

“An Army of Bronze Simulacra”: The Copied Soldier Monument and the American Civil War

Sarah Beetham

Instructor, Department of Liberal Arts, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
sbeetham@udel.edu

Abstract

In the wake of the American Civil War, memorials to citizen soldiers who died during the conflict proliferated across the national landscape. Many of these monuments were replicated over and over using available mechanical processes to reproduce sculpture. Critics often complained that the monuments lacked originality or failed to memorialize the soldier properly. But the very formal sameness of the soldier monuments contributed to their effectiveness, connecting the statues to nineteenth-century popular culture with a visual repetition that linked local trauma with national memory. Ultimately, the soldier monument's repetitive mimetic qualities made it a highly recognizable and legible form that continues to telegraph the enormous human cost of the Civil War.

Key words: American Civil War; sculpture; monuments; replication; workshop practices

Resumen

Después de la Guerra Civil Norteamericana, en dicho territorio, comenzaron a proliferar una gran cantidad de memoriales dedicados a los soldados no profesionales que murieron durante el conflicto. Muchos de estos monumentos fueron replicados en repetidas ocasiones utilizando los medios y procesos mecánicos disponibles en la época para reproducir esculturas. La crítica frecuentemente se ha quejado de que dichos monumentos carecieron de originalidad y que fallaron en su intento de homenajear a los soldados adecuadamente. Sin embargo, la misma cualidad formal repetida de dichos monumentos, contribuyeron a su eficacia, al conectar las estatuas con la cultura popular del siglo XIX a través de una repetición formal que une el trauma local con la memoria nacional. Finalmente, las cualidades miméticas repetitivas de los monumentos a los soldados las convirtieron en formas fácilmente reconocibles y legibles que continúan resumiendo el costo humano enorme de la Guerra Civil.

Palabras clave Guerra Civil Norteamericana; escultura; monumentos; réplicas; prácticas de taller

In the small town of Peterborough, New Hampshire, a bronze statue of a Civil War soldier stands in front of the local hall of the Grand Army of the Republic, a Union veterans' organization (fig. 1). Erected in 1869, the statue depicts a young Union soldier clutching his rifle and gazing downward and to his right in a posture that evokes thoughtful remembrance. The warm brown patina of the monument complements the red brick of the G.A.R. Hall behind it. Approaching from the stairs below, the viewer gazes directly into the soldier's pensive face, offering an opportunity to reflect on the human cost of war (fig. 2). On the base of the monument is a list of names recognizing each citizen of Peterborough who lost his life in the war. The monument seems to harmonize perfectly with its surroundings, suggesting that it was designed to stand on this hill in front of this structure. And yet, the statue is a nearly exact replica of another soldier monument that was erected in Forest Hills Cemetery in the Roxbury suburb of Boston, Massachusetts in 1867 (fig. 3). This nearly

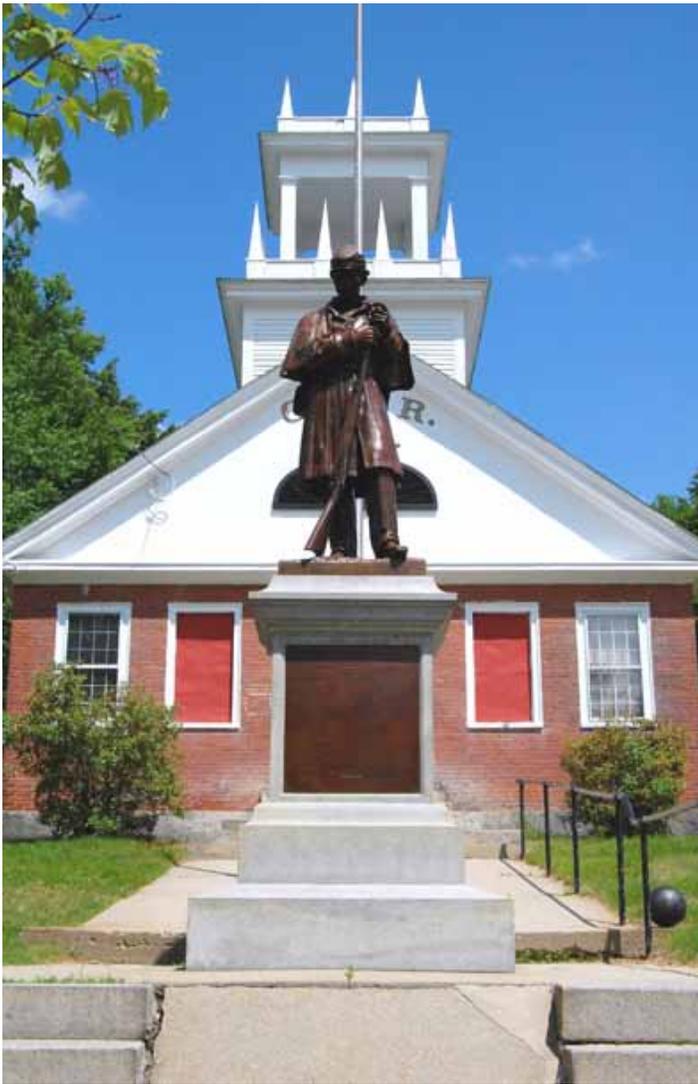


Fig. 1 Martin Milmore (sculptor) and Ames Manufacturing Company (founder), *Soldier Monument*, Peterborough, NH 1869, copied after Milmore's *Soldier Monument* in Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, MA. (Photo by Author.)



