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**A FRAMEWORK FOR THE EPHEMERAL:
DIALECT AND PERFORMANCE
IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR NOVELS OF
WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS**

by

Jennifer Elizabeth Owens

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Early American Culture

Spring 2000

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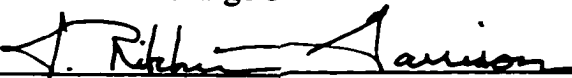
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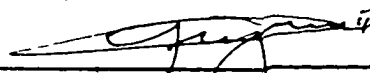
**A FRAMEWORK FOR THE EPHEMERAL:
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Jennifer Elizabeth Owens

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After many, many emails whose tone and intent were lost in the transmission of the spoken word into the printed word, I started pondering the importance of sound in human communication. From there, I wondered about the possibility of interpreting sound and the actual act of speaking as an artifact. Few people understood what I was even talking about, except for my advisor Bernie Herman, who not only grasped the idea, but encouraged me to run with it. For his willingness to advise such a project, I owe him many thanks.

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have made it through two years together? Your humor and willingness to procrastinate will always be appreciated. Friends far and wide, your constant reminders that life should not be taken too seriously helped me make it through. To Bell and La, tres fini. To Amy dear, werd. And to Nonie, boom-boom.

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I dedicate this thesis to the nine other women with whom I have shared many car trips, many meals, many drinks, many conversations, and, above all, many laughs. Y'all put a whole new light on the phrase "spoken word."

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the relationship between speech and the nineteenth-century convention of reading aloud, or performing, texts. Beginning with William Gilmore Simms's series of eight nineteenth-century historical novels detailing the Revolutionary War in South Carolina, this argument focuses on Simms's textual depiction of African-American dialect. Further, examining women's roles within nineteenth-century parlor culture and the level to which oral performance of text transforms and/or translates meaning from the page into reality provides context for investigating the larger implications of dialect as a mediator between performance and communication.

Conceptualizing the performative aspect of these texts and their larger relationship to issues of power, race, and gender requires an understanding of the social and cultural context in which they were written. This essay addresses three specific issues, including: nineteenth-century parlor culture as depicted in period journals as well as Simms's texts; women's roles within the parlor and society in general, specifically the use of voice and language as an exertion of power; and the implications of performing dialect by white women in the parlor.

An examination of these three topics reveals a common theme: their shared resistance to imposed cultural hierarchies of expression and communication. Through oral performance, Simms's textual representation of dialect becomes an

artifact, framed within cultural and historical ideologies. As an ephemeral artifact made permanent, textual speech demands a re-interpretation of both context and methodology, forcing critics to ask questions of the object rather than about it. Theorizing out of Simms's texts leads to an examination of dialect as it relates to performance, forcing one to reconsider conventional concepts of performer and audience, specifically as this relationship informs questions of power, agency, and identity. This essay attempts first to contextualize women's performances, understanding the significance of speech as a mode of communication and instrument of expression, then extends analysis to examine the spoken word's ability to maintain or destabilize social and cultural hierarchies of communication.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The rebel ladies of Charleston lie in wait, plotting in secrecy while playing at graciousness. Acting out an everyday scene of wealthy civility, they pose in the parlor: reclining on a sofa, sitting patiently at their needlework, delicately thumbing a sentimental novel. With everything in its place, the audience observes, oblivious to the subtleties of deception these women master and so artfully enact. The careful dissembling of their true intentions and inclinations makes them the most dangerous of opponents. Their power lies in their apparent innocence, their strength in the cut of the tongue and the flash of the eye. Enter the enemy. Blinded by the appearance of passivity, the intruder walks onto the stage unaware of the carefully arranged set—a parlor contrived to conceal. In the domain of the domestic, man stands powerless against woman's designs.

The scene described above is a brief retelling of one of the dramatic moments captured in the pages of William Gilmore Simms's (1806-1870) Revolutionary War romance, *Katharine Walton*, published in its entirety in 1851.¹ Written as the United States sought to define and ratify a democratic national identity, *Katharine Walton* praised the unfailing republican idealism of Revolutionary War patriots. In his introduction to the work, Simms outlines his intent to "show the effects of [the

Revolutionary War] on the condition of the country, the fortunes of its people, and the general morale of society” through the story of his novel (*Katharine Walton* [KW], 4). As an historical romance, *Katharine Walton* both glorified and sentimentalized the heroism and patriotism of the Revolutionary War period. Read within this historic context, Simms’s description of the actions of “the Rebel Ladies of Charleston” acts as a prescriptive model of Republican behavior for its nineteenth-century audience, an audience consisting largely of women.

Using Simms’s novels as a reference point, this essay addresses three specific issues: 1) the ability of the novel to act as prescriptive literature, that is to say, as a guidebook to, rather than a mirror of, social and cultural norms; 2) the power of the novel to make ephemeral artifacts permanent, specifically fixing speech in text through dialogue; and 3) the effect of performance on reader’s reception, especially the women’s performances in nineteenth-century parlors. Understanding novels, speech, and performance as artifacts extends the conventional concept of artifact beyond the material world to that of the ephemeral and conceptual. Novels and their reception are artifacts of the world of ideas, while performance and speech as symbols of visual and oral language, are artifacts of communication. Defining these intangibles as artifacts redefines “artifact” to become a more inclusive and expansive term. In its most basic form, an artifact is defined as “a usually simple object showing human workmanship or modification as distinguished from a natural object.”² When we think of artifacts, we think of objects—Egyptian relics, pre-historic flints, or ceramic buttons—we do not think of language or ideas. As an

“object showing human modification,” speech, performance, and thought can all be considered as artifacts, they are just difficult to find because they are lost the moment they are acted—except in the world of novels.

The power of the novel to instruct while it describes is not lost on Simms. His work literally tells his readers how to act. The organization of the entire scene, from characters and setting to conflict and denouement, reflects Simms’s awareness of the theatrical and performative nature of text. Simms writes not just for the page, but for the parlor as well, mimicking the real-life theatrics of parlor culture through the scenes and exchanges within his texts. By writing for an audience of performers, Simms uses the medium of the novel to make material the most ephemeral and intangible of artifacts: speech and action. The use of dialogue within a novel fixes speech in text, creating a speech-artifact, a visual representation of speech in material form. Within the historical context of nineteenth-century parlor culture, the speech-artifact assumes a level of interpretation beyond that of the printed page. Through the act of performance, the text becomes vocalized, recreating the moment of speech itself and is transformed into simulacrum of another state, speech. As the tangible manifestation of human action, text becomes an object for understanding and interpreting the cultural framework surrounding it. While the orality and intonation of the nineteenth-century speaker, or performer, appears to be lost the moment speech occurs, the actual sound of certain types of speech, such as dialect, may be more easily recovered and repeated than standard-usage English. Materially rendered in Simms’s text, dialect becomes an artifact informing the cultural and historical events

surrounds its creation. Simms uses dialect within the text as a literary device to define African-American characters as social and cultural Others by establishing cultural beliefs and prejudices. Fixed in Simms's text as a speech-artifact, dialect possibility of novels to act as active mediums for defining and demarcating cultural norms and expectations.

In the following excerpt, Simms contrasts the African-American dialect of his character Tom, the faithful servant, with the proper English of Tom's master, Porgy. In this exchange, Simms depicts Tom and Porgy as squabbling opposites, Tom the wise slave and Porgy the obstinate master:

Tom. when you die, there shall be no weight of earth put upon you. You shall be laid out bare, just where the horse is laid—should you suffer him to die! And I shall have a trumpet to sound a notice to all the buzzards, for fifty miles round, to attend your funeral.

Come, come, maussa: 'twunt do for talk sich ting! Tom nebber for bury when he dead? None but buzzard for ax to he fun'rel? and jis 'kaise you hoss gwine for dead, and nobody for help 'em! He a'n't hoss-doctor.
(*Mellichampe* (M), 154)

Visually, Tom's dialect automatically distinguishes him from his master. Where Porgy's speech represents proper English, Tom's speech is distorted, mangled, and, most importantly, Different. Roughly translated, Tom's retort to his master goes something like this:

Come, come, master: it won't do to talk of such things. I won't be buried when I'm dead? No one but buzzards to ask to the funeral? And just because your horse is gone for dead, and no one can help him! I am not a horse doctor.

Written in standard English, Tom's words lose their intended humor and, more importantly, no longer visually contrast with Porgy's standard English. If their speech looked the same in the text, the master-slave relationship would not be so easily discerned by the reader. As a speech-artifact, Simms's use of dialect as an indicator of cultural difference signifies the importance of language and its mastery as a symbol of power in the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, the ability to speak clearly, eloquently, and with tact was a sign of a well-mannered and well-cultivated individual. This is evident throughout Simms's texts as the most fluid speech inevitably falls from the lips of the most heroic male. The articulate hero is inevitably balanced by an equally articulate, though most often silent, virtuous woman. In his text, Simms casts the ideal woman as one who "quietly advanced" (KW, 31), conversed silently "with a single glance" (KW, 39) and "knows how to behave [and] what is expected of her" (KW, 41). For Simms, the model woman lived, spoke, and moved in a society dominated by men; they existed only as men perceived them. Within this social context, it is significant that nineteenth-century women read these novels, and read them aloud in a space perceived as the woman's sphere. They literally gave voice to Simms's ideologies which portrayed women as idealized models, not individuals. But, through their performance of his text, these women asserted their own power over language by assuming roles denied to them outside the imaginary world of the novel. Their performances becomes, then, artifacts of identity and expression in the world of nineteenth-century parlor culture.

