Beyond the Romance: The Aesthetics of Hawthorne's "Chiefly About War Matters"

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I. Slavery and Hawthorne's Aesthetics

One of the notable recent reorganizations in Hawthorne criticism is the rise to prominence of his 1862 piece for the *Atlantic Monthly*, "Chiefly About War Matters," which details Hawthorne's trip to Washington, D.C., and Virginia during the Civil War. While James Bense could claim in 1989 that "Chiefly About War Matters" was "one of the author's least known and appreciated writings" beyond Hawthorne specialists, the essay has since become a frequently cited text, precisely because it is now seen as a valuable point at which to integrate Hawthorne's work into broader critical discussions about slavery and nationalism.[1] Many critics, including Jean Fagan Yellin and Larry Reynolds, identify "War Matters" as Hawthorne's most significant, but ultimately incomplete, acknowledgment of the slavery issue, while in critical histories such as Gordon Hutner's "Whose Hawthorne?" "War Matters" exemplifies the non-canonical texts whose increasing significance marked the political turn in Hawthorne criticism.[2]

This recent body of criticism sees in "Chiefly About War Matters" a declaration of Hawthorne's position on slavery and the course of the post–Civil War United States. Notably, it derives much of its authority from a single passage from "War Matters" in which Hawthorne describes his encounter with a group of fugitive slaves:

> One very pregnant token of a social system thoroughly disturbed was presented by a party of contrabands, escaping out of the mysterious depths of Secessia; and its strangeness consisted in the leisurely delay with which they trudged forward, as dreading no pursuer, and encountering nobody to turn them back. They were unlike the specimens of their race whom we are accustomed to see at the North, and, in my judgment, were far more agreeable. So rudely were they

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> attired,—as if their garb had grown upon them spontaneously,—so picturesquely natural in manners, and wearing such a crust of primeval simplicity (which is quite polished away from the northern black man), that they seemed a kind of creature by themselves, not altogether human, but perhaps quite as good, and akin to the fauns and rustic deities of olden times.[3]

For critics, the meaning of the passage lies in the way the mythic and imaginative qualities of the account—in many ways so typical of Hawthorne's style—seem here to dominate the real circumstances of slavery that the passage describes. The discordance between political reality and what these critics consistently describe as the "aesthetic" quality of this passage has established "War Matters" as an emblem of Hawthorne's indifference toward slavery, and, more broadly, the power of celebratory versions of American Renaissance literature to elide northern white recalcitrance on political questions of race and equality.

Nancy Bentley reads the turn to aesthetics in this passage, for instance, as a move that opens for Hawthorne an imaginative space of "antithesis," within which the faun operates as a "logically absurd" figure that allows Hawthorne to

> [join] two contradictory meanings, the sense of both innocence and menace that Hawthorne derives from the sight of slaves. Its efficacy comes from the way it articulates—makes thinkable—an illogical belief. In the passage the black man is and is not like a faun. Through an antithesis that separates the more pleasing fantasy from an anxious reality the figure stabilizes a disordered scene.[4]

For Bentley, the loosened constraints of aesthetic representation provide the necessary medium to convey and sustain Hawthorne's self-contradictory racial ideology. In a compatible treatment of the political potential of aesthetics, Arthur Riss argues that Hawthorne turns to the aesthetic as the necessary way to illustrate what he takes to be the particularly abstract—and therefore dangerously disruptive—nature of African-American identity. Citing previous work by Bentley, Eric Cheyfitz, and others, Riss concludes that, in the current critical consensus, "this fauning of Black slaves has come to stand as merely the most egregious instantiation of the primary ideological failing of Hawthorne's writing and thought: his use of the aesthetic to excuse, contain, or conceal the political problem of race-based slavery."[5]

The dangerous politics of Hawthorne's aestheticization of the slaves is made all the more significant for critics by the fact that Hawthorne begins "War Matters" by claiming to set aside his usual practice of the romance. In the opening paragraph, Hawthorne announces that the crisis of the

Civil War had "knocked at my cottage-door, and compelled me, reluctantly, to suspend the contemplation of certain fantasies, to which, according to my harmless custom, I was endeavoring to give a sufficiently life-like aspect to admit of their figuring in a romance" (299). This seems to signal Hawthorne's commitment to a more direct and realistic mode of representation. And it is against this declaration of realism that recent criticism has defined the aesthetic presence in "War Matters"; though otherwise loosely articulated, the common element of the "aesthetic" as defined in these critical works is precisely that it is *not* the strictly literal or journalistic account of the slaves' condition apparently promised by the author.

Bentley, for instance, describes the fugitive slave section as a "striking fantasy" that "appears in the middle of a narrative piece that Hawthorne wrote in the name of realism" (Bentley 901). She argues that in both "War Matters" and *The Marble Faun* Hawthorne employs "two divergent registers": a "style of empiricist observation" alongside a "diction of *aestheticized* vision" marked by "ideal beauty and ahistorical meaning" (Bentley 907). Her assessment, which anticipates elements of Cheyfitz's condemnation of "War Matters" a year later, is that "The image of slave as faun, then, creates a contradictory link between two dimensions—between a contemporary 'social system' and a world of myth, between the eye-witnessing of travel observations and the reinvention of pagan fantasy" (Bentley 901).[6] Riss too notes the apparently transgressive quality of the faun's appearance in "War Matters," like Bentley tracing the link between the faun in the essay and its appearance in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, published two years earlier in 1860:

> Apparently, the faun has escaped the realm of the Romance and entered the literal premises of Hawthorne's nonfiction. Indeed, even though Hawthorne claims that the seriousness of the Civil War has "compelled" him to "suspend the contemplation" of the "fantasies" he customarily writes, going so far as to assert that it would be "a kind of treason" to think such "idle thoughts in the dread time of civil war," it appears that when he looks closely at slavery—the social and moral problem at the center of the Civil War—he cannot help but apprehend it in terms of the Romance.[7]

Though he goes on to argue for a reading of the aesthetic as something other than mere evasion of the real, Riss re-emphasizes this one passage as the single, key site of aesthetic eruption. The language—however playful—of the escaped faun intruding into the "the literal premises of Hawthorne's nonfiction" establishes the passage as out of place within the essay overall. Riss further emphasizes the particularity of the passage by suggesting that Hawthorne is, to some extent, compelled by the slavery question to break

the literal realism of the essay in what Riss describes as a "hyperaesthetic flourish" (Riss 252).[8] The apparent betrayal of Hawthorne's stated intention to leave fantasy behind has led critics to treat the passage as a crisis of representation, asking what it is about slavery that somehow must be expressed in aesthetic terms. This inquiry has essentially remade "Chiefly About War Matters," establishing it as a pivotal instance of Hawthorne's aesthetic style intersecting explicitly political content, an intersection that has come to illustrate the inevitably political dimensions of Hawthorne's romantic aesthetics.

