

## THE BODY IN THE GARDEN: DEATH, INEVITABILITY AND THE TRACE IN LITERARY AND PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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*“the blissful Prime, / Then—perished” (Herman Melville, 1866)*

*“the grass will grow greener ... when the next Summer comes” (The New York Times, 1862)*

*“The good American ... has eaten of the tree of knowledge” (Henry James, 1876)*

“Living means leaving traces,” proclaimed Walter Benjamin in 1969 (*Baudelaire* 169). Exploring “traces” as signs of mortality almost a century earlier, Stephen Crane, Herman Melville, Alexander Gardner and George Barnard knew, however, that *dying* “means leaving traces.” Barnard and Gardner, confronting a battle-ravaged land in the wake of the Civil War, tried to believe that the conflict had left America with flesh-wounds only—that it had not been fatal to the national body. Barnard, in his *Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign*, and Gardner in *The Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War*, both published in 1866, used photography to heal that body’s wounds and re-member the dismembered union. Amid repeated calls for artists to heal the wounds of war, and sensing what Friedrich Nietzsche famously called the “malignant historical fever” of the age (4) or what Hayden White once referred to as “the burden of history” at this late 19<sup>th</sup> century moment (110), Barnard and Gardner offered temporal continuity where the discontinuity of wounds and death loomed large. In these two image-texts the life of the body and the story of the nation rediscover a “relative and proper order,” as Stephen Sedgwick put it in an advertisement for his late 19<sup>th</sup> century lantern slide show (qtd. in Parrison 340).

Yet in Crane’s war stories and Melville’s collection of war poetry, traces of death create a despoiled Eden and a post-lapsarian America. Crane and Melville responded to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century crisis of death and engaged landscape hermeneutics to connect individual war-deaths to the death of the national utopian dream. The Civil War becomes “man’s latter fall,” as Melville puts it (54)—the Fall a moment when past and future crowd out a timeless present, pushing man out of Eden into clocked and historical mortality. For, grappling with the possibility of resurrecting a timeless pre-war world out of death-traces and ruins, Crane and Melville encountered the problem of irreversibility. With Jo in the film version of *Little Women* (1933), they ask: “Why can’t we stay as we are? Can we go back to the way we used to be? Happy old times?” Ultimately, though, they rejected the attempts of Gardner and Barnard to “go back to the way we used to be,” realizing that, as Jo acknowledges, “those happy old times can’t come back.” Though it feels to Jo like “only yesterday,” the past is another country. And for

Jo, at this moment of post-war realization amid the deceptively tranquil surrounds of pastoral America, the turnstile moves around.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Stephen Crane's Bodies in the Garden

Crane wrote against the concept of Manifest Destiny, the myth of eternal return, and the romantic and scientific histories of his day that denied the *might have beens* and made war and death part of an inevitable historical movement.<sup>2</sup> Crane mingled death and life and infused his writing with a sense of simultaneous other worlds: for example, in the form of tents that are like “stones in a graveyard” or sleeping men who might be corpses (Follet IX 21). This confusion of living and dead appears in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and also in “War Memories,” when “men had gone to sleep ... in such abandoned attitudes that one’s eye could not pick the living from the dead until one saw that a certain head had beneath it a great dark pool” (Follet IX 208).<sup>3</sup> Such confusions, and Crane’s soldiers who explore a counterfactual reality where they “had never joined the marine corps at all but had taken to another walk of life and prospered greatly,” were part of his resistance to accounts of the war that oscillated between romantic histories of reunion and scientific histories of deterministic covering laws (Follet IX 107). Both histories claimed the war as inevitable, in narratives of inexorable progress that gave it a meaning beyond death and catastrophe: the war is part of America’s journey toward national consolidation, or the necessary completion of the Revolution—slavery erased altogether. A passage in *The Red Badge* is one chastisement of this amnesia: “They speedily forgot many things. The past held no pictures of error or disappointment” (88). And scenes of forgetfulness appear throughout Crane’s war-writing, as, for example, in “The Upturned Face,” when soldiers cannot remember the funeral service and so stop midway.