Conceptualizing these ephemeral artifacts—speech, performance, and thought—requires a theoretical model based on interpretation rather than physical characteristics. Material culture theory is useful for emphasizing the artifact as an object which exists within multiple contexts. Where historians form chronologies and archaeologists generate structural typologies, material culture scholars seek out the “memory and language,” the narrative, hidden within the artifact.³ Viewing artifacts not just as material remains, but as “the processes, social structure, and infinitely complex relationships” within a culture encourages a multi-disciplinary interpretation of the object.⁴ While material culture studies do examine the multiplicity of contexts surrounding an object, they also tend to limit the definition of artifact almost exclusively to the material world, stressing the physical and the tangible, the detritus of former lives: pick-axes and chamber pots, tea cups and easy chairs. Traditional methods of interpretation give little attention to the ephemeral artifact of ideas or emotions, such as those expressed in literature or language, limiting analysis of artifacts and their contexts to intent, human consumption, and function, what Dell Upton describes as the “artifact-intention-person triad.”⁵ This relationship, while useful for understanding the simple relationship between makers and consumer needs, does little to examine the more complex area of human responses to the environment, to each other, and to cultural behaviors, nor does it address the artifact’s ability to effect intent and individuals. Progress has been made, however, in expanding this idea of artifact to include thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Deetz expands the definition of material culture to include not just the physical world, but also “the product of our

thoughts, *that sector of our physical environment that we modify through culturally determined behavior* [emphasis his].”⁶ He even goes so far as to assert language is a part of material culture, but rather than using a material culture approach to language as an object, he relies on linguistic theory and archaeological structuralism to discuss “language on the basis of form.”⁷

This critical model does not engage speech, performance, or the novel as artifacts with their own stories to tell, but rather views them as parts of the social and cultural fabric. To access these artifacts, one must combine a close-reading of the novel with material culture analysis. Such a method moves away from types and structures to interpret the meaning contained within the object itself as well as its role within a larger cultural framework. If we examine Simms’s novels, their words and their performance, we can recapture the ephemeral. Recreating the sounds and actions of women reading aloud in their parlors, we can understand the importance of performance and language to those whose voices were silenced by social rules and expectations.

¹ Simms, William Gilmore. *Katharine Walton, or the Rebel of Dorchester. An Historical Romance of the Revolution in Carolina..* New York: Redfield, 1854. Reprint. Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1976. Originally published serially as a shorter version in *Godey's Lady's Book* (February–December, 1850). Republished as a longer novel in 1851 by A. Hart of Philadelphia. All references to the text are from the 1976b reprint edition and listed by book title and page number within parentheses.

² *Webster's Third International Dictionary*. Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam and Company, 1965. See "artifact" entry.

³ Herman, Bernard. *The Stolen House*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1992. 12.

⁴ Garvan, Anthony N. B.. *Proprietary Philadelphia as Artifact*, as quoted in Dell Upton, "The City as Material Culture," 51.

⁵ Upton, Dell. "The City as Material Culture." *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology*. Eds. Anne Yentsch and Mary Beaudry. Ann Arbor: CRC Press, 1992.

⁶ Deetz, James. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*. NY: Doubleday, 1977. 24.

⁷ Deetz, James. *Invitation to Archaeology*. 83-96. Deetz discusses the concept of language as an artifact based on the system of phonemes and morphemes. In his definition of "language as the basis of form," Deetz distinguishes between grammar and vocabulary, i.e. form vs. function.

Chapter 2

“THE READING OF ROMANCES . . . ONE OF THE STANDING CAUSES OF INSANITY,” THE CRAZE FOR NOVELS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Understanding William Gilmore Simms’s (1806-1870) motivations for writing and the popular reception of his novels in the nineteenth century requires an awareness of the literary and social context in which he wrote. Simms began his literary career writing poetry, not prose. His first volumes of poetry appeared in 1825, when Simms was only nineteen years old, but he remained virtually unknown outside the South until the publication of his poem, “Atalantis,” by Harpers in 1832. The popularity and critical success of “Atalantis” introduced Simms to the larger literary circle around New York, the major center for publishing in the mid-nineteenth century. Following the success of “Atalantis,” Simms turned his hand to prose with his first novel, *Martin Faber, the Story of a Criminal*, published in 1833. Simms continued to publish novels, as well as short stories, essays, literary criticism, and more poems until his death in 1870. The evolution of Simms’s career, from his earliest work as a fledgling poet in the 1820s to the height of his renown in the 1850s as one of America’s leading novelists, reflects concurrent shifts in public attitudes toward reading, authorship, and books, especially readers’ attitudes towards novels. Simms’s transition from poetry to prose in the 1830s coincides with improvements in

publishing technology as well as an overall change in the interests and tastes of the American reading public away from strictly fantastical literature, such as poetry, towards reality-based works, epitomized by new, “American” novels. In an 1835 review of his novel, *The Partisan* (1835), Simms received praise for writing the best “American historical novel that has yet been given to the public.”¹ Stressing the American-ness of Simms’s work, the reviewer contrasted Simms’s fact-based story with the novels of Sir Walter Scott, emphasizing the American taste for “Nature and Truth” over the “superstitions of by-gone days:”

Men begin to be tired of merely artificial creations . . .
Fiction, in order to please, must now be kept within the
bounds of probability, . . . and the course of events that
actually take place. . . .²

Whether or not Simms wrote in response to this shift or actually fostered it is uncertain, but, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, novels were so popular they actually defined the American experience as America raced to produce its own authors worthy of critical acclaim. The public’s new-found—and ever-growing—taste for novels could finally be sated as faster, inexpensive printing methods flooded the market with books affordable to the emerging middle-class. The impact these events had on social expectations and personal behaviors in the nineteenth century can be understood through the development of the publishing industry since its eighteenth century beginnings.

Following the Revolution and throughout the early years of the Republic, literacy rates improved as education became a priority in the formation of a new nation. A successful government required an intelligent citizenry to uphold the tenets

of a viable democracy. In response to this need for educational institutions, academies were formed throughout the United States, to instruct boys how to be Republican men, emphasizing a curriculum of literacy, mathematics, and practical science. Women, largely illiterate until this time, were not neglected amidst the educational fervor; they were, however, expected to fulfill a role slightly different from their male counterparts. Rather than learning classical literature or arithmetic, women were instructed in the rules of virtuous womanhood. Graduating from their status as youthful maidens, women were expected to assume the role of Republican mother. Their responsibilities, as Republican Mothers, were to educate their children in the proper behaviors and beliefs of Republican society and to exist as exemplars of virtue and civility.³

Despite the seeming disparity between education for men and women, literacy rates improved throughout the eighteenth century across all levels of society: rich and poor, male and female, educated and uneducated. By the 1790s, ninety-one percent of white, American men could read and write, but books and printed materials remained an expensive commodity, out of reach for a majority of readers.⁴ Few people could afford to purchase books and, even if they did, selection was limited to a few familiar texts. Printers, bound by the expense of publishing a single book, only produced works they knew would sell: the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and primers. Noah Webster's *American Spelling Book* alone sold 24 million copies from its initial publication in 1783 until Webster's death in 1843, after the revolution in publishing of the 1820s and 1830s.⁵ Before the print revolution, literature belonged

to the wealthy. As an expensive commodity, few people, other than the wealthy elite, could afford to own their own books. The growth of libraries brought books to the masses, or at least to those who could afford to pay a small fee for their use, and helped to bridge the gap between supply and demand by offering access to a variety of books usually too expensive for the average consumer to purchase. Between 1731 and 1800, 376 social libraries were founded—266 in the decade from 1791-1800.⁶ Libraries catered to readers' interests by offering selections from history, biographies, classical literature, natural science, and the often-criticized, but hugely popular, new genre—novels. Reading aloud also provided non-readers and those unable to purchase books with access to the world of literature.

The emergence of the novel initiated a major shift in the world-view of eighteenth-century readers. From the moment the first novel appeared on the shelves of London booksellers, Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* (1723) challenged readers to question the very notions of truth and reality they had come to accept, marking the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. While eighteenth-century fiction existed in the form of classical epics and Shakespearean dramas, few works addressed the social issues dominating the conversations of everyday people. Defoe's *Journal* did and subsequent authors followed his lead by formulating plots and characters familiar to contemporary audiences. Simms's heroes and heroines were not only *like* real people, they *were* real people. Historical figures like Gates, Marion, Cornwallis, and Lee, were all names familiar to a recently democratized country. Establishing a relationship between the reader and the characters fostered a feeling of intimacy

between the reader and the text, making the act of reading itself a more personal and individualized experience. Novels redefined the concepts of author, audience, and literary form by introducing a genre based on imagination and individual characters rather than history, science, or classical knowledge. The novel also democratized the act of reading, and as Davidson suggests, “democratized the mind” as well. By making the reader the interpreter, novels empowered the common individual to choose and define his or her own social and cultural norms.⁷ Scrutinized for their power to eliminate the intellectual boundaries between the elite and the public, novels targeted an audience of average Americans, often women. Using characters’ tastes and behaviors as models of civility for an ever-growing middle class, novels became prescriptive literature, read alongside elocution manuals and etiquette books as blueprints for proper behavior.