Yet, while the oft-cited section in which Hawthorne renders the slaves he meets as "akin to fauns" has played a central role in arguments for the importance of attending to Hawthorne's aesthetics, almost no attention has been given to the aesthetics of "Chiefly About War Matters" in any other section of the essay. Critics specifically highlight this passage's difference from the essay overall, yet a reading of the entirety of "War Matters" reveals that the fugitive slave section is not nearly as distinct from the overall approach of the essay as the prevailing critical account would suggest. Rather, the elements of the slavery passage taken by critics to define the passage as "aesthetic" exist throughout the essay, at some moments with striking similarity to Hawthorne's account of the fugitive slaves.

For instance, the reference to an ancient "world of myth" that Nancy Bentley noted in the slave section is hardly a unique feature of this passage. Early in the essay, Hawthorne describes a stop in New York where he finds evidence that the city's business has "considerably diverted from its customary channels into warlike ones," noting that

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

Here the god Mars makes an appearance, casting the war atmosphere in terms of the specifically Roman "pagan fantasy" so many have highlighted in Hawthorne's references to the slaves as fauns. Just a few sentences later, this same paragraph ends with Hawthorne and his companions

> looking towards the mysterious and terrible Manassas, with the idea that somewhere in its neighborhood lay a ghastly battlefield, yet to be fought, but foredoomed of old to be bloodier than the one where we had reaped such shame. Of all haunted places, methinks such a destined field should be thickest thronged with ugly phantoms, ominous of mischief through ages beforehand. (301)

Barely three paragraphs in, not yet having arrived at his trip's first destination, Hawthorne has presented his reader with what will turn out to be the general language and mode of the essay. Though the subject matter is quite clearly tied more directly to real-world people and places than his more fictional work, the language with which he presents those real subjects is simply not that different from his romances, nor is it so fundamentally different from the now well-known passage regarding the fugitive slaves. Moreover, this language appears throughout the essay, foregrounding the imaginative quality of Hawthorne's account in just those ways taken to be markers of the aesthetic by previous critics. Hawthorne compares the Union Army's advance across the Potomac to "old romances, where great armies are long kept at bay by the arts of necromancers" (304), imagines that the bloodshed at Fort Ellsworth will "afford fit soil for poetry to root itself in: for this is a plant which thrives best in spots where blood has been spilt long ago, and grows in abundant clusters in old ditches, such as the moat around Fort Ellsworth will be a century hence," and concludes the essay by comparing the possibility of Southern secession to Milton's account of Lucifer having "seceded from [Heaven's] golden palaces" (344–45).[9] Whatever ways the fugitive slave passage stands out, it is not by virtue of being the sole example of Hawthorne's addition of aesthetic flourish to his wartime report.

This observation offers the opportunity to revisit the issue of politics and aesthetics in "War Matters" framed by a new set of questions. The problem that has dominated previous criticism in one form or another—"Why does the subject of slavery compel Hawthorne (unconsciously or by craft) to present it in aesthetic terms amidst an otherwise literal text?"—can be revised to account for the operation of aesthetics elsewhere in the essay. Recognizing that "Chiefly About War Matters" is a thoroughly aesthetic text means reassessing not just the scope of Hawthorne's aesthetic practice but more significantly the particular means by which it is achieved and its function in political terms. That the essay's aesthetics are not exclusively tied to the question of slavery reveals that its politics, too, range more broadly into Hawthorne's consideration of the United States at a moment of national historical crisis. A rereading of "War Matters" that attends to these moments allows us to build on previous readings that have only incompletely traced the political function of aesthetics in Hawthorne's essay.

My central claim is not simply that aesthetic representation is the prevalent mode of Hawthorne's essay. More importantly, this recognition paves the way for a new reading of "War Matters" that recognizes the link between aesthetics and politics as the central, explicit *subject* of Hawthorne's essay. The essay, that is, represents and theorizes the interplay between aesthetic representation and political meaning that critics have previously treated as its unconscious—a relationship well recognized

as a persistent interest in Hawthorne's work overall, but unnecessarily excluded from analyses of "Chiefly About War Matters." The prevailing observation that the aesthetic is the necessary tool of Hawthorne's politics is thus absolutely true, but in fact more true than recognized by previous critical accounts that have not addressed Hawthorne's explicit theorization of the link between aesthetics and national politics. As I argue below, Hawthorne treats aesthetics as the medium through which national identity can be most powerfully articulated.

Reading aesthetics as the subject of "War Matters" also prompts a more specific examination of the different representational practices that fall under the general heading of "aesthetics." When aesthetics is treated primarily as an obscuration of the political real, an important element of the critical history with which I began, the sheer presence of the aesthetic can overwhelm the significance of the specific means by which that aesthetic effect is achieved.[10] This observation about the displacement of poetics is at the heart of metacritical reevaluations of ideological criticism and its reshaping of literary critical practice, and in part my reading of "War Matters" asserts the value of considering how the particularities of aesthetic form modulate their political impact.[11]

On closer examination, Hawthorne's essay turns out to present a varied sequence of different aesthetic modes, and it is the implication of those differences that outlines its argument. One of the central themes of Hawthorne's essay is the decline of the romance with which he is so closely identified, a form he locates in the essay as the province of other artists, but not himself. Hawthorne's presence in the article is not transparently autobiographical, despite his opening protestations of realism. Larry Reynolds likens the approach to that taken by Hawthorne in *The Blithedale Romance,* employing an "unreliable first-person narrator . . . to essay his political views and critique them at the same time" (184).[12] I would add that the same self-critique is made as well in the area of aesthetics, as Hawthorne lauds the power of the romance only to perform his *inability* to create romantic art out of the world around him, yielding instead ironic transformations of the romance into satire and tragedy.

Hawthorne's artistic self-reflection is developed in parallel with his account of a nation in crisis, a structure that links the political and aesthetic throughout the essay. Hawthorne's turns of satire and tragedy in place of the romance fulfill his promise to leave aside romancing in order to "look a little more closely at matters with [his] own eyes" (300). But it is the apparent incompatibility between romantic form and political reality that conveys Hawthorne's pessimistic and nostalgic view of the state of the nation and of national art. This pessimism emerges from a critique not only of the romance but of narrative itself as an aesthetic form appropriate to the representation of American ideals. Hawthorne's critical examination

of artistic form suggests that the ability of visual media such as painting to suspend time may allow them to depict moments of utopian possibility required of an encouraging national self-imagination.[13] Hawthorne is, in other words, arguing against the idea of a homogeneous "aesthetic," independent of form and consistent in political meaning. In the reading that follows, I argue that "War Matters" illustrates Hawthorne's conception of literature's distinct capacities as a form of art. With implications that clear the ground for a thorough reassessment of Hawthorne's theory and practice of the literary romance, Hawthorne's pessimistic contemplation of literary form reveals a suspicion that narrative trades the power to mirror the temporal progress of history for a necessarily ironic, and therefore discouraging, relation to an idealized national future.

