Nathaniel Hawthorne's Intention in "Chiefly About War Matters"

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DESPITE its notoriety among Hawthorne specialists, "Chiefly About War Matters" remains one of the author's least known and appreciated writings published during his lifetime. Hawthorne's motive in what is alleged to have been an act of authorial self-censorship has not been clearly understood. Neither has evidence to the contrary been fully examined. Traditionally, an imprecise account of disagreements that arose between Hawthorne and his publishers has beclouded the genesis of the text, confusing elements of Hawthorne's intentional satire with reported last-minute concessions to suppress and nullify parts of the original version.

The following analysis of what happened brings the essay into its proper light and takes a first step toward a critical appreciation of its true character. Although expurgations did occur, the facts derived from the evidence as a whole indicate that Hawthorne had originally devised his essay in great part as a censorship hoax. As a result of constraints he felt while trying to write honestly about the war, he created a satirical dialectic between his narrator and an imaginary editor. Through this ventriloquism, which has been misapprehended as self-censorship, Hawthorne's essay communicates the importance of maintaining freedom of speech while it is most severely tested, when the passions of a nation in turmoil threaten to suppress it.

I

After following the early events of the Civil War from a distance, Hawthorne resolved to approach the crisis more closely. In March 1862, accordingly, he traveled from New England to Washington, observed General George McClellan reviewing

American Literature, Volume 61, Number 2, May 1989. CCC 0002-9831/89/$1.50.

Union troops, met President Lincoln, and toured Union military installations along the Virginia border. "Chiefly About War Matters," later published in the July 1862 *Atlantic* under the pseudonymous appellation of "A Peaceable Man," presents a narrative of firsthand impressions gathered during the trip and reflects Hawthorne's dissent from the social idealism of the Northern public.

Hawthorne intended his essay to be provocative. Its probing observations sustain a sharp focus and immediacy; as a result, the essay's narrative consciousness is dynamic and complex. The discursive movement of the text registers candid, humorous, and heartfelt reflections, far-flung in their implications and unsettling to the North's moral vision of the war. This persona is countered by the defensive reactions of a censorious editor, apparently of the *Atlantic*, whose objections to parts of the text represent the prevailing mood and opinion of Northern readers.

Hawthorne's contemporary readers were disturbed by the essay's broad range of disconcerting viewpoints about the war crisis. Many were fooled by the pseudo-authenticity of the editorial notes.[1] Subsequently, neither Hawthorne's intention nor achievement has been accurately recognized. To some extent, the confusion surrounding the text has been symptomatic of the fervid atmosphere of political crisis in which he wrote. Even so, the later failure of eminently competent readers to perceive the essay's notes as the author's own is surprising.[2] More importantly, an apocryphal tradition has grown up among Hawthorne's twentieth-century biographers and critics, who acknowledge that the notes are Hawthorne's but maintain that they were his reluctant concession to self-censorship.[3]

[1] For evidence of the contemporary response, see Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884, 1893), II, 311–14; Moncure D. Conway, *Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1890; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1968), pp. 203–06; and Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1973), p. 51.

[2] Henry James and historian George M. Fredrickson have taken Hawthorne's footnotes to be authentic reactions of the *Atlantic* management, thus exemplifying the extent of the irony that has resulted historically from Hawthorne's Swiftian intention. See, respectively, *Hawthorne*, ed. Tony Tanner (1879; rpt. New York: St. Martin's, 1967), p. 159; and *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 2–3.

[3] The misleading information in the Riverside Edition and Fields's reminiscence of Hawthorne (both cited below) evidently led Randall Stewart to infer that Fields had

Hawthorne's plan to publish a satirical hoax was obscured initially by unanticipated censoring on the part of his friend and editor James T. Fields and, later, by subsequent historical accounts of the matter. A manuscript written in Hawthorne's hand and bearing the signatures of typesetters (presumably those who produced the proof sheets for the July 1862 *Atlantic*) still survives; nonetheless, a complete text of the essay as originally submitted has never appeared in print.[4] In both the first published version, edited for the *Atlantic* in 1862, and the partially-restored version first printed in the 1883 Riverside Edition of Hawthorne's collected works, footnotes written by Hawthorne but implicitly attributed to the *Atlantic* editor raise objections to remarks in the text. When Hawthorne as narrator asserts, for instance, that "Man's accidents are God's purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for," Hawthorne as pseudo-editor replies in an anonymous footnote: "The author seems to imagine that he has compressed a great deal of meaning into these little, hard, dry pellets of aphoristic wisdom. We disagree with him. The councils of wise and good men are often coincident with the purposes of Providence; and the present war promises to illustrate our remark."[5]

