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‘Written with a Mrs Stowe’s Feeling’: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the Paradigms of Southern Authorship in the Anti-Tom Tradition, 1852–1902

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that the following thesis is entirely my own work and confirm that no part of this work has been submitted for a degree at another university. An earlier version of chapter 1 appeared as '*Uncle Tom's Cabin: Genesis of a Tradition*' in *Overhere*, 18 (1999).

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the representation of authorship, readership and intertextuality in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the southern anti-Tom tradition from 1852 to 1902. The principal claim of the thesis is that Stowe's novel provides nineteenth-century southern readers with a series of aesthetic paradigms that enable these readers to construct and reconstruct the role of artist in the South as this intersects with the construction of gender identity in nineteenth-century America. In Chapter 1, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is interpreted through Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, whereby 'the one who writes is the same as the one who reads', to argue that Stowe's text promotes acts of active rather than passive readership. The reading of Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* in Chapter 2 interrogates the ways in which the female writer locates herself within a female literary tradition by subverting the Bloomian model of literary paternity to create the gothic mother author. Chapter 3 demonstrates how William Gilmore Simms appropriates Stowe's aesthetics of sympathy in the 'sensible man'. Barthes's recapitulation of the writer and reader as 'producer' and 'consumer' is mapped onto Simms's aesthetic terminology of 'utility' and 'extravagance' to reconcile Stowe's antithesis of marketplace and sentiment within the southern home. In Chapter 4, James Lane Allen's paired stories 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky' and 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' are read in the context of the literary debates between realism and romance in the late nineteenth-century. In doing so, Allen attempts to reconfigure these gendered aesthetic paradigms and so legitimise southern cultural elegy as a southern form but effectively begins the process of dismantling Stowe's aesthetics of sympathy. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* dramatises the failure of Stowe's aesthetics of sympathy in the context of the southern rape complex.

INTRODUCTION

'TO YOU, GENEROUS, NOBLE-MINDED MEN AND WOMEN, OF THE SOUTH [...] TO YOU IS HER APPEAL': HARRIET BEECHER STOWE AND THE SOUTHERN READER

When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in print in the early months of 1852 it was, J. C. Furnas later declares^d, a 'verbal earthquake, an ink-and-paper tidal wave'. Furnas's metaphor suggests that the impact of the novel was like a force of nature — greater than the individual, equally uncontrollable and inexorable in its power — and the myths that surround the conception and the reception of the novel do nothing to diminish the apocalyptic might that Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel seemed to presage. Questioned about her inspiration for the novel, Stowe avowed that 'God wrote it' and, when Abraham Lincoln met Stowe during the Civil War, his ^{reported} ~~apocryphal~~ address — 'So this is the little lady who made this big war' — honoured Stowe with an almost divine omnipotence. Yet, in its depiction of the abuses of the economic and social system of slavery in the antebellum South, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was premised upon both the authority of individual experience and the power of every American man and woman to effect change. In the preface to the novel, Stowe volunteered her 'personal knowledge' and appealed to the 'witnesses' who could verify her facts.¹ Indeed, Stowe's rendering of a personal narrative addressed to the individual reader was integral to the ways the novel was received by its readers. As Robyn R. Warhol has noted, the repeated

¹ J. C. Furnas, *Goodbye to Uncle Tom* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1956), p. 7; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [1850], ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.

interjection by a narrative voice directed to the reader was not an unusual strategy in mid-nineteenth-century fiction. To do so presupposed that the reader would identify with the narrator, that they had a shared value system and codes of discourse, that the reader would trust the narrative and was finally eminently persuadable to a cause they were already, inherently, predisposed to believe in.²

What makes Stowe's narratorial interventions so intriguing, however, is the question of to whom *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was actually addressed. The answer is initially simple — it was a novel addressed to women and, more specifically, the mothers of the North — and this was certainly not a new strategy for female antislavery and abolitionist campaigners. Lydia Maria Child, in her preface to *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), presented herself to her readers in comparable ways. She anticipated that her readers might query 'what a woman who had much better attend to her household concerns will say upon the subject' of slavery, but, whilst acknowledging her departure from acceptable female topics, she clearly expected her readers to be, like her, women with homes and families themselves — 'Reader, I beseech you not to throw down this volume as soon as you have glanced at the title. Read it [...] for an hour's amusement to yourself, or benefit to your children'.³ Within the context of acceptable female reading habits ('amusement') and a mother's educative responsibility for her children, Child attempts to locate her radical text at the centre of conventional female experiences and duties. Likewise, Angelina Grimké's *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (1836) and *Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States* (1837) and

² Robyn R. Warhol, 'Towards a Theory of the Engaging Narrator: Earnest Interventions in Gaskell, Stowe, and Eliot', *PMLA*, 101 (1986), 811–18 (pp. 811, 814).

³ Lydia Maria Child, *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* [1833], ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 4.

Catherine Beecher's answering *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism Addressed to Miss A. E. Grimké* (1837) articulated the opposing arguments concerning women's suitable role in the slavery and abolitionist debates. If *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was addressed to northern mothers, her female readers were encouraged to identify with the sympathetic white women in her novel as they attempt to understand and ameliorate the suffering of the distressed slave through the shared experience of maternity. Northern female readers would find their representatives in women like Mrs Shelby — a Kentucky slave-owner but nominally a sympathetic mother — and Mrs Bird, Rachel Halliday or Miss Ophelia.

Like Child, however, Stowe needed to consider the extent to which women could intercede in the political and economic issue of slavery. In addressing the mothers of the North, Stowe amended the unwomanly activities that her text might imply by encoding a reader response into her text that was appropriate to female behaviour. If, as Helen Waite Papashvily argues, in 'the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, [...] Stowe had exhibited many of those qualities considered by her contemporaries to be sex-linked to females — sympathy, tact, sensitivity, sensibility', she encouraged in her readers a similar observance of female work. Stowe's female audience were shown the ways in which they could practice a moral pedagogy circumscribed by the domestic space. Through female characters such as Mrs Bird, Stowe indicated the female reader's role in teaching her children and her husband how to feel. Stowe 'made her reader^S/participants in the characters' moral learning process by way of an engaging maternal teaching voice speaking directly to her audience'.⁴

⁴ Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women who Wrote It, the Women who Read It, in the Nineteenth-Century* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 75; Sarah

If *Uncle Tom's Cabin* engaged women readers in the distinctly female activity of moral persuasion, Doris Y. Kadish argues that many male readers and critics found little to appreciate in Stowe's text. Critiquing Stowe's novel for its apparent lack of aesthetic accomplishment, male readers were patently excluded from the maternal metaphors of readership that Stowe's text presumed — 'male critics uniformly complained about the novel's lack of artistic qualities and failed to grasp the positive sentimental, maternal features' of the text.⁵ Yet Stowe's address to her readership in her novel was not as wholly female-oriented as might be suggested by twentieth-century feminist readings and reclamations of the aesthetics of female sentimentality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁶ If Stowe's lauding of maternal power increasingly privileged the feminine as the source of moral authority and literary instruction, ultimately her text sought to draw upon both the male and female experience of her readership. Significantly, Stowe's empowering of femininity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as both Elizabeth Ammons and Nina Baym note, also

Robbins, 'Gendering the History of the Antislavery Narrative: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Benito Cereno, Beloved* and *Middle Passage*', *American Quarterly*, 49 (1997), 531–73 (p. 542).

⁵ Doris Y. Kadish, 'Gendered Readings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: The Example of Sand and Flaubert', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 26 (1998), 308–20 (p. 312). Kadish's analysis focuses upon the response of French critics to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but her conclusions are also applicable to the American response to the novel whereby the gender of the author and her intervention in the public discourses of slavery were regarded as problematic.

⁶ Interpretations of Stowe's novel as a text of female power are now standard rather than subversive readings of the text, but it is still necessary to recognise the significance of this reclamation of the aesthetics of sentimentality for modern readers. See Elizabeth Ammons, 'Heroines in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Literature*, 49 (1977), 161–79 (p. 164); Gillian Brown, 'Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Quarterly*, 36 (1984), 503–23 (p. 519); Jane Tompkins, 'Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History', in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 267–92 (p. 269).

never exclusively aligns masculine and feminine qualities to the male and the female body so that gender in her text becomes more fluid and more inclusive.⁷

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it is entirely possible for a man like Mr Bird, who, as a senator, 'could not be expected to cry', still to reveal 'signs of hearty sympathy' (p. 90) as he listens to the story Eliza Harris tells of her desperate escape from slavery. After hearing her story, Mr Bird, who had formerly 'scouted all sentimental weakness' (p. 94) in others, then begins his 'moral reflections' (p. 95) as Stowe's narrator interjects to address her readers:

you need not exult over him, good brother of the Southern States; for we have some inklings that many of you, under similar circumstances, would not do much better. We have reason to know, in Kentucky, as in Mississippi, are noble and generous hearts, to whom never was tale of suffering told in vain. (pp. 94–95)

Though Warhol argues that Stowe's narratee is female and this assumption is materially endorsed by the majority of female critics of the novel, Stowe repeatedly addresses an alternative reader of her text — a reader who is southern and a reader who can be either male or female. In the concluding remarks to the novel, Stowe's narrator makes her most conspicuous address to the multiple readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She speaks to the 'men and women of America', with a collective idealism to equal Walt Whitman's celebration of American diversity in 'Song of Myself' — to the 'Farmers of Massachusetts', to the 'strong-hearted, generous sailors and ship-owners of Maine', to the 'mothers of America' (p. 451) and to the 'Christian men and women of the North' (p. 453). Finally, however, Stowe reveals an important alternate readership — 'To you, generous, noble-minded men and women of the South [...] to you is her appeal' (p. 450–

⁷ Ammons, 'Heroines', p. 172; Nina Baym, *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels By and About Women in America, 1820–70*, 2nd edn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 232.

51). Certainly, the context of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as it appeared in weekly instalments in the antislavery *National Era*, emphasised a heterosocial southern readership; under Gamaliel Bailey's editorship, the *National Era* courted a mixed-gender southern audience. As Mr Bird demonstrates, male characters could possess the feminine quality of sensibility, but Stowe's novel also suggests that she was acutely aware that the experience of male readers was essential to the reception of her writing.⁸

To argue that Stowe's text contemplated a readership that was not northern or female does not override the consequence of the readership of New England mothers directing the discourses of the narrative. What such an argument does propose, however, is that if an anticipated northern female readership dictated the rhetorical strategies Stowe used in her text — what Melanie J. Kisthardt describes as the 'maternal influence paradigm' — in what ways might an addressed southern readership direct the discourses of the novel?⁹ How does Stowe's fraternal paradigm of readership — the 'good brother of the Southern States' — inform her text? How are the 'noble-minded men and women of the South' figured in the text as readers and what is the impact of this mixed-gender readership? The objective of this thesis is to answer these questions by reading Stowe's novel as it articulates her understanding of authorship, readership, literary history and intertextuality within the context of the southern male and female critical reviews, reader commentary and published fictional responses — the southern 'anti-Tom tradition' — which appeared after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852.

⁸ Robbins, p. 542; Susan Belasco Smith, 'Serialization and the Nature of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 69–89 (p. 78).

⁹ Melanie J. Kisthardt, 'Flirting with the Patriarchy: Feminist Dialogics', in *The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Mason I. Lowance, Ellen E. Westbrook, R. C. De Prospro (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 37–56 (p. 51).

The critical analysis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has, in recent years, increasingly moved towards interpreting the novel specifically in terms of reader reception. Whilst the influential readings of the novel by Tompkins and Ammons locate the text in a gendered literary history, the nature of the reader reception for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has predominantly been defined by race.¹⁰ Certainly, the argument for prioritising black responses to the novel is legitimate. Robert S. Levine argues that 'an important index of the novel's relative success or failure [...] should be its reception by those who had the most at stake in its reformatory social program: the free and the enslaved blacks of the 1850s'. As Marva Banks demonstrates, African-American readers responded to Stowe's novel in considerable numbers — Banks calculates that between 1852 and 1855 over two hundred articles appeared in the black press. What both Levine and Banks conclude, in their reading of the black responses, was that Stowe's novel was primarily rated by black readers in relation to its 'social function' and its effectiveness as an 'antislavery weapon'. Within this context

Uncle Tom's Cabin — despite its phenomenal sales and popularity among whites — was a secondary issue for most antebellum blacks [...] when references to the novel appeared in the black press, they were often appended to discussions of more pressing concerns such as politics, education, and employment.¹¹

¹⁰ Tompkins, p. 269; Elizabeth Ammons, 'Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and American Women Writers before the 1920s', in *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 155–95 (pp. 170, 188–89). Ammons's study effectively intersects gender and race by identifying a female literary tradition inspired by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that involves black and white female authors.

¹¹ Robert S. Levine, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin in Frederick Douglass' Paper: An Analysis of Reception', *American Literature*, 64 (1992), 71–93 (pp. 72, 74); Marva Banks, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin and Antebellum Black Response', in *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Contexts of Response*, ed. James L. Machor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 209–27 (pp. 210, 211).

Nevertheless, Stowe's representations of her black characters — Uncle Tom, George and Eliza Harris and Cassy — were profoundly influential in determining the ways in which African-American writers perceived black identity and understood the audience for their own texts. Stowe's novel had created a readership for slave fiction by placing the black man at the centre of her work. Yet

In bequeathing to Afro-American protest novelists writing after her a literary form and stance as well as a white audience with certain strong expectations, Stowe also helped to establish a range of character types that served to bind and restrict black authors for decades.¹²

Unquestionably, the representation of race in Stowe's novel and her endorsement of colonisation do not dramatically distinguish her racial politics from those of her pro-slavery contemporaries in the South. Stowe's 'romantic racialism', to use George M. Frederickson's term, was simply not a radical enough revision of racial discourses in the nineteenth century to alter the ways in which white readers understood black experience. African-American writing has responded^{to} and confronted Stowe's characters from the 1850s to the 1950s and beyond. A roll call of the titles of black fictional responses to Stowe's novel — the texts that black authors, black readers and black critics have received as answers to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — reads like a book list of the pre-eminent works of African-American literature. From Frederick Douglass's 'The Heroic Slave' (1853) and Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859) to Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1893) and Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) to Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), black authors have attempted to revise, reinterpret and recreate the 'lasting images' of racial identity in American literature. Yet finally, Sophia Cantave's argument — that, after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 'the telling of the slave experience became a strangely white affair' — remains a

fundamental, if troubling, testimony to the authorship and readership of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.¹³

The following thesis proposes, therefore, that the assumed reader of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was not exclusively the northern white woman represented as 'mother' in the text. Similarly, black writers soon discovered that, though clearly legitimately implicated in articulating slave and free experience, nor was the legitimised respondent to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* necessarily the African-American reader. In appealing to the 'noble-minded men and women of the South', Stowe identified the readers and writers that she sought to engage in dialogue. Stowe signalled this by intentionally appropriating what was the southern literary form — the genre that had made John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* (1832) the acme of southern letters before the war — the genre of ^{the} southern plantation novel. As William R. Taylor argues, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* 'was both the summation and the destruction of a literary tradition'.¹⁴ Southerners would answer this novel because it was addressed to them in discourses that were specific both to their experience and to their representations of their experience.

¹² Richard Yarborough, 'Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel', in *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 45–84 (p. 72)

¹³ George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on African-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper, 1972), p. 110. The cited African-American texts have been identified and interpreted through their relationship to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Yarborough, pp. 57–58; Levine, p. 83; Lori Askeland, 'Remodelling the Model Home in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Beloved*', *American Literature*, 64 (1992), 785–805 (p. 802); Sophia Cantave, 'Who Gets to Create the Lasting Images? The Problem of Black Representation in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', in *Approaches to Teaching Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons and Susan Belasco (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000), pp. 93–103 (pp. 97, 102).

¹⁴ William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Braziller, 1961), p. 307.

Even as southerners proclaimed a public ban upon the novel, it is manifest that southerners bought, read and discussed the text in their homes, in their diaries, in their periodicals and in their fiction. In an editorial for the *Southern Quarterly Review* in January 1852 — as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was halfway through its serialisation in the *National Era* and two months before the publication of the book version — William Gilmore Simms stated the southern position towards all abolitionist and antislavery writing. He claimed that abolitionists would not listen to southern accounts of slavery but, nevertheless, ‘The truth is to be spoken, and set down, though we should lack all listeners and readers’.¹⁵ ^{Although} Of Simms suspected there was no one to listen to the southern story, when Stowe wrote her preface to the novel, she acknowledged a correspondent silence on the true horrors of slavery — ‘what may be gathered of the evils of slavery from sketches like these, is not the half that could be told, of the unspeakable whole’ (p. 4). Simms and Stowe argue that the intense literary and rhetorical debates between North and South circulating around *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were essentially characterised as acts of non-communication. The southern anti-Tom tradition, sponsored by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and attempting to articulate what it was to be an author and a reader in the South, was predicated upon what is not, and cannot be, spoken. In his reading of Stowe's novel, David Leverenz suggests that

Uncle Tom's Cabin engages and suppresses what to antebellum readers were three nonnarratable plots: black male rebellion, white women's anger at being restricted to the roles of wife and mother, and the mutual sexual desire of black men and white women.¹⁶

¹⁵ William Gilmore Simms, ‘Treatment of Slaves in the Southern States’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 21 (1852), 209–12 (p. 210).

¹⁶ David Leverenz, ‘Alive with Contradictions: Close Reading, Liberal Pluralism and Nonnarratable Plots in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*’, in *Approaches to Teaching Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 120–31 (p. 123).

These ‘nonnarratable plots’, however, are the essential plots that anti-Tom novels address, reconstitute and rewrite in their response to Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. For southern authors and readers, what cannot be narrated becomes what must be narrated.

In Chapter 1 of the thesis, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is read as a text that expresses the fundamental theory of intertextuality in which, to use Julia Kristeva’s terms, the ‘one who writes is the same as the one who reads’.¹⁷ Through scenes of reading and writing and rereading and rewriting, Stowe negotiates the nature of texts and the nature of literary tradition as defined, undermined and, ultimately, undetermined by the gender of the author and the reader. This analysis proposes that Stowe’s text provides southern writers with the model for authorship by dramatising active readership and so initiates the development of a new southern aesthetic discourse that prefigures the acknowledged southern literary renaissance of the twentieth century.

Chapter 2 examines the way in which Caroline Lee Hentz constructs female authorship in the South in her anti-Tom novel *The Planter’s Northern Bride* (1854). Hentz’s novel provides the bridge between the northern and the southern female author and indicates the means by which Stowe’s novel and aesthetics are integrated into southern artistic discourses. Like Stowe, Hentz was northern-born but, after moving South, became assimilated into the value systems and culture of her adopted region. In her dramatisation of the relationship between her two heroines, the southern Claudia and the northern Eulalia, Hentz confronts the relationship between female author and reader in resisting the male authorial, and authorising, voice. In this text, Hentz debates the ‘nonnarratable’ plot of female rebellion.

¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 34–61 (p. 56).

Chapter 3 discusses the artistic project of William Gilmore Simms's *Woodcraft* (1852) in its recapitulation of the aesthetics of sympathy. Stowe's novel establishes the conflict between male economy and female sympathy but, through his version of the 'sensible man' who unites emotional 'utility' and 'extravagance', Simms makes possible a male aesthetics of sympathy that is authorised in the bond of love between the southern white man Captain Porgy and the southern black man Tom. In this context, Simms suppresses the possibility of black rebellion by reaffirming gender affinity over racial affinity.

James Lane Allen, writing 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky' and 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' in the late 1880s, takes this same bond between black man and white man to interrogate the relationship between realism and romance. Chapter 4 discusses the gendered nature of realism and romance and the strategies through which the late nineteenth-century writer begins to effectively dismantle Stowe's aesthetics of sympathy. This is finally completed by Thomas Dixon in *The Leopard's Spots* (1901), an answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that achieves what all other anti-Tom novels aspire to — to wholly rewrite the sympathetic bond between white man and black man. Chapter 5 argues that, in the figure of the black-on-white rape, Dixon revealed his belief in the ultimate outcome of the misapplication of sympathy in the South. In articulating the 'nonnarratable' plot of black and white sexual desire, Dixon's white supremacist novel inverts Stowe's primary discourses and reinvents a language for the South that informed the subsequent literary tropes of the region in the twentieth century.

Inevitably a study of the pro-slavery answers to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* must engage with texts that propound racist arguments that compromise the work of southern writers and arguably sanction their dismissal from an American literary tradition. The argument for

re-examining these southern novels is twofold. To read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* outside of this white tradition is finally to overlook Stowe's own contention that her text alone is 'not the half that could be told'. The dialogic practices of her own text demand that it be read as one side of the 'unspoken whole' and the story that is unspoken is, ultimately, not that of the black man and woman but that of the white southerner. The southern texts that are discussed in the following chapters are the overt responses that Stowe both inspires and is inspired by. The second reason for reconsidering these texts is to challenge the claim that the South simply did not have a distinct literature before the twentieth century. The question of the deficiency of southern literature dominates southern literary criticism from William Gilmore Simms in the 1850s to Thomas Nelson Page in the 1890s. As Louis D. Rubin demonstrates, the question that continues to direct the studies of nineteenth-century southern literature is ultimately why southern authors could not equal the work produced in the New England-based American Renaissance.¹⁸ Yet, as the texts in this study illustrate, throughout the nineteenth century, southern writers were interrogating the nature of authorship, readership, text and aesthetic form in complex and self-conscious ways that would prefigure, and make inevitable, the southern renaissance of the twentieth century.

¹⁸ Louis D. Rubin, *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study of the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 7.

CHAPTER 1

'THE FULL FORCE OF ITS EXCITING POWER': TEXTUAL INSPIRATION

AND AUTHORISATION IN HARRIET BEECHER STOWE'S *UNCLE TOM'S*

CABIN

When Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* was published in book form in 1852, her first novel was an immediate and unprecedented bestseller inciting both elaborate praise and passionate censure from her readers and reviewers. In her depiction of the careless domestic economies of the Shelby family in Kentucky, her rendering of the exotic and promiscuous St. Clare household in New Orleans and the gothicism of Simon Legree's dilapidated Red River estate, Stowe's imaginary travelogue of the South explored the moral and fictional terrain of the southern landscape. Originally planned as a three-month serialisation for the weekly antislavery journal the *National Era*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* finally ran from 3 June 1851 to 2 April 1852; the first two-volume book edition was published a month before the serial concluded. In the first days of publication the novel sold 3,000 copies and, with the publication of a cheaper, single volume version, sales had increased by the end of the year to 300,000 copies.¹ The initial southern reception for Stowe's work was muted and the serialised story received little attention in the South, but as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* rapidly achieved mythic status as a bestselling novel, both in America and Europe, it became clear that the anti-southern impact of Stowe's work was far greater than its first

¹ *The Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Annie Fields (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1897), p. 149; Lyman Beecher Stowe, *Saints Sinners and Beechers* (London: Nichols, 1935), pp. 183–84; Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of the Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 117.

southern readers had anticipated. Stowe herself characterised the objectives of her novel in a letter to the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1853 in which she claimed a ‘true heart of love for the Southern people’ that she fully believed ‘must appear to every impartial reader of the work’. Stowe had attempted to portray, in the early scenes in Uncle Tom’s cabin or in the St. Clare household, a benign if sometimes morally lax, South and had explicitly implicated the North in the sin of slavery in her characterisation of the diabolic slaveholder Simon Legree, a native of the North. Yet, who the ‘impartial reader’ of her overtly politically-motivated text might be is a somewhat moot point. As the Shaftesbury letter continues it becomes clear that Stowe’s target readership were southerners themselves — certainly no very ‘impartial reader’ — and that Stowe believed her chosen sentimental discourses ‘might be allowed to say those things of the system which would be invidious in any other form’. Stowe suspected her favourable characterisation of the ‘amiable, generous, and just’ men of the South would provoke abolitionists to denounce her novel for being ‘too mild in its dealings with slaveholders’. Unlike other propagandistic antislavery papers, including William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator*, the *National Era* attempted to be more conciliatory to its southern readers. Yet, despite this immediate context, in an atmosphere of increasing political and cultural sectionalism in antebellum America, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was soon interpreted by Stowe’s southern and pro-slavery readers as a deliberate and factually inaccurate vilification of southern society. Stowe concluded her letter to Shaftesbury by acknowledging that ‘when the book circulated so widely and it began to be perceived how powerfully it affected every mind that read it, there came on a reaction’.² In

² Charles Edward Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe Compiled from her Letters and Journals* (London, Sampson Low, 1889), p. 171; *Life and Letters*, p. 151. Examples of Stowe’s positive representation of the South and criticism of the North are given in Edward Wagenknecht, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Known and the Unknown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 181; Lyman Beecher Stowe, p. 185; Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University

Stowe's interpretation of the novel's reception in the 1853 letter she revealed herself as a self-conscious literary artist pragmatically assessing the both the political and textual implications of the relationship between author and reader within the specific literary genre of sentimentality. Sensible of the impact of her novel upon its readers, Stowe constructed around her text a series of authorship narratives that sought to implicitly direct and redirect how her book should be received. What emerged from her commentary on the novel's authorship, a commentary that was ongoing into the late nineteenth century, were multiple and often inconsistent accounts of her first inspiration, her subsequent writing process and her strategies for guiding her readers in how to interpret her text.

Stowe had repeatedly defined her purpose in writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the preface and the concluding remarks that framed the narrative of the 1852 book edition. The primary objective of the story, Stowe asserted, is 'to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race'. Stowe's answer to the question 'what can any individual do?' in response to these pictures of slavery was simple. That individual 'can see to it that *they feel right*'.³ Such comments made it clear that, though she might hope that her readers would exercise their sympathy in real life, Stowe perceived the principal impact of her novel on its readers to be both imaginative and affective, to some extent regardless of whether that internal response ultimately translated into effective civil action —

Press, 1985), p. 128. Discussion of the impact of the *National Era*'s political objectives on the composition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is found in John R. Adams, *Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Boston: Twayne, 1963), pp. 58–59; Susan Belasco Smith, 'Serialization and the Nature of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 69–89 (p.78).

³ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* [1852], ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3, 452, original emphasis. All subsequent references to this edition will follow citations in parentheses.

'feeling' right certainly preceded but also necessarily superseded 'doing' right for female readers denied an active role in public discourses. Despite the political motivations for her novel, what emerged as Stowe's primary objective was the moral reformation of her readers through appropriate reading practices. In 'An Appeal to Women of the Free States of America, on the Present Crisis in Our Country', published in the *Independent* on 23 February 1854, Stowe specifically summarised the duties of American women in response to slavery. 'The first duty is for each woman', Stowe urges, 'thoroughly to understand the subject'. Further, Stowe identified more proactive measures for her female readers: 'make exertions to get up petitions', 'communicate information', 'employ lecturers', 'circulate the speeches of our members in Congress' and finally 'make this subject a matter of earnest prayer'. Such activities, if adopted by women, are 'bound to give her influence on the right side'. For Stowe, it was an 'influence' achieved by locating women at the centre of a moral and textual exchange. The female reader spurred to action by Stowe's depiction of the horrors of slavery would find a role as a mediator between differing writers, readers and texts. By encouraging women to seek a rational as well as an emotional knowledge and to participate, under certain conditions, within distinctly public discourses, the reading strategies Stowe proposed for her readers were not strictly appropriate to nineteenth-century notions of femininity. Yet Stowe finally foreclosed more vital creative acts by counselling women to confine their own personal expressions of grief or anger to the privacy of their prayers.⁴

⁴ Harriet Beecher Stowe, 'An Appeal to Women of the Free States of America, on the Present Crisis in Our Country', in *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Joan D. Hedrick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 452–56 (pp. 455–56).

Stowe gave her first and elusive account of the writing process as the novel was serialised in the *National Era*. J. P. Jewett, the publisher responsible for the book edition, advised Stowe to conclude the expanding narrative. With the knowledge that longer works rarely sold well in the book market, Jewett saw any potential profits to be made on the novel diminishing as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* extended into a second volume. Stowe responded, but not in the way Jewett had hoped. This was a novel that she had no choice but to write, the 'story made itself' and the 'feeling that pursued her increased in intensity to the last, till with the death of Uncle Tom it seemed as if the whole vital force had left her'. This was a novel 'into which she had put heart, soul, mind, and strength, which she had written with her heart's blood'. As the novel was read, however, Stowe explained how

she soon began to hear echoes of sympathy all over the land. The indignation, the pity, the distress, that had long weighed upon her soul seemed to pass off from her, and into the readers of the book.

As Stowe completed her text, writer and reader were connected by the power of 'sympathy' — an emotional and intellectual apprehension of the text that Stowe conveyed through the physical experience of the body.⁵

If this account of her inspiration emphasised the melodramatic potential of authorship, Stowe's contemporary accounts of authorship also embraced the more prosaic demands of family life and housework that imposed upon the time she could devote to hastily written copy produced weekly for the *National Era*. In the description of kitchens and parlours, the novel itself transcribed onto its pages the daily knowledge — what Ellen Moers describes as the 'rattle and clutter of domestic life' — shared by its female author and reader. As a writer who was also wife and mother, Stowe was eager to identify her children as the novel's first, and exacting, audience as she read to them from her

manuscript. When the serialisation in the *National Era* concluded, the paper's editor Gamaliel Bailey projected this familial intimacy between author and reader within the family parlour onto Stowe's relationship with the public readers of her text in the pages of the paper. For the author, 'The thought of the pleasant family circles that she has been meeting in spirit week after week has been of constant refreshment to her'. As the metaphor of the parlour suggested, the encounter between author and reader was one of physical and emotional kinship based upon the affinity between their experiences. Susan Belasco Smith's reading of the serialised version of the text stresses the vital ways in which Stowe and her readers communicated with each other as the story was composed. The novel's original appearance in the *National Era* permitted an intimate and conversational relationship between author and reader. The opportunity to contribute letters to the editor, as the serial was ongoing, enabled readers to be 'unusually active participants' in the 'social text' of the journal whilst the writer 'acts on as well as reacts to a particular and evolving publishing environment'.⁶

In a later account of the writing process included as an introduction to the 1879 illustrated edition of the novel, Stowe provides an extended description of the work's conception that established the most renowned explanation of the novel's authorship. Whilst her 'one purpose' was 'to show the institution of slavery truly, just as it existed', Stowe invoked spiritual intervention to explain her authorial inspiration. In a letter to a Mrs Howard, Stowe declared that she in fact "did not write that book [...] I only put

⁵ *Life and Letters*, pp. 148–49.

⁶ Ellen Moers, *Harriet Beecher Stowe and American Literature* (Hartford, CT: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1978), p. 22; *Life and Letters*, p. 147; Charles Edward Stowe, p. 157; Smith, 'Serialization and the Nature of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', pp. 71, 73, 76; Susan Belasco Smith and Kenneth Price, 'Introduction: Periodical Literature in Social and Historical Context', in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, pp. 3–16 (pp. 3, 9).

down what I saw [...] it all came before me in visions, one after another, and I put them down in words”’. Identifying herself only as an amanuensis to God, Stowe ascribed her authorship to her physical possession by a divine energy. ““God wrote it”’, she explained, ““I merely did his dictation”’.⁷

Stowe’s claims of a celestial author seemingly preclude the possibility of an independent literary creativity; authorship had simply been the acquiescence to a more powerful force. Perhaps, as E. Bruce Kirkham and Charles H. Foster suggest, Stowe’s claim of spiritual inspiration enabled Stowe to effectively communicate the ineffable notion of artistic genius. Nevertheless, this version of authorship enabled Stowe to empower her writing in several important ways. The model of divine inspiration profoundly connected her own experience as an author with that of her readers. If the female writer and the female reader were mutually engaged in the transmission and mediation of real and spiritual texts, then authorship and readership were not discrete acts of creation and reception and the role of writer and reader were essentially interchangeable. In her contradictory and self-effacing versions of authorship, Stowe’s attempts to relinquish direct responsibility for the text expressed a self-consciousness about the capricious and indefinable notion of inspiration that was particularly problematic for a female writer. Stowe was not alone among female authors in attempting to relinquish her own claims of authorship for those of an alternative masculine voice, when to do so was a familiar strategy for nineteenth-century women authors struggling to come to terms with their

⁷ *Life and Letters*, pp. 165, 177. The various and often inconsistent accounts of the inspiration and sources for the composition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* are given in Charles H. Foster, *The Rungless Ladder: Harriet Beecher Stowe and New England Puritanism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1954), pp. 18–22; E. Bruce Kirkham, *The Building of Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), pp. 72–75; Gossett, pp. 88–95.

authorship within the male tradition.⁸ Jan Pilditch acknowledges that by positing God as the creator of her text, Stowe ‘neatly relegated responsibility’ but, in doing so, also authorised her female-oriented work in ‘challenging male authority by appealing to a higher one’. Likewise, Theodore R. Hovet interprets Stowe’s attempts to disavow her creative role as inherently informing Stowe’s political objectives. In denying her own authorship, Stowe rejected the ‘cult of creativity’ and ‘depict[ed] the author not as creator or artistic master but as servant to an already existing narrative’. In doing so, Hovet argues, Stowe offered a critique of patriarchy by redefining authorship and seeing ‘in the master narrative a powerful symbol system with which to subvert the masculine ideology of mastery’. Stowe’s strategy of authorial self-effacement was an effective way of critiquing male authority by simultaneously manipulating feminine power. Amy Schrager Lang argues that, by citing God as the author of her work and ‘casting herself as medium, the woman writer confirmed her femininity’ yet in ‘representing herself as God’s scribe [...] the woman author proved herself a fit prophetess’. By ‘denying herself and invoking God, she could [...] assert herself all the more vigorously’.⁹

Though Stowe’s postbellum claim of divine intervention and inspiration is an appropriately dramatic explanation for the long-term effects of the novel, it finally neglects Stowe’s dramatisation of artistry in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and conceptualisation of authorship in the prefaces to both her first novel and to her subsequent related slave

⁸ Ann Douglas [Wood], ‘The “Scribbling Women” and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote’, *American Quarterly*, 23 (1971), 3–24 (p. 8).

⁹ Jan Pilditch, ‘Rhetoric and Satire’ in *The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ed. Mason I. Lowance, Jr., Ellen E. Westbrook and R. C. De Prosopo (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 57–70 (p. 59); Theodore R. Hovet, *The Master Narrative: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Subversive Story of Master and Slave in Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Dred* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), pp. ix, 27; Amy Schrager Lang, *Prophetic Women: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 194.

texts written during the 1850s. The preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had expressed Stowe's belief in the moral force of literature: 'every influence of literature, of poetry and art, in our times is becoming more and more in unison with the great master chord of Christianity'. Within this context, her work had specific objectives:

The poet, the painter, and the artist, now seek out and embellish the common and gentler humanities of life, and, under the allurements of fiction, breathe a humanizing and subduing influence, favorable to the development of the great principles of Christian brotherhood. (p. 3)

The seeds of the later claim for her mediation of a divine inspiration are clearly articulated in the preface, but so too are the elements of her nascent aesthetic theories. Though the 'allurements' of an art that seeks to 'embellish' real life implied certain moral judgements about its practices, for Stowe, the artist's power lay in the capacity to express intangible inspiration through the corporeal presence — to 'breathe a humanizing [...] influence'. In her preface to *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), a compilation of documents to corroborate the accuracy of her earlier novel, Stowe also amended her statement of the artistic principles that had informed her first work. Though 'it has grown beyond the author's original design', Stowe claimed that

This work, more, perhaps, than any other work of fiction that ever was written, has been a collection and arrangement of real incidents, of actions really performed, of words and expressions really uttered, grouped together with reference to a general result, in the same manner that the mosaic artist groups his fragments of various stones into one general picture.¹⁰

In making such assertions, Stowe engages with the possibilities of artistic power; to suggest that the work had exceeded its creative remit was implicitly to acknowledge that she had conceived an 'original design'. In her emphasis upon 'real incidents' and acts 'really performed' and words 'really uttered' as they were imparted through 'fiction', Stowe proposed a reconciliation between fact and fiction that, as Michael Davitt Bell

¹⁰ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* [1853] (New York: Arno, 1968), pp. v, 1.

argues, nineteenth-century aesthetic discourses defined as incompatible.¹¹ In perceiving her role as that of the ‘mosaic artist’, Stowe articulated a vital new version of authorship — one that balances the specific skills and philosophies of the artist and the artisan — that also challenged the distinction between high art and popular art that nineteenth-century readers and reviewers often defined in gendered terms. Whilst the imaginative scope of male authors was recognised, reviewers demanded that female writing have a more functional use. As an anonymous reviewer for the *Southern Quarterly Review* argued in 1852, women were ‘incapable of the intellectual development requisite for [...] those functions demanding literary cultivation’ but female-authored texts did have one fitting area of application. ‘From her written precept, as from her living example’, women authors had ‘an ameliorating influence [...] upon the affections and the morals of society’.¹²

It is in her preface to her last slave novel *Dred: A Tale of the Dark Dismal Swamp* (1856), however, that Stowe expressed her most complete assessment of her artistic strategies and her most assured expression of her role as an artist. Stowe defended her decision to write another novel on slavery on the grounds that:

in a merely artistic point of view, there is no ground, ancient or modern, whose vivid lights, gloomy shadows and grotesque groupings, afford so wide a scope for the exercise of his powers.

In the preface, she reminds her readers that there are, in the subject of slavery, ‘exciting possibilities of incident’ and ‘every possible combination of romance’. Whilst in the preface to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Stowe had claimed the ‘fidelity’ of her novel’s representations, in *Dred* she makes the significant admission that, though she once again

¹¹ Michael Davitt Bell, *The Development of American Romance: the Sacrifice of Relation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 8.

‘endeavor[ed] to do something towards revealing the true character of that system’, the authenticity of her depiction of slavery must be apprehended through the ‘principle of artistic fitness’ in which ‘works of fiction must sometimes use some liberties’. Though Stowe claimed the privilege of the ‘moral bearings’ of her subject, in the several brief paragraphs of the preface, only some five hundred words, Stowe describes herself as ‘writer’, ‘novelist’ and ‘author’ seven times and repeatedly refers to the ‘artistic’ possibilities of her ‘works of fiction’ whilst denying the novel was ‘mere cold art’. Reading the preface to *Dred*, it is hard to believe that the subject of Stowe’s text is slavery and not art itself. One subtle but important distinction is made in the preface, however, that indicates Stowe’s fundamental conflict as an author. Though her previous prefaces had made her gender as a writer clear, in the *Dred* preface, Stowe’s representation of the artist fluctuates between a male and female persona. What is significant is that it does so around a single issue — the distinction between art as art and art as moral influence. Whilst the description of artistic powers is aligned to a male persona, when Stowe claims her readers will find in her novel a ‘sympathizing heart’ she subsequently identifies the writer as female. For Stowe, the ‘moral bearings’ of her text, deemed appropriate subject-matter for the female artist, legitimise the artistic ‘liberties’ she takes in her writing and enable her to inhabit the conventionally male artist role with confidence. For Stowe, it was possible for the female artist to put on the ‘allurements of fiction’ at will without finally compromising her integrity as a woman.¹³

Despite Stowe’s overt defining of her authorship through the metaphors of conventional female experience, southern readers of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* were quick to question

¹² L., ‘Female Prose Writers of America’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 21 (1852), 114–21 (pp. 116, 119).

¹³ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* [1856], ed. Judie Newman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 29–30.

Stowe's true feminine sensibilities and to adjudge her professed ventriloquism of a masculine authorial presence in more vulgar terms. Undoubtedly, the sexually-charged description of her inspiration as a 'feeling that [...] increased in intensity to the last, till [...] the death of Uncle Tom' suggested certain physical passions that were distinctly unfeminine in the nineteenth century woman. Contemporary southern reviews, angered by Stowe's presumed but apparently fallacious knowledge of the South, paralleled criticisms of the novel's accuracy with indelicate insinuations about Stowe's sexuality. The editor John Reuben Thompson, reviewing the novel for the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1852, berated Stowe for her 'gross and stupendous libel' and her 'tissue of falsehoods'. Countering Stowe's exempla of southern atrocities toward the slave with both legalistic and syllogistic evidence, Thompson's condemnation of Stowe asserted that 'where a writer of the softer sex manifests [...] a shameless disregard of truth and of those amenities which so peculiarly belong to her sphere of life, we hold that she has forfeited the claim to be considered a lady'. An anonymous commentator, writing in the New Orleans *Picayune*, stated the same point rather less verbosely — the 'man Harriet' had 'proved herself false to her womanly mission'. George Frederick Holmes's several contributions to the *Messenger* on the subject assured southern readers that Stowe 'had abandoned the elevated sphere appropriate to her sex' and that consequently hers was a female mind 'unsexed'.¹⁴ Though intended as a reproach against Stowe, such suggestions of authorial gender ambiguity did not wholly differ from Stowe's own earlier experiments in writing. The accusations of 'unsexing' or betrayal of femininity

¹⁴ John Reuben Thompson, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852), 630–38 (p. 630). Thompson's review is reprinted, but incorrectly attributed to George Frederick Holmes, in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Boston: Hall, 1980), pp. 7–24. The *Picayune* review is cited in Diane Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 60–62 and Gossett, p. 191; George Frederick Holmes, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin',

were not unusual in cavilling descriptions of contemporary female writers, but Stowe's personal attempts to gain an audience for her writing began in an environment in which gender codes were less rigid than those observed by Thompson and Holmes.¹⁵ As a member of the Semi-Colon Club, a literary society Stowe joined whilst living in Cincinnati in the early 1830s, her contributions to the readings were, like other male and female members, put forward anonymously. In this environment, contributors often deliberately attempted to disguise or manipulate any gender traits conveyed in their text to prevent identification of the original author. In the Semi-Colon Club, Stowe learnt and honed her writing skills within a social and creative setting where 'gender was a fluid, performed, and assumed category' and writers masqueraded in alternative authorial personae.¹⁶ In her sometimes contradictory versions of authorship, Stowe's sporadic attempts to relinquish direct responsibility for the text expressed her self-consciousness about the act of inspiration. Yet, in conceptualising her authorship through both visionary intervention and domestic concerns, Stowe could also convey the nature of authorship in distinct, though not necessarily rigid, gender terms by defining what it meant to be both a male and a female artist. Stowe's version of sentimental sympathy manipulated the relationship between the author's body and the author's imagination in ways that destabilised established definitions of authorship in the mid-nineteenth century. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe began to raise profound questions about the relation between the biological and the cultural identity of the individual,

Southern Literary Messenger, 18 (1852), 721–31 (p. 722); George Frederick Holmes, 'Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 19 (1853), 321–30 (p. 323).

¹⁵ Douglas [Wood], p. 4.

¹⁶ Nicole Tonkovich, 'Writing in Circles: Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Semi-Colon Club, and the Construction of Women's Authorship', in *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write*, ed. Catharine Hobbs (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 145–75 (p. 148).

between gendered writers and gendered readers and between female authors and the male literary tradition.

'If the emblems of fiction are assumed but to delude': The Aesthetics of Sentimentality and the Body of the Artist

Stowe's own descriptions of inspiration were expressed through a sexual corporeality that paralleled the female body and the female text. Indeed, Stowe's metaphorical rendering of her 'heart's blood' as the gruesome ink of an impassioned writer transformed even the most elemental constituent of the human body into text. Similarly her conceptualisation of the relationship with her readers, as one of intimate conversation in the family parlour, blurred the distinctions between real and textual presence. Her southern reviewers immediately responded to the possibilities of physical and textual dissimulation that these strategies implied. If gender and authorial identity were performative as Stowe's text suggested, southerners were forced to question other, seemingly rigid, definitions of identity that were understood through a reading of the individual's body and went to the heart of slavery's defence whereby skin colour was regarded as a reliable external marker for biological, moral, and intellectual superiority and inferiority.

The southerner Louisa S. McCord, reviewing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the *Southern Quarterly Review* in 1853, perceived the interlocking aesthetic and ideological objectives of Stowe's novel. Like Holmes, McCord ardently denounced Stowe's assumed 'authority' to condemn the South and vehemently challenged the 'absolute falsehood' and 'infamous libel' of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. McCord rapidly connected Stowe's abolitionism to contemporary campaigns for women's rights. The southern

writer categorically reaffirms that ‘God directs and man perverts. Make a law perverting nature by which [...] woman and man are equal [...] and what ensues but bloody barbarity and tyrannic force’. Canvassing for greater suffrage, the constrictions of enslavement and marriage were repeatedly seen as analogous in the rhetorics of both antislavery and proto-feminist advocates. In her review, McCord immediately voices her concern at the mediatorial relationship that Stowe had implied in defining her authorship in the preface to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. She questioned the exactitude of such acts of transcribing and mapped these fears onto contemporary debates about gender in nineteenth-century America. The activities of woman’s rights, McCord warned, are ‘putting the ladies into their husbands pantaloons; and Mrs Stowe’s theory would lead them, Heaven knows where!’. McCord feared the ‘foul imagination which could invent such scenes, and the malignant bitterness [...] which, under the veil of Christian charity, could find the conscience to publish them’. Likewise, Holmes had warned his readers to be vigilant ‘if the emblems of fiction are assumed but to delude, if the stole which they wear is the robe of the Cynic, or their hood the cowl of the fanatic’. For both reviewers, Stowe’s fiction adopted the guise of female apparel — the ‘veil’, the ‘stole’ and the ‘hood’ — to conceal a menacing and ‘perverting’ textual power.¹⁷ If Stowe’s text provoked frequent allusions to female cross-dressing, masquerade and disguise in the southern reviews, for both Holmes and McCord the possibilities of a performed racial identity within Stowe’s plot also demanded comment and containment. For Holmes, the unusually ‘white’ features of George and Eliza Harris would unequivocally remove them

¹⁷ Louisa S. McCord, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 23 (1853), 81–120 (pp. 84, 87, 108, 89–90, 82); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), p. 50, Karen Sánchez-Eppler, ‘Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolitionism’, in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 92–114 (p. 93), Holmes, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, p. 721.

from slavery whilst conversely McCord challenged the plausibility of both Madame de Thoux and George Harris successfully ‘passing’ as white. In doing so, both Holmes and McCord hastily remove the liminal characters that repeatedly transgress the boundaries between white and black, male and female, and, in their fugitive escape across the Ohio River, between southern and northern. What these characters also dramatised for southern readers were the possibilities of rewriting the meaning of the body as though it were a text.¹⁸

Though informed by a conservative religious doctrine, in her declaration that ‘God directs and man perverts’, McCord also articulated a sophisticated dichotomy between two rhetorical discourses — one dictated by God and one dictated by man — through which to critique Stowe’s novel. Julia Kristeva’s formulation³ of Bakhtin’s ‘monologic’ and ‘dialogic’ discourses locates this dichotomy between God and man as integral to the processes of artistic creation. Kristeva determines that the ‘monological discourse [...] both assumes and submits to the rule of 1 (God)’. Hence, in the monologic, ‘all discourse is smothered by a *prohibition*, a censorship, such that the discourse refuses to turn back upon itself, to enter in to dialogue with itself’. Conversely, in ‘dialogic discourse [...] writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis’. Though Stowe would later claim she had received God’s text, her contemporary conceptualisation of author and text in the 1850s repeatedly stressed the dialogic processes of creation and reception within her novel. Like the slave Topsy, who, denying the possibility of either earthly parents or celestial creator, declares “‘I spects I grow’d. Don’t think nobody never made me”” (p. 247), Stowe’s avowal that this ‘story made itself’ engages with the permissible dialogic discourse of intertextuality that simultaneously obviates the notion of a definable textual

¹⁸ McCord, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, pp. 114–15; Holmes, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, p. 726.

origin and makes redundant the metaphor of female authorship as an extension of maternal power. Topsy's 'talent for every species of drollery, grimace and mimicry' (p. 253) locates the performative artist at the centre of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In doing so, Stowe authorised the practices of revision, reinvention and reinterpretation through which the author and the reader created and recreated the text. In key scenes in the novel — Uncle Tom's attempts to learn to write, George Harris's disguise as a Spanish gentleman and the description of Uncle Tom's annotated Bible — Stowe unequivocally demonstrates the 'dialogical structure' of the text whereby, as Kristeva states, the 'one who writes is the same as the one who reads' and vice versa.¹⁹ Through these scenes of literal textual negotiation, alteration and improvisation, Stowe initiates, along with Topsy, a 'perfect carnival of confusion' (p. 254) that privileges the dialogic over the monologic text. The putting on of a disguise to enable the black body to 'pass' as white, or the annotation of texts that simultaneously incorporated the author's and reader's meaning and interpretation, powerfully challenged established hierarchies of gender, race and ultimately, in the context of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, region by redefining the meaning of authorship for Stowe's readers.

A reading of the juxtaposition of the 'monologic' and the 'dialogic' discourses in the southern reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is reinforced by the problematics of gender raised by Stowe's seemingly inappropriate female authorship. As Judith Still and Michael Worton state, 'Theories of intertextuality have, from the outset, referred at least obliquely to sexual hierarchies':

On the one hand, there is phallic monologism or the illusion of unity and self-sufficiency. On the other hand there is liquefaction, the vehicle of passion — even madness, polyphony, the receptive object penetrated by

¹⁹ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 34–61 (pp. 47, 56).

other voices and so on. The latter pole [...] can be read as a figure of ‘femininity’.²⁰

Identifying monologism with masculinity and dialogism with femininity, the implicit sexual hierarchy imposed upon a penetrative masculinity and a receptive femininity corresponds to Hovet’s rendering of Stowe’s negotiation between the ‘master narrative’ and a narrator role that ‘embodies the ideology of the suffering servant who incorporates what has been repressed or excluded.’²¹ In Stowe’s dramatisation of the processes of authorship as an act of ventriloquism or self-fashioning and in the caricaturing of Stowe’s transgressive authorial identity by the South, the issues of race, gender and hegemony in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* fundamentally inform, and are informed by, the tensions between multiple texts, their writers and their readers. Though the issues of race and gender were fundamentally the motivation for the anger of southerners towards the novel, they finally do not explain why southern authors decided to specifically answer *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the ways they did — through responsive anti-Tom fiction. Yet, in the context of the issues of textuality, authorship and readership, Stowe’s work immediately prompted southerners to become authors because, in addressing them as readers, it implicated them in the intertextual equation of Stowe’s novel whereby the ‘one who writes is the same as the one who reads’. Through repeated examples of readers becoming authors, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* provided the South with a model of empowerment through self-authorisation.

If in writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Stowe wished to produce an accurate and realistic representation of the South — ‘to show the institution of slavery truly, as it existed’ — she acknowledged that, to broach the factual truths of the institution of slavery, also

²⁰ Judith Still and Michael Worton, ‘Introduction’, in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 1–44 (pp. 29–30).

demanded the articulation of more abstract moral truths. In a letter to Gamaliel Bailey, during the early stages of composition in March 1851, Stowe explained that ‘I have always felt that I had no particular call to meddle with this subject, and I dreaded to expose my own mind to the full force of its exciting power. But I feel now that the time has come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak’. Writing on the issues of slavery necessitated a clarity of moral purpose and a relocation of the power to express Christian truths in the politically and socially disempowered voice of the woman or the child. In a letter to Frederick Douglass, the former slave and prominent abolitionist, in which the northern writer requested information about the South to ensure that her novel was ^a picture that shall be graphic & true’, Stowe validated the accuracy of her depiction of slavery in the anticipated realisation of new Christian values in America. Chiding Douglass for adjudging the church pro-slavery, Stowe predicted that the abolitionist ‘movement must & will become a purely religious one — the light will spread in churches — the tone of feeling will rise — Christians north & south will give up all connection with & take up the testimony against it — & thus the work will be done —’. As she prepared to write, Stowe understood that her aesthetic truth was intimately interconnected with the exposition of moral truth. For Stowe, the Bible exemplified ‘the tone of feeling’ in its applicability to both aesthetic and moral truth.²²

In the imagery of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Stowe revealed that the Bible remained the primary source of knowledge of God’s will but also the primary source of literary

²¹ Hovet, p. 11.

²² *Life and Letters*, p. 148; Harriet Beecher Stowe, ‘To Gamaliel Bailey’, 9 March 1851, in *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, pp. 65–66; Harriet Beecher Stowe, ‘To Frederick Douglass’, 9 July 1851, in *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, pp. 58–61.

authority — the Bible was the pre-eminent text.²³ As Hortense J. Spillers argues, it was the ‘Ur-text’ Stowe saw expressed through her own writing, informing her extensive allegory and inspiring a typological interpretation of contemporary events. As the word of God, the Bible provided a transcendent and eternal moral framework through which slavery could be condemned as an evil directly opposed to God’s divine order. Conversely, regarded as a literary text, it was also possible to emphasise the interpretative function of the reader in constructing the meaning and so challenge the pro-slavery exegetic practices that cited biblical examples as irrefutable proofs to legitimise slavery. The Bible articulated truths but the reader was required to actively participate in apprehending that truth. Jane Tompkins’s influential reading of the novel identifies the powerful import of Stowe’s typological reworking of the Bible. Tompkins’s proposes that Stowe advocated a radical critique of contemporary patriarchal economic and political authority through her reading and interpretation of the bible codes. Within this framework the Bible text is conceived of as the ‘primary language’ that expresses the ‘self-evident meaning of the word’ through which all subsequent texts must be read.²⁴ Stowe’s aim to write a text that accurately depicted the

²³ The significance of the Bible as text for Stowe is noted in Foster, p. 56; Winifred Fluck, ‘The Power and the Failure of Representation in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, *New Literary History*, 23 (1992), 319–38 (p. 331); Helen Petter Westra, ‘Confronting Anti-Christ: The Influence of Jonathan Edwards’s Millennial Vision’ in *The Stowe Debate*, pp. 141–58 (p. 141); Mason I. Lowance, ‘Biblical Typology and the Allegorical Mode: The Prophetic Strain’, in *The Stowe Debate*, pp. 159–84 (p. 160); Hortense J. Spillers, ‘Changing the Letter: The Yokes and Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs Stowe, Mr Reed’, in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 25–61 (p. 40); Josephine Donovan, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Evil, Affliction and Redemptive Love* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), p. 7.