II. A "momentary pause of triumph": the Mural as Romance

Hawthorne's discussion of aesthetics in "War Matters" is inaugurated early in the essay as Hawthorne arrives in Washington, D.C. In another element that echoes *The Marble Faun*—beyond the oft-noted reappearance of the faun figure itself—Hawthorne describes an encounter with the German painter Emanuel Leutze, whom he finds in the Capitol building at work on the mural titled *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way,* an iconic painting of the Westward expansion. The resulting conversation about beauty and visual art echoes the extended meditation on those subjects in *The Marble Faun,* but transposes these aesthetic questions back from Rome to the American national capital. While the Roman setting of *The Marble Faun* has often been read as a site onto which American social and political ideas are displaced, Hawthorne's staging of a related scene in the Capitol building itself signals the section's more explicit treatment of link between art and American national ideology.

The meeting with Leutze picks up on the two central artistic forms from *The Marble Faun,* here depicted as part of the very structure of the Capitol. On his way to meet the painter, Hawthorne recalls that he and his party passed "through halls, galleries, and corridors, and ascended a noble staircase, balustraded with a dark and beautifully variegated marble from Tennessee, the richness of which is quite a sufficient cause for objecting to the secession of that State" (305). Though offered in jest, this comment about the marble from Tennessee introduces an important idea for this section: natural beauty is inherent to the materiality of the American landscape. This idea provides the starting point for Hawthorne's comments on Leutze's painting, still in the early stages when Hawthorne arrives. Seeing the outlines of the mural on the wall and then a color sketch of the completed work, Hawthorne predicts that the painting "will be emphatically original and American, embracing characteristics that neither art nor

Figure 1. Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way,* commissioned 1861. Stereochromy, 20 x 30 in. United States Capitol, House wing, west stairway.

literature have yet dealt with, and producing new forms of artistic beauty from the natural features of the Rocky-Mountain region, which Leutze seems to have studied broadly and minutely" (306).

As Hawthorne describes the painting further, his analysis establishes a connection between Leutze's painting and his own aesthetic practice of the romance. As Hawthorne addresses the overall themes of the painting, he considers the scene's human figures and the spirit captured by Leutze's scene:

> The garb of the hunters and wanderers of those deserts, too, under his free and natural management is shown as the most picturesque of costumes. But it would be doing this admirable painter no kind office to overlay his picture with any more of my colorless and uncertain words; so I shall merely add that it looked full of energy, hope, progress, irrepressible movement onward, all represented in a momentary pause of triumph; and it was most cheering to feel its good augury at this dismal time, when our country might seem to have arrived at such a deadly stand-still. (306)

The "energy, hope, progress, irrepressible movement onward, all represented in a momentary pause of triumph" Hawthorne perceives in the

painting are, on one hand, familiar as the platitudes of Manifest Destiny. Hawthorne, though, draws inspiration not from the actual endeavors of the pioneers, but from Leutze's artistic representation of them. In the next paragraph Hawthorne reflects that, amidst anxiety about the outcome of the war, "the artist keeps right on, firm of heart and hand, drawing his outlines with an unwavering pencil, beautifying and idealizing our rude, material life, and thus manifesting that we have an indefeasible claim to a more enduring national existence" (307). For Hawthorne, it appears, the nation's destiny is manifest in its aesthetic representation, which is made possible by the painter's ability to idealize and beautify the real, a marriage of Imaginary and Actual that strongly recalls Hawthorne's theorization of his own aesthetic practice in the construction of his romances. One need only consult the well-known prefatory remarks that introduce Hawthorne's romances—for instance, Hawthorne's elevation of the romance's "legendary mist" over the novel's "very minute fidelity"—to find accounts of his own effort to create an aesthetic vision that eschews mimetic detail for the intertwined idealization and beautification of the romance.[14]

The logic of motion that Hawthorne locates in the opposed pairs—"energy, hope, progress, irrepressible movement onward" versus "a deadly stand-still"—highlights the painting's engagement with the movements of history and progress, another element that ties the mural to Hawthorne's own work. And yet, the most noteworthy element of the painting in this context is the fact that the painting captures not so much motion (as, for instance, in John Gast's later painting *American Progress,* dominated by a forward-leaning American angel sweeping westward across the American plains) as a pause Hawthorne himself describes as a "moment of triumph." In his own notes on the painting, Leutze describes the design as follows: "A party of Emigrants have arrived near sunset on the divide (watershed from whence they have the first view of the pacific slope, their 'promised land' 'Eldorado' having passed the troubles of the plains, 'The valley of darkness' &c.——."[15] For both Hawthorne and Leutze, the painting is defined by its representation of a particular temporality. The painting is meant to capture a liminal moment, triumphant in that all obstacles have been overcome, but at a point when the journey is not quite complete, for the promised land remains at a distance, beckoning from the far horizon. Neither here nor there, neither in the darkness of past trouble nor the sunshine of the destined future, the settlers have won their victory but still look forward to claiming their reward.

This is, of course, only another instance of Hawthorne's persistent reference to the visual arts throughout his work, culminating with the construction of *The Marble Faun* around the "aesthetic company" of Hilda, Kenyon, and Miriam, with each character providing a different visual art for Hawthorne's ruminations. Hawthorne scholars have turned to these

references as sites that reveal Hawthorne's theorization of his own artistic practice, seeing Hawthorne's discussion of visual art as the evocation of an instructive analogy.[16] In *Prophetic Pictures: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Knowledge and Uses of the Visual Arts,* Gollin and Idol argue that the depth of Hawthorne's self-conscious connection to the visual arts is reflected not only in explicit references but also in his "pictorial" sequencing of scenes—a technique that privileges image over narrative flow. In related work, Kristie Hamilton reads Hawthorne's use of the literary "sketch"—a genre originating out of its analogy to drawing—as a response to the essential speed of modern life, "invaluable to perceiving and conveying a world imbued with momentum" (104).[17] The sense Hamilton describes of representation pitted against the passage of time, of sketches as capturing moments as a ward against "premature obsolescence," as "provisions for sustaining modernity and its subjects" (117) highlights the importance of temporality in Hawthorne's understanding of the visual arts. This emphasis structures Hawthorne's analysis of Leutze's painting, for it is the feeling of narrative suspension that Hawthorne seemingly admires in the mural. Both in terms of the subject matter—a moment poised between the struggles of the past and final victory—and the inherent capacity of the still image to more comfortably suspend a moment than narrative, painting appears in "War Matters" as the appropriate art of national hope, "sustaining" national self-identity against the war's threat of impending obsolescence.

It is true that Hawthorne's work reflects a deep and abiding interest in the connection between American national identity and—to use the language of *The Scarlet Letter*'s first chapter—an endlessly deferred "Utopia of human virtue and happiness." In this way, Hawthorne's praise of Leutze marks them as kindred spirits. On the other hand, Hawthorne's rueful observation in *The Scarlet Letter* that mortality and immorality make a graveyard and prison the "earliest practical necessities" in the establishment of social order signals his long-standing concern that utopian projections do not survive their realization. In terms of Leutze's painting, one has the sense that, in Hawthorne's view, "moment[s] of triumph" precede but do not survive arrival to the promised land, the dead standstill of settlement, or the rude, material everyday life that follows.

