THE CONCEPT OF NATURE AND STEWARDSHIP IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS

by

ERIC WILLIAM ENSLEY

(Under the Direction of James E. Kibler)

ABSTRACT

In "Stewardship and *Patria* in Simms's Frontier Poetry," James E. Kibler explores Simms's connections between stewardship for the land and the necessity of staying in one place. Although limited by its focus on a small amount of Simms's frontier poetry, Kibler touches on Simms's ideas concerning the proper stewardship of nature. These ideas would benefit from an in-depth study including a more comprehensive range of Simms's works as well as biographical information. My thesis conclusively demonstrates that Simms, although sometimes promoting nature as a primeval Eden to be preserved, believed that people should develop nature to further beautify their societies—white civilization's radical engineering of nature, such as clearing forests to make fields, became bad only when driven by greed. Diametrically opposed to the view of nature and society as mutually exclusive, Simms believed in a well-ordered alliance between people, their communities, and nature.

INDEX WORDS: Stewardship, Nature, William Gilmore Simms, Agriculture, Agrarian, Environmentalism

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DEDICATION

To God for filling my spirit with a love for literature, to the Air Force for giving me abundant opportunities to further my knowledge of literature and of life by sending me to different lands and this great city of learning, to my momma as well as other family and friends for helping me get to where I am today; to creator, critic, and in the truest sense, teacher—Dr. James Kibler—for inspiring me to delve deeper into both Southern history and Southern literature, explorations which have cemented, and centered my appreciation of who I am and where I come from; to that wonderful lady Mary Hood, the great inspiration of my time in Athens and one whose words of encouragement and support strengthened my soul, and always brought a host of big smiles; to Andrew, the great, opinionated Renaissance man *extraordinaire,* though you never asked, I am still trying to repay all that you gave me; finally, to artists like Danijela, along with Joan of Arc and all the other extraordinary men and women from history who have valiantly, and nobly, fought against the dark forces of ignorance and dared hold onto the flame—you all have my most generous and expressive thanks

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INTRODUCTION

Simms, Society, and the Agrarian Tradition in the South

William Gilmore Simms produced a torrent of literary works amounting to dozens of novels, short stories, essays, and poems. Throughout this voluminous outpouring, Simms combines often unpredictable blends of romance and realism in his treatment of Southern life as well as life on the Southern frontier. The theme of nature and its proper stewardship pervades this prolific body of works, and in keeping with the controversy over Simms's rich admixtures of romance and realism,[1] his ideas concerning stewardship often seem contradictory. The sheer breadth of Simms's canon also makes it difficult to arrive at a thorough understanding of his ideas concerning this theme, and at worst, lends itself easily to misunderstandings deriving from a topical examination of his works—for instance, assumptions that Simms was an environmentalist along the lines of Thoreau (and thereby making him a kind of "Southern Thoreau") or that he blatantly opposed the destruction of nature implicit in clearing land to create farm land and build settlements on. In other works, most notably his Indian poetry, Simms adds to this confusion by lamenting the loss of Indian cultures and their more environmentally-

[1]John C. Guilds captures the soul of this debate, writing, "Part of the debate over Simms's literary status centers around the long-standing question whether Simms should be considered a romanticist or a realist—for he undeniably possessed characteristics of both." Guilds also describes how critics like William P. Trent believed Simms's best work was along the lines of Scott and Cooper and other critics, led by Vernon L. Parrington, believed Simms was at his best when donning the unpretentiousness of plain-spoken realism (Literary Life 338-339).

friendly ethics to white civilization's encroachments and oftentimes unethical exploitation of the land, while in other places, he celebrates white civilization's destruction of nature as "progress."[2]

The purpose of my thesis is to explore Simms's attitudes towards nature and its proper stewardship by examining primary evidence from several of his key texts along with secondary evidence from his critics. More specifically, my argument is that Simms, although sometimes viewing nature as a primeval Eden to be preserved, was not at all a forerunner of modern environmentalism,[3] and instead believed that people—Indians and whites alike—could rightfully develop nature as long as they were driven by ethics promoting stewardship. In both his literature and on his plantation "Woodlands," Simms views favorably white civilization's clearing of lands and otherwise "taming" of nature as long as it was driven by ethics of stewardship because they contributed to the predominantly agrarian values Simms championed—things like a sense of place, traditions, continuities, harmonies, ties, memories, associations, community, family, reverential and sacramental attitudes, and finally man's very humanity itself (Kibler, Stewardship 217).[4] I also demonstrate Simms's belief in the superiority of a well-ordered communal alliance between people, society, and nature—an idea diametrically

[2]Although to Simms, Indians were wanderers, and as such—according to the logic in his oration, The Social Principle, unable to cultivate the sense of *patria* (used here to denote a very deeply felt sense of reverence for, and love of one specific, often postage stamp sized piece of land) necessary to stewardship of the land, he cannot seem to reconcile this opinion with his belief that the Indians were better stewards of the land than white people—whom, for instance in his novel The Yemassee, Simms calls "monstrous great rascals" (25). Manifold examples of this contradiction exist—see, for example, "The Broken Arrow" (438), "The Love of Macintosh" (439), "I was a Wanderer Long" (444-445), and "The Widow of the Chief" (452-455), all in Guilds' An Early and Strong Sympathy.

[3]Namely, the predominantly modern view of nature and human civilization as mutually exclusive entities, where people view nature as "pristine, pure, and free of human 'intrusion' and 'contamination'" (Jacobson 105).

[4]Ethics that destroyed stewardship were driven by "greed, narcissism, egocentrism, empiricism, hedonism, insensitivity, waste, profligacy," and led to alienation and fragmentation (Kibler, Stewardship 217).

opposed to the "American Adam" thesis.[5] In strict contrast to Thoreau, Cooper, and other exemplars of Lewis's thesis, Simms's heroes are men who, instead of coming to innocence by striking out in the supposedly salutary and unspoiled wilderness, more often than not leave society—often foolishly they recognize in hindsight—to experience their greatest ordeals in the wilderness, and having overcome them, find their reward in being welcomed back to the society they had left.[6] Simms's frontier societies also cut against the grain of Lewis's thesis concerning

[5]In his influential book, American Adam, R. W. B. Lewis examines the literature of almost exclusively 19th-century Northern writers such as Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman and Cooper in promulgating "the first tentative outlines of a native American mythology" (1), containing the figure of an "American Adam," whom Lewis calls "the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling" (5). This figure exhibits the "total renunciation of the traditional, the conventional, the socially acceptable, the well-worn paths of conduct" Thoreau prescribes in favor of the "total immersion in nature" (Lewis 21); not surprisingly, his survival is made possible by the presence of the wilderness (Lewis 100). As Elliott West makes clear in his astute and thoroughly researched article, "American Frontier: Romance and Reality," this stereotypical image of the lone, wilderness-conquering male is essentially fictive, since the bulk of pioneering was accomplished by pioneer families, "not," he writes, "by heroic males pressing on their own into the great unknown to pave the way for women and children" (35). Unlike Cooper's Leatherstocking and scores of other characters based on Filson's Daniel Boone, less than 1 percent of adult pioneers were single and planned to stay that way, and those who did were considered freaks (West 36). Louis D. Rubin convincingly illustrates how "Simms's dream…turns out to be diametrically opposed to that of Cooper," and "is a dream not of solitude but of society, and the attainment of a position of comfort and dignity within it" (125). Lewis's thesis, while representative of 19th-century New England literature, is neither representative of 19th-century American literature, the reality of pioneering, nor the American ideology of society and the wilderness. As Molly Boyd cogently illustrates in her article, "The Southern American Adam: Simms's Alternative Myth," there are clear alternatives to Lewis' Adamic myth (74).

[6]In Simms's novel Richard Hurdis, for instance, the protagonist Richard Hurdis speaks buoyantly of his "desire to range," of bursting his shackles to "traverse the prairies, to penetrate the swamps, to behold the climbing hills and lovely hollows of the Choctaw lands, and luxuriate in the eternal solitudes of their spacious forests" (2-3). Yet a few pages later when Hurdis speaks of leaving society, he terms it "utter, irrevocable banishment" to "deeper forests" and a "wilder home" which he acknowledges as having "fewer attractions" to the home he contemplates leaving (12). In the next chapter, appropriately named "Comrade in Exile," in defending his self-imposed departure, Richard reveals his strong sense of his folly in leaving his society when he muses, "It is strange how earnestly the mind will devote itself to the exactions of the blood, and cog, and connive, and cavil, in compliance with the appetites and impulses of the body. The

the benefits of being immersed in nature. While situated away from the more established cities of the East, and closer to the supposedly pristine wilderness, Simms's frontier societies are often lawless and cutthroat—his borderers "mere Ishmaelites" (Letters, I, 37).[7] As Boyd writes, "For Simms, the American wilderness is not a mythical space of individual regeneration, an ideal, pre-labor Eden, but…a place of hardship and danger which carries the promise of future development" (80).

In "Stewardship and *Patria* in Simms's Frontier Poetry," James E. Kibler touches on the types of stewardship for the land Simms advocates as well as the connections Simms makes between stewardship for the land and the sense of patria that comes from staying in one place. Although limiting his focus on a small amount of Simms's frontier poetry, Kibler insightfully explores Simms's ideas concerning proper stewardship for the land—citing how the "abiding and unchanging nature of the frontier" has been replaced by "the specter of a despoiled natural landscape," and "the certain vision of cut trees and sterile, worn-out soil," a situation the old narrator laments will result in the sweeping away through the "woodsman's blazes" of "trees, cool spring and shade, and all their association and remembrance" (Stewardship 215). This wilderness, now barren and shorn of its trees—and their spiritual influence, since trees to Simms were not simply wood but "monuments or memorials of God's presence"—will be "no less a wasteland than Eliot's" (Kibler, Stewardship 214-215). Kibler concludes that "As an artist who

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animal is no small despot when it begins to sway" (13). The end finds Hurdis married to the heroine Mary Easterby, and receiving a kindly social call from Colonel Grafton and his daughter Julia. Ralph Colleton, Simms's hero of Border Beagles, also returns from the primitive backwoods of Mississippi to Carolina to live presumably "happily ever after" with his betrothed. Concerning such protagonists, Gary Macdonald points out how "The manly beauty of Simms's aristocratic heroes marks their participation in commerce, civilization, and social stability" (270), a point reinforcing Boyd's "Southern Adam" argument.