²⁴ Alice Crozier, *The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 16; Foster, pp. 53–58; Jane Tompkins, ‘Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History’, in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 267–92 (pp. 275–77); Thomas P. Joswick, ‘“The Crown Without the Conflict”: Religious Values and Moral Reasoning in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, *Nineteenth-*

experiences of slavery in the South in the mid-nineteenth century — as Stowe comments to Gamaliel Bailey, the ‘time has now come’ — and her concomitant reliance upon ‘timeless’ biblical tropes to provide a shared language familiar to her readers seem to be strategies that work in contradiction. It is an aesthetics that requires both specificity and universality, realism and symbolism. Yet Stowe’s understanding of her mediating relationship with God in the processes of writing and a conceptualisation of Scriptures which, Joan D. Hedrick suggests, ‘characterised the Bible in a homely way that made it the apotheosis of parlor literature’, made available to Stowe the artistic strategies of imitation, alteration and rewriting of an ostensibly inviolable precursor text. Through her imagery, Stowe’s replacement of a masculine divinity with an alternative matrifocal religion simultaneously deified womanhood and secularised the Bible. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was a text written by a reader of the Bible, familiar with the tropological origins and implications of her characters and situations. In writing her text, as Tompkins suggests, Stowe ‘does not simply quote the Bible’ but ‘rewrites the Bible as the story of a Negro slave’.²⁵

Stowe’s dual aesthetics of the visionary, eternal, divine and the antithetical realistic, timely, human were fundamental to the hostile reception of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the South because this theory of art transgressed the ideology of appropriate female

Century Fiction, 39 (1984), 253–74 (pp. 266–67); Hovet, p. 7. Leslie A. Fiedler suggests that Stowe’s ‘primordial images’ are ‘scarcely mediated by her transparent text into the public domain’. See Fiedler, *Inadvertent Epic: From Uncle Tom’s Cabin to Roots* (New York: Touchstone, 1979), p. 23.

²⁵ Elizabeth Ammons, ‘Stowe’s Dream of the Mother-Savior: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and American Writers Before the 1920s’, in *New Essays on Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 155–95 (p. 159); Nina Baym, *Women’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels By and About Women in America, 1820–70*, 2nd edn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 232; Gillian Brown, ‘Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, *American Quarterly*, 36 (1984), 503–23 (p. 519); Tompkins, ‘Sentimental Power’, p. 269; Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 171.

behaviour. When the southern-born Maria J. McIntosh wrote a fictional response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, her preface to *The Lofty and the Lowly* (1853) verbalised her fears that, in her choice of subject matter, she too might step outside women's sphere. Appealing to 'the privileges accorded to her sex by the chivalry of every age', McIntosh assured her readers that 'While endeavoring faithfully to represent classes, the author has carefully endeavored to avoid every approach to personalities'; her one exception she defended because it had 'been a labor of love'. In describing her representational strategies, McIntosh revealed an aesthetics contained by the dictates of feminine decency. McIntosh answers Stowe's depiction of the South by claiming representational accuracy but her feminine observance of the universal rather than the particular made it impossible to truly challenge Stowe's revision of sentimental aesthetics whereby the universal and the particular were simultaneous in the relationship between author and reader.²⁶

As Stowe's ideology of the female home in conflict with the masculine marketplace had demonstrated, in her critique of southern slavery, Stowe fully exploited the gender correlatives that nineteenth-century America applied to the distinctions between the spirit and the body. In her *Dred* preface, Stowe had clearly applied these same criteria to the differences between male artistic and female moral influence.²⁷ Yet, as Susan L. Roberson, Lynn Wardley and Winifred Fluck have argued, within the epistemology of

²⁶ Maria J. McIntosh, *The Lofty and the Lowly; or, Good in All and None All-Good*, 2 vols (New York: Appleton, 1853), I, 5–6.

²⁷ Barbara Welter's influential analysis of true womanhood describes four virtues, including piety, in defining appropriate female behaviour in the nineteenth century. See Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860', *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 151–74 (p. 152). Elizabeth Ammons and Gillian Brown provide important readings of Stowe's novel whereby Stowe's exploits the distinction between the female spirit and male body to empower her female characters. See Ammons, 'Heroines in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Literature*, 49 (1977), 161–79 (p. 164); Brown, p. 51.

sentimentality the spirit and body were not in conflict. Indeed, the nineteenth-century reader was reliant upon ‘an elaborate sign system whereby [...] the inner self could be known by external signs such as manners and dress’ in which spirit and body correspond exactly in meaning. The consequence of this was a ‘biologization of cultural traits’. For Fluck, Stowe’s novel depends upon her reader’s understanding of this sentimental semantics but also must essentially ‘resemanticize the meaning of the sign “black” [...] within a cultural system and mode of literary representation which the novel wants to strengthen, not to question, in order to achieve its own cultural and political goals’. For Fluck, this is both the ‘power’ and the ‘failure’ of Stowe’s representational mode.²⁸ Yet, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Stowe increasingly exploited and problematised the model of interpreting the body and text by placing the reader in a position of active power rather than passive reception. If material culture continued to possess powerful affiliations with spiritual culture within the codes of sentimentality, the performative possibilities of the body within her text provided effective ways of utilising and confuting these reading strategies. Stowe’s repeated assertion of the correspondence between writers and readers within her text insisted upon readers taking responsibility for the meanings they formulated through their acts of interpretation.

In theorising the role of female literary authorship in the nineteenth-century, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar conceptualise the way in which female writers negotiated between the restrictive tenets of their society and the liberating possibilities posed by textual authority by understanding these texts as

in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus

²⁸ Susan L. Roberson, ‘Matriarchy and the Rhetoric of Domesticity’, in *The Stowe Debate*, pp. 116–37 (p. 131); Lynn Wardley, ‘Relic, Fetish, Femmage: The Aesthetics of Sentimentality in the Work of Stowe’, in *The Culture of Sentiment*, pp. 203–20 (p. 210); Fluck, p. 326.

these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming and subverting patriarchal standards.²⁹

Certainly the suggestion that Stowe's text is palimpsestic is a relative commonplace in recent critical readings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Hovet has applied and critiqued the trope of the palimpsestic text in his analysis of Stowe's rhetorical strategies and Catherine O'Connell identifies, in Stowe's incorporation of the competing rhetorics of patriarchal religion and republicanism within female sentimentalism, a novel that is the true 'model of heteroglossia'. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a text that, Josephine Donovan argues, exactly 'fits Bakhtin's description of a "dialogical" work'.³⁰ Gilbert and Gubar's understanding of the female text as palimpsestic visualises the relationship between different discourses within texts as symbolic acts of over- and under-writing, and, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Stowe represents this literal act of textual annotation, through repeated scenes of interpretation in which both texts and bodies are written and over-written and read and read over to create new meanings and authorise new artistic subjectivities. What makes these scenes of reading and writing so important in Stowe's novel, however, is the fact that each act of textual reworking corresponds to those passages in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where Stowe as an author reveals her intertextual strategies most clearly. As her characters exercise their skills as readers and writers, Stowe the writer announces herself as Stowe the reader by incorporating and responding to the genres and specific texts that inspired her text — the slave narrative (Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*), pro-slavery rhetoric and the sentimental domestic novel (Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*). These scenes are the sites where the tensions between

²⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 73.

³⁰ Hovet, pp. 72–73; Catherine E. O'Connell, "'The Magic of the Real Presence of Distress': Sentimentality and Competing Rhetorics of Authority', in *The Stowe Debate*, pp. 13–36 (p. 13); Donovan, p. 25.

essentialist and performative notions of race and gender destabilise social and political hierarchies and where textual authority is constituted and reconstituted as the reader becomes the writer and the writer becomes the reader.

**Writing the ‘wrong side out’: Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative* and the Rewriting of
Models of Marginal Authorship**

In Stowe’s presentation of the first scene in his eponymous cabin, Uncle Tom is learning his letters under the guidance of his young master George Shelby. In introducing Uncle Tom, Stowe immediately reminds her readers that her text is a fiction by advising that, ‘as he is to be the hero of our story, we must daguerreotype for our readers’ (p. 27). Disrupting the story to announce the text’s status as a fiction, Stowe’s narrator constructs a framework of textual possession (‘our story’) and textual reception (‘our readers’) that immediately implicates her own readers in the reading and writing strategies acted out in Uncle Tom’s cabin. Bending over a slate, Uncle Tom ‘was carefully and slowly endeavouring to accomplish a copy of some letters’. As he clumsily writes, his enthusiastic and patient tutor corrects his mistakes:

‘Not that way, Uncle Tom — not that way,’ said he, briskly, as Uncle Tom laboriously brought up the tail of his *g* the wrong side out, ‘that makes a *q*, you see’. (p. 27)

Though he follows George’s original, Tom’s letter finally does not accurately replicate his young master’s written text. Slave literacy, and the access to abolitionist texts that it made possible, ensured that this early scene in Stowe’s novel was profoundly ominous for her southern readers. With characteristic hyperbole, the pro-slavery southerner James Henry Hammond had warned abolitionists in 1845 that the South would never ‘Allow

our slaves to read your writings, stimulating them to cut our throats!’³¹ Yet even if Tom’s error in copying the letter was, as Hammond might suggest, an indication of his resistance to his master’s authority, George Shelby is quick to redirect Tom’s reading and writing back towards the permissible parameters of his own text. The categorising of Uncle Tom’s *q* as a ‘wrong side out’ *g* concisely reveals Stowe’s dual objective in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Though Uncle Tom’s *q* is an inaccurate copy, he still produces a legible alphabetical character nor is he spelling a word whereby the *q* would make his text meaningless. In this context, can one letter be judged right and one letter be judged wrong and in ascribing such a conclusion, Stowe signals the intersection of art and morality that she regarded as integral to her text. Yet the scene also raises the issue of simultaneous acts of reading and writing. George interprets Uncle Tom’s text as wrong because it misreads and rewrites his own text. George immediately attempts to show Uncle Tom the difference between the *g* and the *q* as he ‘flourishingly scrawled *q*’s and *g*’s innumerable’ for the slave. Certainly George reveals his textual superiority in his accomplished writing skills, but in copying the *q* he incorporates Uncle Tom’s text into his own and immediately reverses the dynamics of the writer and the reader in the passage as George becomes the copyist and Uncle Tom the originator.

What makes the scene of Uncle Tom’s good-natured attempts at literacy even more provocative, however, is that, through it, Stowe performed her own ‘copy’ from one of her early-acknowledged sources for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Relating his thwarted efforts to learn to read and write, Frederick Douglass, in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), describes how he covertly uses his own young master’s school books

³¹ James Henry Hammond, ‘Hammond’s Letters on Slavery’, in *The Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States, Containing the Several Essays, on the Subject,*

to con his letters 'writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copying-book [...] until he could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas'.³² In *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe included several citations from Douglass's *Narrative* and, in a chapter devoted to the character of George Harris, she reproduces in its entirety the passage relating Douglass's efforts to gain literacy. The scene in which Uncle Tom learns to write is a 'copy' of Douglass's influential earlier antislavery text but, like Uncle Tom's copying of his master's letters, Stowe's own rewriting of the scene creates a text that is essentially 'wrong side out' and, in doing so, expresses Stowe's own burgeoning sense of simultaneous authorial dependence and independence from her precursor texts.

Stowe's rendering of the writing scene, a fundamental element in the slave narrative form, manipulates the power relations between master and slave and between the text and its copy. Douglass's master Thomas is renamed the slave Uncle Tom, Douglass's exact copy of his master's text becomes, in Tom's hand, an alternative text. Douglass's *Narrative* is founded upon the paradigms of illiteracy and literacy as they correspond to slavery and manhood. For Douglass, literacy is homologous with a profound male virility. Douglass's faultless duplication of his master's text reflects his repeated appropriation of the dominant white discourses to convey his experiences of slavery to his white readership.³³ Uncle Tom, ensconced in his own cabin surrounded by his wife

of Chancellor Harper, Governor Hammond, Dr Simms, and Professor Dew [1852] (New York: Negro University Press, 1968), pp. 99–174 (p. 124).

³² Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself* [1845], in *The Oxford Frederick Douglass Reader*, ed. William L. Andrews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 21–97 (p. 54).

³³ Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 25–28. Discussions of masculinity, white discourse and authorship in Douglass's *Narrative* are found in James Olney, "I Was Born a Slave": Slave Narratives as Autobiography and Literature', in *The Slave Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davies and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 148–75 (pp. 152–53); Valerie Smith, *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 22–23;

and children, espouses the feminine values of the idyllic domestic space. His 'wrong side out' script signals an alternate text that manipulates and transforms the master text written by his actual master George Shelby that in turn directs George to rewrite the original text in a cyclical process of authorship that erases the denotation of writer and reader and originator and copyist. Stowe's own reworking of the writing scene establishes a relationship between her 'master' text — Douglass's *Narrative* — and her own domesticated version.

In her depiction of Uncle Tom's cabin, identified, in her title, as the primary imaginative space of the novel, Stowe establishes a series of images that define Tom's artistic strategies as a man and as slave and contextualise the writing scene enacted within the confines of the cabin. Following the writing scene performed by Uncle Tom and George Shelby, the cabin is transformed into the accommodation for a Bible 'meetin' of the Shelby's slaves. Uncle Tom's wife Aunt Chloe begs George Shelby to stay and contribute a reading to the group for he "is such a beautiful reader" (p. 33). Proud of such admiration, the young boy obliges:

Mas'r George, by request, read the last chapters of Revelation, often interrupted by such exclamations as 'The *sakes* now!' 'Only hear that!' 'Jest think on't!' 'Is all that a comin' sure enough?'

George, who was a bright boy, and well trained in religious things by his mother, [...] threw in expositions of his own, from time to time, with a commendable seriousness and gravity. (p. 35)

David Van Leer, 'Reading Slavery: The Anxiety of Ethnicity in Douglass's *Narrative*', in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 118–40 (p. 118); Houston A. Baker, Jr., *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980), p. 36. Stephanie Smith identifies Stowe's rewriting of other passages from Douglass in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* that emphasise the sentimental and maternal terms of the *Narrative*. See Smith, 'Heart Attacks: Frederick Douglass's Strategic Sentimentality', *Criticism*, 34 (1992), 193–216 (p. 203).

As George reads from the Bible, the slaves create their own text combining white and black, scripted and extemporary voices into a single performance. Just as Uncle Tom has attempted to repeat George Shelby's written text, so he immediately follows George's reading with his own oral text that again reinterprets his master's performance:

the simple, hearty, sincere style of his exhortations might have edified even better educated persons [...] Nothing could exceed the touching simplicity, the child-like earnestness, of his prayer, enriched with the language of Scripture, which seemed so entirely to have wrought itself into his being, as to have become part of himself, and to drop from his lips unconsciously. (p. 35)

The contrast between the 'gravity' of George's reading and the 'child-like' quality of Uncle Tom's prayer, the weightiness of George's 'expositions' and Uncle Tom's emotive 'exhortations' is finally expressed most clearly in the mirroring of the polyphonous texts both George and Uncle Tom produce. Throughout the novel, Stowe continues to juxtapose the textual 'exposition' and the textual 'exhortation' initiated in this scene through the processes of reading and writing which renegotiates the authority of reader and writer.

'This way of speaking is [...] unscriptural': Rewriting and Rereading George

Harris's Escape Narrative

Escape to the North for the fugitive slaves George and Eliza Harris requires them to repeatedly undercut the assumed essential racial and sexual identities of their bodies. This is most explicitly demonstrated in George's response to the slave notice written by his master. George 'metamorphosed' himself, from the 'mulatto' identity defined in the advertisement, into a distinguished-looking Spanish gentleman by applying dye to his hair and darkening his lightly-toned skin. He passes relatively unmolested from South to North and from slave to free by passing from black to white. Arriving at an inn, George

enters and ‘sauntered up to the advertisement’ that his master, intent on recapturing his valuable slave alive or dead, has distributed. George pauses and calmly ‘read it over’ (p. 113):

‘Ran away from the subscriber my mulatto boy, George. Said George six feet in height, a very light mulatto, brown curly hair, is very intelligent, speaks handsomely, can read and write; will probably try to pass for a white man; is deeply scarred on the back and shoulders; has been branded in his right hand with the letter H’. (p. 111)

In the advertisement, George’s owner categorically characterises his missing slave physically (‘six feet in height’), culturally (‘a very light mulatto’) and semantically (‘branded [...] with the letter H’). George’s body, already delimited by the texts brutalised into his flesh, is specified through a careful though archetypal physical description of a missing fugitive slave that combines his specific characteristics, the scars and branding that his master has inflicted, with the universal characteristics of the ‘mulatto’. In his description of George, the master as ‘subscriber’ clearly signals his autonomy as master through the linguistic authority he has over his slave’s body. Whilst his master has lost track of George’s actual geographical movements, the slave’s journey is narrated through his master’s concise use of grammatical tenses. George’s master records the past (‘Ran away’), the present (‘is very intelligent’) and even offers a putative future (‘will probably try’). As George stands before the slave notice, however, his disguised body simultaneously refutes and affirms the description given by his master. Though only temporarily, George is not the fugitive mulatto of the slave notice but enacts a very public performance of an alternative identity that, whilst it too is a dissimulation, liberates him from his master’s authorial control. In this way, the scene does not impose a true text over a false one but, as it questions the binary of white and black, questions the very possibility of true and false texts. In this scene, interpretation not verification become central to the acts of reading and writing that Stowe dramatises. George’s transformation immediately fulfils his former master’s suspicions — he does

indeed attempt to 'pass for a white man'. Yet it is an alteration that is achieved by accentuating the darker rather than lighter tones of his skin and destabilising the racial binaries of his culture. George reinvents his identity with bold strokes and Arnold Weinstein comments upon such acts within Stowe's novel as 'moments of mastery and ease, moments when the hounded subject begins to script the environment, starting with the contours of his own body'. Melanie Kisthardt concurs, suggesting that 'the Other manipulates the source of his oppression by appearing to act within the normative cultural pattern, all the while unmasking and often subverting it' in ways that mirrored Gilbert and Gubar's reading of female acts of subversive authorship. The empowering success of George's physical disguise, however, depends ultimately not upon a single act of self-scripting but upon a deliberate misreading of his master's text. George's proficient oral and literacy skills reveal that he both 'speaks handsomely' and 'can read and write'. The emphasis upon spoken, as well as written, communication is fundamental to the passage. When sympathetic southerner Mr Wilson reads the notice he 'proceeded deliberately to take out his spectacles' and 'read this advertisement from end to end, in a low voice' (p. 111). In Mr Wilson's spectacles, Stowe draws her own reader's attention to the physical processes of reading — the visual apprehension of the printed text — but Mr Wilson's simultaneous out-loud reading immediately alters his relationship with the text as an active rather than passive reader. Likewise, Stowe's slightly stilted phrasing as George 'read over' the advertisement renders his reading processes also distinctly active — in the performance of reading George brings new meanings that are immediately imposed 'over' the original text. George's branded hand, described by Julia Stern as 'metonymically the most vital part of the worker's body', is also the metonymic site for authorship. 'Hand' becomes both the physical instrument for writing and handwriting itself. If George is a bad 'hand' as a slave on the southern plantation, in the scenes in the inn he proves he has a good 'hand' as a writer because he

is an active reader of texts. Stern suggests that George's Spanish masquerade is 'a *scene of counterwriting*' but this overlooks George's equivalent skills as a reader. When George requests a private apartment 'as he had some writing to do' (p. 113), the room becomes the location for multiple acts of textual interpretation where George's performed act of 'counterwriting' is performed within the act of counter-reading.³⁴

Mr Wilson, George's former employer, recognises the fugitive slave and, disturbed by his passionate and eloquent opposition to slavery, warns that "this way of speaking is wicked — unscriptural" (p. 115). For Mr Wilson, written texts assume a moral power and, he suggests, to speak outside the text is to speak 'wickedly'. In doing so, both men recognise that their reading and writing strategies are interconnected through the spoken voice. If Mr Wilson's reading is performed only through the eyes (signified by his spectacles) and George's writing is performed through the hand (dramatically branded with text), the different acts divide the processes of communication across the body. Yet, if Mr Wilson's reading is in a 'low voice' and George's rewriting of his body is specifically a 'speaking' that is emphatically 'unscriptural', the two men unite the acts of reading and writing through the mouth. The two men demonstrate that reading and writing are not separate, distinct acts but profoundly interconnected.

George declares that, in his elaborate disguise, "I don't answer to the advertisement at all" (p. 114). As Mr Wilson interrogates the slave and analyses his disguise more closely, George repeats his declaration of the inaccuracy of the description published by

³⁴ Arnold Weinstein, *Nobody's Home: Speech, Self, and Place in American Fiction From Hawthorne to Delillo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 57; Melanie J. Kisthardt, 'Flirting With the Patriarchy: Feminist Dialogics', in *The Stowe Debate*, pp. 37–56 (p. 40); Julia Stern, 'Spanish Masquerade and the Drama of Racial Identity', in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 103–30 (pp. 105, 103).

his master: “nobody will take me up from the advertisement”. When Mr Wilson alludes to the identifying letter on George’s body by his master as the ‘subscriber’, George ‘drew off his glove, and showed a newly-healed scar in his hand’ (p. 120). Initially, George refuses to overtly ‘answer’ the texts that define him represented by the slave notice and the text seared onto his body. His response to these texts is a temporary erasure of his textual identity — the withdrawal into that which is ‘unscriptural’ and the branded letter concealed beneath his glove — and the creation of multiple performed identities that write and rewrite the text of his body. In debating the rights and wrongs of his slavery and his escape, George silences Mr Wilson’s attempts to justify the laws of his country. When Mr Wilson resorts to the pro-slavery rhetoric founded upon biblical exegesis, George urges “Don’t quote Bible at me that way”. Mr Wilson can only conclude that “We must all submit to the indications of Providence, George, — don’t you see?” (p. 116). What George does is to challenge this assumption of the monologic meaning of a text by suggesting that the ‘indications of Providence’ might have multiple interpretations.

The episode is one of multiple texts within texts — Stowe’s fictional account combines a slave advertisement, biblical quotation and pro-slavery exegesis, the contemporary popular literary forms of the fugitive slave narrative and Indian captivity narrative, and, in George’s dark make-up and theatrical improvisation, the minstrel show burlesque. Through the three participants in the scene — George, his physically absent but textually present master and Mr Wilson — Stowe establishes a series of multiple texts whereby writers become readers and readers become writers. George’s rhetorical strategies, like his professed need for privacy to write, are essentially a ruse geared towards prompting new understandings of old texts. If George’s body has altered dramatically, it is Mr Wilson’s hesitancy at George’s unlawful actions and his faith in the accountability of

texts that is ‘metamorphosed’ in the scene. When George challenges Mr Wilson’s biblical reading he provides the southerner with an essential model for rereading. For Stowe’s contemporary audience, the old testament example Mr Wilson cites as proof of Providence — that of Hagar’s return to servitude described in Genesis — is one used by pro-slavery advocates and, in particular, Thornton Stringfellow in his essay ‘A Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery’ (1841) to justify racial hierarchy.³⁵ George’s subtle but fundamental rejection of this biblical authority revolves not on the scriptural text itself but the use that is made of it in the process of reading. Mr Wilson’s chosen text should not be read in ‘that way’, George warns as he attempts to redirect his interpretative strategies.

Mr Wilson continues to resist George’s arguments and, in his attempt to help Mr Wilson understand his experiences as a slave, George then retells his own fugitive slave story as an Indian captivity narrative in which Mr Wilson is re-identified as the protagonist:

‘I wonder, Mr Wilson, if the Indians should come and take you a prisoner away from your wife and children [...] if you’d think it your duty to abide in the condition in which you were called. I rather think that you’d think the first stray horse you could find an indication of Providence — shouldn’t you?’ (p. 116)

The shift in genre enables George to recontextualise Mr Wilson’s biblical aphorism. In the intertextual citing and inverting of Mr Wilson’s “‘indication of Providence’”, George compels Mr Wilson to challenge his interpretations of texts. George’s deconstruction and exegesis of multiple texts, including his own body, literally fulfils Mr Wilson’s decision to allow George to “‘learn to read and write, and to try to make something of [him]self’” (p. 118). Having prepared Mr Wilson to interpret his story in the way he

³⁵ Thornton Stringfellow, ‘A Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery’, in *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 138–67 (p. 143).

wants, George finally declares to his auditor, ‘hear what I can tell you’ and begins to relate his own story. As he tells the story his body remains integral to its meaning; it is ‘delivered with tears, and flashing eyes, and despairing gestures’ (p. 118). Likewise, the effect on Mr Wilson is dramatic: George’s narrative ‘was altogether too much for the good-natured old body to whom it was addressed, who had pulled out a great yellow silk pocket-handkerchief, and was mopping up his face with great energy’. Guided by George, Mr Wilson’s response to the fugitive slave’s autobiographical story provides Stowe with an exemplar for correct reading. His empathy for George’s suffering through his somatic and emotional reaction to the story George relates and Mr Wilson’s subsequent decision to translate those feelings into civil action constitute a reader response Stowe counsels for male readers. The scene defines active readership in two ways — the active reader must use their interpretative skills to create a meaning out the text but the active reader must also be changed by, and they must effect change in response to, the text.

Yet, what makes this scene of reading and writing, and rereading and rewriting, so important is that, though Stowe does define her readers as women, her primary model for active readership in the novel is figured as male. Stowe sanctions Eliza Harris’s decision to run away from slavery by questioning her female readers — ‘If it were your Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you [...] how fast could *you* walk?’ (p. 55) — and the narrator’s repeated use of ‘you’ was central to the novel’s aesthetic objectives.³⁶ Though Stowe repeatedly asks ‘mothers of America, is this thing to be defended, sympathized with, passed over in silence?’ (p. 452), however, it is George and Mr Wilson that dramatise the alternative to such passive responses. As

³⁶ Robyn R. Warhol, ‘Towards a Theory of the Engaging Narrator: Earnest Interventions in Gaskell, Stowe, and Eliot’, *PMLA*, 101 (1986), 811–18 (pp. 811, 814).

George negotiates texts, he demonstrates his skills as a reader who becomes a writer whereby to do so was a deliberate confrontation with the figure of his father. It is from his biological father and his mother's master — 'one of your Kentucky gentlemen' (p. 117) — that George inherits the skin tone and features that prove so malleable in his masquerade. If his true father is also his first master, within the patriarchal metaphor of slavery, his present owner Mr Harris is a surrogate father; like a son, George bears his master's surname and, when Mr Harris's seeks George's return, his condescending 'my mulatto boy' also hints at another relationship than that of master to slave. It is the third father-figure, Mr Wilson, who enables George to tell his own story by providing him with literacy skills and an audience. In a chapter titled 'The Husband and Father', George's dispute of Mr Harris's rights over him — "who made him my master? [...] I'm a man as much as he is" — is based upon his education: "I can read better than he can; I can write a better hand, — and I've learned it all myself and no thanks to him, — I've learned it in spite of him" (p. 21). In a chapter in which George is identified through his marital relationship to Eliza and his paternal relationship to Harry, this rejection of his 'father', however, must also be read as his inevitable identification with his 'father'. When George summarises his plans to Eliza, he promises that, once he is in Canada, "I'll buy you [...] you have a kind master, that won't refuse to sell you. I'll buy you and the boy" (p. 24). This assurance to buy his wife and child exposes George's ultimate investment in the values of his white fathers. His hopes to purchase his family allow him to relocate himself as both father and owner in a role that mirrors his relationship to his own father. As both Lisa Watts MacFarlene and Stern claim, George's rhetoric reveals that he 'never rejects the patriarchal politics of ownership and domination'. For Christina Zwarg, George's patriarchal aspirations 'embroil him in the language of property and possession'.³⁷ George's joint declaration of manhood and freedom, like

³⁷ Stern, p. 121; Christina Zwarg, 'Fathering and Blackface', *Novel*, 22 (1989), 274–87 (p. 280); Lisa Watt

that of Frederick Douglass, interlocks with the rhetoric of the Revolution and, for George, the model of legitimate civil disobedience that he endorses is finally one of white fathers. He assures Mr Wilson that “I’ll fight for my liberty to the last breath I breathe. You say your fathers did it; if it was right for them, it is right for me!” (p. 118). In claiming familial and political liberty, George proclaims his generational usurpation of his father — he rejects the ‘Kentucky gentleman’, Mr Harris and Mr Wilson so that he can identify himself as the father of his son.

In relating his slave narrative, George describes his movement from a son witnessing the sexual, physical and psychological abuse of his mother and sister at the hands of his several masters through his separation from his mother to his own defiant claim of fatherhood. As Nancy Bentley argues, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,

Rebellion is the scandal of domestic poetics. It violates the domestic world view: that social relations can and should be patterned after family relations and that the family, far from being the field of original conflict as portrayed in classic myth (and later in Freudian science), is governed instead by compassion and sacrifice.³⁸

Though Stowe’s commitment to colonisation forecloses George’s physical rebellion by relocating him outside the geographical and ideological parameters of her text, his act of textual rebellion remains a vital expression of Stowe’s aesthetic objectives. As Stowe’s idealisation of her female narratee (‘mother’) and reader (‘pleasant family circles’) revealed, domestic and familial compassion were at the core of Stowe’s conceptualisation of the author and reader relationship within her ‘domestic poetics’. Yet, in George’s response to pro-slavery texts, Stowe could express her own artistic

MacFarlene, “‘If I ever Get to Where I Can’: The Competing Rhetorics of Social Reform”, *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 4 (1990), 135–47 (p. 138).

³⁸ Nancy Bentley, ‘White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction’, *American Literature*, 65 (1993), 501–22 (p. 501–2).

relationship with her precursor texts. In uniting his textual authority to his manhood — both achieved “in spite of” his ‘father’ — George dramatises his ability to be the author of his own destiny, to use Harold Bloom’s terms, as a ‘battle between strong equals, father and son’. It is a battle Bloom identifies as integral to the dialectical relationship of ‘poetic influence’. Bloom’s definition of the movements of ‘*clinamen*’ or ‘poetic misprison’ and ‘*tessera*’ or ‘completion and antithesis’, more than any other encounter between writer and precursor, map out their life-cycle in terms of the Freudian ‘family romance’. For Bloom, *clinamen* signifies that ‘to beget means to usurp’ through acts of ‘creative revisionism’ whereby each writer is defined not by his artistic father precursor but by his son. Within the movement of *tessera*, however, the artist ‘antithetically “completes” his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense’.³⁹

The affiliation between Uncle Tom, as ‘patriarch’ whose language is ‘enriched’ by his reading of the Bible, and George Harris, whose own ambitions for fatherhood are manifested through his violent rejection of the Bible texts, encapsulate Stowe’s own feelings of authority and authorship and her exclusion, as a female writer, from the tradition of literary paternity that both Uncle Tom and George can perform within. If authorship was an act of fathering whereby ‘literary history is intensely (even exclusively) male, and necessarily patriarchal’, as Gilbert and Gubar note in their critique of the Bloomian model of artistic influence, the question for Stowe was what model of authorship she, as a woman, could respond to in her own writing. What Uncle Tom and George do signal for Stowe is the power of the marginalised voice when it engages with the literary tradition it inherits. In identifying her own tradition — one that

³⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 11, 14, 37, 42.

not only establishes its authors and readers as women but conceptualises texts as sites of, to use Still and Worton's discourse, 'multiple liquefaction, the vehicle of passion [...] madness, polyphony' — Stowe resists the model of assumptive 'patriarchy' that is practised by both Uncle Tom under George Shelby's tutelage and George Harris inspired by narratives of the Revolution. For Stowe, a book identified through the masculine epithet of 'Tom's Bible', represents the possibilities of female authorship and texts and, in representing it in her text, ^{She} powerfully engages with her own, specifically female, literary tradition.

'Tom's Bible': Textual Ownership, Sentimental Tropes and the Mastery of the Female Literary Tradition

A third scene of textual negotiation that again intersects the processes of reading and the processes of authorship also corresponds to Stowe's own negotiation with the popular sentimental trope of the mother's Bible. Uncle Tom's earlier demonstration of his writing skills in his cabin is replicated in his marked Bible text. The treasured volume, renamed and recognised in the novel as 'Tom's Bible',

though it had no annotations and helps in the margin from learned commentators, still it had been embellished with certain way-marks and guide-boards of Tom's own invention, and which helped him more than most learned expositions could have done. It had been his custom to get his Bible read to him by his master's children, in particular by young Master George; and as they read, he would designate by bold, strong marks and dashes, with pen and ink, the passages which most gratified his ear or affected his heart. His Bible was thus marked through from one end to the other, with variety of styles and designations, so he could in a moment seize upon his favorite passages. (p. 151)

First alluded to following the writing scene with Master George in the opening chapters of the novel, Tom's annotated text is glossed, not with the 'learned' marginalia of biblical scholars, but with esoteric symbols that reflect those passages that stir his heart,

the ‘strong marks and dashes’ that constitute an affective phonetics. His marks are sweeping and artistic; not the language of rational thought but of intuitive sentiment. Tom produces an alternate text that ‘foregrounds feeling over exegesis’.⁴⁰ His notation upon the page easily identifies specific extracts from his Bible so that ‘without the labour of spelling out what lay between’ the pen marks, the ‘Bible lay before him, every passage breathing of some old home scene’ (p. 151). Tom’s glossed text evinces Stowe’s appropriation of the Bible as the epitome of domestic texts. The biblical imagery reinforces a typological reading of his personal experience as slave martyr that emerges in the final chapters, but Tom also utilises the Bible text as a mnemonic tool to access his personal story so that it literally becomes ‘Tom’s Bible’.

As with Tom’s inversion of the copied letter or George Harris’s act of ‘passing’, Tom’s annotation of the Bible corresponds to a moment in Stowe’s text where she confronts her own intertexts— those antecedent texts that mark the meeting between Stowe as reader and Stowe as writer. Whilst its antislavery impulse was explicit, Stowe’s novel utilised the discourses of the female domestic sentimental novel that was emerging as the bestselling literary form during the 1850s. Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) which, with its story of good and bad homes within a Christian framework, the arbitrary separation of families and its parallels between motherhood and divinity, echoed many of Stowe’s concerns, was to set the book sales records *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* superseded two years later. Kirkham suggests that Warner’s novel represented, for Stowe, an influential female ‘native tradition’ and it is ‘Tom’s Bible’ that reveals Stowe’s debt to the earlier text most succinctly.⁴¹ In Warner’s novel the heroine Ellen Montgomery receives two annotated texts. The first is a Bible, described as ‘Ellen’s

⁴⁰ For brief discussion of ‘Tom’s Bible’ see Kisthardt, p. 45; Ammons, ‘Heroines’, p. 164; Donovan, p. 46.

Bible' and inscribed by her mother. The second book is a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* given to her by her adopted brother and future husband John Humphreys. The newly purchased Bible is examined by Ellen:

Ellen went over every part of it with [...] great care and satisfaction [...] The words that caught her eye as she turned over the leaves seemed to echo what her mother had been saying to her.⁴²

'Ellen's Bible', like 'Tom's Bible', throbs with emotion. Passages are selected with the eye and treasured for their affective power. Its personalised text reverberates with individual memories of mother and home through meanings that are freely applied to and drawn from the sacred words. Tompkins conceives this alignment between God and mother as a 'feminist theology in which the godhead is refashioned into an image of maternal authority'. Through her dedication, 'I will be a God to thee', Ellen's mother profoundly 'writes herself into Ellen's Bible as source, not agent'.⁴³ Yet with her mother's death, the influence of Mrs Montgomery is usurped by that of John Humphreys. Though the Bible remains precious, its interpretation and that of other texts is increasingly dictated by the scholarly John. Whilst the Bible imparts solace and refuge from her sufferings, it is only through her acquiescence to John's interpretations and their eventual, implied though never consummated, marriage that Ellen achieves actual earthly economic and domestic sanctuary. It is only through the newly sensitised reading of her mother's hand-written inscription under John's instructions that Ellen achieves the 'communion between her mother and her that was wanting before'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Kirkham, p. 77.

⁴² Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* [1850], ed. Jane Tompkins (New York: Feminist Press, 1987), p. 41.

⁴³ Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 163; Nancy Schnog, 'Inside the Sentimental: The Psychological Work of *The Wide, Wide World*', *Genders*, 4 (1989), 11–25 (p. 20).

⁴⁴ Warner, p. 351.

Likewise, in examining the ‘fine copy’ of *Pilgrim’s Progress* given to her by John, Ellen discovers ‘all through the book, on the margin or at the bottom of the leaves in John’s beautiful handwriting, a great many notes — simple, short, plain, exactly what was needed to open the whole book to her and make it of the greatest possible use and pleasure’.⁴⁵ Throughout Warner’s novel, John carefully but rigorously guides both Ellen’s reading material, prohibiting certain reading and informing her interpretations of the books he permits her to read. His control over Ellen and her requisite submissive, Christian-inspired acquiescence to his control prompts Joanne Dobson, reading *The Wide, Wide World* within a tradition of nineteenth-century subversive fiction, to describe John as the ‘supra-ultimate authority figure’ whose actions reposition him above the ‘moral authority of God’.⁴⁶ In teaching Ellen, John’s model of biblical reading fundamentally privileges the authority of the text:

‘The Bible gives a great many signs and descriptions by which Christians may know themselves [...] If you find your own feelings and manner of life at one with these Bible words, you may hope that the Holy Spirit has changed you and set his mark upon you.’⁴⁷

Unlike Tom’s reading of the Bible which applies the text to his own experiences, Ellen is directed towards shaping her life to fulfil the meaning of the text, submitting her own story to the dictates of biblical semiology.

Stowe’s revision of the sentimental trope of the treasured copy of the Bible challenges the interlocking paradigms of masculinity and femininity, of writer and reader and the processes of authority and interpretation that underpin the sentimental tradition from

⁴⁵ Warner, p. 370.

⁴⁶ Joanne Dobson, ‘The Hidden Hand: Subversion of Cultural Ideology in Three Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women’s Novels’, *American Quarterly*, 38 (1986), 223–42 (pp. 231–32).

⁴⁷ Warner, p. 352.

which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* emerges. In Warner's novel, the printed words and John's rational, 'plain' explanations create a glossed but essentially monologic text. John's annotations reinforce an acceptable understanding of textual authority and prohibit unacceptable or multiple readings. In overseeing Ellen's reading, John personifies the ideological and aesthetic purpose of contemporary sentimental literature. Amy Schrager Lang's definition of the characteristics of sentimental fiction emphasises this privileging of 'the values of the dominant social order and [...] conformity to the behavioral mandates that these imply'.⁴⁸ Though sentimental fiction challenged the centrality of the masculine world of the marketplace in antebellum America, it did so by claiming greater influence for the matrifocal home. It was a relocation of power that did not fundamentally disrupt the essential meaning of the authoritarian text.⁴⁹ As Lang argues, such an ideological standpoint inherently undermines the ultimate radical political objectives of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* necessary to achieve social reform. Yet in replicating and reworking the Bible reading scene found in contemporaneous female sentimental novels, Stowe provides a self-conscious alternative lesson in reading that informs her aesthetic project by empowering the possibility of a female literary tradition.

The correspondence between the titles of 'Tom's Bible' and Stowe's own *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is duly noted by Stowe's southern respondents. Indeed, the southern author William Gilmore Simms condemned Stowe's later *Key* precisely for its profession of 'Bible authority' by declaring that 'Here is her Bible — the key before us'.⁵⁰ In 'Tom's Bible', Stowe achieved a sophisticated act of self-referentiality; 'Tom's Bible' becomes,

⁴⁸ Amy Schrager Lang, 'Slavery and Sentimentalism: The Strange Career of Augustine St. Clare', *Women's Studies*, 12 (1996), 31–54 (p. 33).

⁴⁹ Baym, *Women's Fiction*, p. 17; Zwarg, pp. 274–75.

⁵⁰ William Gilmore Simms, 'Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 24 (1853), 214–54 (p. 216)

not simply the example of a text-within-a-text but, the text-within-the-text or *Uncle Tom's Cabin* within *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In doing so, Stowe destabilises the continuum of the linear literary tradition. To cite her own text within her text was a profound act of anarchic textual 'madness' that redefined the processes of authorship so that, as Stowe had explained, the 'text made itself'.

'Tom's Bible' is the most important text in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and it appears repeatedly throughout the novel. When Tom is sold South, he is discovered 'studying over his Bible' (p. 149) on the Mississippi steamboat, when he seeks solace he resorts to his 'only literary cabinet' (p. 266) and it is Uncle Tom that introduces Eva St Clare to the Bible. For Eva, her reading of the Scriptures provides her with the specific discourse to express her nascent antislavery sentiments; her growing 'womanly thoughtfulness' (p. 271) is conveyed in her desire to educate her slaves — "I'd teach them to read their own Bible, and write their own letters, and read letters that are written to them" (p. 272) she declares after she has read both Bible and letters to Uncle Tom. Likewise, when Uncle Tom is sold to Simon Legree, he introduces Legree's slave Cassy to his Bible text when he asks her to read to him as he lies wounded from a beating. At his request she

took the book, with a dry, proud air, and looked over the passage [...] as she read, her voice faltered, and sometimes failed her altogether, when she would stop, with an air of frigid composure, till she had mastered herself. (p. 369)

After her emotional reading of the Bible, the customarily indurate Cassy begins to tell Uncle Tom her personal history 'with a wild, passionate utterance' until 'So vehement and overpowering was the force with which she spoke, that for a season, Tom was beguiled' (p. 375). In the context of the 'meetin' in Uncle Tom's cabin at the beginning of the novel, the Bible reinforces Uncle Tom's role as a 'patriarch in religious matters'. Yet, as 'Tom's Bible' passes through the hands and minds of the novel's central female

characters, it increasingly exercises its spiritual and aesthetic inspirational power over its new readers. Eva's developing sense of the wrongs of slavery and her independent resistance to the consensus views of the South are expressed in the gender-specific maturation of her 'womanly thoughtfulness'. Likewise, Cassy's initial silence in the novel is ended when she reads the Bible and finds inspiration to narrate the 'wild, painful, romantic history' (p. 360) of her life. Through her reading of 'Tom's Bible', Cassy 'had mastered herself' and simultaneously empowered her storytelling voice. In the 'overpowering [...] force' of Cassy's newly discovered storytelling voice, Stowe describes an artistic fervour to match the 'vital force' of her own authorial inspiration for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 'Tom's Bible', Stowe encapsulates her own relationship to her writing, her text and her readers so that, in authorising marginalised voices, Stowe's text-within-the-text also legitimised marginalised readers. This fact was vital in explaining what followed the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the South.

'To create and cherish a true southern literature'; or, the 'scribbler who panders to immediate profit and passing popularity': Answering *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the South

In his review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in December 1852, George Frederick Holmes considered the strategies the South could and should adopt in response to Stowe's novel. Perhaps an 'unruffled contempt and unbroken silence' was the 'true mode of meeting the bold slanders and the forged accusations of mere fiction'. Yet the inferred dignity of such a stance would have been more conclusive if Holmes did not have to acknowledge that, for most southerners, the 'voice of a home-born literature, which would have been efficient in their defence, is almost unheard'. For Holmes, the deficiency of southern letters meant 'the South is now

left at the mercy of every witling and scribbler who panders to immediate profit or passing popularity'. He concludes, however, that the 'only true defence of the South against this attack [...] is to create and cherish a true southern literature'. Holmes was not alone in such demands for the production of regional writing in response to Stowe's work. Yet, though reviewers trumpeted the opportunity for a renaissance in southern letters, the immediate answers satisfied few critics or readers. The republication of John Pendleton Kennedy's revised *Swallow Barn* twenty years after the original edition and the public success of its response to contemporary abolitionist rhetoric ultimately reflected the limitations of contemporary southern authors unable to provide a new text for southern readers. Though less than complimentary to the virility of the southerner, McCord's condemnation of Stowe's representation of Marie St. Clare queried whether 'Elegant southern gentlemen, however curtain-lectured or hen-pecked, will you acknowledge this as a picture of your wife?'. Yet for McCord, the question also remained of who would effectively receive the answers any southerners might venture. In her review she hoped that 'To such as are willing to hear both sides we have endeavoured to invalidate Mrs Stowe's testimony' but as Holmes had argued, few southerners themselves supported the literary productions of their region. Certainly, as an insightful reviewer for *Putnam's Monthly* recognised, one other problem remained for southerners responding to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If the South answered the novel it was 'one of the most striking testimonials to the intrinsic merit of the work that it should be thought necessary to neutralize its influence by issuing other romances to prove that *Uncle Tom* is a fiction'.⁵¹ Southern writers seeking to answer *Uncle Tom's Cabin* faced a dilemma caught between the necessity for a composed silence in the absence of true

⁵¹ Holmes, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', pp. 723, 725; McCord, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', pp. 98, 104; Anonymous, 'Uncle Tomitudes', in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Boston: Hall, 1980), pp. 35–42 (p. 38)

southern writers and the desire for a passionate outcry by substandard scribblers. To condemn Stowe's 'untruths' might also ultimately validate them as an accomplished fiction the South could not equal.

Aunt Phillis's Cabin (1852), an early answer written by Mary H. Eastman, had certainly benefited from being one of the first novels to enter the field of Uncle Tom fiction. Eastman's novel remained a notable commercial and literary success in what was the otherwise unsatisfactory beginnings of a southern tradition. Certainly Holmes's disinclination for the responses that had been attempted by the end of 1852 was palpable. Answers that sought to counter Stowe's novel by showing the fair side of slavery, Holmes claimed, demonstrated 'such an adherence to the progression of sentiment adopted by the original work, that it places the replicant in a secondary position, and exhibits him in the false light of a mere imitator and plagiarist'. For twentieth-century readers, Eastman's novel posed certain problems as a response to Stowe's domestic ideology. S. Bradley Shaw and Minrose Gwin use Eastman's text to demonstrate the ways in^{which} Stowe's rhetoric of maternal bonds, when applied to the opposite side of the argument, had an equivalent power. For Beverly Peterson, however, the southern author's 'proslavery stance disrupts the domestic novel form'.⁵² As these more recent readings of the novel evidence, in responding to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the South faced a vital issue — what was the outcome of applying, what Holmes had described as, Stowe's 'progression of sentiment' to the southern experience. Though Holmes was troubled by the possibility of the southern author as a 'mere imitator', the act of imitation was necessary if the South were to effectively use anti-Tom novels to

⁵² Minrose C. Gwin, *Black and White Women of the Old South: The Peculiar Sisterhood in American Literature* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1985), p. 36; Beverly Peterson, 'Aunt Phillis's Cabin: One

foreground the critical importance of southern literature. Imitation as an act of intertextuality, Judith Still and Michael Worton argue, ‘presupposes a virtual simultaneity and identification of reading and writing’ so that the practices of imitation must be ‘seen as a theory not only of writing but also of reading as a performative act of criticism and interpretation’.⁵³ Stowe’s own intertextual strategies in her novel clearly legitimised textual ‘imitation’ as pivotal to her conception of the relation between authorship and readership. As Stowe had dramatised through the palimpsestic texts of *Uncle Tom and George Harris*, the ability to be concurrently both reader and writer empowered marginalised voices as authors.

Holmes’s perception of the primary failing of southern responses is an important contemporary reading of the emerging tradition of anti-Tom southern texts. So too was that suggested by the anonymous contributor to *Putnam’s*. Stowe’s text was compelling to its readers ‘not because it is a tale of slavery, but in spite of it’. Despite diverse attempts *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* remained unanswered, the *Putnam’s* reviewer claimed, because it was ‘the consummate art of the storyteller that has given popularity to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and nothing else’. In their reviews, both southern commentators identified the function of storytelling, as distinct from subject matter, in determining the affective and political power of Stowe’s text. In these terms, some southern critical readers understood that the most effective defence of the region was the writing and promoting of an expressly southern literature and the fashioning of an independent southern aesthetic form rather than a perfunctory denial of the practical and moral implications of slavery.

Reply to Uncle Tom’, *Southern Quarterly*, 33 (1994), 97–112 (p. 98); Holmes, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, p. 727;

⁵³ Judith Still and Michael Worton, ‘Introduction’, p. 6.

Despite the limited critical regard for the hastily written novels that had already appeared, southern authors continued to write answers to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from 1852 onwards. Twentieth-century surveys of the reception and fictional response to Stowe's novel recognise a number of southern and northern pro-slavery texts that a reviewer for the *Literary Gazette* had categorised under the sobriquet of 'Uncle Tom literature' as early as 1852. A brief recapitulation of the titles of several anti-Tom novels that appeared during the 1850s illustrates the often inept attempts by some authors to refute Stowe's work and yet exploit the popular market for Uncle Tom-related fiction that her novel had spawned. Whilst the title of Martha Haines Butt's *Antifanaticism: A Tale of the South* (1853) seemed to make only oblique reference to the novel that had inspired it, other southern texts like Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, John W. Page's *Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia, and Tom Without One in Boston* (1853) or McIntosh's *The Lofty and the Lowly* flaunted their literary lineage unashamedly. Likewise, pro-slavery northern writers assembled ever more elaborate titles for their texts to signal their relationship to Stowe's novel. J. Thornton Randolph's *The Cabin and the Parlor: or, Slaves and Masters* (1852) was a title of laudable restraint compared to William L. G. Smith's *Life at the South: or, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' As It Is. Being Narratives, Scenes, and Incidents in the Real 'Life of the Lowly'* (1852) or Robert Criswell's *'Uncle Tom's Cabin' Contrasted with Buckingham Hall, the Planter's Home: or, A Fair View of Both Sides of the Slavery Question* (1852).⁵⁴ Uncle Tom captured the imagination of mid-

⁵⁴ Lists of both northern and southern novels written in response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are included in Barrie Hayne, 'Yankee in the Patriarchy: T. B. Thorpe's Reply to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Quarterly*, 20 (1968), 180–95 (pp. 180–81); Margaret Holbrook Hildreth, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Bibliography* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1976), pp. 255–57; Jean W. Ashton, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1977), Appendix I; Gossett, pp. 430–31; Peterson, p. 111; Forrest Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (London: Hutchinson, 1942) p. 177.

century America. Songs, doggerel, dramatisations, burlesques, engravings and memorabilia were hawked to an eager northern public. Market forces made the fictional 'Uncle Tom' a valuable cultural commodity and a mania not just for novels but for artefacts inspired by Stowe's novel leads Stephen A. Hirsch to conclude that Uncle Tom was, 'in his various forms, the most frequently sold slave in American history'.⁵⁵ Yet even as early as November 1852, the *Southern Literary Messenger* expressed a weariness with the subject. In a passing literary notice for Randolph's *The Cabin and the Parlor*, the reviewer regretted the appearance of another Tom novel that the 'similarity of title and time of its publication' implied. The novel was, the reviewer explained, 'excellent enough to have won for itself a wide popularity, in the absence of that surfeit of 'nigger' literature which now sickens the public taste'.⁵⁶

To assign the text to the category of 'nigger' literature, however, directed the reading of Randolph's novel towards the belief that subject matter determined, indeed was synonymous with, the artistic objectives of the form. Frequently, later interpretations of the tradition have similarly prioritised the subject matter over literary form or defined the genre by its content. Jane Gardiner's reading of the anti-Tom tradition identifies significant strategies to 'imitate Stowe by putting the pro-slavery case into fictional, melodramatic form'. Yet whilst this initially suggests that the genre of the text was a fundamental factor in the response to Stowe, Gardiner's subsequent argument more precisely addresses the ways in which pro-slavery texts utilised what were familiar constitutional, religious, biological and historical arguments to legitimise the institution of slavery in the South. In this respect, many of the novels written within the anti-Tom

⁵⁵ Stephen A. Hirsch details the variety of Uncle Tom merchandise in 'Uncle Tomitudes: The Popular Reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Studies in the American Renaissance*, 1978, pp. 303–30 (p. 311).

⁵⁶ 'The Cabin and the Parlor', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852), 703.

tradition attempted nothing new. The arguments they articulated were the arguments that the South had used repeatedly to defend their social system since the early decades of the nineteenth century. Henry Louis Gates, drawing upon Stowe's use of the slave narrative as inspiration, perceives the plantation novel as its direct antithesis and suggests that this was the obvious form for the southern refutations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁵⁷ Yet Holmes's claim that there was a greater necessity for an alternative to the 'progression of sentiment' in Stowe's work than an answer to the specifics of slavery suggests that some contemporary southern intellectuals perceived the possibilities of an anti-Tom tradition in ways that held the promise of a literary rebirth in the South. For some of the South's most astute critical reviewers, readers and authors, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* posed important questions about the aesthetics of sentiment, the art of authorship and the function of reading in nineteenth-century America that the potential southern literati needed to answer if they were to create the important native literature they coveted.