The image in this story of the dead soldier, which the forgetful soldiers fear to confront, recurs across Crane’s work. Through this potential glance between dead and living, Crane resisted pastoral and romantic historical consciousness. The discovery of corpses—often at moments when characters are seeking to escape history—becomes an almost Leo Marx-esque body-in-the-garden trope (humorously represented by Buster Keaton in his 1927 Civil War film *The General* via the song

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<sup>1</sup> See Jo’s question near the end of the film. The scene is at a turnstile, Laurie on one side, Jo on the other.

<sup>2</sup> This first concept is symbolized in “The Price of the Harness” by Nolan: not believing that he lies dying in his own blood, he thinks he is “holding an argument on the condition of the turf” (Follet IX 39).

<sup>3</sup> In a reversal, early photographs portray corpses as sleepers, and Hippolyte Bayard famously photographed himself as a drowned man.

that repeats throughout: “if you go down to the woods today, you’re sure of a big surprise”).<sup>4</sup> In one story the “billowy fields of long grass, dotted with palms and luxuriant mango trees . . . fair as Eden in its radiance of sun, under its blue sky” suddenly reveal a “dead man, with a bloody face . . . twisted in a curious contortion at the waist” (Follett IX 72). In another, a sudden bullet that wounds their lieutenant prompts soldiers to contemplate the green forest in shock; and in a third, the war writes a history across the timeless pastoral landscape that can be read in the “eloquent” poses of corpses (Follett II 37). Crane explained this tension between pastoral blankness and historical trace as not “a battle with men,” but rather “a battle with a bit of charming scenery, enigmatically potent for death” (Follett IX 28).

Of course the most famous body-in-the-garden is in *The Red Badge*. Henry Fleming, fleeing history and even hoping for Confederate victory, walks “from obscurity into promises of a greater obscurity” (36) into the American pastoral but is confronted with evidence of time’s passage, in the form of a decomposing corpse. Feeling the impulse of “the living to try to read in dead eyes the answer to the Question” (19), he exchanges a deep glance with history. Then, retreating step by step, fearing to turn his back on the corpse, he becomes a twisted proto-Benjamin angel of history, “turned toward the past,” moving “into the future to which his back is turned,” while a “storm is blowing from Paradise” (“Theses” 257-8).<sup>5</sup> Benjamin’s “debris” of history piles up in Crane’s storied land too: corpses and tales of encounters with corpses, or the “remnants . . . a vast collection of odd things reminiscent of the charge, the fight, the retreat” (Follett II 36-7). The “history of the whole conflict . . . [is] written plainly in the streets . . . a history of many movements in the wet yellow turf” (Follett II 44). It’s the end of the traceless utopia: the “calm green of the land” is no longer “a familiar scene,” the “marks” on the landscape now “strange and formidable” (Follett II 72).

In “The Veteran,” Crane’s 1896 story that completes *The Red Badge*, Fleming’s own face is now the corpse face of history: no longer “a face” but “a mask, a gray thing, with horror written about the mouth and eyes.” And Fleming himself remains as trace or scar on the land and sky, a crimson smoke that “midnights of the universe will have no power to daunt.” “The Veteran” begins where *The Red Badge* ends, with another “vivid yellow” day that now brings a trial by fire: at the end of *The Red Badge*, Fleming thinks his time as an “animal blistered and sweating in the heat and pain” is over (98) but, in the barn-fire of “The Veteran,” animals and he blister and burn (Follett I 206, 209, 207).

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<sup>4</sup> See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> The image of men twisting away from history also appears when, in one story, Quick looks over his shoulder to see his emblem of history caught, while the storm of war blows: “As he swung his clumsy flag to and fro, an end of it once caught on a cactus pillar, and he looked sharply over his shoulder” (Follett IX 125).