As "War Matters" moves forward, this dilemma becomes a crisis, and as a result the example of painting and its encouraging patriotic aesthetics takes on an unusual role. It turns out to be crucially important that painting appears as the exclusive site for the "beautifying and idealizing" of the American nation. Thus, while I agree with Larry Reynolds's recent observation that Hawthorne's account of Leutze seems largely self-reflexive, offering "a glimpse of Hawthorne's sense of himself as an artist and a patriot," it is important to note that within "Chiefly About War Matters" Hawthorne emphasizes the degree to which he cannot live up to Leutze's example (131).

Leuzte, in other words, defines what Hawthorne might wish to be as "an artist and a patriot" (and perhaps even what he might once have been) but is not. No longer an illustrative analogy for the romance, the visual arts become estranged from Hawthorne's own literary practice and serve instead as a troubling counterpoint.[18] If the stillness of painting can fulfill the obligation of a national art by capturing the nation's ideal ideological moment, what, then, is the place of narrative and its capacity to render the experience of moving through time?

It is the mark of Hawthorne's deep pessimism in "War Matters" that his efforts to place the national "moment of triumph" into the context of an historical narrative do not succeed. As he refigures the moment of the Leutze painting, Hawthorne highlights his inability to reproduce the painter's idealization, transposing romantic triumph into satire and tragedy. In the sections that follow, I examine two crucial instances of this reflection on the capacities of literature as an essentially narrative art: Hawthorne's account of President Lincoln and the now well-known description of the fugitive slaves. At these moments Hawthorne depicts a gap between what literary aesthetics can do and what the nation needs, signaling grave doubts about both the nation's future and the function of a genuinely *American* literature.

III. "The homeliest man I ever saw": Abraham Lincoln as Aesthetic Object

That Hawthorne's readers would have best known Emmanuel Leutze as the artist of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* gives considerable irony to the next section of "War Matters," in which Hawthorne offers his own, far less heroic presidential portrait. The section begins with Hawthorne and other members of his party awaiting the arrival of Abraham Lincoln in the White House, until "[b]y and by there was a little stir on the staircase and in the passage-way, and in lounged a tall, loose-jointed figure, of an exaggerated Yankee port and demeanor, whom (as being about the homeliest man I ever saw, yet by no means repulsive or disagreeable) it was impossible not to recognize as Uncle Abe" (309). Hawthorne's initial impression is a thoroughly aesthetic one, moreover one that inverts the "beautifying and idealizing" romantic style by which he has just defined Leutze's encouraging, patriotic aesthetic in *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way.* Hawthorne's Lincoln is not beautiful but homely, not idealized but exaggerated. In short, Hawthorne signals from the beginning that the aesthetic register has shifted into a satirical mode that will pointedly not manifest "an indefeasible claim to a more enduring national existence" (307).

While other critics have noted the role of satire in "War Matters," they have not connected their formal reading to a clear sense of the text's other aesthetic modes, much as the slavery-based readings have avoided the

aesthetic content outside of the sections on slavery.[19] Thus, these readings have highlighted an important element of Hawthorne's text, but leave out what I take to be crucial context for Hawthorne's shift to a satirical mode. The full significance of the passage lies in the appearance of satire as a form that actively refuses the terms by which Hawthorne has just defined hopeful national art in the section on Leutze.[20]

Hawthorne elaborates his satire with a more thorough account of Lincoln's homely nature, playfully reflecting on the interaction between Lincoln's essential and apparent qualities, developing a complicated set of relationships between what Lincoln is and how he looks—a fundamentally aesthetic relationship between appearance and deeper truth. At the beginning of a long paragraph in which he contemplates the president, Hawthorne begins by reflecting, "Western man though he be, and Kentuckian by birth, President Lincoln is the essential representative of all Yankees, and the veritable specimen, physically, of what the world seems determined to regard as our characteristic qualities" (309). Hawthorne comments on Lincoln's power as iconic representation, reading the president as he does the pioneers in the Leutze painting: as an abstracted, visual representation of a national ideal. Yet, when Hawthorne notes that "the world" outside America "seems determined" to define America as physically and essentially like Lincoln, that willful determination to interpret in a certain way suggests that Lincoln may not in fact *be* the essential American that he is rapidly coming to represent, which reveals the ironic gap between ideal and actual that structures the entire section.

Throughout "War Matters" Hawthorne pointedly notes the distinctive products and characteristics of particular states and regions—a significant trope given the setting of Civil War and looming threat of the nation disuniting at the behest of its constituent states. Here, Hawthorne balances Lincoln's appearance with the reminder that the President is a Western man and "Kentuckian by birth," an apparent comment on inherent elements of Lincoln's character and physical being. In so doing, however, Hawthorne suggests that the outward reflection of Lincoln's regionally specific type is misunderstood in specifically national terms. The central claim seems to be this: Lincoln is not the essential American because he is something other—a Kentuckian and a Westerner.

At this point the "West" in Hawthorne's account splits into two increasingly separate sets of associations. While the western pioneers of Leutze's painting occupy a West of abstract national promise, Lincoln literally embodies the West as barely civilized frontier. This impression is conveyed, for instance, by Hawthorne's description of Lincoln's clothing as a seemingly natural outer layer, rather than the "picturesque" pioneer garb Hawthorne admired in Leutze's painting. He writes that Lincoln "was dressed in a rusty black frock-coat and pantaloons, unbrushed, and

worn so faithfully that the suit had adapted itself to the curves and angularities of his figure, and had grown to be an outer skin of the man" (310). Amidst so much critical attention to the ways in which the fugitive slaves in "War Matters" reflect Hawthorne's wistful and conservative politics, this account of Lincoln has gone essentially unnoticed, despite the striking similarity of this passage to Hawthorne's description of the fugitive slaves as "rudely . . . attired,—as if their garb had grown upon them spontaneously" (318–19). In both cases, the clothing which might mark the figures as "human" or "civilized" rather than "natural" is undone by fancifully imagining the clothing as a natural outgrowth, a parodic imitation of clothing as marker of culture.

There are, without question, differences, even as one recognizes the parallel between the Lincoln and slave sections. Most significantly, Hawthorne expresses little if any nostalgic regret about Lincoln's development, an important difference from the account Hawthorne provides of the fugitive slaves' journey toward a tragic loss of Edenic innocence. It is presumably the difference of race that allows Lincoln to achieve the hybrid identity of Kentuckian/President that Hawthorne describes. In the end Lincoln need not entirely give up his natural simplicity as he joins the center of American political power. Still, the section on Lincoln is at pains to differentiate between Lincoln's earthy, Western nature and the idealized American standing at the threshold of Leutze's utopian American future.