The anti-Tom novels that appeared in the wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were written by men and women of variable literary accomplishment and intellectual perspicuity. Many could be disregarded, Richard Beale Davis argues, as 'feeble tractarian novels' conveying to their quixotic readership the 'saccharine depictions of life in a paradisiacal South that never was'. At the heart of many of the novels was the kindly master — men like Mr Weston in *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* or Colonel Montrose in *The Lofty and the Lowly* — who furthered the interracial domestic harmony of the southern plantation by their just governance. Frequently the South was portrayed as an agrarian idyll untouched by

⁵⁷ Jane Gardiner, 'The Assault Upon Uncle Tom: Attempts of Pro-Slavery Novelists to Answer *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Humanities Review*, 12 (1978), 313–24 (p. 313); Henry Louis Gates, *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the 'Racial' Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 82.

modernity and in direct contrast to the social problems of the urban North. When a southern poet like William J. Grayson deliberately encouraged such an antithesis in his anti-Tom narrative poem *The Hireling and the Slave* (1856) he was voicing in fictional form the overt political rhetoric of pro-slavery propagandists like George Fitzhugh and James Henry Hammond. In *Sociology for the South* (1854), Fitzhugh explained that in the North the 'competitive system is a system of antagonism and war; ours of peace and fraternity'. Rejecting polygenesis accounts of racial difference, Fitzhugh claimed that in the South masters treat their slaves as 'weak, ignorant and dependent brethren' akin to 'a grown up child' and he assured his readers that the 'southerner is the negro's friend, his only friend'. James Henry Hammond concurred in 'Hammond's Letters on Slavery' originally addressed to Thomas Clarkson in 1845 and reprinted in the anti-abolitionist collection *The Proslavery Argument* in 1852. Hammond assured his readers that 'in this cold, calculating, ambitious world of ours, there are few ties more heartfelt, or of more benignant influence, than those which mutually bind the master and slave'. If Stowe's novel could ideologically condemn the South for its transgression of familial duty through slavery, southerners were more than prepared to frame their defence of slavery within familial and domestic metaphors.⁵⁸

If the majority of anti-Tom novels proved inadequate as answers to Stowe's representations of race, region and gender, some southern authors attempted to more precisely answer Stowe's aesthetics by confronting her 'progression of sentiment'. In

⁵⁸ Richard Beale Davis, 'Mrs Stowe's Characters-in-Situations and a Southern Literary Tradition', in *Essays on American Literature in Honor of Jay B. Hubbell*, ed. Clarence Gohdes (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), pp. 108–25 (p. 109); George Fitzhugh, *Sociology of the South or the Failure of Free Society* [1854] in *Antebellum Writings of George Fitzhugh and Hinton Rowan Helper on Slavery*, ed. Harvey Wish (New York: Putnam's, 1960), pp. 41–95 (pp. 58, 95, 89); Severn Duvall, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin: The Sinister Side of the Patriarchy', *New England Quarterly*, 36 (1863), 3–22 (p. 4).

choosing to read and write over Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, their works entered into the debates about authorship and readership and writing and interpretation that Stowe's novel had posed. Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* and William Gilmore Simms's *Woodcraft* were published in the immediate wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and demonstrate the contemporary response to Stowe's work as the South attempted to claim its own authorial voice. James Lane Allen's paired stories, 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky' and 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky', and Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*, however, were written over forty and fifty years after the first publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and confirm the fact that Stowe's text remained integral to southern attempts to define an autonomous cultural and literary identity. In identifying the South as her readers and providing a model of active readership within her text, Stowe ensured that southerners, for the first time, recognised, and had a language to articulate, the possibilities of southern authorship. Before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, southern intellectuals, authors and readers mourned the limited scope of southern literary accomplishment. After *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, southern readers and southern authors had a new sense of what they could achieve by constructing a southern aesthetics that would express the specific experiences of the region.

CHAPTER 2

'SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IN LITERATURE': THE HESITANT

REBELLION OF THE FEMALE SOUTHERN AUTHOR IN CAROLINE LEE

HENTZ'S *THE PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE*

From the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852 to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, the debates over Stowe's original novel and her southern respondents found a forum in the thriving periodical magazine culture of the mid-nineteenth century. With over 100,000 subscribers, the prominent journals of 1850 — *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Peterson's Magazine* and the *New York Ledger* — had a potential monthly influence (unlike the others, the *New York Ledger* was published weekly) that, though it did not match the annual sales figures of bestselling novels such as Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* or Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, still constituted a large proportion of the reading public.¹ Contemporary reviews of, and editorials on, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are found in a broad range of periodical publications, North and South. Responses to the novel, calls for a notably southern literature and reviews of the countering anti-Tom novels appeared in the abolitionist press (William Lloyd Garrison's influential *The Liberator* and *Frederick Douglass Paper*), regional literary journals (*Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, the *Southern Literary Messenger* and the *Southern Quarterly Review*), general interest magazines (the New

¹ Nina Baym, *Novels, Readers and Reviews: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 14; Frank Luther Mott calculates that in the decade between 1850 and 1859 required sales for a best-seller was 225,000, which is equal to one per cent of the population. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold an unprecedented 300,000 copies in its first year of publication. See *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best-Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 117.

York *Knickerbocker Magazine*) and in specifically female-oriented periodicals (*Godey's Lady's Book*). The political or sectional allegiance of the editor, the reviewer and the readership of individual journals patently influenced the form the reviews, editorials, and gossip-style comments took. Contributions varied from specific detractory literary reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to a deliberate attitude of indifference to the novel itself but the highly publicised inclusion of literary notices for the fictional answers to Stowe's work.

In a review essay published in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in January 1853, the anonymous contributor responded to what he saw as the emerging popularity of novels that sought to answer *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The reviewer judged these 'Uncle Tomitudes', a phrase coined for the title of the article, of dubious quality but that they amounted to 'something entirely new in literature'. This was a literary phenomenon that the reviewer categorised as predominantly female, on the premise of "similia similibus", and it is a perception repeated by both contemporary nineteenth-century reviewers and more recent critical readers of the tradition.² However, of the twenty-seven fictional responses written between 1852 and 1861 collated by Thomas Gossett in the most recent comprehensive survey of anti-Tom novels, only ten are attributed to women.³ One explanation for the misleading assertion that the anti-Tom tradition was

² Anonymous, 'Uncle Tomitudes', in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Boston: Hall, 1980), pp. 35–42 (pp. 38–39). Diane Roberts is one of the most recent critical readers to repeat the perception of the predominance of female-authored responses. See Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 56.

³ Thomas Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), pp. 430–31. Further compiled lists of responses indicate that the split between male- and female-authored anti-Tom novels is, at most, approximately equal. Barrie Hayne, 'Yankee in the Patriarchy: T. B. Thorpe's Reply to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Quarterly*, 20 (1968), 180–95 (pp. 180–81) lists sixteen works published between 1852 and 1854 of which seven are written by women, eight by men and one by an unidentified author. Margaret Holbrook Hildreth, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Bibliography*

primarily a female tradition is the fact that, though they did publish in equally large numbers, very few male respondents were established or well-known writers and few achieved notable success. With the exception of the southerner William Gilmore Simms, many of the male writers produced little work before or after their response to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In the case of female authors, however, several of the respondents were the foremost literary women of the mid-nineteenth century and already proven chroniclers and defenders of southern life. In the North, a female writer as august and well known as Sarah J. Hale, the successful editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1834, revised and republished her popular 1827 plantation novel, *Northwood*, and wrote a second slavery novel, *Liberia; or, Mr Peyton's Experiments*, which appeared in 1853. Southern responses came from the journalist Louisa S. McCord in one of a series of critical articles on abolitionism and feminism for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, from the novelist Mary H. Eastman, from Maria J. McIntosh and from Caroline Lee Hentz, a northerner who had become assimilated into the cultural ethos of the South. When Eastman published *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, she was an author already very familiar to a mid-century readership for her 1849 novel, *Dahcotah*, and for 'Indian tales' in the periodic press — ethnic stories that seemed to peculiarly qualify Eastman to commentate on the issues of race in the South. In selling 18,000 copies of her anti-Tom novel in a few weeks, when it appeared almost immediately after the book edition of Stowe's novel, Eastman achieved a publishing success that only the exceptional sales

(Hamdon, CT: Archon, 1976), pp. 253–57 lists thirty-two novels, including republications and revised editions, published between 1852 and 1918, of which only ten are female-authored, twenty-one are male-authored and one published anonymously. Jean W. Ashton, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1977) lists, in the first appendix, nineteen fictional responses published between 1852 and 1861, of which nine are female-authored, eight are written by men and two are anonymous publications. Beverly Peterson, 'Aunt Phillis's Cabin: One Reply to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Quarterly*, 33 (1994), 97–112 (p. 111) details ten answers written in 1852, of which only three are written by women,

figures of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* itself made moderate.⁴ Hentz published two rebuttals to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* within a few years, but had already achieved a reputation as an author with an earlier, highly successful work, *Linda; or, the Young Pilot of the Belle Creole*, and during her most productive writing period of the early 1850s her novels had sold 93,000 copies over a period of three years.⁵

Without fully providing evidence to substantiate her point, Elizabeth Moss suggests that female apologists for the South simply gained a wider audience for their work than their male counterparts. Yet there are legitimate reasons for making such a claim. In certain ways, Stowe's novel was a text addressed to women by a woman so that a successful attempt to refute her claims almost necessarily demanded that potential anti-Tom writers should address themselves to this same readership. Yet in broader terms, women in the mid-nineteenth century were the primary readers of novels and increasingly determined the literary tastes and standards by which texts were appreciated. The application of the notion of gendered 'separate spheres' onto the daily experiences of women in 1850s America had effectively created both a private physical and temporal space for women to read within the home that was not equally afforded to men. The import of this shift in

including Sarah J. Hale's revised 1827 novel *Northwood*, as compared to six novels written by men and one by an anonymous author.

⁴ Winton U. Solberg, 'Mary Henderson Eastman', in *Notable American Women, 1607–1950* ed. Edward T. James, 3 vols (Cambridge, Harvard, 1971) I, 545–46 (p. 545); Hayne, p. 181; Peterson, p. 98; Minrose C. Gwin, *Black and White Women of the Old South: The Peculiar Sisterhood in American Literature* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1985), p. 36.

⁵ Melanie Levinson, 'Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz', in *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), pp. 220–23 (p. 221); Jamie Stanesa, 'Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz', *Legacy*, 13 (1996), 130–39 (p. 132). James D. Hart identifies the figure of 93,000 sales for Hentz's work without specifying which novels or the date of these sales, but Stanesa also quotes a similar figure for a period during the 1850s. As Hentz's work remained popular into the 1870s, this figure must be accepted with caution. See *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 97.

reading habits and the consequent burgeoning of successful female-authored and female-oriented texts was that, as Sarah Robbins notes, literary reviewers for papers like the *National Era* and *Putnam's* had clear 'gendered expectations about American literature and particularly imagined audiences for it'. In essence, in the mid-nineteenth century, the assumed reader of a text was most frequently a woman and more specifically a white, middle-class northern woman.⁶

The consequence of this assumption was that women were afforded a role in the cultural productions of their society but a role that had specific aesthetic limitations. Female sentimentalists produced prose that, G. M. Goshgarian argues, 'everyone (its perpetrators not excepted) considered subliterate'. Susan Coultrap-McQuin conceives this as a paradox in which the mid-century literary culture made the woman writer a possibility but simultaneously devalued her work as art.⁷ Indeed, participation in the production and exchange of texts by female writers and female readers committed these women to fulfilling two contradictory functions. The female author, unlike her male

⁶ Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 11; Richard H. Brodhead, 'Veiled Ladies: Toward a History of Antebellum Entertainment', *American Literary History*, 1 (1989), 273–94 (p. 278); Sarah Robbins, 'Gendering the History of the Antislavery Narrative: Juxtaposing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Benito Cereno*, *Beloved* and *Middle Passage*', *American Quarterly*, 49 (1997), 531–73 (p. 533). For a discussion of the notion of 'separate spheres' see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 64. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese argues that bourgeois male and female separate spheres are an exclusively north-eastern construct inapplicable to southern society. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 77. The southern reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Thompson, Holmes, McCord and others, however, showed that southern reviewers and readers understood and used the discourses of woman's sphere to condemn the novel's transgression of female concerns.

⁷ G. M. Goshgarian, *To Kiss the Chastening Rod: Domestic Fiction and Sexual Ideology in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 36, 2; Susan Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 3.

equivalent, often eschewed the more problematic notion of aesthetic creativity or desire for self-expression by professing financial motives for authorship and positing her writing as a saleable commodity. The prevailing commercialism of the literary marketplace in the 1850s required that women, rather than producing art, produced artefacts, where value was determinable in dollars and cents rather than aesthetic criteria. Conversely, the process of reading was circumscribed by the domestic space; reading was a private intimate act performed within the confines of the woman's own home and was enabled by middle-class women's de-professionalisation, her removal from an active participation in the public sphere and her consequent increased leisure time within the parameters of the domestic space. The movement between the public and the private spheres that dramatised the mutual act of female authorship and female readership in the mid-nineteenth century was contrived to mitigate the overt dangers of female creativity for the male contemporaries of these successful women writers. Mid-nineteenth-century men could take consolation in the fact that, even if women writers were active in the public arena of letters, ultimately their purpose was directed towards reaffirming the private role of women in the home. The prototypes this fiction offered for appropriate female submission to men and the passive role the act of reading itself conferred on the female reader seemed sufficiently palliative until Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If the domestic ideology that shaped women's sentimental writing did provide acceptable models of female behaviour, as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had shown, such models were not necessarily as innocuous as they might at first seem. Domestic fiction possessed, to use Susan Harris's terms, 'multiple hermeneutic possibilities' that existed between the public dictates of society and the private desires of the individual. In its mediation between public and private female voices, the processes of reading and writing that were implicit in many women's texts exposed and exploited the gaps between what was written and what was read. As James Machor argues, male

reviewers were increasingly cognisant of the dangers of unsupervised female reading and sought to direct women's interpretative strategies in ways that maintained the conservative status quo of gender relations.⁸ Yet it was too late. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had made sure that female authorship and female reading could never be regarded as ingenuous again and it was primarily southern readers that understood this. The literary notices and commentary that appeared in southern periodicals uniformly condemned the accuracy of Stowe's facts but the reviews also demonstrated repeatedly the South's objections to Stowe's authorship and the impact of the novel on a susceptible female readership.

Louisa S. McCord's impassioned critique in the *Southern Quarterly Review* in January 1853 tacitly expressed the dangerous possibilities of unsupervised female reading that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had evidenced for southern readers. In the article, an incensed McCord voiced a common theme in the southern reviews of the novel by demanding like for like and assuring her southern readers that 'We can but meet false evidence by counter evidence; we can but meet false assertion by counter assertion'. Having authorised an anti-Tom literary tradition, McCord argued that the discourses Stowe used to convey her vision of the South were entirely foreign to the region. McCord claimed that Stowe was 'ignorant alike of our manners, feelings, and even habits of language'. Challenging the 'absolute falsehood' and 'infamous libel' invented by Stowe's 'foul imagination', McCord's objections also abruptly located the novel within the context of the 'women's rights theory'. McCord had made clear her distaste for aggressive female

⁸ Susan K. Harris, *19th Century American Women's Novels: Interpretative Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 13; James L. Machor, 'Historical Hermeneutics and Antebellum Fiction: Gender, Response Theory, and Interpretive Contexts', in *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Context of Response*, ed. James L. Machor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 54–84 (p. 67).

emancipation almost a year earlier in an article published in April 1852 entitled 'Enfranchisement of Woman' that had also appeared in the *Southern Quarterly Review*. Stating her disapproval of female emancipation with slurs that she later repeated to condemn Stowe, McCord regarded those that called for greater rights as 'petticoated despisers' who were increasingly 'Unsexed' by their demands. Yet, the way in which McCord sought to redirect her reader's response to the women's rights movement was to use a metaphor that also implicated the processes of female reading. For McCord, the campaigner for female enfranchisement 'should be a woman' but they 'come to us in such a questionable shape, that we hesitate so to interpret them'. McCord's readers were assured that their obeisance to conventional female roles in society left no such ambiguity in their own interpretation as texts. '*Fulfil thy destiny; oppose it not*', McCord urged, for 'Nature's sign-posts are within thee, and it were well for thee to learn to read them'. Yet McCord's point was rather more specific; McCord's metaphor of female readers implied a right and a wrong way to read and, in her criticism of both contemporary women's rights campaigners and women writers including Harriet Beecher Stowe, directed women towards a self-imposed surveillance of their own reading and interpretative strategies.⁹

McCord and Holmes applied an unabashed melodramatic imagery to the reading and writing processes that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other reformatory rhetoric anticipated. For McCord, women's rights was 'but a piece with negro emancipation' and by the 1850s the association of women's rights and abolitionism was indeed a 'fearful phantom' for southerners. Not only was Stowe an 'American woman whose name the

⁹ Louisa S. McCord, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 23 (1853), 81–120 (pp. 104, 87, 89–90, 107); Louisa S. McCord, 'Enfranchisement of Woman', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 21 (1852), 322–41 (pp. 327, 326).

pure-minded women of her own country hold in pitying contempt', as an anonymous contributor to the *Messenger* suggested, but for Holmes her fiction raised the question of whether 'scenes of license and impurity, and ideas of loathsome depravity and habitual prostitution [were] to be made the cherished topics of the female pen, and the familiar staple of domestic consideration or promiscuous conversation'?¹⁰

**'Reading Mrs Stowe' and 'Writ[ing] with a Mrs Stowe's feeling': Southern Women
and Harriet Beecher Stowe**

In Maria J. McIntosh's novel *The Lofty and the Lowly*, the title patently a parody of Stowe's subtitle to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the narrator interrupts the narrative to briefly describe the southern response to the influx of abolitionist writing. The narrator explains that 'strange pamphlets invoking the furies of rage and slaughter [...] have been sent among the slaves, and our wise legislators have thought it easier to seal up the fountains, than to purify them, or to give an antidote to the poison that had been thrown into them'. Despite such avowals that abolitionist texts like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were unread in the South, however, the censorship of the novel was only cursory. In writing of his tour of the slave South during 1853 and 1854, the northerner Frederick Law Olmsted remarked that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was 'generally criticised very severely and its representations of slavery indignantly denied'. In contradiction to McIntosh's prim claim of southern restraint in responding to the charges of abolitionism, Stowe's novel was, he noted, certainly 'not placarded outside bookseller's stores, though the whole fleet of gunboats that have been launched after it show their colors bravely'. Yet Olmsted suspected that,

¹⁰ McCord, 'Enfranchisement of Woman', p. 327; E., 'Woman's True Mission, or, "the Noble Ladies of England"', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 19 (1853), 303–06 (p. 306); Holmes, 'Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 19 (1853), 321–30 (p. 322).

though publicly disregarded, Stowe's novel 'must [...] be a good deal read here, as I judge from the frequent allusions I hear made to it'.¹¹

Two such covert readers were the southerners Mary Boykin Chesnut and Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas who both confided their feelings about Stowe's novel to their diaries. Both women had come to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* some time after the first edition of the novel had appeared, but the impact of Stowe's writing on their thoughts and feelings was dramatic. In her several references to Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Chesnut admits to repeated readings of the forbidden novel and to its significant effect upon her comprehension of southern slavery. In an entry for 23 September 1863, Chesnut comments that 'Reading Mrs Stowe [...] one feels utterly confounded at the atrocity of African slavery'. For Chesnut and Thomas, Stowe's text had enabled them to interpret the value system of their region in profound and ultimately revolutionary ways. In an entry for 23 September 1864, the slave-owning Thomas explained the important role reading assumed in informing her personal ideologies:

altho I have read very few abolition books (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* making most impression) nor have I read many pro slavery books — yet the idea has gradually become more and more fixed in my mind that the institution of slavery is not right — but I am reading a new book, *Nellie Norton*, by the Rev. E. W. Warren which I hope will convince me that it is right.¹²

Both southern women identify *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the origin for their re-assessment of slavery despite their personal and quotidian experience of slave-ownership. Both women come to interrogate the nature of slavery, even though to do so conflicted with

¹¹ Maria J. McIntosh, *The Lofty and the Lowly; or, Good in All and None All-Good*, 2 vols (New York: Appleton, 1853), II, 106–7; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States in the Years 1853–1854 With Remarks on Their Economy* [1856] (New York: Putnams, 1904), p. 109.

¹² Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, ed. by C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 428; *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848–1889*, ed. Virginia Ingraham Burr (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 168–69.

their culture's increasingly intractable commitment to justifying the system. Thomas, particularly discomforted at the dichotomy her inchoate antislavery feeling creates with her actual possession of slaves, deliberately attempted to superintend the interpretation of slavery she had drawn from reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by seeking out more acceptable pro-slavery arguments in alternative texts that expressed the consensus views of her community.

Both women also allude to the influence Stowe's novel has upon their attempts at self-expression through their journal writing. As chroniclers of personal southern experience whether for contemporary publication, as in Chesnut's case, or in a more private form, both Chesnut and Thomas acknowledge the effect of Stowe's writing upon their imaginative talents. In her diary, Chesnut prefaces the passages in which she relates the harsher aspects of slavery with a considered nod to her literary predecessor. Chesnut asks herself, 'Without emulating Stowe, how can I tell Wade's tale?' and identifies a further description of slave mistreatment as a 'document à la Stowe'. Similarly, in recording her independent thoughts about slavery in her diary, Thomas shares Chesnut's engagement with Stowe's writerly presence. In an entry for 2 January 1859 Thomas confesses that

Southern women are I believe all at heart abolitionists [*sic*] but there I expect I have made a very broad assertion but I *will stand* to the opinion that the institution of slavery degrades the white man more than the Negro and oh exerts a most deleterious effect upon our children — But this is the dark side of the picture, written with a Mrs Stowe's feeling.

Just as their reading of Stowe's novel had shaped their understanding of slavery so, when the two women attempt to convey their own growing doubts about the rights of slave treatment, they ventriloquise it through the authorial figure of Stowe. To do so, in some respects, enabled the women to distance themselves from ideas and feelings they found troubling, but it also provided them with a powerful female voice through which

they could communicate in ways not allowed them in their more passive daily life. If Chesnut's repeated elision of the differences between slaves and women within a patriarchal culture — 'There is no slavery, after all, like a wife', she argues in one entry for 9 May 1861 — fully realised McCord's fear of the consequences of pernicious reading habits, then Thomas's boldly declarative 'I *will stand*' confirmed the empowering possibilities of writing through a 'Mrs Stowe's feeling'.¹³

In the preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that Stowe composed for the completed book edition, the northern author outlined the interlocking artistic and moral integrity of her work. 'In the northern states', she explained

these representations may, perhaps, be thought caricatures, in the southern states are witnesses who know their fidelity. What personal knowledge the author has had, of the truth of these incidents such as here related, will appear in its time.

As this conscious defence of the factual accuracy of her work indicated, Stowe's authorial probity as a witness to the horrors she describes and as a writer capable of portraying these horrors through fiction was a fundamental matter of contention for the majority of southern and pro-slavery reviewers. In answering Stowe, southern writers exploited their intimate knowledge of the region to confer legitimacy upon their writing. Caroline Lee Hentz asserted in the opening pages of *Marcus Warland* (1852), a broadly pro-southern novel that appeared almost contemporaneously with the book version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that it was 'not our intention to write a work in defence of the peculiar institution of the South; but in delineating pictures of southern life [...] we would draw from nature alone', and defended her personal veracity. Unwilling to enter openly into the political debates about slavery, Hentz nevertheless understood the value of her reader's esteem in assuring the positive reception of her novel. In discussing the

¹³ Chesnut, pp. 298, 347, 59; *The Secret Eye*, pp. 238–39.

rhetorical practices adopted by Sarah J. Hale in *Godey's Lady's Book*, Nicole Tonkovich comments upon the specific repercussions of print culture in the nineteenth century for women writers. The precedence of written communication over oral communication in the public space was reflected in the dramatic increase in mass-circulation journalism during this period. This meant that the 'gender, race, and authority of the originator of the discourse no longer were evident in the speaker's presence and embodied voice'. This anonymity enabled previously marginalised speakers such as women to participate more fully in the debates of their society, but, in the absence of an 'embodied voice' providing irrefutable proof of the speaker's authority, it also made readers more vulnerable to false witnesses. George Frederick Holmes, in his review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, urged readers to be more circumspect and consider the 'prudence of questioning at the threshold, these new votaries of fiction, that we may know whence they come, and to what end they visit us' and, if necessary, to 'repel them from our intimacy and from our dwellings'. Holmes's metaphor evidences the very real fear of a print culture in which the body of the speaker can no longer be read and evaluated by the audience. Holmes attempted to encourage his readers to adopt the same discretion in their selection of texts as they would in their invitation of strangers into their home. Likewise, in the literary notices published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, reviewers frequently returned to this same criteria to commend new novels to readers.¹⁴

¹⁴ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, [1852] ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4; Caroline Lee Hentz, *Marcus Warland; or, The Long Moss Spring* [1852] (Philadelphia: Peterson, 1869), pp. 17–18; Nicole Tonkovich, 'Rhetorical Power in the Victorian Parlor: *Godey's Lady's Book* and the Gendering of Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric', in *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric*, ed. Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), pp. 158–83 (p. 162); George Frederick Holmes, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852), 721–31 (p. 721).

Trenchant caricatures of Stowe, such as that described by editor John Reuben Thompson in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, enabled reviewers to suggest that because she had ‘forfeited the claim to be considered a lady’ the text she had written could be immediately discredited. Similarly, the character of female authors ^{who} that attempted to answer Stowe was frequently forwarded as evidence of the quality of their literary work. Under Hale’s editorship, reviews published in the northern-based *Godey’s* repeatedly relied upon vignettes describing the female author’s modesty and spotless reputation in order to promote anti-Tom texts. The journal carried the monthly literary reviews, literary gossip and notices for forthcoming publications alongside recipes, homoeopathic remedies, anthropological essays, fashion plates and short fiction. Overall, as Tonkovich summarises, the ‘content was [...] conservatively predictable, demonstrating recognizable maxims of behavior’ within the domestic sphere for both North and South. In the two years following the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* reviews were run for Hale’s *Northwood* (December 1852), J. Thornton Randolph’s *The Cabin and the Parlor* through three editions (December 1852, January 1853, March 1853), Robert Criswell’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin Contrasted With Buckingham Hall, the Planter’s Home* (December 1852), McIntosh’s *The Lofty and the Lowly* (April 1853), Martha Haines Butt’s *Antifanaticism: A Tale of the South* (August 1853), J. W. Page’s *Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia, and Tom Without One in Boston* (September 1853) and Hentz’s *The Planter’s Northern Bride* (May 1854). Despite the often explicit purpose of these novels to refute Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and their slavery-based subject matter, no reference is made to the slavery debates or to Stowe and her novel in the nine literary notices. An explanation for this reticence is found in the review for Hale’s *Northwood*, which states the journal’s standpoint on these contemporary issues. ‘We have never yet’, explains the reviewer, ‘and we have no idea now of mingling in any of the political controversies that agitate the public mind’. Commenting upon Hale as an author, the

reviewer, perhaps unsurprisingly, commends her for a novel that is ‘altogether such a work as might be expected to emanate from the pen of a Christian woman’. Though such encomiums to a novel by the journal’s editor might be routine, the notice emphasises two features of *Godey’s* characterisation of the anti-Tom fiction received for review. In references to the debates that dominated mid-nineteenth-century American thought — the moral issues of slavery, the political threat of the collapse of the Union and the cultural impact of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* — *Godey’s* rarely did more than allude to such ‘delicate questions’ of public concern. Instead, *Godey’s* praised the female-authored texts produced in a more womanly vein; texts that exercised authorial restraint and even exorcised political issues entirely were afforded column space in the literary reviews and editorial comment.¹⁵

In the April 1853 edition of the magazine, McIntosh’s *The Lofty and the Lowly* was discussed both in the notice for new works and under the header ‘Centre-Table Gossip’. In the latter article, McIntosh’s work was praised because her text was written ‘in woman’s true sphere, not stirring up the strife of tongues and of spirits’. The review itself went further, however, in constructing the relationship between female writer and female reader. The literary notice explains that the novel ‘had its origin in the desire of the author to remove some of the prejudices [...] as, unhappily, are fostered nearer home’. The review continues by suggesting that ‘There can be no doubt of the good result, if her volumes are perused with the same deliberation and calm desire to obliterate all unworthy national prejudices’. In doing so, the reviewer directed the reader towards a more responsible role in interpreting the novel — readers must not approach

¹⁵ John Reuben Thompson, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852), 630–38 (p. 630); Tonkovich, ‘Rhetorical Power’, p. 166; ‘*Northwood; or, Life North and South*’, *Godey’s Lady’s*

the work passively but with circumspect ‘deliberation’. This recommendation for careful reading reflected the belief of reviewers that their role was to be both the arbiters of literary taste and, as Machor argues, to ‘effect a proper relation between the middle-class and fiction by acting as surrogates and guides for that readership, directing it not only to read certain types of fiction but also to read fiction *in certain ways*’.¹⁶

‘No uninterested or inattentive listener’: Eulalia as the Ideal Reader in *The Planter’s Northern Bride*

In praising McIntosh for writing in the ‘woman’s true sphere’, *Godey’s* stated an implicit agenda for judging the work of female writers. When Caroline Lee Hentz’s *The Planter’s Northern Bride* was received from the publishers too late for *Godey’s* to prepare a full notice for the next edition of the magazine, the reviewer briefly gestured towards the anticipated distinction of the unread novel because the ‘name of the popular author will be the best recommendation we could give of her work’. Following the publication of *Marcus Warland*, Caroline Lee Hentz immediately planned, wrote and, against her publisher’s advice, pushed for the publication of *The Planter’s Northern Bride* which was, as Jamie Stanesa asserts, a ‘polemical and distinctively Southern response to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, a particularly noteworthy achievement because Hentz was a northerner by birth.¹⁷ Born in Massachusetts, Hentz

Book, 45 (1852), 579; ‘*Cabin and the Parlor; or, Slaves and Masters*’, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, 46 (1853), 378.

¹⁶ ‘*The Lofty and the Lowly*’, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, 46 (1853), 372; Machor, p. 65.

¹⁷ ‘*The Planter’s Northern Bride*’, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, 48 (1854), 466; Stanesa, ‘Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz’, p. 130; Moss, p. 109. For further biographical details on Caroline Lee Hentz see also George Harvey Genzmer, ‘Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz’, in *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, 10 vols (New York: Scribners, 1931), IV, 565–66; Helen Waite Papashvily, ‘Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz’, in *Notable American Women*, II, 184–86; Richard D. Watson, Jr., ‘Caroline Lee

moved with her husband to North Carolina in 1827 and subsequently lived in Kentucky, Alabama and Georgia. Nina Baym uses the examples of the northerner Hentz and the southerner McIntosh, who had moved from Georgia to New York in 1835, to support the thesis that the geographical mobility of women 'suggests a fluidity of sectional boundaries where women are concerned' during the 1850s. In their writing, southern women in particular, Baym suggests,

though fully committed to the notion of the South as a distinct region, were inclined to stress a gender commonality between northern and southern women and, thereby, in some sense undo the divisive effects of southern exceptionalist rhetoric.

Despite her northern origins, Hentz's assimilation into southern culture and racial ideology is profound. If, as Stanesa claims, Hentz's 'sympathy for both regions of the country' makes it 'difficult to predict where her sectional sympathies would have fallen during the Civil War', the two novels Hentz produced at the beginning of the 1850s were unequivocally pro-southern texts with a clear racial and cultural purpose. Hentz's decision to defend the South against prevailing abolitionist argument in *Marcus Warland* and specifically counter *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *The Planter's Northern Bride* reflects her commitment to the tenets of her adopted region even if she attempted it in the belief that her northern origins made her 'uniquely qualified to offer a balanced view of Southern social life'.¹⁸

In *The Planter's Northern Bride*, the journey of the eponymous heroine Eulalia to the South, following her marriage to the southern slave-owner Russell Moreland, enables Hentz to portray the semi-autobiographical experiences of a northern woman in the

Hentz', in *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Robert Bain, Joseph M. Flora, and Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 221–22.

¹⁸ Nina Baym, *Feminism and American Literary History: Essays* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1992), pp. 188, 184; Stanesa, 'Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz', pp. 136, 130.

South and her growing understanding and appreciation of southern values. Placing both gender and racial authority firmly in the hands of Moreland, the novel ostensibly conformed to the conservative principles of the southern patriarchy. Moreland's capacity for both physical and moral superiority is asserted through succeeding examples of submission and acquiescence to him as master — by his new bride Eulalia, by the insurgent plantation slaves, and ultimately even by Eulalia's father, Mr Hastings. Mary Ann Wimsatt balks at Hentz's 'vapid plantation romances' and her defence of southern idealism 'through familiar arguments that appear annoyingly condescending' to modern readers.¹⁹ Yet, though both of her southern plantation novels conveyed the conventional myth of a social order based around the southern master and his ideal wife, in *The Planter's Northern Bride* Hentz also engaged in a different, if connected, argument. If *The Planter's Northern Bride* was an answer to Stowe's representation of the South as Hentz intended, the novel also assayed the equally problematic notion of the potential power of female reading and female writing that Stowe's work had exploited. In her text, Hentz manipulated the two popular genres that had informed Stowe's own novel — the slave narrative and the female-oriented domestic narrative — in ways that expressed both fear of, and desire for, the empowerment of marginalised voices articulated through these literary forms. The apprehension of the possible authority that reading and writing evoked for women is dramatised in the relationship between Moreland's first, southern-born wife Claudia and his second, northern bride Eulalia. The fraught encounters between the two women throughout the novel, encounters generally overlooked by critical readers, repeatedly undermine the terms of the domestic narrative form that

¹⁹ Lucinda H. MacKethan, 'Domesticity in Dixie: The Plantation Novel and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), pp. 223–42 (p. 236); Mary Ann Wimsatt, 'Caroline Lee Hentz's Balancing Act', in *The Female Tradition in Southern Literature*, ed. Carol S. Manning (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), pp. 161–75 (pp. 173, 161).

readers like Wimsatt use to depreciate Hentz's work. By figuring Claudia as a female storyteller and Eulalia as a female reader in *The Planter's Northern Bride*, Hentz was able to interrogate the nature of a female literary tradition, to query the strategies used to overtly comply with the norms of gender behaviour but also effectively contemplate alternative female roles, and confront the issues of female readership and female authorship in the mid-nineteenth century. Somewhat in contradiction to Baym's argument that female writers essentially minimised regional affiliation in writing for other women, Hentz's project clearly aligned the act of reading with the northern woman and the act of storytelling with the southern woman. As Baym also notes, the concentration of publishing houses and readers in the North meant that male and female southern writers were essentially reliant upon a northern audience for commercial success. By conflating regional identity with the differing roles of reader and writer, however, Hentz ensured that *The Planter's Northern Bride* implicitly forwarded an argument for the inclusion of the specifically southern narrative in the American literary tradition.

Throughout the novel, Eulalia is the silent recipient of the stories told by other characters. Her courtship by Moreland is punctuated by scenes in which he assumes the role of narrator, relating his experiences of southern life to correct the northern abolitionist tales of slavery she has learnt from her father. Mr Hastings is an ardent, though Moreland believes misinformed, abolitionist. After their first meeting, the proselytising Hastings supplies Moreland with several copies of the 'Emancipator', an antislavery journal that he personally edits, and asks Moreland to conduct a 'careful

perusal' of the papers.²⁰ At first a piqued Moreland merely 'glanced over them carelessly' (p. 77), but as he reads he discovers that

There was much truth in them, but the true was so ingeniously woven with what was false, none but the most experienced eye could detect the tinsel from the gold. There were facts, too, but so distorted, so wrenched from their connexion with other extenuating facts, that they presented a mangled and bleeding mass of fragments, instead of a solid body of truth. (p. 78)

Concluding his reading of the papers, Moreland finds it impossible to believe "that such things can be published and circulated and read by a rational and intelligent community as truth" (p. 78). This unequivocal critique of the artistic strategies of abolitionist fiction does not simply condemn the writers of these 'facts' but also censures the casual reading habits of readers who do not possess the necessary faculty of the 'experienced eye' to determine the truth of the work.

In *Eulalia*, however, Moreland finds 'no inattentive or uninterested listener' (p. 50) and, increasingly, he becomes assured of *Eulalia*'s discrimination as a receiver of texts. The antislavery views Hastings propounds are drawn, in part, from his contact with a runaway slave called Nat the Giant. Hastings explains how Nat had related the "story of his sufferings and wrongs" and that, faced with this "victim of an inhuman master", he "had compassion on him" (p. 164) and offered the fugitive both food and a bed. In defence, Moreland emphatically proclaims Nat's "whole story a lie" (p. 165), Nat is accounted the teller of "false, demoniac tales" (p. 195). Hastings's purpose in alluding to Nat is to warn Moreland of *Eulalia*'s apparent antipathy for slaves, which he fears will "develop" with daily contact on Moreland's plantation. During Nat's stay in the Hastings's home, "Eulalia manifested a loathing so unnatural that it distressed me

²⁰ Caroline Lee Hentz, *The Planter's Northern Bride; or, Scenes in Mrs Hentz's Childhood* (Philadelphia: Peterson, 1854), p. 71. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited in parentheses following the text.

beyond expression. She could not eat seated at his side; she actually languished and sickened” (p. 165). It is a “repugnance” (p. 164) that Hastings cannot dismiss. Recognising the physical consequences of Eulalia’s contact with Nat, Diane Roberts argues that this intimate, domestic encounter between the black man and the white woman ‘implied sexual danger’. Yet Moreland, in asseverating the falsity of Nat’s story, finds a subtly different explanation for Eulalia’s response to the fugitive slave. Moreland claims that “I do not wonder that Eulalia shrank with horror from the approach of such a wretch; that her intuitive delicacy and purity felt the contamination and withered under its influence” (p. 165). Certainly the exchange between Hastings and Moreland does not obviate the sexual implication that Roberts suggests. Yet in the context of the opening chapters of *The Planter’s Northern Bride*, the central terms used to describe Eulalia’s reception of Nat’s story are also applied to the only story she refuses to hear from Moreland — the history of his marriage to his first wife — from which, ‘though her curiosity had been strongly excited [...] she shrank with unconquerable repugnance from hearing from his lips’ (p. 102). When Hastings presses Moreland for further details, Moreland ‘paused in great agitation’ and the ‘soft dark eye of Eulalia met his own, beaming with sympathy and glistening with sensibility [...] Her delicacy was wounded by her father’s abrupt inquisitiveness’ (p. 97). The sexual implications of Moreland’s prior marriage — ‘He had loved and wedded’ — are clear, but in her sympathetic response to the forced revelations, Eulalia demonstrates the skills as a reader that she also applies to the discredited story represented through Nat. For Moreland, her ‘repugnance’ and her ‘delicacy’ become markers for her aptitude as an active interpreter of stories. In her tears Eulalia demonstrates, to use Helen Waite Papashvily’s terms, ‘those qualities considered [...] to be sex-linked to females — sympathy, tact, sensitivity, sensibility’. In marrying Eulalia, Moreland implicitly affirms her interpretative strategies as a complement to his own reading and storytelling roles. In Eulalia he finds an

‘intuitive’ capacity to gauge the veracity of stories that corresponds to his own ‘experienced eye’ in eliciting truth from fiction.²¹

For Moreland, Eulalia is perceived as the ideal reader, a discerning if innate judge of authorial reliability that enables her to trust Moreland’s untold story of his first wife because of her ‘confidence in his honour and truth’ (p. 102). Yet the facts of this untold story are repeatedly alluded to in the first half of the text. Small details emerge that provoke Eulalia, and Hentz’s readers, to ever greater curiosity that culminates in Claudia’s sudden appearance half way through the novel and her violent retelling of the events of her marriage. The very fact of Claudia’s existence as Moreland’s still-living wife undermines the stability of Eulalia’s own marriage. Yet Claudia’s continued refusal to acknowledge her former husband’s authority ensures that she also personifies the most profound challenge both to the myth of southern patriarchy and to Moreland’s storytelling and story-listening criteria. When Eulalia and Claudia finally meet, the story Claudia narrates and the response she elicits from Eulalia dramatically destabilise the codes of female storytelling and story listening established in the opening chapters of the novel. This offers Hentz’s readers, if only temporarily, an alternative version of female aesthetics that Hentz must ultimately delimit if the pro-slavery ideology of her text is to remain intact.

Though Hentz’s novel ostensibly fashioned Eulalia as the eponymous heroine of *The Planter’s Northern Bride*, in doing so Hentz departed from the thematic patterns of her earlier novels. For Melanie Levinson the novel ‘is interesting [...] for its deviation from

²¹ Roberts, p. 68; Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 75.

the adventurous, wild, and ultimately untamed heroine' that dominated Hentz's previous work. As Jamie Stanesa notes, the novel itself begins at the point when the traditional sentimental plot ends — with the marriage of the novel's hero and heroine. In the same way, Eulalia's character development diverges from the conventions of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction as summarised in Nina Baym's 'overplot' of women's novels which 'chronicle the "trials and triumphs" [...] of a heroine who, beset with hardships, finds within herself the qualities of intelligence, will, resourcefulness and courage sufficient to overcome them'. As Hentz's central female protagonist, in Baym's assessment of *The Planter's Northern Bride* using the criteria of the 'overplot', Eulalia is the 'most conservative and traditional heroine, fulfilled in the most traditional kinds of wifely behaviour and happy to be ruled by Moreland'. The trials Eulalia faces — her father's opposition to her marriage to Moreland, a potentially life-threatening illness, a spiritual submission to Moreland and her separation from her mother and her family — are given only brief attention and are soon overcome in the first chapters of the novel before Eulalia's removal to the South. Eulalia's position as heroine of the sentimental text is somewhat diminished by the easy resolutions that Hentz offers for the trials Eulalia experiences — her happiness is not hard-won.²²

The dislocation between the character of Eulalia and the archetypal heroine of the female sentimental plot is further emphasised as Eulalia travels to her southern home with her new husband. Aboard the steamboat taking her to Georgia, Eulalia meets another storyteller — an old woman from the North whom Eulalia summarily designates Nightmare. Nightmare garrulously relates her own experiences of southern life and

²² Levinson, p. 221; Jamie Stanesa, 'Caroline Lee Hentz's Rereading of Southern Paternalism; or, Pastoral Naturalism in *The Planter's Northern Bride*', *Southern Studies*, 3 (1992), 221–52 (p. 225); Nina Baym,

mourns the trials she anticipates for Eulalia. After deciding that Eulalia “‘look[s] too young to be married’”, Nightmare concludes

‘Ah, poor thing! you are an orphan, I suppose. Take my advice, and try to get a living where you are. They are the proudest folks there [in the South] that ever lived, and they look upon poor people as no better than white negroes’.
(p. 183)

Nightmare’s ready assumptions about Eulalia’s personal history and her characterisation of the young woman as an orphan journeying South constructs around Eulalia a typical plot of the sentimental tradition that was utilised by both northern and southern domestic novelists. The journey of the destitute orphan signals the beginning of Ellen Montgomery’s physical, spiritual and emotional trials in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*. Even in postbellum southern fiction, the journey of the orphaned Edna Earl initiates the plot twists that place her in the southern home of the hero in Augusta J. Evans Wilson’s novel *St. Elmo* (1867).²³

Nightmare’s refashioning of Eulalia’s story to suit the conventions of sentimental fiction immediately begins the gradual deconstruction of the processes of storytelling that Moreland oversees at the beginning of the novel. As the prior scenes of *The Planter’s Northern Bride* have revealed and as Eulalia ultimately admits, this retelling of her own story as a sentimental plot is inaccurate. Nightmare’s interpretation of the immature body of Eulalia effects a misreading of Eulalia as a sentimental heroine. Yet it is a misreading to which Eulalia contributes by refusing to actively participate in the

Women’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels, By and About Women in America 1820–70, 2nd Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 22, 136.

²³ See Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* [1850], ed. Jane Tompkins (New York: Feminist Press, 1987), chapter 7 and Augusta J. Evans Wilson, *St. Elmo* [1867] (New York: Ward, 1889), chapter 3. Other orphan heroines who feature in contemporary best-selling sentimental novels include Capitola in E.D.E.N. Southworth’s *The Hidden Hand* (serialised from 1859) and Gertrude Flint in Maria Susanna Cummins’s *The Lamplighter* (1854).

narrative. When Nightmare barrages Eulalia with questions, the one question the young bride does not answer is whether she is married. In response to the direct appeal, Eulalia emphatically ‘was silent’ (p. 183) and Nightmare returns to this unspoken fact later when she meets Moreland and learns the truth. In the exchange with Nightmare, Eulalia withholds the single piece of information that will enable the old woman to make an effective reading of her. Eulalia refuses to co-author with Nightmare a narrative that will convey her individual experiences, preferring instead to remain ‘silent’. Perhaps Nightmare is another indiscriminate interpreter, like Hastings, unable to recognise the truth from the fiction; but, ultimately, the false story Nightmare narrates about Eulalia unconsciously presages the true story of the other heroine of the novel, Claudia. Eulalia listens to Nightmare’s improvised creative inventions, like the still-unknown narrative of Moreland’s first wife, with new ‘impressions crowding on her mind’ (p. 184). The ‘excitement of her imagination’ (p. 188), is exacerbated by the coincidental appearance and ensuing death of Nat the Giant on the same steamboat. If Nat’s presence in her father’s home confirmed Eulalia’s interpretative skills for Moreland, his death at this juncture redirects Eulalia’s artistic sensibilities. As she attempts to sleep, Eulalia ‘tried to rid herself of the hideous image that haunted her couch. There it lay — a black gigantic barrier between her and the fair, flowery land to which her bridegroom’s hand was leading her’ (p. 188) and the sexual import of the black man figuratively sharing her bed is overt. The physical oppression Eulalia feels when her imagination is excited ensures that she consistently withdraws from the role of independent female storyteller and of unguided female reader because both activities reveal to her the interlocking sexual and creative energies she cannot accommodate within the dictates of nineteenth-century womanhood.

Unlike the orphan character Nightmare creates, Eulalia is not the heroine of a story of her own making, but the interpreter of other people's stories. Instead, in Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride*, as Levinson argues, 'female courage and pride [...] is not in Eulalia, who becomes the staunch supporter of the Southern status quo, but in Claudia'. The pairing of the celestial, pure and submissive second wife with the dark, wild and erotically-charged first wife of Moreland is not necessarily an unusual plot feature in the structuring of sentimental fiction. It is a juxtaposing of the 'light against the dark', the 'sexless' against the 'passionate' that Leslie Fiedler identifies as a defining feature of American fiction, or the conflict of the heroine and the villainess of Baym's 'overplot'. Indeed, for Wimsatt, it is Hentz's 'inventiveness in balancing, comparing, and contrasting' her characterisations to 'reveal her thematic concerns' that constitutes the best elements of her work. In *The Planter's Northern Bride*, when Claudia finally reveals her story to Eulalia, however, the novel both complies with and dramatically resists the conventions of the traditional 'overplot' of female domestic narratives. Claudia is a child of mysterious heritage sold by her mother to a wealthy but childless patron. With maturity, Claudia's beauty seduces the young Moreland and they marry. However, her untamed passions and her refusal to bow to Moreland's jealous dislike of her biological mother and her friends result in their divorce. As this summary suggests, Claudia's story relates to the plot dynamics of the contemporary sentimental novel with one exception. Claudia cannot learn the requisite female attributes of self-sacrifice and submission to the will of men. Instead she increasingly turns towards acts of self-determination in ways that demonstrated her resistance to the 'genre conventions demanding that "womanliness" triumph over individuality' that Joanne Dobson defines as fundamental to the cultural ideology of mid-nineteenth-century fiction. Unlike Eulalia, Claudia will not remain 'silent' but resolves to tell her personal story and deliberately set it in opposition to the interpretation of events Moreland relates. For

Hentz, Claudia's neglect of her daughter and her refusal to comply with Moreland's wishes, as Stanesa argues, 'clearly illustrates the potential danger of excessive individualism for women' and the ways in which 'misguided independence could lead women to [...] a serious transgression of woman's duty under paternalism'. Certainly, in part, it is this that explains her fundamental failure as a southern lady within *The Planter's Northern Bride*, and the sin for which she is, within the ideological context of the novel, justly punished. Yet the final form her individuality takes — the construction of her identity in the wilful act of telling her own story — intimates the broader context of Hentz's characterisation by positioning Claudia as a female author seeking an aggressive self-expression.²⁴

To Read the 'sealed book': The Forbidden Female Text and the Construction of the Female Literary Tradition

From the moment Moreland first sees the guileless Eulalia his attraction to her is founded upon her very difference from his beautiful but corrupt and corrupting first wife. Yet, despite the allusive comparisons, Claudia remains, for both the reader and Eulalia, a mysterious and unknown figure. She is a liminal character that, nevertheless, returns repeatedly to dominate scenes from which she is physically absent. Moreland travels North to ease the 'widowhood of heart' (p. 36) that his divorce from Claudia has engendered and the not dead, but mourned-as-dead, Claudia continues to be a non-present presence in *The Planter's Northern Bride*. She is reflected in the features of the

²⁴ Levinson, p. 221; Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Normal, IL: Dalkey, 1997), pp. 205–6; Baym, *Women's Fiction*, p. 35; Wimsatt, p. 162; Joanne Dobson, 'The Hidden Hand: Subversion of Cultural Ideology in Three Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Women's Novels', *American Quarterly*, 38 (1986), 223–42 (p. 226); Stanesa, 'Caroline Hentz's Rereading of Southern Paternalism', pp. 236–37.

young daughter Effie she bore to Moreland, a child that he 'did not, could not love; because its mother's spirit flashed from its eyes of gipsy hue and brightness' (p. 211). Eulalia remains absorbed by her interest in Moreland's first wife though she herself has foreclosed the revelation she increasingly desires by refusing to hear the story from her husband. Claudia's name is unmentioned by both Moreland and Eulalia though a 'thousand times had it hovered on her lips, yet she had never dared to utter it; and the past had seemed a sealed book to him' (p. 308). For Eulalia 'the image of Claudia was for ever flitting before her. She would have given anything for one glimpse of the face, the haunting face, her imagination had drawn' (p. 309). Eulalia's manifestation of the former and now degraded wife is explicitly that of the 'spirit' that 'hovered' across her mind, 'flitting' and 'haunting' the imagination of the new bride and mistress of the southern mansion. When Eulalia finally meets Claudia this characterisation is fully realised:

Eulalia's first consciousness of her presence was so startling that it made her spring from her seat, as if penetrated by an electric shock. She heard no step, and yet, an inexplicable sensation induced her to turn, and [...] she beheld the haughty, yet graceful figure, whose lineaments, once seen, could never be forgotten. There were the large, black resplendent, yet repelling eyes, that were forever haunting her. (p. 362)

Hentz's language in describing the growing influence Claudia has over Eulalia emphasises Eulalia's repeatedly repressed urge for self-expression. Eulalia's sense of individual 'consciousness', the vibrant creations of her 'imagination' and her ongoing frustration with ideas she 'never dared to utter' reveal the intensifying creative influence of Claudia. The 'inexplicable' reappearance of Claudia in the home she formerly occupied as mistress has emphatic ghostly resonances and her characterisation as a 'ghost' draws upon divergent but interconnected discourses that dominated contemporary constructions of race and gender. Roberts and Stanesa both interpret, in Claudia's dark colouring and gypsy heritage, the implications of at least a dangerous

exoticism and an interracial ancestry.²⁵ Claudia's representation as the racial and sexual 'other' was the metaphor for her exclusion from southern society but it was also an imagery that enabled Hentz to map McCord's 'phantom' and Holmes's 'promiscuous conversation' onto this alternative female voice in her text. Just as Eulalia's 'barrier' of female imagination is evoked in sexualised and racialised terms, so Claudia embodies the sexual and racial traits of a female creativity gone awry that Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* so distinctly represented to southerners.

In Hentz's novel, Claudia's perversion of womanly duties is juxtaposed with the perfect emblem of womanhood represented by Eulalia. Jan Bakker's reading of Hentz's fiction identifies 'a pattern of hesitant feminine social protest' in which Hentz consistently generates assertive female characters that show her 'contempt for the nineteenth-century stereotype in romance of the delicate, fading heroine'. Yet, also consistently, Hentz 'withdraws from her rebellious statements' by ensuring independence is always finally sacrificed in favour of domesticity. The contrast Hentz establishes between the 'angel' Eulalia and the 'degraded idol' Claudia works deliberately to demonstrate Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's specific conceptualisation of a divided creative identity in female-authored nineteenth-century fiction. Gilbert and Gubar argue that even those women writers that uphold the conservative values of their society

obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all the patriarchal structures which both their authors and their submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable [...] by projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad or monstrous women [...] female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the strictures of patriarchal society and reject them.

This understanding of the 'madwoman' in the text as a simultaneous expression, suppression and displacement of female rebelliousness and creativity contributes to the

²⁵ Roberts, p. 69; Stanesa, 'Caroline Hentz's Rereading of Southern Paternalism', p. 236.

re-evaluation of Hentz's purpose in creating the figure of Claudia in her own text. If, as Elaine Showalter argues, 'women writers and intellectuals have repeatedly envisioned a literature validated by the Dark Lady, the feminist messiah, the tenth muse', Claudia's function in *The Planter's Northern Bride* signals the independent intellectual and creative desires that both Eulalia and Hentz are attracted to — desires that demand utterance but must be, ultimately, contained. Claudia's role in the novel is not simply to subvert the social values of the patriarchy, though she does this, but to specifically define the result of the traumatic realisation and consequent containment of female creative talent.²⁶

For Eulalia, Claudia's name remains unspoken, the 'interdicted name, the forbidden subject' (p. 320) that she is inevitably drawn to again and again. In her first brief meeting with Claudia, as Moreland and Eulalia journey to Moreland's southern plantation, Claudia is depicted as a monstrous female as she passes 'like a vision'. As Eulalia looks at Claudia for the first time, 'Never had she seen such an expression on a woman's face'; and when Eulalia 'looked at her husband; he was lividly pale, and his lips had the rigidity of stone' (p. 316). Eulalia is finally able to look upon the forbidden 'expression' of Claudia, and Hentz's meaning is tantalising^{ly} twofold. Eulalia can now see Claudia's physical features, but the opportunity to scrutinise Claudia demonstrates the ways in which Eulalia attempts to read the 'lineaments' of 'expression' manifested in Claudia's body as she would the printed lines of a body of text. Claudia becomes for Eulalia a story that is both a 'forbidden theme' (p. 308) yet one that 'had

²⁶ Jan Bakker, "...the bold atmosphere of Mrs Hentz" and Others: Fast Food and Feminine Rebelliousness in Some Romances of the Old South', *Journal of American Culture* 21 (1998), 1-6 (pp. 1, 3); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 77-78; Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 41.

she not yearned to behold' (p. 317), a textual body to read but one that remains 'indescribable' (p. 309). Eulalia desires to read the text but also knows that to do so would expose her to a knowledge that she potentially could not control. Claudia's embodiment of female imagination literally silences Moreland. Yet, as Eulalia wavers between her attraction to and her repulsion from Claudia, Moreland resolves to write over Claudia's dangerous story before she can reveal it. At this moment he decides to open the 'sealed book' (p. 308) and disclose the history of his first marriage in his own terms. In doing so, Moreland achieves his aim by drawing Eulalia back towards the values of marriage and the home that Claudia's very existence challenges. If 'the dread charm' of the untold story 'vanishes with familiarity', Moreland overcomes the possibility that, 'while there is one forbidden theme to a husband and wife, it will rise between them a cold, icy barrier' (p. 320). In telling Eulalia, Moreland reaffirms the stability of established gender roles but also removes the 'barrier' that Hentz uses in *The Planter's Northern Bride* to paradoxically encapsulate the outcome of an uncontrolled or transgressive female imagination. The 'barrier' that the narrator interjects at this point repeats the 'black gigantic barrier' that Nat provokes when Eulalia first journeys South. In both cases, the female imaginative act is a 'barrier' that precludes marriage and the choice for Eulalia is whether to fulfil her desire for self-expression or comply with the domestic gender codes of her community. At this point in the novel, as Moreland redirects her response to Claudia by telling his own story, again Eulalia withdraws from the creative possibilities that are suggested by her encounter with Claudia.