Like Scarlett in *Gone With the Wind*, he seems not to have changed “since the last barbeque.”<sup>6</sup> He had turned to images of tranquil skies at the end of *The Red Badge*, placing the American apocalypse, “sky falling down ... the world ... coming to an end,” firmly in the past, but now he is buried when the roof falls at the end of “The Veteran.” The bell tolls for Fleming, as it does in *The Red Badge* when he leaves home to go to war; it tolls now as a “flare of crimson” appears, another red wafer scarring the horizon. American trees may have previously been “free of references,” while European trees “rustle with allusions”—as Richard Brodsky famously put it—but the “hickory trees” in the first line of “The Veteran” are overshadowed by the “old dismal belfry of the village church” that tolls a death-knoll and the sound of history (Follet I 203-4, 209, 208). Fleming perhaps becomes his own red badge of courage, for the smoke as he burns is “tinted rose-hue.” It is also a red badge of *history*, for, through his rose-hue corpse, the “crimson blotches on the pages” of history seem to endure: the desire to return to a blotchless, pre-historic, pre-war world cannot be satisfied (*Red Badge* 4), The romantic era has passed. “What like a bullet can undeceive!” writes Melville (90), and Crane echoes this shot heard round the world: “From somewhere in the world came a single rifle-shot” (Follet IX 20).

## 2. Herman Melville’s Bodies in the Garden

Like Crane, Melville knew death, time and trace had entered the American Eden. *Battle-Pieces* is Melville’s call to abandon dreams of utopia, frail though such dreams had always been for him. Amid the disruptions of war and the new sense of fragile human time and mortality, Melville rejects metrical regularity and illustrates the clash of history against myth, the reality of death in Eden. Brown’s body creaks on the scaffold in the opening poem, swaying with the new rhythms of Melville’s verse. Rather than use poetry to aestheticize war, Melville allows war to disrupt poetry. It is the end of a world in which art can be sure of its role and aim: “In time and measure perfect moves / All Art whose aim is sure: / Evolving rhyme and stars divine / Have rules and they endure,” he writes in “Dupont’s Round Fight,” and goes on to disrupt the iambs with an anapest in the third stanza (65).

Melville had long pondered the changed rhythm of social time, while fearing its repercussions on art, poetry and society, and the war finally shatters the eternal time of the American garden, heaping “[t]ime’s strand with wrecks” (55). Brown’s “shadow on the green” brings an end to what Melville calls in “Misgivings” the “optimist-cheer”; similar to the disruption of the “pastoral green” in “An Apparition” (51, 53, 158), “Weird John Brown” is a new prophecy for America, a shadow on previous understandings of its fate (51). *Battle-Pieces* confronts a fallen land trying to regain this dream: seeking the eternal hour, America dies enlightened by its glare. With lurking intimations of this post-lapsarian universe, Melville had sent Ahab down with his whale, after all.

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<sup>6</sup> See Ashley’s comment to Scarlett near the end of the film.

As the collection progresses, America becomes a storied land of “storied days,” as Melville puts it (80). The war writes a story across the landscape. “The wagon mired and cannon dragged / Have trenched their scar,” and remnants remain: “[b]y the bubbling spring lies the rusted canteen, / And the drum which the drummer-boy dying let go.” In Melville’s “obscure wood,” like Crane’s, there is “skull after skull ... Green shoes full of bones, the mouldering coat/ And cuddled-up skeleton” (115, 118). Men move through “worn-out fields,” “[d]unked and decayed,” and literally see stories in the land:

The brook in the dell they pass. One peers  
Between the leaves: “Ay, there’s the place—  
There, on the oozy ledge—’twas there  
We found the body (Blake’s you know):  
Such whirlings, gurglings round the face.” (189)

Here is the story of a story, the memory of finding the trace of action on a previous occasion. The soldiers find the place where they had found the place where something had once happened! This *something* was an encounter with a body in a dell and, similarly, in Crane’s story “The Sergeant’s Private Madhouse,” a soldier pauses to remember “tales of comrades creeping out to find a picket seated against a tree perhaps, upright enough but stone dead” (Follet IX 105). The corpse lingers on, strange fruit on America’s tree: for Melville and Crane, the landscape retains traces of history, storied layers of war.