[7]Subsequent citations from The Letters of William Gilmore Simms are abbreviated. For instance, the citation for a letter on page 20 of volume two reads (L, II, 20).

recognized the true value of place," Simms was "one of our first environmentalists, his view of stewardship supported by a remarkably complete vision of society. And literally hundreds of his poems and essays, written long before Thoreau, prove it" (Stewardship 217). Before however comparing Simms to Thoreau, or turning Simms into a "Southern Thoreau," the type and quality of Simms's ideas concerning nature and stewardship of the land—what some might call today environmentalism—would benefit from a more comprehensive study.

Prior to and throughout Simms's lifetime, agriculture formed the basis of American civilization, and in both the North and South, influential men championed the nobility of an agrarian way of life.[8] In 1782, the Frenchman St. John de Crevecoeur, in his Letters from an American Farmer, wrote, "We are a people of cultivators, our cultivation is unrestrained, and therefore everything is prosperous and flourishing" (12). Thomas Jefferson, asserting the "primacy of agriculture as the ideal pursuit for men and nations" (Ekirch 18), became perhaps the most influential agrarian, calling farmers "the chosen people of God" (Notes 228), and "the most precious part of a state" (Portable Jefferson 396-7). Additionally, the Bible, one of the most widely read books at this time, contains innumerable links between gardening and the sense of place, as in, for instance, Genesis, chapter two, verse eight, where the author relates how "the Lord God planted a Garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Bible 10). Moreover, contrasting biblical themes of exile and wandering illustrate Jacobson's insight that "God places man and conversely punishes him by sending him into exile as a

[8]In addition to Jefferson and Crevecoeur, Ben Franklin, John Taylor of Caroline, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and even the gilded age Horace Greeley advocated the virtues of rural life while in England, such poets as Jonson, Pope, Goldsmith, Crabbe, Burns, Gray, Wordsworth, and Thomson wrote on the subject of the moral causes and effects that attended rustic living as well as the proper relationship between man and nature (Inge xvii). Of course, nearly all of these men were influenced by a rich classical tradition including Hesiod, Aristotle, Virgil, and Marcus Cato.

wanderer" (36), a key theme in Simms's frontier writings and one that directly opposes the idea that people benefit from leaving civilization to live in the wilderness in favor of a more integrative view that instead pairs the "seemingly contradictory ideas of nature and civilization" (Ekirch 21).

Three key ideas concerning nature and its proper stewardship directly correlate with the values found in Crevecoeur's Letters and Jefferson's agrarianism, and recur again and again in Simms's fiction, as in for example his orations The Age of Iron and The Good Farmer, both of which Kibler calls "extraordinary Jeffersonian statements proving that Simms had become a true agrarian" (Simms Review 10, 1).[9] The first idea is that cultivating the soil promotes a positive spiritual good that strengthens the cultivators' character. This spiritual good flows from the cultivators' direct contact with physical nature, the medium through which God is directly revealed and which reminds him of his finite nature and dependence on God. Second, the view that those who work with the soil have heightened senses of identity, historical and religious tradition, and feelings of belonging to concrete families, places, and regions, all of which are psychologically and culturally beneficial. Their lives are more harmonious, orderly, and whole, and counteract tendencies in modern society towards abstraction, fragmentation, and alienation. The third idea is that agricultural communities, with their brotherhoods of labor and cooperation, provide the model for an ideal social order (Inge xiv).[10]

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[9]Simms reiterates these Jeffersonian themes in The Social Principle, an oration delivered to the Erosophic Society of the University of Alabama in 1842. In one particularly representative passage, he praises how "To tend the soil, indeed, is to make one love it," and then explains how in seeking to create homes in the wilderness, "an office which the Spaniard in his pride, and the Frenchman in his levity, equally disdained to perform," the British Colonist secured his future in North America (28).

[10]These ideas correspond with the agrarian-based philosophy found in Kibler's article, "Stewardship and *Patria* in Simms's Frontier Poetry," where, in describing the kind of stationary society Simms's advocates, Kibler enumerates the following ideas: art must have a settled

While Jeffersonian agrarianism remained a popular idea during Simms's lifetime, the idea of staying home to practice it did not. In the years following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the vast amount of ostensibly "open" land dominated American thought, and whether from Horace Greeley or Bishop Berkeley, the rallying cry during Simms's lifetime was "Go West!" (Oxford Quotation Dictionary 235).[11] More often than not, farmers who had impoverished their land through careless farming did just that, "Mississippi-mad"[12] for western riches as Simms called it. In the midst of this great current of westward emigration, however, Simms—after sufficiently conquering his own wanderlust—articulated the importance of staying home, believing it to be inextricably linked with good stewardship of the land.[13]

Like Jefferson before him, Simms believed an agrarian-based way of life was not simply a sound basis for an economy, but rather the foundation of an entire value system which among other things, promoted proper stewardship of the land.[14] In his oration, The Social Principle, Simms notes how "the quantity of land before us deprives us of that veneration for the soil, to

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traditional base to generate and support it; man cannot create lasting moral monuments and be a nomad, but rather has to value what is at his own doorstep and the place he knows best—the soil and its traditions, its memories and associations—what Virgil called the *patria*—that little postage stamp of land called home, "not the national or even the regional *palatia Romana*" (211). What Kibler calls a "right attitude toward nature," along with the virtues that flow from it, form the bedrock of Simms's agrarianism (Stewardship 213).

[11]Carville Earle notes that the rate of frontier expansion in the lower South surpassed all other regions during this period then slowed dramatically when the cotton market collapsed in the 1830s and 1840s (59).

[12]As in "The Western Immigrants" (Poems 163).

[13]In his own life, Simms was tempted early on to migrate west at his father's urging, and even went so far as to move to New York when he was twenty-five years old, only to return to Charleston less than a year later, knowing that his native place and its traditions formed the wellspring of his art (Kibler, Stewardship 211). Although in his letters he repeatedly questions the impact on his career of his decision to remain in the South, Simms positively articulates his reasons again and again for staying home both in his words and his actions.

[14]Jefferson repeatedly and unequivocally expresses his belief in the connection between land and civic virtue. In advocating the virtues of farming over the vices of manufacturing, he writes: "It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the hearts of its laws and constitution" (Notes 164-165).

which the Englishman owes so many of his proudest virtues" (23). Of the Indians, after stating how "A wandering people is more or less a barbarous one," Simms expostulates:

> We see in the fate of the North American savage, that of every nomadic nation. What is true of them, is true in degree of every civilized people that adopts, in whatever degree, their habits. Every remove, of whatever kind, is injurious to social progress; and every remove into the wilderness, lessons the hold which refinement and society have hitherto held upon the individual man. (Social Principle 36).[15]

In his "Notes of a Small Tourist, No. 10," Simms rails against the possession of so much territory as "greatly inimical to the well being of this country" because it destroys well established societies and "makes our borderers mere Ishmaelites" (L, I, 37). Simms returns to this idea again almost verbatim in an 1840 letter, noting how "The vast temptations to cupidity, and mercenary enterprise" caused by the immense tracts of open land in the West produced a sleepless discontent so that Southerners "prepare, negatively, for removal from their homesteads, long before they have actually resolved upon the measure" (L, I, 206).

Despite these connections between staying home and good stewardship of the land, Simms was not entirely averse to pioneering. Time and again in his works, especially his

[15]Although he laments the passing of the Indians in his novels and poems, and possessed what he called, "an early and strong sympathy with the subject of the Red Men" (L, III, 101), In his 1828 essay, "North American Indians," Simms, in condemning nomadic life, describes how Indians, following the examples of their white pioneer neighbors, "discovers that it is not necessary that he should be always hunting….he has corn at home, when he finds no venison abroad, and he discovers in the course of one season, that the regular labor of the field is an enjoyment, compared with the fatiguing difficulties of the hunt" (Guilds, Sympathy 13). Simms clearly shared the then-predominant view that Native Americans "should be converted to farming, to live sedentary rather than nomadic or pastoral lives, and to live in bounded, mutually defined exclusive plots of land and reservations" (Jacobson 100). As one government architect of Indian policy wrote, "We want to make citizens out of them, and [in order to do so] they must first be anchored to the soil" (qtd. in Jacobson 100).

frontier novels, Simms demonstrates how those who "leave behind the moral standards of society and attempt to carve a quick fortune in the wilderness, by exploiting fellow human beings as well as nature," are conclusively bested by "those hardy pioneers who maintain a healthy respect for human dignity and for the necessary rules of civilization; even in conquering the wilderness, they nurture and preserve its resources, rather than exploit and waste them. Such frontiersmen have a sense of responsibility…for the land they seek to cultivate" (Guilds, Literary Life 85).[16]

Romanticism is another key facet to understanding Simms's ideas concerning nature and its proper stewardship. Simms both knew of, respected, and was profoundly influenced by such English Romantics as Coleridge, Keats, and Wordsworth, and like them, believed in nature's power "not only to teach and nurture the soul, but also to restore it from the enervating effects of industrialism, materialism, and utilitarianism" (Brennan 37), themes Simms repeatedly iterates in his poetry.[17] In the lines from "The Mountain Tramp" for instance, where he echoes Coleridge's "Kubla-Khan" in describing "A world of savage solitude, / Unknown, unwrought and unsubdued; / Terribly beautiful and strange," Simms praises how this scene is "Yet full of sweet and pleasing change…And making pictures, scenes for art, / That fill the thought, and soothe the heart" (Guilds, Sympathy 507). In "Forest Reverie by Starlight," he delights in how "Balmy airs

[16]The tide of frontier expansion Simms so ardently rails against was stimulated by the 1793 invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin as well as a dramatic rise in cotton prices. Of this period of expansion taking place primarily from 1780 to 1830, Carville Earle writes, "If ever agrarian capitalism in the South was truly unrestrained and the pursuit of profit rode roughshod over environmental sensitivity, it was in these halcyon days. Planters cultivated cotton continuously until soils wore out, at which point they abandoned these lands for good and shifted cotton onto new land. And when all their plantation had been exhausted, they pulled up stakes, migrated to new lands on the edge of the cotton frontier, and repeated their destructive sequence" (59).