The power of the novel to affect the tastes and behaviors of the general population, especially women readers, generated a flood of criticism against the genre. Novels preoccupied women’s minds, steering them away from a life of utility and purpose towards one of laziness and moral corruption, as one critic declared in a 1798 edition of the *Weekly Magazine*:

. . .when a young lady finds principles of religion and virtue inculcated in a book, she is naturally thrown off her guard by taking it for granted that such a work can contain no harm: and of course the evils steal imperceptibly into her heart.⁸

Importantly, though novels were criticized, ridiculed, and censured, they remained hugely popular. While histories and biographies constituted a large part of many

public libraries, novels reigned supreme as the literature of the masses. Although George Jacques was by all accounts an average man—a horticulturist in Worcester, Massachusetts—he recorded the discussion of public libraries at the 1840 Third Annual Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education with great interest:

Character of the books (in the 299 social libraries in MA in 1840): of the useful class Histories are the most numerous—These constitute the staple of many libraries. . . . Another considerable part of the libraries, especially the newer ones, consists of novels, fictions, light reading, etc. These are read merely for amusement. This reading is proper for relaxation, but as an employment, its influence is very pernicious both to the intellect and to the moral character. They address the feelings and not the intellect, excite emotions but do not convey with them the intellect; they rest Upon scenes outside real life. In reports of French hospitals for lunatics, the reading of romances is set down as one of the standing causes of insanity.⁹

Jacques's notes reveal more about nineteenth-century novel-reading than just an anxiety over lunacy. By 1840, when Jacques records these notes, the publication of American novels began a dramatic increase, resulting in the publication of over 1,000 novels by the end of the decade.¹⁰ The number of popular magazines increased from about 125 in 1825 to over 600 by 1850, a 300% growth in only 25 years.¹¹ In 1800, libraries in the entire United States only numbered 376; by 1840, Massachusetts alone supported 299 social libraries, *excluding* institutional and commercial libraries.¹²

Improved technology yielded a massive product. With mechanization came cheaper paper, cheaper labor, and cheaper books. By the 1820s high-quality machine-made paper replaced hand-made paper, thus tremendously reducing the cost of book production. At the beginning of the nineteenth century in the United Kingdom, a pound of fair quality book paper cost 1s. 6d., but, by the end of the

century, a pound of machine-made paper only cost 2d.—a change so significant it effected the cost of books and the publishing industry at large.¹³ Similarly, the invention of the stereotype in the 1830s allowed entire books to be preserved on a set of plates and reprinted quickly in response to demand, ultimately replacing the time-consuming task of typesetting with pre-set plates. Further, stereotyping took the risk out of publishing new books. No longer left to estimate a book's popularity before it was printed, publishers created stereotypes, printed a few volumes initially and printed additional editions if necessary.¹⁴ Novels and other secular reading replaced school books, old-favorites like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and even the Bible as popular reading material. By the mid-nineteenth century, reading was not only a national pastime, but a national diversion.

As books became more affordable and accessible throughout the nineteenth century, they moved out of the library and into the parlor. Books appeared in the parlors of upper-, as well as middle-class, nineteenth century women. And where is the novel in all of this? Acting as a “passport to culture.” While still regarded as harbingers of mental depravation, novels were, by the nineteenth century, acceptable reading material. Jacques refers to “novels, fictions, light reading, etc.” as “amusement” and “reading . . . proper for relaxation,” suggesting novels could be read if taken lightly, but not if confused with reality. As novel-reading became socially acceptable, the number of novelists increased as well. Authors gained national notoriety as celebrities and at the top of this list, “justly regarded at the head of American novelists.” was William Gilmore Simms.¹⁵

By the 1840s, Simms had published numerous poems and essays, and several works of long fiction, including his first novel, *Martin Faber, The Story of a Criminal* (1833), and the first two books of his Revolutionary War Saga, *The Partisan* (1835) and *Mellichampe* (1836). From 1833, when *Martin Faber* first appeared, until 1842, Simms wrote prolifically, producing at least twelve novels, a history of South Carolina, and several volumes of poetry and essays. Published by major publishing houses in New York and Philadelphia, including Harper Brothers and Redfield, Simms was one of the most prolific and serialized authors of the mid-nineteenth century. Only an economic depression in the 1840s forced him to stop writing long fiction and focus on short essays and periodical literature.¹⁶ In an 1841 letter to his friend James Henry Hammond, a South Carolina politician and planter, Simms commented on the difficulty of publishing in such a depressed market:

There are very few American writers who ever get anything.
... Irving now writes almost wholly for magazines and
Cooper and myself are almost the only persons whose novels
are printed.¹⁷

Once the depression passed, Simms returned to long fiction and remained popular through the mid-century, again writing novel after novel, essay after essay.¹⁸ By the first years of the Civil War, Simms had written another twenty novels and countless poems, critiques, histories, and biographies. An 1853 review in the Philadelphia periodical *Arthur's Home Magazine* pronounced Simms "the head of American novelists," but, by the onset of the Civil War, his pro-slavery sentiments distanced him from Northern readers and alienated him from the Northern publishing industry.

Following the Civil War, Simms never regained the status he once held as one of America's preeminent antebellum authors.¹⁹

Simms may have been regarded as one of America's most successful authors, but understanding exactly what that meant in the middle of the nineteenth century is more difficult than it appears. As a member of the Young America circle, which included Melville and Poe, Simms sought to establish a national literature based on American principles, characters, and events. Acting in opposition to the native literature espoused by the Young Americans, members of the Knickerbocker group, such as William Cullen Bryant and, most notably, Longfellow, imitated the style and content of British authors, such as Scott. Different periodicals supported each group; *Godey's* and *The Southern Literary Journal and Monthly Magazine* favored the Young Americans. An 1835 review, characterized a successful American novelist as one who "confines his attention to a period within the personal recollection of most of his readers."²⁰ The Young Americans looked not to the distant past, but to contemporary events for the body of their works; writing in the present moment, these authors used their works to define and shape a new American identity based on the precept of inevitable social progress. In his *Views and Reviews*, a collection of critical essays, Simms outlines his perception of the role of history:

We care not so much for the truth of history, as for the great moral truths, which, drawn from such sources, induce excellence in the student.²¹

Simms wrote not just for the entertainment of his readers, but with the intent of shaping a national literature, and, therefore, a national identity, through his works. In

his inscription for Katharine Walton (1851), Simms stresses the accuracy of the story: “The portraits are mostly of real persons. The descriptions of life, manners, customs, movements, the social aspects in general, have all been drawn from sources as unquestionable as abundant” (3). Simms used history in his novels to provide examples of behaviors for his readers to emulate. By 1851, the war between the Young Americans and the Knickerbockers had subsided. Melville produced *Moby Dick* that same year and Hawthorne published *The Scarlet Letter* a year earlier, ushering in a new form of American Romanticism based on emotion and symbol rather than history. Simms maintained his ideology, however, and continued working from an historical model to produce instructive literature.

Just after the publication of *The Cassique of Kiawah* (1859), what was to be his last novel published in book form in his own lifetime, and just before the firing on Fort Sumter in Simms’s native Charleston in 1860, Simms prepared notes for an upcoming biography of himself. In an 1859 letter to his biographer, he made a few final changes to the version of the personal “sketch” he had just received, adding details about himself he believed his readers should know:

You may also throw into Mr. Cooke’s sketch that from my earliest years, I have been a hard student & perpetual reader, rarely even now retiring at night until the short hours; . . . I have traveled . . . I have seen the red in their own homes; could imitate them in speech, imitate the backwoodmen, mountaineers, swamp suckers, &c. . .²²

In his instructions, Simms mentions his family and his plantation, his trips to Charleston for the summer, and his occasional travel north, but he places the most emphasis on his first-hand knowledge of the subject about which he writes: America

and its people. Not only did he see the country with his own eyes, but he studied its inhabitants, even mimicking the different voices he heard along the way. During his travels, Simms constructed an early form of ethnography, distinguishing not only between the variety of voices he heard, but the sound of speech as well, treating human speech like an artifact to be studied, recorded, and, later, published in his novels. Simms used this experience as the basis for many of his short stories and historical novels, including his Revolutionary War novels and other historical fiction, like the *Border Romances*. He defined himself and his work as “ultra-American” and authentic, an accurate representation of the speech, actions, and environments of other people and an exemplar for an emerging nation of democracy.²³

As an editor, a critic, a novelist, and a diarist, Simms recorded and discussed a range of events during one of the most crucial periods in American history: the threat of nullification, the rise of the plantation system in the antebellum South, and the Civil War. Though his letters and essays reveal more about the emotions and issues of the period, including the American attempt at self-definition, his works of fiction, specifically a series of eight historical romances based on the Revolutionary War in the South Carolina Lowcountry, provide a point of entry into understanding the complex system of social hierarchies, methods of expression, and roles of literature in the nineteenth century. Simms’s novels, looking backwards toward history, delineated and projected social behaviors and national attitudes for his nineteenth century audience. For Simms, novels do more than reflect an historical period; they define it. Through reception and interpretation, the novel is an artifact in process. It is

an artifact of idealized nineteenth century behaviors; nineteenth-century attitudes toward reading; and performance as a form of individual expression.

¹ *Southern Literary Journal and Monthly Magazine*, 1 (1835-36): 284.

² *Southern Literary Journal and Monthly Magazine*, 1 (1835-36): 284.

³ Kerber, Linda K. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980. See her chapter on "Education and Intellect" for a discussion of the disparities between educational opportunities for men and women.

⁴ Hart, James D. *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1950. 67. Hart is not specific about who constitutes this 91%, presumably he refers to white males recorded in the census of 1790.

⁵ Hart: 47. By 1883 Webster's primer had sold over 70 million copies.

⁶ Davidson, Cathy N. *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1986. 27. Davidson cites Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949) for these statistics. Also see Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States*, New York: R. R. Bowker, 1972, 104-105 for Benjamin Franklin's founding of the Philadelphia Library on which "the splendid library system in America was built."