Fig. 2 Martin Milmore (sculptor) and Ames Manufacturing Company (founder), *Soldier Monument*, Peterborough, NH 1869, copied after Milmore's *Soldier Monument* in Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, MA. (Photo by Author.)

Fig. 3 Martin Milmore (sculptor) and Ames Manufacturing Company (founder), *Roxbury Soldier Monument*, Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, MA 1867. (Photo by Author.)



identical monument has its own harmonious setting and a different list of names. Both of these soldier monuments were the work of Martin Milmore, a young Irish-born sculptor living in Boston who produced several notable examples of public statuary during the course of his career. In total, there are at least seven casts of this particular soldier statue, each leaning wistfully on his rifle in remembrance of a different Northern community's soldier dead.¹

¹ Known examples of this soldier monument, often called the *Roxbury Soldier Monument*, were erected in Boston, Massachusetts in 1867; Claremont, New Hampshire in 1869; Peterborough, New Hampshire in 1869; Amherst, New Hampshire in 1871; Chester, Pennsylvania in 1873; York, Pennsylvania in 1874; and Waterville, Maine in 1876.

These monuments were erected as part of a nationwide effort to honor and remember the soldiers who died on both sides of the Civil War through the building of public memorials. This process began almost immediately after the war ended and continued well into the twentieth century. The American public's need to memorialize and interpret the Civil War fueled a boom in the construction of monuments beyond anything the nation had yet seen. Especially striking was the fact that these monuments were built not only in honor of famous statesmen or military leaders, as had been the case before the Civil War, but also and overwhelmingly to the rank-and-file citizen soldiers who gave their lives during the course of the war. Because the demand for monuments was so great, artists and artisans moved quickly to produce them. Some soldier statues were sculpted by classically-trained artists who had spent time abroad in Italy or Paris, such as Martin Milmore, Randolph Rogers, or John Quincy Adams Ward. But many others were produced by firms that also specialized in carving gravestones or architectural masonry. By the 1880s, firms such as the New England Granite Works, the Monumental Bronze Company, and the Muldoon Monument Company were in the process of erecting hundreds of monuments across the United States to Union and Confederate soldiers of the North and South. The most popular designs for soldier monuments were reproduced over and over, both by the companies that developed them



Fig. 4 Monumental Bronze Company, *Civil War Memorial*, Westfield, NJ 1889. (Photo by Author.)

and through unauthorized emulation. The most extreme example of this is a statue by the Monumental Bronze Company, sometimes called the “American soldier” and generally produced in zinc. This Union infantryman dressed in a forage cap and overcoat exists in at least eighty-six examples in twenty-three states, and was sold from the early 1880s well into the twentieth century (fig. 4).²

The copied soldier monument served the needs of local communities who wanted to make sense of the war and honor their soldier dead, but the phenomenon received intense criticism from writers in the fine art world. Most famously, in calling for a new type of war memorial in the wake of World War I, Adeline Adams referred to Civil War monuments as “an army of bronze simulacra,” decrying their formal sameness.³ Several scholars, including Jennifer Wingate and Kirk Savage, have explored the critical backlash against soldier monuments, which began almost immediately after the war and continued through the period of their popularity.⁴ Critics often complained that the monuments lacked originality or failed to memorialize the soldier effectively. But this essay will argue that the citizen soldier monument was a potent symbol precisely because of its repetitive mimetic qualities, making it a highly recognizable and legible form linked to the pervasive and formulaic funeral rituals recognizing soldiers’ death. Further, the replicated soldier monument must be understood in relation to the culture of copying that pervaded popular art in the nineteenth century and the mechanical processes that made it possible to produce multiples in sculpture. This essay will examine the many ways in which copies of fine and popular art circulated in the nineteenth-century United States, the changing critical response to these copies, and the soldier monument’s meaning in this context. In order to understand why the soldier monument performed its important memorial work, it is necessary to consider its repli-

² Carol Grissom, *Zinc Sculpture in America, 1850-1950* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 509-537.

³ Adeline Adams, “War Memorials in Sculpture,” *Scribners* 65, March 1919, 381.

⁴ Jennifer Wingate, *Sculpting Doughboys: Memory, Gender, and Taste in America’s World War I Memorials*, Burlington, VT, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013, pp. 68-75; Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 164-167.

cation as the nineteenth-century viewer might have seen it. And in charting the artistic replica's fall from grace, this essay maps a key development in art world attitudes in the modern era.