[17]According to Matthew C. Brennan, Simms's poetry "falls in the mainstream of English Romanticism—before Emerson, Thoreau, Whittier, Longfellow, and Whitman began to write" (37), while Kibler shows Simms's "constant praise of Wordsworth" hinged partly "on the English writer's ability to 'invest the sun, stars, the air and vernal woods…with something of a spiritual instinct'" (Perceiver 107).

/ Creep gently to my bosom, and beguile / Each feeling into freshness" (Poems 52), while in "By the Edisto," he praises how the "murmur" of the Edisto River "strengthens / The purpose in my soul" (Poems 61). In 'Nature's Favorite," he personifies nature, and praises how she has been:

> The gentle mother, leading them away
> From the immure of the unnatural town,
> To the free homestead of the ancient trees;
> Bestowing them the life that there alone
> Makes life a dear romance. (Poems 69)

We find the best novelistic example in The Cassique of Kiawah, where Simms, in characteristically lush and descriptive nature prose, admonishes the reader to "Go through these sweet, silent, mysterious avenues of sea and islet, green plain, and sheltering thicket…at early morning or toward the sunset, or the midnight hour, and the holy sweetness of the scene will sink into your very soul, and soften it to love and blessing" (12). With this rich admixture of ideas about nature, it is easy to see why Simms's views of nature and its proper stewardship are often misunderstood.

CHAPTER 2

NATURE BEAUTIFIED BY SOCIETY

Despite Simms's paeans to the primitive glories of a pre-colonial and early colonial nature, it is a mistake to think he believed nature was more beautiful without the "improvements" wrought by white civilization. For in spite of his nostalgic dirges lamenting the disappearance of pre-colonial nature and the fate of the Indian, Simms frequently presents the primeval wilderness as anathema. In chapter one of Guy Rivers, appropriately named "The Sterile Prospect and the Lonely Traveller," in striking contrast to the image of a salutary wilderness Eden, Simms describes the sparsely settled land between the Chatahoochie and Chestatee Rivers in Northern Georgia in terms evoking more of a wasteland than a woods. "The wayfarer," Simms writes, "finds himself lost in a long reach of comparatively barren lands" where "the tract is garnished with a stunted growth, a dreary and seemingly half-withered shrubbery, broken occasionally by clumps of slender pines that raise their green tops abruptly, and as if out of place, against the sky" (Guy Rivers 1). Though the "ragged ranges of forest" remain almost "untrodden by civilized man," the entire scene wears a "gloomy and discouraging expression" which "saddens the soul of the most careless spectator," indicating to Simms a "peculiarly sterile destiny" (Guy Rivers 1). Amidst "the dreary wastes, the dull woods, the long sandy tracts, and the rude hills," Simms finds "no lights for the encouragement of civilized man" (Guy Rivers 2). Although several critics focus on the Gothic nature of Simms's imagery in Guy Rivers, they underestimate

the extent to which it reflects Simms's true beliefs about the proper state of nature—beliefs Simms evinces time and again.[18]

In "The Edge of the Swamp," Simms casts the swamp in poisonous and forbidding terms. In this "wild spot," which "hath a gloomy look," Simms describes how "the young leaves seem blighted," while "A rank growth / Spreads poisonously round, with power to taint, / With blistering dews, the thoughtless hand that dares / To penetrate the covert" (Poems 201-202). Knowing that swamps harbored greater numbers of biting insects like mosquitoes, black flies, gnats, and deer flies—insects that we now know carried yellow fever and malaria—Simms, along with wealthier plantation owners, sought to avoid the summer infestation of insects by removing their families for the season to areas that were higher, drier, and more open, and freer of fevers than the areas where there were swamps (Kniffen 10).[19]

Responding to criticism that Richard Hurdis was of "too gloomy and savage a character" (Introduction, Richard Hurdis xxvii), Simms retorted that "the entire aspect of a sparsely-settled forest, or mountain country, is grave and saddening, even where society is stationary and consistent" (xxvii), while in The Social Principle, he tells of "Traversing the then dreary wastes of this south-western region" (7). In a letter titled "Notes of a Small Tourist," Simms describes the Charleston to Augusta section of the Savannah River as "a dull, monotonous and rather

[18]In demonstrating how Simms "quickly divined that vast wildernesses in the South offered admirable replacements" for "the European haunted castles or landscapes that had figured as the central *loci* in Gothic fiction" (Bosky 159), Benjamin F. Fisher soundly illustrates Simms's use of Gothic imagery to enhance "the senses of wildness, awe, and mystery" (To Shadow Forth 62) as well as to blend "exteriority with interiority" in creating atmospheres "that correspond and impart depth to the characterization" (To Shadow Forth 65).

[19]Before Simms left for Charleston, usually around October or November, he wrote to a friend, "We are packing up for the city, and will leave our woodland home….The season is fast approaching when the rank vegetation of our swamps becomes fatal to European and Atlantick life; and we natives of the seaboard find it a timely precaution to depart before the middle of June" (L, I, 142).

sluggish sheet of water" with "low and swampy" shores that are "without relief or circumstance calculated to make them, even momentarily, picturesque" (L, I, 20). When cataloguing such "substantial marks of civilization" that make such natural scenes not only more picturesque, but more importantly, increase their material comforts, Simms instructs planters to build stately mansions and plant favorite trees around them to provide shade, create gardens filled with tropical plants, and lay out graveled walks. These efforts in turn would prompt those who lived there (mainly farmers and other planters) to work harder to maintain the soil's fertility through a proper cultivation that improves the soil (Social Principle 42-43). Echoing Andrew Jackson,[20] Simms muses in "The Good Farmer," "Originally yielded to man as a garden, shall we return it to the Giver as a wilderness?" (Simms Review 10, 12).

For Simms, the answer to this question was not in the affirmative—as the swamps were drained, the forests cut, and the wilderness otherwise became filled with well kept houses, gardens, and what he considered the adornments of a superior European civilization, the wilderness became more beautiful. Its inhabitants would then be more likely to stay on their land and take better care of it due to the work they had invested in making it attractive. "We must concentrate our energies," Simms wrote in a passage remarkable for its precocious emphasis on localism, "upon the little spot in which we take up our abodes, and, in making that lovely to the mind, we shall discover in it abundant resources to satisfy all the mind's desires" (Social Principle 50). A perennial theme throughout much of his work, Simms illustrates how

[20]"Philanthropy," Jackson asserted, "could not wish to see this continent restored to the condition in which it was found by our forefathers. What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute…?" (qtd. in Ekirch 24).

these “energies” improve nature with what he considered to be the finer adornments of civilization.

In Richard Hurdis, describing a primitive Tuscaloosa, Simms notes how, amidst the piles of brick and timber crowding a main street that was but “little more than hewn out of the woods,” the town’s “very incompleteness, and rude want of finish, indicated the fermenting character of life” (99). In another passage remarkable in its denigration of pristine wilderness at the expense of a progressive white civilization, Simms commends how “The stagnation of the forests was disturbed,” and “The green and sluggish waters of its inactivity were drained off into new channels of enterprise and effort” (Richard Hurdis 99). “Life,” Simms tells of the wilderness, “had opened upon it; its veins were filling fast with the life-blood of human greatness; active and sleepless endeavors” (Richard Hurdis 99). For Simms, these efforts, far from harming the environment, brought a marked improvement. “A warm sun,” he writes, “seemed pouring down its rays for the first time upon the cold and covered bosom of its swamps and caverns (Richard Hurdis 99).

In his 1870 article, “Flights to Florida,” Simms discusses the growth of white civilization in what was a region still largely unsettled by white, predominantly, Anglo-European civilization. In arguing the difference between the beauties of the Rhine versus the St. Johns River, Simms draws a quite descriptive vision of nature with and without white civilization’s ostensible improvements—even mentioning specific architectural styles of the villages he presages will one day increase the beauty of the St. Johns’ shores. “As a matter of course,” Simms relates:

> All great structures, all objects which tend to relieve the monotony of a scene—will contribute to its attractions; but the St. John’s, with its thick forests and

> varied foliage, demands a different style of architecture from that of those rocky cliffs on which the feudal barons planted their castles….Here the simpler forms of the Gothic or the Italian, as shown in its *cottage* architecture—its sloping roofs—its colonnades and verandahs—would be much more in keeping with the scene; and from these we could extract *loveliness* and charm; affecting the gentler tastes, the sympathies and the affections, where we should never look for the sublime, nor feel, for one moment, a sentiment of awe. I have no doubt that, well settled, and with lovely cottages skirting this river, and dotting the modest headlands right and left, and gleaming through the green thickets of grand old trees,--the St. John's River could be made one of the most grateful, at once to the mind and sight of the traveler, and I trust the day will come when a superior civilization will crown its shores with lovely settlements—villas and villages, where wealth, bringing art and superior tastes in its train, will make for us thousands of beautiful pictures which the painting will delight to transfer to canvas. (Flights)

For Simms, the St. Johns River will clearly become more beautiful with the increased development of an avowedly superior white civilization.[21] In part VIII, Simms reiterates this theme in praising the benefits of the period when thousands of whites "will gladly bring hither their wealth and seek repose and leisure" and will "necessarily bring improvements of all descriptions" (Flights). Simms concludes by anticipating how "numerous villages will adorn these shores with the one beauty of art which they now need for complete attraction" (Flights).

[21] Interestingly enough, Simms's contemporary James Fenimore Cooper also favored the village model, praising "not one of those places that shoot up in a day…while the stumps still stand in the streets," but rather "a sober country town, that has advanced steadily…with the surrounding country, and offers a fair specimen of the more regular advancement of the whole nation in its progress towards civilization" (126).