Moreover, as revealed by Hawthorne's manuscript, he also devised textual disjunctions creating the illusion of missing pas-

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deleted the passages about Lincoln and "certain Cabinet-members and Congressmen." Not able "to locate the original manuscript," Stewart concluded that this material "would seem to be irrecoverable" ("Hawthorne and the Civil War," *Studies in Philology*, 34 [1937], 96n). Apparently basing his remarks on the same sources as Stewart, Matthiessen inferred that Hawthorne had written the notes at the insistence of the *Atlantic* (*American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941], p. 317). Similarly, Nina Baym, *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), p. 267, speaks of the actual removal of "paragraphs pertaining to Washington officials"; and Raymona E. Hull has Hawthorne promising Fields to add the notes (*Nathaniel Hawthorne: The English Experience, 1853–1864* [Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1980], pp. 209–10). Arlin Turner concludes correctly that the essay "remained thoroughly Hawthornean." But his reference to "deleted passages" later published by Fields suggests that Turner was still not sure exactly what Fields had done to Hawthorne's text (*Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980], p. 366).

[4] Nathaniel Hawthorne Collection 6249-g, the Clifton Waller Barrett Library, University of Virginia.

[5] "Chiefly About War Matters," *The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Riverside Edition, ed. George Parsons Lathrop (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883, 1891), XII, 332. All subsequent references are cited as *R*. The essay was originally printed in *Atlantic Monthly*, 10 (1862), 43–61.

sages regarding the Congress and President Lincoln's Cabinet. Each purported suppression, indicated by a sudden breaking-off of the narrator's discourse, is highlighted by an explanatory note. The editor's comment, however, has the humorous effect of stimulating reader interest in the missing passage while characterizing the freedom of description that has made its removal necessary. This element of his hoax seems to have established a precedent within the essay's text, apparently unintended by Hawthorne, for an unexpected excision of an interview with Lincoln. Fields's insistence that details of Lincoln's appearance would have to be modified brought about Hawthorne's last-minute decision to remove the interview passage altogether. This modification of the manuscript text was certainly the most notable, though other deletions and alterations were made as well.

Much of the confusion that has grown up around the genesis and publication of Hawthorne's essay is traceable to the influence of Fields. His account of the matter, including the text of the essay's deleted Lincoln interview, first appeared in 1871 in the *Atlantic*'s "Our Whispering Gallery" and later in *Yesterdays with Authors* (1872). Fields's comments on the censor's role he had exercised nine years earlier have been the source of misleading inferences: "If any one will turn to the paper in the Atlantic Monthly (it is in the number for July, 1862), it will be observed there are several notes; all of these were written by Hawthorne himself. He complied with my request without a murmur, but he always thought I was wrong in my decision." These remarks suggest that Hawthorne wrote the footnotes to the essay at Fields's request. Fields's comments as a whole invite the inference that other deleted passages, most likely those others indicated in the essay by footnotes, along with the Lincoln interview, resulted from his insistence on "alterations."[6] In fact, as will be shown further on, the textual changes brought about by Fields, in the interest of propriety, stripped the essay's manuscript text of Hawthorne's most revealing satirical humor,

[6] *Yesterdays with Authors* (Boston: Osgood, 1872), p. 98; these remarks appeared earlier in epistolary form as part of a shorter version of Fields's recollections of Hawthorne in "Our Whispering Gallery," *Atlantic Monthly*, 27 (1871), 510; and subsequently in expository form as part of a revised and expanded chapter of Fields's memoirs in *Yesterdays with Authors*.

particularly unmistakable signals of mock-seriousness within the footnotes. Fields did not, however, alter the fundamental nature of Hawthorne's intentional hoax.