Despite the horror that Claudia evokes, the relationship between Eulalia and Claudia remains the single closely-bound female relationship in Hentz's novel. Unlike other popular female domestic fiction, such as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* does not

ostensibly present close and nurturing female ties as an alternative to the masculine world. Though other female characters, both black and white, are introduced by Hentz as viable female companions for the young Eulalia, it is only with Claudia that she has an established intellectual and emotional relationship. Yet this relationship seemingly contrasts with the sympathetic and nurturing bonds between Eliza and Mrs Bird or Rachel Halliday in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or the homo-social support offered to Ellen Montgomery by Alice Humphreys in *The Wide, Wide World*. The female bonds presented in the fiction of these northern women writers echoed the powerful female culture of same-sex relationships that were established as a source of influential power for women in a patriarchal society. These bonds, as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Catherine Clinton describe them, are essentially non-confrontational, bonds that provided nineteenth-century women with 'a female world in which hostility and criticism of other women were discouraged'. In *The Planter's Northern Bride*, the relationship between Eulalia and Claudia is ostensibly one of confrontation, yet this very divergence from the cultural norms of female relationships did not suggest that this was not a self-fulfilling relationship in different ways. For Hentz, it is the direct possibility that Claudia might depose Moreland's authority over Eulalia that is finally the reason why Claudia must be removed from the novel. Whilst Moreland is away, Claudia and Eulalia finally meet alone and, in the privacy of Eulalia's parlour, Claudia tells her version of the events of her former marriage to his new northern bride. In the staging of the scene, Hentz invokes a specific relationship between the two women — that of female storyteller and female story listener — and, in doing so, uses the scene to interrogate her own experiences of authorship and her relationship to a female literary tradition.²⁷

²⁷ Smith-Rosenberg, p. 64; Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 162.

Left alone in the southern mansion by Moreland, Eulalia is sitting in the parlour practising upon the piano when the uninvited Claudia enters the room. Entering the inner, sacred spaces of the house with a 'careless home attitude' (p. 364), Claudia finally tells the dark events that have remained always present but never revealed in the novel. Though Moreland has previously related to Eulalia the story that had caused him such pain, Hentz does not allow her own reader to be privy to this exchange. It is only at this moment, when the two living wives meet without Moreland, that Hentz's reader learns the secrets of Moreland and Claudia's past. Hentz condemns Claudia's transgression of the ideals of the 'cult of true womanhood'. Claudia is the possessor of 'evil passions' (p. 363) who returns, as Eulalia believes, "'glorying in [her] shame, to the home [she] once desecrated'" (p. 365). Yet Hentz also privileges the story Claudia tells by presenting Claudia's version directly to the reader. Though Claudia's story is strictly circumscribed and undermined by Eulalia's denial of its veracity, by presenting it Hentz both challenges and relies upon female readers who are, Judith Fetterley argues, 'taught to think as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values'. Hentz foregrounds the female version of events over the male version; indeed, Claudia's story deliberately opposes the male version, but finally can never wholly validate it.²⁸ The telling of the story satisfies the reader's long-denied wish to hear the facts but does so in explicitly sensationalist terms, and Eulalia's refusal to accept Claudia's truth demonstrates the success of Moreland's attempts to direct Eulalia's interpretative strategies. Even though Moreland is not present, Eulalia's self-surveillance effectively disempowers Claudia's attempts to offer an alternative model of female behaviour. Likewise, Hentz relies upon her own reader's disciplined

²⁸ Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. xx.

interpretative strategies to ensure that the provocative opportunities Claudia's text offers, which would undermine Hentz's pro-slavery agenda, are never finally endorsed. In the subsequent scene, therefore, Hentz establishes a powerful and problematic interrelationship between the female storyteller and the female reader. The scene dramatises the simultaneous desire for and resistance of female self-expression, the simultaneous evocation of female imaginative, emotional and social independence and dependence, and the simultaneous affiliation with and rejection of literary predecessors.

Claudia's intrusion into the intimate surroundings of Eulalia's new home juxtaposes the purity of the domestic sphere maintained by Eulalia with the corruption of domestic neglect Claudia imposed upon her own home. Yet the location of this climactic emotional scene within the parlour of the young bride is deliberate and ensures that the scene is understood also in terms of the specific activities of female authorship and female reading. Joan Hedrick has described the function of the parlour in the antebellum home as an 'informal, heterosocial institution' in which personal news, family letters, songs and literature, both published and self-authored, were exchanged within an environment that was predominantly oral. Central to the activities of the nineteenth-century parlour was the reading aloud of letters and poetry, essays and fiction by both published authors and more amateur members of the household. Hedrick suggests that the

production of literature was [...] an integral part of polite society and domestic culture. 'Becoming an author' was not a distant and mysterious process, but an everyday event continuous with polite forms of social behavior such as writing letters.²⁹

²⁹ Joan D. Hedrick, 'Parlor Literature: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of "Great Women Artists"', *Signs*, 17 (1992), 275–303 (pp. 279, 283).

As such, women were not immediately excluded from authorship but could actively participate in the literary business of the parlour. Just as Stowe had learnt and practised her literary talents in both the domestic parlour and its more formal manifestation in the literary club, so Hentz was also familiar with the parlour as the locus for literary production. Indeed, like Stowe, Caroline Lee Hentz briefly belonged to the Cincinnati Semi-Colon Club in the 1830s. The Semi-Colon Club used the reading and writing strategies of the family parlour to provide an environment for women to attempt more public and professional sorties into writing.³⁰ Though the possible and intriguing encounter between the two burgeoning female writers goes unrecorded, twenty years later Hentz found an opportunity to continue, in a more national arena, the literary exchanges that had taken place in the Cincinnati parlour. Hentz's understanding of the parlour as the sanctioned site for female literary experimentation implicates Claudia and Eulalia in a vital interchange of ideas and textual practices in Moreland's parlour. The encounter provokes in Eulalia new feelings of subjectivity and the self-conscious impulse to articulate that subjectivity within the context of parlour literary discourse.

The 'introspective view': The Implications of Female Reading

Preluding her own story with the angry declaration "And you believe *his* story?" (p. 365), Claudia's impassioned narration to Eulalia directly addresses the issues of authorship, veracity, and gender relations in antebellum America, issues that also dominated the southern debates over *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Fundamental to Claudia's story of her refusal to sever her relations with her Italian mother as her husband demands and so submit to Moreland's rule is her rejection of the power relations imposed by marriage:

³⁰ Hedrick, p. 293; Stanesa, 'Caroline Hentz's Rereading of Southern Paternalism', p. 241.

'I thought I married a lover! he turned into my master, my tyrant! — he wanted me to cringe to his will, like the slaves in the kitchen, and I spurned his authority! — I defied his power! He expected me to *obey* him, — me, who never obeyed my own mother!' (p. 366)

Claudia's characterisation of her marriage dramatises her resistance to Moreland's inviolable rights as husband over her will and actions. The immoderate repetition of 'I' and 'me' provides Claudia with a language that evokes the subjectivity she has dramatically averred as her own. Claudia's challenge to Moreland's 'authority' explicitly incorporates the shared discourses of women's rights reformers and abolitionists in ways that enabled Hentz to contemplate the autonomy such rhetoric claimed whilst never endorsing it either as her own or that of her more conservative heroine.

Pre-dating Hentz's 1854 novel, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's influential 'Declaration of Sentiments' was the primary public expression of female rights in America in the mid-nineteenth century. The 'Declaration' stated that woman 'is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming to all intents and purposes, her master' and perceived the 'repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having as its direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her'.³¹ Claudia's own declaration of independence from her former husband rehearses these same descriptors of male and female relations in terms of 'obedience', mastery and 'tyranny'. Anne Firor Scott acknowledges the growing influence of northern women's rights rhetoric upon southern women as it filtered South in the early 1850s following the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. Mary Chesnut's identification of the correspondence between wives and slaves had demonstrated that the terminology of women's rights had

³¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 'Declaration of Sentiments', in *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir*, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 413–21 (p. 416).

an immediacy for southern women that made the reading of certain texts — including work by Margaret Fuller, the southern sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimké and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — of grave concern to the southern patriarch.³²

Discourses that challenged the traditional social classifications, even to equate oppression of white women with that of slaves, profoundly destabilised a hierarchical society founded upon rigid sexual and racial mores. The preservation of white male autonomy in the South depended equally upon the shibboleths of white female purity, inferiority and passivity as upon the religious and biological sophistry that justified slavery.³³ Indeed, even in 1913 the southern author Mary Johnston could rely upon the inherent association in the southern mind between the dangers of female reading habits and feminist protest to signal her heroine's nascent rejection of traditional female roles and evolving suffragism. In Johnston's novel *Hagar*, Hagar Ashendyne's selection of a 'forbidden' book, Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, chosen over the more mawkishly titled volumes of her demure Aunt Serena — 'Ministering Children', 'Home Influence' or 'Mother's Recompense' — is met with outrage from both her aunt and her grandfather. Whilst Serena and Colonel Ashendyne regulate Hagar's reading on a single principle of literary criticism — "No lady would read it" — the selection of the text prompts Colonel Ashendyne to warn his granddaughter that 'such books unsettled all

³² Anne Firor Scott, 'Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s', *Journal of American History*, 61 (1974), 52–64 (p. 63–64, 53).

³³ Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1995), p. 16; Roberts, p. 2; W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), p. 87; Karen Sánchez-Eppler, 'Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolitionism', in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in Nineteenth Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 92–114 (p. 95).

received notions, and while he supported her he wasn't going to have [her] imbibing damned anarchical sentiments of any type'.³⁴

In the scene between Claudia and Eulalia, Hentz dramatised the 'anarchical' possibilities that unsupervised reading could indeed provoke. As Nina Baym argues, reading 'supports the all-important home by providing pleasure within its precincts', and this was doubly so if the favoured reading matter reaffirmed the domestic values that Johnston had encoded in the titles of Serena's novels. Nevertheless, the processes of reading 'at the same time [...] encourages a dangerous privatism and individualism by providing a solitary, self-centred activity'.³⁵ In the confined space of the parlour, the effect of Claudia's story upon Eulalia is immediate. Listening to the narrative

Eulalia felt a quick, sharp pang at her heart, at the sudden storm of passion rising and surging within. She knew not before that such powerful elements were slumbering in her breast. At every scornful and mocking word [...] answering scorn sent its flash to her eye and its bitter taunt to her lip. But the flash went out, the taunt died away without utterance [...] she could have wept at the introspective view that moment of passion had given her. Without trusting herself to speak, fearing she would say something which she would hereafter regret, she turned away. (pp. 366–67)

The impact of Claudia's story is an unleashing of impassioned emotion previously unknown to the young listener, a moment of personal revelation that impels the oral expression of the uncharacteristic 'taunt' that ultimately remains unspoken only after a troubling personal effort. Though Eulalia controls that desire to voice her own feelings in an energetic mirroring of Claudia's outpouring, she is awakened to the possibilities of an inner self that does not correspond to the passive external role she customarily fulfils. Hentz explicitly depicts Eulalia's brief realisation of independent female selfhood in terms of a need for verbal expression, a need to express a subjectivity she had previously

³⁴ Mary Johnston, *Hagar* [1913], ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), pp. 2, 25–26.

denied. Eulalia finally withdraws from pronouncing the words ‘she would hereafter regret’, but Claudia’s own short narration has provided the new bride with a language with which to expose tacit passions. For many southern women, the reading of novels provided ‘a context for their private fantasies [...] they retreated to novels as a way of shutting out the world and letting their own imagination play with forbidden delights of romance and adventure’.³⁶ Though Eulalia considers the contingency of responding to Claudia’s story and releasing the passions the ‘introspective view’ has revealed to her, she finally upholds the male story narrated to her by her husband and retreats from the profoundly ‘anarchical sentiments’ aroused by her new intimacy with the long-desired and long-forbidden female narrative and the ‘powerful elements’ it engenders. In this encounter between Claudia and Eulalia, Hentz explores the conflict between male- and female-authored texts, the very real threat to the patriarchy that female reading and writing posed, and conceptualises the relationship between women writers and women readers in inspiring and articulating latent subjectivities. Yet, the desirability of Claudia’s story and the temptation to express a problematic female selfhood are delimited by Eulalia’s decision to unreservedly affirm the patriarchal ideology. The ‘powerful elements’ that disturb Eulalia are not simply an aroused female selfhood but a response to the questioning of Moreland’s probity as storyteller. The questions that the scene suggests are firmly and finally silenced by the narrator of *The Planter’s Northern Bride* through the immediate, calm detailing of the history of Moreland and Claudia so as to ‘vindicate [Moreland] from the charges brought against him by the unhappy Claudia’ (p. 373) and reassert a story narrated from a viewpoint that enforces and reinforces the patriarchal hierarchy.

³⁵ Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers*, p. 50.

³⁶ Fox-Genovese, p. 261.

In the absence of her own mother, the relationship between Claudia and Eulalia assumes a pseudo-maternal significance enacted within the domestic intimacy of the parlour. In addressing the young bride, Claudia identifies Eulalia in a filial relation to her native region — she is the ‘daughter of a Northern clime’ (p. 366) — and whilst Eulalia cannot condone her proto-feminist revolt as a wife, Claudia’s maternal relationship to her own step-daughter Effie repeatedly provides a vital sympathetic understanding between the two women as Eulalia is left ‘feeling still more intensely for the unhappy mother’ (p. 369). Having implicated Claudia and Eulalia in a mother and daughter relationship, Hentz uses this model of women’s relationships to encode a viable female version of the Bloomian paradigm of authorship dramatised in the violent but necessary conflict between father and son in the production of texts and authors. As characterised by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, nineteenth-century female relationships functioned as ‘what might be described as an apprenticeship system’ through which ‘mothers and other older women had carefully trained daughters in the arts of housewifery and motherhood’.³⁷ Such education was seldom purely practical but also embraced the imperative ideological framework of female passivity and purity. Yet Claudia’s version of mothering propounds an alternative model of womanhood and alternative ‘arts’ of self-expression and artistic creativity uninhibited by, and in fact in direct contravention of, male authority. After their initial transitory meeting, Eulalia is wary of the conflicting female identities Claudia represents. Faced by Moreland’s first wife, Eulalia senses her own ‘want of self-possession’ and is suddenly aware of her perceived failings as a traditional wife to Moreland — ‘it was *her* place to soothe and comfort him’ (p. 318). Claudia’s freedom reveals to Eulalia her own lack of freedom and, momentarily, causes her to neglect her more wifely duties. When Claudia later enters Eulalia’s home with her

‘careless home-attitude’ and overt sensuality — the ‘handsome, but bold outlines of her figure [...] swelled through the dark mistiness of a black lace drapery’ (p. 363) — the effect immediately ‘roused all the woman in Eulalia’s breast’ (p. 364). In opening the ‘sealed book’ again, whilst her husband is away from home and unable to redirect her interpretations, Eulalia confronts and acknowledges for the first time what her culture has deemed dichotomous — the sexual mother — a discovery attuned to the developing consciousness of the young bride. In fictionalising her former marriage, Claudia dispenses guidance that subverts Eulalia’s acquiescence to male authority and rejection of female sexuality and creativity by reconfiguring the benign instructive relationship between mother and daughter. Elaine Showalter’s reading of the sentimental literary tradition emphasises the utilisation of the metaphor of motherhood as a justification for female creativity. Certainly Stowe had made effective use of the trope in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by not only directly appealing to the experience of her readers as mothers, but as Jennifer Fleischner argues, ensuring that ‘maternal affection structures the narrator’s relation to her reader, whom she guides, like a mother leading her children [...] educating her reader in, quite simply, how to feel’.³⁸

For mid-century reviewers, the maternal influence that domestic texts could afford in the absence of actual mothers was a vital reason for the promoting of certain types of female texts and certain types of female authors. Under the guise of writing a review article in the *Southern Quarterly Review* for John S. Hart’s anthology of *Female Prose Writers of America*, that included biographies of, amongst others, Stowe, McIntosh and Eastman,

³⁷ Smith-Rosenberg, p. 65.

³⁸ Showalter, p. 14; Jennifer Fleischner, ‘Mothers and Sisters: The Family Romance of Antislavery Women Writers’, in *Feminist Nightmares, Women at Odds: Feminism and the Problem of Sisterhood*, ed. Susan Ostror Weisser and Jennifer Fleischner (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 125–41 (p. 134); Coultrap-McQuin, pp. 91–92.

the reviewer details the conventional expectations of womanly behaviour in antebellum society. Following criticism of women's rights with the assertion of the differences between the sexes, espousing the innate inferiority of women and approving the role of the father and mother in defining gender, the article finally addresses the issue of appropriate female authorship and readership. The reviewer queries, 'are there departments in authorship that can be more satisfactorily filled by woman than by man?' and argues that indeed

There is in literature a sphere peculiarly woman's. As long as children [...] are taught to read; as long as girls, growing into womanhood, have books placed in their hands; as long as women can profit by the advice and suggestions of the discreet and experienced, in regard to the true nature of the new domestic relations [...] so long will judicious female writers be indispensable to the community. Who better than the mother, can write for the budding mind?³⁹

For the reviewer, the motive that legitimised the female writer was the creation of a text that reproduces, and was a substitute for, the mother-daughter relationship. By the 1850s, the sentimental trope of the interchangeable 'mother-as-text' and 'text-as-mother', in Elizabeth Barnes's terms, underpinned the projection of both female relationships and textuality in contemporary domestic novels. An explicit example was the gift of the inscribed Bible and writing desk in *The Wide, Wide World* that enabled the passing on of an exclusively female text between mother and daughter. For Barnes, this exchange in Warner's novel affirms the conservative values of womanhood under patriarchal control, but Beverly Voloshin interprets the text and the tools of writing rather as subversive in permitting a correspondence between mother and daughter that is a 'circumvention of male dominance'.⁴⁰ The reviewer for the *Southern Quarterly Review* clearly anticipated the opportunities of female-authored texts that did not seek to

³⁹ L., 'Female Prose Writers of America', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 21 (1852), 114–21 (p. 118).

⁴⁰ Beverly R. Voloshin, 'The Limits of Domesticity: The Female *Bildungsroman* in America, 1820–1870', *Women's Studies*, 10 (1984), 283–302 (p. 290).

promote the 'true nature of domestic relations'. Claudia's narration reflects this problematic uncertainty about how the 'text-as-mother' might function in the parlour. Eulalia's confusion about how to interpret the story Claudia tells is motivated by the very fact that over 'the wreck of all womanly [...] sensibilities', Claudia's 'maternal love cast a ray of redeeming lustre' (p. 368). Claudia presents her story within the paradigms of motherly instruction that uses her maternal power to overturn male authority. Claudia demonstrates to Eulalia the power of a female creativity that resists control by the patriarchy. Prior to Claudia's unexpected entrance into the room, Eulalia has been practising upon the piano 'with all the assiduity of a school-girl, wishing to surprise her husband with her proficiency' (p. 362). In contrast to Eulalia's expressive act circumscribed by, and seeking approval from, male sanction, Claudia also pauses at the piano and, 'running her fingers over the keys, produced a wild, passionate burst of harmony, in which a minor note of wailing softness strangely mingled, then dashing into a gay, reckless strain, the ivory seemed to sparkle under her touch' (p. 367). Claudia's beautiful playing captures the essence of her artistic persona — the unconstrained, the sensual, the delicate and the passionate all in 'harmony'. Claudia's aggressive, antagonistic display of her art and her desire to direct Eulalia towards new interpretations of her role as a woman and as a reader are delimited because her meanings are repeatedly 'misguided' (pp. 101, 211) within the conservative strictures of the novel. Yet Hentz explored, through the relationship between Claudia and Eulalia, an understanding of female artistic influence removed from Showalter's sentimental 'literary sorority [...] whose motives were moral rather than aesthetic, whose ambitions were to teach and to influence rather than to create'. Alternatively, Ellen Moer's conceptualisation of female literary creativity forwards a determined form of independent female identity in which 'writing women [...] never felt much of a

sentimental loyalty to their own kind'. Instead, 'not loyalty but confidence was the resource that women writers drew from the possession of their own tradition'.⁴¹

'Tales of horror': Claudia as the Gothic Mother and Hentz's Anxiety of Influence

The scene between Claudia and Eulalia concludes with a histrionic struggle between the two white women and a third woman, the black nurse Kizzie, over Claudia's biological daughter Effie. Though Claudia's profound desire for the return of her daughter belies her apparent unnatural neglect of the child, Eulalia's objections to Claudia's rights over her child are momentarily disarmed because of her belief that Claudia had indeed 'purchased her child by the pains and sorrows of maternity' (p. 369). Effie, however, withdraws from Claudia 'in terror and repugnance' (p. 369) and retreats to the side of her stepmother who was 'half-suffocating her with her clinging arms' (p. 370). Claudia seizes her daughter and attempts to escape from the house with the child she roughly embraces, 'smothering the cries of Effie by pressing her hand tightly on her mouth' (p. 370). Her exit is prevented only by the appearance of another 'mammy' in the form of Kizzie. Claudia strikes out at Kizzie but her 'hand came down upon the door frame with such force that the blood gushed from her fingers (p. 371). Claudia is forced to leave without her child and the short scene between Eulalia and Claudia abruptly concludes. The ending of the storytelling scene with this physically violent struggle over Effie immediately jars with the previous events but provides a continuation of the debates about female authorship raised in the encounter between the two women. Each alternate pairing of mother or surrogate mother and child — Eulalia and Effie, Claudia and Effie, 'mammy' Kizzie and Effie — corresponds to an act of suffocation, of 'pains and sorrow', 'terror and repugnance' or the shedding of mother's blood. The relationship

⁴¹ Showalter, p. 14; Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: Women's Press, 1986), p. 42.

between mother and daughter is figured as one of possession and freedom, of obeisance and rebellion, of the struggle of a daughter to resist her mother literally (Effie) and symbolically (Eulalia).

The initials of the names of Claudia and Eulalia obliquely suggest a parallel between Hentz's women and Stowe's own quasi-maternal-filial pairing of Cassy and Emmeline in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Certainly the Moreland plantation is more akin to Legree's Red River plantation than to either Shelby's or St Clare's. It is Nightmare's presage of doom, as Eulalia travels South, that initiates the imagery of the southern plantation as a gothic realm in *The Planter's Northern Bride*. In her preface to the novel, Hentz acknowledges that she had 'seen the dark and horrible pictures drawn of slavery' but reassures her readers that in the South she had 'been touched and gratified by the exhibition of affectionate kindness and care [...] and loyal and devoted attachment' between master and slave (pp. iv–v). Hentz punctuates her novel with repeated assurances that, in her presentation of the South, she has 'not gone groping in dark by-lanes and foul dens for tales of horror' (p. 578) as others had done. 'Why do they pass over everything that is fair and pleasant to the moral sense', Hentz queries of writers about the South, 'and gather every shadow, which, darkening under their touch, rolls into a mass of gloom and horror' (p. 237). Yet, despite such guarantees, the South Hentz creates is not one of untroubled benignity or the idyllic 'fair side of life' that Hentz promises in her preface. If the jessamines of Moreland's southern town house and the 'rich, rolling fields of cotton' and 'white-washed cabins' (p. 330) evoke the romantic beauty of the southern landscape, Eulalia's first feelings as she reaches 'that lonely plantation' are of a fear provoked by the 'horrible stories she had heard of negro insurrections' (p. 331). Her fears are abated by Moreland's easy manner as he is reunited with his slaves, 'like a father welcomed by his children' (p. 332). Yet, as Hentz's novel progresses, this

plantation does become the location for a violent slave insurrection that transforms the relationship from one of domestic harmony to racial violence. Hentz anticipates this in the preface — ‘Even in the garden of Eden, the seeds of discontent and rebellion were sown; surely we need not wonder that they sometimes take root in the beautiful groves of the South’ (p. vi). Yet Hentz never truly depicts Moreland’s plantation as a ‘garden of Eden’. Instead, it is a place literally haunted by the ghost of a debased former wife and agitated by a slave rebellion inspired by ‘that agent of darkness’ (p. 495) the missionary Reverend Brainard and led by the brutal blacksmith Vulcan. Even when Moreland’s daughter Effie vanishes, her last moments on the plantation are described as those of the ‘lovely Proserpine in the vale of Enna [...] borne off by the terrible Pluto’ (p. 433). Hentz constructs around the southern plantation a biblical and mythological hellish imagery as an incredulous Moreland warns his insurgent slaves that “‘you have been engaged in the service of Satan, and doing the work of devils’” (pp. 500–1); if the plantation is a ‘garden of Eden’ it teeters dangerously at the entry to hell.

In Stowe’s novel, Cassy and Emmeline are house slaves who are bought to serve Simon Legree’s domestic and sexual requirements. When Legree has tired of Cassy his attentions turn to the younger Emmeline, and Cassy, inured to Legree’s abuse, advises the naive Emmeline to endure his sexual advances by accepting the brandy he offers.

Emmeline objects:

‘Mother used to tell me never to touch any such thing,’ said Emmeline.

‘*Mother* told you!’ said Cassy, with a thrilling and bitter emphasis on the word mother. ‘What use is it for mothers to say anything? [...] I say, *drink* brandy; drink all you can, and it’ll make things come easier’.

‘O, Cassy! do pity me!’

‘Pity you! — don’t I? Haven’t I a daughter, — Lord knows where she is, and whose she is, now, — going the way her mother went, before her, I suppose, and that her children must go, after her! There’s no end to the curse — forever!’⁴²

⁴² Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, pp. 384–85.

Cassy's contempt for the lauding of maternal authority and her horrific prophecy of a female generational 'curse' from mother to daughter subsequently become her source of power in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when she manipulates the story of mother's love into a story of mother's hate. The events Stowe depicts at Legree's Red River plantation at the end of the novel elaborate, as Jennifer Jenkins describes it, a 'progressive collapse of domesticity' so that 'as the scenes move from hearth to hell, the narrative shifts from domestic to gothic'. As the novel's locus moves gradually South, so Stowe transforms the 'angelic mother' into an 'angel of death' that leaves the domestic plot at a moment of crisis, of 'domestic violation'.⁴³ Cassy uses the story of Legree's rejection of his adoring mother as the intertext for a new ghost story in which Legree finds himself metaphorically haunted by the memories of his own mother and literally haunted by Cassy as the perverted mistress of his house. Cassy's telling of the story creates an imaginative space that finally liberates her from Legree's control and facilitates her escape from the plantation. In narrating to the drunken Legree the stories of ghosts haunting the upper floors of the dilapidated mansion, Cassy ensures he will never venture into the attic and so creates an inviolable hiding place for both herself and Emmeline through an act of storytelling. Though some of Stowe's plot strategies in the characterisation of Cassy and Emmeline are mirrored in the relationship between Claudia and Eulalia — one example being Claudia's attempts to overturn the patriarchy by reinterpreting male and female roles for a daughter figure as Cassy does for Emmeline — Hentz's response to Stowe's scenes on the Red River plantation is more clearly elucidated if read through a third related text.

⁴³ Jennifer L. Jenkins, 'Failed Mothers and Fallen Houses: The Crisis of Domesticity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *ESQ*, 37 (1991), 161–87 (pp. 161, 178); Gillian Brown, 'Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Quarterly*, 36 (1984), 503–23 (p. 520).

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, published in 1861, provides a vital revision of the Cassy scenes in Stowe's earlier novel, and also serves as an effective gloss on Hentz's rewriting of the same events in Moreland's mansion in *The Planter's Northern Bride*. As Jean Fagan Yellin describes it, Jacobs had met Stowe shortly after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, between the end of 1852 and the beginning of 1853, but their encounter was patently not one of a personal, political or intellectual sisterhood. Jacobs's initial plan was not to write her own slave narrative, but request that Stowe be her amanuensis. Stowe intended instead to include the salient elements of Jacobs's story in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Jacobs's objections were met with notable silence from the northern author. As Yellin interprets it, Stowe's actions left Jacobs feeling 'denigrated as a mother, betrayed as a woman and threatened as a writer'.⁴⁴ Through the pseudonymous heroine Linda Brent, Jacobs subsequently detailed in *Incidents* her strategies for escape from her own lascivious master Dr Flint by hiding in the garret space of her grandmother's home. This confined 'loophole of retreat', as she designates it, becomes not simply a physical sanctuary but also a metaphor for her textual and authorial critique of the sentimental genre to which her narrative must necessarily conform if it was to find an audience. For Valerie Smith, Jacobs 'seized authority over her literary restraints in much the same way that she seized power in life. From within her ellipses and ironies — linguistic narrow spaces — she expresses the complexity of her experience'. Specifically for Jacobs, writing as she was for a white female northern readership, the tenets of nineteenth-century 'true womanhood' articulated through the sentimental form were inadequate to express her racial and sexual choices. Smith points to Jacobs's self-conscious silences on her sexual

⁴⁴ Jean Fagan Yellin, 'Written by Herself: Harriet Jacobs's Slave Narrative', *American Literature*, 53 (1981), 479–86 (pp. 482–83).

relationship with another white man to demonstrate the ways in which the domestic form, and the codes of female behaviour it endorsed, disabled Jacobs's attempts to convey an independent subjectivity. As Hazel Carby argues, however, in her text Jacobs manifested to her readers the ways that the discourses of racism and the conventions of true womanhood were interrelated primarily because the narrative both condemned chattel slavery and deliberately 'challenged ideologies of female sexuality'. In actively choosing a sexual relationship over death as a route to freedom, Jacobs's text 'entered the field of women's literature and history transforming and transcending the central paradigm of death versus virtue' inculcated in women's domestic narratives.⁴⁵

The reinvention of Stowe's storytelling slave Cassy in Linda Brent's garret scenes as the central motif of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* implicitly expressed Jacobs's artistic anxieties about her brief association with the now famous Harriet Beecher Stowe and her unwillingness to allow Stowe to assume the authority to rewrite her story. In a letter to the abolitionist Amy Post, Jacobs explained her refusal on the grounds that her personal history 'needed no romance'.⁴⁶ In making this observation, Jacobs revealed her own plans to critique the sentimental form through her writing and to explore and challenge the limitations of female authorship within the codes of true womanhood. What it also intimated was the far from sympathetic relationship that existed between the established author Stowe and the aspiring writer Jacobs. Indeed the very opposite was true as Jacobs struggled to remove her text from Stowe's dominating control. By inhabiting the storyteller-heroine of Stowe's text, Jacobs was able to convey her

⁴⁵ Valerie Smith, "Loopholes of Retreat": Architecture and Ideology in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (New York: Penguin, 1990), pp. 212–26 (pp. 213, 224); Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 50, 59.

⁴⁶ Cited in Yellin, 'Written by Herself', p. 482.

resistance to authorial and sexual archetypes represented in Stowe's tropes of domestic sentimentality. Jacobs's imaginative attraction to Cassy over the more romantic Eliza dramatised her resistance to patriarchal authority not through physical flight but through the processes of storytelling. Using Stowe's subject of female withdrawal to the garret to dramatise her own physical and authorial freedoms, rewriting Cassy's overt contempt for maternal authority was also a way for Jacobs to liberate herself from her own textual mother, Stowe.

Certainly the suggestion of parallels between Jacobs and Hentz is problematic, and the dissimilarities in their political ideology alone are profound, yet there are also intriguing similarities in their association with Stowe in the mid-nineteenth century that had a dramatic impact upon their writing. Both Jacobs and Hentz had encountered Stowe in her specific capacity as an author, whether as a putative transcriber of slave stories or as a contributing member of the Semi-Colon Club. Perhaps more interestingly, in writing their own texts in which the issues of slavery, female identity and female authorship intersected, both Jacobs and Hentz elected to revise the passages of Stowe's novel in which an outcast female storyteller uses her imaginative powers to negotiate her way out of prescribed gender roles and in particular that of the mother. The decision to rewrite the history of Cassy was certainly not automatic. In reading the Tom tradition, Leslie Fiedler notes that though Uncle Tom, Eva and Topsy were immediately popular to readers, the characters of Cassy and Emmeline quickly disappeared from the iconographic imagery surrounding the novel. Fiedler's explanation for this is particularly interesting in relation to their performance of female authorship. Cassy and Emmeline were overlooked in the various Uncle Tom adaptations and anti-Tom novels because they were 'too "novelistic" [...] dependent for their credibility on psychological

“realism” rather than hallucinatory vividness’.⁴⁷ Arguably it was precisely this ‘novelistic’ quality that attracted Jacobs and Hentz to Cassy because her character expressed a textual and authorial consciousness that both writers wanted to encode into their own writing.

In speaking through Stowe’s storytelling heroine, Jacobs could counter the sexual codes that contained female behaviour and delimited the imaginative capabilities of the female author. Jacobs understood a contiguity between female sexuality and female creativity that both Stowe and Hentz also apprehended but delimited in their own texts. What Jacobs’s later version of Cassy also interpolates into a reading of Hentz’s characterisation of Claudia and Eulalia is the significance of the conflictive relationship between the female predecessor and the female inheritor in the female literary tradition. When Jacobs wanted to evince both the confidence and anxiety she felt as a writer in her relationship to Harriet Beecher Stowe she chose to do so through her reinvention as Cassy. The double displacement of her most rebellious thoughts — in her text Harriet Jacobs speaks through Linda Brent who speaks through Stowe’s Cassy — Jacobs publicly performs what Mary Chesnut and Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas do privately in their diaries and Hentz enacts through Claudia. Stowe’s persistent presence in their respective texts as an empowered and empowering author-figure expressed their consciousness of what it meant to be a female writer. Stowe’s hagiography to the maternal influence of the divine mother in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* posed the most traumatic dilemma for her female respondents. Cassy’s anti-mother role in the gothic portions of Stowe’s novel, however, enabled female authors like Jacobs and Hentz to confront their literary mother and experiment with the possibilities of female rebellion through the

⁴⁷ Leslie A. Fiedler, *Inadvertant Epic: From Uncle Tom’s Cabin to Roots* (New York: Touchstone, 1979), p. 30.

discourses of the gothic. When Claudia dies towards the end of the novel, Hentz draws upon Cassy's imagery of the 'angel of consolation' (p. 472) and the 'destroying angel' (p. 476) to signal her investment in the gothic narrative as a way of asseverating a female authorial independence within a female tradition.

Claudia's gothic presence throughout *The Planter's Northern Bride* manipulates what Gilbert and Gubar describe, in their reading of Stowe's Cassy, as a 'uniquely female plot'.⁴⁸ The marginality of the gothic form in the literary tradition made it particularly useful to the female writer alongside the more publicly endorsed, though ultimately no less subversive, form of the domestic novel. As ^{Juliann}Judith Fleenor reads this particular literary strategy, the tropes of gothic fiction explored an alternative version of female roles within the home that made the 'conflict at the heart of the female Gothic' that of 'the conflict with the all-powerful, devouring mother'. Not only did the female gothic form reveal the 'feelings of terror, anger, awe [...] directed toward the female role, female sexuality, female physiology, and procreation' but, in the conflict between the mother and daughter, it expressed 'the confrontation of the female author with the problem of being an author, not the father of her work but the mother of it'.⁴⁹

To interpret Hentz's story of Claudia and Eulalia in relation to Stowe's Cassy and Emmeline is to argue that it exposed not only Hentz's understanding of an independent female authorship but how Hentz defined her authorship through the deliberate 'misinterpretations', to use Bloom's term, of a text by possibly the most imposing

⁴⁸ Gilbert and Gubar, p. 534.

⁴⁹ Juliann E. Fleenor, 'Introduction: The Female Gothic', in *The Female Gothic*, ed. Juliann E. Fleenor (Montreal: Eden, 1983), pp. 3–30 (pp. 15–16); Eric J. Sundquist, 'Slavery, Revolution, and the American Renaissance', in *The American Renaissance Reconsidered*, ed. Walter Benn Michaels and Donald E. Pease (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 1–33 (p. 20).

female literary precursor in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ If Claudia's storytelling strategies are 'misguided', as the narrator of *The Planter's Northern Bride* suggests, this encapsulates the empowerment of her own authorship in this encounter with the male and female literary tradition. Claudia's bold declaration as she narrates her history — 'He expected me to *obey* him, — me, who never obeyed my own mother!' — asserts in the most clear terms where Hentz locates the female author in rejecting both the husband/lover/father and the mother in the originating of a new artist's subjectivity. For a region determined to define slavery through the metaphor of interracial domestic harmony, the conflict of the 'family romance' of literary influence was not easily accommodated and, in her pro-slavery context, Hentz's withdrawal from the jeopardy to the ideal family unit that Claudia poses is predictable. Claudia's death and Moreland's reassertion of his power over the insurgent slaves in the final chapters of the novel guarantees a return to the status quo of patriarchal authority. Yet Claudia's rebellion in the novel does signal 'something entirely new in literature' for the South. Before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the South had sedulously refused to commentate upon the social or artistic implications of slavery. Nor had the region cultivated a female literary culture to equal that produced in the North by writers like Stowe.⁵¹ In *The Planter's Northern Bride*, Caroline Lee Hentz attempted to do both. Her willingness to deliberate rather than immediately suppress the issues of slave and female rebellion in the character of Claudia enabled the southern writer to communicate to her readers the dilemma of her own authorship — the anxiety of female influence. Hentz's response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* expresses more than Hentz's racial and political agenda though it does materially achieve this. *The Planter's Northern Bride* is a text that locates at its centre an evocative

⁵⁰ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 95.

storyteller, at once a mother and a daughter, attempting to define her authorial voice within the context of restrictive male and female storytelling traditions and interpretative strategies.

⁵¹ Jay B. Hubbell, *The South in American Literature, 1607–1900* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 386; Fox-Genovese, p. 246.

CHAPTER 3

“DON'T YOU UNCLE ME”’: THE MALE AESTHETICS OF SYMPATHY IN

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS'S *WOODCRAFT*

Writing to his friend and fellow southern author John Pendleton Kennedy in May 1851, William Gilmore Simms expressed his pleasure at the timely republication of Kennedy's 1832 plantation romance *Swallow Barn*. In his unrestrained praise for the novel, Simms saw an occasion to state his conviction that this form of regional literature was an appropriate counter to the prevailing rhetoric of northern moral opprobrium. Simms acknowledged that Kennedy's

genial and natural pictures of Virginia life, are equally true of Southern life generally among the old & wealthy families, and are in fact the most conclusive answers to the abolitionists, (if they *would* be answered) that could be made. But they are not a people to need or to tolerate an answer [...] They have done the mischief which wiser and better men will fail to repair, and have utterly subverted the only bond (that of sympathy) by which the people of our separate sections were ever truly held together.¹

In his reading of the reissued novel within the contemporary climate of political sectionalism, Simms reverted to an established aesthetic paradigm that emphasised a distinction between fact and fiction over the differing forms of artistic representation.² Simms recognised the literary strategies of Kennedy's 'natural pictures' of the South as a welcome and necessary answer to abolitionism. He reluctantly suspected, however,

¹ William Gilmore Simms, 'To John Pendleton Kennedy', 12 May 1851, letter 585 in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, ed. Mary C. Simms Oliphant and others, 5 vols (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952–1956), III (1954), 122–23 (p. 122).

² Michael Davitt Bell, *The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1980), p. xii. Bell's analysis of the literary discourses of the romance, whilst it focuses upon the self-conscious use of romance in the North, has provided a useful understanding of the genre within which to locate Simms's comments.

that Kennedy's subjective transformation of the southern landscape into the 'genial [...] pictures' of his romance might prove less than decisive for new readers in the face of an irrevocable 'subver[sion]' of the bond of 'sympathy' prompted by antagonistic abolitionist writing.

The interlocking discourses of sentimentality and antislavery sermonising in the antebellum North ensured that the appropriation of the realm of sympathy into abolitionism would be profoundly problematic for the actively pro-southern Simms. William Lloyd Garrison directly challenged the reader of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in prefatory remarks that brooked no other response from a sensitive reader — 'Reader! are you with the man-stealers in sympathy and purpose, or on the side of their down-trodden victims?'³ With such a choice before them, readers of abolitionist literature were repeatedly required not simply to feel but to exercise their sympathies for the suffering of the slave — performing a textual sleight of hand vital to the political objectives of antislavery propaganda, abolitionist rhetoric ensured that 'sympathy' became necessarily inseparable from 'purpose'. To invoke, to feel and ultimately to act upon sympathy for another was to reveal the provenance of antislavery writing in the established and popular tradition of female sentimentalism and to transmute that affective power into the central tenet of antislavery action.⁴ For George

³ William Lloyd Garrison, 'Preface', *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself*, in *The Oxford Frederick Douglass Reader*, ed. William L. Andrews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 23–29 (p. 28).

⁴ Amy Schrager Lang, *Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 193, 199, 201; Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 99–100. Lang discusses the synonymy of female 'right feeling' and the opposition to slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* whilst Fisher argues that the 'political content of sentimentality is democratic' and hence 'exactly reverses the process of slavery'.

Frederick Holmes this implicit rationale of ‘proseletism’ rather than ‘amusement’ in Stowe’s novel made the work dangerously incompatible with its professed fictional form. Stowe’s book was not a ‘romance’, Holmes argued, because rather than seeking ‘to kindle and purify the imagination’, Stowe’s novel was, instead, ‘Engaging in the coarse conflicts of life’.⁵

In theorising the problematic impact of sentimental abolitionism upon southern culture and politics, both Simms and Holmes implicate antislavery and pro-slavery fiction within the contemporary debates about literary form and the dichotomy between factual truth and art.⁶ The sectional disparity both men witnessed in their individual interpretations of regional rhetoric and literature was increasingly expressed as a tension between two seemingly discrete genres — a tension between the ‘genial pictures’ of fiction and the ‘coarse conflicts’ of fact. In response to the arguments of sectional politics, Simms applied this artistic dichotomy repeatedly in his fictional and journalistic writing during the 1850s. In doing so he sought to validate southern authorship and the adaptation of native subject matter within an established and national discourse of artistic principles. As Simms’s letter to Kennedy demonstrated, however, this also accommodated a correlative critique of sentimental abolitionism that converged upon the fundamental definition of sympathy.

⁵ George Frederick Holmes, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852), 721–31 (p. 721).

⁶ P. Gabrielle Foreman’s definition of the term ‘sentimental abolitionism’ is of particular relevance here in its emphasis upon the heart and the ‘affectional realm’ to effect ‘change and redemption’ in the personal and public sphere. See Foreman, ‘Sentimental Abolition in Douglass’s Decade: Revision, Erotic Conversion, and the Politics of Witnessing in “The Heroic Slave” and *My Bondage and Freedom*’, in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, ed. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 149–62 (p. 150).

Four months after his letter to Kennedy, Simms wrote to Abraham Hart in September 1851 to advise the publisher that he had ‘more than half written a novel entitled “Fair, Fat & Forty; or the Sword and the Distaff”’. It was not until August 1852, however, that Simms noted the recent completion of his authorial ‘labours’ on the novel, in a letter to his friend and the former governor of South Carolina, James Henry Hammond.⁷ This ‘reasonable sized novel’ was subsequently serialised in the semi-monthly literary supplement of the *Southern Literary Gazette* from February to November 1852 and published in book form by Walker, Richards and Company as ‘The Sword and the Distaff’ the same year.⁸ As the dates of Simms’s letters indicate, his approval of the representational traits that validated Kennedy’s novel as an effective answer to the abolitionists and his concerns over the revision of the aesthetics of ‘sympathy’ were written as he was himself in the processes of either planning or actually writing the southern novel he later believed was, as he declared in a subsequent letter to Hammond, ‘probably as good an answer to Mrs Stowe as has been published’.⁹

⁷ William Gilmore Simms, ‘To Abraham Hart’, 27 September 1851, letter 596a in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, ed. by Mary C. Simms Oliphant and T. C. Duncan Eaves (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1982), VI (Supplement), 118–19 (p. 118); William Gilmore Simms, ‘To James Henry Hammond’, 18 August 1852, letter 638 in *Letters*, III, 193–97 (p. 193).

⁸ For further details of the publication history of the novel see Patricia Okker, ‘Serial Politics in William Gilmore Simms’s *Woodcraft*’, in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Balasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 150–65 (pp. 150–51).

⁹ William Gilmore Simms, ‘To James Henry Hammond’, 15 December 1852, letter 655 in *Letters*, III, 218–23 (pp. 222–23).

'To indulge in invidious comparisons': Reading Simms's *Woodcraft* as the Southern

Answer to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

The critical discussion of Simms's 1852 novel 'The Sword and the Distaff', reissued by Redfield under the revised title of *Woodcraft* in 1854, has been dominated by the debate over whether Simms indeed wrote the novel as a self-proclaimed southern 'answer' to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In antebellum America, the South Carolina-born William Gilmore Simms was the pre-eminent southern writer, a spokesman for his intellectual peers and an increasingly propagandistic voice for the region. Simms was the author of both long and short fiction, poetry, biography, literary criticism and history, and, as the editor of ten southern-based journals of varying quality and success that culminated in his six-year tenure for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, his impact upon the southern intelligentsia was assured. As a result, though generally unknown to recent readers, Simms has been superlatively and successively acclaimed by each new generation of critics of southern literature as 'by far the most virile and interesting figure of the Old South', or 'the most versatile, and the most successful southern antebellum man of letters [...] the outstanding southern literary figure'. He was, J. V. Ridgely asserts, 'the South's one-man literary movement' and Mary Ann Wimsatt concedes that, though the majority of Simms's hastily composed work rarely exceeds 'relative mediocrity', the extent of his writing career ensured that, until the Civil War, Simms 'dominated the literature and spoke for the intellectual life of the section'.¹⁰ A prolific writer, Simms

¹⁰ Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, 2 vols (London: Harvest, 1927), II, 119–30 (p. 122); C. Hugh Holman, 'Introduction', in William Gilmore Simms, *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction*, First Series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. vii–xliii (p. vii); J. V. Ridgely, *Nineteenth-Century Southern Literature* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1980), p. 50; Mary Ann Wimsatt, 'William Gilmore Simms', in *The History of Southern Literature*, ed. Louis D. Rubin and others (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), pp. 108–17 (p. 108);

began his literary career in the 1830s but looked for his major inspiration and subject matter in the events of the American Revolution of the previous century. *Woodcraft* was the fifth of seven volumes in a loosely connected series of revolutionary romances, though chronologically it was the last, and depicted the end of the war and the return of Simms's hero Captain Porgy to his neglected plantation home. This 'Story of the South', as the novel's subtitle announced, and Simms's inclusive portrayal of the wealthy plantation owners, their slaves, the poor whites and the backwoodsman of the South, the very elements Simms had endorsed in Kennedy's earlier novel, all distinctly identified *Woodcraft* as what L. Moffitt Cecil terms an 'authentic regional work'.¹¹ Yet Simms's ready defence of his region in his fictional account of the resurrection of a southern plantation and the reunion of the white master and his slave family does not make this novel a direct response to Stowe. Simms's first biographer, William P. Trent, writing in 1892, provides an early interpretation of what he perceived as Simms's albeit marginal encounter with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Trent alludes to Simms's responsibility, as editor of the *Southern Quarterly Review*, for the publication of Louisa S. McCord's review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in January 1853. Trent continues by noting that Simms

himself had been requested by a Philadelphia firm to write a romance of Southern life which should serve as an answer to that great book; but he had shown his good sense by declining to give any such opportunity to the world at large to indulge in invidious comparisons. He preferred the seemingly poetic justice of having the Northern woman answered by a Southern woman.¹²

Trent's unhesitating judgement of the literary context of a southern response to Stowe manifestly reflects the prevailing opinion that the anti-Tom tradition was foremost a

Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 113.

¹¹ L. Moffitt Cecil, 'Simms's Porgy as National Hero', *American Literature*, 36 (1965), 475–84 (p. 483).

¹² William P. Trent, *William Gilmore Simms* [1892] (New York: Greenwood, 1969), pp. 174–75. See also S. P. C. Duvall, 'W. G. Simms's Review of Mrs Stowe', *American Literature*, 30 (1958), 107–17 (p. 107), which cites this same passage in an influential study of Simms's *Key* review.

female one. Despite Trent's interdiction against drawing Simms into 'invidious comparisons' with the northern author, however, Simms's own brief summation of *Woodcraft* as a southern 'answer' continues to remain pivotal for those who argue for and against the novel with specific reference to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In an article published in 1962, Ridgely cites the author's comments in his letter to Hammond to support a reading of the novel as Simms's 'first answer' to Stowe. Using further textual evidence, Ridgely argues that the 'writing of his [Simms's] own romance proceeded in full knowledge of Mrs Stowe's attack on slavery'. As such, Ridgely suggests that the anti-Tom message of *Woodcraft* pre-dates Simms's overt criticism of the novel expressed in a review article of Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* published in July 1853. In his introduction to his subsequent book-length biography of Simms, Ridgely declares, without providing additional evidence, that there is 'no doubt' that *Woodcraft* is a reply to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.¹³

Hugh W. Hetherington, however, does not share Ridgely's view, maintaining that though *Woodcraft* can be read in the context of abolitionism, the publication history of both novels actually precludes the possibility that one directly influenced the other. Further, Hetherington notes that there is no evidence to suggest that Simms was familiar with the earlier serialised version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the *National Era*. It is only by July 1852 that Simms acknowledged he had actually read the novel when he included a passage on Stowe to supplement the revision of his 1837 essay on Harriet Martineau. This essay, published as the 'Morals of Slavery', was written for the *Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Authors of the Southern States* that is dated for that month. As the serialisation of *Woodcraft* had begun in February of that

¹³ J. V. Ridgely, 'Woodcraft: Simms's First Answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *American Literature*, 31 (1960), 421–33 (pp. 422–23); J. V. Ridgely, *William Gilmore Simms* (New York: Twayne, 1962), p. 97.

year and Simms had completed writing the novel by August, Hetherington's doubts about the relationship between the two novels are certainly valid. What Hetherington's attention to publication dates does confirm, however, is that these two novels were almost indistinguishably contemporaneous. Although publication of *Woodcraft* overlapped the serialisation and book version of Stowe's novel by several months, it was still being read by subscribers to the *Southern Literary Gazette* for over a year after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had appeared in the *National Era* and for a clear eight months after the release of the best-selling book edition. Irrespective of whether Simms planned *Woodcraft* as 'answer' to Stowe, the circumstances of the novel's contemporary reception ensured that it was possible for Simms's reader to read it with a precise knowledge of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.¹⁴

In his work on *Woodcraft*, Charles S. Watson returns to the debate and, using Simms's self-penned epigraph to the novel, argues that, for the author, this indicated that his Revolutionary romance had relevance to the heightening sectional crisis of the 1850s. Watson suggests that Simms sought to present the South with a more critically astute and certainly more personally informed evaluation than the northerner Stowe had brought to the subject matter. Subsequent studies by James B. Merriwether and Patricia Okker have followed Watson's compromise by agreeing that, though the novel may not have been written specifically in reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Simms's *Woodcraft* provided either a valid 'antidote' for the novel or at least shared Stowe's original impetus by engaging in the current debates on slavery, abolitionism and sectionalism.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Cavalier of Old South Carolina: William Gilmore Simms's Captain Porgy*, ed. Hugh W. Hetherington (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 38–40.

¹⁵ Charles S. Watson, 'Simms's Answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Criticism of the South in *Woodcraft*', *Southern Literary Gazette*, 9 (1976), 78–90 (pp. 79–80); James B. Merriwether, 'The Theme of Freedom in Simms's *Woodcraft*', in 'Long Years of Neglect': *The Work and Reputation of William Gilmore Simms*,

Simms's editorial relationship to McCord's critique of Stowe, his own article on the *Key* in the *Southern Quarterly Review* and his brief comments in his essay 'The Morals of Slavery' written and published during 1852 and 1853 indicate that, if *Woodcraft* is to be read as an 'answer' to Stowe, Simms's novel was only one element of his ongoing consideration of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its author. During Simms's editorship of the *Southern Quarterly Review*, the southern periodical continued, like other journals, to publish critical notices for some of the most successful and accomplished southern anti-Tom novels alongside some of the less proficient offerings. This included brief reviews of Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* (April 1853), John W. Page's *Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia and Tom Without One in Boston* (October 1853), *The Exiles* by Mrs Robinson under the pseudonym of Talvi (January 1854), the verse *The Patent Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Mrs Stowe in London* (January 1854) and Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* (July 1854). The reviewer often paid greater attention to either Stowe's original novel or to her direct artistic influence upon the respective authors than to the particular works under consideration. These works were predominantly, and perhaps surprisingly for a highly politicised pro-southern journal, rated poorly besides the merits of Stowe's novel. The reviews often repeated the same basic criticism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, frequently challenging a lack of truthfulness in Stowe's representation of the South, an element that had equally rankled with Louisa S. McCord. What uniformly

ed. John Caldwell Guilds (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), pp. 20–36 (pp. 29–30); Okker, pp. 161–62. Jean Fagan Yellin suggests that 'Simms was probably right' in his assessment of the novel as an 'answer' to Stowe. Thomas F. Gossett names *Woodcraft* as one of the four best literary responses to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the anti-Tom tradition, and Diane Roberts includes it in her brief overview of answers to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. See Yellin, *The Intricate Knot: Black Figures in American Literature, 1776–1863* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), p. 77; Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), p. 212; Diane Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 61.

dominates these notices, however, is the commitment shown by the anonymous reviewer to interrogating the literary strategies of Stowe's work. Unlike McCord and Holmes, the concise notices avoided an impassioned or outraged negation of Stowe's purported facts and did not belabour her femininity as an author but instead attempted to assess and effectively commend the northern author's artistic power.