⁷ Davidson: 43-45, for a discussion of the cultural elite and their power over literature which was translated to the popular masses by novels and other forms of entertaining literature.

⁸ Quoted in Davidson: 43, taken from "Character and Effects of Modern Novels," *Weekly Magazine* 1 (March 10, 1798):185.

⁹ Jacques, George. Diary, ms. The Downs Collection. Winterthur Museum and Library.

¹⁰ Hart: 90.

¹¹ Baym, Nina. *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984. 14.

¹² Jacques' manuscript includes the number of libraries in Massachusetts; see Davidson: 28-29, for a description of the various types of libraries. Briefly, 1) social or subscription libraries (dues paid for membership, usually for the wealthy); 2) institutional libraries (associated with men's colleges, not available to the general public); and 3) circulating libraries (commercial libraries owned by booksellers with the latest popular books available).

¹³ Gaskell, Philip. *A New Introduction to Bibliography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. See 214-230 for discussion of the paper-making industry in the nineteenth century, particularly 229 for changing cost of paper.

¹⁴ Gaskell, see his chapter on "Book Production: The Machine-Press Period, 1800-1950," 189-310 for detailed description of technical revolution of publishing industry.

¹⁵ *Arthur's Home Magazine* 2 (August 1853): 160.

¹⁶ Wimsatt, Mary Ann. *Tales of the South by William Gilmore Simms*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996. 9.

¹⁷ Oliphant, Mary Simms, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. C. Duncan Eaves, eds. *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*. Vol. 1. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952. 271. 5 vols. This reference will subsequently be referred to as *Letters*, followed by volume number and page numbers.

¹⁸ *Biblioteca Americana: Catalogue of American Publications . . . from 1820-1852*. Compiled by O. A. Roorbach. Metuchen, NJ: Mini-Print Corporation, 1967. See 498-499 for listing of publishers and prices of Simms's works within this time period. Compared to novels by Hawthorne and Melville, Simms's prices were fairly similar, but in comparison to novels by women, Simms and his male counterparts were much more costly, sometimes as much as three times the prices of a novel by a female contemporary.

¹⁹ The quote is cited earlier, from *Arthur's Home Magazine*. 2 (1853): 160. Wimsatt discusses the effect of the Civil War on Simms career in *Tales of the South*, 2-3.

²⁰ *The Southern Literary Journal and Monthly Magazine*. 1 (1835-36): 39.

²¹ Simms, William Gilmore. *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History, and Fiction*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845. Reprint. Ed. C. Hugh Holman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962. 39. *Views and Reviews* was originally published as a series of eleven essays in Southern literary journals in the 1840s.

²² *Letters*, 4: 178-179, letter number 949. From a letter dated Sept. 1859 to Orville James Victor, the author of a biographical sketch of Simms for the *Cosmopolitan Arts Journal*, 3 (December 1859) 212-214.

²³ *Letters*, 1:319. Letter to George Frederick Holmes, Aug. 15, 1842.

Chapter 3

“WE FORGET ALL OUR CARES AND TROUBLES,” WOMEN PERFORM IN THE PARLOR

In her journal entry for Monday, April 18, 1836, Mary Moragne, a well-educated and wealthy, white woman describes a day passed in passionate reading:

Mother spent the day from home, and I was all day and till [sic] a late hours of the night reading, *The Yemassee*—Simms’s *last* [italics hers]—to Grandma.¹

Mary Moragne, a relative of John C. Calhoun and resident of Abbeville, South Carolina, enjoyed a life of leisure, if not of luxury. Like many women sharing her educational, economic, and social status, Moragne spent her spare time paging through books, sewing, and writing in her journal. Also, like many other middle- and upper-class women in the nineteenth century, Mary Moragne read, and read extensively. Her journal records book after book, novel after novel, including Simms’s *The Partisan* and other authors ranging from Shakespeare and Irving to Milton and Scott. In her breadth of reading, Mary Moragne may have been slightly more well-read than her Southern counterparts, but only barely. Writing in 1862 at only eighteen years of age, Anna Maria Green discusses the latest novels by Dickens and Warner as well as poetry by Byron and Shakespeare’s dramas, illustrating the range of materials read by wealthy, young women in the South.² Similarly, Emma Holmes fills her diary with critical analysis of contemporary works as well as classic

authors and even records the books discussed in her women's reading club in Charleston.³ In other words, these women, though located away from major nineteenth-century urban centers, such as Philadelphia, New York, or Boston, were well-read and, as members of Southern planter society, were equally well-versed in the rigors and rigidity of nineteenth-century social rituals. Not only did these women read about a life of manners and reserved civility, they lived it.

For this discussion, it is important to note where these women did their reading. Moragne describes reading alone in several places, but reading with a group in only one, the parlor. On a February 27, 1838 Mary Moragne visited Augusta, Georgia. While there, she made the rounds of fashionable calls, including a visit to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carter. There she was "conducted into a most elegant parlor, in which were two tables strew'd with beautiful books," but, because of the rules dictating behaviors within the parlor on a "fashionable call," Mary Moragne resisted the "Hesperian fruit" and did not open the books. At home in her own parlor, however, Moragne behaved much differently.⁴ At the end of a long day, Mary Moragne and the other women in the household "gathered round the evening light, knitting & chatting or reading aloud." At the end of one such day, September 24, 1839, Mary "read aloud a chapter of Leiber's *Stranger in America*" for the entertainment of the other women."⁵

From Moragne's descriptions, it is clear that books and women typically decorated the parlor, but a parlor with two different purposes: an arena for the public (receiving guests) as well as a place for the family to retire at the end of the day. In

her work, *At Home*, Betsy Garrett describes these two different uses of parlor space as a front, or best, parlor for the entertaining of guests and the back parlor, a more informal and frequently used space.⁶ What is important for this discussion is the difference in function between the two spaces, or at least their *perceived* difference. In Moragne's first entry, she describes being escorted into a drawing room "strew'd with beautiful books," but goes on to lament the nature of the "fashionable call" which "precluded" her from opening them. In her second entry, Moragne illustrates a much different social situation, one in which she read freely from a book for the entertainment of the other women who worked at their daily chores. While it appears that behaviors and attitudes changed when in different social circumstances—a evening with the family as opposed to a formal call—it is important to note that no matter what the behaviors are, they are still part of a larger social performance. In the house of a wealthy and fashionable member of Augusta society, Mary Moragne denied herself the pleasure of flipping through an interesting book. In her own home, she not only read the book but read it aloud for her family. Although different from each other, Moragne's behaviors are still those culturally prescribed for women in the nineteenth century.

According to nineteenth-century etiquette manuals, the parlor was a place for performance. Although Mary Moragne and her grandmother were merely reading aloud, they nonetheless behaved according to prescriptive rules of behavior which encouraged reading to the elderly or infirm within that specific space.⁷ Defined in a nineteenth-century manual on polite behaviors as a "stage upon which

parts are performed before a public,”⁸ the parlor provided a setting for the playing out of what Erving Goffman refers to as “socialized performance.”⁹ Multiple levels of performance occurred in almost every nineteenth-century parlor, from acting out civility in front of guests to staging elaborate theatrical performances with costumes and make-up. This argument does not intend to discuss the variety of performances transpiring in the parlor, but a single one: the reading of novels by women, for women in a space governed by specific rules of behavior and codes of manners. Reading aloud to other women is a performance directed at an audience with a specific intent.¹⁰ For women like Mary Moragne, reading aloud to an audience of other women allowed her to “forget” her daily chores, and, possibly, the social limitations impressed on her sex.

Reading aloud as a way of asserting individual identity can only be understood within the physical and social confines of the nineteenth-century parlors. Erving Goffman’s description of “socialized performance” is helpful for conceptualizing the significance of women’s actions within the parlor. Viewed as a “ceremony,” performance becomes a way of reflecting culture’s larger normative behaviors, essentially becoming “an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of a community.”¹¹ As the embodiment of Republican virtue and elevated domesticity, nineteenth-century women in the parlor symbolized idealized perfection of post-Revolutionary American society. By contradicting established rules of behavior and decorum by performing out of character, so to speak, these women manipulated space through speech to distinguish themselves from prevailing,

and dominating, cultural norms. Assuming a male voice, an African-American dialect, or the voice of a sentimental heroine, women adopted identities other than their own through the vocalization of novels and other literary texts.

While these women were certainly not the only audience William Gilmore Simms addressed in his text, they constituted a large part of the reading public. By the middle of the nineteenth century, novels not only for women, but *by* women dominated readers' interests. Fiction, specifically those works designated as "sentimental" and "domestic" fiction, were deemed the literature of women. Popular magazines designated fiction as part of the "woman's appropriate sphere, as much as the flower garden, the drawing room and the nursery."¹² Although Nina Baym opposes the use of the terms "sentimental" and "domestic" to describe nineteenth-century women's fiction, these terms were nonetheless period terms used to designate the publisher's or author's intended audience. Since novels were often dismissed as a serious literary form, authors defended their works by writing for a specific audience of learned, informed critics—which did not always include women. Simms is no exception. In a letter to his friend and editor, James Lawson, Simms describes his audience as "the refined, the generous, the lofty."¹³ Displaying "enduring constancy, fearless valor, and solemn elevation of purpose," Simms's audience, he believed, was mostly male.¹⁴

Simms did not even consider himself a novelist; he was an author. In the preface to his popular novel *The Yemassee* (1835), Simms defines his work specifically as "not a novel," but a "romance," the nineteenth-century equivalent to

“the ancient epic” along the lines of Scott’s *Ivanhoe*.¹⁵ While he may have been reluctant to admit it, Simms’s works nevertheless appealed to a broad assortment of readers, including women like Mary Moragne. In her journal, Mary Moragne records reading Simms’s novel *The Yemassee* aloud to her grandmother and excitedly notes the purchase—only a week later—of Simms’s most recent novel *The Partisan* (1835).¹⁶ Women read novels, domestic, sentimental, and otherwise, frequently and with great interest, and in their parlors.

