psychological trauma and war injury, the soldiers return to a civilian life that was never perfect and find that being in battle has not made them, as Ferdinand Mason in “A Most Extraordinary Case” realizes, impervious to alienation and disappointment.

As Chapter Three discusses in more detail, literary realism gained favour in postbellum America, eventually being taken up by late nineteenth-century writers such as Ambrose Bierce, Stephan Crane, Hamlin Garland, Jack London,

and Frank Norris, and continuing in the twentieth century with modernist writers such as Ernest Hemingway. The willingness of these writers to depict violence has characterized realist fiction of the United States; Michael Kowelewski, in his examination of the stylistics of representations of violence in nineteenth and twentieth-century American fiction, notes that “American fiction is not for hemophobics” (11). John Fraser argues that the most effective representations of violence are attributable “not primarily to the formal daring of the work but to the simple fact that one believes that such violences could actually happen” (50). A sense of realism arises when the perceiver believes that a text’s projected world bears a relation so close to the real world that the real and projected worlds abide by the same rules, including the rules that govern how physical risks, as well as routines of daily life, can lead to disability and death. Roland Barthes’s “reality effect” describes this phenomenon. In this view, Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* is realist because it acknowledges, unlike other texts about war, that in battle human bodies become damaged, even if Crane himself, unlike De Forest, had not witnessed such violence himself and could only measure verisimilitude by the representations of violence that he had read or heard recited by others. For some writers, the absence of violence constitutes an absence of realism: such a charge was often levelled against Howells and James by the so-called “savage realists” such as Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris, and Jack London (Shi 222). Caught by Rooseveltian America’s fears about a perceived feminization in modern society, such writers and critics viewed the absence of violence in James’s writing as symptomatic of a realism that was not “true” realism. My

dissertation has argued, however, that violence resonates in James's stories even without actual battle sequences. *Edmund Wright*, by comparison, contains more depictions of violence, but those depictions derive from non-realist genres such as dark romantic adventure fiction, not from any interest in verisimilitude.

To argue that different genres might prove more truthful than others leads to the question of how these texts might be different had they employed other genres. Another way to ask that question is to ask if a genre can fail to do justice to its subject matter. Claudio Guillén notes that genres, after all, are based on choices people make (128). In his "On the Uses of Literary Genre," Guillén poses three questions that articulate the possible perspectives a study of genre can take:

Is the norm under consideration a model that could have affected the writer (exerted an influence upon the work in progress), or is it a critic's 'afterthought' and an a posteriori category (though liable as time passes to become an a priori model)? Is it an explicit norm and an accepted part of the authoritative systems of the day, or does it belong to the 'unwritten poetics' of the period? Has it come into being by means of a process of definition on the part of critics and theorists, or as a result of the *decisions* of writers, readers, and audiences? (Guillén 147)

The choice of genre affects what Guillén would call the poetics of a time, such that a creator admits to himself that one "genre allows me to activate certain possibilities of meaning and value rather than others" (Frow 72). A different

framework of meaning therefore implies a different set of interests, if not actual values (Frow 72).

Determining what impelled the authors of *Edmund Wright*, *Miss Ravenel*, and the three short stories to use particular genres would require careful treatment of explicit authorial statements, and I am not convinced that enough of such statements exist for me to determine (or perhaps guess) what all these authors had in mind. I have, however, argued that the genres in the primary texts range along a spectrum of approaches influenced by realism and romance. Realism and romance are not dialectical opposites but rather approaches to representation that were available to nineteenth-century American writers. These approaches aid in understanding the various rhetorical, creative, and ideological threads that texts at a particular time and place can adopt.<sup>10</sup> The circumstances under which a genre arises and prospers—what Frow calls “genrification”—depends on the shifting requirements of social organizations at a particular moment: “Genres emerge and survive because they meet a demand, because they can be materially supported, because there are readers and appropriate conditions of reading (literacy, affordable texts), writers or producers with the means to generate those texts, and institutions to circulate and channel them” (137). Cultural and historical circumstances, therefore, made the genres of realism and romance work for these texts. Frow cautions, however, that “the order formed between and among genres should be regarded as a historically changing system rather than a logical order.” Such a perspective “makes it possible to bring together the categories of a poetics with those of the historical event: if genres are actual and contingent forms rather

than necessary and essential forms, they are nevertheless not arbitrary. And this in turn means that the ‘internal’ organisation of genre . . . can be understood in terms of particular historical codifications of discursive properties” (71). My analyses in Chapters Two, Three, and Four have aimed to examine how genres reflect particular historical codifications in particular texts, that is, how both war and genre make their presences known in specific texts.

### **Research Implications**

Contingency genre theory demands that texts must be examined within their particular contexts. Regarding the subgenre of Civil War genres, further expansions of this project could take on other kinds of authors besides American men of European descent sympathetic to the Union (assuming *Edmund Wright*’s author is such, which is likely). These kinds of authors include Confederates, European-descended women, and African-Americans (both slaves and freedmen). Another kind of work would be to categorize texts with respect to Frow’s schema in particular in order to test the validity of his model as expressed in detail in *Genre*. More archival work could be conducted as well. Little is known about the publishers of *The Narrative of Edmund Wright*, and information about them may illuminate the context of writing and publishing that book. More archival work on De Forest might also be possible to supplement existing scholarship on his place in American literary history, particularly on his relationship with realism.