The culture of copying

The sudden demand for soldier monuments came about at a time when Americans were increasingly comfortable with the products of mass production, both in everyday items and in art. During the Civil War, both armies relied heavily on mass production to keep their soldiers clothed, fed, and supplied with war materiel. War news was circulated through the newly-founded illustrated press. And whether on the front lines or at home, soldiers and civilians accessed imagery through every available source. Throughout the nineteenth century, most middle class Americans consumed artworks through inexpensive copied forms, such as chromolithographs, plaster casts, or photography. These forms were used to disseminate both fine art and popular imagery, and the boundaries between these two categories of images were often fluid. These relatively affordable forms of multiplied art made images widely accessible, democratizing the consumption of visual images and serving to educate the public on the diversity of art practice.

Soldier monuments responded to this popular taste for replicated art forms. Practices of multiplication made the monuments widely available and iconographically legible. The proliferation of the soldier monument also points to an important characteristic innate to most forms of cast and carved sculpture: the ability to be replicated. Unlike a painting, which can reasonably be produced by a lone artist in front of an easel, the production of a bronze or marble sculpture is almost always a collaborative process. The artist makes a model of the design and then turns it over to a team of workmen, who assist in scaling the model to the appropriate size, usually with the assistance of precise mechanical measuring tools, and then converting the model either to carved stone or cast metal. The existence of molds for cast sculpture and precise measuring tools for carved sculpture make it possible to produce numerous mathematically exact copies of a single work.

For American sculptors working in the nineteenth century, these copies were a basic element of the sculptural market. The expense and difficulty of producing a single model, combined with increasing knowledge of how to produce exact copies of sculpture, induced many mid-century artists to create sculptural prototypes that would appeal to a wide audience. Practices of sculptural replication were employed by artists at all levels of the art market. Expatriate artists living in Italy, including Hiram Powers and Harriet Hosmer, employed skilled marble carvers to produce dozens of copies of their most popular works. The most successful of these neoclassical productions was Powers' *Greek Slave* of 1846, which was copied six times at full size, several more times at a reduced size, and ad nauseam in small tabletop copies in marble, plaster, porcelain, and bronze. With his *Greek Slave*, Powers clothed an erotically-charged female form in a sentimental tale of Christian forbearance in the face of degradation, a formula that proved irresistible to his viewers. After a successful exhibition at London's Crystal Palace in 1851, the *Greek Slave* toured the United States, drawing praise wherever it went. The wide availability of copies of the statue in several sculptural media made the work accessible to serious collectors and to a mass audience.⁵

Even as some expatriate sculptors achieved wide success in replicating their works, however, others encountered resistance to the practices of the sculptural workshop. In 1864, just after the completion of her ideal marble figure *Zenobia*, sculptor Harriet Hosmer defended herself and her profession against charges that her sculptures were more the pro-

⁵ Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 46-72; Lauren Lessing, "Ties That Bind: Hiram Powers's *Greek Slave* and Nineteenth-Century Marriage," *American Art* 24, no. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 40-65.

duct of Italian marble carvers than her own ingenuity. The critique, printed in the London *Art-Journal*, drew from a widely-held suspicion that sculptors relied too heavily on their studio assistants in producing finished versions of their ideal works.⁶ In a strongly worded letter that was later printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Hosmer described the process of sculpture from the initial clay model to the finished work in marble, pointing out that all of her contemporaries and most of their Renaissance and Baroque predecessors employed workmen in the same way that she did. Ultimately, she surmised that it was her gender that placed her work under such scrutiny.⁷ But Hosmer was not the only artist to experience backlash against her studio's practices. Many scholars have quoted the memoirs of Maitland Armstrong, who visited the studio of Randolph Rogers in 1869. Armstrong was horrified to see a row of stonecutters, all producing copies of Rogers' popular *Nydia, the Blind Girl of Pompeii*, calling the practice a "gruesome sight."⁸ Even at the height of its popularity, the replication of ideal sculpture made some viewers uneasy.

While the expatriate artists in Rome were struggling to defend their workshop practices, one sculptor in the United States used the practices of sculptural replication to masterful effect. John Rogers made a career out of catering specifically to a mass audience with his genre sculptures, produced out of plaster and scaled for the average home. Rogers straddled the worlds of popular and fine art: he was respected by his fellow sculptors and sometimes exhibited his works in art exhibitions, but the target audience for his genre scenes was the middle-class consumer. Over the course of his career, Rogers sold about eighty thousand copies of about eighty different designs, a scale of production that would not have been possible in the more expensive marble or bronze.⁹ Ranging from explicitly Union-oriented political themes during and after the Civil War, like *Wounded to the Rear: One More Shot* (1864); *Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations* (1865); or *The Fugitive's Story* (1869), to sentimental scenes of daily life, like *Coming to the Parson* (1870) or *Checkers Up at the Farm* (1875), Rogers' groups became a fixture in American middle-class homes, making the ownership and viewership of sculpture available to a wide audience. In addition to pricing his sculptural groups at an accessible rate, Rogers also made his works available through other replicated forms, including collectible photographs and prints in the popular press.¹⁰ A stereo card published in 1868 by H. Wood, Jr., of New York shows Rogers' popular *Council of War* of the same year (fig. 5). Even if the modest price of a Rogers group was out of reach for a particular viewer, he or she could still own a work by Rogers through the medium of photography.