The reviewer of *The Exiles*, after a brief comment upon the text presented for review, turned his attention to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its female author:

‘Uncle Tom’ must still carry the day for a long season; and until he is fairly laid on the shelf, it will be useless to run an opposition line of negro fiction. Besides Mrs Stowe has a passionate power [...] The dramatic faculty of the author of Uncle Tom is somewhat remarkable. She is unquestionably a woman of great inventive faculty, and ‘Uncle Tom’, considered wholly aside from the slavery question, is a story of great and striking, though coarse attraction.

For the unnamed reviewer, whilst he cannot accede to the novel's antislavery agenda, reveals his appreciation of Stowe's authorial ‘dramatic’ and ‘inventive faculty’ and an interest in the artistry of Stowe's writing as distinguishable from its subject matter and political motive. The critical notice for *The Planter's Northern Bride* repeats the characterisation of Stowe's authorship in its admiration for the unmatched ‘passionate power’ of her novel.¹⁶ The critical notices uniformly identify the novels within an emerging tradition of anti-Tom literature as the southern authors engage in a ‘little Uncle Toming’. The reviewer alludes to a possible ‘opposition line of negro fiction’ in his reading of Eastman's novel, a work that was clearly ‘designed as an answer to *Uncle*

¹⁶ ‘Aunt Phillis's Cabin’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 23 (1853), 523; ‘Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia and Tom Without One In Boston’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 24 (1853), 539–40; ‘The Exiles’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 25 (1854), 235–36; ‘The Patent Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Mrs Stowe in London’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 25 (1854), 261; ‘The Planter's Northern Bride’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 26 (1854), 255.

Tom's Cabin', and, likewise, later reviews interpret the work of John W. Page and Hentz as, respectively, an 'offset to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*' and a 'foil to the work of Mrs Stowe'. In 'Pro and Anti Slavery Literature', a brief preface to the critical notices in the January 1853 issue, the writer again noted that the 'success, no means astonishing, of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, has brought out a host of writers, all emulous of like successes, though on the other side' and considers the relative merits and faults of several northern defences of slavery. Indeed, despite the political motives for doing so, several reviews failed to approve the modest works offered to the reading public by novice southern writers even if these native authors adopted a pro-slavery stance. The notice for *The Patent Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* finds little to admire in the 'very, very, very bad' poetry and maintains that Stowe's 'inspiration has been as evil in its influence as her fiction'. By January 1854, the reviewer of E. J. Stearn's *Notes on Uncle Tom's Cabin* had to admit that 'we are pretty well tired of this discussion' but did offer an appropriate alternative to the compass of Uncle Tom fiction. The review recommends that, to understand the truths behind the institution of slavery, 'the people of the South make it a point to buy and read the writings of their own men, even to the exclusion of all others'.¹⁷ For the reviewer, this was not simply an opportunity to heedlessly refute the criticisms levelled at the South by a book-wielding northern public, but an occasion for the readers of the South to finally nurture a truly and exclusively southern literature.

These critical notices, published throughout 1853 and 1854, provide a commentary on Stowe's novel and the anti-Tom tradition of southern fiction even as the *Southern Quarterly Review*, aside from the review essays by McCord and Simms, avoided furnishing extensive editorial opinion or prolonged contributions to the current debates

¹⁷ 'Pro and Anti Slavery Fiction', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 24 (1853), 233; 'Stearn's *Notes on Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 25 (1854), 248-49.

about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As editor of the journal during this period, it might be assumed that Simms was, at the very least, familiar with the views expressed in these unattributed notices. In his letter to Hammond in which Simms encouraged a comparison between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Woodcraft*, however, Simms cites his editorial commitments as an explanation for a delayed trip to Hammond's home. In this letter, an apologetic Simms admits that 'my Critical Notices have all to be written' for the January 1853 edition of the journal. In doing so, Simms's unequivocal self-identification as the unsigned reviewer of the forthcoming critical notices reveals a not unusual practice for often hard-pressed editors of the southern journals with little money to pay contributors. Richard J. Calhoun notes that this meant that nineteenth-century journals included 'a great deal of last-minute writing by the editors themselves' and that this often constituted the 'most significant literature in antebellum magazines'.¹⁸ The editors of Simms's *Letters* subsequently also name Simms as the anonymous writer of the critical notices for April 1853, October 1853, January 1854 and July 1854, clearly identifying Simms as the author of the critical relationship between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Stowe's southern respondents in the literary pages of the journal.¹⁹

Despite their relevant subject matter and the positive identification of Simms as the author, however, these critical notices have received only brief and indiscriminate attention in the studies of the relationship between Simms and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.²⁰ In

¹⁸ Richard J. Calhoun, 'Literary Magazines in the Old South', in *The History of Southern Literature*, pp. 157-63 (p. 161).

¹⁹ *Letters*, III, 229, 246, 263, 290.

²⁰ Duvall supplements his reading of Simms's *Key* review by noting comments in 'Pro and Anti Slavery Literature' (p. 107); Jon L. Wakelyn connects Simms's views in 'Stearn's *Notes on Uncle Tom's Cabin*' to the author's pro-slavery stance in *The Politics of a Literary Man: William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1973), p. 193; Charles S. Watson refers to the review of *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* to reflect

these largely overlooked reviews of the anti-Tom novels, Simms formulated a concise critical language to understand Stowe's art and literary form in an effort to further the claims of southern writing by providing southern readers with new strategies for interpreting her text. In reviewing Eastman's novel Simms admitted, however, that whilst *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* was worth recommending to its prospective readers, it remained incomparable to Stowe's work because 'Truth never could hold a candle to falsehood where the medium of both was invention'. The adept 'inventive faculty' of the northern author, Simms suggested, could not be answered by the majority of pro-slavery fiction whose 'arguments are mostly untenable, for the simple reason that they seek to justify the South on the score of the facts merely'.²¹ Truth and invention, as they specifically informed the genres of fact and fiction, were the imperatives through which Simms sought to understand and respond to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Simms knew that truth and fact alone could not undo the persuasive 'passionate power' of Stowe's novel. Simms's 1853 *Key* review repeated this same preoccupation but expanded and adapted it so that it constituted the major element in his critique of the novel. Likewise, at the beginning of Simms's *Woodcraft*, the novel's heroine Widow Eveleigh inspects a pair of pistols of 'curious and costly workmanship'. The weapons have an 'antique richness [...] calculated to gratify the eye' and are decorated with '*fleurs de lis* and vines, done in filagree of variegated gold'. With their delicate ornamentation, these duelling pistols are 'beautiful tools of murder' that combine functionality with artistic beauty and encapsulate the 'passionate power' Simms found so estimable in Stowe's art. These symbolic pistols depicted in the opening pages of Simms's novel, uniting the energies of

Simms's continued interest in slavery in *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1993), pp. 95–96.

²¹ 'Pro and Anti Slavery Fiction', p. 238.

the workman and the artist, demonstrate that, for Simms, southern authors must exercise the endowments of both function and art if the South were to truly answer Stowe.²²

The review of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* extends to over forty pages of the *Southern Quarterly Review*. Simms attempts, in similar ways to McCord in her earlier essay, to challenge the validity of Stowe's presentation of southern life and values. Like McCord, Simms queries the authenticity of characters such as George Harris, Mr Shelby, and Simon Legree created out of Stowe's erroneous knowledge of racial and class distinctions in the South. He argues that the faulty morals Stowe urges are the inevitable result of 'a woman reasoner, whose process of thought is wholly sensuous'. The 'good looks and locks' of the nearly-white George Harris, Simms provocatively suggests, 'have worked very happily upon her imagination'. In highlighting the profoundly libidinous dangers of a female imaginative sensibility let loose, Simms frames his censure of the novel as a product of invention that is wholly 'considered in the nature of evidence'. Simms warns that the *Key* has become 'the book of Stowe' from which the author has drawn the material for her earlier novel and, like the beauty of George Harris, these 'facts' have 'possesse[d] her imagination'. The autoerotic pleasures of Stowe's self-referential texts, as Simms's describes them, underlie Simms's contention that the 'attempt to establish a moral argument through the medium of fictitious narrative is, *per se*, a vicious abuse of art and argument'.²³

²² William Gilmore Simms, *Woodcraft; or, Hawks About the Dovecote, a Story of the South at the Close of the Revolution* [1852] (New York: Norton, 1961), pp. 10–11. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically following citation.

²³ William Gilmore Simms, 'Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 24 (1853), 214–54 (pp. 216–17).

S. P. C. Duvall's 1958 study of the *Key* review argues that, for Simms, the publication of the *Key* was an overt addendum to the best-selling novel which 'really defined *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as fiction [and] defined the author's attitude towards her fiction'. As an 'abuse of art', Simms cites the mixing of genres — the unquestioned assimilation of fact and fiction — that warranted both criticism and admonition for unwary readers. In doing so Simms, Duvall argues, 'did what no other southern reviewer of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* attempted: he stated his objections to the novel solidly and explicitly in literary theory even though he used that theory to reinforce proslavery argument and sectional prejudice'.²⁴ Duvall's analysis of the *Key* review offers a valid approach to understanding Simms's conceptualising of Stowe's novel. What Simms's review also identifies is the southern author's simultaneous attempt to redirect the ways in which the text should be received and read in the South. Simms's reading of Stowe's texts did not simply object to their moral and political power but confronted a more profound subversiveness that was embedded in the practices of Stowe's fiction. His allusions to both the metaphorical self-satisfying sexual desire he saw as implicit in the female imagination and the physical violence of Stowe's 'vicious abuse' of artistic codes reveal Simms's complex intellectual response to the novel. In his review for *The Exiles*, Simms had described *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as 'a story of great and striking, though coarse attraction', and this simultaneous and sustained appreciation of, and repulsion from, the novel ultimately underpins his critique of Stowe's manipulation of genre. As Simms expanded upon his criticisms of Stowe he challenged her perversion of two seemingly dichotomous but interconnected models of authorship as Simms defined them — the artist as soldier and the artist as producer. Stowe's 'vicious abuse of art' in using fiction to express her political and moral propaganda and her regeneration of texts from other

²⁴ Duvall, pp. 108, 117.

texts contravened the very ideals of authorship Simms had outlined in his earlier critical writing. When Simms began *Woodcraft*, its original title, 'The Sword and the Distaff', encoded these same artistic impulses in archetypal symbols of war and manufacture and implicitly identified his text as not simply a defence of southern life but also the furthering of a particular model of authorship.

'Why need the Southern people send to the Northern States for their intellectual pabulum?': Simms and the Paradigms of Southern Authorship

In a review of the *Southern Quarterly Review*, in John R. Thompson's monthly editorial for the April 1853 issue of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the southern periodical under Simms's editorship received unreserved praise. Thompson was eager to 'commend the literary publications of the Southern States, where such commendation is merited, as it is most gratifying to us to witness their increasing prosperity and influence'. Thompson overviewed the increasingly wide scope of contemporary southern literary periodical publications with explicit sectional pride and he found specific justification for his belief in the growing importance of southern letters in Simms's publication of McCord's review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* three months earlier. Thompson admitted that, 'though somewhat tardy in making its appearance', the essay was wholly 'crushing'. He concluded his editorial by assuring his readers that the southern literary journals, including both his own *Southern Literary Messenger* and Simms's *Southern Quarterly Review*, were

all worthy of the most liberal encouragement, working as they are, to some purpose, in the same good cause of Southern refinement and elevation. With such periodicals and weekly journals why need the Southern people send to the Northern States for their intellectual pabulum?

Such particular encomiums to Simms and the *Southern Quarterly Review* modified those Thompson had bestowed a year earlier when he stated his belief that the journal under Simms's editorship was both a 'credit to the South and the Country'.²⁵ With the appearance of McCord's review, Thompson found tangible evidence for the emergence of a southern literary and intellectual independence from the North. For Thompson, McCord's article, and the implicit endorsement of her anti-Tom sentiments by Simms, signalled the moment when the southern periodical revealed the promise of an autonomous regional critical voice.

Simms clearly shared and expanded upon Thompson's opinions. As William M. Moss notes, when Simms took over the editorship of the journal he 'viewed his editorial efforts as a patriotic mission'.²⁶ The development and the recognition of southern letters remained, however, the foremost principle of his staunch defence of the South. His own critical notice for E. J. Stearn's *Notes on Uncle Tom's Cabin* had advocated, in even stronger terms, the need for the South to turn to its own literature in response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In declaring *Woodcraft* an 'answer' to Stowe's novel in his letter to Hammond, Simms's purpose was to express his concern at the lack of critical attention his new work had received in the South. He candidly regretted the fact that the book had 'not been named by a single Carolina Press'. His privately-communicated grievances at the neglect of the novel in the literary papers emphasise Simms's wish to have the novel located within a recognised southern literature. Indeed, Drew Gilpin Faust characterises the pro-slavery and pro-southern efforts of Simms and his contemporaries, including James Henry Hammond, as a calculated means of gaining and ensuring both a regional

²⁵ John Reuben Thompson, 'Editor's Table', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 19 (1853), 252-53; John Reuben Thompson, 'Southern Quarterly Review', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852), 511.

and a national attention for southern erudition that had been so long denied. For these southerners, the prevailing politicised topics were, therefore, foremost a ‘vehicle for intellectual self-definition’.²⁷ In a letter to the southern poet William J. Grayson, Simms described the function of the *Southern Quarterly Review* in the South as ‘essential to our public and sectional objects, honorable to our character and particularly useful in the developments of our young men’.²⁸ During the mid-1840s and early 1850s, Simms repeatedly outlined his conception of what constituted a specifically regional authorship in articles that had ostensible political motives. By 1851, as he began *Woodcraft*, Simms had established two distinct but interdependent paradigms for southern white male authorship — the first was expressed through the metaphor of war and the second, more peaceable model, was conveyed through the processes of manufacture. These paradigms were bound together by their reference both to the historical example of the American Revolution and to the attainment of masculine honour by ‘our young men’ of the South.

In ‘Summer Travel in the South’, published in September 1850, Simms forwarded his interpretation of the intellectual relationship between the two sections. The dependence of the South upon the North for books and opinion, Simms declared, left the South ‘in nearly the same relation to the Northern States of this confederacy, that the whole of the colonies, in 1775, occupied to Great Britain’. With little reserve, Simms avowed that the perpetuation of such circumstances ‘emasculated’ the dependent region. Likewise, in ‘The Southern Convention’, a more openly political article on the assembly of southern

²⁶ William M. Moss, ‘Vindicator of Southern Intellect and Institutions: The *Southern Quarterly Review*’, *Southern Literary Journal* 13 (1980), 72–108 (p. 91).

²⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840–1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 116, 126.

²⁸ William Gilmore Simms, ‘To William J. Grayson’, 20 November 1852, letter 651 in *Letters*, III, 208–10 (pp. 209–10).

states in Nashville earlier the same year, Simms again emphasised the status of the South as the 'precise counterpart' to the pre-Revolution colonies.²⁹ J. V. Ridgely, Jon L. Wakelyn, Drew Gilpin Faust and Charles S. Watson all comment upon Simms's overt connection between the Revolutionary era of the eighteenth century and the sectional crisis of the mid-nineteenth century as an important expression of the author's political agenda. Whilst Ridgely describes an 'emotional connection between the two epochs' for the southern writer, Wakelyn, Faust and Watson argue that Simms's scholarly knowledge of the Revolution provided him with a 'propagandistic tool', a vehicle for both his own and his region's escalating desire for the founding of a separate southern nation. In drawing analogies between the past and the present, therefore, Simms performed an act of 'partisan' scholarship with patent political objectives.³⁰

As Simms's interpretation of the Revolution shows, however, literary autonomy was not a prerequisite for political autonomy nor did civil freedom confer intellectual freedom. In an earlier review article, 'South Carolina in the Revolution', published in the *Southern Quarterly Review* in 1848, Simms expresses his irritation at the overlooking of South Carolina's patriotism in the predominant histories of the war. The South, unlike New England, Simms suggests, had no economic motives to draw them into the conflict. The 'wrong done to the South' was, he argued, 'the denial to the native mind, of its proper position'. For his region, the 'discontents [...] have been confined entirely to the intellectual and ambitious portions of its population'. Paradoxically, the intellectual aspirations that had incited southern involvement in the Revolution failed to translate

²⁹ William Gilmore Simms, 'Summer Travel in the South', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 18 (1850), 24–65 (p. 31); William Gilmore Simms, 'The Southern Convention', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 18 (1850), 191–232 (p. 207).

³⁰ Ridgely, *William Gilmore Simms*, p. 92; Wakelyn, pp. 128–29; Faust, *A Sacred Circle*, pp. 74–75; Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism*, pp. 74–75.

into the subsequent accounts of the period. Whilst, for Simms, the South had ensured the establishment of the Republic, it had not achieved its deserved concomitant intellectual liberty. Simms, therefore, urged southern writers to produce their own histories, 'written out in full', that recognised the sacrifices and achievements of the region and would 'bear honorable comparison with those of any part of this nation'. Simms encouraged the production of a revisionary history that would rewrite the central role of the South into the accounts of the founding of the nation. In doing so, the southern writer would replicate the processes of civic independence in overturning the peremptory historical narratives of the Revolution written wholly by the North.

Allying artistic and political colonialism and the expediency of revolution on both counts, in his essay on James Fenimore Cooper, Simms argues that

Our colonial relation to Great Britain had filled us with a feeling of intellectual dependence, of which our success in shaking off her political dominion had in no respect relieved us. We had not then, and, indeed, have not entirely to this day, arrived at any just idea of the inevitable connexion between an ability to maintain ourselves in arts as well as arms — the ability in both cases arising only from our intellectual resources, and a manly reliance upon the just origin of national strength, — self-dependence!³¹

The symbolic alliance of 'arts as well as arms' ensured that, for Simms, expertise in the occupation of the artist conveyed a 'manly' appropriation of the 'resources' of his nation comparable to the heroism of an actual, armed revolution. Whatever his national pretensions, the manhood Simms demanded in antebellum America was, however, ultimately a distinctly southern one — based not upon a Yankee social discipline and observance of civic constraint but upon an expression of, what Bertram Wyatt-Brown describes as, the antithetical 'belligerent, self-regarding manhood' of the Old South. Further, it is these very 'discrepancies' in the meaning of honour, Wyatt-Brown

³¹ William Gilmore Simms, 'The Writings of James Fenimore Cooper', in *Views and Reviews*, pp. 258–92 (p. 266).

proposes, that are part and parcel of the impetus for the South's eventual secession.³²

Ultimately, the ethics of individual honour that Simms implicitly encoded into his definition of authorship concisely combined his cultural and political allegiances to the South. Simms's rendering of the writer in his criticism ensured that the championing of a regional authorship fully sustained his political objectives.

In 'Epochs and Events of American History, as Suited to the Purposes of Art in Fiction', included in Simms's essay collection *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction* (1846), however, Simms used the same question of the relationship between history and art to propose a viable alternative model of authorship. In the opening section of the essay Simms proposed that

it is the artist only who is the true historian. It is he who gives shape to the unhewn fact, who yields relation to the scattered fragments, — who unites the parts in coherent dependency, and endows, with life and action, the otherwise motionless automata of history.

Simms's emphasis upon the creative, unifying powers of a Promethean authorial role contrasts aesthetically and politically with his alternative understanding of the revolutionary impulses for authorship. Simms continues by figuring the writer as

a limner, a painter, a creator, and the picture glows beneath his hand, and the drama dilates in action under his glance, and he becomes a living and authentic witness of the past.³³

Simms describes the artist in possession of a capacity for revivification so that the artist's eye and hand become the medium through which meaning is generated from the 'fragments' of his subject matter. This manifesto on the role of the writer is central to Simms's attack on Stowe in the *Key* review as he critiques the northern writer's

³² Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 20.

‘mosaic’ art in her antislavery writing. In contrast to his own vision of generative artistry, Simms accuses Stowe of ‘borrow[ing] an ugly fact here and a brutal fact there [...] until she has completed her fanciful portrait of the whole; — and the result is a Mosaic monster!’³⁴ The skilled artist ‘gives shape’ and ‘yields relation’ to the ‘unhewn fact’ yet, Simms warns, these processes of artistic creation can be perverted, resulting in the grotesque forms of Stowe’s novel or likewise Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, a novel which he had found ‘shapeless’. Stowe’s procreative imagination, Simms argued, had patently gone awry. Unlike Stowe, the true artist takes the ‘crude and shapeless’ elements of history and renders them ‘symmetrical by the hands of imaginative art’. The writer of fiction, Simms explained, deviating from his usual trope of corporal perfectibility, in his 1849 essay ‘Modern Prose Fiction’,

must possess the constructive faculty in large degree. With this he frames and adapts his materials to the sort of edifice he proposes to construct. That edifice may be a palace or a hovel but it must be symmetrical [...] He must possess lively fancy or imagination; else how should he adorn and even embellish the structure he has raised.³⁵

Simms defines an artisanship of the ‘constructive faculty’ combined with the artistic details of the ‘lively fancy or imagination’ to adapt the writer’s ‘materials’ into the desired form. Simms repeats this metaphor of a more functional creativity as an alternative source of artistic independence to parallel political and economic nationalism. In ‘Americanism in Literature’, also collected in *Views and Reviews*, the connection was explicit. Simms warned that ‘Our people have taken too little interest in the production of the American mind, considered purely as American, whether in art or letters’. Urging his nation to seek intellectual recognition, Simms looked to an emerging commercial self-sufficiency as a model for American art:

³³ William Gilmore Simms, ‘The Epochs and Events of American History, As Suited to the Purposes of Art in Fiction’, in *Views and Reviews*, pp. 30–127 (pp. 36–37).

³⁴ Simms, ‘Stowe’s *Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’, pp. 228–29.

we have an idea of independence in some respects which tends to show how wretchedly limited has been our ambition. Parties are formed among us to compel the manufacture of our own pots and kettles, our woollens and window glass; parties to revolutionize the country again.³⁶

Whilst the analogy between literary ‘production’ and the more prosaic ‘manufacture’ of domestic items, suggests an American rather than a specifically southern authorship, it also encourages the artist to seek for inspiration in the commonplace but intrinsic elements of their nation. For Simms, the ‘manufacture of our own pots and kettles’ illustrates the ways in which the domestic realm intersects with the marketplace and so forwards a prototype for the requisite birth of the nation politically, economically and aesthetically.

Expressing his vision of a national authorship — and increasingly during the late 1840s and early 1850s this was an unreservedly southern nation — Simms developed two definitions of male authorship. The first increasingly figured an anticipated declaration of intellectual freedom as a declaration of revolutionary war that demanded a break from the old forms and an overturning of the past. The second definition regarded authorship as inherently procreative; art was drawn from the ‘resources’ of America and reshaped the past into the forms applicable to the new nation. In seeking to theorise the inspiration and function of art in America, Simms generated a series of concise but interlocking and referential images to convey his understanding of authorship. As the original title of *Woodcraft* implies, the models of national and independent authorship Simms defined were imperative to his original defence of the South. In ‘The Sword and the Distaff’, Simms simultaneously called upon the symbolism of ‘arts as well as arms’ in his interrogation of both the role of the author in American and southern society and

³⁵ William Gilmore Simms, ‘Modern Prose Fiction’, *Southern Quarterly Review*, 15 (1849), 41–83 (p. 45).

³⁶ William Gilmore Simms, ‘Americanism in Literature’, in *Views and Reviews*, pp. 7–29 (p. 13).

the issue of professional writing as an answer to the political, economic and intellectual dominance of the North in antebellum America. Irrevocably bound into the problematic place of authorship in America, was the definition and performance of masculinity and the remunerative success of contemporary women's domestic fiction predicated upon the intrinsic sympathy between female writer and female reader. As Simms sought to locate his text more directly in response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he apprehended the growing need to define an aesthetic form that incorporated the strategies of ^{both} war ~~and~~ and manufacture. To 'answer' *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for Simms, was to address these very questions — to counter the 'subverted' bond of 'sympathy' manipulated in abolitionist fiction and to proffer a revised version of the South that also amended established notions of author and text as they intersected with antebellum assumptions about masculinity and femininity and artist and artisan. In the practices of 'woodcraft', Simms discovered a creative model that sufficiently consolidated these debates about genre and gender within an effective regional context.

'Lessons in woodcraft': Renaming 'The Sword and the Distaff'

In September 1854, Redfield, the New York publishing house, issued a uniform edition of Simms's work that included a revised volume of 'The Sword and the Distaff' under the new title of *Woodcraft*. The motives for Simms's decision to rename the novel are unknown and hence much debated; equally the merits of both the original and the new title have found adherents. For contemporary reviewers, the modified title provoked no further comment, though the reissue of an almost inclusive set of Simms's writings certainly warranted the attention of the literary pages. The critical notice in the *Southern Literary Messenger* counselled its readers to purchase the republished volumes, as 'now standard works in Southern literature', and pressed the uniform edition upon its readers

by suggesting that 'Every Southerner should own a complete set'. In the North, *Godey's Lady's Book* echoed these sentiments and, substituting a less partisan recommendation for the sectional paeans of the southern paper, regarded the series of books as 'deeply interesting to American readers'.³⁷

Writing to Simms in 1853, James Henry Hammond had recommended that the writer revise the title of 'The Sword and the Distaff' to 'strike out the "Fair, Fat & Forty"', the subtitle to the serialisation in the *Southern Literary Gazette* and a less than flattering description of the novel's central female character, Widow Eveleigh. Hammond found the extended title '*decidedly* vulgar' and, whether he concurred or not, Simms excised not only the offending phrase but finally chose to wholly retitle the novel.³⁸ In a letter written in June 1853 Simms, anticipating the reissue of the novel by Redfield, further requested Hammond to 'advise me of any special monstrosities in Sword & Distaff, such as you hinted at, — for I shall be required, in time to revise that for the new series'.³⁹ Whatever Simms's motivation, the final decision to rename the novel was made after Simms had identified 'The Sword and the Distaff' as an 'answer' to Stowe. Whether Simms regarded the original title as one of the novel's 'special monstrosities', the author was wary of discovering in his own work the glaring 'abuse of art' he had condemned in Stowe's 'Mosaic monster'. His willingness to turn to Hammond and his friend's reciprocal contribution to the process of revision underscored the importance, for both the pro-southern men, of selecting an appropriate title to avoid misrepresenting the author and his novel to their potential readers.

³⁷ 'Woodcraft', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 20 (1854), 639; 'The Scout and Woodcraft', *Godey's Lady's Book*, 49 (1854), 556.

³⁸ Hammond's letter is cited in *Letters*, III, 243.

³⁹ William Gilmore Simms, 'To James Henry Hammond', 20 June 1853, letter 666 in *Letters*, III, 238–43 (pp. 242–43).

For William P. Trent, however, Simms ‘hardly improved the title in revision’. More recent critics agree, arguing that the original title more successfully pointed to the dominant themes and the defined notions of gender within which the novel’s characters functioned. Merriwether notes that ‘The Sword and the Distaff’

gives a clearer indication of the dual focus of the work — the sharply marked contrast between war and peace, with the major differences between the two worlds represented in the characters of Captain Porgy [...] and the Widow Eveleigh.

Merriwether perceives the two gendered realms literally brought together in the return of the southern soldier to a mansion he cannot defend by conventional military means. Deliverance comes only through the intervention of the Widow who ensures that Porgy’s slave ‘family’ will not be separated, supplies much-needed food and restores Porgy to the cultural civilisation of the South. In preserving the home, the Widow Eveleigh performs a version of the requisite feminine virtues of antebellum America. In an earlier study, Watson interprets both titles within this context of the meeting of a world of war with a world of peace as they apply to received gender roles. The original title ‘symbolized the needed union of the man’s military skills with the woman’s domestic arts in peacetime’. Likewise, the revised *Woodcraft* identified the guerrilla skills of ‘woodcraft’, the ‘Indian art of warfare’, demonstrated in the rescue of the Widow Eveleigh in the opening chapters of the novel, an act that ‘represents all those wartime qualities which are transferable to peacetime’.⁴⁰

The distinction that Merriwether and Watson make between the war (‘the sword’) and the domestic (‘the distaff’) as they directly correspond to the male and female characters of Porgy and the Widow Eveleigh is, however, acutely problematised by Simms in his

blurring of conventional gender roles throughout *Woodcraft*. Simms's explicit symbolism of 'the sword' in the opening chapters and 'the distaff' in the final chapter ensures that the two images frame the action of the novel. The 'spectacle' of the 'Turkish scimitar' with its 'polished and beautiful blade' (p. 18) in the hands of the Widow Eveleigh and the 'particularly picturesque performance' (p. 514) of the Widow Griffin at her spinning wheel prevent, however, the simple gender identification between the emblematic object and its user that Merriwether and Watson suggest. The two women represent Porgy's prospective romantic choices within the conventions of the romantic plot. For the inept wooer, the powerful and energetic Widow Eveleigh is contrasted with the milder Widow Griffin, yet in the final pages of the novel Porgy's advances are rejected by both women and he lives out his days as a, not necessarily reluctant, bachelor.

Simms's use of the 'the sword' and 'the distaff' in *Woodcraft*, and their association with Porgy's two possible loves, doubly undercuts the reader's initial expectations grounded in a readily interpreted gender imagery and the standard tropes of romantic fiction. Merriwether does acknowledge that Porgy is unable to 'play the role that he knows is required of him if he is to be a proper match for Mrs Eveleigh' and that this failure disrupts the 'apparently conventional working out of the plot'. Likewise, Patricia Okker notes the contradictions brought about by the disparity between the 'familiar structure' of the marriage plot and Porgy's disappointed courtship. Lucinda H. MacKethan's reading of the dual issues of gender and genre as they apply to both the purpose and the form of *Woodcraft*, however, constructs the most serious critique of the irreparable tensions between Simms's chosen literary form and his pro-slavery ideology in the

⁴⁰ Trent, p. 201; Merriwether, p. 25; Watson, 'Simms's Answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', pp. 84-85.

novel. MacKethan sees, in *Widow Eveleigh*, Simms's attempt to 'meet Stowe's promotion of women as agents of change by creating his own powerful woman character'. Through his depiction of the Widow's financial and social independence, however, MacKethan argues that Simms locates her power within the conventionally masculine marketplace rather than the usual female domestic sphere. By 'aiming somehow to feminize the South's patriarchal scene without allowing the kinds of associations with domestic power [...] that Stowe used so effectively', Simms's participation in the 'increasingly troubling distortions of acceptable male and female roles [...] in the end turned southern fictions of the plantation into a chaos of genres and genders'.⁴¹

MacKethan's analysis of *Woodcraft* profoundly undermines Simms's deliberate manipulation of his artistic strategy to forward ideological beliefs, yet it does not, conversely, afford Simms enough recognition as a critical reader of literary texts. MacKethan concludes that, for Simms, 'genre becomes the vehicle of political power' and that when the southern writer 'charg[es] Stowe with violating rigid conventions of both genre and gender' it is an 'attempt to discredit a book whose ideology is what he really deplores'.⁴² Yet whilst, for Simms, issues of authorship and regional identity are entirely and explicitly interconnected in his criticism, the intended propagandistic strategies of *Woodcraft* do not wholly efface his literary strategies. In opposition to a broad consensus of critics who read Simms's fiction primarily through his sectarian interests, Louis D. Rubin asserts 'that Simms the literary artist was at least as important

⁴¹ Merriwether, p. 26; Okker, p. 152; Lucinda H. MacKethan, 'Domesticity in Dixie: The Plantation Novel and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 223–42 (pp. 235–36, 239).

⁴² MacKethan, pp. 238–39.

a storytelling presence within the fiction as is Simms the political propagandist'.⁴³ Recognising and drawing the reader's attention to the artificiality of the symbols of 'the sword' and 'the distaff' and to the corresponding performative nature of masculinity and femininity, Simms instead foregrounds the role of the artist in constructing meaning through his depiction of the 'spectacle' and the 'picturesque'. Widow Eveleigh's examination of the beautiful weapon with its extravagant rather than functional 'handle of mother-of-pearl' immediately prompts her memories of its former owner, Major André, a man who possessed 'tastes, and sensibilities' in 'music and poetry' that clearly also extended to arms. The present owner of the sword, M'Kewn, explains that it was received in exchange for his own weapon, "a genuine Damascus, while this, though a very beautiful imitation, is not!" (p. 19). Likewise, Porgy's first thoughts as he surveys the scene of Widow Griffin, dressed in 'ordinary household gear' and sitting at her spinning wheel, is to 'wonder[...] that he had not seen it more frequently delineated in pictures' (p. 514). The two scenes are presented as succinct vignettes of artistry and artistic appreciation, presenting symbols of war and peace and of masculinity and femininity within the text and engaging Widow Eveleigh and Porgy in acts of metafictional aesthetic analysis that rapidly focus upon the key issues of Simms's own critical discourses — the relationship between art ('imitation') and reality ('genuine') and between the beautiful ('spectacle') and the useful ('ordinary'). Rather than feminise the southern patriarchy as MacKethan suggests, Simms's metaphors of the 'sword' and the 'distaff' articulated his attempts in *Woodcraft* to masculinise the aesthetics of

⁴³ Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study of the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 93. Rubin specifically disagrees with Wakelyn's view that Simms used his 'periodical for almost purely political purposes' that were supplemented 'with little literary analysis'. Watson recommends that the 'most fruitful approach to his fiction is to study it carefully within the framework of his gradual change from nationalism to secessionism'. See Wakelyn, pp. 188, 191; Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism*, p. xii.

sentimentality by ensuring that soldiers like Major André and Captain Porgy have access to the 'sensibilities' Stowe's text had elided with femininity.

In defining the particular skills of 'woodcraft', however, Simms elaborated upon a more regionally-inspired artistry and foregrounded the validity of an art form drawn from native materials. In doing so, he also provided an account of the requisite skills of the artist — skills that discovered the native subject matter, that adapted this factual material into art and that mastered the delicate balance of passion and rationality. L. Moffitt Cecil interprets the heroics of Porgy and his followers through their intervention in the forest ambush of Widow Eveleigh related in the opening portion of the novel. The action extends over twelve chapters, ensuring that it is not an inconsiderable proportion of the completed novel's sixty-six chapters, and depicts in minute detail the ambush and the attempts by Arthur Eveleigh and Fordham, respectively the Widow's son and her overseer, to rescue the Widow and the slaves she has lately reclaimed from M'Kewn. The attack on the Widow is led by the poor white squatter Bostwick under the instructions of M'Kewn who is eager to retrieve both the valuable slave property and a document stolen by the Widow that implicates him in their illegal seizure. Cecil notes that 'it was natively inspired resourcefulness (woodcraft or swampcraft) which enabled the American to win a military victory over their enemies'.⁴⁴ In the ambush scenes, Simms reveals how these ancient skills of 'woodcraft' become a way of specifically protecting southern property from external and unsympathetic forces. In the lessons of woodcraft that Fordham gives his young and initially impulsive pupil Arthur Eveleigh, the young man is disciplined in the skilful manipulation of the familiar resources of the forest to overcome the ambushers. Fordham patiently demonstrates the wiles and the

⁴⁴ Cecil, p. 477.

methods by which to determine the covert movements and motives of their immediate enemy. By the end of the episode, Arthur has learnt and practised the finer points of interpreting and utilising his native land as his medium in his role as an apprentice woodcrafter. In describing the stalwart efforts of the two men in defending the rights of the southern planter, Simms addressed the literal and symbolic uses of the native woods as a source for art. In these scenes he returned to the double meaning of 'woodcraft' — the native expertise of the backwoodsman and the dexterity of the woodcarver — that he had expressed in an earlier critical work. In 'The Epochs and Events of American History, As Suited to the Purposes of Art and Fiction', Simms argued that, for the writer of fiction, 'That which we possess, is not less susceptible of artistic elaboration [...] but rudely developed in the block, and ready to our hands'. Further, Simms believes that the ideal artist

Has but to [...] cut down the under growth — to cast down the offensive and obtrusive object — to bring out in bolder relief such forms as merit to be made particular — to be raised into superiority, and elevated by appropriate tributaries — and the work is done as he could wish it. The creation is here — already in our possession! — it is the *clearing* — the *clearing* only — which has need to follow.⁴⁵

Simms allied the indigenous material of the American backwoods to the sculptor's block and paralleled the processes of 'clearing' the dense foliage of the woods to the bas-relief of the sculptor's carving. The 'woodcrafter' creates meaning out of his adaptation of his material as he brings shape and symmetry to his inchoate but abundant resources. Though he does not use Simms's critical stance to interpret the southern author's fiction, Edd Winfield Parks concludes, in his analysis of Simms's literary criticism, that Simms believed that 'Only through the skill and imagination of the artist could history be made

⁴⁵ Simms, 'The Epochs and Events in American History', p. 111.

to yield its ultimate meanings'.⁴⁶ In uniting the skills of guerrilla warfare and the artisanship of woodcarving in the single act of 'woodcraft', Simms established an image that successfully combined his theories about the destructive possibilities of the 'sword' and the constructive possibilities of the 'distaff' in ways that Simms saw as vital to the progression of southern letters in the mid-century literary marketplace. 'Woodcraft' was an inclusive aesthetics that enabled the southern man to participate in both the male world of war and the female world of the home.

As Arthur Eveleigh and Fordham position themselves so as to overcome their adversaries in the forest, Fordham explains the arcane skills that the young man must now master: "I must give you a lesson in woodcraft. We are to see without being seen. If they see us, we lose all that we have gained" (p. 73). The first skill the novice woodcrafter must learn is the importance of careful observation. For the practitioner of 'woodcraft', seeing without being seen is fundamental to his triumph over his adversaries. Fordham continues in his painstaking tracking of the ambushers 'managed with perfect success by the practised woodsman', admonishes Arthur Eveleigh for a hasty shot and insists upon circumspect manoeuvres through the woods that 'rendered the operation a tedious one' (p. 73) for the impatient young man. The 'inexperienced' (p. 80) Arthur Eveleigh finds the necessary care taken by Fordham and the need for constant 'circumspection' (p. 92) difficult to duplicate and a 'perpetual annoyance', and as they weave on their bellies across the forest floor, Fordham is required to frequently reassure and calm his companion, urging him to "take it coolly" (p. 81). Simms's characterisation of the forest skills of the backwoodsman is a physical demonstration of

⁴⁶ Edd Winfield Parks, *William Gilmore Simms as Literary Critic* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 22.

the skills he defined as essential in the writer. In the 1849 essay 'Modern Prose Fiction', using Sir Walter Scott as a model, Simms proposed that

the great or successful writer in prose fiction, must be [...] a person of equal imagination and cool common sense; of lively sensibilities; of great tact — which is another word for admirable taste — and of equal vigilance and courage. He must observe without effort; — so endowed by nature, and so trained by practice, as to achieve, as it were, by the simple outpouring of his customary thoughts.⁴⁷

Fordham's advice — 'to see without being seen' — and his equally important restraint translate Simms's earlier definition of the proficient author into the woodcrafting activities in the woods of South Carolina. Fordham's innate talents are honed with practice as he imparts his knowledge to his rash apprentice with a dexterity that the young man cannot yet replicate. Yet the experience also marks an important rite of passage for the southerner. In the first moments of the attack, the surprised Arthur Eveleigh is caught and bound. He is 'humbled by the sense of shame and impotence, tears [...] gushed from his eyes which he closed, in very mortification, as if to conceal the weakness which he could not control' (p. 63). It is only when his mother and her slave untie him that he gains a 'new sense of manhood' (p. 65). Under the tutelage of Fordham and in possession of new skills in guerrilla warfare, Porgy alerts the Widow Eveleigh to the change that has occurred in her son. The successful thwarting of the ambush has, Porgy says, "brought out the manhood in your brave son" (p. 139). Arthur Eveleigh's training in 'woodcraft' provides him with an important opportunity through which to achieve and demonstrate his manhood and a manhood that Simms could define as discretely southern. In 'woodcraft', Arthur Eveleigh discovers a way to redirect the 'sensibilities' that had invoked his earlier tears into a new form of male artfulness.

⁴⁷ Simms, 'Modern Prose Fiction', p. 46.

The explicit violence of the skirmish in the woods — all but two of the ambushers are shot and in an attempt to force a confession out of one of the captured men, Porgy and his followers repeatedly hang him from a nearby tree until he too is shot and silenced by Bostwick — is an integral part of Arthur Eveleigh's lessons in 'woodcraft'. In defending his section's participation in the Revolution, in 'South Carolina in the Revolution', Simms identified the 'ordinary amusement' of the southerners — hunting, horsemanship and marksmanship — as the source of a southern military prowess. The southerner, he asserted, 'was almost naturally trained to war'. In defining the significance of violence in the South, Dickson D. Bruce provides two interrelated consequences of the hunt that have relevance for the opening chapters of Simms's novel. Firstly, violence in the South was 'an expressive form of antebellum culture through which Southerners symbolically described, even acted out, many of their basic assumptions about the world'.

What was gained through the violence of the hunt, therefore, was the 'dramatized renewal of faith in the existence and permanence of a stable and orderly world.' With specific reference to the earlier frontier writing of Simms though not to *Woodcraft* itself, Bruce also suggests that, secondly, for the writer, acts of violence concisely 'dramatized the traditional conflict between passion and reason'.⁴⁸ If Stowe had distorted the process of artistic creativity in the 'mosaic monster' of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, likewise her 'vicious abuse' of art had erased the vital necessity for the processes of a war dictated by reason that is demonstrated in the ritual violence of 'woodcraft'. In Arthur Eveleigh's 'lessons in woodcraft', the callow southerner is trained not simply in how to be a man, but in how to be a southern man. Drawn into a fight both to protect his mother's slaves from

⁴⁸ Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 196, 209, 224.

confiscation and to retain documents that will subsequently negate M’Kewn’s mortgage rights over Porgy’s plantation, Arthur Eveleigh fights equally to preserve the southern plantation and the institution of slavery against an outside threat as for his own honour. In putting down the squatter Bostwick and hence obstructing M’Kewn’s parvenu pretensions, he overtly reaffirms the social hierarchy of his region integral to his own identity as a southern white man. Yet, for Simms, the lessons Arthur Eveleigh learns in southern manhood also dramatise essential lessons in southern authorship.

As the forest skirmish reaches its climax, the narrator interjects to describe the manoeuvres performed by the experienced exponents of ‘woodcraft’. Fordham and Bostwick engage in

fox-like doublings, the snake-like crawlings, the subtlety, stealth, keen sight, and foresight, equally [...] of the best school of stratagem, as practised by the red-men of America. The little practice of our *dramatis personae* will, on a small scale, exhibit the characteristic features of Indian warfare, which first of all, recognises the necessity of risking nothing, and of making a clear gain, without equivalent losses of all its advantages [...] Art is to supersede brute valor. (p. 96)

In summarising the native origin of ‘woodcraft’ in America’s past, Simms ensures that the activities of the previous chapters should be read within the context of artistic proficiency. The intricate plotting of the subterfuge and the visual and interpretative acuity demanded in the practice of ‘woodcraft’ parallel the skills manifested in writing. The animal tropes used to describe the metamorphic ‘fox-like’ and ‘snake-like’ movements of Fordham and Bostwick draw upon familiar elements in Native American mythology and ritual. Simms viewed the native culture, and particularly the way in which the native mythology invested the land with a plethora of spirits, as evidence that the ‘native North American’ was ‘an artist, a poet, a painter and a novelist’ comparable to those of the Old World. The Native American ‘spirits of the mine and the river, of the forest and the mountain’ and the related skills of ‘woodcraft’ transform the land — and,

for Simms, this is specifically an American land — into a unique imaginative space for the American artist, providing both abundant material for subject matter and an exemplar for regional authorship.⁴⁹

Fordham's training of Arthur Eveleigh in the opening chapters of *Woodcraft* demonstrates an interlocking and compounding series of issues imperative to Simms's literary defence of the South. Firstly, mastering the skills of 'woodcraft' was a rite of passage that enabled Arthur Eveleigh to assert his identity as a man. Secondly, in his protection of the fundamental institutions of the white South — the slaves, the plantation and the southern woman, represented by his mother — he confirmed his inviolable status as a southerner. Thirdly, the restraint imposed by Fordham provided an instructive example of how reason must control passion. All these issues, however, were finally united in the skills of 'woodcraft' as a metaphor for a natively-inspired male authorship. The opening chapters of *Woodcraft* begin Simms's 'answer' to Stowe by providing an unequivocal manifesto for the development of a specifically southern literature in defence of the region. Writing to John Pendleton Kennedy in 1852, Simms again championed the literary possibilities of the South in American arts. Simms expressed faith in his belief that the 'South has all the Imagination of the US' but recognised 'that the South, however, has not the necessary training for authorship, and hence it wants of symmetry and polish'. Likewise, in a letter written the following year to Henry Carey Baird, Simms surveyed the literary strengths of the *Southern Quarterly Review* and admitted that the paper 'has independence, courage, freshness' though it was 'frequently rude of style, wanting polish, &c, and the work of men who think & speak

⁴⁹ William Gilmore Simms, 'Literature and Art Among the American Aborigines', in *Views and Reviews*, pp. 128–47 (p. 143); Miriam J. Shillingsburg, 'The Southron as American: William Gilmore Simms', *Studies in the American Renaissance*, (1980), pp. 409–23 (p. 409).

rather than write — unpractised, but still strong hands'.⁵⁰ Simms believed that southern authors, like Arthur Eveleigh, needed 'training' to fulfil their potential. Defence of their region from attack, whether that be literal (M'Kewn and Bostwick) or metaphorical (abolitionism and Stowe), presented the southern male with just the opportunity to learn and practise the skills of 'woodcraft' in authorship.

**'Of kitchen art': Domestic Aesthetics and the Sympathy of the Sentimental Male in
Woodcraft**

As Simms stated in his letter to Kennedy in 1851, he believed that the problematic relationship between abolitionist writing and the putative southern 'answer' resulted from a 'subverted' bond of 'sympathy' between the two regions. The exact meaning of Simms's enigmatic statement is ultimately uncertain, yet in utilising the discourse of 'sympathy' to describe his response to abolitionism, Simms related a threatened cultural and political understanding between northerner and southerner to a 'subverted' relationship between author and reader in the 'negro fiction' of the period. Sympathy in antebellum, and particularly in abolitionist, discourses was an overtly female quality and whilst the 'cultural power' of sympathy, to use Jane Tompkins's terms, is somewhat contested in recent critical evaluations of sentimentality, for Simms the conversion and subversion of sympathy to the abolitionist cause clearly posed a serious threat to the South.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Simms, 'To John Pendleton Kennedy', 5 April 1852, letter 622 in *Letters*, III, 172–75 (p. 175); Simms, 'To Henry Carey Baird', 17 December 1853, letter 686 in *Letters*, III, 266–68 (p. 267).

⁵¹ Helen Waite Papashvily defines 'sympathy' as one of four qualities 'sex-linked to females' in *All the Happy Endings: A Study of the Domestic Novel in America, the Women Who Wrote It, the Women Who Read It, in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 75. For debates about the extent and success of the aesthetic, social and political power of 'sympathy' see Jane Tompkins, 'Sentimental Power',

In *Woodcraft*, following the strategies of other anti-Tom writers, Simms sought to implicate in a defence of the South the domestic scenes and archetypes popularised by contemporary women's novels and seemingly apotheosised in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Female pro-slavery responses to Stowe, including Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* and Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride*, revealed the effectiveness of adapting what S. Bradley Shaw terms, the 'pliable rhetoric' of Stowe's subversive domestic ideology to defend a more conservative societal model of the patriarchal home and the extended slave family.⁵² Yet Simms's predominant and almost exclusively masculine world represented by the bachelor Porgy, the war veterans and the slave Tom assembled on the plantation of Glen-Eberley ensures that Simms's use of the domestic space, and the associated language of sentimentalism, fundamentally differs from that propounded by both Stowe and her female respondents. Simms depicts a domestic kitchen and an accomplished cook in the slave Tom, the exchange of a Bible between the surrogate mother Widow Eveleigh and a daughter in Dory Bostwick, the reconciliation between a ghostly 'mauma' Sappho and her white 'chile' Porgy, the intimate family life of the squatter Bostwick in his cabin and Porgy's hesitant attempts to woo Widow Eveleigh and Widow Griffin into matrimony. Each episode mirrors generic elements of the contemporary female sentimental novel but Simms's restructuring of each scene reveals his self-conscious appropriation of these sentimental tropes, his explicit allusions to authorship and textual interpretation, and his repeated masculinising of conventionally

p. 269; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (London: Papermac, 1996), pp. 45, 77–78; Amy Schrager Lang, 'Slavery and Sentimentalism: The Strange Career of Augustine St. Clare, *Women's Studies*, 12 (1986), 31–54 (p. 34); Lang, *Prophetic Woman*, pp. 199, 201.

⁵² S. Bradley Shaw, 'The Pliable Rhetoric of Domesticity', in *The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Mason I. Lowance, Ellen E. Westbrook and R. C. De Prospro (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 73–98 (pp. 80, 96).

feminine roles. In doing so, Simms reaffirms a generative rather than divisive model of male authorship based upon masculine community and reunion centred around the epitome of southern society, the slave plantation. Having established a masculine model of southern authorship in the skills of 'woodcraft', Simms transfers his male characters from the frontier setting of the forest to a domestic and familial environment that enabled him to interrogate both the gendered aesthetics of the literary form and directly challenge the 'subverted' bond of 'sympathy' he detected in sentimental abolitionism. In *Woodcraft*, Porgy's anxieties over his lost occupation as a soldier at the beginning of the novel and his gradual acclimatisation to the values of peacetime correspond to this adaptation of male authorship to the realm of the domestic. This extension of masculine art into the home and the explicit attempt to redefine sentimentality as an expression of male sensibilities effectively refutes sentimental abolitionism because Simms's version of the plantation does not exclude affective power but is ultimately founded upon the bonds of the heart and their expression through art that had made Stowe's work so influential.

Having finally returned to Glen-Eberley, Porgy's slave Tom is called upon to satisfy the appetites of his master and his male companions. Tom quickly furnishes the soldiers with a meal of hominy, fried bacon, hoe-cake and hot coffee spread out on the floor of the gutted mansion by the slave Pompey. As the gravy, bacon and accompaniments are passed around, the hungry men are soon pacified as the

taste of the meats improved the moods of all parties, and opened hearts as well as jaws. The fullness of the mouth soon prompted the heart to speech; and in the enjoyments of the flesh, Porgy soon began to forget the anxieties of the spirit. (p. 182)

Porgy responds to Tom's display of culinary skills, devouring his 'Johnny Cake', the '*chef-d'oeuvre* of kitchen art', with a material satisfaction. Porgy's renowned

gastronomic pleasures stir him and provide him with an emotional consolation that delivers him temporarily from the 'anxieties of the spirit'. The 'opened hearts' of Porgy and his fellow veterans and their shared desire to speak from the heart are inspired by the 'performance' (p. 179) of Tom's fry and 'brile', in the 'picturesquely' arranged men seated upon the table-cloth on the mansion floor and likewise the improvised 'equipments of the board as picturesque as the group around them' (p. 181). Overlooking the impromptu feast, Tom demands that Pompey's unpractised table duties imitate his 'dextrous' mastery of the violin (p. 180). The meal demonstrates Tom's expertise as the 'grand cuisinier' (p. 177) of Glen-Eberley, transforming the modest foodstuffs donated by the Widow Eveleigh into culinary art. With the proficiency of a talented portrait artist, Tom is able to calculate the necessary quantities of food to please his master, effortlessly judging with 'an eye to a man's dimensions' (p. 178).

Tom's knowledge of his dual ability to satisfy the frequent hunger-pangs of Porgy and to provide sustenance for his master's beleaguered spirit is reflected in the pride the slave possesses in his culinary implements. Conscious of his 'genius for stews' (p. 51) and the consequent pabulum he affords to both stomach and heart, Tom is careful to safeguard the tools of his artisanship. Tom's horse is

covered, accordingly, with a variety of kitchen equipage. Pots and kettles were curiously pendant from the saddle, strapped over the negro's thighs, or hanging from his skirts. A sack which exhibited numerous angles, carried other utensils, to say nothing of pewter plates, iron spoons, knives and forks, and sundry odds and ends of bacon and bread. (p. 51)

Tom's fantastical transformation of his treasured possessions into an eccentric costume, and his precarious descent from the heavily-laden horse, which is in itself a 'performance' (p. 52), integrate the cook himself into an assured display of stage-managed artistry. The 'curiously pendant' kitchenware on the 'negro's thighs' explicitly transmute the slave's masculinity into the tools of his trade, an act that Alan Henry Rose

interprets as a calculated ‘emasculatation’ of the black male. The substitution of the ‘pots and kettles’, Rose argues, means that the ‘very symbol of [...] masculine strength is transformed into an image of weakness and harmlessness’.⁵³ The cherished pots of this ‘sable kitchen despot’ (p. 177), when called upon to supply the want of Porgy’s plundered crockery and cutlery, are indeed described with a distinct and racialised masculinity. The hominy pot is removed, ‘black and smoking as it was’, directly from the fire, permitting the men to spoon out portions of ‘its white and boiled contents’ whilst Tom’s ‘sooty’ frying-pan (p. 181) is passed from hand to hand by the hungry veterans. Yet the phallic substitution of the kitchen articles and the homoerotics of a meal that satisfies the men physically and spiritually underscore both Tom’s male fecundity and his empowerment in the select male environment of the plantation. For the men at Glen-Eberley, Tom’s prowess in the kitchen makes him indispensable for their well-being and establishes him as a viable and masculine counterpart to the female practitioners of the culinary arts in the contemporary best-selling women’s fiction, including Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. For Ellen Montgomery, in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*, the careful ritual of tea-making at the parlour hearth-place is a ‘real pleasure’ and the ‘zeal that love gives’ to the precise preparations ‘made it taste better’. Likewise Tom assumes the qualities of the female cooks in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, mediating between Dinah, ‘the principal of all rule and authority in the kitchen department’, and the Quaker Rachel Halliday, whose ‘benignly happy’ situation at the head of the breakfast table ‘seemed to put spirit into the food and drink she offered’.⁵⁴

⁵³ Alan Henry Rose, ‘The Image of the Negro in the Pre-Civil-War Novels of John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms’, *American Studies*, 4 (1970), 217–26 (pp. 225–26).