In Charlemont, and to a lesser degree, its sequel, Beauchamp, Simms further develops this idea of nature's beautification from improvements wrought by white civilization. Like Filson's Daniel Boone,[22] Charlemont opens with the same Romantic, Eden-like vista West describes as "wilderness, a realm of astonishing beauty, a land bursting with natural bounty, virgin country undefiled and unstroked by the hand of man" (34). The first scene opens appropriately in spring, which Simms poetically describes as "in all the green and glory of her youth," a time when "the bosom of Kentucky heaved with the prolific burden of the season" and "That lovely presence which makes every land blossom, and every living thing rejoice, met, in the happy region in which we meet her now, a double tribute of honor and rejoicing" (Charlemont 13-14).

The very next scene contains a crucial shift however as Simms begins discussing the resoundingly positive changes wrought by Charlemont's white settlers on this once-pristine wilderness. On ground formerly rendered "dark and bloody" by Indian conflicts with white pioneers, Simms, with a clearly anti-Indian bias, optimistically describes how, "the savage had disappeared from its green forests for ever, and no longer profaned with slaughter, and his unholy whoop of death, its broad and beautiful abodes" (Charlemont 14). In place of the Indians, lazy by white civilization's standards, Simms glories how "A newer race had succeeded; and the wilderness, fulfilling the better destinies of earth, had begun to blossom like the rose.[23]

[22]West elaborates how, "Immediately before his capture…Boone had passed through a great forest where 'nature was…a series of wonders, and a fund of delight,' and on the very day of his brush with the Shawnees he had marveled at 'myriads of trees…a variety of flowers and fruits, beautifully colored, elegantly shaped, and charmingly flavored.' Boone was expressing the ancient dream of Eden" (33-34).

[23]In Charlemont, Simms writes disparagingly of the Indians, "High and becoming purposes of social life and thoughtful enterprise superseded that eating and painful decay, which has terminated in the annihilation of the red man; and which, among every people, must always result from their refusal to exercise, according to the decree of experience, no less than

Conquest had fenced in its sterile borders with a wall of fearless men, and peace slept everywhere in security among its green recesses (Charlemont 14). Amidst this extremely complex ideological skein of "broad and beautiful abodes" contrasting with the "sterile borders" of the wilderness now blossoming and otherwise fulfilling "the better destinies of earth" (Charlemont 14), Simms links the wilderness' fruitfulness with the improvements wrought upon the wilderness from Charlemont's founders. In other words, the white conquest of the wilderness—the fencing in of Charlemont's "sterile borders with a wall of fearless [white] men"—makes Simms's optimistic and nature-rich description of spring's glories possible. Simms writes favorably of the "well-directed and continual labor" of Charlemont's white settlers, even though they were transforming the forests through what Elliott West calls an Anglo-American "biotic, botanical, zoological, and chemical invasion" (33) which produced "changes of almost unimaginable complexity" (33). As Jacobson writes, "The rationalization of the landscape created reasoned and rational citizens, in contrast to the wild and untamed woods and its wild and untamed progeny" (95).

Of the clearing of the forests surrounding Charlemont by its white villagers, a theme he often critiques,[24] Simms affirms that "Stirring industry—the perpetual conqueror—made the woods resound with the echoes of his biting axe and ringing hammer" (Charlemont 14). "Smiling villages rose in cheerful white, in place of the crumbling and smoky cabins of the hunter" (Charlemont 14). Adding to this sense of Simms's sure approval of white civilization's

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Providence, their limbs and sinews in tasks of well-directed and continual labor (14). This is in strict keeping with Simms's assertions in The Social Principle that "A wandering people is more or less a barbarous one. We see in the fate of the North American savage, that of every nomadic nation" (36) as well as his argument that "all wanderers cease to be laborers" (37).

[24]Such as in "The Traveller's Rest," where he laments how "The profligate hands / Of avarice and of ignorance will despoil / The woods of their old glories" (Poems 25). Indian poems like "The Broken Arrow" and "I was a Wanderer Long" in An Early and Strong Sympathy also illustrate this theme.

ceaseless metamorphosis of nature going on before him, is the sense of manifest destiny he impresses upon us in such passages as the following:

> A great nation urging on a sleepless war against sloth and feebleness, is one of the noblest of human spectacles. This warfare was rapidly and hourly changing the monotony and dreary aspects of rock and forest. Under the creative hands of art, temples of magnificence rose where the pines had fallen. Long and lovely vistas were opened through the dark and hitherto impervious thickets. (Charlemont 14-15)

In other passages, Simms revels in the changes wrought by white civilization, describing how:

> A dozen snug and smiling cottages seem to have been dropped in this natural cup, as if by a spell of magic….The houses, though constructed after the fashion of the country, of heavy and ill-squared logs, roughly hewn, and hastily thrown together…are yet made cheerful by that tidy industry which is always sure to make them comfortable also. Trim hedges that run beside slender white palings, surround and separate them from each other. Sometimes, as you see, festoons of graceful flowers, and waving blossoms, distinguish one dwelling from the rest. (Charlemont 18)

Such homes were one of Simms's favorite reflections on the domestic sentiment that led people to stay in one place and develop culture—in The Social Principle, he portrays how the vines and flowers encircling a habitation illustrate “The progress of one man, thus endowing his little cottage with love and comfort,” thereby “provoking the emulation of his neighbor, and thus hamlets rise, and great cities, even in the bosom of a wilderness like this!” (15). In describing such a "home thus rendered sweet to the affections," Simms notes how "If gentle spirits make it

desirable within, the busy fingers of an equally gentle fancy render it attractive without. Vines and flowers encircle the habitation" (Social Principle 14). In another passage, Simms notes the connections wrought by generation upon generation "endowed with the numerous improvements of successive generations….No spot is left unhallowed by the all-endowing hands of love and veneration. Every tree has its appropriate name and history" (Social Principle 23).

Simms castigates in no uncertain terms those who fail to make these improvements. Most of all, he condemns a planter for his "insatiate rage for gain," along with failing to build a "stately mansion" and lay out a garden and plant favorite trees, "whose mellowing shade would have seemed too sacred for desertion" (Social Principle 43). In a letter written in 1840, Simms again criticizes planters who "built houses which scarcely shelter them from the inclemency of the weather"--men who "neither seek to beautify" while avoiding all improvements (L, I, 207). While studying the varied characters of the slaves, as shown in the style of their cabins, the order in which they kept them, and the taste displayed in their gardens, T. Addison Richards makes this connection between supposedly "improving" the land and human virtuousness even more explicit, describing how:

> The huts of some bore as happy an air as one might desire; neat pailings enclosed them; the gardens were full of flowers, and blooming vines clambered over the doors and windows. Others, again, had been suffered by the idle occupants to fall into sad decay: no evidence of taste or industry was to be seen in their hingeless doors, their fallen fences, their weed-grown gardens. These lazy fellows were accustomed even to cut down the shade-trees, which had been kindly planted before their homes, rather than walk a few yards further for other and even better fuel. (Simms Review 1, 10)

Simms makes this connection between virtue and domestic improvements explicit in characters like Ben Pickett, a villain in Simms's novel Richard Hurdis who lives in "a miserable cabin that stood in a secluded and wild spot" (65). In Woodcraft, the squatter Bostwick lives in a "wigwam" Simms describes as "one of the meanest sort of log-houses" (214-215). After describing the beauties of a forest filled with honeysuckle, jessamine, and dog-woods, along with oaks ("the ancient patriarch") and magnolias ("the crowned king of the forest"), Simms relates how "the squatter [Bostwick] had no eye for these objects" (Woodcraft 240). With Bostwick, as with most of Simms's male squatters, "a tree is a tree only; and in a region which boasts of a wilderness of trees, the most noble is but little valued—is cut down and cast into the fire without remorse on the smallest occasion" (Woodcraft 240).

A similar, though more commercially-oriented spirit imbues "Flights to Florida."[25] In the opening sketch, Simms praises Floridians' great energy in cutting lumber, raising all kinds of cattle, planting cotton, tobacco, and tropical fruits and otherwise being a model for other antebellum states in working diligently towards "the recuperation of their State" (Flights). In vaunting the vast commercial potential of Florida's landed natural resources—especially its abundant trees—Simms's language mirrors his commercial treatment of nature, and trees become "products" of a seemingly indistinct "lumber region" as opposed to Simms's usual treatment of trees and place.[26] "The whole course of the Withlacoochee [River]" he writes:

[25]"Flights to Florida" appeared in the *Charleston Courier* in 1870.

[26] Simms treats trees with especial reverence, as evinced in T. A. Richards's statement, in reference to Simms's plantation at Woodlands: "The ranks of orange trees and live oak which sentinel his castle, are the objects of his tenderest care—true and ardent lover of nature that he is" (Simms Review 1, 10). In Woodcraft, he tells how "Our live oaks are certainly patriarchal presences when we find them of an age beyond the memory of man" (239). Kibler captures Simms's love of trees in explicating two versions of Simms's poem, "The Traveller's Rest." Here, Kibler writes, "There had been great forests over which 'hung brooding the countenance of God, when beneath his creative word, / They freshened into green, memorials of His presence.'

> passes through a great lumber region abounding in yellow and pitch pine, cypress and cedar. The Florida railway, from Fernandina to Cedar Keys, must become the grand avenue for an immense transportation of its products of the fertile region which it relieves—carrying all manner of produce, besides cattle and lumber; of both of which the supply may be shown, under proper auspices of society and energy, to be endless. (Flights)

In another passage, Simms describes Florida as "a great grazing region and a productive and compensative lumber and turpentine country," where "Not only the tropical fruits, but the whole vegetable world may be embraced here, as rewarding the most moderate degree of labor, and compensating the most extravagant expenditure of wealth" (Flights). Mindful of the potential wealth this field of endeavor offers, Simms gloats, "Capital here *breeds*," then reports how the cultivation of "fine leaf segar tobacco" may be profitably extended over "the whole of South and East Florida" (Flights).