That democratizing impulse had already played a key role in America's replication of images, decades before Rogers began sculpting his groups. In a time when few could afford

⁶ Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, pp. 155-157.

⁷ Harriet Hosmer, "The Process of Sculpture," *Atlantic Monthly* 14, no. 86, December 1864, pp. 734-737.

⁸ Maitland Armstrong, *Day Before Yesterday: Reminiscences of a Varied Life*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, p. 195. For instance, see Thayer Tolles, *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume 1: A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born before 1865*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999, p. 118.

⁹ Michael Clapper, "Reconstructing a Family: John Rogers's Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations," *Winterthur Portfolio* 39, no. 4, Winter 2004, p. 259.

¹⁰ Michael Leja, "Sculpture for a Mass Market," in *John Rogers: American Stories*, Kimberly Orcutt, ed., New York, New-York Historical Society, 2010, pp. 20-21.

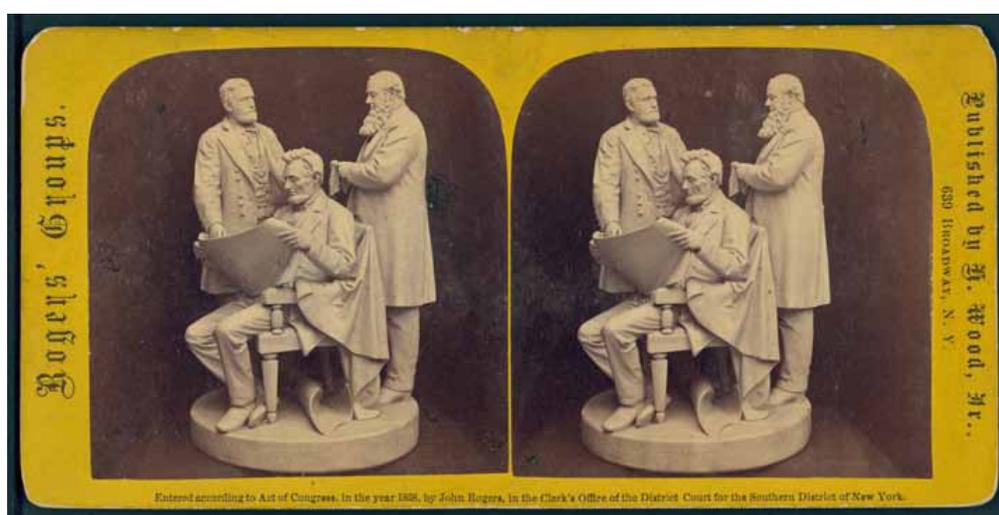


Fig. 5 H. Wood, publisher, *Rogers' Groups: The Council of War*, 1868. Stereograph. (Library of Congress.)

to purchase important works of art or travel to see them, printed media was key to any knowledge of the art world. Since the colonial and early national periods, European conventions of portraiture had spread via mezzotints, and the ownership of printed images was within the means of most middling families. All sorts of images circulated through print culture: reproductions of the Old Masters; high-style works by nineteenth-century American and European artists; and a wide range of popular imagery from political cartoons and genre scenes to sentimental images and advertisements. In the antebellum period, one of the most influential artistic organizations was the American Art-Union, organized upon the dual principles of encouraging American artists through financial support and elevating the public taste through the dissemination of fine art images. The Art-Union, active between 1839 and 1852, solicited subscriptions by offering at least one fine art engraving each year, a ticket for the annual Christmas lottery giving the subscriber an opportunity to win an original artwork, and eventually, a subscription to the Art-Union's journal.¹¹ The Art-Union folded in 1852, nominally because the New York State Supreme Court had declared its annual lottery to be illegal. As Rachel Klein points out, however, the Art-Union also faced criticism from a genteel press that ridiculed the Art-Union's attempt to elevate popular taste, a penny press that resented the privileged Art-Union's attempt to manipulate the art market, and artists who felt that they had been treated unfairly by the organization.¹² But during its heyday, the organization served as an important mediator of public taste. Paintings by American artists disseminated through the Art-Union's engravings and other publications promoted an awareness of a burgeoning national art tradition, while putting ownership of art images at an accessible level for most Americans.