Simms wrote fully aware of the nineteenth-century convention of reading texts aloud. Confident of his abilities as a dramatist, declaring “dramatic writing is my *forte*,”¹⁷ Simms crafted his texts to emphasize the theatrical and performative nature of the novel. As the narrator, Simms the author becomes Simms the director instructing his characters’ (and, therefore, his readers’) movements, expressions, and cues. In a dining room scene from *Katharine Walton*, Simms directs Katharine to “ask the stranger” to “join the party . . . at the pause in the dialogue” (KW, 38). Following the narrator’s directions, the stranger “answered her gracefully” and accepted her invitation “frankly,” taking his seat at the table (KW, 38). Reading this scene aloud, the reader assumes the roles of both actor and director, simultaneously giving voice to Simms’s directions while following them in the text. As directors, women play men’s roles. As actresses, they play the parts of the hero and heroine, lives not their own. Through performance, nineteenth-century women translated the written word into speech, creating a speech-artifact by transforming textual dialogue

into the spoken word. Through reception and interpretation, the speech-artifact and performance both become moments for interpretation.

Performance creates a dynamic relationship between observer and observed, speaker and listener, actor and audience. The process of reading is based on the concept of reception, i.e. how the reader (the audience) perceives and thinks about the work. Within the context of performance, the reception of a novel occurs on at least two different levels: the reception of the text and the reception of the reader's performance of the text—one an individualized act, the other a public display. As a public performance, the reader communicates to an audience, a necessary component to Goffman's definition of "socialized performance;" without an audience, the performer may as well be silent, as no communication exists without perception. As reading moves from the printed page into parlor performance, the act of reading becomes a process of public observation rather than individualized perception.

Re-enactments of Simms's text are accentuated by their performance in the parlor, due largely to women's shared understanding of proper parlor behaviors makes their performance of actions contrary to convention even more powerful. Their shared awareness of social expectations reflects Barthes's idea of *écriture* which Susan Harris defines as "writing that is rooted in institutional conventions, that depends on, is fueled by, the assumption that the reader will share its values and its mode of conceptualizing the world."¹⁸ Simms depends on his readers knowledge of nineteenth-century parlor culture to recognize the moments his characters are *not* behaving correctly.

If the performance of the text can be objectified and treated as an artifact, methods of interpretation examines the relationship between speech and performance and identity and expression. Focusing on a particular excerpt from Simms's text provides the social, cultural, and historical contexts framing these particular novels, including the conventions associated with nineteenth-century parlor culture, such as novel reading, manners, and gender roles in antebellum Southern society. Let us return to "scenes . . . of graver cares and objects:" the parlor of the rebel ladies of Charleston and their unwelcome guests (KW, 227). Left alone within the city of Charleston, the citizens deemed least insurgent, least dangerous, and above all, most impotent, gather together within the houses and parlors of fellow conspirators to undermine the King and support the Revolution. Ranging from "superannuated old men" to ladies "ancient and well-bred" as well as "fair, . . . witty, [and] young," this band of unsuspected patriots forms a cast of characters surprisingly well-suited for the treacheries of rebellion (KW 228). In this scene, Simms manipulates and plays upon nineteenth-century parlor culture within an eighteenth-century context to emphasize certain points within the text. Through the reversal of gender roles, male characters are unsexed and undermined. The manners and rules of behavior depicted in this scene, while taking place in the text at the time of the Revolution, nonetheless represent contemporary rules of behavior. When the scene is read aloud in the parlors of well-educated women they are acting out, and reacting to, their own cultural paradigms. Simms uses the rules of proper parlor behavior to his advantage by

displaying proper manners and following them excruciatingly at some points while distorting them for comic effect at others.

Contemporary literature regarding acceptable behavior and polite manners was prevalent in the parlors and libraries of middle-class Americans during the 1840s and 1850s. From cheap periodicals sold for a few pennies to expensively bound instruction manuals, rules of proper behavior were widely available to a range of audiences. A comparison between contemporary prescriptive literature and the scene Simms depicts reveals the significance of performing correctly within nineteenth-century parlor culture. In the introduction to *The Art of Conversing* (1848), the author (a “Society Gentleman”) describes the purpose of the book: “. . . to indicate, as clearly as possible, the means of appearing to advantage in the private circle;” this “private circle” is understood as the parlor, or drawing-room.¹⁹ The author defines the drawing-room as a space “to be regarded as a stage upon which parts are performed” before an audience whose reception is measured in “applauds or hisses.”²⁰ In the parlor, the performer is not only criticized by her peers (applauding or hissing her behavior), but she is a judge as well, watching “[her]self as well as others” with as keen an eye as she herself is scrutinized.²¹ This returns us to Barthes’ terms *écriture*, the shared understanding of social conventions. In the context of the parlor, the participants actively engage in a system of reciprocal acting/judging, reflecting their shared ideologies. Those unaware or untutored in the rules of the parlor automatically became the Other. It is significant, then, to recognize Simms intended to write for an audience of his peers, “the intellectual class of readers”²² who

shared his system of attitudes and ideologies. Both Simms and his audience viewed the parlor as an arena for performance of social rituals against a backdrop of well-placed books, stylish furnishings, and finely garbed socialites. Simms plays upon this convention in his text and, by reading his novels aloud, women in their parlors performed his version of manners, fully aware of the incongruity between the reality of nineteenth-century refined parlor culture and the parlor culture Simms depicts.

The curtain closes on “Rebel Ladies of Charleston.” The second scene opens with the entrance of the British soldiers, Balfour and Cruden, the unsuspecting victims of the ladies’ well-rehearsed scene of civility. Simms sets the stage. Each woman assumes her role, “some busy at needlework, one appeared to have been reading” and together they present a believable resemblance of propriety and manners to deceive their unwelcome guests. Mrs. Brewton, “seen to the best advantage,” awaits the guests with a “world of mischief . . . looking forth from [her] half-shut eye” (KW, 236). Creating a scene of dissemblance, Simms prepares the reader for what will unfold: a reversal of conventional gender behavior.

According to the *Art of Conversing*, proper behavior upon entering the drawing-room is to address “the first word . . . to the master or mistress of the house.”²³ Balfour does just this, “exchanging salutations” with Mrs. Singleton, the “ancient and well-bred hostess,” but, as Simms informs the reader, he does so only to advance his own ambitions to claim the character of an “easy, well-bred gentleman” (KW, 236-237). As Goffman states, “a status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate

conduct . . . well-articulated.” Balfour’s attention to social contrivances reflects his desire to achieve status by maintaining a “well-articulated” and well-rehearsed “pattern of appropriate conduct” through a performance of correct behavior.²⁴ What Balfour does not anticipate are the effects of the women’s manipulation of these social codes for their own devices. Through role-reversals, Balfour and his aid, Cruden, are unsexed by the women’s biting wit and clever deceit.

While instructions contained within the *Art of Conversation* suggest women lack conversational prowess, Simms depicts a scene much to the contrary. Although nineteenth-century thought on “conversation with women” contends “women generally are not fond of long phrases, and rarely employ great words” and should be addressed in “simple and concise” terms, the rebel ladies of Charleston engage both Balfour and Cruden as equals, and master them through the art of conversation.²⁵ Cruden and Mrs. Brewton engage in a battle of words and wit, as she derides Cruden for “carry[ing] a weapon that he knows not well how to use” against her quick-witted banter (KW, 240). Faced with Mrs. Brewton’s mastery of language, Cruden is forced to concede his loss and accept defeat. Simms foreshadows the defeat of the British soldiers from the beginning of the scene as the two soldiers enter “*arcades ambo*,” or as “arcadians both,” a term suggestive of the camaraderie the two men share, but which was often used in the nineteenth century to imply a homosexual relationship between the characters. In this context, Simms suggests these two men, physical manifestations of the ultimate symbol of male domination—the British Monarchy—are actually unsexed within the realm of the women’s parlor. Through performance,

the woman reader exists, albeit temporarily, in a transitional state where conventional behaviors are reversed and women, as agents of this change, affect their own environments.

The scene depicted in the “Rebel Ladies of Charleston” contradicts nineteenth-century conventions of womanhood by empowering women to ridicule men. Viewed within the context of Simms’s political views, however, this scene may actually be a commentary on the dangers of a world at war—a world where women *can* emasculate men, where men play the fools and women the aggressors, and, ultimately, a world where the powerless wrest control from the powerful. *Katharine Walton* was first serialized in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* in 1850, during a period of political unrest and increased sectionalism over the issues of states’ rights and slavery. The Compromise of 1850 ignited a series of fiery debates as Northern Democrats and Southern Whigs fought out the terms of the Mexican cession. Sectional tempers ran high as Southerners battled against Northern abolitionists to maintain an equal number of slave and free states in the Union. Clay’s Compromise of 1850 quieted talk of secession by settling the western boundaries of Texas and organizing the Mexican territories. The compromise lasted only briefly, until the Civil War. Simms, as a writer and editor of popular Southern journals, voiced his opinions regularly and passionately. Although he opposed Nullification some fifteen years earlier, Simms nonetheless supported Southern claims to states’ rights. For Simms, history informed the present and the present moved forward toward inevitable progress and order. Northern abolitionists impeded progress and, therefore, Southern

claims to economic and cultural advancement. Though he voiced his opinions in articles and editorials, Simms also used his novels, including *Katharine Walton* and others, to communicate his ideologies on race, secession, and states' rights. In his depiction of the Tories (Balfour and Cruden) as inept disciples of the oppressing force of the King, Simms establishes a direct contrast to the valiantly successful American heroes and heroines epitomized by Katharine Walton and her lover, Major Singleton.

