

2011

"I Had Never Before ... Heard of Him At All": William Gilmore Simms, the Elusive William North, and a Lost Simms Novel About American Authorship

Patrick G. Scott
University of South Carolina - Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/engl_facpub



Part of the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Publication Info

Published in *Simms Review*, Volume 19, Issue 1-2, 2011, pages 5-17.

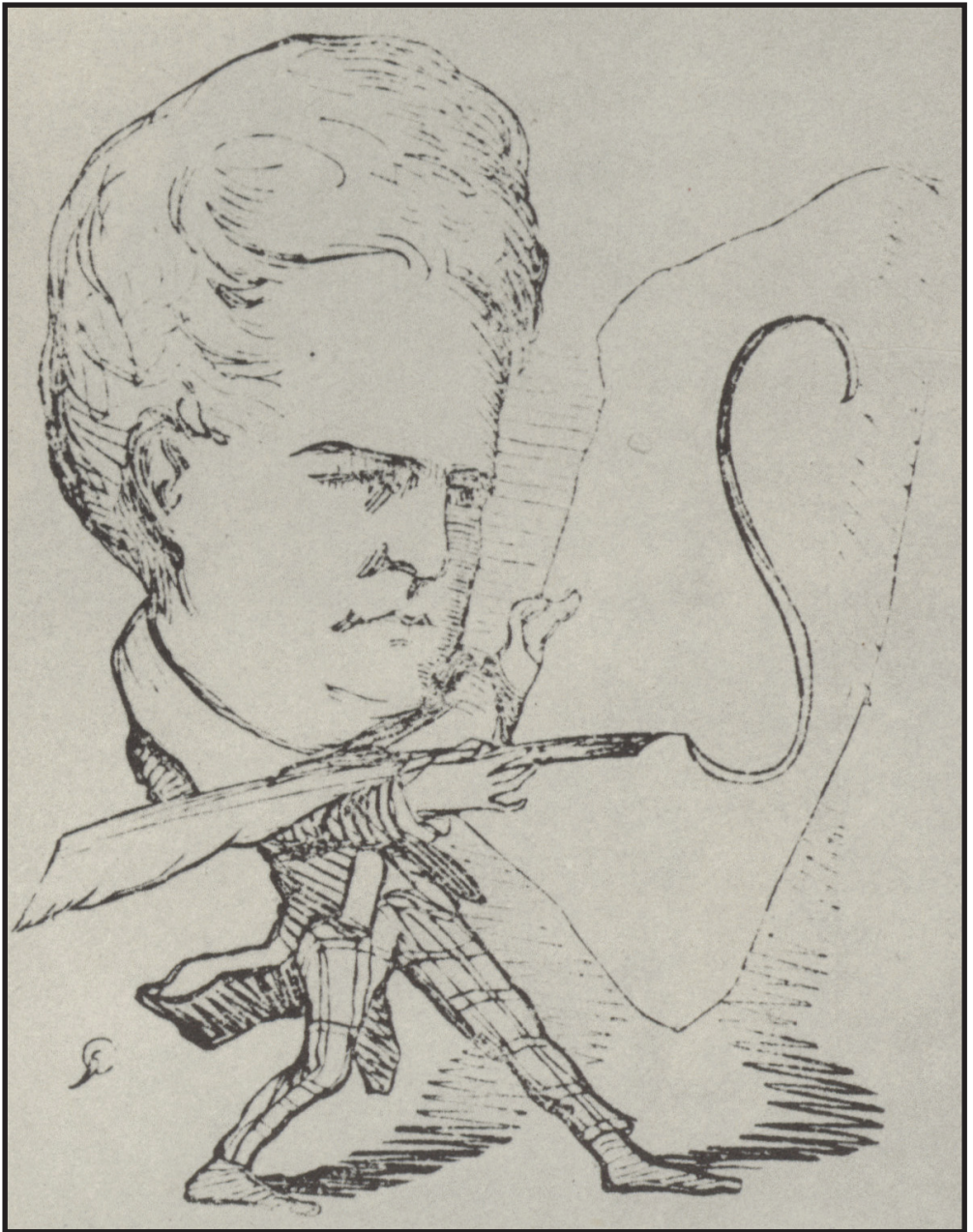
This Article is brought to you by the English Language and Literatures, Department of at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

VOL. 19, NOS. 1/2

SUMMER/WINTER 2011

THE SIMMS REVIEW

A PUBLICATION OF THE WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS SOCIETY



William Gilmore Simms

“I Had Never Before ... Heard of Him at All”: William Gilmore Simms, the Elusive William North, and a Lost Simms Novel about American Authorship

Patrick Scott

Any writer with Simms's wide range of interests, long career, and great productivity, in so many genres, poses special problems for the researcher. The importance of Simms's work as essayist, reviewer, and critic across several national literatures has long been recognized (see e.g. Guilds, "Simms"; Kibler), and current research, including that associated with the Simms Initiatives, mining the recently-conserved Simms scrapbooks at the South Caroliniana Library, is opening up for study more of the critical writings that Simms published in periodicals or newspapers but that have not previously been collected in book form.¹ It is especially in such uncollected writings that the scholar will run up against chance allusions and fugitive references that stubbornly resist investigation.