Melville’s despoiled Eden is a land now littered with traces of warfare (those pieces of battle in *Battle-Pieces*). He is concerned with representing the *trace*, not tracelessness. Time’s trace entered Eden with the Fall, when man marked the apple, and Melville’s post-lapsarian land is therefore inescapably full of such traces: his “war-paint shows the streaks of weather” (89). All things cast shadows before and leave residues after, for Melville can find no land or present left in which to dilate an eternal moment. His American landscape is crowded with the corpses of past and future, portents and the after-quiet, as the nation re-imagines itself and its Union. Man’s trace is on the land, and past and future, or what he calls “Wisdom ... and prophesy,” mark the present (56). The meeting point between that past and future thus seems a no-man’s land of ever-decreasing space. He even sounds echoes across his collection, pairing each of his opening poems with a closing one, so that *Battle-Pieces* draws tighter across its middle, and the passage between opening and closing sequences feels brief. For example, “The Portent” pairs with “The Apparition”; “Misgivings” with “The Muster”; “The March into Virginia” with “On the Slain Collegians.” “The Conflict of Convictions” pairs with the last poem

in the collection, “America”; both works have 18 distinct line-by-line echoes.<sup>7</sup> The beginning is in the end, and the end in the beginning: past and future, so tightly linked, crowd out the present.

When it does appear in *Battle-Pieces*, the present moment is just a forerunning. In the poem “To—,” for example, “pastoral fields” with “pillared pines in well-spaced order” cannot remain. “All dies! ... A year ago was such an hour, / As this, which but foreruns the blast / Shall sweep these live leaves to the dead leaves past.” The live leaves are already dying and the present vanishes, lost in the “warmth and chill of wedded life and death.” The poem continues: “And present Nature as a moss doth show / On the ruins of the Nature of the aeons of long ago,” breaking within these two lines from the first line’s rhythm to extend the length of the second, so one rhythm contains and extends another, reaching the expected conclusion and running on. It is an overlapping of present with past and future: the ruins of the first rhythm underlie the living motion of the second.

The presence of one rhythm within another, of death in life, haunts other poems. In “The Temeraire” the ship seems doomed even in its glory days: destruction through fire lurks when the ship “flapped with flames of battle-flags,” and when “Bickering” and “licked” in the fifth stanza combine with all the “f”s of “freshnet ... foam ... flapped ... flames ... flags” to become *flickering* (87). Melville’s battlefield then remains littered with corpses of past and future: unlike many post-war American texts, his accepts the permanence of the new clocked and fallen world. It doesn’t seek Dickinson’s eternal noon or Whitman’s mighty living present, though it honors their passing as one poem mourns the death of the Temeraire. There is no fancied return to grace, and the apple does not dangle, unplucked: the “berrying party” in “The March To Virginia” is, through a pun, a *burying* party (59). In plucking the boys are themselves plucked.

It is the end of American innocence, and once living in time man cannot return to timelessness. “Youth feels immortal, like the gods sublime. / Weeks passed,” writes Melville, chasing immortality with time’s passage (64). He writes, in another passage, this time italicized for emphasis:

*(The poor old Past,  
The Future’s slave,  
She drudged through pain and crime  
To bring about the blissful Prime,  
Then—perished. There’s a grave!)* (56)

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<sup>7</sup> For example, “*There’s a grave*,” “with graver air”; “*Flings her huge shadow*,” “the shadow chased by light”; “*On starry heights*,” “far drawn height.” Italicized lines from “The Conflict of Convictions,” unitalicized from “America,” 54-6, 162-3.

