Sentimental Borders: Genre and Geography in the Literature of Civil War and Reconstruction

Abstract
This dissertation resituates four popular antebellum sentimental novelists—Maria Cummins, Mary Jane Holmes, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Susan Warner—as novelists of Civil War and Reconstruction. Turning from their well-known novels of the 1850s to their less-studied works of the 1860s and 1870s, I argue that these novelists experimented with genre and geography to address—and sometimes, to avoid—the moral, political, and ideological underpinnings of the Civil War. While their popular first books were foundational to the evolution of the sentimental novel during the 1850s, their later novels enable a more precise account of how popular mid-century sentimentalists grappled with the enormous historical and cultural shifts of this period.

On one level, the dissertation argues that these novelists experimented with the generic boundaries of the sentimental novel to produce narrative accounts of the Civil War and Reconstruction that do not fit neatly into the categories of their earlier works. In Chapter 1, I illustrate how Cummins manipulated the conventions of the murder mystery and the historical romance to enter an ongoing national debate about the legality of secession; in Chapter 2, how Holmes manipulated the conventions of the realist novel to depict the brutality of Civil War combat; and in Chapter 3, how Stowe and Warner adopted the conventions of the travel narrative to imagine fantasies of laborless agricultural production in postbellum Florida. In Chapter 4, meanwhile, I examine the migration Bleeding Kansas—a pre-Civil War conflict over the possible expansion of slavery into Kansas territory—from anti-slavery sentimental discourse in the 1850s to historical romance in the 1880s and 1890s.

On another level, I argue that these authors also responded to the challenges of representing Civil War and Reconstruction by displacing them to unexpected geographic and chronological borderlands—including rural New Jersey during the War of 1812, Florida orange groves in the 1870s, a deserted Caribbean island, and Kansas territory in the 1850s. Chapters 3 and 4, in particular, filter the story of Civil War and Reconstruction through two states on the "borders" of the major conflict: Florida and Kansas. At these geographic edges, I uncover regionalized alternatives to familiar reconciliation narratives in the war’s aftermath.

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The CIVIL war: pre-war situation in the north & south; the war; the years of reconstruction. The CIVIL war. The opposition of the North and the South did not come about overnight. In the north, the abolitionist sentiment grew more and more powerful as new territories were acquired, and they were thought of only in the context of slave-free organization. It was important at that stage because those territories were not yet organized into states. By 1850, slavery in the South was well over 200 years old, and had become an integral part of the basic economy of the region. In 15 southern and b... A war depicted in a book with the intertextual title Sentimental Journey is reconstructed here as a mechanism paralleled principally with the automobile; a means of transport to be handled with care. In the first part of the book, the war is seen as having a specific order of things, as opposed to a revolution which follows more the path of chaos. In this essay I submit that modern literary theory was born in the decades between World War I and World War II in Eastern and Central Europe due to the disintegration of philosophical discourses and to changes in literature itself. I also examine the uniquely heteroglot environment in which intellectual life in these parts of Europe proceeded at the time. Four border states held slaves but remained in the Union. West Virginia became the 24th loyal state in 1863. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. To a large extent and by his own preference, Davis was his own secretary of war, although five different men served in that post during the lifetime of the Confederacy. Davis himself also filled the position of general in chief of the Confederate armies until he named Robert E. Lee to that position on February 6, 1865, when the Confederacy was near collapse. African American literature: The Civil War and Reconstruction. Submarine: American Civil War and after. African Americans: The Civil War era. As Alice Fahs in The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861–1865 (2001) conclusively elaborates, these war-related texts were often either overlooked or dismissed by critics due to their nature as popular texts. While primarily fictionalized as a just war against slavery in the first Civil War novels, published in the period during and immediately after the war, it became a “tragic mistake” in the majority of texts printed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This shift in the fictional discourses on the conflict from a highly sentimental reconstruction. The capital city of the South (Confederacy) during the Civil War. Montgomery, Alabama, The federal fort located in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina that was the focus of the Southern attack that marked the beginning of the Civil War. Fort Sumter. Border states. Laws based in the South just after the Civil War intended to control freed men and women - allowed plantation owners to take advantage of African American workers. Black codes. The number one non-combat killer of soldiers during the Civil War caused the death of half of some regiments before they ever went into battle. Dysentery. The nickname given to a faction of President Lincoln’s main political opponents who called for an end to the war and the reuniting of the states.