One of Simms's essay-reviews from the *Charleston Mercury* in May 1855 poses special problems because the writer it deals with, William North (1825-1854), has long vanished from any standard reference source.² Simms was reviewing North's final novel, *The Slave of the Lamp* (1855), which had then just appeared. Though North published some ten books in the previous ten years, along with over a hundred articles and poems, he still remains among the most elusive of mid-nineteenth-century writers. The researcher will end up equally empty-handed whether looking for North in major British sources (the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, the *Cambridge History of English Literature*) or in major American ones (*American National Biography*, the *Oxford Companion to American Literature*, the *Literary History of the United States*). Nor was North much more widely known when Simms was writing, at least in America, or at least outside New York. Before he decided to review North's book, Simms himself had never heard of its author, commenting (inaccurately as it turns out) "I had never before seen any of NORTH's writings. In fact, until that moment, had never heard of him at all."

Yet Simms's review essay on North, one of his long series under the pen-name Lorris that appeared in the *Mercury* between December 1854 and May 1856, has special importance, because more than half of it concerns an otherwise unrecorded fiction project of Simms's own. Any light that can now be thrown on the lost author whom the pseudonymous Simms was ostensibly reviewing may cast light also on Simms himself and on a mysterious long-lost Simms novel. At the very least, fuller information on the writer, his books, and his career may perhaps contextualize Simms's comments in his review on the conditions of American authorship in the 1840s and 1850s. Because of

North's life-story, and his connections in New York in the early 1850s with the emergent culture of the New York bohemians, Simms's comments on North also show Simms's conflicted attitude towards the bohemian strand in mid-19th century authorship.

It was a review Simms specially wanted to write. Indeed he had been waiting to write it for eight months or more, primed and ready, ever since he first got wind of the book's impending publication, during his visit to New York in late summer 1854. As he himself later reported:

Strolling last summer, my dear Mercury, in a morning round among the publishers of New York, I stepped into the extensive establishment of LONG and BROTHER in Nassau Street, and was exceedingly taken aback to be told that there was a work in their press, then almost ready for publication, by a young Englishman, entitled "*The Slave of the Lamp*." some months elapsed before it made its appearance. When I could get my hands on it, I did so, and examined it with eager curiosity (Lorris [Simms], on North; unattributed block quotes below are from this essay).

As Simms tried to learn more about the mysterious young author, he found only that North's "rank was obscure in New York; and I was told that he was chiefly known as a writer for the Sunday newspapers." The book itself included a twelve-page memoir, but even with the book in hand, Simms wanted to know more. He wrote to his New York ally Evert Augustus Duyckinck, apparently following up a previous request that Duyckinck had not yet answered:

I wrote to beg you that you would obtain for me any information with regard to William North, author of the *Slave of the Lamp*. Pray do so, as soon as possible & let me know. ... I desire the matter ... for a newspaper letter (*Letters* 3:383).

Two weeks later, on May 21, just a week before the Lorris article appeared, he wrote again to Duyckinck: "thanks for the items touching North. I will use them in a letter" (*Letters* 3:386).

Simms's urge to discover more about North was right, because the sparse information available to him was far from the whole story. But the sources available to Duyckinck were equally sparse. One problem is that most of North's literary career had been spent in Britain, not America: North had only recently moved to New York from London, in March 1852, and of the ensuing nineteen months before his death in November 1854, several were spent not in New York but in Cincinnati. More problematic still was that the early American sources on North's life (chiefly newspaper obituaries) confidently identified North himself with the aristocratic protagonists of his admittedly semi-autobiographical novels, and North seems to have done little to discourage such identification.

By his enquiries to Duyckinck, Simms had perhaps performed due diligence, but he could only write with the information he had. North's earlier writings were almost all unavailable to him, and his review was evidently colored by a very strong moral and professional revulsion against the writer he was reviewing. Such coloring may of course derive from Simms's source, Duyckinck, rather than originating with Simms himself, but the resulting portrait is inevitably both partial and unsympathetic. On North's family origin and turn to literature, Simms describes North as:

a scion of that stout old family, the Guildfords It is said that our young author became alienated from his home, because of some difficulty with his family. He, no doubt, offended it temporarily, by eccentricities or extravagances; while his own reckless and impulsive temper made him resent, in extremes, all attempts to restrain or guide him.