Past and future compose the “blissful Prime,” the plateau of present time, and perish upon achieving it, like the men in “The Armies of the Wilderness” who dig trenches as though “diggers of graves,” or the boys in “The March Into Virginia” who perish upon achieving enlightenment: “ere three days are spent—/ Perish” (113, 60). The poem looks ahead to “On the Slain Collegians,” positioned later in the collection, in which “All who felt life’s spring in prime ... were swept by the wind”; or to “The Scout toward Aldie,” where America is “long past the prime,” a “ravaged land,” “time-stained” (160, 192, 191). The particular extinguishing in “The Conflict of Convictions,” of “the blissful Prime” with all its implications of pre-lapsarian life, stands for Melville’s whole post-war aesthetic of clocked time and death-traces: “*Then—perished,*” he writes, embodying the vanishing present, expected after “Then” but vanquished by “—.” Melville uses the dash to similar effect in “The Stone Fleet,” concluding: “And all for naught. The waters pass—/ Current will have their way.” Again the dash indicates time’s passage (“pass—”), depositing a tide-mark when the “currents” have moved relentlessly on. When Lee cannot avoid the “sequel of the strife” in “Lee in the Capitol,” we see that “The Past her shadow through the Future sent” (218). Past and future fill the crowded present with shadows, and when Lee seeks “the light in the future’s skies” he finds only “darkening prophecy” (219): Melville’s imagery merges dawn and dusk into one moment, and the live-long American day slips away.

### 3. Resurrected Bodies and Fertilized Gardens

In part, Crane and Melville were writing against attempts of Civil War photographers to restore a timeless pastoral to the storied land. *The Red Badge* is often compared to Civil War images, and one passage does evoke an image by Gardner, “The Dead at Antietam”: “Under foot there were a few ghastly forms motionless. They lay twisted in fantastic contortions ... It seemed that the dead men must have fallen from some great height to get into such positions” (28-9) (Figure 1 on CD). In addition, Fleming’s “somber picture” (60) of sleeping soldiers that might be dead, echoes Gardner’s image of a well-preserved corpse that could almost be sleeping. Yet Gardner and Barnard produced albums with visual emplotments and philosophies of history that restored America to its previous blemish-free state, and Crane and Melville debunked this pastoral imagination: their enduring traces and false pastorals shatter the restorative cycle.

From its beginnings, photography was associated with traces of time and mortality: William Henry Fox Talbot’s first image in *The Pencil of Nature* (1844) is of a building which, as he explains in a caption, “presents on its surface the most evident marks of the injuries of time and weather.” Or his caption to plate VI discusses “a shadow ... a time-withered oak ... a moss-covered stone. Photography has long been associated with death as well: Edgar Allen Poe feared the daguerreotype would steal his

life-force, Honoré de Balzac felt it stripped “spectres” from the body; and numerous early images were taken in cemeteries. The flickering daguerreotype portraits, with the face of the viewer reflected in a mirrored surface, blend living faces with dead. Light and dark areas oscillate in a daguerreotype, so that it contains negative and positive within itself (and has no negative/positive development process). It was ghosted by the rhetoric of absence and loss, the shift between positive and negative echoing that between life and death: the skull-like appearance of portraits as the light shifts across the polished surface built *memento mori* into the structure of the daguerreotype.

When Walt Whitman visited a daguerrian gallery he encountered a “legion of human faces ... an immense Phantom concourse.” He evoked the American utopian project, adding: “You are indeed in a new world ... though mute as the grave.”<sup>8</sup> But the war meant that death suddenly threatened to burst the bounds of the daguerreotype’s velvet-case, which had stabilized the ghost within the case. War and death shattered the bucolic air of photography, as well as that of the New World: one commentator noted that “[p]hotography came to us smilingly and trippingly, fragrant with meadows and beautiful with landscapes ... She had a bucolic air ... Consequently one may be pardoned for starting with surprise when she suddenly flashed from the clouds, helmeted, plumed and be-belted, at once the Minerva and the Clio of the war!” (“Photographic Phases” 5). It was the “big surprise” in the woods of Buster Keaton—the surprise of Crane and Melville’s bodies in the garden.

Commentators attempted to restore the lost pastoral heart of photography. Oliver Wendell Holmes acknowledged that “[i]t is so nearly like visiting the battlefields to look over these views [of] ... rags and wrecks ... [that] we buried them in the recesses of our cabinet as we would have buried the mutilated remains of the dead,” and softened the trauma by turning to images of surgical redemption: “Yet through such martyrdom must come our redemption. War is the surgery of crime” (Holmes 12). A writer for *The New York Times* felt, similarly, that war photographs “brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets ... there is a terrible fascination about [the battle-field] that draws one near these pictures ... You still see hushed, reverend groups standing around these weird copies of carnage, bending down to look in the pale faces of the dead, chained by the strange spell that dwells in dead men’s eyes.” Disturbed by the corruption of the pastoral with death, the writer added: “It seems