Within this context, the scene of the rebel ladies of Charleston and their successful deception becomes more than just comic relief. The women and their accomplices, the old men of the city, work secretly to overthrow the governing forces. Playing off stereotypes of bumbling old men, pious dowagers, and innocent maidens, Simms carefully constructs a coterie of insurgents whose actions, and their relative effectiveness, contrasts markedly with the insufficiencies of the enemy, the seemingly superior British soldiers. Simms's character choice reveals his specific intentions within this scene to reverse traditional ideas of power and agency. Although their actions are commendable as a retaliation against the King, the women and men further symbolize the dangers of revolution: role reversals and exchanges of power. In the historical framework of abolition and secession, this scene illustrates the dangers of empowering the powerless. In the nineteenth century, women in the parlor were perceived as voiceless and benign, much like slaves in the field. In the pages of Simms's texts, women successfully undermined authority through deception and dissemblance. By implication, given the chaos of war, so could slaves. Read beyond a surface level, nineteenth-century novels, such as Simms', became

prescriptive and propagandist literature, informing and defining not only social behaviors but also political and moral ideologies.

While Simms's novels were clearly meant to entertain, they were also intended to educate his audience, becoming a guidebook for genteel behavior in the nineteenth century. Aware of the common practice of reading aloud, Simms insured his instructions for civility would be translated through performance in the very center of nineteenth-century polite society: the parlor. The question, then, seems to be the level to which these novels affected women's behaviors: did novels instruct women how to act within specific social and cultural spaces, or were novels the vehicles through which women commented on and reacted against the boundaries of social spheres? The answer lies between the power of the novel to inform and the power of the reader to interpret. Certainly, the women who read these novels aloud in their parlors played according to the rules of proper society, but the difficulty in understanding their reception of the text lies in how they acted *out of* the texts. Through their performance, Simms's novels became a constituting medium which established and codified culturally prescribed behaviors. As critical readers, women in their parlors understood Simms's intentions, both on the surface and beneath. Whether or not they agreed with him is uncertain. What is significant, however, is women's deliberate manipulation of the text for their own purposes. By giving voice, literally, to a variety of characters, women reading aloud in their parlors assumed roles denied to them elsewhere, allowing women to exist, however momentarily, in

another world. Performing these texts, women enacted the rebellious tendencies of their social and cultural predecessors, the “Rebel Ladies of Charleston.”

As characters within various novels, these same women became people other than themselves. Charlotte Boykin read aloud “delightfully” at the meeting of the Charleston Reading Club, in a voice “musical and expressive in its intonations.” As she took on the persona of different characters, her expressions “constant[ly] change[d].”²⁶ Reading aloud, Charlotte altered her voice and expressions to fit the character she was playing. For Charlotte, reading aloud scenes such as the “Rebel Ladies of Charleston” required a simultaneous awareness and rejection of culturally prescribed behaviors and gender roles. For the audience, Charlotte’s performance offered them the opportunity to interpret Simms’s texts in new and unexpected ways. The reciprocal acts of performance and reception initiated a process of self-expression and identity which allowed women to react against the strictures of nineteenth-century parlor culture and gender conventions.

¹ Moragne, Mary and Delle Mullen Craven, editor. *The Neglected Thread: A Journal from the Calhoun Community, 1836-1842*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1951. 10. The diary of Mary Moragne (1816-1903) records the period from 1836-1842 when she lived in Abbeville, South Carolina. Moragne was an writer herself, publishing *The British Partisan* in 1838 and writing prolifically until her marriage in 1842 when she ceased her efforts to be an author.

² Bonner, James C. *The Journal of a Milledgeville Girl, 1861-1867*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1964. 36-37, 67 and 77-78 for discussion of these novelists. Anna Maria Green was born in 1844 in Milledgeville, GA, then the capital of Georgia. Green's diary mostly contains descriptions of her social life as a wealthy, Southern women; she describes visiting other women, attending large galas, and going to the theatre. Although she is not as critical a reader as Moragne or Holmes, Green still dutifully records and discusses the books she reads, as if it is expected of her although no one will read her journal other than herself. Diary covers period from 1862-1867.

³ Holmes, Emma. *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861-1866*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979. See 117-126 for her description of the reading club. As a descendent of three prominent South Carolina families, the DeSaussures, the Holmes, and the Gibbes, Miss Emma Holmes (b. 1838) represents the highest level of South Carolina society, both economically and socially. Her diary covers the period from 1861-1866.

⁴ Moragne: 73-76. Moragne gives a detailed description of her visit to the Carters' as well as a call to the Bustin home. In this entry, she gives a vivid and extremely detailed description of the interiors of the homes and the actual call itself, how they ate, etc.

⁵ Moragne: 161. She describes an evening spent at home reading for her family. This is not the only reference she makes to reading at night for other women as part of the daily routine of finishing chores.

⁶ Garrett, Elisabeth Donaghy. *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870*. New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1990. See her chapter "The Parlors," 39-77, especially 55-56 for a description of A. J. Downing's use of books as decoration as well as 61-62 for the distinction between the front parlor and the back parlor. See also James Hart, *The Popular Book*, 88 for an analysis of the book as a "passport to culture."

⁷ Moragne: 10. Moragne's grandmother lives with the family and is frequently read to by Mary or other members of the family. This practice of reading to the elderly or infirm is not uncommon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

⁸ *The Art of Conversing: Written for the Instruction of youth in the polite manners and language of the drawing room by a Society Gentleman*. Boston: James French, 1848, sixth edition. Excerpt taken from the "Conversation in a Drawing-Room," 25.

⁹ Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1959. 35.

¹⁰ Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982. See specifically Halttunen's chapter "Disguises, Masks, and Parlor Theatricals: The Decline of Sentimental Culture in the 1850s," 153-190, and particularly her discussion of the performances within the parlor, both theatrical and everyday, 182-190. Halttunen describes elaborately staged parlor theatricals which involved performances by both men and women for a large audience of social peers. This essay does not focus on those types of performance. When using the term "performance" I mean any type of oral or visual action seen by an audience.

¹¹ Goffman: 35. Goffman compares socialized performance as ceremony to the ideologies of Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown.

¹² Hart, James D. *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1950. See 90-91 for discussion of emergence of women authors in the mid-nineteenth century. Hart does not cite the specific magazine he quotes, only to say it is a "magazine of the day." For further information on this topic, see Nina Baym, *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

¹³ Oliphant, Mary Simms and T. C. Duncan Eaves, eds. *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*. Vol. IV. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1955. Henceforth cited as *Letters*. 155. From a letter to James Lawson dated December 27, 1839 in which Simms responds to Lawson's criticism of his work *The Damsel of Darien*. Simms goes on to describe the process and qualities of successful writing at some length.

¹⁴ *Letters*, 4: 155.

¹⁵ Simms, William Gilmore. Introduction. *The Yemasee*. 1834 edition. Downloaded from database of the south at UNC-CH: www.metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/index.html

¹⁶ Moragne, diary entries dated April 18th, 1836 and April 27th, 1836, 10 and 13, respectively.

¹⁷ *Letters*, 1: 167. In an autobiographical letter addressed to James Lawson dated December 29, 1839. He concludes with a self-descriptive paragraph: "You may add that I am a Democrat of the Jackson School, a State rights man, opposed to Tariffs, Banks, Internal improvements, American Systems, Fancy Rail Roads, Floats, Land Companies, and every Humbug East or West, . . ."

¹⁸ Harris, Susan K. *19th-century American Women's Novels: Interpretive Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 32.

¹⁹ *The Art of Conversing*, "Introduction," no page number.

²⁰ *The Art of Conversing*: 25.

²¹ *The Art of Conversing*: 25.

²² *Letters*, 1: 155.

²³ *Art of Conversing*: 26.

²⁴ Goffman: 75.

²⁵ *Art of Conversing*, quotes taken from "Conversations with Women:" 33.

²⁶ Holmes, 200-202 in an entry dated Sept. 27th, 1862.

Chapter 4

“OUR READING CLUB MET FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY,”

THE PARLOR, WOMEN, AND NOVELS

Having established the power of the novel to instruct and define social norms and to permanently fix ephemeral artifacts, such as dialect, let us now examine the relationship between performance of the novel and its reception. Playing out scenes of civility, such as Simms’s “Rebel Ladies of Charleston,” is only one type of performance found within his texts. As women read the entire novel, they encountered a variety of characters, including wealthy land-owners, poor whites, Partisan and Tory soldiers, and African-American slaves. Performing these roles through reading aloud, women assumed personalities unlike their own—rich and poor, male and female, white and black—for the enjoyment of their audience.