And Simms's account of North's literary career is equally dismissive, parading Simms's unavoidable informational lacunae as evidence of North's professional nonentity:

He took up literature as a profession, nay rather perhaps, as a resource from want; and wrote a Novel entitled "Anti-Coningsby."... He wrote besides, "The City of the Jugglers," "The Impostor," and several other fictions, of which I can tell you nothing. I have seen none of them. The inference is that they failed in their effect on the British public—all his literary enterprises seem to have failed there. He wrote for the periodical press besides, and he wrote in vain. He seems to have been a contributor to the small-fry periodicals.... But his labors had no satisfactory results, and in 1852 he came to this country.

Simms gave no greater credit to North's work in America:

Here he plunged head-long into all kinds of hack and literary labor; he wrote verses.... Where these poems appeared, or when, I know not. I have never seen them.... In New York, he derived the pittance of support (enough for this, no doubt) from the periodical press.

Simms was confident that he had diagnosed what had caused North's lack of success in the profession of letters:

He had, by the way, a German education at Bonn—a school particularly objectionable in the case of an ardent temper, associated with a somewhat mystical mind. There North became a republican, a neologist, and what not—all that fish, flesh, fowl sort of metaphysico-politician which makes it scarcely possible to keep down a German brain to anything like a decent rationalism.

Nor does the tragic end of North's life mitigate the severity of Simms's assessment. In November 1854, shortly after completing the novel that Simms was to review, North had committed suicide, by drinking prussic acid. As Simms recounted the story, North's suicide too becomes a sign, not of despair, but of unprofessionalism:

He left letters in his room to DICKENS and other persons... An open letter contained a ten cent piece and two cents, endorsed "The Remains of my Fortunes and Labors for Ten Years." Certainly, with twelve cents still in his pocket, no man ought to commit suicide. But the subject is not one for jest—however striking its follies. The history is a miserable one, out of which you may make for yourself material for reverie, sermon and possibly nightmare.

Had Simms known more of North's real life and actual achievement, he might perhaps have modified this rather grudging account. Indeed, elsewhere (as for instance in his writing on Poe), Simms shows greater appreciation and sympathy for the literary commitment and social resistance of what would later be tagged bohemianism, and Simms's own attitude to authorship was never merely a matter of commerce. Even on the facts he did have, Simms surely could have spun North's story less negatively.³ Rather

than being, as Simms suggests, a spoiled scion of the aristocracy playing at literature and radical politics, North had supported himself for ten years through his writing, in a way with which, in other circumstances, Simms himself might well have identified. Though North declared himself (in European terms) a radical, a democrat, and a republican, and took his commitment seriously enough to have given away most of his inheritance in the mid-1840s, a lot of the political satire in his novels struck evenhandedly both to left and right.

Recent research by Allen and Page Life has clarified much about North that had previously been murky at best, disentangling life and fiction, and looking fully for the first time at North's activity on both sides of the Atlantic. As Simms reports, North presented himself in his writings as an aristocrat by birth, Eton-educated, from a rich landed and clerical family, and a descendant of the 18th-century prime minister Lord North. However, no such relationship has yet been traced, and if there were one it must have been at best vestigial. North's wish to present himself in this way (what one might label the Shelleyan or Byronic tendency), and the wish of New York bohemianism to believe in his aristocratic origin, are indeed equally suggestive about some of the social complexities in the 1850s counter-cultural self-image of authorship. The reality of North's family background was less glamorous than he had let people believe, or at the least it was more mixed. North's grandfather and father had made their money in trade, as "blue" and starch manufacturers, though the father also owned rental property. North had been educated at a private school, Temple Grove, but at the age of fifteen was dispatched, not to Eton, but to Germany for private tuition in Bonn, with periods attending university lectures in Bonn and perhaps also more briefly in Berlin.

On his return to England in 1844, North initially was set up by his father to study law, but instead embarked almost immediately on a career as a writer. This switch in career was linked to North's final break with his father, which North later depicted as political in origin, an unbridgeable disagreement stemming from the radical political idealism he had adopted while in Germany. In fact, as Allen and Page Life have shown, the break was only the final stage in a more deeply rooted conflict that antedated North's time in Germany. In 1837-1838, North's much-loved mother, rightly suspecting his father of adultery, had gone to the house of his suspected mistress, found North's father there, and been driven off by him with a poker. The *father* then pursued the *mother* through the civil courts with a charge for assault, and through the ecclesiastical court with a plea for divorce on grounds of *her* adultery; during the prolonged suits and counter-suits that followed, North's mother died of typhus, and just six days later, under special license, the father married his mistress. North had good reason to reject both his father and Victorian conventionalities, and to seek for himself a different life.