The editorial gloss in the Riverside Edition was almost certainly derived from Fields's account of the matter. George Parsons Lathrop, editor of the Riverside whose initials are appended to the headnote to the text of "Chiefly About War Matters," was so unaware that the footnotes were a part of Hawthorne's authorial intention that he states, "It has seemed best to retain them in the present reproduction" (*R*, XII, 299). Most likely, Lathrop did not know of Hawthorne's manuscript and used Fields's article as the source of the Lincoln interview passage, which he restored in the Riverside text. Lathrop's apparent reliance on Fields's published account (probably after Fields's death in 1881) very likely explains why the Riverside text presents only a partial restoration of Hawthorne's original essay, rather than a faithful representation of the manuscript.

Other comments in the Riverside gloss, evidently based upon Fields's account, have perpetuated further misunderstandings. Lathrop's headnote, which was retained with slight alterations in later collected editions of Hawthorne's works, states that when the article first appeared, "the editor of the magazine objected to sundry paragraphs in the manuscript, and these were cancelled with the consent of the author, who himself supplied all the foot-notes that accompanied the article when it was published" (*R*, XII, 299). Moreover, in the Riverside and later editions, an explanation appended to the Lincoln interview states that the restored passage "was one of those omitted from the article as originally published" (*R*, XII, 312), reiterating the implication that others had been omitted as well. Accordingly, current readers are still presented with the erroneous impression that the missing passages of the essay's text, which were to have satirized the Congress and Lincoln's Cabinet, were deleted from the essay, at Fields's request, before its first publication. Scholars, as well, have been continually misled into assuming that not only were these apparent "cancellations" once included in the text, but that the footnotes were part of an overall author-editor agreement to make the article acceptable for the *Atlantic* in 1862.

For reasons of his own, Fields in 1871 obscured much that he might have elucidated. In view of what seems to have occurred,

his circumspect account does not explicitly falsify the facts. On the other hand, his confusing shift of focus between matters regarding the article as a whole and the tenuous resolution of the issue of the Lincoln interview does suggest that Hawthorne's manuscript text was unadulterated by editorial interventions and was therefore fundamentally different from the *Atlantic* version.

The impact of this erroneous impression has been pernicious and long-lived. If Hawthorne had violated his text only as a concession to Fields's conditions for publishing it, the surviving version would seem to nullify Hawthorne's original intention. Questions relating to the restoration of Hawthorne's text have not been pursued, perhaps in part because the author has been thought to be unsure of his purpose. What might be construed as malice, however, seems entirely inconsistent with Fields's generous nature. His motivation, as discussed further on, is not easily determined.

Hawthorne's own motivation in producing a satirical hoax and the final form it was to have taken *are* clear, however, from his correspondence with his publishers, the surviving manuscript of "Chiefly About War Matters," and the historical context in which he wrote. Initially, he had written much more than he could include in the space limit of the article. As he told Fields in his letter of 7 May 1862 accompanying the manuscript, he "had to leave out a great deal; else it would have grown into a book."[7] But the necessity of being selective by itself would not have inspired him to invent the censored version of his essay that his manuscript presents. More importantly, he anticipated that much of his material would be objectionable to Northern readers of the *Atlantic*. This fact and his response to it explain why he was led to contrive the satirical form that his essay assumed.

The extent of Hawthorne's sociopolitical estrangement from his Northern world, though well-known in general, was more extreme than can be readily imagined. In his biography, Moncure D. Conway observed that in the early days of the war

[7] *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat et al. (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962-). All subsequent references are cited as *C*. Subsequent quotations from *The Letters, 1857–1864* (*C*, XVIII) are identified in the text, e.g., Hawthorne to Fields, 7 May 1862. I am indebted to Centenary editors Thomas Woodson and James A. Rubino for generously sending me computer file copies of Hawthorne's correspondence before this volume was published.

Hawthorne "had no party,—then nearly equivalent to having no country. Probably," Conway went on to speculate, "there was not an individual in the United States who would have subscribed his article [sic], 'Chiefly About War Matters.'"[8] Conway's abolitionist allegiance, which was a radical revolt against his own Southern heritage, may have led him to exaggerate Hawthorne's estrangement. Nevertheless, Fields's explanation of Hawthorne's notoriety during the same period corroborates the propriety of Conway's assessment: "Those were troublous days, full of war gloom and general despondency. The North was naturally suspicious of all public men, who did not bear a conspicuous part in helping to put down the Rebellion."[9]

Ironically, the politics of the war had flung Hawthorne back into an earlier predicament, despite his lifelong attempt "to open an intercourse with the world" (*C*, IX, 6). The problem of audience he encountered in 1862, though more intense and acutely focused, produced an effect reminiscent of the authorial isolation he had experienced for more than a decade, until the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). Hawthorne had humored himself in 1851 by observing that prior to this recognition he could hardly "regard himself as addressing the American Public, or, indeed, any Public at all" (*C*, IX, 5).