Let us imagine ourselves sitting in Emma Holmes’s parlor, part of the audience at a performance of William Gilmore Simms’s Revolutionary War novel, *Mellichampe* (1836).¹ The year is 1862 and the Civil War is on the minds of everyone in Charleston, including the women left behind as their brothers, cousins, and husbands left for war. We find the meeting of the Charleston Reading Club already in session. Charlotte Boykin reads aloud Simms’s novel, *Mellichampe*, an historical romance detailing the rebellious Partisans soldiers’ courageous battle

against the oppressive King George, a story which seems quite fitting for times such as these.² Looking around the parlor we see eight other women, all well-educated and wealthy members of the Lowcountry planter class, listening attentively to Charlotte's reading of Simms's chapter, "Love's Barrier."³ Changing the expressiveness and intonations of her voice as she assumed the roles of different characters, Charlotte "read delightfully" the exchange between the slave, Scipio, and Janet Berkeley, his white mistress as they plan to rescue Janet's lover, Earnest Mellichampe:⁴

The sturdy Scipio followed his young mistress toward the avenue. . . . they heard the rush of horses and the shrill blast of the bugle

"Top in dis bush, young missis; squat down here . . . whay day can't see you."

"No Scipio, let us go forward. . . . Do not fear, Scipio; we shall have time, but you must go forward quickly."

The black looked into her face with astonishment . . . her words were unbroken and unaffected, equable, even musical.

"Gor-a-mity, Miss Janet, you no scare? You no frighten, and you only a young gal? . . . Wha' for you no scare like Scipio?"

She said in tones which strengthened him . . . "Fear nothing, but come on quickly."

He opposed nothing farther to her progress, but followed in silence (M, 235-236).

Acting out this scene before us, Charlotte Boykin becomes Janet Berkeley, a character not unlike herself in social rank and education, as well as Scipio, an African-American male slave. What do we see? And, most importantly, what do we hear?

Reading from the text, Charlotte follows Simms's visual cues of pronunciation for each character's voice. Janet Berkeley, the romantic heroine, epitomizes Simms's conception of female virtue and civility. As the ideal woman, the sound of her voice, mirrors her personality, "unaffected, equable, even musical" (235). In contrast, Simms depicts Scipio's voice as both visually and aurally distinct from his mistress's. In the text, Scipio's dialect is spelled out phonetically, emphasizing the *sound* of his speech as an indicator of social and racial difference. Scipio's language is exaggerated and hyperbolized to accentuate the racial and class differences between Janet and Scipio, as well as Scipio and other male characters in the text, such as Mellichampe, the heroic white title character. While it is clear Simms intends this passage to illustrate the caring and trusting relationship between Janet and her slave, his depiction bases this relationship on white subjugation of blacks. The linguistic difference represented on the page as dialect translates to social, economic, and cultural difference between blacks and whites in the nineteenth-century slave-holding South.

When the visual differences between dialect and standard English are translated into performance through a reading such as Charlotte Boykin's, the voices of these two characters take on new meaning. The audience is no longer an individual reading silently, but a group of people gathered together to be entertained. Where the silent reader remains largely outside the text, the performer literally *becomes* the text, speaking and acting straight from the page within the socially defined space of the nineteenth-century parlor. Reception to this performance

depends entirely on pre-existing social and cultural ideologies. As female members of the ruling class, the women in the Charleston Reading Club may have seen this scene as a moment of empowerment for wealthy, white women as they act out the role of the benevolent mistress and the fearless heroine.

The relationship between audience and actor depends on a shared cultural language between the speaker and the listener (and viewer) of this visual and oral performance. For Charlotte Boykin performing in the parlor, the members of her Reading Club constitute a community of female observers who share a common language of appropriate behaviors for their social circle. Performance by women within the parlor, a space defined by guidelines for proper behavior, challenges perceived notions of femininity and offers the performers the opportunity to redefine the space they inhabit. It is difficult to view these wealthy, white women as victims of oppression, especially as they lived and worked in a space socially prescribed for them. While the parlor was a woman's room, it is important to note it was also the *only* room in which women had power. Women may have represented virtue as the mistresses of the parlor, but that role was as culturally defined as the physical structure of the room. Further, though white women held power over their slaves, they were also at the mercy of white plantation males, a relationship based on female submission.⁵ By engaging in these "moments in and out of time" performed in the parlor, women suspended the social expectations impressed upon them by outside forces and, instead, exist within a self-defined world of their own construction.⁶

As Miss Berkeley, Charlotte assumes the character of a woman so powerful her voice “strengthens” her fearful servant enough to continue their journey. Janet Berkeley, in her “maiden innocence,” demonstrated “purity of soul and person” (237) and while, “blinded . . . to all feeling of danger,” she proceeded to rescue her lover (236). Simms depicts a conflicted version of Southern womanhood in Miss Berkeley. She represents both Simms’s version of the ideal woman while also exhibiting traits typically associated only with men: bravery and courage. For Simms, this type of womanhood exists only when things are not as they should be, such as in time of war, exemplified by the “Rebel Ladies of Charleston.” Through her performance of Miss Berkeley, Charlotte Boykin is a woman at odds with traditional perceptions of womanhood. This action is magnified as she performs the role of this headstrong female in the parlor, a space perceived as the “precinct” of women, but women decidedly different from Miss Berkeley.⁷ The parlor, transformed into an arena for performance, becomes what Victor Turner defines as a “liminal space,” a physical or metaphorical place “betwixt and between” the rules, customs, and traditions used to define it.⁸ The nineteenth-century parlor, we have seen, was a space delineated by customs and expectations so pervasive they necessitated the publication of manuals, guidebooks, and periodicals for instruction on proper behavior within its walls. Once these rules are suspended through women’s performances, the parlor acts as a staging point for rituals usually deemed inappropriate behavior for women. In the context of traditional parlor plays, women performers were common, but they did not necessarily portray unconventional roles, such as African-American slaves.⁹ Taking

the voice of Scipio, the African-American slave, Charlotte Boykin spoke in dialect, clearly mimicking the language of a population over whom she held power and control. Performing the role of a black male, especially the stereotypical trusty slave Simms characterizes in Scipio, Charlotte Boykin asserts racial and cultural superiority of a white woman over a black male: the ultimate expression of power. Had she not spoken in dialect, Charlotte's performance would not have been as degrading and denigrating; but, speaking in the voice of "black darkies," Charlotte parodied slaves and slave speech to reduce Scipio to an inarticulate, uneducated Other.

Within this performative framework, the novels these women read became the basis from which to enact the lives they hoped to lead. Acting out the characters of a novel allowed women the opportunity to become people other than themselves and manipulate those roles for their own use. Women in the Charleston Reading Club became not just the heroine, but also the hero, the anti-hero, and the slave—social roles denied to them outside the boundaries of the parlor. Just as this moment of performance is liberating, it is also limiting. These women can only exist as Others when in the parlor, a space socially designated as part of the woman's world, but which is, in reality, defined by the rules of behavior and propriety assigned from without by a largely male-dominated society. Novels, as a vehicle for escape, became the means for women to redefine their own lives by giving voice to a character, by speaking in dialect, by acting like a man, and, perhaps most importantly, by witnessing this process. Performance means little unless it has an audience. Creating a community of observers, women in the parlor validated each other's attempts at

expression and identity. Through reception, the women reinterpret, in unexpected ways, Simms's text through Charlotte Boykin's speech.

When these women performed, or witnessed performances of, dialect, they may have felt a range of emotions, from superiority to association to ambivalence, but, regardless of their intent, their mere performance and reception of the text signifies the importance of novels and language to self-definition. Women used novels as an expressive medium from which to perform their lives, or at least the lives to which they aspired. Novels served a dual purpose of rendering speech permanently in text as speech-artifacts and providing the vehicle for women to perform. It was through performance that women asserted their identity, individuality, and intelligence. They mastered a text, they read it aloud, they performed it before an audience, they used it to become actresses, all within a space limited by physical, social, and intellectual barriers. Controlling the actions and language within the parlor, these women controlled their own identity manifested in the control of their voices and their bodies. Novels offered them a world in which to escape. The parlor provided the venue. They initiated the process.

¹ The events imagined here were not recorded in Emma Holmes's diary, but is based on several of her entries. Emma Holmes did indeed belong to a reading club located in Charleston during the Civil War which met for the first time on January 2, 1862 (117). Subsequent entries regarding the reading club list the novels they planned to read: "historical novels, *Partisan Ranger* and *Border War*" (200-202). As this narrative progresses, endnotes will indicate the reference in Emma Holmes's diary for particular facts, when they are available.

² In an entry dated September 27, 1862, Emma Holmes records the following: "Our club met and commenced to read *Border Wars*. Charlotte Boykin reads delightfully—her voice is so musical and so expressive in its intonations—her face equally interesting in its constant changes" (200-202).

³ As a member of the Holmes family, Emma is related to three prominent South Carolina families: the DeSaussure, Holmes, and Gibbes. Holmes moved in the most elite social circles of Charleston society, including members of the White, the Boykin, and the Earle families (126, 200, and 316-317). In an entry dated February 24, 1862, Holmes describes a meeting of the club, after which "we nine girls" went to walk (126).

⁴ Charlotte "reads delightfully" in Holmes journal, (200-202). The excerpt from Simms is taken from *Mellichampe*, 235-236.

⁵ See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's work, *Plantation Women* for an extensive discussion of the relationship of white women to their masters and white women to their black slaves.

⁶ The quotes included in this paragraphs are taken from Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process*, 1969 as quoted in Cockrell, 157. The excerpt is as follows:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae are necessarily ambiguous Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. . . . We are presented at such times with "moments in and out of time," and in and out of secular social structure which reveals . . . some recognition of . . . a social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented (Turner: 95-96).

⁷ *Art of Conversing*, 25. In this excerpt, the author describes “ladies” as “more exacting as to the due fulfillment of social obligations” (i.e., rules of language, behavior previously outlined) and should be paid due attention “in their own precincts” (the parlor).

⁸ Cockrell: 157. See endnote 6 for Victor Turner’s quote excerpted from Cockrell’s text.