Nor does Simms limit his comments on Florida's commercial resources to its landed ones alone—he also promotes harvesting the natural wealth of Florida's seas. Pointing out how "Along the entire coast of the Gulf and Atlantic the fisheries of Florida are perhaps the finest in the world," Simms exults in describing how ".Millions of dollars worth may be caught and cured annually" (Flights). Then, after recounting how shrimp and oysters "appealing to the tastes of princes" could be canned and sold around the world, Simms concedes that the outlay for a mullet fishery would be "exceedingly moderate," and adds admiringly that "One of my Floridian friends said to me: 'I have known 1200 barrels of fish caught at a single haul of a seine, 300 yards long'; and when you reflect that these fisheries might be established along 1000 miles of coast and

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Virgin forests are thus imaged here as monuments or memorials of God's presence….Now the older man sees these memorials reduced to smoking stumps" (Stewardship 214).

inlet, there is no attractive limit to be attached to the probable wealth which such fisheries might be made to yield" (Flights). Here, Simms's commercial focus takes for granted the potentially finite nature of natural resources, somewhat resembling the ethos behind Daniel Boone's killing 155 bears in three weeks—eleven one day before breakfast (West 35)—or William Elliott's account of how twelve thousand drum, averaging from thirty to forty pounds each, were caught on the coast of South Carolina during a typical April in the 1840s (61-62).

In the opening pages of The Cassique of Kiawah, Simms paints a scene of verdant delight that David Aiken calls "the Garden of Eden, the American landscape before the coming of the white man's civilization" (Introduction, Cassique xxiii). In one of his most glorious prelapsarian passages, Simms describes "an empire of sweetness and beauty," with "mighty colonnades of open woods" filled with the "noble live oak" and "gigantic pine" along with cypresses, laurels, bays, beeches, poplars and mulberries that fill the air with fragrance (13). Yet even amidst these "dense thickets which the black bear may scarcely penetrate" and where the "redman still winds his way (Cassique 13), Simms further develops the idea of the virtue of clearing the land to make way for white civilization.[27] In describing the colonists' early commercial endeavors, Simms sings optimistically of the "prophetic gleams of promise" (93) shown by the early colony of Charleston, reporting that "In no very distant time, she [Britain] will probably receive her very best wines from the same and contiguous regions….Not only does the vine grow here in native and peculiarly appropriate soil, but the olive, brought from Fayal, has been planted, and is flourishing also, to the great delight of the prophetic settlers and proprietors" (93).[28] Through the

[27]In much of his Indian poetry, Simms, although calling the Indians poor stewards of the land, shows that nature was filled with wildlife when the Indians lived there—wildlife that would recede and eventually disappear with each advance of white civilization.

[28] In a letter to James Lawson in 1861, Simms writes, "I had a present of about 100 dollars of fruit & shrub trees, and have set out 1000 grapes Catawba & Warren, and shall set out (D. V.)

character of Edward Berkeley, a rich landed proprietor and brother to the hero Harry Calvert, Simms also comments favorably upon the radical ecological transformations effected by early white immigrants. Although Berkeley is radically altering his 24,000-acre plot of Eden on the Kiawah River into a landed barony, Simms casts Berkeley's efforts in a clearly positive light. The quasi-Indian, woodcraft-wise character Gowdey "admires his energy, his courage, the boldness of his projects, the dignity of his bearing, and, so far as he knows it, the worth of his character" (Cassique 196), and adds that though Calvert lives in seclusion, he "will make his establishment a grand one, and, if he carries out his plans, the barony of Kiawah will be a model family-seat" (Cassique 119). Gowdey's remarks hint at Simms's approval of several of Berkeley's initiatives to drastically transform nature as well as his faith in the gospel of work—for Simms, as long as Berkeley's initiatives are driven by greed, all is well. "Though I think he's quite wild in some of his calculations, as when he thinks to tame these red savages and convart these marshes into grand pasturages, and make wine out of these grapes to beat all France," Gowdey admires how:

> he's so manful and courageous in it all, that I can't help liking him. And, another reason, he's all the time trying *to do*! It isn't to *make* money! Ef you believe me, your honor, I don't think this cassique, as they call him, cares a copper whether he gits anything out of all his workings for himself. But he looks out upon the marsh, and says, 'If I could conquer it from the sea, and make it green with grass!' And he says, 'Think of all these forests, Gowdey, supporting their thousands of sheep!' And then he looks at the grapevines everywhere, and cries

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another 1000 in a week" (L, IV, 340-341). Kibler posits that Simms—along with his friend Hammond and Henry William Ravenel of nearby Aiken, S.C—was also preparing to enter the viticulture industry (Simms Review 1, 19).

> out, 'All Europe shall drink of the wine of Carolina!' Them's grand idees, your honor, and them's the idees of Colonel Berkeley. He's got no sort of little meanness in all his nature. He's for taking the rough world, jest as you see it, and making it smooth for man! (196-197)

A few sentences later, when Harry Calvert asks him, "He is making a great place of his barony, then?," Gowdey replies, "Give him five years, and it'll be famous" (Cassique 197). As this and the aforementioned passages illustrate, Simms clearly is not against destroying the forest, or even pushing out the Indians, as long as it increases the beauties of white civilization and is not perpetrated with what Kibler calls "the wrong response" to nature (217).[29] In this way, Simms, like Berkeley, would make the rough world smooth for man.

[29] Kibler comments how, "As mentor and guide, Simms the poet shows the healing power of nature—of nature as the source of man's life. A right attitude toward nature is celebrated here and in his poetry in general. The contrasting wrong attitude is also damned severely in no uncertain terms: this wrong response grows out of greed, narcissism, egocentrism, empiricism, hedonism, insensitivity, waste, profligacy, and alienation. All these set about destroying a sense of place, traditions, continuities, harmonies, ties, memories, associations, community, family, reverential and sacramental attitudes, and finally man's very humanity itself. These traits are thus self-destructive for the individual and cataclysmic for physical nature itself. They make stewardship impossible" (Stewardship 217).

CHAPTER 3

SIMMS'S TREATMENT OF NATURE AT "WOODLANDS" PLANTATION

Although he experienced nature at length through traveling the Southern frontier, exploring Charleston's surrounding low country swamps, and extensive hunting and fishing trips, Simms did not experience plantation life firsthand for any consistent length of time until he married Chevillette Eliza Roach in 1836 and thereafter moved into her father's plantation at "Woodlands," which quickly became "an inspiration for Simms--in poetry, in fiction, and in life" (Guilds, Literary Life 74). Purchased in 1821 by Simms's father-in-law, Nash Roach, "Woodlands" consisted of four thousand acres situated across the Edisto River from Roach's companion plantation "Oak Grove." Evidence from his life and letters reveals that he knew "every tree, every vine, every branch, every swamp on the plantation" (Literary Life 74), and possessed some familiarity with, and involvement in plantation affairs before Nash Roach sold "Oak Grove" and moved into "Woodlands" permanently. Evidence also reveals however that Roach administered quotidian plantation affairs at "Woodlands" until two years before his death in 1858.[30] At this juncture, when Simms definitively took over plantation affairs, his agricultural efforts at "Woodlands" drastically differed from those of his predecessor. By observing Simms's evolving efforts at "Woodlands" as a planter, landscaper, and farmer, one sees clearly how his

[30]Guilds describes how, "though he [Simms] was fully committed in every other way to the plantation and apparently had invested some of his own capital in it—he had no legal authority in business affairs" (Literary Life 249). Beginning in 1849, Roach suffered consistent relapses and recoveries, during which Simms was required to handle the affairs of "Woodlands" alone until Roach sufficiently recovered (Rogers 20). In 1856, Roach's state was so worsened that from this time until his death, Simms effectively controlled "Woodlands."

pragmatic actions often clashed with his earlier ideas concerning proper stewardship, and once again revealing his ultimate belief in developing nature.

Visitors' accounts paint an idyllic and almost pastoral picture of antebellum "Woodlands" that are in keeping with Alexander Salley's observation that "the great fields [at "Woodlands"] were so well kept that they had the appearance of a garden" (L, I, lxxvii). The landscape painter, T. A. Richards, visiting in 1852, manifested his awe at the "ranks of orange trees and live oak which sentinel Simms's castle," and noted how these trees were "the objects of his tender care—true and ardent lover of nature that he is" (Simms Review 1, 10). Richards also relates how "a stroll over Mr. Simms's plantation will give you a pleasant inkling of almost every feature of the lowlands, in natural scenery, social life, and the character and position of the slave population" (Simms Review 1, 10). From the "dark and solemn" swamps filled with "gothic passages of cypress," to the "quiet banks of the Edisto" (Simms Review 1, 10), "Woodlands" met William Byrd's criteria that plantations have gardens, groves, and "a Purling stream" (along with a library), as the primary means for a planter's leisure (qtd. in Ekirch 12).[31] In "A Novelist's Plantation" (1847), Charles Lanman echoes Richards's garden imagery in describing the cornucopia of cotton, rice, along with "almost every variety of the most delicious fruits," all of which were produced on the grounds of an altogether "spacious" plantation house "surrounded with a brotherhood of superb trees" (L, II, 404). These trees were part of an

[31]As Huth argues, "Such simple desires show the modesty of the demands upon nature; yet they also indicate that there were no puritanical restrictions on the use of leisure time or on any pleasant relationship between man and nature" (9). Of course this pastoral picture of the plantation tacitly overlooks slavery and the ill health of agriculture resulting from planters' abandonment of a colonial agricultural system of land rotation. Spurred by the invention of the cotton gin and a rise in prices, many planters abandoned this system for one of "destructive occupance" which exhausted their land in the one-sided pursuit for maximum yield in the minimum time—at which point they moved on to exhaust new lands on the edge of the cotton frontier (Earle 59). Simms adamantly and consistently opposed this new "get rich quick" system of land exploitation.

extensive forest. Lanman notes approvingly, that Simms was "gradually transforming into what he designates a woodland," every tree of which "seemed to him a familiar friend" (L, II, 404-405). "The natural beauties of everything I looked upon," he concludes, "seemed to have been quietly enhanced by the hand of the Poet" (L, II, 405).[32] Exemplifying Jefferson's agrarian ideal, Simms's oft-artificial beautifications at "Woodlands" reveal efforts of the "hand of the Poet" focused less on celebrating the land in its wild, primitive state, than in gradually transforming it in order to establish a more rationalized, cultivated, controlled, and aesthetically pleasing landscape (Jacobson 83). For Simms, human society both could and should be integrated with nature, along the same lines as "Woodlands."[33] God was the "Almighty Planter," while the earth was the "great plantation" dedicated "to the uses of that various and wondrous family which was

[32] In "Simms the Gardener: Reconstructing the Gardens at Woodlands," Kibler leaves no doubt that Simms spent abundant time and money enhancing the native scene at Woodlands—a project undertaken as a labor of love more than mere drudgery. Writing to James Lawson in 1861, Simms effuses on the "fine shrub trees" set in front of the house—English laurels, various cedars, along with numerous roses and flowers. There were also abundant quantities of the water oak and Carolina cherry laurel, while records for 15 January 1861 from Pomaria Nurseries list various quantities of peaches, plums, roses, Chrysanthemums, laurels, cedars, and Chinese privets (Simms Review 1, 19). Records from the previous year show Simms purchasing 16 Peach, 12 Apples, 10 Pears, 2 Apricots, English Walnuts, 2 Spanish Chesnuts, and 12 Roses (Simms Review 1, 20) while later purchases show 24 extra peach trees and 6 extra apples, along with additional apricots, plums, pears, cherries, and various other ornamentals (Simms Review 1, 19-20).