Nor was North's literary achievement as nugatory as Simms implies. What North accomplished was remarkable, in scale, in variety, and in creativity. His first novel, *Anti-Coningsby* (3 vols. 1844), a political satire on Disraeli and Young England, published when he was barely nineteen, was quite widely reviewed, though North himself later disowned some of its acerbities. That first success was quickly followed by *The Impostor* (3 vols., 1845); a short novel *The Anti-Punch* (1847), a satire on journalism;

two translations, one from German, Pückler-Muskau's *Travels and Adventures in Egypt* (3 vols. 1847), and one from French, Lamartine's *Poetic Meditations* (1848); an edition of Beckford's *Vathek* (1849, but frequently reprinted both in Britain and America); a political fantasy, *The City of the Jugglers, or Free-Trade in Souls* (1850), about a crisis on the stock-market and the revolutions of 1848; a philosophical manifesto, *The Infinite Republic* (1851, with a French translation in 1855); a scathing *History of Napoleon III* (Cincinnati, 1853, illustrated with North's own caricatures); and the 400-page novel that first brought North to Simms's attention, *The Slave of the Lamp* (1855, which would be reprinted under a different title in 1866 and 1877). And that was just North's books. He also wrote regularly for British periodicals in the 1840s. He edited at least two periodicals, one at least briefly successful, *The Puppet Show* (1848-49, a weekly, reported as reaching a peak sale of 50,000 per issue), and one an almost immediate failure, *North's Monthly Magazine* (1852). He traveled to Paris to join the revolution of 1848. He advised the Rossetti brothers when they were establishing their short-lived but ultimately very significant PreRaphaelite little magazine *The Germ* (1850).

In his short period in New York, North also made much more of an impact than Simms realized. He contributed to significant magazines, including some to which Simms himself had contributed and some that he disliked—*Harper's New Monthly*, the *American Whig Review* (two contributions), *Knickerbocker* (seven contributions), the *United States Review* (sixteen contributions), *Graham's American Monthly* (six contributions), the recently-founded *Putnam's New Monthly Magazine*, the *Illustrated New York Journal*, and *Pen and Pencil* (Cincinnati, eight contributions, one noticed in *Scientific American*). For a period, he was literary editor for *Graham's*, and he started, with himself as sole writer and illustrator, a new though short-lived humor magazine, *The Hint*. His edition of Beckford's *Vathek* was republished in Philadelphia, strangely enough by a publisher with whom Simms was also then trying to set up a project, Henry Carey Baird; Simms had actually reviewed North's Beckford for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, referencing one of the biographical details from North's introduction, though two years later he would not remember having seen any of North's earlier work (Simms, "Vathek").

In New York, also, North pushed himself into new literary genres, not only publishing several poems reflecting his PreRaphaelite connection, but also a play, *The Automaton Man*, which in 1854 had multiple performances at Burton's Theater. Most strikingly, he began in New York to write a new kind of short story, gaining widespread critical attention for his tale "The Living Corpse," in the very first number of *Putnam's*, which Simms dismissed as "somewhat, I believe, in the spasmodic, POE-ish manner." In the late 1850s, after North's death, it was these short stories that briefly revived North's reputation, when a New York editor, Henry Clapp, who had known North in London and Paris, chose to reprint two of them, "The Living Corpse" and "The Magnetic Portraits," as featured attractions in the first three numbers of his new literary weekly, the *Saturday Press* (23, 30 Oct. & 6 Nov. 1858). In the perspective of subsequent literary history, this last was no mean endorsement: Clapp's *Saturday Press* also championed Walt Whitman, publishing eleven Whitman poems in the paper's first year, and the then-unknown Mark Twain, publishing Twain's first successful story "Jim Smiley and the Jumping Frog" (Whitley and Weidman 39-41).

Literary achievement, and even such prodigious literary productivity, does not, of course, necessarily translate into financial success. North was still a minor when he broke from his father, and his inheritance from his grandfather was withheld after the break. In April 1847, following the failure of a new magazine on which he had staked his hopes, North was imprisoned for debt and, almost simultaneously, petitioned for bankruptcy (Life and Life 79). One of the most haunting scenes in North's novel *The City of the Jugglers* (1850) involves a successful writer returning from an evening out to discover, hiding in an empty closet of his chambers, the starving author who had been their previous tenant; his secret guest had kept a key after his eviction, and been living undetected in the closet for several months, coming out only when his luckier successor went out for business or pleasure (North, *City* 215-220). North's move to New York was spurred, if not wholly caused, by the collapse after only two issues of *North's Monthly Magazine*. After each setback, North returned again and again to writing as both career and calling.