By asserting this difference the Lincoln section reworks the geographic logic of the Leutze painting, particularly the status of the "West." The painting doubles the figure of the West as the site of promise and "enduring national existence." The American West is both the literal setting—the Rocky Mountains looking out toward the Pacific—and its figurative one, depicting the West as the yet unattained space of future success. The West from which Lincoln hails, however, is not the distant space of hope but a far more mundane frontier at the ragged edge of what Hawthorne views as the domain of American social and political power.

If it is indeed the case that, for Hawthorne, the West can only manifest our national promise insofar as it remains an idealized image, it should not be surprising that Lincoln's Kentucky is no longer such a place, even if it once was. Describing Lincoln's home as Western, Hawthorne invokes a characteristically palimpsestic geographical/historical vision. As he is so often fascinated by the revision of New England geography whereby the "same" place has been English colony then American nation, here Hawthorne plays with the idea of "Western" as a space transformed from what it once was—the West of potential and imagination—to what it now is—a space of "rude, material life" exemplified, and indeed exaggerated, in the figure of Lincoln.[21] In making this point, Hawthorne is effectively historicizing the moment of the Leutze painting, reminding his readers

(as he does in the opening of *The Scarlet Letter*) that American history is a series of projections toward a better future. These projections carry revolutionary potential about which Hawthorne is conflicted but which he does not entirely refuse, yet each projection also encourages forgetfulness about the similar moments that have preceded it, unwilling to let prior failures cast doubt on their own prospects.

The Lincoln section elaborates the difference between what ideally could be and what is, a distinction quite compatible with previous criticism that has evaluated the aesthetic in "War Matters" largely by treating aesthetics as a space in which the non-real is represented. From this critical perspective, Hawthorne's aesthetic account of the slaves is read as an effort to render the actual slaves as less pressingly real (as in Cheyfitz's reading) or as a space in which Hawthorne can experiment with permutations of identity and nature outside of those he actually encounters (as in Bentley and Riss). I am arguing, however, that the Lincoln section functions in a fundamentally different way. Hawthorne does not signal the difference between ideal and actual by alternately applying and avoiding aesthetics; rather, the Lincoln section introduces an ironic aesthetic mode defined by its difference from the painterly, romantic aesthetic he has previously defined as capable of preserving the national ideal.

When Hawthorne remarks later that "on the whole, I like this sallow, queer, sagacious visage, with the homely human sympathies that warmed it; and, for my small share in the matter, would as lief have Uncle Abe for a ruler as any man whom it would have been practicable to put in his place," it should be noted that his praise (however damningly faint) is contingent on a limitation to the "practicable" (311). These are the terms under which Hawthorne creates his portrait of Lincoln: thoroughly aesthetic but pointedly not idealized, because Lincoln's presidency is an event that illustrates practical realities having won out over the ideal. The exaggerated materiality of the Lincoln section takes its full meaning when read against the backdrop of the earlier theorization of idealizing national aesthetics as practiced by the essay's other artist, the painter Leutze.

The "idealizing and beautifying" epitome of that other art is the suspended moment of triumph, just before arrival in a promised land that lays geographically and historically ahead. Having defined this ideal, Hawthorne uses his meeting with Lincoln to actively diverge from that aesthetic, depicting Lincoln as more grotesque than picturesque, defined by his stubbornly material being—a being that Hawthorne is unwilling or (facetiously) unable to idealize or beautify. Lincoln's exaggeratedly material, practical presence appears in the essay as satire, illustrating a ruefully comic contrast between hope and actual experience. As such, the West is dragged from the utopian future into the mundane everyday. Or, to use the language of Leutze's title, itself a borrowing from George Berkeley's poetry,

the course of empire takes its way westward; it converts the dream-West of the future into the uncouth homeliness of Lincoln's Kentucky.

IV. The Tragedy of "contrabands . . . akin to the fauns and rustic deities of olden times"

The observation that Hawthorne is making his meaning in "War Matters" by the variation of aesthetic modes implies a different approach to aesthetics in the oft-read fugitive slave section than has so far occupied most critics' attention. Rather than repeating the question of why Hawthorne presents the slaves in aesthetic terms, I want to revisit the passage to examine how the aesthetic mode Hawthorne develops in the section compares to those before it, particularly its alignment with the beautifying and idealizing aesthetic of American art.

The consistent critique of Hawthorne's treatment of the subject of slavery has rested largely on the idea that Hawthorne's aesthetic effaces the oppressive reality of slavery by substituting a consideration of the slaves he depicts as "akin to the fauns and rustic deities of olden times" (319). As Hawthorne makes fairly explicit, this section is engaging a "beautifying and idealizing" mode of aesthetic representation, inasmuch as the passage takes the fact of their "picturesque" appearance as the occasion to render them as an epitome, an idealization of the quality of the slaves Hawthorne intends to emphasize. As the Romans had invented fauns as an embodiment of pre-cultural nature, so here does Hawthorne turn the actual slaves in to emblems of that same natural state.[22]

But this is only a part of aesthetic framework Hawthorne has laid out in the essay. Along with his contemplation of the slaves synchronically—a study of what defines them in Hawthorne's view—Hawthorne repeats his use of a geographical/historical connection, in this instance turning away from Westward expansion to consider the other crucial geographic dynamic in the middle nineteenth century: the division between north and south and the redemptive movement of fugitive slaves across that boundary into the North.

Hawthorne's account of the slaves does seem to take for granted the transformative nature of their forthcoming arrival to the North; his main preoccupation is the civilizing change awaiting the slaves rather than an evaluation of whether that change is possible. Nowhere in this section does Hawthorne contemplate that the slaves will not be changed by their passage to the North, a literal passage that provides the metaphor for emancipation and the integration of former southern slaves into American society. In fact, as most critics note, Hawthorne contrasts the southern slaves with "the northern black man" from whom that "primeval simplicity . . . is quite polished away" (318). Understandably, critics highlight

this comparison as a way to emphasize the troubling fact that Hawthorne is undecided about the basic humanity of the slaves he describes. At the same time it is also worth noting that the casual reference to the northern black man, amidst the condescension of its post-lapsarian nostalgia, further encourages the reader to believe that the slaves' transformation will in fact happen. The issue, in other words, is not whether the slaves will become "northern black men," but whether this is for the best.