[33] A good illustration of this is found in Richard Hurdis, where Simms promotes the plantation's ordered life in painting Colonel Grafton's plantation as a strongbox for the superior cultural values against which the wilderness cannot encroach. "The air of the whole establishment took us both at first sight" he writes, "A something of complete life—life in repose—seemed to mark his parlor, his hall, the arrangements of his grounds and gardens, the very grouping of the trees. All testified to the continual presence of a governing mind, whose whole feeling of enjoyment was derived from order….To mark what I mean more distinctly, I will say that he never seemed to insist on having things *in their places*, but he was always resolute to have them *never in the way*" (115). This idea of order echoes the idea in the writings of Jefferson, Paine, and Crevecoeur that the aesthetic beauty of nature—its awe and mysterious quality as well as its rational and scientific predictability—were of a whole, and that it was this orderly character that created a fusion of aesthetics and science, or an aesthetic beauty in science and rationality in aesthetics (Jacobson 72-73).

to follow" ("Ages of Gold" 2). For Simms, the "Age of Gold" was characterized by the preponderantly pastoral.[34]

Not surprisingly, Simms's own accounts of his plantation life at "Woodlands" prior to Nash Roach's death often echoes Lanman and Richards' pastoral imagery. Writing in 1849 to William Cullen Bryant, Simms expressed his wish that Bryant could "have passed a week with us to the gratification of most of your senses. Birds, blossoms, breezes, all in finest condition—acknowledging by play and scent, the acutest sense of life and enjoyment" (L, II, 509). In an 1850 letter to Nathaniel Beverly Tucker where he invites Tucker and his family to "Woodlands," Simms delightedly pictures "Your little flock, meanwhile, wandering with mine," and otherwise communing joyfully with nature "under great oaks, and green bristly pines, where the dove shall plain for them at noon" (L, III, 65). In an 1850 letter to Evert Augustus Duyckinck, Simms relates, "I am anxious for cool weather that I may escape to the plantation," and anticipates how "There, the woods wait to welcome me with outstretched arms, and in favorite solitude my heart will recover some of its *ancient freshness*" (L, III, 61).

Despite these romanticized portraits of plantation life, and even though Simms did not fully manage "Woodlands'" daily affairs until his father-in-law's death in 1858, Simms was clearly not a mere "Gentleman Planter" (Guilds, Literary Life 109), who remained aloof and uninvolved with plantation affairs and otherwise ignorant of agricultural matters.[35] On the contrary, Simms had a vast knowledge of nature gleaned from personal experiences hunting,

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[34]Of these idyllic "days of peace, and sunshine, and innocent mirth—of a long life of youth, unembittered by disease," Simms describes how "The shepherds led their flocks over the mountains, to the delicious strains of flute and flageolet" (Simms Review 10, 6).

[35]In William Gilmore Simms and Woodlands Plantation, Jeffery J. Rogers corroborates this assertion, showing how Simms drew not only inspiration from "Woodlands," but also used his residency there to learn "the particulars of agriculture" and otherwise keep "abreast of the business of the plantation, what was planted, and for how much it might sell" (12).

fishing, and observing nature, and clearly possessed a good working knowledge of farming and the unique agricultural issues at "Woodlands."[36] In an 1838 letter to James Lawson, Simms describes how he could not fulfill his desire to send him a bountiful supply of peanuts due to "the remissness of a worthless overseer" who allowed hogs to get into the field before they could be harvested. In another letter, Simms lists brief, but detailed directions for planting "a barrel and a box containing Corn and Peas," instructing, "The ground being broken up—the corn is planted two grains to every 5 feet square, or four feet square, one grain. The peas are planted on a small ridge four feet apart, drop one in the ridge every 3 or 4 inches—both are to be worked with the hoe or plough four or five times, and kept free from grass" (L, I, 132). In several letters, Simms also comments on the various states of the crops and even orders seeds for the coming season.[37]

In other passages, Simms revels in the bounty of plantation life. In an 1839 letter to the New York Mirror written on the eve of his annual autumn departure for Charleston,[38] he describes the plums, peaches, pears and apples; strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and cherries left behind for his slaves (L, I, 143). From the Edisto River, Simms describes how they "receive from it abundant supplies of fish in the proper season; trout, rock, perch, bream and

[36]Simms also read widely from the works of William Bartram and kept close friendships with leading local naturalists (Perceiver 106). Simms contributed information on the practical properties of plants to Francis Peyre Porcher's Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests, Medical, Economic, Agricultural (1863). Among the local naturalists he encouraged were John Bachman (1790-1874), friend and collaborator of Audubon; Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779-1851); William Summer (1815-1878), horticulturist and nurseryman; and Henry William Ravenel (1814-1887), botanist and authority on fungi (Perceiver 106). In 1840, Simms addressed the Agricultural Society in Barnwell, South Carolina. Then again, in 1845, he spoke to the South Carolina State Agricultural Society at its meeting in the House of Representatives. Simms also gleaned knowledge from reviewing various agricultural articles such as Ruffin's "Essay on Calcareous Manures" in the Southern Quarterly Review (L, III, 20 June 1853).

[37]See for instance, his letters from 1845: (L, II, 156), and (L, II, 103); for seeds, Simms's 1846 letter to James Lawson typifies several others: "Let me beg you, *with all dispatch* [sic], to see Sherwood & get him to send on the wheat seed *instanter*" (L, II, 183).

[38] In an 1845 letter to Evert Augustus Duyckinck, Simms notes how "We are not in Charleston (the family) during winter & spring, only in summer & autumn" (L, II, 41).

cat," the latter accounted among them as one of "the most exquisite" dishes (L, I, 142-143). Of hunting at "Woodlands," he notes the opossums taken nightly by the dozen along with raccoons, squirrels, wild turkeys, ducks, and deer (L, I, 143), while in 1862, when the prospect of Southern victory in the Civil War remained bright, Simms gloated to Lawson over his several acres of rice, potatoes, and peas, adding, "My gardens are 2 acres. I am eating of almost every vegetable, and we milk 14 cows daily" (L, IV, 370-371).

Simms's early agricultural expostulations are "extraordinary Jeffersonian statements" proving that Simms had become a true, albeit essentially untested, agrarian (Simms Review 10, 1). Five years after moving to Woodlands, Simms expostulates his farm and landscape theories in "The Good Farmer," part of an 1840 oration delivered to the Agricultural Society in Barnwell, South Carolina. Emphasizing how the farmer should "bare no new fields but renovate the old," and otherwise rejuvenate the soil through composting and manuring, Simms admonishes the good farmer to "venerate" the native woods and protect each tree, and even more insightfully, to practice selective forestry by transferring choice forest trees "at convenient periods of leisure to his open grounds, increasing the beauty of the one, and securing the posterity of the other" (Simms Review 10, 18).[39] In a passage reminiscent of Alexander Pope's admonition to Richard Boyle, the third Earl of Burlington, to "Consult the Genius of the Place in all" (142), Simms counsels the wise farmer-gardener to first "inquire what the genius of the place in which he lives demands" when choosing exotics (Simms Review 10, 19), a hard-won truth inherited from

[39]Simms likely was familiar with John Taylor, called by many "the most systematic thinker of the Jeffersonian Republican party," as well as the "father of agriculture" (visitcaroline). In 1803, he published a volume entitled Arator, one of America's first books on agriculture, containing suggestions for improvements of soils using various types of manure, rotation of crops and conservation of forests, along with other contemporary agricultural issues (visitcaroline).

common sense as well as the lessons of colonial agriculture.[40] In another passage capturing the Jeffersonian sense of a moral connection between farming and society, Simms describes how promoting "the loveliness and grace of all objects which meet his eye," remains "as much the duty of the Farmer, as it is of the Poet and the Painter" (Simms Review 10, 18). "There is a moral grace," he continues:

> which the mind as decidedly derives from the contemplation of innocent and lovely objects, as in the daily study of abstractions which have this purpose for their end. Then, as the taste ripens and his judgment expands, smooth green lawns appear upon his landscape; the trees are grouped in patriarchal families about his habitation; his avenues conduct the eye through lovely vistas, with favorite haunts of solitude and beauty, while his fields, green and golden, lift their clusters and sheaves of promise, in profuse tribute to the indulgent Heavens which have smiled upon their increase. The Good Farmer may easily realize all these blessings and create all these beauties. These make the Golden Age—these restore the prosperity of his race….Love, Charity, Peace, and Religion, and numberless saints beside, work with the Good Farmer, and lovely beyond compare is the sweet progeny which spring from their cooperation. (Simms Review 10, 18-19)

The good farmer, far from being a mere cultivator of the land, is thus an artist whose creative acts mirror those of the Creator and contain the bright, redemptive gems of a “Golden

[40]Kniffen describes in detail the numerous adjustments colonial Europeans had to make in the hot Southern climate, and writes, “Such subsequently familiar crops as cotton, sugarcane, indigo, rice, and even corn had to be ‘discovered’ and integrated into a new agricultural economy” (10). We see an example of this in the Cassique of Kiawah, where the colonists have planted olive trees, a Mediterranean species totally unsuited to the South’s hot and humid climate.