Yet Simms's limited or partial knowledge of North's work, and the unavailability to him of most of North's other writing, cannot fully account for the tone of his Lorris essay. The explanation may lie rather in Simms himself, and in the challenge that North's career seemed to present to Simms's own professional identity. Among the accounts offered by scholars of Simms's later development, Miriam Shillingsburg's political explanation, in her essay on his aborted Northern lecture-tour in 1856, has proved particularly influential. But as James West has recently pointed out, in his later career Simms also faced rapid and dramatic changes in American publishing.⁴ Simms had identified strongly with the emergence of an American literary professionalism, arguing for the importance of a national literature (Holman; Guilds, "Simms's Views;" and cf. Guilds, *Simms* 182-183, and Greenspan 179-180). In the early 1840s, through his allies in the Young America movement, Simms had been involved with their (unsuccessful) lobbying for international copyright, which if successfully enacted would have allowed American authors to compete on at least an equal financial basis with Europeans, rather than finding their writings and income undercut by the free availability to American publishers of easily-pirateable European bestsellers (Holman; Charvat; Barnes esp. 77-85; and cf. Guilds, *Simms* 183-184). As his correspondence makes clear, Simms's annual visits to Philadelphia and New York were professionally motivated, as he sought out opportunities, made new contacts with northern publishers and editors, and took care of business as an author whose national recognition, social status, and professional identity were dependent on his pen.

But by the 1850s, the conditions of American authorship had changed significantly from those under which Simms had first established his reputation and career. He faced new professional challenges, not only from hardening political attitudes, but from structural changes in American book production, distribution, and financing. What piqued Simms's interest in North's forthcoming book, during that visit to New York in late summer 1854, was its title, *The Slave of the Lamp*, and its announced subject, the perils of authorship. The Lorris essay reveals just why Simms had been so "taken aback" when North's novel was first mentioned to him:

Ten years ago, I had myself written several chapters, and had elaborated the whole plan of a work, with this very title, the object of which was to follow out the career of a young author of equal genius and misfortune; and, by tracing out all the clues in his progress, elucidate, if possible, the whole of that curious difficulty by which, in all periods, such persons are kept from direct communication with the very people whom they would counsel and inspire.... I had spoken of my plan, and of the title chosen as a fit one for such a work, to many American writers of distinction, and they unanimously encouraged me to carry out my purpose to fulfillment, as one eminently calculated to be of service in the solution of a problem involving many topics of considerable practical importance; for example, the subject of "*Literary Property*," which, generally, is very little understood, and, as a consequent upon this, that of "*International Copyright*." ... [I] was prepared, in fact, to take up the subject and address myself wholly to it, and only waited to rid myself of other tasks to which I was pledged, and which I had already begun. Judge, then, my annoyance and surprise to find my subject anticipated ... and the very title which I had selected for my work actually prefacing the labors of another!

In the following April, however, when Simms eventually got hold of North's book, he found both the book, and its account of an authorial career, quite different from what he himself had projected:

I read the book carefully, and was disappointed—gratefully so, I confess—as I found that the author had ... never trenched upon my plan, ... that he made but little use of the history of authorship; that he never attempted the solution of its difficulties; ... that, so far from developing the career of painful labor which distinguishes literary life—its denials, disappointments, and defeats—his laborers were generally of the order of *chevaliers d'industrie*; —that his work was, in brief, a sort of social romance; the flash portions being most conspicuous, and his chief actors being swindlers, more or less decent and dexterous... . The great swindler and hero of the book, we are told, wrote for the press, and so did another of the parties; but no use whatever was made of their toils as authors, ... we never see him at work. The labors on which we find him usually engaged are drinking-bouts, fashionable parties, etc. His chief employment seems to be love-making, and *pour passer le temps*, seduction and other gentlemanly vices.

In short, in North's novel, Simms had encountered a view and experience of authorship quite different from the kind of literary professionalism he had himself embraced.

Not only to Simms, but more positively to other commentators, North represented the emergence of a new and alternative literary culture, or counter-culture, a bohemianism that rejected almost all the landmarks around which Simms had oriented his professional career. Even before he moved to New York, North's closest connections had been with the far-from-bourgeois young artists of the PreRaphaelite brotherhood. As Allan Life has documented, Dante Gabriel Rossetti had rented a studio in Red Lion Square from North's unsuspecting father. Nor were North's personal morals

conventionally Victorian. When, before embarking for America, North arranged to have his letters forwarded from the Rossetti household, Rossetti's devoutly poetical sister Christina (who thought North a "rabid" Chartist) was much disturbed that "a young lady with a child in a cab left the message" and asked "Is Mr. North married?" Her stronger-minded brother William Michael Rossetti later commented that North was not "to be tied down by church ceremonies" (*Life and Life*, 87-88 and n. 23).

Bohemianism, the idea of the artist as free-spirited gypsy, had first emerged as a cultural phenomenon in the eighteen-forties, in Paris, most notably in Henri Murger's book *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*, first published in collected form in 1848.⁵ By the early 1850s, bohemian ideas began to emerge in New York, identified particularly with a group of young writers and artists that included North's friend the journalist Henry Clapp, the British artist Frank Bellew (who had illustrated North's *City of the Jugglers*), the aristocratic British exile and sports writer "Frank Forester," and the Irish would-be-aristocratic exile Fitz-James O'Brien (caricatured in North's *Slave of the Lamp* as "Fitz-Gammon O'Bouncer"). In part because of his early death, North had a special place in this circle; Albert Parry, the doyen among scholars of New York bohemianism, wrote that "chronologically, North's suicide on 14 November 1854, began the true Bohemia" (Parry 49).