The same could be said of Hawthorne's situation as a commentator on the Civil War, though for very different reasons. An article on the subject uppermost in the national consciousness would come to the attention of the *Atlantic*'s 30,000 or more subscribers. But Hawthorne certainly knew that a magazine with Republican sympathies (whose semiannual title pages in the collected volumes bear the Union flag in glorious sunlight above somber clouds) would have few readers prone to appreciate the narrator's examination of the crisis from a Southerner's point of view. Few could be expected to reflect calmly on the implications of a Swiftian proposal to allow only men of "fifty-five or sixty" to be "eligible for most kinds of military duty and exposure." Most would probably be somewhat puzzled and annoyed at the sardonic tone beneath the veil of lyricism, particularly as the

[8] Conway, p. 206.
[9] Fields, p. 107.

narrator's argument proceeds from a lament over the tragic loss of youthful lives to a poeticized reflection upon the prospect of an elderly combatant's death—the bullet wound "a pretty little orifice, through which the weary spirit might seize the opportunity to be exhaled!" (*R*, XII, 334). Readers holding to patriotic illusions would not be predisposed to recognize the cool anger with which the author seems here to have dwelt upon the evil of language appropriated to glorify sentimental heroics and obscure the brutal facts of the battlefield. Though the essay might reach the hands of a multitude, the unsettling illuminations of "A Peaceable Man" would have few understanding listeners.

Some realization of this irony must have occurred to Hawthorne. The derisive humor in his two letters to Fields, though private, is very much in consonance with the essay itself. Taken together, the public and private record serve as an index of the unsparing satirical spirit in which Hawthorne devised his literary hoax. There were strong currents of public opinion that he intended to play upon, and provocatively undercut, for which he could expect little sympathy even from his friends. His attempt to humor Fields in what seems to have been the first disclosure of a plan to foist an editorial pose on Fields himself reveals the extent to which Hawthorne's problem of audience had complicated his intention. After informing Fields that he had left out "a great deal," his letter of 7 May continued: "You will see that I have affixed some editorial foot-notes, which I hope you will have no hesitation in adopting, they being very loyal. For my own part, I found it quite difficult not to lapse into treason continually; but I made manful resistance to the temptation. I am afraid it will prove a stupid affair."

Circumstances during the next week or so would cause Hawthorne to become increasingly troubled over the possibility of creating "a stupid affair." On 17 May, ten days after submitting the article, he wrote to William D. Ticknor, senior partner of Ticknor and Fields. He had learned that Fields had trustingly "transmitted" his manuscript "to the printer unread" and had departed for New York "without looking it over in the proof-sheet." Evidently, Hawthorne had been hoping Fields's reaction would allay his own apprehensions; now the article was on its way to final production. Not wishing to cause a disaster for the

Atlantic's circulation (as in fact, Harriet Beecher Stowe brought about seven years later with her Byron article), he thought it time to alert Ticknor.

Despite its genial tone, the letter reveals a sharply divided impulse. After discussing the financial plight of his sister Elizabeth, Hawthorne shifts incidentally to Fields's departure: "This is somewhat to be regretted; because I wanted the benefit of somebody's opinion besides my own as to the expediency of publishing two or three passages in the article. I have already half-spoilt it by leaving out a great deal of spicy description and remark, and whole pages of freely expressed opinion, which seemed to me as good as anything I ever wrote, but which I doubted whether the public would bear."

The ambivalent effect of the assertions that follow belies the casual approach in the letter as a whole: what remains of the article "is tame enough in all conscience, and I don't think it will bear any more castration; but still, I don't wish to foist an article upon you that might anywise damage the Magazine." On this point, Hawthorne tries a reverse argument: "I think the political complexion of the Magazine has been getting too deep a black Republican tinge, and that there is a time pretty near at hand when you will be sorry for it. . . . After all, I think I left out almost everything that could possibly be objectionable (that is to say, everything in the least worth retaining,) . . . so that I need not have mentioned it to you at all. Nevertheless, my advice about the Magazine may be worth considering."