⁵⁴ Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* [1850] (New York: Feminist Press, 1987), pp. 13–14; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* [1852], ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 146–47.

Tom's demonstration of his 'peculiar genius for the kitchen' (p. 183) prompts Porgy to express his concern that he and his slave should be parted. Porgy repeatedly offers his slave freedom and, likewise, Tom repeatedly rejects the offer. Yet the threat of Tom's imminent seizure by M'Kewn encourages Porgy to pause from his meal and, 'laying down his knife and fork', to advise his slave to seek death rather than capture. He advises the slave to "Kill yourself, Tom, rather than let them carry you off. Put your knife into your ribs, anywhere, three inches deep" (p. 184). Tom, needless to say, is not so enthusiastic about his prospective demise and regrets that such ideas have been expressed "jis' now, when de time is 'mos' [almost] come for me eat supper!" (p. 184). For Porgy, the same tools of Tom's 'kitchen art' become the weapons that will defend, even to death, the vital relationship between southern master and slave. Tom's knife, like the exquisite duelling pistols examined by Widow Eveleigh, literally manifests the combination of 'arts and arms' that Simms exemplified as the distinct talent of the southern artist. Simms further ensured that the domestic scenes between Tom and Porgy are interpreted as overt responses to Stowe by interpolating Stowe's avuncular character into the novel. Preluding the artistic displays of the kitchen, Porgy's Tom is ascribed an epithet he categorically rejects: "Don't you uncle me" (p. 179), Tom warns his companion Pompey. Yet Tom has an explanation for Pompey's ill-advised descriptor and recommends that "De army's de place for mek' man ob sense out ob fool" (p. 179). The exchange between Tom and Pompey prefaces a series of debates between Porgy and Millhouse that are Simms's central counter to Stowe's novel. In repudiating his identification as 'uncle Tom', Porgy's loyal slave identifies the "man ob sense" within the southern home that the subsequent Socratic discourses between Porgy and Millhouse interrogate.

'To the ear of the heart': Sensibility and the Philosophies of the Utilitarian and the Extravagant

Following the successful rescue of the Widow Eveleigh and her slaves through both the skills of woodcraft exercised by Fordham and Arthur Eveleigh and the opportune appearance of Porgy and his followers, the central chapters of the novel finally return the soldier to his desolate plantation. Once re-established in his peacetime home, Porgy is forced to confront the prodigal ways of his past and acknowledge the jeopardy to which he has exposed his plantation, his home, his slaves and his beloved Tom, by mortgaging his property to M'Kewn. It is only with the generosity of Widow Eveleigh and the rigorous help of Millhouse, as his self-appointed Yankee overseer, that the possibility arises that Porgy might overcome his financial difficulties and return his plantation to its stable, profitable and civilised position in the South. In his efforts to resuscitate the flagging fortunes of the southern home and economy, Millhouse engages Porgy in a series of philosophical debates that dominate the central chapters of the novel. Frustrated by Porgy's easy management of his limited resources, Millhouse encourages his former captain to adopt a more restrained, parsimonious and 'utilitarian' (p. 294) philosophy. Millhouse chastises Porgy for his "thoughtless, profligate and expensive ways" (p. 279) and urges him to reconsider his duties as a southerner:

'it's not resonable [*sic*] that he should be a sportsman and a gentleman. That's a sort of extravagance that's not becoming to a free white man, when he's under bonds to a sheriff'. (p. 191)

Millhouse's criticisms of Porgy, and Porgy's mild and even pre-emptive admission to Lance Frampton that he had indeed "wasted money — a great deal — ran into debt — sold negroes — mortgaged others" (p. 111), suggest an honest appraisal by Simms of the faults of both the southerner and the economy of the South and a subsequent critique

of an indolent planter class. Simms's seemingly satiric treatment of Porgy's unabashed romanticism and his attendant mismanagement of the financial realities of his plantation become, for many modern readers of *Woodcraft*, an expression of Simms's censure of the South and specifically the southern planter's ineffectuality.⁵⁵ Similarly, Millhouse's unmitigated materialism is also exposed to ridicule, and the philosophies espoused by both flawed men provided Simms, Mary Ann Wimsatt argues, with an opportunity to 'compar[e] two social and economic orders [...] money-grabbing pragmatism on the one hand and human aesthetic values on the other'.⁵⁶

Whilst the debates in *Woodcraft* between the slave owner and his overseer do ostensibly employ the terminology of economics to participate in a measured critique of the laissez-faire policies of the South, Simms had previously applied the concepts of both utility and extravagance to express his views specifically in relation to the art of fiction rather than social, political or economic issues. In the opening paragraphs of Simms's short story 'The Last Wager, or, the Gamester of the Mississippi', published in the first series of his collection *The Wigwam and the Cabin* (1845), Simms used 'extravagance' to denote a specific aesthetic mode. Establishing a narrative framework for the story, Simms again queried the role of the artist in the construction of fiction:

For, what is fiction, but the nice adaptation, by an artist, of certain ordinary occurrences in life, to a natural and probable conclusion? It is not the policy

⁵⁵ John R. Welsh, 'William Gilmore Simms, Critic of the South', *Journal of Southern History*, 26 (1960), 201–14 (pp. 209–10); Wakelyn, p. 173; Richard Gray, *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 52–53; Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism*, p. 100.

⁵⁶ Mary Ann Wimsatt, *The Major Fiction of William Gilmore Simms: Cultural Traditions and Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 168; Watson, 'Simms's Answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', pp. 81, 86.

of the artist to deal much in the merely extravagant. His real success, and the true secret of it, is to be found in the *naturalness* of his story.⁵⁷

In his conclusion, Simms argued that the 'extravagant' must be finely balanced by the artist with the 'natural' if the fiction is to meet with any success. As the story demonstrated, for Simms 'extravagance' was an important and explicitly critical literary term to denote a particular form of romanticism. For Jan Bakker, Simms's *Woodcraft* establishes a 'precedent in antebellum southern fiction for the believable, the actual, the everyday and the commonplace in the American novel', but this simplifies Simms's definition of the 'natural' in making it a version of proto-realism.⁵⁸ Similarly, in 1850, Simms entered into a discussion about the specific literary application of the term 'utility' in an article on 'Sentimental Prose Fiction' published in the July issue of the *Southern Quarterly Review*. The article was outwardly a review of four volumes by Alphonse de Lamartine, but it ultimately provided Simms with an opportunity to question and define the forms of contemporary sentimental fiction. In the article, Simms repeats his belief in the essential value of 'what is *vraisemblable* in character' and argues for the necessity to 'Couple the sentiment with action'.⁵⁹ The tendency of sentimental writers to focus upon 'nothing but extreme suffering' so that 'the action seems totally at an end' explains, Simms suggests, the lack of success of this mode of fiction in America where the 'national character is eminently practical'. So, Simms

⁵⁷ William Gilmore Simms, 'The Last Wager; or, the Gamester of the Mississippi', in *Tales of the South by William Gilmore Simms*, ed. Mary Ann Wimsatt (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 137–74 (p. 137, original emphasis).

⁵⁸ Jan Bakker, 'Simms on the Literary Frontier; or, So Long Miss Ravenel and Hello Captain Porgy: *Woodcraft* is the First 'Realistic' Novel in America', in *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier*, ed. John Caldwell Guilds and Caroline Collins (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997), pp. 64–78 (p. 65).

⁵⁹ William Gilmore Simms, 'Sentimental Prose Fiction', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 17 (1850), 355–69 (pp. 357, 356).

concludes, sentimental fiction in America faces the 'great test' of 'utility'. In the context of his argument, Simms presents an interpretation of the standards of utility which refer

to that higher sense which recognizes the soul of man, as the first great element of his composition, for which a human form yields but a tabernacle, and mortal necessities but an ordeal, rather than employments and a life. In this higher sense, the soul depends upon the fancy, and the imagination, as essential to its continued struggle after an ideal.

By adopting these standards of the utilitarian character, sentimental fiction should therefore, Simms suggests, paradoxically satisfy

our want as human beings, of mixed earth and spirit; having a human necessity before us, which, however lowly, is the absolute essential to any higher or more hopeful condition.⁶⁰

In this article Simms offered a vital redefinition of the 'useful' that mediated between the real and the ideal and between the mortal and the spiritual. In his debates with Millhouse, Porgy proposes a comparable reinterpretation of the meanings of the useful, redirecting Millhouse's defence of an economic and pragmatic 'utilitarianism' so that it embodies the perfect and desirable mediation between the demands of the body and the needs of the spirit, between the economies of the marketplace and the economies of the soul.

Though Porgy's mishandling of his monetary affairs remains central to Millhouse's comments and to the interpretations of Simms's criticism of the South, Porgy does not question the correctness of Millhouse's judgement and his prodigality is, ~~however,~~ not the major contention of the repeated debates between the two men. Whilst Porgy accepts Millhouse's assessment of his neglect of the plantation, what he refuses to comply with ^{are} ~~is~~ Millhouse's demands to cease his patronage of two favoured companions, George Dennison and Dr Oakenberg. For Millhouse, the poetic pleasures these two men indulge

⁶⁰ Simms, 'Sentimental Prose Fiction', p. 360.

in, at the expense of practical labours, typify the worst sort of ‘extravagance’. Dennison, he argues, is not a “reasonable, useful man” (p. 281) when “the great business of men on airt is eating — that is to say, eating and drinking, and clothing” (p. 292). Millhouse can appreciate neither Dennison’s artistic endeavours, his “redikilous stories” and “them foolish po’tries — tink-it-a-tank, tink-it-a-tank — one word knocking agin another at the eend of the line” (p. 281), nor Porgy’s constant delight in his storyteller’s company. In his literal rendering of the end rhymes in his parody of Dennison’s poetry, Millhouse’s poetic judgements reflect his eminently practical predisposition and his apparent immunity to the delights of Dennison’s artistry. Yet, in doing so, Millhouse appropriates and rewrites the poetic metre, transposing the rhythm into his own broad dialect and establishing, at the very beginning of the debate about the value of the sentimental, the possibility of exchange between writer and reader in an intertextual relationship between, to use Roland Barthes’s terminology, the ‘producer’ of a text and the ‘consumer’ of a text.⁶¹ The materialistic exchange that Barthes’s terms encode resonates with Simms’s own use of the metaphor of economic exchange to understand both the mid-nineteenth-century literary marketplace and the differing conceptions of a gendered art that are voiced through Millhouse and Porgy.

Porgy defends his pleasure in music, literature and gastronomy by challenging Millhouse’s conception of “the great business of life” (p. 292) as wholly within the ideology of the marketplace and, instead, offers a revised version of Millhouse’s philosophy:

‘I waste no guineas. When I give money, it is only that I may get good interest for it. The true man, Millhouse, does not live by money, nor by that which money will always buy — bread and meat’. (p. 235)

⁶¹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 4.

For Porgy, the system of mercantile exchange favoured by Millhouse becomes a suitable metaphor for the spiritual ““consolation”” (p. 281) that Dennison’s poetry has brought him. Millhouse urges his captain to recognise that he should

‘give up this foolish po’try and soul music, ’cept when you’re among women — and listen with good will to what men of business and sense is telling you, and there’s no saying how sensible you’ll grow in time’. (p. 294)

Whilst Millhouse aligns the poetic, the consolatory and the spiritual with women, men, he advises, should engage in the public, acquisitive, business world. Millhouse believes it is possible for Porgy to participate successively both in the female world of the ‘soul’ and the male world of ‘business and sense’ without compromising himself. For Stowe, the market value of the slave made it impossible to reconcile these two worlds and consequently, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Gillian Brown argues, the market was ‘accountable for a failure of sentiment, for impeding or perverting the process of sentimental relations’.⁶² Porgy’s proposal for a reformulation of exchange so that it included the world of sentiment simultaneously evades Stowe’s problematic of slave ownership as a perversion of the sentimental and challenges Millhouse’s essentialist notions of gender in defining the sentimental as exclusively female. The debates between Porgy and Millhouse that Simms stages in *Woodcraft* ultimately revolve around what it means to be the ‘true man’ and the implications of their antithetical definitions of the ‘sensible’. For Millhouse, the sensible man lives by what he buys and sells, by his pragmatic grasp of life and by his constant recourse to the ‘useful’. For Porgy, however, the ‘sensible’ conveys his own capacity to apprehend the world through his feelings:

‘Dennison is one of my songbirds. He sings for me when I am sad. He makes music for me which I love. It is soul music which I owe to him, which finds its way to the ear of the heart, and seems to fill it with sunshine. Now, I call that being very useful to me’. (p. 283)

⁶² Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 43

Dennison's poetry evokes for Porgy an emotive engagement with the world — the 'soul music' he creates mediates between Porgy's feelings of sadness, of joy and of love accessed by the poet through the 'ear of the heart'. In Dennison's performance Porgy, the soldier and the bachelor, experiences an empathy more usually aligned in the nineteenth century with the feminine sphere of sensibility. Porgy's metaphor of aural emotive receptivity, the 'ear of the heart', profoundly links the somatic and the practical to the affective and the aesthetic in ways that evade a gendered subjectivity.

P. Gabrielle Foreman, in her reading of both Harriet Jacobs's slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and Frederick Douglass's novella, *The Heroic Slave*, comments upon a comparable connection between the ear and the heart in the discourses both writers manipulate. For Foreman it is a fundamental strategy within a revised definition of 'sentimental abolitionism' that interconnects sentimentalism, domesticity and abolitionism. In Jacobs's narrative, the female slave narrator sublimates her experiences of physical and sexual abuse as a slave into the obscenities and desires whispered into her ear by her master. In doing so, Foreman argues, Jacobs's literal and physical relocation of her violation to the ear 'as the orifice penetrated by words, acts to degenderize sexual exploitation'.⁶³ In *The Heroic Slave*, Frederick Douglass utilises the same metaphor of an eroticised aural encounter in depicting the conversion of the white northerner Mr Listwell to the cause of abolitionism through his overhearing of the impassioned soliloquy of Madison Washington. Foreman reads this scene as a revision of Stowe in both 'de-emphasizing women's centrality' within the discourses of sympathy and in allying

⁶³ P. Gabrielle Foreman, 'Manifest in Signs: The Politics of Sex and Representation in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*', in *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays*, ed. Deborah M. Garfield and Rafia Zafar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 76–99 (p. 78).

patriarchal and political power with what contemporary critical discourse and slave narrative discourse cast as the feminized vulnerability and penetrability of the ear.⁶⁴

The utilisation of the 'ear of the heart' in both these African-American abolitionist texts permitted, Foreman argues, a movement across gender boundaries and an expansion of the realm of sensibility and of sympathy that Stowe had aligned and empowered as an exclusively feminine trait. In the figure of Porgy and his understanding of the contemporary significance of the 'ear of the heart', Simms participated in these debates as they resonated with his own pro-slavery stance and as they enabled him to answer the formation of the specifically female-centred realm of the sentiment exemplified by Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Simms's depiction of the debates between Millhouse and Porgy, punctuated as they are with the language of utilitarianism and extravagance, underpin Simms's response to the problematics of the 'subverted' bonds 'of sympathy' that he perceived in abolitionist discourse. In doing so, Simms clearly framed his answer to Stowe within the issues of genre and literary discourse rather than simply inverting her critical presentation of the South and the politics of the southern plantation.

When Simms wrote *Woodcraft* in the early 1850s, his definition of 'extravagance' and 'utility' as aesthetic terms was fully formulated and enabled him to express his criticisms of Stowe's novel on several interconnected levels. In answering *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Simms's depiction of the idyllic plantation of Glen-Eberley and the loving bonds between master and slave was simply his most overt method of repudiation. In the regional art of 'woodcraft', Simms attempted to provide subsequent southern male authors with a paradigm for a rigorous authorship that would truly give the future South a distinct voice in American letters. Simultaneously, in masculinising the domestic

⁶⁴ Foreman, 'Sentimental Abolition in Douglass's Decade', pp. 150, 151.

space, Simms effectively revised the aesthetics of sentimentality that dominated the contemporary literary marketplace. Whilst he could acknowledge the power of her creative processes, Stowe's female-oriented art and her division of a male economy and a female sensibility both profoundly contravened the model of the 'sensible' man that Simms dramatises in *Woodcraft* and excluded the southern man from participation in the fiction of sympathy. In the relationship between Porgy and Tom, Simms demonstrates a connection between economic and affective bonds so that mercantile exchange becomes a metaphor for, and not a violation of, the emotive and imaginative exchange between the artist and his audience. Ultimately, Simms sought in *Woodcraft* to redefine and empower a sentimentality that challenged the antithesis between the marketplace and the home, between the masculine sphere and the feminine sphere, and between rationality and emotionality that was central to Stowe's ideological objectives in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Simms's unequivocal identification of the 'sensible' man with the southern male, engendered by the slave owner's particular experience of the concomitant financial and emotional bonds of slavery, stated his key manifesto of a southern male authorship and proposed it as a viable and necessary alternative to northern female authorship within the political, sectional, aesthetic and cultural discourses of antebellum America.

CHAPTER 4

'UNCLE TOM IS PURE FICTION': REALISM AND ROMANCE IN JAMES LANE ALLEN'S 'MRS STOWE'S "UNCLE TOM" AT HOME IN KENTUCKY' AND 'TWO GENTLEMEN OF KENTUCKY'

In a review article 'The Great American Novel', published in the *Nation* in 1868, the northern writer John W. De Forest surveys the literary output of America up to that date and queries the possibility of a contemporary American-authored novel that would truly meet the criteria of his article's title. De Forest had rational justifications for his conclusion that there was an absence of great American works because of the absence of the necessary communality of an American 'literary culture to educate Thackerays and Balzacs'. Further, De Forest acknowledges that the American writer's subject matter — the 'continental infant of American society' — was so elusive that a true and lasting likeness of the nation was impossible. De Forest considers the work of several American writers including James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell Holmes and, with ^{faint} ~~faint~~ praise, William Gilmore Simms, 'of whom the best and worst thing to be said is this — that he is nearly as good as Cooper'. Yet these American writers, he suggests, conveyed either the 'wide realm of art rather than [...] our nationality' (Hawthorne) or produced works that are 'not American novels; they are only New England novels; they are localisms' (Holmes). There is, however, one American work that De Forest believes was the 'nearest approach to the phenomenon' of greatness — Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this work, Stowe combines 'a national breadth to the picture, truthful outlining of character, natural speaking and plenty of strong feeling'. It was a novel that conveys a 'picture of American life, drawn

with a few strong and passionate strokes, not filled in thoroughly, but still a portrait'. In the 'natural speaking' of Stowe's text, De Forest finds the representational accuracy of Holmes's 'localisms' whilst in her 'few strong and passionate strokes' he could admire the 'wide realm of art' of Hawthorne.¹

De Forest admits 'noticeable faults' in Stowe's novel, including '(if idealism be a fault) a black man painted whiter than the angels' and explicitly parodies Stowe's characterisation of an ideal Uncle Tom to create his own flawed but equally sacrificial black hero, Major Scott, in his Civil War novel *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* (1867). De Forest's Major Scott is, the narrator explains, 'a counterpart of Mrs Stowe's immortal idealism, Uncle Tom' but Major Scott's occasional falsehoods and marital transgressions disappoint his liberal southern master Dr Ravenel who must concede that ultimately "'Uncle Tom is pure fiction'".² William Gilmore Simms's captious review of De Forest's first novel for the *Charleston Courier* in June 1867 directly responds to the northern author's attempted reworking of Stowe. In his criticisms of De Forest's work, Simms repeats the language he had used in his assessment of the fictional qualities of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fifteen years earlier. Simms unequivocally disapproves of De Forest's postbellum version of the South in *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* and condemns a novel that, he believed, in 'lacking the art-faculty

¹ John W. De Forest, 'The Great American Novel', in *Critical Essays on John William De Forest*, ed. James W. Gargano (Boston: Hall, 1981), pp. 31–37 (p. 36, 34, 33).

² John William De Forest, *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* [1867], ed. Sharon L. Gravett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), pp. 236–37. Thomas Gossett briefly comments upon De Forest's version of Uncle Tom. See Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), p. 340.

of Mrs Stowe', was the 'embodiment of all the brutal malignity Northern writers have ever conceived, or reported to the slander and the misrepresentation of the South'.³

Despite the profound changes that had occurred politically, socially and culturally since the publication of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, this terse critical exchange between Simms and De Forest in the late 1860s indicated to contemporary American readers that Stowe's novel remained relevant to a generation of immediate post-war writers, north and south, as a way of articulating both the continuing significance of regional and cultural identity and the new objectives of authorship and art in a reunified America. With defeat, the freeing of the slaves and the effective ending of the South's secessionist ambitions, the specific political motives for aggressively defending a defunct social system in fiction were no longer there. Yet, as Francis A. Shoup acknowledged, in an article written for the *Sewanee Review* in 1893 to mark the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, even 'with the slavery issue long since dead, it [Stowe's novel] has as many readers as ever'. In the post-Reconstruction South that Shoup was writing for, Stowe's first novel remained both an influential and referential text for southern authors seeking to take their place amongst the literary elite. Even as the original propagandistic imperative to write a southern answer to the novel declined, new artistic tensions were emerging — tensions about the nature of art and its relationship to reality — that De Forest's reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reopened. Certainly, as antebellum readings of the novel had shown, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had provoked these conflicts from its very inception. In their interpretations, antebellum southern readers had explicitly used the categories of fact and fiction to assess the artistic qualities of the work. George Frederick Holmes, in his reviews of both *Uncle*

³ Simms review cited in Edd Winfield Parks, *William Gilmore Simms As Literary Critic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 37.

Tom's Cabin and the *Key*, argues that 'success has been attained less by the imaginary merits of the fiction' than by its 'unblushing falsehoods' as fact. The novel was 'a fiction, not for the sake of more effectually communicating truth; but for the purpose of effectually disseminating a slander'. As already demonstrated, though Simms had engaged more seriously with the aesthetic elements of Stowe's work than many of his contemporaries, in his review of the *Key*, he also argued that her

facts are at once natural and unnatural. Natural, as they have unquestionably taken place; — unnatural, or rather not justly characteristic of society, — as they only occur in rare instances. It is for this very reason that the romancer and the dramatist make choice of them.⁴

Whilst Holmes expressed, in characteristically melodramatic terms, his unease at what he perceived as Stowe's abuse of fact by applying to it the 'imaginary', or imaginative, powers of fiction, Simms's corresponding distinction between the 'natural' and the 'unnatural' in artistic representation anticipated the tenor of subsequent American realist debates in the 1880s. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, critical readers of the late nineteenth century increasingly appreciated Stowe's novel for both the author's imaginative capacity and, conversely, her assured ability to represent the real. As De Forest had predicted, it was time for the South to recognise Uncle Tom as 'pure fiction' and develop its consolidation of the genuine with the imaginary.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe noted the distinction between the 'exceedingly real' and the 'romance' of the 'ideal of life'. Stowe acknowledges that the compromises of fiction — 'in a novel, people's hearts break, and they die [...] and in a story that is very convenient' — finally could not convey the experiences of 'real life', the 'round of

⁴ George Frederick Holmes, 'A Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 19 (1853), 321–29 (p. 321); George Frederick Holmes, '*Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 18 (1852),

eating, drinking, dressing, walking, visiting, buying, selling, talking, reading [...] what is commonly called *living*'. Yet such a recognition of the discrimination between the 'romance' and the 'real' did not prevent Stowe from attempting to revise this aesthetics to enable her 'to exhibit [...] a *living dramatic reality*' in her own writing.⁵ Whilst antebellum readers might reject the possibility of the seemingly contradictory aesthetics of the real, postbellum readers increasingly understood *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through a refined literary vocabulary of the 'real' of life and the 'romance' of fiction.

Richard Burton, in an article on 'The Author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*' for the *Century Magazine* in 1896, explained that 'it is a misconception of her methods of literary labor [...] to imagine that her Uncle Tom was starkly taken from life'. Instead, Burton argued, Stowe's 'types, figures, and scenes came of the creative imagination, differing from the raw materials offered by objective facts, because of the selective instinct and transmuting touch of the born storyteller'. In 'The Native Element in American Fiction Before the War', published in the *Century* in 1883, James Herbert Morse claimed *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

marked a new era in American novel writing. Here we had the genuine novel, — no mere romance, or allegory, or evolution from the inner consciousness, but a work saturated with American life, — not local but spanning the whole arch of the States.⁶

For Burton and for Morse, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* offered, for the first time, the possibility of a 'genuine novel' — one in which the representation of the 'genuine' was expressed

721–31 (p. 722); William Gilmore Simms, 'Stowe's *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Southern Quarterly Review*, 24 (1853), 214–54 (p. 217).

⁵ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 160, 450.

⁶ Richard Burton, 'The Author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Century Magazine*, 52 (1896), 699–704 (pp. 700–1); James Herbert Morse, 'The Native Element in American Fiction Before the War', *Century Magazine*, 26 (1883), 288–98.

through the 'transmuting' powers of the 'novel'. These new readings of Stowe's text raised the possibility that, whereas antebellum definitions of literary art differentiated fiction from fact, a revised appreciation of the aesthetics of the 'romance' allowed Stowe's imaginative talents to be consonant with her depiction of the real.

Nor were such amended interpretations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exclusively endorsed by the northern-based *Century Magazine*. Joel Chandler Harris, the Georgian author of the Uncle Remus tales and southern contributor to the *Century*, expressed a comparable commendation of Stowe's literary talents in a series of articles, submitted to *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1904, discussing the representation of race in the South under the title of 'The Negro as the South Sees Him'. In 'The Old-Time Darky', Harris advised that Stowe 'had among her other possessions the spark of genius that is necessary to make the creations of fiction live and move'. Further, in her depiction of the South in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harris understood the ways in which Stowe's evident fiction had become an essential fact for her later southern as well as northern readers in its appropriation into the myth of the southern plantation. Harris noted that

it has so happened in the course of time that this romantic feature, so beautifully thought out in a volume that was for a long time taboo in the South, has become the essence, and almost the substance, of the old plantation as we remember it.⁷

In doing so, Harris's reading of the novel inverted the central southern argument used against Stowe half a century earlier. That Stowe and her readers had transposed the specificity of fiction into the universality of fact was fundamental to southern outrage. Yet when fact itself became implicated in the construction of memory, as the South

⁷ Joel Chandler Harris, 'The Old-Time Darky', in *Joel Chandler Harris, Editor and Essayist: Miscellaneous Literary, Political, and Social Writings*, ed. Julia Collier Harris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1931), pp. 114–17 (p. 116)

sought to redefine their past in the postbellum period, so the power of Stowe's art could be acknowledged and exploited in the cause of cultural elegy. This was not to suggest that the novel did not continue to have its detractors in the South. Yet even the continued criticism of Stowe's work was framed within new aesthetic discourses that tolerated the possibility of authentic detail within fiction. The Virginian author Thomas Nelson Page critiqued the novel by also restating the objections of the antebellum period. In his essay, 'The Southern People During Reconstruction' first published in 1908, Page objected to the faulty mimetic strategies of the novel, arguing that 'as a presentation of the life it undertook to mirror, it was rather a piece of emotional fiction, infused with the spirit of an able and sincere but only partially informed partisan, than a correct reflection'.⁸ Yet, though Page's criticisms of Stowe's novel seem an extension of those voiced by Holmes, the objections of antebellum readers were founded in the belief that fiction had an obligation to convey moral truth. For Page, such objectives were at least secondary, and at most contrary, to the primary consideration of a representational truth. Indeed the aesthetic considerations of 'emotional fiction' were, Page claimed, essentially inimical to the requisite impartiality of the author seeking to depict the particularities of southern life. Certainly Page's arguments against Stowe's 'emotional' and 'partisan' novel jar with his own southern storytelling tropes. Page's short stories of the 1890s are related by distinctly 'partisan' voices — the former slave narrator of Page's highly popular story 'Marse Chan' (1884) achieves notable success precisely because of his 'emotional' connection to the story he tells.

The responses of southern authors like Page and Harris in the 1900s, and the marginally earlier readings of Stowe's novel by Burton and Morse in the pro-southern *Century* in

⁸ Thomas Nelson Page, 'The Southern People During Reconstruction', in *The Old Dominion: Her Making and Her Manners* [1904] (New York: Scribners, 1909), pp. 241–88 (p. 251).

the 1880s, signalled a renewal of interest in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* after a period of nearly forty years. Whilst Stowe's novel had aroused manifold southern responses in the early years of the 1850s, even by the latter years of that decade the failure to effectively silence or offer an acceptable alternative to Stowe's vision of the South discouraged further contributions to the argument. In 1856, two years after the publication of Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride*, an anonymous contributor to the *Southern Literary Messenger* could still urge southern writers to answer the abolitionist fictional assaults on the region — 'As literature has been the most powerful weapon which the enemies of African slavery have used in their attacks, so, also, to literature we must look for the maintenance of our position, and our justification before the world'. For southern authors, this remained their 'duty to the South'.⁹

The appearance of Stowe's second antislavery fiction *Dred* in 1856 had, like the publication of the *Key* in 1853, prompted further renewed and unashamed hostility from southern journals and a revival of interest in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its author. The *Southern Literary Messenger* belatedly published an anonymous review of the novel in 1858, purportedly submitted by a northern woman, that recalled earlier criticisms of the author by condemning Stowe for her 'want of female delicacy' and characterising her new work as 'bordering on profanity'. The editor defended the late appearance of the article on the grounds that the review was 'more a criticism of Stowe than of *Dred*' and, assuming such motives were eminently acceptable to its readers, declares that 'as such we are confident it will be gratefully accepted'.¹⁰ Few new southern writers, however, would venture an anti-Tom novel or an anti-Tom article in the late 1850s and Civil War

⁹ W. R. A., 'The Duty of Southern Authors', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 22 (1856), 241–47 (pp. 242–43).

years. Mrs Henry R. Schoolcraft's novel *The Black Gauntlet: A Tale of Plantation Life in South Carolina* was published in book form in 1861 and was one of the last novels to attempt an overt disavowal of Stowe's depiction of slavery using the familiar tactics of the standard antebellum anti-Tom tradition. Schoolcraft sought to counter the negative impression of everyday southern experience forwarded by Stowe through a detailed fictional account of the Wyndam plantation located in her native state. The skeletal plot of the novel and the superficial characterisation of white and black, and master and slave alike, connects extensively quoted fact-based accounts of the South, alongside Biblical citation and biological evidence, to demonstrate Schoolcraft's belief in black inferiority and justification of slavery. In dedicating the novel to her husband, the anthropologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the author accepts that she too 'might, 'tis true, amuse my fancy like our daring, dashing, witty romancer, Mrs Stowe, by imagining a millennial world, where all are born equal [...] or I might even lash my sensibilities into fury' yet queries 'of what practical use would all this castle-building be? It would fritter away the mind'. Schoolcraft's identification of the aesthetic strategies of the 'fancy', of 'imagining' and aroused 'sensibilities' in her introductory allusion to Stowe contrast with her repeated definition of her own literary project to write accurate 'sketches of plantation life'. The implication was, if Stowe wrote from the 'fancy', Schoolcraft was writing from real life. As the wife of a prominent nineteenth century social scientist, Schoolcraft's credentials as a seemingly impartial observer were patent.¹¹

In subsequent years, however, the attention of reviewers was withdrawn from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The publication of *Dred*, as the *Southern Literary Messenger* review

¹⁰ A New England Lady, 'Mrs Stowe and Dred', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 27 (1858), 284–86 (pp. 284–85).

demonstrated, had revived interest in the earlier anti-slavery novel because of its similar subject matter and southern setting but Stowe's later New England novels ensured that after 1857 few reviews or articles addressed her first novel in any detail. Even a cursory examination of the bibliographies compiled on both Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reveal the hiatus in critical commentary on, or fictional encounters with, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for a period of over twenty years between the early 1860s and the mid 1880s.¹² Certainly the economic and social upheaval that Civil War and Reconstruction effected in the South go a long way to explain the southern silence on the subject. Clearly many southern men and women had found a new, more imperative, 'duty' to their region than to answer Harriet Beecher Stowe in fiction though that was not to suggest that ^{the} importance of southern authorship was lost on the seceding states.

The 'harpers were present at the feast, but no one called for the song': Resurrecting Southern Authorship in the Postbellum South

The war did not interrupt the continuing debate over the more general needs of southern authorship, however, even if *Uncle Tom's Cabin* itself no longer posed the specific threat it had. As the war was fought, the demands for 'a literature of our own' continued to dominate southern intellectual thought unabated. During the 1860s the *Southern*

¹¹ Mrs Henry R. Schoolcraft, *The Black Gauntlet: A Tale of Plantation Life in South Carolina* [1861] (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. vi.

¹² Thomas Gossett's bibliography specific to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* cites only one periodical article relating to the novel during this period whilst Margaret Holbrook Hildreth's more general Stowe bibliography shows the controversy in the periodical press surrounding Stowe's 1870 work *Lady Byron Vindicated* but cites only one article on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that appeared in 1866 until the mid 1880s. Jean W. Ashton's extensive chronological bibliography confirms the same fluctuations of interest in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the postbellum period. See Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), pp. 449–71; Hildreth, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Bibliography* (Hamdon, CT: Archon, 1976), pp. 203–57; Ashton, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1977).

Literary Messenger would, with almost monthly regularity, call its incipient writers to account. Recapitulating Simms's own paralleling of political and cultural independence, M. Brooks, writing in an article 'The Intellectual Future of the South' in May 1862, urged his readers to anticipate the positive cultural impact of the war with the North. With confidence he explained that 'after any great moral or political convulsion has shaken a nation to its foundations, the age immediately following is generally one of great intellectual activity'. The article appeared in the *Messenger* only a month after the sobering bloody defeat of the Confederates at the battle of Shiloh, a battle that redefined the meaning of the war by suggesting, for the first time, the possibility of heavy fatalities and a drawn-out struggle. With unprecedented casualties on both sides, James M. McPherson argues that Shiloh dramatically disabused southerners and northerners alike of their romantic notions of combat. Yet the *Messenger* still encouraged its readers to interpret the outcome of the war in romanticised terms that foregrounded the cultural, rather than political or social, impact of the conflict and idealised the peace that southerners and northerners desired. If the South was reeling from its unexpected defeat in Tennessee, Brooks did not allude to it as he anticipated the time 'when peace once more sheds her hallowed influences around us, may we resolve to have a literature of our own'.¹³ Likewise, in October 1863, Samuel D. Davies submitted an article entitled 'Observations on Our Literary Prospects' that repeated many of the points made by Brooks nearly eighteen months earlier. Like Brooks, Davies believed the Civil War brought with it 'the promise of ultimately creating for us a national literature marked by all the distinctive characteristics of the Southern temperament'. Appearing in the autumn of 1863, Davies's article followed the southern defeats at Gettysburg and

¹³ M. Brooks, 'The Intellectual Future of the South', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 34 (1862), 313–14 (p. 314); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The American Civil War* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 413.

Vicksburg in July. At the end of these battles both sides had almost unimaginable numbers of dead, wounded and missing, yet Davies sees in the inevitable southern isolationism a vital spur to southern intellectualism that he framed explicitly in strategic terms. It was, he argued, the 'same circumstances which forced us to seek within our own territorial limits the means of maintaining our physical well-being [that] have also made us look within ourselves for the means of gratifying our intellectual wants'. For both Brooks and Davies, the impact of war was interpreted in the opportunities it provided for southern authorship.¹⁴

Yet despite a hoped for southern literary renaissance expressed by the contributors to the *Southern Literary Messenger* during the war, after the southern surrender at Appomattox and the subsequent period of Reconstruction some southerners still suspected that the infrastructure necessary for the production of great authors — literary communities, publishing houses, periodicals, and a literate and sympathetic reading public — were as limited in the defeated South as they had been ten years earlier when Simms expressed his own dissatisfaction at southern cultural parochialism and amateurism. In two essays, 'The Old South' and 'Authorship in the South Before the War' collected in *The Old South: Essays Social and Political* (1892), Page attempted to approach the topic and defend the cultural paucity of the antebellum South on the grounds that the region lacked these necessary inducements for authorship. It was no lack of talent, he assured his readers, the 'harpers were present at the feast, but no one called for the song'. Page also took the essay as an opportunity to commend several antebellum southern writers to his readers, suggesting that a reconsideration of southern texts, a rereading within the context of postbellum experience, would rediscover the capabilities of southern artists.

¹⁴ Samuel D. Davies, 'Observations on Our Literary Prospects', *Southern Literary Messenger*, 35 (1863), 620–27 (pp. 620–21).

Edgar Allan Poe deserved recognition for his poetry and, aside from Poe, John Pendleton Kennedy, John Esten Cooke and William Gilmore Simms were the 'leading literary men of the South'. In fact, Page asserted, 'no one in the history of Southern literature ever applied himself more assiduously and loyally to its development than Simms'. Page's appreciation of southern literary endeavour was comprehensive and he equally acknowledged the importance of the *Southern Quarterly Review*, the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *DeBow's Review* and the success of both southern antebellum women writers like Caroline Lee Hentz and postbellum writers like E.D.E.N. Southworth, Augusta J. Evans Wilson and Marion Harland in establishing a southern literature.¹⁵

If the need for a southern literature was important to antebellum writers, the end of a war that left the South 'once more reduced to the intellectual status of a colony' was, to use Jay B. Hubbell's emotive terms, even more 'galling' for southerners increasingly eager to establish and promote their own writers. Yet, by the late 1860s and 1870s, many of the prominent southern authors of the previous decades, those writers lauded by Page, were either dead or in the twilight years of their literary careers. As Louis D. Rubin and Helen Taylor note, few southern writers spanned the antebellum and postbellum period and even fewer southern writers had emerged to take their place.¹⁶ Like Page, late-

¹⁵ Thomas Nelson Page, 'The Old South' in *The Old South: Essays Social and Political* [1892] (New York: Scribners, 1906), pp. 3–64 (p. 59); Page, 'Authorship in the South Before the War', in *The Old South*, pp. 67–109 (p. 95); Hubbell paraphrases the same principal causes for a limited southern literary tradition outlined by Page to explain why postbellum southern authorship remained unremarkable. See Jay B. Hubbell, *The South in American Literature 1607–1900* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 713.

¹⁶ Francis A. Shoup, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin Forty Years After', in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Hall: Boston, 1980), pp. 49–59 (p. 56); Hubbell, p. 709–10; Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *The Writer in the South: Studies in a Literary Community* (Athens: Georgia University Press, 1972), p. 34;

nineteenth-century readers of antebellum writers confidently identified and prompted several important southern writers of the pre-war period. Whilst Brooks commended Edgar Allen Poe, Morse concurred with Page in his praise for Simms, Poe and John Pendleton Kennedy. Yet, Poe had died many years before the war, Simms and Kennedy both died in 1870, and, though Cooke did live until 1886, by the 1880s there were few established southern writers to succeed the prominent men of antebellum southern letters. At the same time, the more successful southern periodicals that had specifically promoted the cause of southern writing had failed before and during the Civil War. The *Southern Quarterly Review* had collapsed in 1857 three years after Simms's departure as editor, and the *Southern Literary Messenger* had failed in 1864. If there was to be a resurgence of southern literature as many southern intellectuals hoped, the question remained who would write it and who would publish it. Finally, southern writers would have to acknowledge that, as Daniel Aaron has argued, the postbellum South could still not produce the 'unwritten novel of the war'.¹⁷

Page's essays on southern writing in the 1890s revealed his determination to establish the literary credentials of his region that were specifically connected to the peculiarities of its discourses. His essays argued that the South had both its own authors and a reputable literature before the war that contemporary southern writers could and should build upon. Page attempted to promote and interpret a literary tradition of the Old South and to recognise the factors that would inhibit further cultural achievement in the region.

Helen Taylor, *Gender, Race, and Region in the Writings of Grace King, Ruth McEnery Stuart, and Kate Chopin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 16.

¹⁷ Brooks, p. 314; James Herbert Morse, 'The Native Element in American Fiction Since the War', *Century*, 26 (1883), 362-75 (p. 291); Page, 'Authorship in the South Before the War', p. 94; Richard J. Calhoun, 'Literary Magazines in the Old South', in *The History of Southern Literature*, ed. Louis D. Rubin

Page also sought to define the distinct qualities of postbellum writing and, in particular, his assessment of Joel Chandler Harris located the Georgian writer in a tradition of southern writing men. Francis Pendleton Gaines identifies Page and Harris as the principal names in the southern plantation tradition. Certainly Page highly regarded the multiple levels of storytelling that underpinned Harris's tales that, he implied, were drawn from the particular social characteristics of the South. In 1895, Page submitted a review essay to the *Book Buyer* entitled 'Immortal Uncle Remus' to express his approval of the appearance of a new edition of Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* first published in 1880. Page praised his contemporary for the 'charming picture of the relation between the old family servant and the family of his master' that had come from 'a region known rather for its acting men and talking men than for its writing men'. The dialect and the 'fidelity to life' of Uncle Remus, Page claimed, is 'perhaps almost the best contribution to our literature which has been given since the war'. The stories that Harris's Remus related to Miss Sally's boy 'were recognized by those who had been brought up in the South as at core the same which they had heard in their childhood from the old "uncles" and "aunties" of the plantation' and Harris's reproduction of the black dialect that conveyed the 'habit of thought as of speech, the quaint turn of phrase' made this text, Page suggested, 'the best thesaurus' of the language of 'all American negroes of the old time'. If the animal fables Remus told rehearsed those heard by every southern boy, it was Harris's technical skill in combining imaginative text and memory that Page admired most in this work.¹⁸

and others (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), pp. 157-74 (p. 158); Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 245.

¹⁸ Francis Pendleton Gaines, *The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and Accuracy of a Tradition* (Gloucester, MA: Smith, 1962), p. 79; Thomas Nelson Page, 'Immortal Uncle Remus', in *Critical Essays on Joel Chandler Harris*, ed. R. Bruce Bickley, Jr. (Hall: Boston, 1981), pp. 55-57 (pp. 55-56).

Harris himself had entered the debates over southern authorship nearly fifteen years before Page in his contributions to the *Constitution* in 1879. Harris recognised the ‘continual call for what is technically known as “Southern Literature”’ but urged southern writers to resist the temptation to translate ‘localism’ into ‘sectionalism’. Repeating the contradictory notation of the ‘genuine artist’ that Morse had articulated, Harris, in ‘As to Southern Literature’, expressed his belief that

when the Southern novelist comes to depict life as it really was and is, his work, if he be a genuine artist, will be too impartial to suit the ideas of those who have grown fat through feeding upon the romantic idea that no additional polish could be put on our perfections’.

In a second article, ‘Literature in the South’, Harris went further in his critique of southern writing motivated by any desire to further sectional prerogatives. Certainly the South had untapped imaginative resources, he assured, but ‘We have no Southern literature worthy of the name, because an attempt has been made to give it the peculiarities of sectionalism rather than impart to it the flavor of localism’.¹⁹

Both Page and Harris shared a common artistic vocabulary that attempted to balance the needs of the ‘romance’ and the needs for a ‘fidelity of life’ in fiction, both recognised in the southern psyche a desire to write about the South, and both ostensibly sought to direct writers away from political motives by emphasising the importance of storytelling strategies and artistry. Yet the aims of both Page and Harris in surveying southern fiction were not necessarily as innocent of a political agenda as they might self-consciously suggest. Taylor stresses, ‘southerners were quick to understand the political potential — indeed, urgency — of sectional fiction, especially as a means of setting straight a record

¹⁹ Joel Chandler Harris, ‘As to Southern Literature’, in *Joel Chandler Harris, Editor and Essayist*, pp. 43–44; Joel Chandler Harris, ‘Literature in the South’, in *Joel Chandler Harris, Editor and Essayist*, pp. 45.

which, it was felt, had been left to the North to write'. For Cash, southern literature like that produced by Harris and Page was unequivocally 'propaganda [...] addressed primarily to the purpose of glorifying that Old South'.²⁰ Both writers finally revealed their interlocking literary and political agenda in a very specific way — through their response to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Page and Harris chose to explicitly write on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* relatively late in their literary careers and over fifty years after the publication of Stowe's work. Both contemporary and modern readers have argued that Page's first novel *Red Rock: A Chronicle of Reconstruction* (1898) was 'in effect a belated reply to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*' as part of an attempt to refute misconceptions of the South. Indeed Theodore Gross cites a review of the novel that made such objectives patent; for many southerners, *Red Rock* 'achieved its political and literary purpose: it "cast a spell strong enough to exorcise Uncle Tom's ghost from all except the darkest, most benighted corners of the land"'.²¹

Yet in *Red Rock*, Page made no overt reference to Stowe's novel or, unlike Hentz or Simms, attempted to revise her aesthetics in any particularly sophisticated way. Certain characters were reminiscent of those created by Stowe — the allusive Tom name of the spinster Miss Thomasia and her correspondence to Stowe's Miss Ophelia is a single example of Page's limited engagement with Stowe's earlier novel. It ultimately answers *Uncle Tom's Cabin* only in presenting a positive version of southern community values.

²⁰ Taylor, p. 18; W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), pp. 145–46; Richard Gray, *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 76.

²¹ Hubbell, p. 801; Theodore L. Gross, *Thomas Nelson Page* (New York: Twayne, 1967), p. 95. The most recent allusion to the relationship between *Red Rock* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is in a biographical entry by L. Moody Simms though this essentially paraphrases Hubbell. See L. Moody Simms, Jr., 'Thomas Nelson Page', in *American National Biography*, vol 16 of 24, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 909–910.

It is only in his later essay, 'The Southern People During Reconstruction', that he directly addresses *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Page suggests that 'As an argument against the evils inherent in slavery, it was unanswerable' and recognised the text's national influence by suggesting that 'Possibly the most general conception of the old life at the South held by the rest of the country is that drawn from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'. Page conceded that the text had a 'truth in detail' but it 'contained even more untruth as a picture of civilization'. This critical distinction between what could be regarded as 'truth' and 'untruth' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was central to Page's response to the novel because it questioned the 'untruth' of Stowe's art rather than the 'truth' of her subject matter — an interpretation that somewhat ameliorated but concurred with William Gilmore Simms's accusations of Stowe's 'vicious abuse' of art. Whilst he testified to the benevolent aspects of slavery in 'Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War' where the exigencies of plantation life created the 'associations which tempered slavery and made the relation one of friendship', in 'The Old South' Page, like other postbellum southerners, finally acknowledged the 'immeasurable ill' of slavery.²²

In contrast, Joel Chandler Harris, ~~however~~, proposed to understand the 'real moral of Uncle Tom's Cabin'. Harris argued that Stowe's integrity of art finally prevented the author from ever fully endorsing her intended assault on the system of slavery. In fact, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a 'volume that was for a long time taboo in the South' is, Harris claimed, a 'defense of American slavery as she found it in Kentucky'. Harris assured any sceptical readers quick to dispute this claim that this was not a defence 'to be found in the text of the book'. Harris's proposition revealed a new way of reading texts that other southern writers were also expressing. Maurice Thompson's short dialect story 'Ben and

²² Thomas Nelson Page, 'Social Life in Old Virginia Before the War', in *The Old South*, pp. 171–221 (p. 178); Page, 'The Old South', p. 11.

Judas', published in the *Century Magazine* in 1889, included a prefatory note that guided his readers towards more subtle reading strategies. He suggested that his story, 'Like all fragments of history, [...] has a trace of allegory in it'. Thompson advises that 'Those who care for dialect literature [...] may read lightly; but let the serious reader ponder over what may shimmer between my lines'. Thompson acknowledged that the pairing of the white and black man in 'Ben and Judas' was reminiscent of Harry Stillwell Edwards's 'Two Runaways' which had appeared in the *Century* in 1886. If Thompson recommended reading between the lines of his text, in directing his readers to prior texts, he also approved his act of intertextual writing and his reader's act of intertextual reading.²³

The *Century* proved itself at the centre of this vital resurgence of southern letters in the 1880s. Under the guidance of its editor, Richard Watson Gilder, the *Century* sought out fiction and critical writing by southern authors that included, almost monthly, work by the prominent postbellum southern authors Page, Harris, Thompson, Edwards, and George Washington Cable and James Lane Allen. As Janet Gabler-Hover notes, in its patronage of southern authors and in its innovative publication of Edward Kings's travelogue 'The Great South' series during the 1870s and the later documentary Civil War series during the 1880s, the *Century* consistently projected a North-South reconciliation that was not fully consonant with the facts of post-Reconstruction America but certainly dramatised the aspirations of southern writers intending, not only to compete in, but, to dominate the national literary market. During the 1880s 'the editors tended to minimize, in editorials and in their consideration of the work of southern writers, sectional disagreement on racial questions' and they achieved this by

²³ Harris, 'The Real Moral of Uncle Tom's Cabin', in *Joel Chandler Harris, Editor and Essayist*, pp. 117-120 (p. 117); Maurice Thompson, 'Ben and Judas', *Century Magazine*, 36 (1889), 893-902 (p. 893).

publishing stories of racial reconciliation. Thompson's 'Ben and Judas' and Edwards's 'Two Runaways' were only two of the *Century* stories that told and retold the ongoing emotional bonds between black and white former slave and former master. One of the most accomplished attempts to pair the loving white man and the loving black man was that published by the Kentucky-born writer James Lane Allen in his story 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky', a local color fiction which also implicitly returned to a sometime neglected text of the South — *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.²⁴

In the late nineteenth century, there was a resurgence of interest in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, particularly in the South, with a number of review articles, stories and novels that returned to the 1852 novel and its characters for material that presaged a confident renewal of southern authorship. Whilst the original novel had been readily available for postbellum readers, the appearance of a new, illustrated edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published by Houghton Mifflin in 1879 occasioned a series of new critical reviews and the celebration of Stowe's seventieth birthday in 1882 and the publication of an authorised biography by her son Charles Edward Stowe in 1889 prompted a number of biographical pieces. After a period of nearly forty years, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was once again drawing the attention of southern readers but, as Stowe's new critics like Burton and Morse demonstrated, the ways in which these readers responded to the novel had subtly changed over the intervening years. Thomas Gossett broadly recognises this shift in attitude towards the novel as the South 'became more willing to concede that Stowe had been motivated by good intentions. She was no longer dismissed as an evil woman, but she was still seen as a badly mistaken one'. In the late nineteenth century, the South

²⁴ Janet Gabler-Hover, 'The North-South Reconciliation Theme and the "Shadow of the Negro" in *Century Illustrated Magazine*', in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and

also returned to the subject matter that had made *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the anti-Tom tradition so popular in the 1850s — the plantation tradition. After nearly forty years, the image of the planter and his slaves assumed a renewed appeal and, if the subject had attracted readers in the mid-century, southerners soon discovered that northern readers were eager to read these new southern texts. As Francis Pendleton Gaines argues, 'We come with 1870 to a new age. There is not a new tradition. There is a new appreciation of the old tradition'.²⁵

The postbellum South was increasingly a very different environment for its native writers and the aesthetic and commercial frustrations, real and imagined, that had encumbered Simms's writing career were gradually changing for later southern authors. Though the defence of slavery as an extant social system was no longer necessary, Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction southern writers nevertheless perceived a continued, if amended, need for a regional literature to convey the true values of the South that they claimed sectional tensions had distorted. Echoing Simms's own concerns that the story of the South was produced only by northern intellectuals, James Lane Allen declared in 1887 that 'if the history' of the relationship between slave and master 'is ever to be written, it will be written in the literature of the South, for there alone lies the knowledge and *the love*'.²⁶ The fundamental difference for the southern author writing in 1846, when Simms declared the need for southern writers, and 1887 was that fiction that depicted the South could, by the late nineteenth century, court a

Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 239–56 (p. 244); Taylor, p. 20; Buck, p. 221.

²⁵ Gossett, p. 356; Gaines, p. 62; William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Braziller, 1961), p. 160.

²⁶ James Lane Allen, 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky', *Century Magazine*, 34 (1887), 852–67 (p. 867, original emphasis). Subsequent references cited following abbreviation *HK*.

national and, perhaps more importantly, northern sympathetic readership unknown to the earlier generation of southern literary men. Whilst slavery continued, southern writing that uncritically lauded or even simply condoned the plantation way of life found a muted response from northern publishing houses and a consequent constricted readership. What southern defeat and emancipation demonstrated was that a value system that offended northern sensibilities in the 1850s was more supportable for northern readers in the 1870s when it was relegated to the past in the new manifestation of the 'Old South'. Southern-born writers soon discovered that, as Paul H. Buck concludes, a 'culture which in its life was anathema to the North, could in its death be honored'. Edmund Wilson concurs when he argues that, having destroyed the South militarily, economically, and culturally the rapidly industrialising North 'wanted to be told of its glamor, of its old time courtesy and grace'.²⁷ The corollary of southern defeat was that, when the actual fact of slavery was abolished, the moral codes that had maintained and defined black-white roles in southern society enabled the South to impress upon the reunified nation what the region perceived as its particular authority in understanding and articulating race relations. The romanticised plantation myth of happy slaves and kindly masters that emerged in southern works during this period somewhat moderated an overtly-expressed racism without finally ever eschewing the racial bigotry that had underpinned pro-slavery defence. If master and slave were emotionally bound together, the representation of the benign relationship simply made it easier for northern readers to accept racial stereotypes that were as restrictive as those of Stowe's *Uncle Tom*, Hentz's *Vulcan* or Simms's *Tom*. What southern writers discovered was that the new story of the old plantation was ultimately as profoundly influential upon the postbellum imagination as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been upon the antebellum

²⁷ Paul H. Buck, *The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937), p. 208; Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the Civil War* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1962), p. 605.

mind. In the resurgence of the plantation as a terrain for fiction, Gaines acknowledges that, 'Abolitionism was swept from the field; it was more than routed, it was tortured, scalped, "mopped up"' .²⁸

As a subject for both factual travel writing and for fiction, the particularities of the landscape and the people of the South were emerging as a rich imaginative resource and a commercial success for southern writers in the post-war literary marketplace. Allen's emphasis upon the 'knowledge' and 'love' of the chronicler of the South insisted upon the author's intimacy with the region, an exclusive qualification that privileged the southern-born writer. With the growing popularity of fiction depicting the picturesque qualities of the local scene from the 1870s through to the beginning of the twentieth century, the already-established exoticism of the South, due in part to Stowe's representation of the region in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, seemed to afford more than ample material for its writers to utilise. As W. J. Cash was to argue, in post-Reconstruction America, the South 'began at last to have a literature'. The significance of the intervention of the *Century*, alongside that of the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly* and *Scribner's Monthly*, in the promotion of southern literature is noted by Richard Brodhead:

These journal titles specify a highly particular provenance: they say that regional fiction was published within a certain historical formation of the literary, and beyond that, of culture at large.²⁹

As Thompson's preface to 'Ben and Judas' indicates, there was a conscious attempt to establish a literary, and also self-referential, literary context for these new southern texts.