While print culture enabled the wide circulation of all forms of two-dimensional art and popular imagery, plaster casts of ancient and Renaissance sculptural masterpieces made it possible for viewers to learn about important works of sculpture. For much of the nineteenth century, the typical American museum made little differentiation between display of copied and original sculptures, and indeed there was no clear line between these two categories of visual material. During the nineteenth century, major museums in both Europe and the United States amassed massive collections of plaster casts, often displaying these casts alongside original contemporary artworks. In 1868, the *Convention for Promoting Universal Reproductions of Works of Art for the Benefit of Museums of All Countries*, made by "several Princes of the reigning families of Europe," facilitated the exchange of casts of famous works through the establishment of national commissions, and created a climate wherein the production and distribution of casts by major institutions was greatly encouraged.¹³ As Pamela Born demonstrates, the cast collections built as a result of this agreement formed the basis of American study of the classics, and the acquisition of casts remained popular until the beginning of the twentieth century, when increased donations by rich museum patrons made it possible for American institutions to become competitive in the market for acquiring antiquities.¹⁴

The cast collections were featured in a debate over the function of museums. As Alan Wallach notes, the presence of casts in museums functioned in conversations over whether the museum should serve primarily as an institution for democratic education, or as a site for the joyful observation of elite artworks.¹⁵ Casts were primarily educational tools, allowing viewers unable to travel to see the originals the ability to experience the three-dimensional impact of important sculptures, and for the most part the casts were accepted as reasonable substitutions for the originals. Even as late as 1900, in describing the collection of plaster casts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arthur Hoeber asserted, "The plaster casts

¹¹ Patricia Hills, "The American Art-Union as Patron for Expansionist Ideology in the 1940s," in *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850*, Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan, eds., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 314-339.

¹² Rachel N. Klein, "Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union," *The Journal of American History* 81:4, March 1995, p. 1536.

¹³ South Kensington Museum, *Catalogues of Reproductions of Object of Art, in Metal, Plaster, and Fictile Ivory, Chromolithography, Etching, and Photography*, London, George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1869, pp. iii-iv.

¹⁴ Pamela Born, "The Canon is Cast: Plasters Casts in American Museum and University Collections," *Art Documentation: Bulletin of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 21, no. 2, 2002, pp. 8-13.

¹⁵ Alan Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998, pp. 52-53.

here are, for all intents and purposes, the originals, for the reproduction is absolutely accurate and, save to the connoisseur, they cannot be told from the sculptor's own creation, so the visitor may study them with the assurance that he loses nothing in being before an imitation."¹⁶ The assertion that the casts *are* the originals is an extraordinary one, and it demonstrates the blurring of lines between original and copy even at the end of the nineteenth century. The function of the casts as primarily didactic mirrors a similar function for the soldier monument – at one level, the soldier monument serves as a teaching tool on virtuous citizenship when placed in a civic space. For both the cast and the copied soldier monument, that educational function is more important than a purely aesthetic one.

Through its replication, the soldier monument participated in a nineteenth-century culture that was rife with copies and replicas through all levels of the art market. Copies were made of fine art and popular imagery and used to generate income, educate the public, and promote individual artists. Trained American sculptors living in Rome used workshops of experienced carvers to multiply their most celebrated works. Popular artists like John Rogers made inexpensive sculptures accessible through the medium of plaster. Rogers' art practice is echoed in the production of larger-scale plaster casts of important works of art, used to educate a public without the means to embark on a European Grand Tour. And print culture and photography made all sorts of art images accessible at a wide array of price points. The people who mourned the loss of soldiers who died in the Civil War were trained to experience art through multiplied forms. When memorializing their soldier dead, they turned to sculptors and gravestone carvers experienced in processes of reproduction. These artists and artisans churned out copy after copy of easily readable soldier statues that telegraphed the values of virtuous citizenship. Mechanical processes made it possible to meet the demand for statues. Meanwhile, the use of copying as a representational strategy highlighted the vernacular nature of these monuments to the common men who served in the war's armies. The copied soldier monument met the needs of a grieving public using a visual language appropriate to the era's artistic practices.

Critical backlash

But not everyone responded positively to the proliferation of soldier monuments. Indeed, the reaction from the fine art world was often quite harsh. The popularity of all types of multiplied art, as they had flourished throughout much of the nineteenth century, began to decline as the century came to a close. The critical backlash against the replicated soldier monument both reflected the shift in attitudes toward copying and propelled it. In other words, the increase in production of standardized soldier monuments was only one of many copying practices that came under fire toward the end of the nineteenth century, but soldier monuments often took center stage in debates over what constituted fine art sculpture and artistic originality. Soldier monuments were targeted both for their ubiquity and for their perceived poor quality. And yet, local communities continued to erect them as symbols of the sacrifice of their soldier dead, refusing to give in to art world criticisms. Throughout the century, critics representing the cultural elite clashed with more democratic elements, each seeking to gain control of America's art market.