⁹ Halttunen, see her chapter on performance and appearance, 153-190, particularly her discussion of parlor performances, 182-190.

Chapter 5

“THE LAST ACT OF THE DRAMA WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE,”

FINAL WORDS

“Twas a dining party!” Ten young ladies and gentleman filled the dining room, dressed in the latest fashions, pondering the possibility of a trip to yet another party after dinner. Men and women, all young, all well-mannered, flirted their way through the meal and retired afterwards to the drawing-room for a game of cards and more congenial conversation. Here, the actors took their places, playing out their social roles: the “young lady monster,” the “loco foco” politician, the “grave and reserve” older General, the love-struck male, and the object of his love, the vain and capricious social belle. Will the young lover win the heart of the fair maiden? The party gathers in the drawing-room to witness the public execution of his fate, the “last act of the drama.” Begging her to answer yes, the lover falls prey to her charms and is presented with a symbol of her answer: the variegated pink flower—a certain sign of rejection. Distraught and dejected, the lonely lover must bear his tragedy in public, before an audience of his peers, in silent suffering. So the tragedy ends and our story begins, again.¹

Scenes similar to the one I described above, and variations of it, can be found in the pages of numbers of nineteenth-century sentimental novels, but the drama

depicted in this particular scene is not fiction—or at least not intended as such. In an entry dated 21st June, 1838, Mary Moragne penned the intimate details of the dinner party she attended that day. Recorded between her brother's arrival from school and the frolics of her young houseguests, Moragne's drawing-room drama stands out in both style and content from the rest of her journal. Continuing for over seven pages, the entry reads like a novel, with dialogue, character descriptions, subtle innuendo, and even a bit of romance and intrigue. Moragne sets the scene by first describing the setting, "twas a dinner party!" (MM, 90) and then introduces her characters, a range of personalities, but all part of the same social circle in Abbeville, South Carolina. Writing just after Simms' published his first major novels, Moragne composes in the same style as nineteenth-century historical and sentimental novelists.²

Like Simms, Moragne writes about women's life in the parlor. Unlike Simms, however, she describes a parlor controlled by women, overtly shifting the balance of power away from men, into the hands of the "lesser sex." The successful statesman and soldier, General McDuffie, grew awkwardly silent and "deficient in those graces of mind . . . for social intercourse" when forced into conversation. Perched alone on a parlor chair, Gen. McDuffie found himself like "the starling [in] his cage," screeching "I can't get out! I can't get out!" (MM, 90). The disappointed lover, Mr. Bowie, lamenting his separation from his intended, "threw himself on the sofa" in exasperation (MM, 92). Though holder of a "well-cultivated intellect," the poor tragic hero, Mr. Wilson, played the target "for the wit of all the others to strike at" (MM, 93). Mr. Wilson, also the victim of his imagined lover's capriciousness,

found himself unmanned in the parlor. Rejected by the woman he adored and left to read his sentence crumpled on a scrap of paper, Mr. Wilson was “forced by etiquette to remain where there was no hope for him” (MM, 95).

Moragne’s entry is insightful in many ways, not least of which are the events she describes and the way she chooses to describe them. Writing from a woman’s point of view for an audience of only one—herself—Moragne may have felt more free to depict the parlor culture she perceived, rather than the socially defined idea of it. In Moragne’s world, not everyone is polite. In fact, people are overtly, *not* nice. Mr. Wilson faces the grimaces and smirks of the other diners and Gen. McDuffie also bears ridicule from his more well-spoken dinner companions. This is *not* the drawing-room described in *The Art of Conversation*, but it *is* the parlor found in the world of novels—not those by William Gilmore Simms, but by women novelists.³ Though they are precocious, Moragne’s women characters are nonetheless assertive and aggressive—traits not likely to be found in most Southern heroines depicted by Simms. Moragne does not necessarily approve of their behavior, but she accommodates it as retaliation against male prejudice. Though she wished to deflate the “lady monster’s” lofty ego, Moragne arrested herself out of an allegiance to her sex:

I had half a mind to assist him in quizzing this learned lady monster—but I resented antipathy which the lordly sex always manifest towards the least degree of learning in ours (MM 93).

Moragne casts the drawing-room as a battle ground, the conqueror of which won the territory by mastering its key weapon: language. Verbal jabs and innuendoes fill the

party-goers dialogue and it was the visual language of the flower which first signaled to Mr. Wilson his rejection. Significantly, Mr. Wilson did not accept his fate until he *read* his flirtatious companion's answer. Through the very recording of this scene, Moragne presents the act of writing as the principle, and most powerful, means of communication. It is the final word.

While this discussion has focused on the significance of the performance of the written word, translating out of text into speech, Moragne reverses that process, recording speech in the form of textual dialogue. By fixing speech into print, Moragne signifies the importance of these events within her own mind. In a culture shifting from an oral to a visual paradigm, the written word assumed precedence over speech as evidence of truth.⁴ Speech, once fixed into print, became permanent and thereby considered a version of reality. Moragne described the events she saw on June 21st, 1838 not just because she was particularly amused, but because she wanted to record them as evidence of the realities of her life. Further, she wanted to make permanent the ephemeral. Moragne's journal captured the words and witticisms of a specific culture in a form familiar to many readers, especially women. By writing in the style of the sentimental novel, Moragne not only wrote for a specific audience (women), but also suggests the novel form often contained accurate depictions of nineteenth-century life. Where women looked to the novel as the basis from which to perform their lives, Moragne watched the performance and returned it to the printed page. She recorded the process of performance and expression and, through print, rendered it permanent.

In the context of this discussion, Moragne's journal entry reflects the major ideas this essay has tried to assert: the primacy of the word in communication; the power of the novel to instruct while it describes; and, most importantly, the possibility to make permanent ephemeral artifacts, whether performance, speech, action, or dialect. Through the written word, Mary Moragne left an artifact for future generations to examine, engage, and interpret. Her description of nineteenth-century parlor culture, at odds with that recommended in prescriptive literature of the period, offers a different point of view from which to examine ideas of gender and power in the nineteenth century. As action and word fixed in print, Moragne's text represents one woman's process of writing, a dynamic process which not only informs, but engages.

¹ All quotes taken from Mary Moragne's journal entry dated Thursday, 21st June, 1838, 89-96. In this single entry, which continues for seven pages, Moragne details the events of a dinner party she attended at Colonel Noble's home. References to excerpts from these particular pages will be cited in the text as Mary Moragne [MM], followed by page number.

² Moragne writes in 1838. Simms published his first short novel, *Martin Faber*, in 1833 and follows it annually through 1838 with a full-length novel, including the first two historical romances in the Revolutionary War series: *The Partisan* (1835) and *Mellichampe* (1836).

³ See Nina Baym, *Women's Fiction* for discussion of women novelists in the nineteenth-century. In her description of early nineteenth-century novels by women, Baym defines them as "books about the psychology of women" (19). Popular women authors contemporary with Simms include Catharine Sedgwick (1820s-40s) and, from the 1850s, E. D. E. N. Southworth, Anna Werner, Maria Cummins, Mary Jane Holmes, Susan Warner and Marion Harland. Sedgwick introduced the genre of "women's fiction" with her work, *New-England Tale* (1822) and Susan Warner's novel, *Wide, Wide, World* (1850),

⁴ Cockrell, Dale. *Demons of Disorder: Blackface Minstrels and their World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. See 141, for what Cockrell describes as the "performative culture of the ear" to the "mediated culture of the eye." Fostered by the print revolution of the nineteenth century, this shift prioritized the visual over the oral and related specifically to the emergence of print media as the new form of communicating and possessing knowledge in the nineteenth century.

APPENDIX:
CHRONOLOGY OF WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS' LIFE

Chronology of William Gilmore Simms's Life

- 1806** William Gilmore Simms, Jr. born in Charleston, South Carolina on April 17.
- 1812-18** Educated in Charleston public and private schools.
- 1824-26** Visits his father in Mississippi twice, traveling extensively west of the Mississippi River.
- 1828-29** Co-founds, edits, and writes for *The Southern Literary Gazette* in Charleston. Sole editor by 1829.
- 1830** Buys *The Charleston City Gazette* with a partner and edits until June 1832.
- 1832** Travels for the first time to New York City, meets leading publishers and authors. Publishes *Atalantis: A Story of the Sea* (New York: J. & J. Harper).
- 1835** Publishes his first novel in the Revolutionary War series, *The Partisan* (New York: Harper & Brothers).
- 1836** Publishes *Mellichampe, A Legend of the Santee* (New York: Harper & Brothers). Marries Chevillette Eliza Roach and moves to Woodlands, a plantation belonging to her father.
- 1841** Publishes *The Kinsmen or The Black Riders of Congaree* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard), later titled *The Scout*.
- 1842** Quits writing long fiction due to economic depression.
- 1844** Elected to South Carolina state legislature, 1844-1846.
- 1851** Publishes *Katharine Walton, or the Rebel of Dorchester* (Philadelphia: A. Hart) .

- 1855** Publishes *The Forayers, or the Raid of the Dog-Days* (New York: Redfield).
- 1856** Publishes *Eutaw: A Sequel to The Forayers, or the Raid of the Dog-Days. A Tale of the Revolution* (New York: Redfield).
- 1859** Publishes *The Cassique of Kiawah: A Colonial Romance*, the last novel to appear in book form during his lifetime.
- 1867** Serializes *Joscelyn: A Tale of the Revolution*.
- 1870** Dies on June 6 in Charleston.

Information in chronology taken from Wimsatt, *Tales of the South*, ix-xiv.

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