²⁸ Hugh M. Gloster, *Negro Voices in American Fiction* (New York: Russell, 1948), p. 9; Ritchie D. Watson, Jr., *The Cavalier in Virginia Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), p. 163; Rubin, p. 40; Gaines, p. 63.

²⁹ Cash, p. 145; Buck, p. 196; Richard H. Brodhead, *Culture of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 123.

Local color fiction clearly promoted realistic heterogeneity — the peculiarities of dialect, custom and manner of the regions of America — but it simultaneously emphasised idealistic homogeneity by anticipating a shared literary readership and emphasising a single and interlocking interpretative and self-reflexive fiction of southern experience past and present.

'To place the whole picture of the present beside the whole picture of the past':

James Lane Allen's Juxtaposition of Realism and Romance

In 1887 the Kentucky-born writer James Lane Allen published a short descriptive piece on his region in the *Century Magazine* that he entitled 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky'. The following year the *Century* began to publish six stories by Allen that would appear from 1888 until 1891. The third story to appear — 'Two Gentlemen of the Old School' — was published in April 1888 and was later included in Allen's first collection *Flute and Violin and Other Kentucky Tales and Romances* (1891) under the revised title of 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky'. The reference to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the title of the non-fiction text clearly signalled Allen's design to reflect on Stowe's characters and her specific representation of his native state in the opening chapters of the novel. Allen expanded upon the brief description of a former slave Peter Cotton included in 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"' to make him the central protagonist in 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' and, in doing so, intertextually connected the two texts. Both Grant C. Knight, Allen's first biographer, and more recently Caroline Gebhard, have noted that the 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' was written as a 'complement' short story to the earlier article and was Allen's first, and finally only, attempt to fulfil a 'plan

of pairing a descriptive or travel essay with a short story in order to capture the spirit of place or time'.³⁰

James Lane Allen received popular and critical acclaim for his writing during the late nineteenth century but, as his work went out of print, his subsequent reputation rapidly declined with later generations of readers. Only two years after his death, Scribner's *Dictionary of American Biography* had clearly staked out Allen's remit as a writer of sentimental plantation fiction. Allen 'holds a secure place' in American literature, J. H. Nelson assured, yet he 'fell heir to a belief in chivalrous ideals of plantation society' and 'His mind played fondly over the idealized past of the South'. By the 1920s Allen had 'lost his vogue', Max J. Herzberg later explained, 'partly because his sentimentality and unreality had ceased to appeal'. Even Allen's biographer William K. Bortoff has acknowledged Allen as 'only a minor master' of fiction. The depreciation of Allen's work is most concisely expressed, however, by Merrill Maguire Skaggs ^{whose} ~~who's~~ exiguous commendation argues that 'Allen's depiction of Kentucky life made it often seem as relaxing as a julep on the next-door colonel's front porch'.³¹ Yet other readers have

³⁰ Grant C. Knight, *James Lane Allen and the Genteel Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1935), p. 74; Caroline Gebhard, 'Reconstructing Southern Manhood: Race, Sentimentality, and Camp in the Plantation Myth' in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 132–55 (p. 140). See also Robert D. Rhode, *Setting in the American Short Story of Local Color, 1865–1900* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 107. Gaines's study of the plantation tradition, first published in 1924, predates Knight's biography by more than ten years and is the earliest reference I have found that suggests a reading of Allen's plantation fiction specifically in the context of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. See Gaines, p. 81.

³¹ J. H. Nelson, 'James Lane Allen', in *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, 10 vols (New York: Scribners, 1927–1932), I (1927), 195–97 (p. 195); Max J. Herzberg, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 17; William K. Bortoff, 'James Lane Allen', in *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Robert Bain, Joseph M. Flora and Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 3–5; Merrill Maguire

found more to admire in Allen's fiction; Allen was, Buck declares, the 'ablest of the younger writers who began writing in the late eighties'. Those critics who approve his work recognise in Allen a self-conscious and self-reflexive artist capable of theorising his storytelling in ways other contemporary southern writers did not or could not. Ironically, Skaggs's explanation for the lack of appeal of local color for modern readers specifically points to this same interest in the narratorial process of local colorist writers — 'local color is primarily storytelling, not prophecy; narrative, not symbolism; character sketch, not psychological analysis' — and, in drawing such conclusions, Skaggs provides a legitimate way of reading Allen's work. Allen's first forays into professional writing were literary criticism rather than fictional pieces with, amongst others, essays on both Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He was, Robert R. Rhode claims, 'an ardent student of narrative art and a competent local color theorist' and this is reflected in his deliberate attempt to redefine the remit of the southern artist. Knight notes that, like George Washington Cable and Mark Twain, Allen embarked on a lyceum lecture tour to raise funds, his repertoire including a no longer extant address called 'The Literature of the New South'. Whatever the specific subject matter of this lost speech, and Knight suggests Allen believed that a southern literature was yet to come and that the limited objectives of dialect stories were fully accomplished, the title of the address clearly indicated Allen's willingness to participate in the debates about southern authorship and conceptualise the literary form these new texts would take.³²

Skaggs, 'Varieties of Local Color', in *The History of Southern Literature*, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and others (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), pp. 219–27 (p. 222).

³² Buck, p. 205; Skaggs, p. 219; Rhode, p. 62; Knight, pp. 77–78. Further biographical details outlining Allen's literary concerns can be found in Bortoff, *James Lane Allen* (New York: Twayne, 1964), pp. 27–28; Knight, p. 59; Lee Emling Harling, 'James Lane Allen', in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), I, 332–33. For a survey of the limited critical writing on Allen see also William K. Bortoff, 'James Lane Allen', *American Literary*

Allen's purpose in pairing the descriptive 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"' and the fictional 'Two Gentlemen in Kentucky' has provoked little further comment from the, admittedly, small number of critical readers of Allen's fiction, yet it was an important dual response to Stowe's novel that both distinguished and intersected the two key elements of Allen's aesthetic theories. By pairing the two texts — the fictional 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' and the non-fictional 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky' — Allen immediately posed an intriguing rereading and rewriting of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that not only challenged Stowe's original text but destabilised the notion of a single, monologic truth. Allen's fictional writing had emerged from his earlier literary criticism — he was, Bortoff claims, 'a critic as early as he was writer' — and his fiction both inculcates and articulates his aesthetic theories. A year prior to the publication of 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"', Allen contributed a literary essay to *The Evening Post* that defined the two critical terms that would become his 'major theme' in writing and also fundamentally 'define his literary technique and approach'.³³ In 'Realism and Romance', Allen recognised the distinction between 'realism' and 'romance' within the context of the debates of William Dean Howells on the nature of realism and its relationship to local color but he also attempted to logically reconcile the two 'motives'. If realists discredit the 'romantic motive', Allen charges, let them try, 'in the very spirit of precision and lucidity, to separate it from everything else and exhibit it in its sole and entire nature'. He concludes:

there is but one definition of romantic that would justify the condemnation of it in the realistic novel; *i.e.*, not true of human nature, for if it *is* true of

Realism, 1870–1910, 2 (1969), 221–24. Though over thirty years old, there has been little subsequent critical work on Allen since, making this annotated bibliography the most comprehensive available.

³³ Bortoff, *James Lane Allen*, p. 28.

human nature, then least of all men is the realist, who must value the whole of human nature, competent to pronounce it uninteresting.³⁴

In his two answers to Stowe's novel, Allen initially distinguishes the realistic and the romantic motive — the descriptive 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"' depicts the 'picturesque in architecture and in life' for the 'stranger' reader in ways that local colorists admired as an indication of their realist strategies. In 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"', Allen compares Stowe's representation of the region to the 'facts' of his own text. Allen's essay was a self-professed 'statement, not an apology' (HK, p. 860) and a statement that was 'made as a fact, not as an argument' (HK, p. 867) that represented the narrator as an impartial writer refusing to engage in the antagonistic and partisan debates of a previous era. Answering Stowe's novel in 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"', Allen was able to provide accurate 'representatives of the same class that furnished her with her hero' (HK, p. 853) from his personal experiences of the region. Though he sought to challenge some of the conclusions drawn from Stowe's arguments, Allen did not entirely dismiss Stowe's version of Kentucky; after citing in full a paragraph of Stowe's description of the peculiar form of benevolent slavery and agriculture from the first chapter of the novel, his first response is to assure his readers that her 'words contain many truths' (HK, p. 854). Indeed, Allen literally derived from Stowe a substantial amount of material for his essay that included several passages of quoted text from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and a series of short descriptive passages that rewrote certain scenes and expanded upon characters introduced in the Kentucky portion of Stowe's novel. In the article, Stowe's text was utilised as both an authority for Allen's own writing and as an alternative text against which Allen would posit his own authority. Allen effectively juxtaposed Stowe's 'fiction' with his own 'fact' by citing passages of Stowe's novel and immediately rewriting the scenes

³⁴ James Lane Allen, 'Realism and Romance' [1886], in *The Heritage of American Literature*, ed. Lyon N. Richardson, George H. Orians and Herbert R. Brown, 2 vols (Boston: Ginn, 1951), II, 282–86 (p. 286).

she had invented. Finally Allen suggests it was not the nature of Stowe's characterisation that was flawed — 'it was not the *character* of Uncle Tom that she so greatly idealized, as has been so often asserted; it was the character of events that were made to befall him' (*HK*, p. 854).

In his article, Allen rectifies this flaw in foreclosing Stowe's primary plot mechanism and denying the possibility that Uncle Tom would have been sold South. Allen then replaces the artistic impetus of Stowe's geographical movement with a movement represented by the 'transitional stage of race' between the slave of the Old South and the freedman of the New South. Moving from the white community to the newly emancipated black community, 'The air seems all at once to tan the cheek' (*HK*, p. 852).

In his apprehension of both the racial body and textual body, Allen alludes to the performative and pastiche nature of minstrel burlesque and, in 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' he again repeats this image within the context of the romanticised relationship between the white man and the black man. The fictional 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' is a romantic memorial to 'a softened charm' that 'invested the drowsy quietude of that shadowy paradise in which the old master without a slave and the old slave without a master still kept up a brave pantomime of their obsolete relations'.³⁵ This foregrounding of the image of the 'pantomime' enabled Allen to appropriate the body of the slave into text and manifest the literal possibility of multiple and layered texts in which romantic idealism performed over reality. For Allen, the black body was the site where textual and aesthetic debates bisect and conflict. He was certainly not the

³⁵ James Lane Allen, 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom" at Home in Kentucky', *Century Magazine*, 34 (1887), 852–67 (p. 852). Subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically with the abbreviation *HK*; James Lane Allen, 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' in *Flute and Violin and Other Kentucky Tales and Romances* [1891] (New York: Harper, 1899), pp. 97–132 (p. 119). All subsequent references to this edition will be cited following the abbreviation *GK*.

first white writer to use the black body as a text for interrogating what it means to be a white author, but Allen's double response to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* enables him to deconstruct and reconstruct the nature of southern authorship by querying the essential nature of texts. In 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"' and 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky', Allen explored the way in which fiction intersects with reality, the ways in which the interpretation of texts informed and disrupted meaning, so that the body of Peter Cotton becomes the focus for repeated acts of textual misinterpretation and anachronism that hesitantly begin to query the application of the text of feeling to the body of the real.

In disrupting the original distinction between fact and fiction, realism and romanticism and male and female, Allen immediately dramatises the construction of a new southern aesthetics that used the body of the black man as the coincidence of the two artistic principles. Inviting his reader into the newly created 'towns' of the former slaves, Allen asks his readers to consider how

Tatters and silks flaunt themselves side by side. Dirt and cleanliness lie down together. Indolence goes hand in hand with thrift. Superstition dogs the slow footsteps of reason. Passion and self-control eye each other all day long across the narrow way. (*HK*, p. 852)

For Allen, the black body, singly or in communion, is the text that embodies the real ('Tatters', 'Dirt', 'Indolence', 'reason', 'self-control') and the romance ('silks', 'cleanliness', 'thrift', 'Superstition', 'Passion') for the southern author. This strategy also provides a vocabulary for Allen's emerging theories of intertextuality. The 'side by side', 'hand in hand' nature of the two impulses replicates the ways in which Allen pastes texts together in 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"' and the ways in which he depicts Peter Cotton's body as text.

In defining his fictional strategies in each text, however, Allen manipulated the established gender affiliations between realism and masculinity and romance and femininity that had dominated the aesthetic debates of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ from the 1850s. As Bortoff summarises, Allen signalled his apprehension of the gendered aesthetic doctrines of realism and romance in the essay ‘Two Principles in Recent American Fiction’ (1897) in which he aligned realism to the ‘masculine principle’ and romance to the ‘feminine principle’. As Allen had indicated in his earlier ‘Realism and Romance’, these two principles ‘should exist, ideally, in a complementary state of tension. Only then are truth and art one; only then is human life represented in all its fullness and richness’.³⁶ In the two complementary texts written in response to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Allen implied that ‘Mrs Stowe’s “Uncle Tom”’ conveyed the accurate realities of his region whilst the ‘Two Gentlemen of Kentucky’ articulated the sentimental, the pastoral ‘charm’ of the romance of his home-state. Yet, conversely, the allusion to the female artist ‘Mrs Stowe’ in the title of the first text and the mixed-gender community of slaves, former slaves, slave-owners — the Mammy, the Cook, the Mistress constitute the ‘great functionar[ies] of the household’ (*HK*, p. 858) alongside the eponymous Uncle Tom and slave preacher Peter Cotton — implicate the text in a female-oriented domestic fiction. Likewise, the emphatic masculine relationship signalled in the title of the ‘Two Gentlemen of Kentucky’ and the bonds between white master and black slave realigned sentimentality with masculinity in, what Gebhard describes as, the ‘homosocial fantasy of racial harmony’. Arguably, as Gebhard suggests, Allen’s story expresses a ‘proto-gay subjectivity’ but what this fantasy really manifests is the way in which the Colonel and Peter Cotton mutually apprehend the reality of

³⁶ Doris Y. Kadish, ‘Gendered Readings of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*: The Example of Sand and Flaubert’, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 26 (1998), 308–20 (p. 313); Bortoff, *James Lane Allen*, p. 29.

existence through the sentiment and discover their readings to be increasingly problematic.³⁷

When the Colonel and Peter Cotton discover a courting couple walking in their garden, the heterosexual love affair certainly mirrors the loving bonds between the white man and the black man. Indeed, shortly after spying the young couple, the Colonel asks his former slave, as they walk, “Give me your arm, Peter” (*GK*, p 126) and so replicates the intimate physical contact he has observed between the two lovers. Yet their witnessing of the affair causes the ‘deepest agitation’ for the two Kentucky men as they ‘crept up breathlessly and peeped through the bushes at the pair strolling along the shady perfumed walks’. (*GK*, p. 121). The emotional excitement of the two men as they become privy to the private love affair primarily identifies them as sensitive sentimental readers emotionally responding to, but not interacting with, the witnessed scene. Though both men debate the exigency of intervening in the secret relationship by informing the girl’s parents, they both tacitly agree to leave the unfolding clandestine romance to its own devices by constructing around it their own idealised, and specifically textual, version of events. The Colonel queries “Peter [...] do you suppose he has already — asked her?” (*GK*, p. 121) for this fictionalised possibility disburdens the Colonel of the actual implications of the lovers’ liaisons. Peter’s response however is significant. The Colonel’s question prompts Peter to relate his own attempts to court his late wife Phillis. Peter explains that he uses his role as a preacher to convey to Phillis his feelings as she sits in the congregation. Peter uses the Scripture text “De greates’ o’ dese is charity; ’caze I knowed charity wuz same ez love” (*GK*, p. 122). Peter grows confident in the effect on Phillis of his preaching, declaring “de better I *feel*, de better I *preach*, so hit

³⁷ Gebhard, pp. 148, 144.

boun' de mek my *heahehs* feel better likewise”’, but as he concludes his reading he becomes aware of the repercussions of the misinterpretation of his text. Though he is assured of the power of his text because it expresses how he feels, when Charity Green approaches him rather than Phillis and reveals that she had “‘tekin’ ev’y las’ thing I said to *herse’f*” (*GK*, p. 123) he realises that the felt text can still be misapprehended. Just because he ‘feel better’ in his textual exegesis, he discovers that his meaning does not become transparent nor categorical.

The reference to the ‘Old School’ in the original title of the short story, Bortoff suggests, underlined a central theme of the text — the ‘passing of a generation’ in the Old South.³⁸ Certainly the phrase denoted the outmoded values held by the two gentlemen of the story, Colonel Romulus Fields and his former slave Peter Cotton are both out of key with the emotional and intellectual needs of the New South. In the immediate years after the war, many southerners shared ^{the} emotive sensibilities of the Colonel and Peter — ‘At affecting passages in the sermons men grew pale and set their teeth fiercely’ (*GK*, p. 99) — but, increasingly, the Colonel and Peter were ‘finding out that [their] occupation was gone’ (*GK*, p. 116). The original title gestured at the passing of an aesthetic or philosophical school that the two men represented and sustained long after it was no longer a viable strategy for interpreting their experiences. If their socially determined roles were no longer valid, Allen ensured that it was conveyed in the failure of the Colonel and Peter Cotton to voice the realities of the postbellum South. So the Colonel found that in the church choir he could only sing an ‘ancient bass of his own improvisation to the older hymns’ and wondered ‘whether any one noticed that he could not sing the new ones’ (*GK*, pp. 119–20). Likewise, when Peter Cotton offers his

³⁸ Bortoff, *James Lane Allen*, p. 39.

'pastoral services' to a newly established black church he attempts 'to preach a new sermon, suited to the newer day' but finds it is poorly received because he 'preached in the old-fashioned way' (*GK*, p. 117). If the Colonel and Peter have lost their 'occupations', Allen expresses their dislocation from contemporary southern society in their failure to participate in their culture's newer artistic practices. Bound by 'old' forms, the Colonel and Peter find their communication strategies no longer relevant to their region. As each man independently discovers, it is not necessarily what he says that jars with the times but the ways in which he says it. When the Colonel and Peter decide to leave their ruined plantation home in the blue-grass plains of Kentucky and move to Lexington two years after the Civil War they are 'ready to turn over a new leaf in the volumes of their lives, which already had an old-fashioned binding, a somewhat musty odor, and but few unwritten leaves remaining' (*GK*, p. 109). Allen was explicit — the white southerner Colonel Romulus Fields and the black southerner Peter Cotton were old books in old bindings. As the anonymous contributor to *Putnam's Monthly* in 1853 had ascribed the popular success of Stowe's fiction to the storytelling strategies that made her novel a 'live book' that 'talks to its readers as if it were alive' so, in Colonel Romulus Fields and Peter Cotton, Allen took this trope of the walking and talking text as central to the characterisation of his white and black southern gentlemen.³⁹

The ways in which Peter Cotton was described made this man-as-text overt. Peter is a preacher and, 'being touched with a spark of poetic fire from heaven', he 'conceived for himself the creation of a unique garment which should symbolize in perfection the claims and consolations of his apostolic office'. This garment takes the form of a blue-jeans coat with long tails upon which Peter's mistress 'embroidered sundry texts of

³⁹ Anonymous, 'Uncle Tomitudes', in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Boston: Hall, 1980), pp. 35–42 (p. 39).

Scripture which it pleased him to regard as the fit visible annunciations of his holy calling' (*GK*, p. 105). In her reading of the story, Gebhard briefly comments upon the 'already-too-much trope of Peter as text' but even if, as Gebhard implies, Allen's metaphor was somewhat heavy-handed the function of 'Peter as text' remains^a central issue in the story and should not be disregarded.⁴⁰

Allen returns repeatedly to the coat to signal the key stages of the narrative. Peter proudly dons the coat before the war as he provides spiritual ease to his fellow slaves, from the coat he selects a text for his sermon following the war, he wears the coat to preach his last sermon over the grave of the Colonel and finally the coat is used as his own winding sheet when Peter dies at the end of the story. Peter's seven 'sundry texts of Scripture' are carefully selected from the New Testament, one for each day of the week. Two of the unidentified texts are taken from the gospel of St Matthew: 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin' (Matthew 6:28) and 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden' (Matthew 11:28). Three come from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: 'Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel' (I Corinthians 9:16), 'Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity' (I Corinthians 13:13) and 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall be made alive' (I Corinthians 15:20). One text is from Paul's letter to the Ephesians: 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh' (Ephesians 6:5) and the final selection is from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians: 'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep' (I Thessalonians 4:13). Finally the 'concatenation' of scriptural texts are 'braided together' and 'duly solemnized', at Peter's request, with an intricately embroidered 'Amen' to

⁴⁰ Gebhard, p. 147.

'close the entire chain' of passages that trace the border of the coat (*GK*, p. 106) in a 'girdle of everlasting texts' (*GK*, p. 107). In Peter's coat, Allen replicated his own acts of textual pastiche in the companion text 'Mrs Stowe's "Uncle Tom"' and his intertextual conceptualisation of cyclical 'everlasting' reference.

The embroidered passages on Peter's blue-jeans coat provoke several important issues for readers of the 'Two Gentlemen of Kentucky' both in terms of the interpretation of the reasons for Peter's selection of specific texts and in terms of the way James Lane Allen apprehends and interrogates the notion of textuality. Initially the motives for the biblical selection seem evident. Several of the passages have a direct application to Peter's slave experiences. The selections from Matthew offer solace for hardships on earth, specifically with reference to physical labour, and encourage faith in God to relieve and reward those trials in the afterlife. Likewise the passage from Ephesians urges social harmony based upon the domestic observances between parents and children and between slaves and masters and draws parallels between obedience to a master and obedience to Christ. These particular passages provide both consolation and affirmation for slavery and the patriarchal social values of the Old South for the white and black communities in similar ways to antebellum pro-slavery biblical proofs. As Peter preaches to his fellow slaves, 'Many a poor over-burdened slave took fresh heart and strength from the sight of that celestial raiment; many a stubborn, rebellious spirit, whose flesh but lately quivered under the lash, was brought low by its humble teaching' (*GK*, p. 107). The power of the text for antebellum readers is manifest in Peter's consolatory authority to his fellow slaves. If several of Peter's texts did materially endorse the 'Old School' order of chattel slavery, the remaining passages are seemingly more esoteric selections. Yet each text provides a further endorsement for both Peter's and, ultimately, Allen's second objective. If Allen intended to accommodate non-

confrontational black and white relations through the mutually supportive bond between Peter and the Colonel, he also sought to legitimise his act of authorship and his attempt to write an alternative southern history. The subsequent texts Peter has embroidered onto his coat and his exegesis of the passages in his sermons literally interconnect to reflect this objective — the divine call to tell the story of a people and a time that are past in ways that engaged the sympathies of his readers.

Allen's brief texts posit a concurrent reinterpretation of the power of the aesthetics of sympathy, the authority of texts and the necessity for self-reflexive authorship that anticipates the profound reinvention of Stowe's text by Thomas Dixon in *The Leopard's Spots*. Through Colonel Romulus Fields and Peter Cotton, Allen began the process of disconnecting the power of sympathetic reading and race relations that Dixon dramatically completes. Though Allen's story is primarily read by post-nineteenth-century readers as a benign vision of romantic reconciliation between the former master and the former slave, the gradual disaffection of both men ^{with} ~~from~~ the codes of discourse surrounding them and the increasing gap between the realities of their relationship and the romance of their 'pantomime' dramatise the inevitable passing of sympathy that both men witness. When Peter's old sermon is poorly received by his new audience he took his 'righteous coat' and

folded it away in a little brass-nailed deer-skin trunk, laying over it the spelling-book and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which he had ceased to read. Thenceforth his relations with people were never intimate'. (GK, p 117)

Peter's rejection of his treasured texts is also a final rejection of a code of relations based upon emotional intimacy. It is only the Colonel that 'took Peter's rejection greatly to heart' (GK, pp. 117–18) and doing so signals his shared understanding of the aesthetics of the heart that the post-war South cannot, nor want^s to, comprehend. Allen's two anti-Tom texts provide a necessary bridge between the antebellum responses of

Hentz and Simms, in which Stowe's aesthetics of sympathy are appropriated by southern authors, and Thomas Dixon. Prior to Dixon, southern authors had insisted upon the affection between the races in contravention of Stowe's horrors of slavery. Allen's text is essential in elucidating how Dixon can legitimise his demonising of this same relationship. By placing black and white relations in the context of the bonds of the heart and to demonstrate that these bonds are anachronistic for comprehending the South after the war, Allen's text enables Dixon to move this towards the argument that, not only is sympathy no longer applicable, but, to practice sympathy is an increasingly dangerous misreading of race and gender relations in the postbellum South.

CHAPTER 5

THE 'WHITE MAN'S BURDEN' OF THE 'ROMANCE': RECONSTRUCTING THE SOUTHERN MALE AUTHOR IN THOMAS DIXON'S *THE LEOPARD'S*

SPOTS

In his essay 'The Freedman's Case in Equity', the first of two related articles produced for the *Century Magazine* in 1885, the Louisiana-born writer George Washington Cable presented a provocative critique of the hypocrisy of the South's commitment to the 'inalienable right[s]' of the white man. For Cable, such a commitment simultaneously consigned the 'American black man' to the very status of 'alien'. When, Cable surmised, the white southerner's continued hold of black men in a state of political inferiority 'should break, one single wave of irresistible inference would lift our whole southern social fabric and dash it upon the rocks of negro emancipation and enfranchisement'. Cable's candid analysis of the racial shibboleths that continued to underpin postbellum southern society prompted Henry W. Grady, the southern editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, to contribute an open response to the paper. In an answering essay commissioned by the *Century*, 'In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr Cable', published later that year, Grady challenged Cable's right to pronounce judgement upon his section. Grady declared that 'the South has been silent', but the time had now come when 'where it has been silent, it now should speak'. Though he answered Cable's political points, the pun of Grady's title, equating the black and white of the printed page with the racial tensions of the post-Reconstruction South, and the explicit dialogic tenor of Grady's written response to the southern author emphasised the importance of the seemingly extraneous question of who was qualified to speak for the region and

transmute black and white southerners into a text truly for and of the South. If Grady's influential 1886 lecture, 'The New South', was to be read as a manifesto for any prospective spokesman for the region, it was implicit that Grady's projection of a 'new' South — an economically, socially and politically progressive region — was nevertheless born of the southern 'hero in gray with heart of gold' returning to the South to 'bear testimony to his children of his fidelity and faith' in the 'old' South ideals of white masculinity at the very moment of his defeat.¹ Even Grady's politically liberal vision of the genesis of the 'new' South encapsulated the disparity at the centre of both turn-of-the-century southern revisionist and projected history. Interpreting Grady's rhetoric, Paul Gaston suggests that defeat fostered the seemingly unrelated 'romantic pictures of the South and the cult of the Lost Cause', and C. Vann Woodward concludes that, out of 'the glittering vision of "metropolitan" and industrial South to come there developed a cult of archaism, a nostalgic vision of the past. One of the most significant inventions of the New South was the "Old South".' For Bruce Clayton, this coupling of old South values to New South progressive ideals presented a considerable tension for the southern intellectuals of the late nineteenth century compelled to walk 'a tightrope between romance and realism' in envisioning their region.²

In his articles for the magazine, Cable recognised that the political and cultural identity of the southern white man remained dependent upon his construction and deconstruction

¹ George Washington Cable, 'A Freedman's Case in Equity', *Century Magazine*, 29 (1885), 409–18 (pp. 410–11); Henry W. Grady, 'In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr Cable', *Century Magazine*, 29 (1885), 909–17 (p. 909); Henry W. Grady, 'The New South', in *A New Reader of the Old South*, ed. Ben Forkner and Patrick Samway (Atlanta: Peachtree, 1991), pp. 342–48 (p. 344).

² Paul Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 6; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), pp. 154–55; Bruce Clayton, *The Savage Ideal: Intolerance and Intellectual Leadership in the South, 1890–1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 40.

of black masculinity. Whilst Grady outwardly rejected Cable's views, his own call for an end to the southern silence accepted that ultimately the historical and fictional narratives about the South were not those of the southern white man but, in many respects, conveyed southern masculinity as an absence defined by what it was not. In an 1887 essay for the *Century*, Wilbur Fisk Tillett was able to both offer an explanation for this and anticipate the need for a resurgence of southern authorship in the postbellum South. For Tillett, as for Grady, antebellum slavery, and the reliance on the agricultural economy that slavery sustained, diminished the strength of the South and the southerner and, in this interpretation of the region, Tillett readily equated the lack of physical potency with the lack of intellectual rigour in the South. The antebellum South promoted the 'dependent idler, or "gentleman of leisure", supported by his slaves', whereby the 'curse of slavery with its slothful and enervating influences rested like an incubus on the intellect of the white southern man of the South'. Finally freed from the 'shackles of his bondage', however, the 'young manhood of the South cannot fail to show itself in making the Anglo-Saxon race in the Southern States a more robust, earnest, and manly type of character than was ever possible under the old civilization'. In the New South, the southern man has set himself to 'change our figure to one more prosaic and true to life' and, in doing so, his 'writings bear as never before the solid marks of mental vigor and strong, manly work'.³ In his essay, Tillett contrived a thematic chiasmus between the body of the southern man and the southern-authored text. Whilst the southern man personified the 'prosaic' qualities of the text, his writing was to embody the corporal ideals of a physical manliness that late-nineteenth-century American culture aspired to. The 'prosaic' southerner and the manful text that Tillett encouraged were some way from the poetic sensibilities of William Gilmore Simms's

³ Wilbur Fisk Tillett, 'The White Man of the New South', *Century Magazine*, 33 (1887), 769–76 (pp. 769, 770, 775).

gallant southerner Captain Porgy and the 'soul music' that entertained him in *Woodcraft*. It also remained antithetical to the hyper-civilised, hyper-feminised southern gentlemen of the old regime plantation that popular authors like Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, and James Lane Allen successfully mythologised in the pages of the *Century*. Tillett confidently critiqued slavery as a system willingly consigned to the past that would make possible new definitions of rigorous independent manhood. At the same time southern fiction writers were finally finding a truly national readership by specifically idealising the emotional bonds between master and slave as the *sine qua non* of southern male identity.⁴ Tillett's essay posed some intriguing problems for contemporary southern writers. Could the 'prosaic' man that Tillett advocated as the future of both southern manhood and southern authorship participate in the romanticised relationships between the black man and the white man that dominated the southern literary imagination at this time? Conversely, could the sentimental tradition, with its fundamental reliance upon the traditionally feminine virtues of sympathy, self-control and civilisation, ever articulate the specific needs of a reinvigorated southern masculinity recovering from military defeat and seeking cultural recognition? These were important questions for southern intellectuals to raise, for, however influential the vanguard of literary realists such as Henry James or William Dean Howells were on American letters in the late nineteenth century, sentimentalism remained the fundamental mode of expression for the South.

Though Grady looked to the future of the region, his 'New South' always came back to the southerner's narratives informed by a 'heart of gold'. The popularity of southern

⁴ In considering postbellum authorship in the South, Jay B. Hubbell comments upon this dual loyalty of southern authors both to the newly unified nation and to the ideals of the southern past. See Hubbell, *The South in American Literature, 1607-1900* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 715.

reconciliation romances in the second half of the nineteenth century, where a marriage between a southern belle and a northern soldier was presented as a symbol of postbellum national unity, did nothing to diminish the centrality of the heart in conveying the southern romantic psyche for American readers. As both Nina Silber and Jane Turner Censer have argued in their analyses of the respective northern and southern 'reunion romances' of the period, such a focus upon the marriage rather than the legislative contract in unifying the two regions 'elevated the sentimental bond above all others'.⁵ Yet this allegiance to the realm of the 'heart', and the attendant reliance on sympathy between northerner and southerner, reverted to an overt romanticism that Tillett had expressly consigned to the 'enervating' old South. Though the South was gaining provenance as a literary terrain for southern authors in the late nineteenth century, the sentimental romances of Page, Harris and Allen would finally never transform the way the region was perceived to the extent that Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had done in the 1850s. It was not until 1902 that a southern writer would fully and successfully challenge Stowe's mid-century interpretation of the region and empower new literary tropes that would reinvent the ways the region constructed an interlocking racial, gendered and authorial identity. The substance of that challenge came in the unequivocal consignment of an aesthetics of the heart to the southern past, the concomitant rejection of the storytelling forms that dominated antebellum and postbellum southern literary texts and the formulation of a revised southern aesthetics for the New South.

⁵ Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina, 1993), p. 64; Jane Turner Censer, 'Reimagining the North-South Reunion: Southern Women Novelists and the Intersectional Romance, 1876–1900', *Southern Cultures*, 5 (1999), 64–91 (p. 64).

'Is it not time they heard the whole truth?': Thomas Dixon's Answer to *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin

It was the unremitting appraisal and reappraisal of the cultural, social and political South in the late nineteenth century, the apparent inaccuracy of these assessments and the abiding desire for a southern-born writer to give expression to the ideals of the 'silent South', that reputedly encouraged the recently ordained minister and aspiring author Thomas Dixon to write a novel that would become a bestseller. Eventually nearly one million copies of Dixon's novel were sold to American readers. Dixon's first novel, *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden — 1865–1900*, was published in March 1902 but seemingly had a long gestation that emerged from the racial and sectional debates of the 1880s engaged in by Cable and Grady. Dixon's biographer Raymond Allen Cook notes that, after attending a lecture contentiously titled 'The Southern Problem' given by Justin D. Fulton in 1887, Dixon identified the need to redress the prejudicial view of the contemporary South that predicted further violent revolution against the North. The North Carolina-born Dixon 'decided that he must some day tell the world what he knew of the South at first hand'. After watching a dramatised version of Stowe's text, Dixon finally committed himself to writing the novel in 1901. He determined that 'Since Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the most famous indictment of the South in fiction [...] the best answer to her charges would be a sequel, pointed to reveal her error about the South'. Contemporary readers and reviewers were under no misapprehension about Dixon's motives; as one commentator enthused, in *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon had gone a long way to "deliberately undo [...] the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe"⁶.

⁶ Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 158; Raymond Allen Cook, *Fire from the*

Subsequently, the popular commercial success and cultural impact of Dixon's first novel would, as Thomas Riggio argues, truly 'rival [...] the publishing sensation of Uncle Tom' and 'reach [...] an audience comparable to Mrs Stowe' in ways that earlier antebellum responses had not. In considering Dixon's authorship, Sandra Gunning goes further in emphasising the aesthetic paradigms that connected Dixon and Stowe. Both writers produced work that was marginalised as art but had a profound influence on popular culture and, with subsequent dramatic and filmic adaptations following on from the publication of both novels, transgressed the artistic boundaries between text, theatre and cinema.⁷ Like Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and unlike Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* and William Gilmore Simms's *Woodcraft*, Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* undoubtedly established its unknown author's reputation. Prior to 1902 Dixon had published only sermons and journalism, and *The Leopard's Spots* was his first literary undertaking. Nevertheless, despite the phenomenal popular success of his first novel, little critical work on anti-Tom fiction has included Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* in the tradition, in part because, written fifty years after Stowe's novel, it falls outside the obvious chronological parameters of most studies focusing upon antebellum responses.⁸

Flint: The Amazing Careers of Thomas Dixon (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 1968), pp. 71, 105–06, 114; Raymond Allen Cook, *Thomas Dixon* (New York: Twayne, 1974), p. 66.

⁷ Thomas P. Riggio, 'Uncle Tom Reconstructed: A Neglected Chapter in the History of a Book', *American Quarterly*, 28 (1976), 56–70 (pp. 61–62); Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890–1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 29.

⁸ Margaret Holbrook Hildreth's list of 'books occasioned by Mrs Stowe's writings' is the only bibliography that does extend to the twentieth century but it too does not recognise Dixon's novel as an anti-Tom text. See Hildreth, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Bibliography* (Hamdon, CT: Archon, 1976), pp. 255–57. Comprehensive literary histories that do not include Dixon include *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 24 vols.; Raymond Allen Cook contributes one of the few biographical pieces included in general literary histories. See Cook, 'Thomas

Initially, such a neglect of Dixon's novel in the context of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is legitimate. The abolition of slavery and Civil War defeat had moderated the immediate and most obvious relevance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Dixon's early twentieth-century southern readers. Indeed, Edmund Wilson claims that by the beginning of the twentieth century the popularity of Stowe's work had dramatically declined and few younger readers were familiar with the text. Yet Stowe and her novel still retained their potent hold on both northern and southern imaginations in 1902. Stowe's story and characters remained very much at the forefront of the national consciousness throughout the late nineteenth century in dramatised form, engaging in vital debates about race, class and gender for white, northern audiences. The Tom shows were predominantly minstrel burlesques rather than serious adaptations; favourite characters were doubled-up, songs and dances were introduced, ever more impressive stage effects were attempted. By turns, the plays were comic, bawdy or melodramatic, and the black-face characters wavered between sentimental nostalgia and contemporary racist caricatures. As Dixon's dislike of the play demonstrated, the stage performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* perpetuated, in a somewhat revised form, a version of the South that a conservative southerner like Dixon could still find objectionable. The popularity of the Tom shows by the end of the nineteenth century was unquestionable and revivals of the play by itinerant acting troupes were frequent as a sure way of making money in a competitive theatrical marketplace. Even in 1901, the year Dixon began writing *The Leopard's Spots*, two rival Tom plays opened in New York to large audiences. Similarly, Thomas Gossett cites a reviewer writing in 1902 who claimed that 'in that year alone a million and a half people in the United States, one in every thirty-five inhabitants of the total

Dixon', in *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Joseph M. Flora and Louis D. Rubin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 127–29.

population, would see a production of the play'. At the beginning of the twentieth century, as Dixon wrote his sequel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's story remained a significant part of American popular culture.⁹

The immediate significance of the popularity of the Tom shows, however, was a shift in the composition of the audience for Stowe's text. If the reception of the original novel was circumscribed by female reading habits in domestic privacy, the Tom shows and theatrical adaptations located Stowe's characters and imagery resolutely in the public sphere. Even by the turn of the century, the theatre and music hall were an almost exclusively masculine environment and, whilst adaptations and burlesques of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reduced the complexity of Stowe's precise moral meaning, the play versions engendered a series of issues specific to its new male audience. David R. Roediger and Eric Lott have interpreted the racial imperatives of antebellum minstrelsy as integral to the construction of the American white working class in the North. Though minstrelsy pre-dated and in some respects inspired Stowe's race stereotypes in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the plays that emerged after 1852 reinforced pro-slavery and white supremacist arguments and introduced into the story provocative sexual and sectional elements that were absent or abated in Stowe's original text. For Roediger, minstrelsy exposed 'the challenges to traditional plebeian concepts of maleness', whilst for Lott, the purpose of the Tom shows was to dramatise regional conflicts that Stowe had attempted to ameliorate in her own novel — antislavery was increasingly redefined by

⁹ In his history of the Tom shows, Harry Birdoff gauges the growing rather than diminishing appeal of the play as the century waned by noting that in 1879 the New York *Dramatic Mirror* recorded forty-nine travelling companies performing variants of Uncle Tom, whilst the same paper in 1899 listed nearly five hundred troupes of 'tommers'. See Birdoff, *The World's Greatest Hit: Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Vanni, 1947), pp. 257, 359; Thomas Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), p. 371.

the 'tommers' as anti-southern in ways Stowe had never intended.¹⁰ Though both studies focus primarily upon the minstrel show before the Civil War, the gender and sectional tensions expressed through black-face profoundly influenced the dynamics of the postbellum Tom shows. Whilst the representation of race on the American stage was increasingly routine in its stereotypes, it was an effective shorthand for debates about the regional and gendered identity of a white male audience that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* now galvanised at the turn of the century.

In the late nineteenth century, a second generation of proto-feminist writers were also investing Stowe's ideology of matrifocal female authority with renewed and intensifying political purpose with the emergence of an alternative and proactive model of the 'new' woman. For the South, even more so than the for North where women had been calling for legal, political and social equality from the 1830s, the shift in gender relations during and after Reconstruction was a veritable sea change. As Marjorie Spruill Wheeler comments, even in the late nineteenth century the 'continued association in the minds of white southerners between feminism and abolitionism made the woman suffrage movement anathema to many white southerners'. If the problematic issue of gender relations remained associated with the objectives Stowe expressed through *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the southern experiences of the Reconstruction period ensured that antipathy for the novel and its author equated with anti-northern sentiments. Thomas Gossett notes that, for the postbellum South, 'Stowe herself became the chief symbol of the perfidy of

¹⁰ Jeffrey D. Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 91, 118; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 120; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 219.

the North' as white southerners confronted dramatic changes in their social and political identity instituted by those who had defeated them.¹¹

Within this context of redefined social roles in the South, Dixon freely exploited Stowe's work for viable characters to participate in his sequel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and deliberately selected those characters and stock scenes that remained popular to a readership familiar with the novel only through the Tom shows. Whilst Simon Legree emerges as a dominant political force in the new order, his rule is facilitated by Dave Haley and a black freedman Tim Shelby, a former slave character that Dixon invents but associates with Stowe's Kentucky Shelbys. The South that Legree controls is peopled by both a black (the ex-slave Nelse) and a white Uncle Tom (Tom Camp), and the familiar figures of a white girl who dies young (Flora Camp) and an amoral and unconstrained wild black child (Dick) in a mirroring of the popular minstrel pairing of Eva and Topsy.¹²

Moving the action North, Dixon also describes the experiences of George Harris, the renamed adult son of the fugitive slaves George and Eliza Harris. In Dixon's novel, Harris is a Harvard graduate in love with the daughter of his white patron. He is

¹¹ Elizabeth Ammons, 'Stowe's Dream of the Mother-Savior: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and American Women Writers Before the 1920s', in *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 155–95 (p. 188); Anne Firor Scott, 'The "New Woman" of the New South', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 61 (1962), 473–83 (p. 473); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), p. 170; Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 17; Gossett, pp. 343–44.

¹² Whilst Tom Camp is recognised as Dixon's version of Uncle Tom by Riggio, the affectionate and loyal Nelse is overlooked as an alternative and complementary Tom figure. Likewise, Sandra Gunning identifies the correlation between Dixon's Flora and Dick characters and Stowe's Eva and Topsy. See Riggio, p. 66; Gunning, p. 38.

persuaded by his patron's rhetoric of racial equality to ask him for her hand in marriage and is subsequently compelled to confront the hypocrisy of the North when he is angrily refused because of his race. Dixon's brevity in his recapitulation of Stowe's characters made clear that he expected his readers to be familiar, at least superficially, with the earlier text and to use this knowledge to understand his revisions. In *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon effectively redirected his reader's knowledge of the male-oriented play text back to a specific consideration of the original female-oriented aesthetic features of the novel itself. Dixon's novel was unequivocally, as Lawrence J. Oliver concludes, 'intertextually connected' to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in overt ways. It is this very attempt to engage the multiple forms of Stowe's text in a dialogue that underlined Dixon's aesthetic pretensions in *The Leopard's Spots*. Whatever his aspirations to write history — and the historical note with which Dixon introduced the novel, in which the work is described as a 'literal statement of the history' of the Reconstruction South, openly declared such designs — the novel was first and foremost conceived of as fiction. Dixon's working title for his text — 'The Rise of Simon Legree' — further demonstrated his intent to position himself in response not simply to Stowe but also to William Dean Howells, whose *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885) perfunctorily inspired Dixon's original title. According to Cook, Dixon also modelled his trilogy of race novels, of which *The Leopard's Spots* was the first, upon a trilogy by the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz. Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* had been an American best-seller in 1896 and both Cook and Michael Rogin comment upon the intellectual and emotional connections that Dixon made between Sienkiewicz's patriotic agenda and his own need to confront the failure of southern nationalism in Civil War defeat and consequent domination by the North during Reconstruction. Alongside the propagandistic motives such allusions conveyed, Dixon's multiple attempts to locate his first novel within both

popularly and critically acclaimed writing testified to his ambition to be thought of as a serious author.¹³

In his reinterpretation of southern race relations and his exposure of contradictory northern racial attitudes, Dixon's immediate plan in answering the novel differed, in some ways, very little from those adopted by earlier southern respondents. His objections to the racial sanctimony of northerners reflected the criticisms levelled at the North by antebellum southerners, and George Harris's experiences repeat those of the fugitive slave Crissy when she seeks paid work in Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride* or the pro-slavery arguments of George Fitzhugh or James Henry Hammond. In his presentation of the South, however, Dixon categorically subverted the image of benign relationships between black and white that pro-slavery writers like William Gilmore Simms had advocated before the war and James Lane Allen repeatedly used afterwards. The loyal slave, the 'ole nigger', was a literary archaism that Dixon replaced early on in his novel with a 'new negro' — a term that differed dramatically from the cultural and political racial rebirth defined by Alain Locke several decades later. Dixon confronted an image of the black male that his predecessors had both conscientiously denied within slavery and demonised as the worst outcome of freedom — the possibility of black violence against the white population.

In 1852, when Simms answered abolitionist propaganda, he expressed an exasperation at the suggestion of an imminent slave uprising. 'As for insurrection', he assured his readers, 'nobody who knows anything of the country, or its people, has any apprehension

¹³ Cook, *Fire from the Flint*, p. 71; Cook, *Thomas Dixon*, p. 66; Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), p. 197;

on the subject. Men retire to their beds at night [...] without locking a door or bolting a window.’ Yet, whilst Simms considered his own, explicitly male, domestic space inviolate, other pro-slavery defenders anticipated a very different scenario if slaves were emancipated. Writing in the early 1830s in response to the debates engendered by the Nat Turner Rebellion, Thomas Roderick Dew unequivocally warned that free black men and women could not remain in America alongside the white population, arguing that the ‘history of the world has too conclusively shown, that two races, differing in manners, customs, language, and civilization, can never harmonize upon a footing of equality’. Emancipation, he argued, was ‘admirably calculated to excite plots, murders and insurrections’. The reason he gave was simple — ‘the emancipated black [...] forever wears the indelible symbol of his inferior condition; *the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots*’.¹⁴ If Dixon’s title and epigraph, cited from Jeremiah, were in the tradition of biblical proofs to legitimise slavery, Dixon’s rhetoric and his repeated coda — ‘*You cannot build in a Democracy a nation inside a nation of two antagonistic races*’ — were patently influenced by Dew’s pro-slavery arguments. In *The Planter’s Northern Bride*, Russell Moreland uses the opening clause of this same biblical citation as a text to restrain his own insurgent slaves. Addressing the black mob he argues that ‘The Bible says — “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” No he cannot! But there is no reason why he should have a black heart, because his skin is black’. Yet for Dew and for Dixon the racial body did convey a profound artistic dissonance. The sentimental aesthetics of the ‘heart’ that Stowe had effectively utilised to bind black and

Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 312.

¹⁴ William Gilmore Simms, ‘The Morals of Slavery’, in *The Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States, Containing the Several Essays, on the Subject, of Chancellor Harper, Governor Hammond, Dr. Simms, and Professor Dew* [1852] (New York: Negro

white experience for her readers in the act of sympathy and the cultural values of ‘customs, language, and civilization’ were, both men agreed, incompatible with the ‘indelible symbol’ of the black body.

In his unequivocal representation of the black man in *The Leopard's Spots* as a rapist or potential rapist, Dixon dramatically conveyed a view he had learnt from Dew — for both men the body was the site where biological and cultural imperatives intersected. In *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon used the repeated threat and act of interracial rape to convey fears about the physical, political and cultural heritage of white racial identity in a single act. What the novel develops out of its title is a series of interracial acts between black men and white women in which the dynamics of storytelling and the dynamics of sexual assault become interchangeable. Reduced to the ‘indelible symbol’, the black flesh was literally a signifier whereby the body of the text and the body-as-text became synonymous. This enabled Dixon to encode aesthetic debates about southern white authorship by exploiting the provocative but influential anxiety about white female and male sexuality in the South that had dominated nineteenth-century racial discourses. What Winthrop D. Jordan defines as the ‘sexual leitmotif’ of race fiction was the fear of black (sexual) aggression that repeatedly returned as an issue of contention for white southerners at moments of social crisis. As Ronald G. Walters explains, the rhetoric of abolitionism and slavery during the 1850s always revolved around the ‘erotic potential in interracial contact’ which acknowledged the rape of black female slaves by their white masters but also extended to fears about black male desire for white women. As such, the artistic subtext of Dixon’s symbolic use of rape in the novel has been superseded by the far greater implications of rape as a political metaphor. For Theodore

Universities Press, 1968), pp. 175–285 (p. 221); Thomas Roderick Dew, ‘Professor Dew on Slavery’, in *The Pro-Slavery Argument*, pp. 287–490 (pp. 410, 444, 447).

L. Gross the racist caricatures of interracial rape by post-Reconstruction authors like Dixon 'did not create a literature of artistic merit' but texts that ultimately 'proved to be artistically fatal'.¹⁵ In the case of Thomas Dixon this has proved true; the reading of the author Dixon has been commuted by the reading of the white-supremacist Dixon and for the majority of readers it remains impossible to reconcile the two. Yet for Dixon, for whom the body itself was the primary source of aesthetic power, his belief in the superiority of the white body and the superiority of the white author were intimately connected. In this context, it is finally impossible to separate Dixon's racist agenda and his artistic agenda. To argue that Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* expresses a revision of the aesthetics of sentimentality is not to disregard nor validate its virulent bigotry. Indeed, to understand what motivated his art is to understand what motivated and, for many turn-of-the-century readers, potentially legitimised Dixon's race and gender prejudices. To read the aesthetic arguments of *The Leopard's Spots* is to read Dixon's dogmatism expressed through terms that made his unquestionably invidious racism more assimilable into, and therefore more persuasive within, contemporary cultural and intellectual discourses.