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Sontag explains that “photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s mortality, vulnerability, mutability.” Similarly Roland Barthes writes of photography as a “flat death”: the photographed subject, undergoes a “micro-version of death: [he is] truly becoming a spectre ... Death in person” for “Death is the eidos of that Photograph” (Sontag 15; Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 92, 14, 15). Barthes insists that “photography ... must be described in relation to death ... a photograph is a witness ... of something that is no more ... Each reading of a photo [is] ... a contract with death (*Grain* 356).



somewhat singular that the same sun that looked down on the faces of the slain, blistering them ... and hastening corruption should have thus caught their features upon canvas.” But there is, nonetheless, a “poetry in the scene ... Here lie men who have not hesitated to seal and stamp their convictions with their blood ... And if there be on earth one spot where the grass will grow greener than on another when the next Summer comes, where the leaves of Autumn will drop more lightly when they fall like a benediction upon a work completed and a promise fulfilled, it is these soldiers’ graves” (*Times*, 1862). The body in the garden fertilizes the American pastoral.

Gardner’s *Photographic Sketchbook* and Barnard’s *Photographic Views* also sought to reaffirm the cycles of the natural world after the “big surprise” of the body in the garden.

Their sequencing controls the disruption of history by war, and their narratives resist the idea of the wounded or ill body: tight grammars of seeing work, machine-like, against fragility and mortality. They do express disruptive pain as the clue or trace within their narratives, so incorporating evidence of damage to bodies and land into a cause-and-effect narrative. But they worked for the erasure of these traces, re-membered fragments via narrative, and restored the devastated landscape to its Edenic state. Timothy Sweet maintains that “the arrangement of images constructs relatively few historical relationships and continuities,” and Alan Trachtenberg notes that photographic sequences have a literary narrative, but that “continuity from image to image [in Barnard’s album] depends entirely on the parallel narrative” (Sweet 138; Trachtenberg 95). But continuity is far from dependent upon the parallel narratives. For example, Barnard’s album has a damaged white house in plates 38-39, and the sequence of plates 39-42 offers an explanation of how the white house was damaged: plates 40 and 42 are similar shots, and plate 41 is a close-up of the canon, so that the shape around the head of the cannon created by the sand bags and the cannon-wheel directly echoes the shape and size of the large hole in the side of the white house (Figures 2-3 on CD). The hole in the house is made by the cannon-ball. A visual syntax of horizontal meaning between images creates relationships elsewhere in the album. Plates 4-5 are a close-up on a bridge followed by the view from the bridge, so opening outwards. This is echoed in plates 6-7, 13-14, and 49-50, which move from inland to sea-view. Plates 4-5 are also linked by the human figure who in plate 4 takes the camera’s view in plate 5, and vice versa. Similarly, plates 9-10 have their views shot from each other (*Mission Ridge from Orchard Knob* and *Orchard Knob from Mission Ridge*). Plates 9-11 survey an area and then reach plate 12, *Scene of Sherman’s Attack*, enacting the likely movements of Sherman himself. The shot-reverse-shot of plates 2-3 also makes the reader an aggressor, who surveys then captures the Capitol (Figures 4-5 on CD). This device is used throughout the collection, in plates 31-32 and plates 56-57, for example. Progress marches on.

Plates 52-53 then echo and alter plates 2-3: the Capitol is ruined and thus the album seems to chart a downward spiral, from plates 2-3 to 52-53 (Figures 6-7 on CD). However the last image of the collection runs the perspective away to the right, so that the direction of the book continues forward, suggesting the possibility of progress into the future. Equally, devastation initially overwhelms plates 54-55: plate 54 has clusters of white flowers in the foreground while plate 55 has piles of broken white bricks, suggesting a pastoral under rubble. Reconstruction seems fraught. Then in plate 60 the white figure sits higher than the black: the image implies that their social positions will remain the same. Yet at the center of this image is renewal—in the form of the building’s scaffolding, and the black figure who sits closer to the water. Gazing right into it, he begins the reflection that will renew the pastoral and restore those flowers of plate 54 (Figure 8 on CD).