These concerns for the magazine notwithstanding, his determination to publish his opposition to popular views, regardless of the consequences to his reputation, shows the strength of his convictions about the war. Although contributors to the 1862 *Atlantic* were not identified, except in the alphabetical listings of the semiannual, library volumes, authorship was no secret among the magazine's readers around Boston where most of the contributors resided. Hawthorne presented Ticknor with this mitigating factor alongside his intention to upset reader expectations: "On the other hand, I shall be known as the author, and should be willing to take the responsibility of much worse things than I have written here. . . ."

Ticknor did not reply to Hawthorne's alert but was soon to confer with Fields. On 21 May, four days after Hawthorne had

written, the putative censor replied: "I have just returned from New York and at once went to the Printing Office of the A.M. as a loyal Editor should do. I found yr. article all ready to send to you in proof and sat down to read it." Though he had expected to "like it hugely" and said he did, he specified changes he and Ticknor had agreed would have to be made. All references to "*Uncle Abe*" should be changed to "the President," and "the description of his awkwardness & general uncouth aspect" should be left out.[10] Fields referred to other troublesome passages, but did so by indicating pages of the proof where he had made markings.[11] At one point, he explicitly touched upon a remark regarding the Southerners that may have resulted in the noticeable strengthening of the narrator's Northern allegiance in the penultimate paragraph of the essay.[12] Moreover, Fields's other markings most likely brought about the deletion of a footnote (in the manuscript text) that follows the portrait of General McClellan.[13] This passage and other alterations of the manuscript were not restored after 1871.[14]

On 23 May, two days after Fields had written his instructions, Hawthorne was ready to return the page proofs. His response shows none of the earlier uncertainty he had expressed to Ticknor. Though he thinks Fields is "wrong," he is "going to comply." It was Hawthorne's decision to omit "the whole description of the interview with Uncle Abe, and his personal appearance," because he did "not find it possible to alter them." Fields had merely requested that he take out irreverent details of Lincoln's awkwardness. Hawthorne "likewise modified the other passage" to which Fields had referred, most likely the

[10] Fields to Hawthorne, 21 May 1862 (*C*, XVIII, 458n).

[11] These numbers do not match those pages the essay came to occupy in the final printing of the issue.

[12] The manuscript states that "Very excellent people, hereabouts, remember the many dynasties in which the Southern character has been predominant, and contrast the genial courtesy, the warm and graceful freedom of that region, with the awkward frigidity of our Northern manners, and the uncouthness of Uncle Abe"; the printed essay was amended to read, "with what they call (though I utterly disagree with them) the frigidity of our Northern manners, and the Western plainness of the President" (*R*, XII, 344).

[13] "Apparently with the idea of balancing his gracious treatment of the Commander-in-chief, the author had here inserted some idle sarcasms about other officers whom he happened to see at the review; one of whom (a distinguished general,) he says, 'sat his horse like a meal-bag, and was the stupidest looking man he ever saw.' Such license is not creditable to the Peaceable Man, and we do him a kindness in crossing out the passage."

[14] Other alterations to the manuscript are noted in *Letters* (*C*, XVIII, 462n; 464n).

comparison of Northern and Southern manners near the end (as noted above).

In connection with the removal of the Lincoln interview, Hawthorne also states that he has "altered and transferred one of the notes," indicating that he performed what would have been a quick operation, due to the pseudo-censorship already established elsewhere in the text. Apart from the interview, the discussion of Lincoln includes a paragraph in which the Peaceable Man "deem[ed] it proper to say a word or two in regard to him, of unfeigned respect and measurable confidence" (*R*, XII, 313). These remarks remained in the *Atlantic* version. Following the longer passage on Lincoln in the manuscript text, however, a footnote that survives in modified form originally began: "We hesitated to admit the above sketch, and shall probably regret our decision in its favor." This humorous signal of satirical intent must have taken on a new semblance of dramatic irony for Hawthorne as he deleted it, moved the rest of the note to the juncture where the interview passage would be taken out, and substituted a new beginning: "We are compelled to omit two or three pages, in which the author describes the interview, and gives his idea of the personal appearance and deportment of the President" (*R*, XII, 312).