'Bleeding hearts' and 'Ravishing a woman': The Correlative Aesthetics of Sentimental Reconciliation and Emotional Seduction

Whether it was because Dixon's explicit white supremacism compromised the novel's ethical value to post-Civil Rights readers or because of the novel's apparent limited

¹⁵ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 153, 161; Ronald G. Walters, 'The Erotic South: Civilization and Sexuality in American Abolitionism', *American Quarterly*, 25 (1973), 177–201 (p. 181); Theodore L. Gross, 'The Negro in the Literature of the Reconstruction', in *Images of the Negro in the American Literature*, ed. Seymour L. Gross and John Edward Hardy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 71–83 (pp. 71, 79).

aesthetic criteria and flagrant appeal to popular rather than literary tastes, Dixon's erasure from both American and southern literary histories has been almost total. The virulence with which he portrayed the black population through grotesque racial stereotypes ^{has} ultimately earned Dixon the unquestionably justifiable reputation and deserved repudiation as the 'worst of the fiction-writing race-baiters' and *The Leopard's Spots* as 'perhaps the most bigoted of American novels' foregrounding 'uncompromising Negrophobia and unrivalled vituperation'. In his critical assessment of Dixon's fiction, Wayne Mixon regards its 'Unrestrained sentimentality and racism' as evidence of Dixon's poor 'grasp of the novelist's craft' that results in a text that is ultimately 'amateurish, suffused with the stuff of popular romance'. Somewhat conversely, in a second reading of Dixon's work, ^{he} perceives no aspiration to literary credentials even of the most popular kind, suggesting that 'Unconcerned with creating a story for its own sake, Dixon used fiction [...] to write what he, at least, contended was history'. Joel Williamson assesses the novel's 'extravagant romanticism' within the structures of 'dime-novel story-telling, unashamedly melodramatic, undisciplined, and oppressively didactic'. Further, Kim Magowan believes that, if the cultural impact of his white supremacist rhetoric is disregarded, Dixon simply 'does not have the artistry to secure him a place in history'. Walter Benn Michaels finally expresses what many modern readers would acknowledge — *The Leopard's Spots* is a novel 'without any literary merit'.¹⁶

¹⁶ Kenneth O' Brien, 'Race, Romance, and the Southern Literary Tradition', in *Recasting: Gone with the Wind in American Culture*, ed. Darden Ashbury Pyron (Miami: University Presses of Florida, 1983), pp. 153–66 (p. 165); Hugh M. Gloster, *Negro Voices in American Fiction* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1948), p. 11; Wayne Mixon, 'Humour, Romance, and Realism at the Turn of the Century', in *The History of Southern Literature*, ed. Louis Rubin, Jr. and others (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), pp. 246–51 (p. 248); Wayne Mixon, *Southern Writers and the New South Movement, 1865–1913* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 48; Williamson, pp. 140–41; Kim Magowan, 'Coming Between 'The Black Beast' and the White Virgin: The Pressures of Liminality in Thomas Dixon',

Whilst Dixon's novel undoubtedly lacked literary sophistication, what Dixon as an author did not lack was a self-consciousness about the putative literariness of his project. The biblical epigraph and derived title, '*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots*', the subtitle allusions to the 'romance' form and the citation of the literary and politically-focused aphorism 'white man's burden' clearly declared Dixon's intertextual strategies to his more erudite contemporary readers. Dixon's historical notice, written in response to the 'hundreds of letters' the author reputedly received querying the historical accuracy of the work, offered as verification for this 'literal statement of the history of those times' a collection of unspecified 'authentic records' that the author had consulted in his research. The implication was that this novel was at the centre of a dialogue between the author and the reader and, in his reference to literary, historical and epistolary sources, the author-as-reader and the reader-as-author. The historical notice also established a crude aesthetic vocabulary that further conflated the distinctions between truth and representation and between art and the body. Dixon explained that the 'only serious liberty I have taken with history is to tone down the facts to make them credible in fiction'. Yet he assured his readers that he had 'tried to write this book with the utmost restraint'. In juxtaposing 'liberty' and 'restraint', Dixon inculcated into his self-conscious artistic processes a terminology that had a profound meaning within the racial and sexual discourses of his region. Dixon's application of the terminology of 'liberty' and 'restraint' to his writing methods paralleled his understanding of racial and sexual transgression in *The Leopard's Spots*. As James Kinney and Maxwell Bloomfield have noted, Dixon read interracial rape as the absence of both sexual and racial restraint that would metaphorically express the social and

political uncertainties of his region. For Dixon, the double tragedy of interracial rape and lynching was the direct outcome of the tension between passion and self-control in defining both southern black and white masculinity, tensions that John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman identify in the shifting definitions of gender identity at the end of the nineteenth century. His connection between social and political 'restraint' and artistic 'restraint', however, signalled his manipulation of the motif of interracial rape in his novel as the site for debates about the form and meaning of the southern authorial voice.¹⁷

Occasionally some critical judgements have acknowledged that Dixon's literary efforts were more considered and that, in writing a belated answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, his use of form reflected a more subtle awareness of Stowe's aesthetic project and its application to his own representation of his native region. In their reading of Dixon's writing, Thomas P. Riggio, Leslie A. Fiedler and Lawrence J. Oliver all recognise Dixon's understanding of Stowe's aesthetics of sentimentality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the discourses of *The Leopard's Spots*. Fiedler and Oliver both point to Dixon's use of the mode of the sentimental romance to answer Stowe's novel — if Stowe could use sentiment to undermine the authority of the patriarchy, Lawrence argues, 'Dixon was equally successful in using the tool of sentimental fiction to help rebuild it'. In such an analysis of Dixon's novel, however, 'sentimental' certainly has a less precise meaning than it does when used to discuss antebellum writing. As Dixon's judgement of Dixon's excessive 'sentimentality' demonstrates, the term is one that alludes more to the novel's

¹⁷ James Kinney, 'The Rhetoric of Racism: Thomas Dixon and the "Damned Black Beast"', *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 15 (1982), 145-54 (p. 147), Maxwell Bloomfield, 'Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*: A Study in Popular Racism', *American Quarterly*, 16 (1964), 387-401 (p. 390), John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 179.

sensationalism, its maudlin gestures at tenderness and its mawkish romantic sub-plot than to the ideological codes of its discourses. Yet in his novel, Dixon attempted to specifically interrogate the legitimacy of the politics of the heart as an aesthetic strategy. The text worked to reject the codes of sympathy and reconstruct, through the two central male protagonists, an alternative discourse that conveyed a revitalised aesthetics congruent with turn-of-the-century notions of masculine vigour and emotional inviolability rather than feminine passivity, receptivity and emotional identification. In *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon revealed an incisive theorising of the dangerous relationship between text and female reader exploited by Stowe in her emphasis upon sensibility as an interpretative strategy. Dixon's novel profoundly dismantles the reliance upon an ideal female reader that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* poses and guides his own readers towards a new paradigm of literature for the South that also inferred and instructed a new reader for the southern text — the white man.

As an answer to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Dixon's novel was explicit — Fiedler's description of Dixon 'burlesquing Mrs Stowe's masterpiece' reveals, at least in part, an inspiration and a reception within the context of the Tom plays.¹⁸ In recreating and subverting Stowe's famous characters, Dixon made his intentions in writing *The Leopard's Spots* very specific — in considering the novel he warned "It may shock the prejudices of those who have idealized or worshipped the Negro as canonized in 'Uncle Tom'. Is it

¹⁸ Riggio, p. 63; Leslie A. Fiedler, *Inadvertent Epic: From Uncle Tom's Cabin to Roots* (New York: Touchstone, 1979), pp. 43–44, 46; Lawrence J. Oliver, 'Writing from the Right during the "Red Decade": Thomas Dixon's Attack on W. E. B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson in *The Flaming Sword*', *American Literature*, 70 (1998), 131–52 (p. 138); Willie Lee Rose, 'Race and Region in American Historical Fiction: Four Episodes in Popular Culture', in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 113–39 (pp. 114, 124).

not time they heard the whole truth? They have heard only one side for forty years".¹⁹ Only Riggio, however, offers a sustained analysis of the relationship between Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Leopard's Spots*. Riggio considers *The Leopard's Spots* to be a 'thoroughgoing revision of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*' in which Dixon specifically 'takes over Mrs Stowe's theme of the sanctity of motherhood and of family life' and 'borrows Mrs Stowe's terms and exploits them to undo her point about the strength of black familial ties'.²⁰ As earlier southern responses to Stowe had shown, the cult of domesticity was an ideology that could be both radical and subversive or immoderately conservative. Dixon's thematic priorities of traditional male and female familial roles within the home and defence of the threatened domestic space against political and social intervention indeed retained Stowe's conservative reverence for the home. Likewise, Dixon's demonising of freed black men as violent rapists rather than martyred uncles, effectively positioned them as the prime threat to the sanctity of women within the home. Yet, for Stowe and her female readers, domesticity and motherhood were never simply the subject matter of the text. Her expansion of the emotive bonds of domesticity into the relationship between author and reader and her figuring of maternal sympathy as the primary medium for textual interpretation had defined her original aesthetic form. In both endangering and redeeming the home in *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon sought to undermine Stowe's combined ideology and literary form by questioning domestic sentimentality as a framework for interpreting and traducing the gender and race relations of the South.

The context for Dixon's revision of Stowe's novel is provided by Francis A. Shoup in a review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the *Sewanee Review* in 1893. Shoup surveyed the

¹⁹ Cited in Bloomfield, p. 392.

effect of the novel on the South and contended that, following emancipation, the ‘free and open cheerfulness’ of the former slaves had passed and ‘Surliness and reserve have taken their place. Crimes have become ten-fold more numerous, and some never heard in old times, have become common’. Shoup’s seemingly innocuous passing reference to crimes ‘never heard in old times’ had an unequivocal meaning for his contemporary readers — the suggestion of the unspoken black crime implied the sexual assault of a white woman. Shoup’s review commended a novel ‘intended to be read with the heart’ and extolled Stowe’s skills as a writer in a work that ‘displays consummate art in its structure and is full of dramatic power.’ The final paragraphs of the review, however, urged a reconsideration of this specific ‘power’ of the novel in a melodramatic warning of the continuing dangers of sentimental reading:

Bleeding hearts! — has Mrs Stowe ever tried to think what her book has been a chief factor of bringing upon the world? [...] Has she ever reflected upon the ten — the twenty millions of wives and mothers, sweethearts and daughters, whose hearts have been torn up by the roots at the wild slaughter between brothers? Truly the indulgence of sentiment is costly.²¹

This progression from sympathy for the sufferings of the slave to the unspeakable crime against southern women through the metaphor of emotional evisceration is compelling and demonstrated little amelioration in southern distaste for Stowe’s novel or the politics of the heart that her text articulated.

South Carolina Senator Ben Tillman expressed comparable views to those of Shoup but was even more explicit in his connection of black sexual assault on white women and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In a speech in March 1900, Tillman stood before the Senate and addressed the subject of the ‘race question’ in the South. For Tillman, the ‘South has this

²⁰ Riggio, pp. 61, 63.

²¹ Francis A. Shoup, ‘*Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Forty Years On*’, in *Critical Essays on Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Boston: Hall, 1980), pp. 49–59 (pp. 59, 50).

question always with it. It cannot get rid of it. It is there. It is like Banquo's ghost.' The spectre of race relations still haunting the South was, Tillman explained, the legacy of a misreading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Those men who 'went on that crusade of blood and destruction for the purposes of liberating those people' were guilty of 'having been misled and of having given Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* undue weight in inaugurating that crusade'. Embedded in flagrant anti-black political rhetoric that sought to justify Jim Crow segregation in the South, Tillman's secondary argument was the affirmation of an aggressive, contemporary sectional reinterpretation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In vilifying Stowe's story of slavery, Tillman recycled the vocabulary of the incensed antebellum South to critique both the apparent inaccuracies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the authority post-Civil War America continued to invest in Stowe's version of race relations. There was a new story to be told, Tillman urged, a story that redefined race relations between the white man and the black man in the South, but it was, nevertheless, a story that directly evolved from Stowe's 1852 novel. Tillman argued that:

it can not be denied that the slaves of the South were a superior set of men and women to freed-men of to-day, and that the poison in their minds — the race hatred of the whites — is the result of the teachings of Northern fanatics. Ravishing a woman, black or white, was never known to occur in the South till after the Reconstruction era.²²

Though Tillman's dismissal of the possibility of miscegenation in any form before the war demonstrated the obvious speciousness of his argument, his views resurrected the southern antebellum suspicions that Stowe's novel promoted a particular illicit sexual desire that for late nineteenth-century readers was manifested literally or, more usually, metaphorically in the image of the rape of white women by freed black men in the New South.

²² Ben Tillman, 'Speech Before the Senate, March 29, 1900', in *The Negro in Twentieth Century America: A Reader on the Struggle for Civil Rights*, ed. John Hope Franklin and Isidore Starr (New York: Vintage, 1967), pp. 66–67 (p. 67).

In an early chapter of *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon provides an illustration of the impact of Stowe's novel on her female readership. The southerner Reverend Durham meets Susan Walker, a Boston philanthropist eager to enlist his support for the education and social betterment of southern blacks. When he draws her attention to Tom Camp's poverty and queries her simultaneous lack of interest in the poor whites of the South, Mrs Walker explains her motives: "My heart yearns for the poor, dear black people who have suffered so many years in slavery and have been denied the rights of human beings".²³ As an example of the educative and financial support she has provided, she tells Durham about one particular former black slave, George Harris, whom she identifies as the son of Eliza Harris, "the history of whose escape over the ice of the Ohio River fleeing from slavery thrilled the world". In this allusion to a familiar scene from both Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Tom shows, the origin of Mrs Walker's sympathy for the southern black man is made clear for Durham. Objecting to her lack of compassion for the poor southern whites, represented in the novel by Tom Camp, the Reverend Durham confidently also rejects the "maudlin ideas" (p. 50) she has garnered from a very specific reading of the South through Stowe's novel. As she explains her purpose of "collecting from every section of the South the most promising specimens of Negro boys" (p. 49) to attend her school, her sympathetic motives seem even less innocent. Mrs Walker's obvious attraction to the suffering body of the black man and her simultaneous lack of compassion for the suffering white man reveals the dangers of her reading habits. Mrs Walker's language — she 'yearns' and is 'thrilled' by the ideas of distress — implicitly conveys the sexual undercurrents of her sympathy. Attempting

²³ Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden — 1865–1900* [1902] (Ridegwood, NJ: Gregg, 1968), p. 49. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.

to atone for his criticisms of Mrs Walker's reformatory actions, the Reverend Durham suggests she meet his wife to "discuss with her the thousand and one things dear to all women's hearts". When Mrs Walker queries whether Mrs Durham "can give me any sympathy in my work" (p. 50) the Reverend must acknowledge that she will not. If the northern Mrs Walker represents the dangers of reading the southern race problem through sympathy, the southern Mrs Durham dramatises a positive resistance to the aesthetics of sympathy.

Later in the novel, a white scallywag southerner (Allen McLeod) attempts to seduce his foster mother, Mrs Durham, in revenge for the political slights of her husband. Whilst McLeod is never identified as biologically black, Dixon is ambivalent about his racial origin. Though McLeod has the 'intellectual forehead of his Scotch father, large, handsomely modelled features', his face also reveals 'nostrils that dilated and contracted widely, and the thick sensuous lips of his mother' (p. 260) that Dixon repeatedly uses in his stereotypes of black characters. If his physical traits do not define him as black, his sensuality, his support of black voting rights and his corruption of the integrity of white southern politics confer upon him black sensibilities as Dixon defines them.²⁴ McLeod's strategies to seduce Mrs Durham are simple. He provides her with magazine articles that deny the possibility of spiritual love and instead emphasise physical desire in an attempt to challenge her belief in the 'old-fashioned romantic ideals of love' (p. 324). McLeod tries to redirect her 'motherlike tenderness' (p. 262) and 'maternal intuitions' (p. 330) for him towards the 'potent influence' (p. 260) and "irresistible power" (p. 330) of sympathetic desire. Mrs Durham's reading habits, however, reveal very different interpretative strategies to those of Mrs Walker. Like the northern woman, Mrs Durham

²⁴ Williamson, p. 168.

has read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but her response to the novel differs dramatically from that of Mrs Walker. In her reading of the sexually provocative texts provided by McLeod and in her interpretation of the significance of Stowe's problematic novel, Mrs Durham demonstrates ways to read that prevent the progression from a maternal compassion to a sexual vulnerability. Mrs Durham uses Stowe's book, whereby a "single act of that woman's will [...] changed the history of the world" (p. 264), to demonstrate the power of the independent voice and the possibilities available to southern men like McLeod if they are willing to pursue them. McLeod's textual attempts to seduce Mrs Durham are resisted through a comparable interpretative strategy. Understanding that the scientific texts have explained the nature of physical desire, Mrs Durham gains the tools to prevent McLeod imposing on her emotional and sexual compassion. She explains to McLeod that "I have simply throttled it in a moment by an act of my will" (p. 329). The antithesis between Mrs Walker's reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which emphasises the heart that 'yearns', and Mrs Durham's interpretation of the text as an act of 'will', repeats Dixon's own aesthetic juxtaposition of interpretative 'liberty' and 'restraint'. Mrs Durham can read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with impunity because her consciousness of the dynamics of sympathy and her ability to read through the intellect rather than through the emotions enable her to resist the influence of the text.

As the southern reviews of Stowe's novel had made patent, Stowe's sympathy for slave suffering had profound sexual overtones for southern readers. Marianne K. Noble's recent assessment of the erotics of the novel, alongside that of Leslie A. Fiedler, P. Gabrielle Foreman and Hortense J. Spillers, reveals how Stowe's manipulation of 'maternal intuitions' towards the 'irresistible power' of sympathy functioned at the centre of Stowe's novel. Noble identifies a 'sodomasochistic pleasure in sympathy' for

Stowe's readers that, whether it challenged or reaffirmed patriarchal authority, still implicated the central precept of the aesthetics of sentimentality within the nexus of the culturally suppressed corporeality of white women and her emotive connection to the distressed and repressed black male body. If the tears shed over death were the apogee of sentiment, in Stowe's novel, the act of dying also enacted both the climax of sexual pleasure and the punishment for that pleasure. As Fiedler comments,

For its potential readers, the death of Uncle Tom, the death of Little Eva, the almost death of Eliza are the big scenes of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for they find in the fact and in the threat of death the thrill once provided by the fact or threat of sexual violation.²⁵

The consolidation of these death or near-death scenes and the possibilities of conventionally prohibited bodies engaged in transgressive sexual acts fully dramatised the dangers of sentiment for southern readers. Elizabeth Barnes argues that, from its origins in the eighteenth century, 'sentimental fiction works out sociopolitical questions and conflicts through a gendered body — the woman's' so that the female body becomes a 'synecdoche for [...] *emotional susceptibility*'. Women readers become 'increasingly associated with the dangers of psychological penetration; they embody, both figuratively and literally, the suggestibility requisite for sympathetic identification'.²⁶ Despite the fifty years since its publication, both Shoup and Tillman in their reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* consciously used reputed acts of sexual violence by

²⁵ Marianne K. Noble, 'Masochistic Eroticism in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Feminist and Reader-Response Approaches', in *Approaches to Teaching Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons and Susan Belasco (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000), pp. 150–61 (p. 156); Hortense J. Spillers, 'Changing the Letters: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs Stowe, Mr Reed', in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 25–61 (p. 39); P. Gabrielle Foreman, "'This Promiscuous Housekeeping": Death, Transgression, and Homoeroticism in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', *Representations*, 43 (1993), 51–72 (p. 51); Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Normal, IL: Dalkey, 1997), p. 266.

²⁶ Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 8.

black men against white women to denounce Stowe's aesthetics of sentimentality and the power of her novel upon her susceptible female readers.

Though, for Dixon, women were the prime site for the enactment of sympathetic identification and penetration, in *The Leopard's Spots* emotional violability was not exclusively defined by gender. If Mrs Durham can demonstrate a female resistance to sympathy, conversely both of the novel's male heroes misread important events by relying upon interpretative strategies that are based upon the emotional truths of the heart. Charlie Gaston's own misapplication of sympathy initiates the events that will culminate in Dixon's horrific depiction of the rape and murder of a southern girl. When Charlie first meets Dick, a victim of extreme domestic abuse, his 'heart went out to the ragged waif' (p. 100) and, despite the fact that his loyal, Old South slave Nelse objects, the mischievous black boy is legally bound over and becomes a member of the Gaston family. When Nelse dies later in the novel, Charlie is consoled by Dick. "I wouldn't cry 'bout er ole nigger!" Dick urges, offering himself as comfort. With some prescience Charlie responds: "you ain't Nelse" (p. 166). Dick clearly signals to Charlie that tears — the physical manifestation of sympathy — can no longer be used to understand the relationship between the races. Yet Charlie continues to invest in Dick the power of his sympathy and, based upon his loving relationship with the 'ole nigger' Nelse, Charlie extends his heart to this 'New Negro' Dick. When Dick finally runs away, Charlie 'sat down under the rock and cried' (p. 186) as he had done when Nelse leaves him. Yet Dick's return in adulthood and his rape and murder of Tom Camp's daughter Flora fully dramatised a new version of black-white relations whereby, as Shoup had argued, the 'indulgence of sentiment was costly'. For Dixon, the violent physical penetration of the white girl was the symbolic culmination of Charlie Gaston's own emotional penetration

by Dick in the giving of his heart and tears. In the Reverend Durham's application of sympathy, however, Dixon located these processes of interpretation through the heart within the specific context of storytelling and story listening. In the opening chapter of the novel, Dixon establishes a scene between the black storyteller Nelse and the white story listener Mrs Gaston. Both Durham and Dixon repeatedly use the tropes of sentimental literature to interpret the scene but the imagery of the story that is told, the emotional sensibilities used to understand it and the dramatic effect of the story demonstrate the problematics of this relationship between author and reader.

'Here is Nelse, madam. Hear his story': Black Narrators, Female Narratees and the Southern White Hero

The opening chapter of *The Leopard's Spots* asserts its literary credentials by utilising an established storytelling trope of the South. The chapter relates the return of the defeated Confederate soldiers 'telling the story of the surrender' (p. 4) to the women of the South that Henry Grady had envisioned. Yet this story of Colonel Gaston, unlike the testimony of the southern hero described by Grady, is to be told only by proxy. The posthumous narration of Colonel Gaston's bravery is brought to his widow in Hambright by Nelse but the recently freed man is wary of telling what he knows and seeks guidance from the Reverend Durham. For the Reverend, story and storyteller are inextricably bound together — "you've brought a brave message from heroic lips and [...] you have brought a braver message in your honest black face of faith and duty and life and love" (p. 7). Durham immediately transmutes this story of war into the discourse of sentiment as the qualities he reads in the slave body are the ideological values of domestic fiction. The Reverend Durham accompanies Nelse the final distance back to the Gaston home and

urges Mrs Gaston to give the slave audience — “Here is Nelse, madam. Hear his story” (p. 9). The homophone of ‘here’ and ‘hear’ emphasises the primacy of authorial presence for Durham but also the ways in which that is translated into the text Nelse narrates. In this symbolic reading scene, Durham assumes the role of the ideal sentimental reader by easily conflating the distinction between physical and textual presence. In her reading of the relationship between Eliza Harris and Mr and Mrs Bird in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Catherine E. O’Connell argues that Stowe’s own sentimental paradigm relied upon the simultaneous centrality of both the body and the story:

The narrative asserts that it is the physical presence of the suffering slave that moves the Bird family so forcefully, and yet the appeal to the reader is premised on the ability of a written account of slave suffering to effect an equally intense emotional response.²⁷

As the scene in the Gaston parlour develops, however, Dixon reveals the very real problematics of Durham’s reading strategies. Durham prefaces Nelse’s narrative by assuring Mrs Gaston that this story is “wonderful news of faith and love, of heroism and knightly valour, that will be a priceless heritage to you and yours” (p. 9) For the sentimental Durham, this story will not just record the passing of the southern patriarch on the battlefield but will anticipate the imaginative needs of the New South by projecting the past values of southern chivalry into a recondite literary ideal for the future. Just as Charlie responds to Dick through sympathy, so Nelse’s story and the texts he carries with him in the form of the letters from Colonel Gaston are predicated on the values of chivalrous romance and sentiment. The Reverend Durham, Mrs Gaston and Colonel Gaston communicate and understand each other through the heart. In his letter to his wife, Colonel Gaston assures her of his unspoken connection to her through a

²⁷ Catherine O’Connell, “The Magic of the Real Presence of Distress”: Sentimentality and Competing Rhetorics of Authority’, in *The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ed. Mason I. Lowance, Ellen E. Westbrook and R. C. De Prospro (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 13–36 (p. 15).

'heart [...] so full of love' (p. 13). Yet, as Nelse's story reveals, it is also an injury through the heart that kills Colonel Gaston both literally with a bullet and metaphorically through the overpowering strain of sympathy that he feels in battle. As Colonel Gaston enters the field he explains that 'I can't go into battle now without thinking how many hearts will ache and break in far-away homes because of the work I am about to do' (p. 13). Nelse carefully describes the wound inflicted on his master during battle:

''der wuz a big hole in his breas' whar er bullet gone clean froo his heart. He never groan. I tuk his head up in my arms en cry en take on en call him! I pull back his close en listen at his heart'. (p. 11)

The 'heart' literally becomes the location for Colonel Gaston's fatal wound. The Reverend Durham anticipates that the imaginative and emotive relationship between the white southern hero of Nelse's story, the black narrator Nelse and the white southern woman Mrs Gaston, as listener and reader of the narrative, will reaffirm the 'heritage' of the South. Yet his faith in the power of this romantic and romanticised story of southern masculine heroism is as misplaced as Charlie's sympathy for Dick, because it is finally founded upon the reliability of both the black storyteller and the female reader within the sentimental paradigm of Stowe's novel — a relationship that Dixon repeatedly defines as the site of greatest danger to the South. The assumption of unquestioned black slave loyalty and white female purity cannot, Dixon argues, be trusted in the New South because the model of sentimental reading the Reverend Durham oversees is inherently compromising. Though Nelse is recognisable as a faithful retainer, a 'good' black man, his arrival at the Gaston home in Hambright is, at least momentarily, ambiguous. As he covertly ventures onto the property and spies his white mistress through the window, this 'giant negro' has 'no difficulty in concealing his movements as he passed' (p. 6). A virile physical presence, Nelse is also aware of his power over this white woman through

the narrative he brings her from the war; he knows that if he tells the story of her husband's death "Hit'll kill her", believing that "I nebber tell her. She drap daid right 'fore my eyes, en hant me twell I die" (pp. 6–7). Within the context of Dixon's postbellum South where the 'shadow of the freed negro' now hovers as a 'possible Beast to be feared and guarded' even this 'good' black man poses a threat to the southern woman and the South if he is received through the codes of sympathy. Dixon subtly makes this connection between the scene of black storyteller and white story listener and black rapist and white victim by paralleling the dynamics of this scene and that of Flora Camp's murder later in the novel. When Dick comes to replace the 'ole nigger' Nelse in the novel and confronts the lynch mob, his declaration of innocence in the rape of Flora — "I nebber done it" (p. 382) — clearly echoes Nelse's own "I nebber tell her". Likewise, Mrs Gaston's response to Nelse's story and to the two letters brought from her dead husband emphasises the dangers such narratives pose. Durham is concerned at the lack of emotional engagement — the 'strangely calm manner she now assumed' (p. 12) — with which she receives the story of her husband's heroics. But her reaction soon changes violently. After reading the letters, a 'wild peal of laughter rang from her feverish lips' and, as her son Charlie listens at her bedroom door, he hears 'her wild ravings. How strange her voice seemed! Her voice had always been so soft and low and full of soothing music. Now it was sharp and hoarse and seemed to rasp his flesh with needles' (p. 14). From the quondam romantic 'dreaming and planning for the great day when her lover and husband would return' (p. 12), Mrs Gaston experiences an animalistic and unconstrained physical and emotional response to the story she hears. If the Reverend doubts her calm and non-emotional acceptance of the story, her subsequent anguish demonstrates the profound somatic response under the guidance of his sentimental aesthetics. Mrs Durham's 'ravings' are later mirrored in Flora's horrific

brief passing into consciousness after she has been raped as 'apparently at the sound of her voice [she] immediately went into a convulsion, clenching her little fists, screaming, and calling to her father for help' (p. 377).

In the immediate postbellum world of the South, the Reverend Durham attempts to resolve the trauma of war, defeat and racial tensions through the heart. In his racially-mixed ministry in Hambright the 'Preacher never touched on politics, no matter what the event under whose world import his people gathered' (p. 39), but instead 'he had the subtle genius that could find the way direct into the hearts of the people before him, realise as his own their sins and sorrows, their burdens and hopes and dreams and fears' (p. 40). Speaking through the heart, the Reverend Durham performs the vital act of sympathy, the ability to identify with the suffering of his own congregation and seek to relieve that pain through his pity. As the novel progresses, however, the Reverend Durham's experiences prove the inadequacies of such an approach. The realisation of his inability to protect or provide solace to his friends and neighbours rapidly undermines his faith in the ideals of sympathy and he soon reveals to Tom Camp that "I am always giving, giving myself in sympathy and help to others; I am famished now and then. I feel faint and worn out" (p. 27). As he continues his efforts he 'tried by sheer power of sympathy to lift the despairing people out of their gloom' but ultimately, in his attempts to heal his region, he has 'torn his heart open' (p. 119). It is then that the Reverend comprehends the failure of interpreting his region through the heart. He understands that a new paradigm of authorship and readership in the South is vital if the region is ever to find ways of expressing the pain and suffering of its white population. In the imagery of the southern rape, Dixon encapsulates that crisis moment of southern art. For Dixon, rape enacted the symbolic violation of the ideal sentimental reader in

which the suggestibility of the individual necessary for sympathetic response also evidenced their vulnerability to psychological penetration. Yet rape in the southern community also enabled the construction of a new aesthetic form. Dixon's depiction of the rape of the white woman was the nadir of racial adversity but also, conversely, a necessity for re-uniting the white male population. As Sandra Gunning argues, the actions of the mob in response to the violation of a white woman by a black man were, for Dixon, a vital expression of white male agency, 'a mediating structure through which white masculinity can punish transgressions and regenerate itself'.²⁸ The way in which Dixon specifically achieves this is by allowing the white man to reassert his narrative authority, as a parallel to his more patent physical domination, by transforming events and their repercussions through the metaphor of storytelling.

'Lips that dare pollute with words the womanhood of the South': Reconfiguring

Southern Rape as the New Southern Text

In a series of rapes, attempted rapes and metaphoric assaults in *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon establishes a new paradigm of southern white male authorship. As the death of Tim Shelby illustrated, even the possibility of the rape of a white woman by a black man legitimised the violent policing of southern society by the white male community. Lynching was an act of social control that exercised the authority of white men during a period of perceived political and cultural disempowerment.²⁹ In apprehending late nineteenth-century southern culture, the 'southern rape complex', as W. J. Cash has described it, dominates the relationships between men and women and between black

²⁸ Gunning, p. 38.

²⁹ George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), p. 276.

and white. The rape-lynch scenario enabled the white man to reinstate a southern social hierarchy that the shifts in the status of black men and white 'new' women were challenging. This preoccupation with the vulnerability of white women and the rapaciousness of black men in the southern consciousness, Kathleen M. Blee argues, conflated and masked 'conflicts over race, religion, nationality and region' within the dynamics of power and gender relations.

If black men were an overt threat to white women, the prospect of interracial rape also implicitly made the white woman complicit in her own assault. The prospect of black male sexuality and licit desire for the white woman necessarily suggested the possibility of white female carnality that the image of the southern belle repudiated. Reliant upon the virtue of the white woman as a symbol of southern exceptionalism, her violation by a black man conveyed to southern men their own fears about racial, sexual and social disorder and the contraction of their gender and racial privileges but also commuted their own sense of the violation of the region after the war.³⁰ If the white woman remained a potent identifier of the region, as Silber notes, the defence of women by lynching reaffirmed white masculinity in a particularly southern way — it was a distortion of the 'legacy of chivalry and gallantry toward white women' in the South.³¹

³⁰ Hall, p. 333; Diane Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 155; Gunning, p. 37; Magowan, p. 96.

³¹ W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), pp. 118, 125; Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), p. 12; Silber, p. 174. A large body of critical material interrogates the use of rape and lynching as a way of reinforcing white male superiority in southern culture. See Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 18–19; D'Emilio and Freedman, p. 220; Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 222; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence", in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 328–49 (p. 329); Valerie Smith,

Though the ‘southern rape complex’ expressed anxieties about racial and gendered identity, the vehicle of this metaphor was emphatically regional. If this was an exclusively southern crime, its punishment was also an attestation of an exclusively southern identity conveying, as Cash describes it, the ‘very model of heroic activity’. It was a ‘chivalry’ that the black journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, writing in *The Red Record* in 1895, assured her readers the southern man did not truly possess. In her analysis of lynching in the South, Wells-Barnett argued that the ‘southern white man, as a tribute to the nineteenth-century civilization, was in a manner compelled to give excuses for his barbarism’.³²

For Dixon, the rape of the southern woman communicated the simultaneous vulnerability of the female reader, the disempowerment of the white male author in the South within the discourses of sympathy and the possibilities of a reconstruction of a male aesthetics informed by the changing notions of masculinity in the fin de siècle. *The Leopard's Spots* fundamentally relies, for its impact and its subsequent reputation, upon the depiction of these dramatic crisis episodes between white and black southerners. In identifying the ‘big scenes of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*’ — the death of Uncle Tom, the death of Eva and the escape of Eliza — Leslie Fiedler points to the scenes of emotional intensity in Stowe's text where the aesthetics of sentimentality are most influential. For Dixon, it is the reinterpretation of these same scenes that enables the articulation of a new white-authored story of rape and retribution that is specific to the region — what Kathryn Lee Seidel describes as the ‘single most important factor in the southern

‘Split Affinities: The Case of Interracial Rape’, in *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 271–87 (p. 272).

³² Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892–1893–1894*, in *Selected Works of Ida B. Wells-Barnett*, ed. Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 138–252 (pp. 141, 147).

mythos'.³³ Dixon's imagery suggests that the horror of the rape scene is occasioned by the continued misapplication of sympathy. Dixon signalled this interpretation of the interracial rape as the key for the new southern story by ensuring that in each rape scene the relationship of author, reader and text was clearly mapped onto the relationship between attacker, victim and rape tableau. This is demonstrated concisely in an encounter between Tim Shelby, a vociferous advocate of interracial marriage, and the white southerner Mollie Graham that revises Eliza Harris's escape from the Shelby plantation in Stowe's novel. When Shelby attempts to solicit a kiss from the white woman his casual sexual overtures are quickly punished by the local Ku Klux Klan. When his lynched and mutilated body is discovered, his 'thick lips had been split with a sharp knife' and a placard attached to his body reads '*"The answer of the Anglo-Saxon race to Negro lips that dare pollute with words the womanhood of the South"*' (p. 151). The imposition of the placard onto Tim's body transforms the sexual encounter between assailant and victim into the textual encounter between author and reader. Likewise, Dixon's emphasis upon the split-open lips is a powerful displacement of the sexual organ onto the organ of communication. The more usual form of mutilation inflicted upon the black body during lynching rituals was castration. By making Tim Shelby's lips interchangeable with the genitals, Dixon makes the psychological penetration of the female reader synonymous with the physical penetration of the female body — Tim's words of desire are as repulsive as his act of desire. Yet through this simultaneous sexual and textual assault, the white South also found an opportunity to regain a narrative voice. The white-authored placard at the centre of the lynch tableau was a new and powerful text that literally wrote over the body of the black man as the site of both sexual and textual threat to the region.

³³ Kathryn Lee Seidel, *The Southern Belle in the American Novel* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1985), p. 137.

Though James Kinney argues that the rape of a white child by a black man was a ‘daring innovation’ by Dixon, the issue of interracial rape itself had been broached by other writers in depicting race relations in the postbellum South.³⁴ In *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), the African-American writer Charles W. Chesnutt describes the outcome when a freedman, Sandy Campbell, is falsely accused of the possible rape and certain murder of an elderly white woman. Like Dixon, Chesnutt’s version of the southern rape accentuated the ways in which the assault of the white woman by the black man encoded not only southern fears of political and social disempowerment but the re-establishment of white male textual authority. When Polly Ochiltree is found murdered and blame falls on Sandy, three white men — Major Carteret, Captain McBane and General Belmont — meet and discuss the crime in terms that Dixon would find familiar. Very soon the men conclude that, ‘Left to his own degraded ancestral instincts’, Sandy had committed the murder and ‘who knew what other horror? The criminal was a negro, the victim a white woman — it was only reasonable to expect the worst’. Carteret is the editor of the local paper, the *Morning Chronicle*, and the three white southerners use the murder and the false accusation of interracial rape to ‘give [...] text enough’ for an editorial that condemns the limitations of white political and legal authority and provides the white men with an opportunity to impose their own narrative onto the events.³⁵ In the same way, Dixon’s repeated depiction of the act of black-on-white rape provides a fundamental ‘text’ that permits the white men of the community to verbalise their own cultural and social malaise. For Dixon, the act of rape and the repercussions of the attack within the community enabled the white man to demonstrate his sole authority within

³⁴ Kinney, p. 148.

³⁵ Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* [1901] (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Gregg Press, 1968), pp. 181–82, 185.

the southern community in a very specific way. Implicit in each scene is the linguistic authority that the immediate punitive response of the mob-like white southerners or the more organised Ku Klux Klan bestows on the white southern man individually and communally. For Dixon, the specific outcome of both the rape and its punishment is the expunging of white female and black male voices from the narrative and the reinstatement of the white southern male voice. In essence, the crisis of rape in his fiction was the impetus for an ending of the white 'silent South'. Dixon's transformation of the former slave 'into a possible Beast to be feared and guarded' (p. 5), and the processes by which these contradictory impulses of fear and guardianship empower the narrative authority of the white southern man, is dramatised through the rape and murder of Tom Camp's daughter.

The rape of Flora is the crisis point of the novel politically and aesthetically. In the configuration of the rape itself and its impact on the white southern community, the rape exposed both the danger of unrestrained and immodest female sympathy and the subsequent opportunity for the reconstructing of southern authorship. Flora's rape is both anticipated and finally represented through Flora's encounter with an itinerant black man several days before her actual assault. Tom angrily asks, "Was you talkin' with that nigger, Flora?" and Flora's answer is both sexually precocious and unrepentant as she relates the events of the meeting to her father. "Yes, I said 'Howdy!' when he stopped to get a drink of water, and he gave me a whistle," she replied, with a pout of her pretty lips and a frown' (p. 369). In Flora's confident initiation of the conversation, her blatant disregard for her father's interdiction against speaking with black men, the exchange of the phallic whistle and the child's sensual pout this brief scene of forbidden social interaction represents the unseen and undescribed physical

assault on the white girl several days later. Flora can see no danger in engaging the man in conversation. If, as Gunning argues, 'white women, simply by virtue of their being women, put their men in danger', Flora's vulnerability is specifically expressed through her participation in interracial 'talkin'.³⁶ Inevitably, Flora must die because she publicly refuses to obey her father's word and instead 'believed with a child's simple faith that all nature was as innocent as her own heart' (p. 370). Trusting her own strategies for apprehending the race relations of the South through the heart, Flora immediately manifests her 'eminently seducible' body, to use Barnes's version of sympathy, as an interpreter of events. Her sexual penetration in rape enacts, in physically gendered terms, the 'dangers of psychological penetration' that Barnes identifies in the aesthetics of sympathy. Likewise, when his daughter dies, the anger Tom Camp directs towards the unknown attacker is focused immediately upon the corresponding site of sympathy in the black body. Tom swears that he will "tear his breast open and rip his heart out" (p. 380). The subsequent response of the southern community to Flora's murder provides Dixon with the opportunity to experiment with alternative modes of discourse appropriate to the new order. In the civil unrest that follows the child's death, the southern white men reclaim their authority over the black body as the site of sympathy in three ways. The southern man attempts to reconstruct his power through violent mob action, through the Klan and finally through a representative individual, Charlie Gaston.

³⁶ Gunning, p. 37; Magowan, p. 96.

“Their songs will fill the world with pathos and power”: The New Model of

Southern Authorship

When the mob seize and lynch Dick for Flora's rape, Charlie Gaston must finally confront his own failings as a sympathetic interpreter of the black man. The response of the mob violently effaces the power of sensibility. Charlie sees the white men 'melt into a great crawling, swaying creature, half reptile, half beast, half dragon, half man, with a thousand legs, and a thousand eyes, and ten thousand gleaming teeth, and with no ear to hear and no heart to pity!' (p. 384). As Gunning notes, at this moment there seems little difference between the white mob and the black 'Beast' they attempt to subdue.³⁷ Though the mob becomes a grotesque 'creature', the emphasis, as the mob begins to 'melt' from one beast into another, is on the fluidity of form. Though the men seem to move as one, the constantly shifting configuration of the body makes it impossible for them to establish bonds of sympathetic likeness. The conglomerate creature asserts and reasserts difference as the primary means of power. It is 'a grim, swaying, voiceless mob' uttering 'Not a cry or a shout or a word' (p. 381). Charlie attempts to oppose the lynching even though Dick's guilt is assured, but he cannot resist a crowd that is 'inhuman in its uncanny silence' (p. 382). When Dick is burnt alive, Charlie can only watch the 'silent crowd, standing there like voiceless ghosts' (p. 384). The oppressive 'voiceless' men with 'no ear to hear' are wholly removed from the interracial 'talkin' that they are punishing. With 'no heart to pity', the mob effaces the unsafe aesthetics of sympathy that the rape manifests but finally can offer no alternative other than 'silence'.

³⁷ Gunning, p. 40.

In punishing Tim Shelby, the Ku Klux Klan represents a second alternative to the aesthetics of female sympathy in *The Leopard's Spots* by imposing an important 'order' on the southern experience that the white mob lacks. The necessity for disguise to preserve their anonymity renders the Klan as 'silent' as the white mob but the Klan's purpose to 'reestablish civilisation' (p. 152) is enacted in a specific and repeated assertion of 'perfect order' (p. 153). The abrupt intervention of the Klan to resolve social tensions is an attempt to 'bring order out of chaos' (p. 152). Judith Jackson Fossett has acknowledged the aesthetic function of the Klan in Dixon's fiction encoded in the perfection of the white robe. Fossett argues that, for Dixon, the Klan performs 'emblematically' so that 'Just as order can be restored by the wearing of the white robe, so too can a sense of shared whiteness be established through the mass consumption of his fiction'. With 'no heart to pity', the white mob wholly erases the possibility of sympathetic affinity between individuals. The white robes of the Klan, however, enforce an antithetical racial congruity whereby white individuals are seen as symbolically identical. For Barnes, Stowe's strategies in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reveal that her 'sentimental lessons reinforce for readers the idea that recognition relies on likeness — that one is bound to love whatever or whomever appears most like one's own'. When Walter Benn Michaels alludes to the robe's integral purpose in defining white racial identity in American race ideologies and fiction whereby the 'conditions of racial identity [...] were the conditions of aesthetic value, and the supreme condition of aesthetic value and racial identity both was [...] "unity"', it reveals the Klan as the apogee of corporal sympathy. Yet it is a sympathy emphatically removed from the domestic sphere of female sentiment. When 'racial ties replace familial ones' in the

Klan, the aesthetics of sympathy are realigned within the all-male, all-white identical bodies.³⁸

If the Klan provides the model for artistic discipline, the Reverend Durham and Gaston are finally and truly the fulfilment of Grady's prophecy of the voices of the South. The public speeches of the two men punctuate the novel and map their individual and connected maturation as southern artists for the new century. The climax of the novel is Gaston's speech, a clarion call to the white community to reclaim its authority in the South through the southern male artist. In narrative terms, this speech resolves the parallel tensions of the romantic plot, by assuaging Sallie Worth's father into blessing the marriage of his daughter to Gaston, and the racial and regional tensions of the novel by instating Gaston as governor. In doing so, the speech brings about the intra-sectional rather than the intersectional and the intra-racial rather than the interracial union by publicly confirming the marriage of the southern white man and the southern white woman. Just as, in the failed relationship between Gaston and Dick, Dixon refuted the romanticised black and white pairings of male characters found in late nineteenth-century southern fiction, so, through the marriage of Charlie and Sallie, Dixon rejected the equally characteristic Reconstruction trope of the 'reunion romance' for his central characters. This final scene also implicitly dramatises the artistic development of the

³⁸ Judith Jackson Fossett, '(K)night Riders in (K)night Gowns: The Ku Klux Klan, Race and Constructions of Masculinity', in *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century*, ed. Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 35–49 (pp. 39, 36); Walter Benn Michaels, 'The Souls of White Folk', in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 185–209 (p. 201). Michaels's argument primarily responds to the representations of race in the writing of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway but it is fundamentally informed by the function of the Klan in Dixon's *The Clansman*. Michaels conclusions are applicable to the limited function of the Klan in the earlier novel; Barnes, p. 95; Michaels, 'Race into Culture', p. 662.

South by theorising the values tentatively propounded by the Reverend Durham and demonstrating the reinvigoration of the rhetorical codes for the next generation of authors in the South. As Durham increasingly perceives the failure of his powers of sympathy to help his congregation in the postbellum South, he recognises and verbalises an alternative aesthetic vision that directly responds to the central motif of Dixon's novel — the necessity for racial 'solidarity' by prohibiting the interracial union of the black man and the white woman. Durham provides the novel with its imperative coda to be repeated by the Klan and by Charlie Gaston in his final speech. Durham declares that his mission is to preserve 'racial absolutism' in America and he affirms that *'In a democracy you cannot build a nation inside of a nation of two antagonistic races; and therefore the future American must be either an Anglo-Saxon or a Mulatto'* (p. 336). This declaration of intent is expressed simultaneously with Durham's revision of sympathy and his suggestion of a new artistic strategy that will allow the South to "find speech, and their songs will fill the world with pathos and power" (p. 337). For Durham and for Dixon, this is finally expressed through the novel's male protagonist Charlie Gaston.

The two figures of Gaston and Durham dramatise Dixon's own personal and sectional experiences in the South as a writer and as a southerner. Like Charlie, Dixon was only a boy through much of the Reconstruction period and his interpretation of the racial, cultural and political issues in the history of the South is profoundly informed by contemporary events and in particular by the Spanish-American War of 1898. The two central protagonists — Charlie Gaston, the son of a southern planter and the novel's romantic hero, and the Reverend John Durham — are the main focus for Dixon's interest and fully personify the white South's resistance to new power bases represented

by Simon Legree, Allan McLeod and General Worth and to black rule. Whilst Williamson's interpretation of the novel as a cathartic 'attempt at psychic self-cure' may be somewhat problematic, his belief that Dixon channelled into the characterisation of the novel his own emotional and intellectual energies is a useful reading of the text whereby the 'actual writing was a way of reliving his life as in retrospect he would have it'. Williamson argues that five male characters — Gaston and Durham, Nelse, Dick and Allan McLeod, an advocate of a new, politically corrupt, South — are all aspects of Dixon's persona.³⁹ Though Williamson's suggestion that Dixon identifies with antagonistic white and black figures is intriguing, Dixon does clearly supplement the biographies of the two white male heroes of the novel with events from his own life so that they very much become his artistic representatives in the text.⁴⁰ In the novel, the older Durham functions as a moral exemplar and articulator of the values of the Old South, but it is his adopted son Charlie who finally gives a public voice to the 'silent South' for the next generation of southerners. The interrelationship between Durham and Gaston enables Dixon to juxtapose and challenge past modes of discourse that circulate around the heart and the power of sympathy that the Reverend Durham understands but finds inadequate to express contemporary southern experience, and propose a new model of authorship that the younger Gaston can take forward into the new century. In *The Leopard's Spots*, both Charlie Gaston and the Reverend Durham discover, in their emotional and intellectual progression and interaction throughout the novel, an increasing dissatisfaction with the old modes of expression and seek to devise an alternative new southern aesthetics. The principal metaphor that Gaston and Durham

³⁹ Williamson, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Like Gaston, Dixon grew up during Reconstruction and, as a boy, he had a black childhood playmate called Dick. Like the Reverend Durham, the older Dixon had graduated from Wake Forest College in 1879 and was, for several years, a Baptist preacher, resigning from his ministry in 1895. See Cook, *Fire from the Flint*, pp. 17–18, 35, 89.

repeatedly use to understand and articulate their frustrated aesthetic stance is that of unrestrained sexual desire, and this is projected out into the rest of the novel so that male and female physical lust and the transgression of contemporary sexual taboos, including interracial, homosexual and incestual desire, function in *The Leopard's Spots* as the signifier for vital cultural debates about art and authorship in the South.

The Reverend Durham, however, is already a mature man at the beginning of *The Leopard's Spots* and his progression through the novel dramatises an aesthetic evolution that emerges from the sentimental discourses of the mid-nineteenth century but finds that the processes of sympathy fail to convey the southern experience of race and gender relations. When Durham visits Boston, he verbalises his new version of a specifically southern aesthetics as he defends the southern right to preserve racial purity. Durham situates the southern 'voice' in direct response to the "“din of cat-calls from an army of cheap scribblers and demagogues”" (p. 337); the southern 'voice' he proposes will answer the fictions of the North. The southern 'voice' will, the Reverend Durham assures, "“come forth [from] the fierce athletic sons and sweet-voiced daughters”" of his region. The new form that Durham espouses, and finally discovers in his protégé Gaston, reinvigorates a feminine 'sympathy' with the explicitly masculine agency of the 'sword' as a metaphor for imaginative potency vital to the renewed authorship of the South. In the opening chapter of the novel, it is Colonel Gaston's sword that the slave Nelse brings back from the battlefields of the Civil War bequeathed by the dying Colonel to his son. Charlie's mother receives this sword 'of her dead lover-husband in her lap, and looked long and tenderly at it. On the hilt she pressed her lips in a lingering kiss' and then finally 'hung the sword beside his picture near her bed' (p. 12). Her 'lingering kiss', her 'tender' look and her relocating of the weapon at the heart of the domestic space all

emphasise her sentimentalising of this emblem of southern honour. As the novel progresses, both Charlie Gaston and the Reverend Durham reclaim the meaning of that sword by using it as a metaphor for their protection of the sanctity of the southern home and southern women. The Reverend Durham first urges a new use for the sword in defending the purity of the white race by preventing marriage between black men and white women, declaring that the 'right to choose one's mate is the foundation of racial life and of civilisation. The South must guard with flaming sword every avenue of approach to this holy of holies' (p. 336). When Charlie Gaston finally speaks in fulfilment of Durham's vision of a new voice for the South, he translates the Reverend Durham's rhetoric of racial preservation into an new aesthetic form:

He played with the heart-strings of his hearers [...] as a great master touches the strings of a harp. His voice was now low and quivering with the music of passion, and then soft and caressing. He would swing them from laughter to tears in a single sentence, and in the next the lightning flash of a fierce invective drove into the hearts its keen blade so suddenly the vast crowd started as one man and winced at its power. (p. 443)

The persuasive and unifying dynamism of Gaston's oratorical skills combines the strategies of emotion and the heart with the strategies of action and masculine power. Durham and Gaston reclaim the sword made impotent within the feminised domestic space of the Old South mansion and translate it back into a chivalrous masculine tool of southern honour used to defend the inviolacy of a racially pure and politically strong 'New South'.

Kathleen Diffley's reading of Civil War short fiction in southern journals traces the attempt by southern authors to 'dismantl[e] a feminized ethos' of home and mother and a growing preference for the exercising of 'masculine will' in terms of the nation state. Diffley's theorising of the changing genre of the stories can help to elucidate the progression of Dixon's novel. Diffley maps the shift from feminine to masculine

rhetoric through three genres — the Old Homestead domestic story, the Romance story of intersectional love and the Adventure story of physical heroism — to demonstrate the ways in which the South was renegotiated into the debates about national identity after the Civil War.⁴¹ The structure of Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* through the three books almost precisely replicates the developing form of the southern text that Diffley describes. The first book of Dixon's novel, entitled 'Legree's Regime', focuses upon the Gaston mansion and its collapse in the face of the new social order of the South immediately following the Civil War. The mansion is invaded by black troopers, Mrs Gaston dies and Charlie Gaston is deprived of his legitimate inheritance as a son of the South. As such, the subject matter of this book corresponds to that of the Old Homestead narrative defined by Diffley. Likewise, the second book, 'Love's Dream', describes Gaston's love affair with Sallie Worth. As Diffley defines it, the 'Romance weighed love over duty, free choice over inherited loyalty'. So Sallie Worth is Gaston's 'One Woman', and, though her father opposes the union, Sallie and Gaston directly reject his patriarchal authority in favour of their love of each other and of the South. Finally, the last book of the novel, 'The Trial by Fire', corresponds to the Adventure story, demanding that Gaston test his strength through a difficult rite of passage that culminates in his public speech and the recognition of his marriage to Sallie. Sallie is accredited with "inspir[ing]" Charlie to "change the current of history, and become the Governor" (p. 467) and the two lovers anticipate a happy future together not in the familial harmony of "the humblest cottage" (p. 469) but in the Governor's mansion. Diffley's interpretation of the Adventure story culminates in this same shift to a 'self, now to be defined by the state instead of the family'.⁴² So the Gaston love match and

⁴¹ Kathleen Diffley, *Where My Heart is Turning Ever: Civil War Stories and Constitutional Reform, 1861–1876* (Athens, GA: University Press of Georgia, 1992), p. 181.

⁴² Diffley, pp. 14, 57, 125.

home do not present a model for social behaviour but inculcate the values of the democratic nation within familial bonds and domestic space.

It was in this way that Dixon directly inverted Stowe's ideology of the family without ever undermining the intrinsic sanctity of the home for his conservative readers. Yet the structure of the book, and the movement of the novel from domestic narrative through romance narrative to adventure narrative, also highlights the ways in which Dixon manipulated literary genre to theorise the form southern authorship should, in his view, ultimately take. As a motif, interracial rape allowed Dixon to repeatedly play out this same deconstruction of authorship and narrative discourses. In *The Leopard's Spots* Dixon interrogated Stowe's politics of sympathy and depicted the dangers of sentimentality through the rape and murder of the southern white woman. The novel used and subverted the stock literary tropes of black and white male homo-social pairings, domestic narrative and intersectional romance to project a new southern aesthetics — an aesthetics that would, as Fisk prophesied, 'bear as never before the solid marks of mental vigor and strong, manly work'. Dixon's clear objective in his novel was to reverse Stowe's ideology in which the bonds of private female-oriented family constituted the ideal alternative to the dynamics of the public male-oriented state. Yet this was entirely bound up with, rather than antagonistic to, the artistic strategies he expounded. In *The Leopard's Spots*, the metaphor for the defence of white womanhood — the sword — becomes Dixon's metaphor for male art. Gaston mediates between the 'pathos' inherent in the controlled racial purity of the Klan and the independent and inviolable 'power' of the mob unrestrained by racial, gender or regional consonance. In doing so, Dixon ensures the preservation of the southern home and its conservative values of gender and racial purity but relocates artistic power outside the domestic space

and the codes of sympathetic reading. Unlike Simms, who sought to assimilate the values of sentimentality by reintegrating the southern man into the home, Dixon's Charlie Gaston reconstructs a masculine 'power' of 'pathos' that does not function in the domestic space but articulates the authority of the southern white man within the public sphere. For Dixon, the metaphor of physical, emotional and intellectual 'liberty' and 'restraint' empowers an aesthetics of affinity without vulnerability that Dixon believed was appropriate for the author of the New South.

Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*, however, ultimately resolves few of the tensions it provokes. By dramatising southern fears of political, regional and authorial disaffection through the metaphor of rape, Dixon provided a vocabulary and an imagery that fuelled racial bigotry in turn-of-the-century America. The symbolism of black on white rape that Dixon had utilised in his first novel is subsequently divested of any broader aesthetic meaning as Dixon's succeeding Klan novels perpetuate increasingly transparent and increasingly violent racial stereotypes and extravagant fictional strategies. Whereas Dixon's first novel did not depict the actual assault but re-figured the rape, or its punishment, as an act of interracial 'talkin', the description of the rape of Marion Lenoir in *The Clansman* (1905) communicates Dixon's ultimate preference for the graphic exploitation of sensational rather than artistic objectives. In a 'single tiger-spring [...] the black claws of the beast sank into the soft white throat and she was still' and, in rewriting of the rape motif from his earlier novel, the tenor of Dixon's fiction alters.⁴³ The intellectual and artistic aspirations that Dixon reveals in *The Leopard's Spots*, however deficient those aspirations ultimately might be, are finally and irrevocably compromised by Dixon's inflammatory political and material objectives. Yet Dixon's

⁴³ Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* [1905] (Ridegwood, NJ: Gregg, 1968), p. 304.

first novel, written as a sequel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was the single southern novel that achieved a popular success and cultural influence to equal that accomplished by Stowe's novel fifty years earlier. *The Leopard's Spots* demonstrated the ways in which Stowe's theories of art and her application of the aesthetics of sympathy might truly provide southern writers with the vocabulary, the imagery and the artistic model for a literature of their own.

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