Age" where the "melodious murmurs which betokened gentleness and peace" were not exchanged for those of "angry warfare, wild passions, and insatiate ambition" (Simms Review 10, 7).

In 1846, Simms expressed worry over what he considered poor plantation management on Nash Roach's part (L, II, 247).[41] In a letter of December 18 to James Henry Hammond, Simms complained how Roach "puts a young negro to the carpenter's trade, makes an excellent mechanic of him, and then turns him into picking peas" (L, II, 241.) In an 1852 letter to James Lawson, Simms more vehemently expresses his growing discontent in attributing the failure of the cotton crop at "Woodlands" to the "antique errors of Mr. Roach, & his lympathic [sic] & unenergetic temperament" (L, III, 216).[42] Writing the same day to James Henry Hammond, Simms reveals more of the reasons behind this discontent. "If you speak so strongly for guano," Simms writes, "I will believe you. Something must be done here, to keep above water" (L, III, 218). "Mr. Roach," Simms continues, "is tenacious of his practice, his opinions, his experience, regards me as a *literary* man, not a *practica*l one—and, it is generally after a year or two that he adopts my opinions. He believes in the guano now, for one of our neighbors has tried it successfully" (L, III, 218).[43] Interestingly enough, a decade ago in "The Good Farmer" (1840),

[41]According to Guilds, "It was possible that some of Simms's misgivings in 1846 resulted from the fact that, though he and his family enjoyed all the benefits of living at Woodlands, he was legally no more than a resident at the plantation. Why had Nash Roach not conveyed the vast estate—and consequently the management thereof—to his daughter and son-in-law?" (Literary Life 249).

[42] Roach himself gives the best evidence of his temperament in a passage discussing rust on his wheat crop. "It is folly to ask experienced neighbors riding by," Roach pontificated, "their opinions are worthless" (L, II, 597).

[43]Recognition of guano, or dried sea bird droppings, as a valuable fertilizer, and what Gregory Cushman calls "one of the most important commodities of the 19th century—not unlike petroleum in terms of the violence and passions it raised if not the wealth it created," began in 1824 and became more prevalent in the 1840s and 1850s when the US government passed the Guano Island Act of 1856, which became a legal basis for U.S. claims for hundreds of sparsely

Simms had praised fertilizer in the form of "the brush, the stubble, the leaves, and all that easily destructible matter which his more profligate neighbor consumes" (Simms Review 10, 10), adding:

> How beautifully does nature, herself, suggest the adoption of this economy, when she every where provides, contiguous to the soil, the substance, whether of marle, clay, lime, or leaves, which is to maintain its fecundity and preserve it from decay….With this certain and regular provision before his eyes, the Good Farmer readily sees where he may find the substance which will always resuscitate his fields (Simms Review 10, 21-22)

While Kibler notes that "Simms's praise for manuring, marling, and especially for composting, shows he is dealing with more than abstracts and [has] the historically broad view," (Simms Review 10, 3) he overlooks how Simms's experimentation with guano reflects a modification in Simms's "Good Farmer" philosophy; to a mild degree, Simms's case reflects the truth behind Jimmy Skaggs' assertion that "Agriculturists everywhere quickly converted to a 'guano gospel,' especially in the South" (8).[44] Yet Simms's experimentation with guano was only a minor

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inhabited or uninhabited islands where businessmen would mine guano and then ship it to the United States and make a handsome profit ("Would Daniel Webster"). Simms's experimentations with guano and other externally sourced fertilizers, although limited, augered the "guano craze" that peaked in the 1870s and 1880s and led to the swift abandonment of "the old system of crop rotation, crop diversification, and the botanic maintenance of soil fertility in favor of continuous cultivation, cotton specialization, and soil maintenance based on industrial chemistry" (Earle 64).

[44]Following the Civil War, Earle describes how "The environmental wisdom of crop rotation rapidly gave way to agrarian reform. Planters, abetted by science, the state, and the fertilizer industry, instituted a new and ill-fated agrarian system in the eastern cotton belt. Within a decade and a half after the war they had abandoned the botanic system of crop rotation and replaced it with an agrarian system based on cheap commercial fertilizers and cotton specialization" (61). In his favor, Simms never abandoned crop rotation and also used homegrown manure more extensively than Roach (Rogers 50). Writing Mary Lawson for instance in 1859, he mentions making compost as well as "speculating on fertilizers, trying

prelude of his adaptations at “Woodlands” after he took over plantation affairs. Whereas while Nash Roach still managed “Woodlands,” Simms was left free to enjoy nature and family life and otherwise devote himself to becoming a successful man of letters, upon taking virtual control of “Woodlands” in 1856, Simms became busier than ever enacting reforms and steadfastly seeking to outperform the crop yields of his predecessor—often through practices that augment or partially revise some of his earlier dictates in "The Good Farmer."

As Rogers corroborates, beginning in October of 1856, Simms effectively managed “Woodlands,” and for the first time since 1836, Simms was free to manage Roach’s plantation to fit his vision of what it should have been all along (23). From 1856 to 1858, Simms's letters reflect his pleasure in this newfound control, an enjoyment marred only occasionally by the great amount of work his new responsibilities entailed, as expressed in a letter to Bryant that he is “now compelled to give as much heed to the plantation as to my books—a duty which greatly distracts me in my own” (L, III, 416). Yet along with this awareness of new burdens and affairs that have been “horribly mismanaged & still more horribly neglected,” Simms boasts, “I shall greatly err in my calculations, and shall greatly fail of God’s favour, if I do not establish such a reform, in two years, as shall put us all in colouring” (L, III, 453). "Tell your father," Simms instructs Mary Lawson in a letter written in 1857:

> that I have made a famous corn crop, better than any made on the place for 20 years; and, though failing, under a bad season of alternate freshet & drought, to realize all that I had calculated to do in cotton, I have yet done better & shall make more this year than the plantation has done for ten previous consecutive

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experiments in lime, salt, guano, &c!” (L, IV, 112), while in 1859, he tells Hammond that he is "about to dress 30 acres of pine land for Cotton, with 2 tons of Guano" (L, IV, 141). He also mentions how he has "manured this season more than 250 acres" (L, IV, 141). In another letter, he mentions “some thousand cartloads of vegetable manure” saved from a fire (L, IV, 203).

> years. This, as it is my first year of independent management, is very encouraging. (L, IV, 509)

In a letter to Hammond in 1858, after stating his respective acreages of corn and cotton, he adds, “if things continue as they promise, I shall be able to wipe off all scores of my old father in law” (L, IV, 54). To Duyckinck in 1859, he declares, "I have not been as successful as I anticipated; though I have doubled the crops of my worthy Predecessor” (L, IV, 108).

Yet for the first four years after he took over, Simms's optimism is juxtaposed again and again with a sense of being tremendously overworked, weary, and unwillingly neglectful of literary things—a state of mind exacerbated by a cycle of good starts followed by continual crop failures. At times calling himself “a man of many children &--cares” (L, IV, 138), he confides to Hammond, “I suffer from great languor, depression of spirits, a painful sinking of the heart….My tasks are endless. My drudgeries keep me from better things” (L, IV, 173). In excusing his remissness in 1859 to meet the deadline for completing The Cassique of Kiawah, he tells John Esten Cooke how “The business of the plantation devolved wholly upon me last year, and I have to restore & repair a neglected & half-dilapidated establishment….I do not despair, but I am harassed & wearied; long for rest” (L, IV, 115); while to Mary Lawson he worries that "poetry & art, & letters, & language, are fast giving way" to thoughts of the crops and other "mere material things" (L, IV, 128). To William Porcher Miles, he calls himself "an invalid…under a cloud," "worried & wearied" due to a "half crop" and "worthless overseer" (L, IV, 180), a sentiment he expresses again in 1860: “My depression is very great, & I weary of all things! Besides, I am in trouble! My crop was a failure” (L, IV, 185). Simms repeatedly

expressed optimism in his crops only to watch them fail,[45] a situation that led him to believe that his cares, troubles, and anxieties "seem destined never to end" (L, IV, 222). Resignation to crop failure begins to pervade his letters, as in 1864 when he tells Paul Hamilton Hayne that his crop is, "as usual, a very sorry one" (L, V, 472). In one particularly gloomy letter, Simms informed Hammond, "I do not feel like work—do not feel like thinking—feel rather like folding my robes about me for a long deep sleep" (L, IV, 144). Thus by the time Simms considered moving to New York in 1866, "where in some obscure chamber" he could "live at moderate cost & have the press at [his] command," he gladly relinquished the management of plantation affairs at "Woodlands" to his oldest son Gilmore, along with his son-in-law, Major Rowe (L, IV, 537).[46] His sons were mature and the father knew that, considering the economic situations in a burned and invaded South, hard money could be had much easier from the pen than the soil. It was natural that he do what he could to aid his family through his literary talents.[47]

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[45] In an 1861 letter to Lawson, Simms said, "Crops are good—mine never better. We have been eating at Woodlands, for months, strawberries, green peas, green corn, okra, irish potatoes, snap beans, squashes, blackberries, June berries, artichokes, &c. &c. My wife sells $2 of butter weekly. Her pocket money. We have milk, butter milk, curds, clabber, spring chickens & eggs in abundance" (L, IV, 369). In another letter, he describes how "My Corn Crop is prodigious, exceeding every thing for 20 years. We are really in the enjoyment of abundance…I am living solely from the plantation" (L, IV, 372). As Rogers points out however, "Clearly some of this was bluster; Simms defiantly pronouncing his and the South's immunity to the blockade" (62).