Several of Clapp's circle (the "Ornithoryncus Club")⁶ formed the core of a wider group gathering nightly at the cellar bar run from 1853 on by a German immigrant, Charles Pfaff, and celebrated by one of the attendees, Walt Whitman:

The vault at Pfaff's where drinkers & laughers meet to eat and carouse
While on the walk immediately overhead was the myriad feet of Broadway.

(Whitman, *Notebook*, I: 454-455).

It is, indeed, this tavern culture, if not Pfaff's Tavern itself, that provides the opening image of New York literary life in North's novel:

NOT far from the celebrated *Tombs*—a modern Egyptian temple devoted to the custody of New York law-breakers—down a street chiefly remarkable for the irregularity of its pavement and the poverty of its inhabitants, three men were eating oysters in a cellar.

In the city alluded to—a city of which, probably, many of my readers have heard—oyster eating is mostly a subterranean process (North, *Slave* 17).

And the attitude to literary life and conventional culture offered by North's hero Dudley Mondel, in conversation with "Peregrine Cope" (i.e. Henry Clapp) is also recognizably bohemian:

... a deep-seated and gloomy discontent pervades the minds of most persons of culture in the present age. In America this feeling is as rife as in Europe. There is no affectation about it. Every day I hear men—aye, and women—even fair and lovely girls, express an indifference to life, a disgust for the world, a vague, objectless dissatisfaction that is utterly depressing and discouraging."

"You associate, probably," said Cope, "with the literary class more than any other, and since the calamities of authors are proverbial and universal, as we ourselves know from dire experience in many cities, it is no wonder that

they utter cries of pain, and even groans of despair in their sufferings. Authors love pleasure,—they are poor. Superior in education and refinement to all other classes, they are proud and in debt. The popular taste is in its infancy, and naturally is captivated by books written most down to the level of the vulgar apprehension. Hence the success of female writers, and commonplace trivialities. The poet and the student is perhaps out of his element amongst us.”

“Not so !” said Mondel, brightening up and speaking with decided animation. “You, Cope, are a New England Yankee, and, with all your travelled lore, can scarcely see things *here*, with the clearness of view given to me, a cosmopolite and a stranger. I have neither patriotism nor prejudices. I see that in England literature has exhausted itself. It is only here in America that new circumstances and a new life can bring forth a new poet. For my part I have long abandoned the idea of playing the part of a mere literary man. If I can originate a thought, I care little for the mode of its realization. At this moment I am ruined—as usual—to all appearances.”

“You are not prospering then in a pecuniary line?” said Cope.

“Not in the slightest degree,” replied Mondel, coolly (North, *Slave*, 62-63).

It would be hard to find anything further from Simms’s own deep-seated sense of cultural identity and hard-won literary professionalism. In Simms’s essay, it sometimes seems as if North’s chief moral shortcoming is his lack of commercial success. From that perspective, literary bohemianism was perhaps merely the solipsistic and self-flattering ideology of unsuccessful writers. For the young bohemians themselves, it represented commitment and artistic liberation. Many of the most talented from the younger generation, and some older ones who had faced and rejected more conventional careers, found in bohemianism, and later in an elitist aestheticism, a convincing alternative to the mainstream literary market-place in which Simms had established his reputation but which was already changing (as Wimsatt and West point out) in ways Simms himself found difficult.

Even Simms, appalled as he was by the life depicted in North’s novel, recognized that North had a literary gift, but he judged North morally defective and ill-trained, both as a man and as a writer:

You are not to understand that the author [i.e. North] was a mere pretender or a fraud, or that his book is worthless. On the contrary, he was unquestionably a man of talents, bold, insolent talents: erratic, impulsive, dashing ... His book is full of fine bits, such as you linger over with a melancholy sort of pleasure.... Since reading his book I have been enquiring of him, and ... his painful history ... the cruel fortunes which attend the career of so many men of letters — men who misconceive the public — who neglect the ordinary precautions of enterprise — who obey impulses rather than laws — and who really do not so much work as play in literature — fancying that they may do, at a mere dash, what can only be rightly and successfully achieved by a life-long labor of devotion and unceasing care.

This is of course a judgment that sheds as much light on Simms as on North. In the eighteen-fifties, Simms himself faced an increasingly difficult professional climate. In

reviewing, and condemning, North and his novel, Simms was perhaps also trying to persuade himself that his own idea of professional authorship remained valid. Even as he recognized North's literary gifts, however, Simms saw North's work as linked with a lowering of literary standards that was in turn linked with a new publication format he also detested:

So far as the mere literary history was employed, it was wholly subordinated to a complicated tale of social strifes, miseries, humors, and vices, very little differing in tenor and tone, however superior in merit, to the general run of slang performances which rejoice in yellow facings.