The reception of Martin Milmore's Roxbury soldier monument (see fig. 3) and other works by Milmore in the Boston area points to this ideological rift. In local newspapers, copies of Milmore's soldier monuments received glowing reviews. In 1869, the *New Hampshire Patriot* declared that Milmore's "easy" and "graceful" monument in Claremont, New Hampshire, had "done him honor."¹⁷ Also in 1869, the *Boston Daily Journal*, showing a strong desire

¹⁶ Arthur Hoeber, *The Treasures of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, New York*, R.H. Russell Publisher, 1900, p. 27.

¹⁷ "The Claremont Soldiers' Monument," *New Hampshire Patriot*, October 27, 1869.

¹⁸ "Woburn – Soldiers' Monument," *Boston Daily Journal*, September 9, 1869.

¹⁹ Truman H. Bartlett, "Civic Monuments in New England, IV," *The American Architect and Building News* 10, no. 289, July 9, 1881, p. 15.

²⁰ William Howe Downes, "Monuments and Statues in Boston," *New England Magazine* 11, no. 3, November 1894, p. 354.

²¹ "Sketchings: Cheap Art," *Crayon* 2, no. 16, October 17, 1855, p. 248.

²² Harriet Beecher Stowe, "What Pictures Shall I Hang On My Walls?" *Atlantic Almanac*, 1869, pp. 41-44.

²³ David Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994, p. 293.

²⁴ Michael Clapper, "I Was Once a Barefoot Boy!": Cultural Tensions in a Popular Chromo," *American Art* 16, no. 2, Summer 2002, pp. 21-26.

to drive the point home, called the Woburn Soldiers' Monument "one of the best specimens of a soldier yet cast in bronze" and "one of the finest monuments that has yet been erected in memory of our fallen soldiers."¹⁸ But by the end of the century, elite art critics advanced a different narrative surrounding Milmore's work. In 1894, sculptor Truman H. Bartlett, reviewing the civic monuments of New England, called the Roxbury soldier "the most suggestive of ridicule of any in Boston," citing the statue's attempt to express sadness in what he considered a "thoughtless" manner.¹⁹ Also in 1894, William Howe Downes dismissed Milmore's 1877 Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument for Boston Common as "one of the poorest monuments in Boston, and even one of the poorest army and navy monuments of all the innumerable poor ones in the country."²⁰ Downes and Bartlett excoriated Milmore's statues for what they perceived as artistic defects. Further, these reproaches point to a divide between what local citizens and art critics considered to be "good" public art. As Downes' complaint indicates, the end of the nineteenth century saw a marked fatigue in certain circles concerning the "innumerable" soldier monuments that decorated America's small towns.

Even before the Civil War and the resulting outpouring of copied commemoration, this ideological battle raged. In 1855, a writer in the *Crayon* disparaged the inexpensive small-scale copies of European paintings and statues that flooded American marketplaces, seeing the copies as a barrier to any attempts to "improve public taste" for "true and pure Art."²¹ For this writer, the education of the public was the duty of the critic, and the direct market for inexpensive copies disrupted the critic's ability to mediate the consumption of art. Writing just after the Civil War, Harriet Beecher Stowe decried such critical mediation. In an essay titled "What Pictures Shall I Hang On My Walls?" for the *Atlantic Almanac* of 1869, she imagines a series of interactions between "honest John Stubbs" and his snooty neighbor, Don Positivo, who sees himself as a great authority in matters of artistic taste and offers pedantic criticism of all images that Stubbs acquires to decorate his home. For Stowe, critics like "Don Positivo" only encourage confusion, and she details categories of pictures that ordinary Americans might prefer to hang on their walls in lieu of reproductions of "high art."²² By the end of the century, however, as David Lubin notes in analyzing the work of still-life painter William Harnett, art criticism had gained an even greater role in public tastes, emphasizing the painterly hand of the artist as the only marker of quality.²³

The declining popularity of chromolithography as a mass art form, hastened by the opinions of art critics, serves as a case study for the changing attitudes toward copying during the second half of the nineteenth century. A chromolithograph is a color print produced by applying several layers of color using a series of prepared stones. Manufacturers of chromolithographs such as Louis Prang prided themselves on their ability to produce accurate images of fine art, and often sold the resulting prints in ornate frames, with surfaces embossed with a canvas-like pattern. But chromolithography came under fire toward the end of the nineteenth century for its role in producing artistic copies. Michael Clapper identifies three aspects of chromolithographs that offended critics: for writers critical of the medium, the resulting images were "mechanical, deceptive, and commercial," mechanical because machines were used to replicate paintings that had first been realized by human hands, deceptive because their producers, especially Louis Prang, claimed that only an expert could distinguish a chromo from a real painting, and commercial because they were explicitly created for a consumer market.²⁴ No matter the quality of the chromo, critics had a complaint: poor quality prints were dismissed as useless, while better-quality ones were denigrated for diluting the art market with inexpensive copies. As Joni Kinsey has persuasively demonstrated, cultural elites finally defeated the chromolithograph entirely by

changing the artistic value system, privileging original works of art exclusively.²⁵ While the multiplication of two-dimensional images through prints continued to flourish, these images were seen as merely educational tools, with no value in the increasingly exclusive art market.