While going along with his publishers, Hawthorne distanced himself from their decision. His patronizing reply to Fields as he claimed to be "the most good-natured man, and the most amenable to good advice (or bad advice either, for that matter)," followed by the complete withdrawal of the Lincoln interview, must have struck Fields forcibly. After asserting that the passage "must be omitted," Hawthorne immediately reversed the responsibility, laying the action on Fields: "and in so doing, I really think you omit the only part of the article really worth publishing. Upon my honor, it seems to me to have a historical value—but let it go."

The close friendship between Hawthorne and Fields seems to have been unaffected by their differences of opinion about the article. Evidently, both could remove themselves as private individuals from their public roles. Three months after the publication of "Chiefly About War Matters," Hawthorne displayed the depth of their trust in a letter which appeared as a headnote with his next sketch in the October 1862 *Atlantic*. This letter from the "Peaceable Man" opens with a mock-heroic threat of a

gentleman's challenge to duel, including a near pun on Fields's name:

> My Dear Editor,—
>
> You can hardly have expected to hear from me again, (unless by invitation to the field of honor,) after those cruel and terrible notes upon my harmless article in the July Number.[15]

Hawthorne probably felt that the character of his intention in "Chiefly About War Matters" had been somewhat obscured by the last-minute changes. The note as a whole offers a public clarification. The tone throughout, like that in the opening remarks above, is highhandedly playful. The grievances expressed *do* contain an unescapable germ of private truth, though they are exaggerated with fictitious license. To the public, on the other hand, this "sendup" was sufficiently obvious to have cleared Fields of any serious involvement as "the Editor" in the previous article. Moreover, by explicitly connecting the pseudonymous authorship of "Chiefly About War Matters" with the English travel pieces to follow, Hawthorne leaves no doubt that he meant to take full authorial responsibility for what was, after all, a censorship hoax.

Fields's apparent exaggeration of his influence in changing the essay remains very curious. Evidently, his profound respect for Hawthorne produced an unresolvable conflict between his role as a guardian of the faith during the national upheaval and his obeisance to Hawthorne's artistic integrity. In his 1871 reminiscence, he summed up his earlier feelings by remarking that "the office of an editor is a disagreeable one sometimes, and the case of Hawthorne on Lincoln disturbed me not a little." Seven years after Hawthorne's death, and six years after the South's surrender, the war's outcome and the apotheosis of Lincoln as savior of the Union no doubt seemed to vindicate his earlier judgment. Thus, he prefaced his disclosure of the suppressed passage on Lincoln with the assurance that "I will copy here verbatim what I advised my friend, both on his own account and the President's, not to print nine years ago."[16]

[15] "Leamington Spa," *Atlantic Monthly*, 10 (1862), 451. Fields carefully distinguished between the personal and professional in reply to Hawthorne's essay. Appended to "I don't like* the way you speak of the Southerners. . ." is a qualifying note: "*as an Editor and Publisher" (*C*, XVIII, 458n).

[16] Fields, p. 98.

But this forthrightness and his candor following the Lincoln sketch are belied by the misleading impression of his other remarks, regarding the genesis of the footnotes. Despite his defense of his earlier judgment, Fields's distaste over his role as censor may have led him to the false conclusion that he had prevented Hawthorne from writing the work that the author had originally intended. This hypothetical work was probably of the same order as others, which Hawthorne said, belonged "on a certain ideal shelf, where are reposited many other shadowy volumes of mine, more in number, and very much superior in quality, to those which I have succeeded in rendering actual" (*C*, V, 4).

Hawthorne's own clarification of the matter along similar lines should have led Fields to quite a different conclusion. Here are his final comments in the reply he made to Fields with the proof sheets of his article:

> What a terrible thing it is to try to let off a little bit of truth into this miserable humbug of a world! If I had sent you the article as I first conceived it, I should not so much have wondered.
>
> I want you to send me a proof-sheet of the article in its present state, before making any alterations; for, if ever I collect these sketches into a volume, I shall insert it in all its original beauty.
> (Hawthorne to Fields, 23 May 1862)

Explicit are two conclusive points: first, the public taste and opinion of the Northern establishment for which Hawthorne wrote had compelled him to abandon an original conception, something closer to his own ideal; second, he fully endorsed the text he had actually produced. His strategy of truncating the text was prompted in part by anger at the vehement public mood. As he told Fields, the last-minute alterations necessitated by the omission of the Lincoln passage were "to indicate to the unfortunate public that it here loses something very nice."