Hawthorne's infamous hesitation on this point—"For the sake of the manhood which is latent in them, I would not have turned them back; but I should have felt almost as reluctant, on their own account, to hasten them forward to the stranger's land" (319)—emphasizes the indeterminate historicity of the scene, caught between the slaves' successful escape from the South—"they trudged forward, as dreading no pursuer, and encountering nobody to turn them back"—and their arrival in the North. In this, the scene recalls, structurally, the scene in the Leutze painting, with the central figures in each having passed all obstacles, awaiting only the final arrival in the promised land beyond.[23]

A crucial difference, however, is that Hawthorne once again repeats this aesthetic structure in order to create an ironic contrast to the Leutze example. As in the section on Lincoln, Hawthorne constructs this scene within the geographical/historical scheme that structures the narrative elements of Hawthorne's aesthetics in the "War Matters" essay.[24] The irony in this section comes not from the slave's present state, but in the tragic quality of their future. Like Leutze's pioneers, they stand on the verge of their future, but unlike the figures in that painting, that future does not remain deferred. Instead, it is revealed that the North into which they are heading is the unknown, open future only from the slaves' limited perspective. From Hawthorne's view, which he offers as an authoritatively more broad perspective, a perspective that opens the space of the tragic irony between the slaves' expectations and his foreknowledge of their impending loss, that space is an already inhabited space of the present, exhausted of its power as site of utopian projection. In other words, it is as if Hawthorne feels compelled to reveal the future that a Leutze-like "moment of triumph" could have suspended, and here too the reader finds that engagement with the future robs it of its encouraging potential. Hawthorne—showing no deficit of conceit—writes as someone who already knows the end of the slaves' story, establishing the tragic irony of the slaves' misplaced hope.[25]

While Hawthorne's acknowledgment of "northern black men" and his sense of the slaves' "latent manhood" speak to their arrival in the North as transformative to some degree, his pessimistic "prevalent idea" casts that transformation as falling far short of any redemptive ideal: "whoever may be benefited by the results of this war, it will not be the present generation of negroes, the childhood of whose race is now gone forever, and who must

henceforth fight a hard battle with the world, on very unequal terms" (319). This section engages with one of the central structures of abolitionist literature—the fugitive slave passage to the North as metaphor for the eventual freedom of all slaves through abolition—but defuses the progressive logic of that story. Hawthorne's already suspect suggestion that "an inscrutable Providence means good to both parties" seems all the less encouraging in the context of his efforts to substitute tragedy for hope. This observation coincides with the critical account of Hawthorne as fundamentally disinterested in addressing the oppressive political reality of slavery or acknowledging his role in a system of racial power, but reading this section as an instance of the aesthetic variations throughout "War Matters" clarifies what his interest in the slave party might actually be. The slaves are, in the end, characters playing a role in the story that *does* interest Hawthorne: the falling away of the nation from its ideals and the waning power of his artistic practice to meaningfully intervene in that collapse.

V. The End of the Romance

In the reading I have outlined above, "Chiefly About War Matters" reveals a central concern with the capacity of art to convey what Hawthorne takes to be the ideal ideological image of America projecting itself toward a deservedly glorious future. Hawthorne's assessment of that capacity hinges on his assertion that different media and modes of aesthetic representation will produce different results, with the implication that the political meaning of art must be detected through attention to the particularity of its construction. In both the theorization and practice of aesthetics Hawthorne provides, there is an argument for the necessity of poetics as a tool by which art's political meaning may be understood.

That argument is most effectively presented by the contrast Hawthorne establishes between himself and the painter Leutze, a comparison that allows Hawthorne to assess not only the power of different literary forms (romance, satire, and tragedy) but also between media. By attributing the power of romance to Leutze, Hawthorne distances himself from the aesthetic form for which he is best known and revises the analogy to visual art by which he so often explained his aesthetic goals. Whereas the visual arts most often provide Hawthorne with a way to analogize some element of his own literary practices, here the Leutze painting serves as a foil for his own pessimistic literary representations. Central to this opposition is an emphasis on a fundamental difference between visual and textual representation—namely, their relationship to narrative. The Leutze painting is, after all, presented by Hawthorne as possessed of a narrative aesthetic—"it looked full of energy, hope, progress, irrepressible movement onward, all represented in a momentary pause of triumph;

and it was most cheering to feel its good augury at this dismal time, when our country might seem to have arrived at such a deadly stand-still"—whereby the progress depicted in the painting enables the viewer to imagine a parallel movement in the real-world narrative space of American history at the crossroads of civil war.

As the essay unfolds, it becomes more and more clear that the key to the painting's aesthetic force is its presentation of the "momentary pause of triumph." The sections describing Lincoln and the fugitive slaves explore times and places that lie beyond that moment, and present the realization of triumphs once anticipated almost exclusively in terms of loss. In earlier writings Hawthorne seems to have been more willing to consider the pragmatic, realistic trade-offs generated when the ideal becomes actual, but in "War Matters" Hawthorne seems resolute in his nostalgia for the moment in which triumph exists just into the future.[26] As such, painting assumes the privileged position it has within the essay only in relation to its properties as a medium. Here, painting's narrative limitation becomes an asset, justifying a temporal fixity that Hawthorne cannot justify in his own writing, for Hawthorne seems compelled by the nature of his literary medium to finish the story, to present the West after its passage from ideal to actual and to foretell the tragedy he sees awaiting the fugitive slaves at the end of their journey.

The tension "War Matters" emphasizes between visual moments and narrative sequence is a clarifyingly extreme instance of a tension fundamental to Hawthorne's understanding of fictional aesthetics, not just in this instance but throughout his work. Recognizing this tension, we can reconsider the role of the visual arts in Hawthorne's fiction, reading its presence not as allegory of or analogy to reading, but rather as the development of an internally comparative aesthetic structure that allows Hawthorne to sharpen his exploration of what narrative fiction can do by setting it beside an artistic form with a fundamentally *different* relationship to narrative. Such a reading would elevate the importance of temporality in the Hawthorne romance, urging its consideration alongside the issues of representational ambiguity that most often ground consideration of his aesthetic practice.

Read with this attention to temporality "Chiefly About War Matters" presents what might well turn out to be the collapse of the dialectic between synchronic image and diachronic narrative in Hawthorne's work. The view presented in the essay is, in the end, an irredeemably pessimistic one. The painting's "momentary pause of triumph" can sustain an ideal only because it can defer what Hawthorne's narrative provides in the name of objective accuracy: the inevitable next step in which ideals are converted to "rude, material life." The earlier romances had experimented with more complex arrangements of the actual and the imaginary, but by

this point Hawthorne seems unable to perceive a role for a literature in service of American national ideals. Though he left substantial unfinished manuscripts at his death, after writing "Chiefly About War Matters" in 1862 Hawthorne never again published a romance.

"War Matters" thus gives us a Hawthorne moving beyond the romance—pointedly estranged from the form that has come to define his aesthetic practice. And yet, the essay is so deeply engaged with aesthetic and political issues that predominate in Hawthorne's work that it cannot be dismissed as an aberration. It is, rather, an illuminating dramatization of the tensions that define Hawthorne's work and as such it argues for the reevaluation of the romance as a more contingent term, no longer taken to be the unifying name for Hawthorne's aesthetic practice.[27]

Moreover, "War Matters" asserts the creation of beauty as the basis for ideological claims to "enduring national existence," and proposes that such claims must be successfully—and repeatedly—performed for the nation to endure. At the same time, the essay identifies narrative as a defining element of literary representation overall, en route to the striking claim that literature—in contradistinction to visual art—is unable to present its audience with convincing visions of a utopian future. The claim that literature is somehow incompatible with the aesthetics of mid-nineteenth century American nationalism is a provocative thesis with which to reconsider Hawthorne's work (and that of his contemporaries, for that matter) not just because it unites aesthetic and political concerns but also because it challenges literary criticism to deal not with aesthetics in the abstract, but with the particularity of literature as a form of art. The political and artistic crises of "Chiefly About War Matters" reveal Hawthorne's literary art for what it is most powerfully—a subtly experimental literature that, like all experimental art, takes up the boundaries of its form and clarifies both the means by which aesthetics find expression and the reasons why art matters.

