War-Prayer" attest to a deep and continuing awareness of the inhumanity involved in any kind of war. Far from weakening the correlation between the two strangers, the considerable differences between Twain's views of the Civil War and the Philippine-American War make the strangers' similarities all the more significant.

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Failed Campaigns and Successful Retreats

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"The War-Prayer" (1905) is less an anti-war polemic than a reflection on the failure of anti-war polemics to persuade. Although the aged stranger identifies himself as the messenger of the Lord, he acts more like an ordinary reformer, seeking to prompt moral recognitions through vivid descriptions rather than compelling such recognitions through miracles and signs. To that end, the aged stranger offers a prayer that describes the terrible consequences of war, but his words fail to achieve any lasting effect. His descriptions are powerful enough to stun: a significant "[*pause*]" follows his prayer (WP 770). But they are not powerful enough to persuade. The townspeople ultimately dismiss the aged stranger as mad and his prayers, as lacking in sense. "The War-Prayer" does not explain why the aged stranger fails; his failure is simply taken for granted. In this way, the text is of a piece with Mark Twain's other political writings from the period, such as "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901) and *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905), which express real doubts about their own power to remedy the abuses they so vehemently attack.

"The War-Prayer" can also be read, however, in relation to one of Twain's earlier writings about war, "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed" (1885). To be sure, the two pieces differ wildly in genre and tone. "The War-Prayer" is an allegory, oracular and grandiloquent, while "The Private History" is a comic memoir of the young Twain's

brief and inglorious career as a Confederate soldier. His "failed campaign" begins when the young men of his neighborhood gather in the middle of the night to organize a military company. In doing so, they resemble nothing so much as Tom Sawyer's friends meeting to form a gang of thieves and their campaign accordingly unfolds as a boyish idyll. The young Twain and his friends, who style themselves the "Marion Rangers," practice their riding a few hours every morning and then court farm girls the rest of the day, falling back whenever there is a rumor of the enemy approaching and having occasional misadventures with muddy fields and too-vigilant guard dogs. From time to time, their nominal captain suggests that they act more like a regular army, but to no avail.

This idyll is interrupted by the killing of a stranger. Hearing yet another rumor that the enemy might be on the move, the Rangers decide, for once, to hold their ground. Hoof beats approach, a stranger appears, and the Rangers fire, the young Twain along with them. As the stranger falls to the ground, they experience for themselves the same moral recognition that the aged stranger would later seek to prompt through his prayer. Indeed, the parallels between the two texts at this point are quite precise: both emphasize that the essence of war is killing and that the damages done by killing radiate far beyond the dead soldiers themselves. Where the "aged stranger" conjures up the "bloody shreds" of shattered bodies and the shrieks of wounded soldiers (WP 769), the young Twain sees a dying man whose breath comes in "heaving gasps" and whose shirtfront is "splashed with blood" (PH 665). And where the "aged stranger" alludes to widowed women, orphaned children, and a land destroyed, the young Twain hears the dying man call for his wife and child and realizes that "this thing that I have done does not end with him; it falls upon *them*, too" (PH 665).

Unlike the townspeople in "The War-Prayer," the young Twain is permanently altered by this moment of moral recognition. He no longer enjoys being a soldier: "my campaign," he says, "was spoiled" (PH 666). But this alteration is not enough to bring his campaign to an end. On the contrary, the campaign continues for some considerable time—and in exactly the same way as before. "We kept monotonously falling back upon one camp or another," he confesses, "and eating up the country" (PH 666). "The Private History" thus resembles "The War-Prayer" in showing that moral recognitions, whether prompted by representations or by first-hand experiences, are not enough to sustain resistance to war. But "The Private History" finds resistance elsewhere, in a rather surprising place. Where the aged stranger tries and fails to prevent young men from marching off to war, the young Twain and his fellow Rangers reveal the unexpected value of retreat.

It is not the killing of a stranger that prompts the young Twain's permanent defection from war, but rather the fear of being killed himself. The Rangers learn that a large regi-

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ment is approaching, under the command of a then-unknown Union colonel named Ulysses S. Grant, and one half of them, Twain included, inform their general that they have had enough of soldiering and ride away from the war. The other half stay and are ultimately transformed into stalwart soldiers. The older Twain describes this transformation in two strikingly different ways. Officially, he celebrates the process by which "rabbits" were made into "soldiers" (PH 668) and "children" into "men" (PH 666). But even as he praises the soldiers for having "learned their trade" (PH 668), he also observes that the "trade" is a "grim" one (PH 663). And this raises the possibility that the transformation is not of young boys into men, but rather "men" into "machines" (PH 663).