North and the bohemians, it would seem, were caught between the "yellow-back" format of mid-century popular fiction, the yellow paper wrappers of the morally-suspect contemporary French novel, and the aesthetic ambitions of the late Victorian *Yellow Book*.

There are two tailpieces to this story. First, when North's novel was reprinted, in 1866, the title that had set Simms aback, that he had wanted for his own novel, was changed. Instead of appearing as *The Slave of the Lamp*, the book was now retitled *The Man of the World*. One wonders whether Simms, or perhaps one of his publisher-friends, had had a role in making this change.

Second, and more significantly, one must ask what happened to the other *Slave of the Lamp*, Simms's own unfinished novel about the misfortunes of a literary career. In the Lorris essay, Simms indicated, not only that he had settled on a topic, selected a title, and mapped out a plan, but that he had written "several chapters." Later in the essay, even more tantalizingly, he revealed that "a beginning was made in the composition, and an introductory chapter actually printed, though under a different title, in a Southern magazine." Moreover, he promised Lorris's Charleston readers that his *Slave of the Lamp* was to be specifically, though not exclusively, a literary novel with a Charleston setting:

The scene was made to open in your city, and it was my purpose to make your society furnish, to a certain degree, a portion of the work ... but as I contemplated the solution of a problem which is felt to be of universal difficulty, I was unwilling to generalize from any small or single circle. Of course the large cities were necessary to be studied.

We can date Simms's *Slave of the Lamp* with some confidence as a work of the eighteen-forties, not only from Simms's reference in the Lorris essay to "ten years ago," but also from the sole earlier book mentioned there as discussing the perils of authorship, and the later books Simms does not mention. In the Lorris essay, he cited as precursor only Richard Hengist Horne's novel *The False Medium ... excluding Men of Genius from the Public*, first published in 1833. What Simms did not mention, however, are two much more powerful rivals in the fictional treatment of authorship, Thackeray's *Pendennis* (1848-1850) and Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849-50). While in the mid-1840s, in the years when he wrote his series of articles on copyright, Simms might reasonably have embarked with confidence on a novel about authorship, by the mid-1850s, when he was confronted by North's insouciant bohemianism, he might have hesitated, though he had by no means given up on his own commitment to authorial professionalism. Simms's own *Slave of the Lamp* must therefore date from the mid-1840s.

So far, earnest enquiry among a range of Simms scholars has failed to turn up Simms's lost novel, to provide any hint as to the unnamed periodical in which Simms might have published that "introductory chapter," or to elicit any suggestion as to the substitute title that was later given to it. For the present, too, no Simms scholar recalls seeing any unpublished plans or drafts that might relate to the novel Simms himself had projected. Perhaps in due season the work of the Simms Initiatives, and other large-scale digital projects, will provide the means by which what is clearly a lost Simms work of wide significance might be identified and rescued. Till then, the only clues to what Simms might have written lie in what he wrote about his mysterious and unfortunate younger contemporary and the novel that he feared had preempted his own. We can be sure at least that the account of literary life in Simms's lost novel, *The Slave of the Lamp*, would have differed dramatically from that of the elusive William North.

Notes

¹ This essay, written at the suggestion of James E. Kibler, grew from conversations with him and David Moltke-Hansen about one of their current editorial projects, *Literature and Civilization: Selected Reviews of [by] William Gilmore Simms* (U of South Carolina P, in preparation). I am indebted to both of them, to Todd Hagstette, editor of *The Simms Review*, to James West, and to the *Review's* anonymous readers, for encouragement, shared expertise, and advice.

² "From Our Literary Correspondent," *Charleston Mercury* (28 May 1855). Quotations from Simms below, unless otherwise attributed, come from this review. Very brief excerpts were included in the annotation to *Letters* 3: 383, note 120. For Simms's Lorris articles, see Kibler, *Pseudonymous Publications*, 61-64.

³ This paragraph and those that follow draw on recent research by Allen and Page Life (Life and Life), on my own shorter essay about North's achievement (Scott, "Introducing"), and on our collaborative bibliography (Life, Scott, and Life).

⁴ West offers a broader-based and more positive account of Simms's later career than that given in Wimsatt's essay, but both agree on the challenges presented by mid-century publishing developments.

⁵ The account below draws on Parry's long-standard account of the New York bohemians, on recent books by Joanna Levin and Mark A. Lause, and on the excellent essay on North's New York circle by Whitley and Weidman.

⁶ Named for *Ornithorhynchus Paradoxus*, the Duck-Billed Platypus, which had been depicted on the street sign for a New York German restaurant by one of North's Pfaffian friends, the artist Frank Bellew, as smoking a large pipe and drinking German beer (Wolle 73).