Finally, genre itself has been under investigation in terms of its efficacy in the scholarly examination of literature. One question that this dissertation in

particular has implied is the distinction between a critic's notion of genre and a writer's notion of genre, in other words, a return to the descriptive-prescriptive debate I address in the introductory chapter. Thomas Beebee argues that genre "is only secondarily an academic enterprise and a matter for literary scholarship. Primarily, genre is the precondition for the creation and the reading of texts" (250). But since genre structures meaning in texts, genre lends individual texts some of their meaning. Genre is therefore a critical practice itself. As Adena Rosmarin argues,

. . . the rhetorical and pragmatic answer to the "descriptive or prescriptive" question is that the critical genre is prescriptive, but what it prescribes is not literary but critical practice. The critic who explicitly uses his genre as an explanatory tool neither claims nor needs to claim that literary texts should be or will be written in its terms but that, at the present moment and for his implied audience, criticism can best justify the value of a particular literary text by using these terms. (Rosmarin 50-51)

A theoretical issue therefore bears further investigation: to what extent does scholarly discursive practice resist the discursive practices that a text attempts to establish? And if this resistance occurs, is it a problem? For example, if Edmund Wright offers itself as a history and I as a scholar treat it as fiction, what are scholarly implications of this generic disagreement?

Although I did not intend to establish any overarching theories about Civil War violence and genre, this dissertation has privileged a particular perspective

about violence in literature. Though the primary texts have different relationships with the war and their uses of represented violence differ, the texts lead me to question the presence of violence in other texts. I take seriously John Fraser's assertion that certain violent texts exhibit

a concern with and, insofar as they are revolutionary in intention, an attempt to transform the "real bases" of things. And it is because of that, and not because of any taboo-breaking or violation, that some of them answer in some measure to Artaud's assertion [in *The Theatre and Its Double*] that "the action of ["cruel"] theatre, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world . . ." (p. 31). (Fraser 48)

Where that hypocrisy lies, which masks should fall, are questions that these texts all try to deal with, even if their answers seem incomplete or unsatisfactory. After all, these texts are projections of the real world, and as such they interact with that world. The nature of the projections can help readers understand from what kind of world those texts arise. For this reason, more scholarly work on Civil War literature, violence, and genre may lead to a greater understanding of Civil War America.



## Notes

1. David Blight argues that this “hibernation” period was not as pronounced as Linderman describes it; Blight offers evidence, for example, that popular magazines other than *Harper's* continued to publish war stories in the 1870s (149-50). Blight acknowledges, however, that war novels were rare in this period (151), and that the 1880s did begin a period of increased interest in war remembrance in general, marked by greater participation in veterans' associations and increased publication on Civil War themes (171).

2. Smith and Peinovich 300. In the preface to the *Battles and Leaders* compilation, the editors note that “the ‘Century War Series’, through peculiar circumstances, has exerted an influence in bringing about a better understanding between the soldiers who were opposed in that conflict” (Johnson and Buel 1: ix). For studies on the reconciliation theme in the late nineteenth century, see for example Blight, Neff, and Silber. See also Martin Griffin on the reconciliation theme in the writings of Henry James, Ambrose Bierce, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and James Russell Lowell.

3. Keeping in mind that crime statistics were not systematically collected on a national level until 1933, Ted Robert Gurr concludes that available data shows an increase in homicide in the United States in the decade after the Civil War, slightly countering the otherwise downward trend in homicide rates since the nation's founding. Gurr attributes the postwar increase in part to the introduction of veterans and arms into civilian society after the war (34-36).

4. For more on *The Bostonians* and the Civil War and Reconstruction, see for example Ryan.

5. In particular, *The Bostonians* portrays Olive Chancellor and her woman question reformers as having “a dispassionate, unfeeling, almost masculine demeanor,” and therefore they demonstrate the loss of “true womanhood” among activist Northern women (Silber 118-19).

6. In his notebook entry of 8 April 1883, James transcribes a book proposal he sent to his publisher, a story set in Boston featuring a male protagonist who has lived in the West for ten years (*Complete Notebooks* 18-19). Under *The Century*’s influence, James changed Basil Ransom from a Westerner to a Southerner (Smith and Peinovich 300). James eventually shifted the Western association to Verena; she has just returned from a year’s residence in the West when Basil meets her at Miss Birdseye’s apartment (66).

7. For the rise of organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan in the nineteenth century, see for example Chalmers, Rice, and Trelease.

8. See for example *Horrible Disclosures: A Full and Authentic Exposé of the Ku-Klux Klan, from Original Documents of the Order, and Other Official Sources* (1868) and *The Oaths, Signs, Ceremonies and Objects of the Ku-Klux Klan: A Full Exposé* (1868).

9. See W. Scott Poole’s “Confederate Apocalypse: Theology and Violence in Reconstruction South,” Terrie Aamodt’s *Righteous Armies, Holy Cause*, and James Moorehead’s *American Apocalypse*.

10. The concept of genre and countergenre is dialectical: a genre suggests an opposite countergenre (Guillén 8). As an example, the picaresque is a countergenre for the pastoral or Greek romance (Guillén 74), and *Don Quixote* is an emergent countergenre to the picaresque (Guillén 146).

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