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NOTES

1. James Bense, "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Intention in 'Chiefly About War Matters,'" *American Literature* 61:2 (1989): 200–14.

2. Jean Fagin Yellin, "Hawthorne and the Slavery Question" and Larry Reynolds, "'Strangely Ajar with the Human Race': Hawthorne, Slavery, and the Question of Moral Responsibility" both in *A Historical Guide to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001). Gordon Hutner, "Whose Hawthorne?" *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004). While these readings address the position of "War Matters" in Hawthorne's overall career, Rita Gollin uses the essay as a provocative backdrop for reading Hawthorne's late, unfinished

fictional manuscripts in "Estranged Allegiances in Hawthorne's Unfinished Romances," in *Hawthorne and the Real* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2005).

3. Nathaniel Hawthorne. "Chiefly About War Matters," in *Tales, Sketches, and Other Papers* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1889), 318–19. Further references are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

4. Nancy Bentley, "Slaves and Fauns: Hawthorne and the Uses of Primitivism," *ELH* 57:4 (1990): 902–03.

5. Arthur Riss, "The Art of Discrimination," *ELH* 71.1 (2004): 252. The critical attitude Riss summarizes—and from which he seeks to distance his own reading—is representative of the broadly held suspicion of the aesthetic in literary criticism. Charges that Hawthorne's aesthetic representation obfuscates and de-historicizes the politics of slavery represent instances of the general critique of aesthetics and aesthetically based criticism as framed by influential critical works like Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991) and Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983).

6. See also Eric Cheyfitz, "The Irresistibleness of Great Literature: Reconstructing Hawthorne's Politics," *American Literary History* 6 (1994): 539–58.

7. Riss, 252.

8. Riss's article demonstrates how powerfully "War Matters" has come to be understood by way of this one passage and its ostensible divergence from the piece overall. Riss argues against treating the categories of "aesthetic" and "real" as opposed terms, asserting that "Hawthorne uses the aesthetic to realize (rather than derealize) the facts of slavery. If conventionally critics have set the real (slavery) against the aesthetic (fauns) and have been unsettled to the extent that the aesthetic overwhelms the real in Hawthorne, this essay explores how in *The Marble Faun* and 'Chiefly About War Matters' the aesthetic identifies rather than stands external to the reality of slavery" (255–56). And yet, in a repetition of the earlier criticism to which it responds, Riss's essay defines the aesthetic quality of the slave-as-faun by asserting its stark difference from the rest of the essay, described as "literal premises of Hawthorne's nonfiction" (252).

9. It is telling, in ways that the rest of this article explores, that the apparent romance of the Union's Potomac crossing—that section he describes as like "old romances, where great armies are long kept at bay by the arts of necromancers"—is transformed into farce by the revelation that the army has hesitated to move against what turns out to be a nonexistent enemy.

10. From the mid-nineties on, the dominance of ideological approaches to literature has prompted a variety of critics to mount a counter-argument for aesthetics and the necessity of its return to literary criticism. While Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (New York: Harcourt, 1994) made its public appeal to reclaim aesthetic experience from its theoretical evacuation, scholars like those assembled in George Levine's collection *Ideology and Aesthetics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994), proposed that fellow critics reexamine the varied political potential of the aesthetic rather than assuming it to be uniformly repressive force. In a similar vein, Michael Clark introduces the collection *Revenge of the Aesthetic* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000), arguing for a "dialectical relation between work and world that confounds simplistic distinctions between the two realms, and that contests the facile elevation of either work or world as the determining factor of literary experience" (10–11).

Despite differences of emphasis and interest among participants in this aesthetic counter-movement, contemporary attempts to revitalize the aesthetic in academic criticism present the prospect as an advance on—rather than a total refutation of—ideological criticism that essentially bracketed off aesthetics as uniformly suspect. For another contemporaneous example of this critical movement, see Susan J. Wolfson's "Reading for Form" in *Modern Language Quarterly* 61.1 (2000): 1–16, which introduces the special issue of *Modern Language Quarterly* devoted to the reclamation of formal analysis as a tool for literary and cultural studies.

Despite this history the project to rehabilitate the aesthetic, particularly in the field of American literary scholarship, still strikes critics as stalled or incomplete. For a more recent instance of the rehabilitation of aesthetics in American literary criticism, see the special issue of *American Literature* entitled "Aesthetics and the End(s) of Cultural Studies" edited by Christopher Castiglia and Russ Castronovo in 2004. Continuing the line of argument presented by Levine and Clark et al., Castiglia and Castronovo decry the "fallacy of discarding aesthetic process as inherently conservative," and propose that a long-standing "aversion" to aesthetics in favor of the apparent demands of politics might give way to a re-engagement with the political implication of aesthetic representation. See Christopher Castiglia's and Russ Castronovo's "A 'Hive of Subtlety': Aesthetics and the End(s) of Cultural Studies," in *American Literature* 76.3, (2004): 424.

11. In his recent assessment of how our sense of Hawthorne's place has been altered by the prominence of ideological criticism, Larry Reynolds describes ideological critiques like Cheyfitz's as

> only a small portion of the vast critical commentary devoted to his works over the last century and a half, almost all of it positive and focused on his art—that is, his themes, sources, symbols, irony, narrative techniques, and so on. Nevertheless, in this age of ideological critique, Hawthorne's politics have attained prominence and are often used as a key to his works. (9)

As I have illustrated in my account of the critical history surrounding "Chiefly About War Matters," the repudiation of Hawthorne's politics has been arrived at precisely in its relation to art—though not, as Reynolds suggests, through a consideration of that art's formal qualities. Part of my argument in this essay is that an understanding of Hawthorne's politics requires an analysis of the formal elements of his art, that the traditional division between formal and ideological criticism need not be maintained; an argument in the spirit of Reynolds's suggestion that a renewed effort at understanding Hawthorne's need not mean acceptance (12). See Larry Reynolds's *Devils and Rebels: The Making of Hawthorne's Damned Politics* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 2008).

12. Reynolds, 184.

13. In this Hawthorne is addressing the formal aesthetic problem of Lessing's *Laocoön* and its asserted division between the visual and literary arts. In "War Matters," Hawthorne accepts some version of this division, particularly on the question of its representation of time's passage. Yet for him, the issue is not the obligation of artists to match their work to the inherent strengths of their medium. Rather, Hawthorne is commenting on the ways in which these two media meet the demands

of American nationalist ideology. Susan Williams has written about the intersection of Lessing with Hawthorne's theories of art in *The House of the Seven Gables.* In contrast to my reading, however, Williams, like most critics, emphasizes a fundamental similarity between Hawthorne's narrative and the visual arts. See Susan S. Williams, "The Aspiring Purpose of an Ambitious Demagogue": Portraiture and *The House of the Seven Gables,*" *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* 49.2 (1994): 221–44.