These two competing accounts of military training offer two quite different lenses through which the Marion Rangers can be viewed. If training makes boys into men, then the Rangers are cowardly and insubordinate. But if training makes men into machines, then cowardice might be better understood as an innate impulse toward self-preservation, a sensible reluctance to create trouble where there is none. On their first night's march, the Rangers' captain brings them to a house guarded by five Union soldiers and orders them to attack. The Rangers stoutly refuse. The captain is free to "meddle with" the enemy if he chooses, they say, but they see no reason to do so themselves (PH 653). The captain is forced to submit, and they learn their first military maneuver as they cautiously flank the house. In much the same way, insubordination might be better understood as "sturdy independence" (PH 662), as a sensible insistence on the equality of all men. Certainly, the Rangers create a remarkably democratic unit. At times, they invert military hierarchy, as when the young Twain, a second lieutenant, must swap ranks with his sergeant in order to get his sergeant to stand watch at night. At other times, they confuse the hierarchy, as when the sergeant and the corporal come to blows over who is more highly ranked and the captain resolves the fight by decreeing the two equivalent. Most often, they flatten the hierarchy beyond recognition. None of the men is willing to cook for the others, so all of them end up sharing the labor every night, and the privates insist on having a vote in what the company will do next.

In this way, "The Private History" seeks to reevaluate a set of innate impulses that we might otherwise denounce or dismiss. Like "The War-Prayer," it seeks, through the episode of the dying Union soldier, to inculcate a laudable horror of killing. But alongside the horror of killing is set an equal reluctance to die, as well as an unwillingness to submit to the authority of other men and a reasonable preference for camping and courting over marching and fighting. These are not the noblest of impulses, to be sure, but they are, Twain suggests, the only ones capable of sustaining what the aged stranger will seek to create, a lasting resistance to war.

The Real Prayer and the Imagined: The War Against Romanticism in Twain, Howells, and Bierce

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Mark Twain's "The War-Prayer" rehearses and recasts a dynamic which we find operating in other realist texts that work to unmask the face of war. Emerson's famous—and perhaps easily satirized—transparent eyeball image, of course, provides the central metaphor of American Romanticism. This clarity of spiritual vision, though, seems almost naïve in light of the blind jingoism that marked the early stages of the American Civil War and the run up to the Spanish-American War. Such a short-sighted vision of the realities of war is not lost on Twain, himself a failed campaigner in the Confederate-sympathizing Missouri State Guard, an experience that inspired another of his anti-war pieces, "The Private History of a Campaign That Failed." Nor are other realist writers blind to the harsh truths about warfare, for as if proceeding from the same set of premises, Ambrose Bierce and W. D. Howells campaign against romanticism in two of their important short works: Bierce's "Chickamauga" and Howells's "Editha."

The concluding scene of Ambrose Bierce's short story "Chickamauga," a terrifying vision of what we now call the "collateral damage" of war, is emblematic of how these stories expose war for what it is: a child standing over the sprawled and broken body of a woman, her skull shattered by "the work of a shell" (23). Bierce's aim in the story is to explode romantic and naïve notions about war by showing us its brutal realities: he does so with grim success in this scene. Bierce's work, then, seems to present in some respects a sort of war against romanticism—a war in which realists such as Mark Twain and William Dean Howells are equally engaged in their short anti-war pieces "The War-Prayer" and "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed," and "Editha," respectively. Deploying the language of romanticism against itself in startling, sometimes even surreal ways, these works descend from the heights of flowery romanticism to the darkest abysses of the gothic—all in the name of presenting a realist's vision of war.

In Ambrose Bierce's story, of course, a young boy plays at war until discovering the appalling realities of combat. The levels on which Bierce's story works to dismantle romanticism are indeed legion: the romantic child, for instance, becomes a child of violence, "born to war" (18) and clutching his toy sword "in unconscious sympathy with his martial environment" (22) as he sleeps through the battle of Chickamauga; and nature itself, that