While art critics denigrated the most common forms of copied art in the postbellum period, artists worried that multiples, especially unauthorized ones, would degrade the value of their original designs. Unauthorized copying of sculpture was a rampant problem in the nineteenth century. An 1861 issue of the *Crayon* recounts an encounter on a New York street between the sculptor Leonard Wells Volk, already famous for a bust of Lincoln he had based on a life mask, and an Italian image peddler, who offered to sell the sculptor a poorly-crafted plaster cast of his own Lincoln bust. Volk immediately inquired where the casts were made and barged into the studio, demanding that the molds for the Lincoln bust be broken. When the counterfeiters refused to comply, he took a mallet and smashed the molds himself, an action for which he was later fined six and a quarter cents.²⁶ Less violent but equally upsetting for the individuals involved was the unauthorized copying of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' design for the *Adams Memorial*, which Saint-Gaudens had produced for the grave of Marian Adams, wife of Henry Adams, who had committed suicide. Saint-Gaudens had failed to copyright his design, and his widow Augusta failed to obtain the removal of the statue by legal means. Perhaps because of the controversy, though, the unauthorized Baltimore copy became a target for vandalism and ghostly urban legends, and public opinion eventually succeeded where the legal system had failed.²⁷

Advances in photography, a medium plagued by its own set of issues surrounding duplication and authenticity, also fueled concerns about the unauthorized multiplication of public sculpture. A November 1892 issue of *Monumental News* advocated the use of photography in advertising the best work of the monumental industry, but also decried those who photograph the works of other artists in public cemeteries without permission, possibly to facilitate copying. So prevalent was this practice that Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston prohibited photography within its grounds altogether.²⁸ Given these concerns, it seems strange that the magazine only two months later published an advertisement for "Tipton's Photographs of Gettysburg Monuments," guaranteed to "increase the business of anyone using them."²⁹ The advertisement did not specify how the photographs will aid in increasing business, but given that the portfolio was obviously intended for an audience other than the artists directly involved in creating the photographed monuments, the implications are somewhat murky. Whether the photographs were intended to serve merely as inspiration or as templates for unauthorized replicas, they must have created a sense of anxiety for the authors of the works in question.

The copying of soldier monuments and other forms of multiplied art contributed to a series of anxieties held by those who criticized the practice. Elite art critics struggled to regain control of an art world that seemed dominated by popular forms. Ordinary citizens resented the cultural voices attempting to dictate what art they could put on their walls or erect in their town squares. Many worried that copies would serve as poor substitutes for original works of art, or worse, that mechanically reproduced forms would stand in so effectively for the originals that they would deceive viewers. Artists were afraid that mechanical processes would allow for unauthorized reproduction or emulation of their work, and indeed these concerns were realized in several high-profile cases. All of these debates contributed to a decline in the popularity of the soldier monument and an end to the nineteenth-century culture of free-form multiplication of art. By the early twentieth

²⁵ Joni L. Kinsey, *Thomas Moran's West: Chromolithography, High Art, and Popular Taste*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, Josslyn Art Museum, 2006, p. 45.

²⁶ "Sketchings," *The Crayon* 8, no. 7, July 1861, p. 151.

²⁷ Cynthia Mills, *Beyond Grief: Sculpture and Wonder in the Gilded Age Cemetery*, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 2014, pp.153-159.

²⁸ "The Camera as a Helper," *Monumental News* 4, no. 11, November 1892, p. 420.

²⁹ "Advertisement: A Selection of Tipton's Photographs of Gettysburg Monuments," *Monumental News* 5, no. 1, January 1893, p. 43.

century, the cult of the original dominated the art world, while multiples declined in status. With this change in understanding, the copied soldier monument seemed passé.

Soldier monuments and the multiplication of meaning

But there is more to this story than the decline of a sculptural form in the face of a changing art world. The soldier monuments of the Civil War appeared at a time when multiplied art was both extraordinarily popular and widely criticized. While the copying of art was common in the nineteenth century, the proliferation of soldier monuments and other copied forms prompted a shift in aesthetic opinion, and the soldier monument came to exist in a liminal space between art and commodity. And yet, twenty-first-century landscapes continue to be marked by these copied and commodified nineteenth-century monuments. Even in the face of much cultural criticism, these monuments dominated American memorial practice from the Civil War through World War I. The monuments may not have been popular with art critics, but they fulfilled an important role in assuaging postwar national grief. It is now possible for the modern viewer to see the copied Civil War soldier as a coherent cultural movement in a way that may not have been clear while the monuments were being built, and to connect the monument to the history of the time it commemorated. Indeed, the copying of the citizen soldier monument, as a whole project, should be indelibly linked with all of the other copied, prosaic, ritual behaviors connected with the death of soldiers in the Civil War.