Works Cited

- Barnes, James J. *Authors, Publishers, and Politicians: the Quest for an Anglo-American Copyright Agreement, 1815-1854*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.
- Charvat, William. *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*. Columbus, OH: Ohio U P, 1968.
- Greenspan, Ezra. *George Palmer Putnam, Representative American Publisher*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2000.

- Guilds, John Caldwell. "Simms's Views on National and Sectional Literature, 1825-1845." *North Carolina Historical Review* (1957): 393-405.
- . *Simms: A Literary Life*. Fayetteville, AR: U of Arkansas P, 1992.
- Holman, C. Hugh. Introduction. *Views and Reviews in American Literature History and Fiction, First Series*. By William Gilmore Simms. Cambridge, MA: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1961. vii-xxxviii.
- Kibler, James E. *Pseudonymous Publications of William Gilmore Simms*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1976.
- Lause, Mark A. *The Antebellum Crisis and America's First Bohemians*. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2009.
- Levin, Joanna. *Bohemia in America, 1858-1920*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2010. [esp. ch. 1 (13-69) "The 'Vault at Pfaff's': Whitman, Bohemia, and the Saturday Press."]
- Life, Allan, and Page Life. "North versus North: William North (1825-1854) in Light of New Documentation." *Victorian Newsletter* 115 (Spring 2009): 55-94.
- Life, Page, Patrick Scott, and Allan Life. "A Preliminary Checklist of Writings by and about William North (1825-1854)." *Victorian Newsletter* 115 (Spring 2009): 95-114.
- Millington, Jon. *William Beckford, A Bibliography*. Warminster [UK]: Beckford Society, 2008.
- North, William. "Memoir." In William Beckford, *Vathek*. London: George Slater, 1849. Frequently reprinted, including: Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1854.
- . *The City of the Jugglers: or, Free Trade in Souls*. London; H. J. Gibbs, 1850. Reprinted with intro. by Patrick Scott, Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2008.
- . *The Slave of the Lamp*. New York; H. Long, 1855. Retitled as *The Man of the World*. Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1866. Reprinted Philadelphia: Peterson, 1877.
- Nowell-Smith, Simon. *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1968.
- Parks, Edd Winfield. *William Gilmore Simms as Literary Critic*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1961.
- . *Ante-Bellum Southern Literary Critics*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1962.
- Parry, Albert. *Garrets and Pretenders; A History of Bohemianism in America*. Rev. ed. New York: Dover, 1960.
- Scott, Patrick. "Introducing a 'Lost' Victorian Novel: The Elusive William North and *The City of the Jugglers* (1850)." *Victorian Newsletter* 115 (Spring 2009): 7-15.
- [Seymour, Charles B., attrib.]. Preface. *The Slave of the Lamp*. By William North. New York; H. Long, 1855. vii-xii.
- Shillingsburg, Miriam J. "Simms's Failed Lecture Tour of 1856: the Mind of the North." "*Long Years of Neglect*": *The Work and Reputation of William Gilmore Simms*. Ed. John Caldwell Guilds. Fayetteville, AR: U of Arkansas P, 1988. 182-201.
- [Simms, William Gilmore, unsigned]. "Beckford's *Vathek*." *Southern Quarterly Review*, new series 10 (July 1854): 252-253.
- [---, signed "Lorris"]. "From Our Literary Correspondent [on North, *The Slave of the Lamp*]." *Charleston Mercury* (28 May 1855).
- [---, signed "Lorris"]. "From Our Literary Correspondent [on Lamartine]." *Charleston Mercury* (31 May 1855).
- . *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*. Ed. Mary Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. Duncan Eaves. 6 vols. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1952-82.
- Stansell, Christine. "Whitman at Pfaff's: Commercial Culture, Literary Life and New York Bohemia at Mid-Century." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 10.3 (Winter 1993): 107-126.
- Trent, William P. *William Gilmore Simms*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1892.
- West, James L. W., III. "William Gilmore Simms and the Postwar Literary Marketplace." *The Simms Review* 18.1-2 (Summer/Winter 2010): 5-14.

- Whitley, Edward, and Robert Weidman. "The (After)Life of William North among the New York Bohemians." *Victorian Newsletter* 115 (Spring 2009): 29-45.
- . "North William (1825-1854)." *The Vault at Pfaff's, An Archive of Art and Literature by New York City's Nineteenth-Century Bohemians*. On-line at <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/pfaffs/p31>.
- Whitman, Walt. *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier. New York: New York UP, 1984.
- Wimsatt, Mary Ann. "The Professional Author in the South: William Gilmore Simms and Antebellum Literary Publishing." In Richard Layman and Joel Myerson, eds. *The Professions of Authorship*. Columbia, SC: U of South Carolina P, 1996. 121-134.
- Wolle, Francis. *Fitz-James O'Brien: A Literary Bohemian of the Eighteen-Fifties*. Boulder, CO: U of Colorado P, 1944.