II

It would be a mistake, however, to characterize Hawthorne's achievement in the essay as the product of a makeshift plan. His own estrangement from contemporaries evidently heightened his awareness of the danger of self-censorship during the crisis. This concern informs his ironic framework as a whole. While he was primarily determined to give full expression to his critical

detachment from the politics of the war, he accomplished this purpose and more. By incorporating the voice of opposition into his essay, Hawthorne enlarged its critical scope and necessarily detached himself from his own skeptical attitudes. Thus, he not only objectified his vision of the crisis, but also displayed the passionate tensions of the historical moment.

The notes as a whole serve two radically different functions. On the one hand, there is the conspicuous representation of censorship. The voice of the imaginary censor—alternately acute, strident, or unwittingly humorous—sustains Hawthorne's ironic vision with powerful economy. As mentioned earlier, some of the humor that arises from the editor in the manuscript text has yet to be restored to the essay. A deleted footnote describing a general on horseback concludes: "Such license is not creditable to the Peaceable Man, and we do him a kindness in crossing out the passage." Not an unkindly figure, the editor here takes the form of a dangerous oppressor, the benign authoritarian. With good reason, perhaps, Fields may have thought the image of the general who "sat his horse like a meal-bag, and was the stupidest looking man" the narrator had ever seen, too offensive. If so, his reaction corroborates the narrator's judgment elsewhere in the text that Lincoln's stories, which "smack of the frontier freedom," might not bear repeating "on the immaculate page of the Atlantic" (*R*, XII, 312). Clearly, Hawthorne devised the humor in this passage—with the editor's disclosure of material he means to suppress—as a signal that the editorial intrusions should be understood as satire.

On the other hand, the footnotes raised in protest against the text dramatically illustrate the dialectic of freedom of speech. As Walter Lippmann once explained, freedom of speech is not simply the expression of opinions, it is "the confrontation of opinions in debate."[17] Although the full range of Hawthorne's intention in the essay as a whole cannot be reduced to one didactic effect, the footnotes demonstrate this important lesson. Thus, it is precisely because "the freedom of opinion which causes opposing opinions to be debated" is, as Lippmann argues, "indispensable" that some of the editorial remarks stand up forcibly against the views expressed in Hawthorne's text. His application of this principle may have contributed to the impression that

[17] "The Indispensable Opposition," *Atlantic Monthly*, 164 (1939), 188.

he was confused during the war. But the opposition within the essay is a corollary to the dialectical habit that probes for truth in much of his writing. Unlike the Hegelian dialectic, his was most penetrating when it remained unresolved.[18] The value of his analysis in the midst of crisis has little to do with the outcome of events. It was the discrepancy between the ideological faith necessary to win a war and the particular truths as he observed them that engaged him as a critic of history itself.

Finding himself at odds with the American world, Hawthorne could not accept the solution of silence. As he wrote at the beginning of the essay, "there is a kind of treason in insulating one's self from the universal fear and sorrow . . . in the dread time of civil war" (*R*, XII, 300). Self-isolation, a recurrent theme of his life and work, was here recast as a form of "treason." His daring appropriation of this term, denoting the most heinous of crimes during the crisis of the war, raises its significance beyond the causes of the moment, to the ultimate level of forsaking involvement with the rest of humanity. This quintessential "treason" had always been a capital offense in Hawthorne's moral universe. Hawthorne's detachment from the popular support of the Northern cause in the Civil War has been criticized, but his engagement with the tragic drama itself should be praised. As an artist and public figure, Hawthorne fulfilled a moral imperative by making his views of the war a matter of public and historical record. To do so without compromising his integrity, he incorporated the voice of opposition into his overall intention, both for the expediency of the moment and with the full realization that what he wished to convey could only be achieved through a unique demonstration of his impersonality as an artist.

[18] I am indebted to Professor Brom Weber for this description of Hawthorne's dialectic, and for other very helpful advice in the preparation of this article.