Gardner’s album also provides a narrative with which to approach the chaos of death and war. He answered a cultural need to impose meaning on the conflict and make the coming of the Civil War as inevitable as the journey of Johnnie’s W.A.R. train over tracks, in Keaton’s *The General*. Like Barnard, he updated the earlier format of photograph albums with slotted pages (intended for viewers to rearrange images)—instead offering a permanent narrative and a definite order. The album has a clear beginning: plate 1 is a photograph of the corner of a building, with the angle forcing the picture in two directions—making a “house divided” (Figure 9 on CD). Plate 3 has two men who face to the right: watching and reading, both figures anticipate the approaching narrative. In plate 4 men begin that narrative journey: passing over the ruins, they drag a cart up a stony path, perhaps all the way to the bridge in plate 98, which, though “rather insecure,” can be crossed “slowly,” as the caption puts it. The house divided is reunited.

A narrative flows between this careful beginning and end. Some images are sequenced through variation of angle (plates 9-10, 12-13), or by subject: plates 97-98 share the theme of railways, and plates 47-48 have a close-up, then a long-shot, of white tents. Others restore natural cycles through captioned sequences: plates 47-48 depict different scenes but connect through the evening sun in the caption to plate 47 and through the dawn in the caption to plate 48. Plate 5 also makes war part of nature, its caption moving from “east” to “west,” while the photograph shifts perspective from right to left. Clues in the captions link other images: plates 40-41 move from the corpse of one sharpshooter to another via the caption to plate 40, the last line of which describes sharpshooters who “secreted themselves so as not to defy discovery,” leading the reader toward the hidden sharpshooter of plate 41.

Gardner then moves beyond this body-in-the-garden and, unlike Melville and Crane, insists on the corpse-less pastoral of the future when, as the caption imagines, “the artist . . . again visited

the ‘Sharpshooter’s Home.’” This restorative future appears in plates 3, 4, 10, 11, 30, 39, where the captions anticipate the scene after its recovery from death and war. Gardner calls upon on pastoral elsewhere in the collection, as well: for example, *The Harvest of Death* parallels wheat stalks with the bloated chests of corpses that also rise vertically toward the sky (Figure 10 on CD). In spite of the Grim Reaper figure in the background, the dead men seem to live and grow even as they decay. The image is also part of a sequence: plates 36-37 are two angles on the same scene, so that the viewer feels the movement of the wind that gives the corpses what the caption calls “such an appearance of life that a spectator could hardly help thinking that they were about to rise to continue the fight.” While the corpses of Crane and Melville linger in a time-stained land, Gardner’s are resurrected.

Gardner does acknowledge the fragmentation of the pastoral, observing that a historically significant “apple tree” is broken into pieces, with “not even the roots remaining” (99). And he admits the presence of death in the landscape, observing “traces of the engagement” (4), “relics of that great struggle” (19), “relics of the past” (63). But he claims that the landscape recovers its tracelessness: “with returning peace, the husbandman finds that nature has not forgotten its fruitfulness in the years of war and devastation.” He also contains traces and relics safely in the form of monuments, gathering them like the corpse-collectors in “The Burial Party” (94): a stone wall is a “monument” to dead men (20), and the final image is a monument, for traces have in fact vanished: “mementoes” have been “carried away in pieces,” and monuments must take their place (99).