[46]These failures punctuate his letters, most notably those from 1860. In one, he lamented that a "rascally overseer ruined my crop, got drunk, neglected the plantation, let the grass run away with my fields & instead of 125 bales of Cotton, I made but 50. A still worse disaster accrues from the failure of the corn crop. I am compelled to buy corn" (L, IV, 193). In a letter to Lawson, he describes how "My Cotton Crop disappoints me. Instead of 125 bales as I calculated, I shall make only about 70, which will barely suffice to keep me above water" (L, IV, 249). To Miles, he states simply, "My crop was a failure this year from drought" (L, IV, 264) while in another, he bemoans, "My domestic cares pressing. Short crops, from the drought, diminish my resources…I am weary & troubled, with much work nevertheless on my hands, and but little money" (L, IV, 275).

[47]Despite Simms's failures at farming, Clement Eaton's assertion that Simms's plantation was not profitable due to Simms being an indulgent master (196) is gross oversimplification and half-truth. Well before taking over "Woodlands," Simms critiques his father-in-law Roach for

Simms also treats trees and clearing land differently when he takes control of "Woodlands." In "The Good Farmer," Simms describes how:

> Once in possession of the allotted number of open acres, he preserves his forest from those two merciless assailants, so commonly and improvidently employed among us, the axe and the torch. He lays bare no woods which he thus protects. The mighty trees which, with ignorant and savage profligacy, we daily overthrow, he regards as sacred objects. (SR, 10, 11)

Although Kibler argues that "The necessity of cutting a tree causes Simms and the good farmer a 'pang' of the heart" (Simms Review 10, 3), as early as 1852, Simms advocates clearing the land, and on taking the reigns of managing "Woodlands," embarks on a progressive land-clearing campaign. '"You are right, I suspect, about the land," Simms confides to Hammond, "but Mr R. would not even clear, and we had not sufficient number of acres open, to allow any adequate rest for any….[I] have urged him on the subject; and have at length got him to work opening fifty additional acres in the swamp" (L, III, 218).[48] After taking over "Woodlands," Simms cleared

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permitting "an undue indulgence" to his slaves (L, III, 11). Rogers offers a more truthful assessment in stating that although Simms determined to be a more disciplined master than Roach, "not much changed for the slaves once Simms took the reins at Woodlands" (45). More importantly, when Roach died, he left Simms with a $5,000 debt (L, IV, 78).

[48]Although determining the amount of cleared land one needed so as to reach the "allotted number of open acres" is problematic and open-ended as is the question of the amount of time Simms felt necessary to allow "adequate rest" for his lands, one can reasonably conclude from his comment that Simms cleared more land in order to allow other lands to lie fallow for a period to revive before replanting. In fact, one of the "antique errors" Simms criticizes Roach for could have been Roach's failure to consistently rotate his crops. In his plantation book, Roach mentions planting corn for instance, often without spreading manure on the field beforehand, in the "Devil's Cut" field three years in a row and in the "Pine Land" field four years in a row (L, II, 585-598). In this way, Simms adhered at least in part to the old colonial system of land rotation, which cycled worn-out lands into a long fallow of twenty or so years in order to restore nutrients to the soil. "At that point," Earle notes, "the tree-covered 'old fields' were cleared again and the cycle began anew" (57). One of the major problems Simms faced was having enough fertile acreage for cotton—the South's main cash crop—as well as enough for corn,

land, both swamp and forest. In 1858, he cleared at least fifty acres, followed by sixty acres in 1859, an unspecified amount in 1862, plus one hundred acres in 1865.[49] Describing Simms's land-clearing, Rogers catalogues how in 1850, 480 acres were "improved" while 2,200 were "unimproved," whereas in 1860, 700 acres had been "improved," with 2,000 remaining "unimproved," an increase of 17 percent of the total acreage of "Woodlands" under cultivation (56). Even after Simms's moderate efforts to clear more land, "Woodlands" was still below the state average of 28 percent for "improved" acres (qtd. in Rogers 56), a fact that convincingly demonstrates that Roach did not in fact have enough "improved" acreage and that Simms was indeed justified in clearing more land.

Additionally, in contrast with his previous arguments that advocate the importance of replenishing the soil through composting and manuring,[50] Simms instead complains, "He [Roach] has gone on working in poor soil, worn out, never seeming to comprehend the superior value of labor, in our country, to soil," then adds, "With your guano, and the new acres, we ought to make 120 bales at least next year" (L, III, 218). In 1857, a year after he began managing

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which provided most of the plantation's subsistence both for people and farm animals. Prior to Simms, Roach consistently planted almost double the amount of corn than that of cotton, a point manifested in his 1858 letter to Hammond in which Simms writes that "Cotton is doing well. I have 270 acres planted against Mr. Roach's 150….I begin to see where all the error has been" (L, IV, 73).

[49] "While you are reveling in Balls and Parties," Simms wrote Mary Lawson in 1858, "I am here drudging in clearing lands, drainage, sawing lumber, hauling, logrolling & burning woods. I have burned more than 10,000 cords this winter, of oak, pine, hickory, ash, bay, poplar, &c….I have cleared some 50 acres of heavily timbered land, and am still busy getting it ready for a crop of corn & cotton" (L, IV, 6). In 1859, he informs Lawson that he has cleared sixty acres (L, IV, 124), while to Miles in 1862 he writes,"I am now clearing some new land for corn" (L, IV, 396). As late as 1865, Simms cleared an additional 100 acres of swampland (L, IV, 482).

[50] For instance in The Social Principle, where Simms critiques the planter who, rather than cultivate the soil--for, according to Simms, "the proper cultivation of the soil improves it"--focuses on "extorting by violence from its bosom, seed and stalk, alike, of the wealth which it contained. He slew the goose that he might grasp, at one moment, its whole golden treasure. A cultivation like this, by exhausting his land, left it valueless, and led to its abandonment (42).

“Woodlands,” he energetically prosecutes reforms, as evident from his letter to Mary Lawson where he describes how he has been "opening new land, introducing new seeds, changing overseers, planning improvements & prosecuting them manfully" (L, IV, 509). In another passage, incredible for someone so overtly averse to cutting down large, old trees, Simms describes to her how:

> I am now draining land, a swamp, covered with timber, which is the richest soil we or you ever saw. It is decayed vegetable matter of six thousand years, and I reckon the *soil alone,* will be found 12 or 20 feet deep. I shall clear some 40 acres of this, in one spot this season, and about 20 acres in another; and if you saw the trees that we have to cut down, some 200 feet high; requiring 5 or 6 men with arms extended to grasp them round,--and were you to hear them fall, shaking the earth for miles, your little heart would sink, and your great dark eyes open wider, if not more lovelily than ever. (L, IV, 509-510)

Curiously, Simms ends this letter with the wish that "some day that you will give yourself an opportunity to witness with your own eyes, the natural wonders of our simple world” (L, IV, 509-510).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Towards a Society-Centered, Agrarian Environmentalism

Although in the last decade, Simms scholarship has enjoyed a quasi-renascence of sorts, one of the greatest dangers that still remains is that certain critical ideas will solidify into dogma without having been first thoroughly tested—a misfortune Simms scholars know so well from the example of his first and only near-contemporary biographer.[51] Simms's ideas concerning nature and its proper stewardship represent one such hazard, a danger complicated by the intimidating extensiveness of his works and the oft-confusing ideas about nature he presents therein. Without a comprehensive sampling of his works and examination of his treatment towards nature in his own life, Simms's ideas towards nature and its proper stewardship can be easily transmogrified. While some of his more famous poetry and prose[52] exemplify Simms's close observation of, and love of nature as well as regret over its destruction, they do not provide the whole picture. Simms did not believe in preserving nature at all costs against the encroachments of white civilization—an idea in keeping with modern environmentalism's view of nature as "pristine, pure, and free of human 'intrusion' and 'contamination'" (Jacobson 105). Simms believed that man should live socially in nature rather than isolate himself in the wilderness. His poetry and prose reflect this belief as well.

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[51]William P. Trent, who wrote a notoriously one-sided, unsympathetic biography on Simms in the American Men of Letters series.

[52]In particular, such poems as "The Western Immigrants" and "The Traveller's Rest," along with prose from the Cassique of Kiawah and countless other stories where he rhapsodizes in descriptive detail over the glories of nature.

A close examination of his works shows that, although he often expresses a fundamentally Romantic sensibility towards nature, Simms was an agrarian who believed that society and nature both could, and should, be artfully integrated and developed, an idea strictly contrasting with the modern environmental ethos separating nature from society.[53] Moreover, Simms's actions at Woodlands after Roach's death demonstrate a sensibility that, while reverent towards, and aware of nature's beauties, possessed no qualms about further developing its resources in order to increase his crop yields. In championing a lifestyle that blended society and nature, Simms places himself squarely in the agrarian tradition of Jefferson, Taylor, and Jackson, and at the same time, heralds later Southern writers like Caroline Gordon and "Fugitive Agrarians" like Andrew Lytle who wished to preserve a once-agrarian South that was being transformed rapidly by what they—like Simms—viewed as the "evils" of industrialization.[54] Simms was not merely a proto-environmentalist who wrote caustic indictments of the environmental abuses perpetrated by white pioneers, but was instead a reasonable lover of nature who understood that certain sacrifices had to be made to prevent even greater environmental destruction. The key to this understanding, as it had been from 1825 onward in Simms's writing, was not laying waste the West by pulling up from exhausted soil and, like nomads, being ever on the move. Simms was, above all, a lover of place and its traditions. "Staying put" was always,

[53]"In contrast to Jefferson's farmer in immediate and palpable touch with the land," Jacobson writes, "national parks and monuments became important in mediating the link with the land and nature for a now national and increasingly urban community. Prior to the Civil War humanity and nature had a symbiotic relationship…men and women *belonged* in nature. Now, in the face of industrialization and urbanization, nature was depicted as pristine only when free of human intrusion and development, and it was in that milieu that national parks were established" (23).
[54]In her novel Penhally, Gordon draws a poignant account of the "progress" away from agrarian life towards the ostensibly "modern," increasingly industrial South of the 1920s and 1930s. In "The Hind Tit" and other essays, Lytle consistently argues against the "war…between technology and the ordinary human functions of living" (4), the view of industrialism as "manifest destiny" (7), as well as efforts to industrialize farms. "Go west, young man, go west," Lytle wrote, "be a slave, young man, be a slave!" (71).

and remains, a key tenet in his philosophy, and one that provided the real basis for his stewardship of the land.

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