Even more to the point, copying as a representational strategy echoes the work of those who labored to mark the lives and deaths of the soldiers slaughtered by war. During the Civil War, 750,000 soldiers died of battlefield wounds, illnesses spread in camp, or the exposure that came with imprisonment behind enemy lines. Each individual soldier's death was realized in a unique experience of grief by his loved ones. But to the controlling government powers, these deaths were statistics, and even at the personal level, responses to death followed a pattern. As Drew Gilpin Faust points out, the letters sent home to inform family members of a soldier's death invariably conformed to a formula of "good death," indicating that the soldier was aware of his impending death and had made peace with it, was reconciled with God, and had offered last words of condolence for his family.³⁰ This formula was often even applied in cases where the soldier was killed instantly on the battlefield; in these cases, the letter writer made it clear that the soldier had expressed all of the necessary sentiments before heading off to battle. This repetition should not be seen as a lack of originality on the part of the letter writers so much as a way of processing loss by relying upon rituals of mourning. The nineteenth-century expectation of a "good death" enacted in the presence of family was shattered by the realities of war, but the letters kept its basic tenets alive. And while the letters are formulaic, each was written by an individual doing his or her best to do the right thing for the deceased, and upon arriving at its destination, each letter impacted a specific family with grief over a specific soldier.

The soldier monument echoes the work of these letters. The monuments exist because a few local communities in the years immediately following the war were looking for an appropriate visual form for their feelings about the war, and the ritual of commissioning and dedicating a sculpted soldier figure seemed to fit. What started in a few locations became a national trend, always fueled by individual locations and marked by the names of local soldier dead. Like the letters, the soldier monument converted profound individual grief into a palatable and visible form, masking ugly and violent reality with a simpler message.

³⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, pp. 15-18.

Likewise, the bronze and granite soldier monuments, as they dominated American landscapes, provided a permanent memory of ephemeral rituals of mass grief during and immediately after the war. Specifically, the repetition of visually striking rituals of death can also be imagined in considering women's mourning garb. As Lou Taylor notes, there were specific guidelines for women for the wearing of mourning garb, dictating the length of time in mourning necessary for different family members: six months for a brother or sister, twelve months for a child, eighteen months for a parent, and two and a half years for a husband, with the mourning for a husband progressing gradually through heavy, full, and half mourning, indicating a lightening in the mourning garb.³¹ These periods of time were guidelines, and many women exceeded them, letting their outward garb illustrate their inner feelings.

During the Civil War, even with shortages of black fabric, many women fought to keep the traditions of mourning alive. Faust considers the heavy death toll of the Civil War in the context of mourning attire, and visualizes a landscape of the wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of fallen soldiers, all clad in black.³² In her memoirs, the nineteenth-century novelist and advocate for women's rights Elizabeth Stuart Phelps remembers a nation "dark with sorrowing women":

Our gayest scenes were black with crape. The drawn faces of bereaved wife, mother, sister, and widowed girl showed piteously everywhere. Gray-haired parents knelt at the grave of the boy whose enviable fortune it was to be brought home in time to die in his mother's room. Towards the nameless mounds of Arlington, of Gettysburg, and the rest, the yearning of desolated homes went out in those waves of anguish which seem to choke the very air that the happier and more fortunate must breathe.³³

This visual sea of women in black would have been most concentrated during the war, when all of the women connected with a dead soldier were wearing mourning for him, but the temporary proliferation of mourning garb that marked the years of the war with a visual index of war death prefigured the later bronze and granite soldiers who would come to symbolize the nation's loss. As a woman wearing mourning during the war years would have immediately evoked meditations on the battlefield, so the presence of a soldier monument indicates the loss of a community's men in the war. Each soldier monument represents a short list of names in the fabric of death and mourning that stretches across the nation's landscape. And in the thousands of monuments that stand sentinel across the nation, the viewer can conceptualize the weight of the war's human cost.

The very simplicity of the soldier monument's iconography has contributed to its effectiveness in propagating remembrance of war. The sculpted image of a soldier on guard duty has an almost literal relationship with the bodies of soldiers who fought and died in the Civil War. The one-to-one relationship between the bronze soldier and the human soldier makes the bronze soldier an effective emblem for the middle-class communities that espoused it. The repetition of these forms, too, has contributed to the clarity of their interpretation, especially in the case of standardized figures like the Monumental Bronze Company's "American soldier," which appeared in locations as diverse as Massachusetts and Nevada (see fig. 4). While the exact meanings of the Civil War continue to be contested, the fact remains that to see one of these soldier figures is to think of the Civil War in some way. With time, the copied soldier monument lost favor in the modern art world, but at its inception, it served as a powerful lightning rod for the memory of the dead. ■

³¹ Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1983, p. 133.

³² Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, p. 149.

³³ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, *Chapters from a Life*, Cambridge, The Riverside Press, 1896, pp. 96-97.