14. The opposition of "legendary mist" and "very minute fidelity" comes from the Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables,* but Hawthorne's definition of the romance against the realism of the novel recurs in the preface to each of his novel-length romances, from *The Scarlet Letter* through *The Marble Faun.* It appears elsewhere less explicitly, as in the debate between the showman and his audience in the story "Main Street." The degree to which Hawthorne presents his own art as non-realist has reinforced critical readings of the slave passage as a misty counterpart to literal realism, but it is crucial to note that in "War Matters" the romance is one of three distinct formal modes, presented primarily so that it can be contrasted with the satire and tragedy that follow.

15. Hawthorne makes no reference to Leutze's notes, but does suggest that they discussed the painting at some length. While it is probably neither possible nor necessary to demonstrate that Leutze conveyed this account of the scene to Hawthorne, it seems plausible to assume that in the discussion Hawthorne describes Leutze would have intimated some version of these ideas about the moment the painter meant to depict.

16. See, for instance, Jonathan Auerbach, "Executing the Model: Painting, Sculpture, and Romance-Writing in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun, ELH* 47 (1980):103–20, or Rita K. Gollin and John L. Idol, *Prophetic Pictures: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Knowledge and Uses of the Visual Arts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991).

17. Kristie Hamilton, "Hawthorne, Modernity and the Literary Sketch," in *The Cambridge Guide to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (New York: Cambridge, 2004).

18. It might be observed that there is a certain vanity in admiring Leutze for exhibiting those artistic characteristics with which Hawthorne sought to define his own work, but the rendition of Leutze as a fellow romancer is significant for the way it allows Hawthorne to surreptitiously introduce the principles of the aesthetic mode by which he is best known in such a way that he can then distance himself from them. As such, Hawthorne keeps his introductory promise not to write "War Matters" as a romance, while nonetheless managing to write *about* the romance refigured as the practice of Emmanuel Leutze, defined for Hawthorne by his evocation of momentary triumph.

19. Two essays have concentrated their attention on the argument that "War Matters" be read in the tradition of classic satire: James Bense, "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Intention in 'Chiefly About War Matters'" (cited above) and Grace E. Smith, "'Chiefly About War Matters': Hawthorne's Swift Judgment of Lincoln," *ATQ* 15:2, (2001): 149–61.

20. My assertion that Hawthorne's satire should be taken seriously as an aesthetic form worthy of meaningful contrast with the romance finds support in Peter Bellis's account of Hawthorne's indirect definition of the romance: "When Hawthorne speaks directly of the romance as a genre in 'The Custom House,' he does not offer a true definition—he describes a scene. He stages the romance itself as a performance, rather than grounding it in abstract or theoretical terms. And

the quintessentially 'romantic' moments in his texts are almost always visual displays or tableaux, scenes of revelation and spectatorship." See Peter J. Bellis, *Writing Revolution: Aesthetics and Politics in Hawthorne, Whitman, and Thoreau* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2003): 24. I read Hawthorne's scene of Lincoln in the White House as just such a definitional performance, in which the "homely" and "rusty" replace the romantic moonlight of Hawthorne's "familiar room." Whereas the romance allows Hawthorne to "spiritualize" the actual, in his performance of satire in this section of "War Matters" Hawthorne seems to materialize Lincoln in an exaggerated way, depicting him almost as if he were composed out of Kentucky dirt.

21. One clear example of this palimpsest history is found in Hawthorne's sequence of "Tales of the Province-House" as they narrate the history of the English Province House from colonial times, through its usurpation by the American governorship of John Hancock, up to the present day of the fictional frame in which the structure has become a tavern. Throughout the sequence, the physical persistence of the structure creates tension with the political and social alterations happening in and around it. Also a framed tale, "Alice Doane's Appeal" provides another example of such a structure.

22. It is quite in keeping with previous criticism to claim that in this section Hawthorne is "beautifying and idealizing" the slaves he describes. The difference here is that I am reading this as a particular, rather than a generic, application of the aesthetic.

23. The religious images in the Leutze painting clearly establish the intentional biblical echoes of that scene; the conventional cultural associations between the fugitive slave's passage north and the biblical promised land provide another link in "War Matters." Hawthorne, however, inverts that association by describing the North as the "stranger's land," i.e., the place of bondage prophesied to Abraham in Genesis 15:13–14.

24. Though the sections on Lincoln and the fugitive slaves are parallel instances of Hawthorne's performed distance from romantic aesthetics, the ironic structure of the Lincoln section works in slightly different ways. That section recounts Hawthorne's encounter with the real, non-utopian West, defusing its power as the site of future hope. As such, it is a pointedly static account that conveys no dynamic movement toward the future. It is a space of compromise ("I . . . would as lief have Uncle Abe for a ruler as any man whom it would have been practicable to put in his place") and moreover a compromised national fantasy and so the ironic gap between that fantasy and the reality of Civil War America is satirically presented at Lincoln's expense, and by extension as a rueful comment on the state of a nation that may have run out of hopeful futures.

25. As his self-conscious asides and "editorial" comments suggest, Hawthorne seems to imply that this ironic misperception is held by the proponents of abolition as well, to whom the essay is largely, if subtly, addressed.

26. This is true even in comparison to *The Marble Faun* of two years earlier, and its exploration of the "fortunate fall" interpretation of Donatello's fall from innocence. The parallel scene of the faun-like slaves in "Chiefly About War Matters" is presented with a far more straightforward sense of tragedy.

27. For example, Hawthorne's mention of the "long, hairy ears of Midas" in his story "A Virtuoso's Collection" has long been recognized (see George Parsons

Lathrop's introduction to the 1890 edition of Hawthorne's *Collected Works*) as a prototype image of *The Marble Faun*'s Donatello. Tracing the origins of "A Virtuoso's Collection" leads to an entry in the *American Notebooks*, in which Hawthorne muses that "A satirical article might be made out of the idea of an imaginary museum, containing such articles as Aaron's rod, the petticoat of General Hawion, the pistol with which Benton shot Jackson,—and then a diorama, consisting of political or other scenes, or done in wax-work. The idea to be wrought out and extended. Perhaps it might be the museum of a deceased old man." Given Hawthorne's fascination with history that mingles the actual and imaginary, why would such a museum be treated as satire rather than romance? The question might be extended to reconsider the place of the romance in *The Marble Faun*: what if that novel, which brings a museum piece—Donatello—to life amongst emblems of political history, were read not as "The Romance of Monte Beni," but a satirical assessment of our attempts to collect and learn from the material traces of history?

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