Gardner’s final caption might also be a comment on the aesthetic of the album, for it too is a memorial “in pieces,” built of individual images and, like the country, attempting to be whole. The album seems to function as what Sontag calls a “defense against anxiety” through “ghostly traces” of continuity and an “imaginary possession of a past that is unreal” (8-9). For Gardner the war is not a Fall, but something like the “little halt” described in plate 50. As the reader pauses between the two volumes, the image shows a horse and rider having what the caption calls a “rest,” or a “little halt,” before the second volumes marches on past this interruption, into the continuous trajectory of the nation’s history. With Barnard, Gardner wrote a story of reunification and progress, akin to Jo’s process in Alcott’s war-era novel: Jo learns to make story out of fragment and historical disjectia, so that the chests in *Little Women* (1868) contain “relics” out of which she might craft the sisters’ individual “histories” in verse. These relics “tell tales” that bring Mr. Bhaer as “knight” and “fairy-prince,” and make her own life a story. Dead treasures of the garret come to life, and Jo’s own ossification becomes renewal in the “falling summer rain” of her poem—rain that falls as she re-reads the poem with Bhaer (Alcott 477-78, 479, 475, 476). This post-war impulse to find story out of trace, renew life out of relic, and erase interruption, is also apparent in the marching song “John Brown’s Body”: if Brown’s soul

marched on, lifted out of the mouldering grave, then the nation's soul could march out of the wasteland and into reconstruction.



While romantic histories and war albums imaged the war as part of history's relentless river or onward road, Crane wrote of streams, rivulets, and overgrown pathways, anticipating and countering the horror of Arthur Koestler's famous "History" that "knows no scruples and no hesitation" but "inert and unerring . . . flows towards her goal," and "at every bend in her course . . . leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned." In *The Red Badge* for example, Jim Conklin fears that he'll fall in the road, to be crushed by wagons and men, left at a bend in history's course (Koestler 48). In his focus on unlived lives, roads less taken, secret deaths and hidden corpses, Crane provides a visionary counter to Koestler's "History," as well as to the photographs of Gardner and Barnard. For, in "The Veteran," Fleming performs his heroic acts (rather than his "mistakes") in the dark.<sup>9</sup> He rushes into the burning barn, and the audience sees no more. The "flare of crimson" in the sky is now a different kind of red badge, sign of a secret history or a missing piece from the public chronicle: not pasted wafer but wound. In Crane's short story "Manacled," the costumed hero dies trapped in a burning theater—dies for the sake of performance—but in "The Veteran," Fleming is beyond public history, hidden from his audience in a bend in history's course. His crimson flare can only be a scarlet letter of multiple meanings—as eventually in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), when the "A" across the sky means different things to everyone. In place of the universal comes a pluralistic vision that does not seek to contain death and illness within the tightly managed public theater of inexorable national history.

In this story of post-war Henry Fleming, Crane echoes Henry James' famous statement that the war "introduced into the national consciousness a certain sense of proportion and relation, of the world being a more complicated place than it had hitherto seemed, the future more treacherous." James adds: "The good American, in days to come, will be a more critical person than his complacent and confident grandfather. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge" (48). A grandfather now, marked by traces of time around his mouth and eyes, Fleming gives way to his grandson, inheritor of James' "more complicated" world. Significantly this day, young Jim sees his grandfather in a different light, "soberly" rewrites his own history of the war, and no longer tries to avoid the treacherous cracks in the pavement as he walks (Follet I 205). Traces of death and shadows of history endure beyond the public narrative of unfettered American renewal in Crane and Melville's post-war world, and are longer denied. Cracks in America's road are no longer pasted over, but remain as signs of history, and warnings of more to come.

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<sup>9</sup> "He had performed his mistakes in the dark, so he was still a man" (*Red Badge*, 64).

In the supplement to *Battle-Pieces*, Melville cautions: “Wherefore in a clear sky do we still turn our eyes toward the South ... ? Do we dread lest the repose may be deceptive? In the recent convulsions has the crater but shifted?” There is, he concludes, an “uncertainty which forever impends over men and nations” (243). Melville’s good American must scorn his complacent grandfather too. Crane’s conclusion to *The Red Badge*, with “images of tranquil skies” and scars fading “as flowers” (98) before crimson scorches the sky in “The Veteran,” is a similar warning—against tranquil skies, or Melville’s “clear sky.” Melville and Crane debunk Gardner and Barnard’s restoration of pastoral innocence and warn against the redemptive sunshine that appears at the end of *The Red Badge*. Beneath the deceptive repose of the American pastoral are the rumblings of a convulsive history. There are traces of time on the land, and bodies in the garden.

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