Review Essay

In Word or Deed: Practices of Print and Citizenship in the Early U.S.

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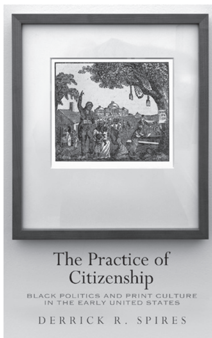

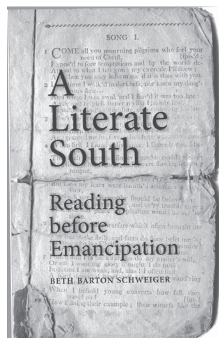

THE PRACTICE OF CITIZENSHIP: BLACK POLITICS AND PRINT CULTURE IN THE EARLY UNITED STATES. By Derrick R. Spires. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.

A LITERATE SOUTH: READING BEFORE EMANCIPATION. By Beth Barton Schweiger. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

The third chapter and seventeenth verse of the book of Colossians encourages its readers that their word and deed must be unified practices of faith. The scripture mentions shared songs and teachings, but also suggests the ethical model of Jesus demands peace and mutual concern overriding the marks of religion, people groups, and states of freedom or bondage. This scripture would be familiar to many of the antebellum urban Black activists and rural White female southern readers explored in new monographs by Derrick R. Spires and Beth Barton Schweiger. Both Spires' *The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United States* and Schweiger's *A Literate South:*

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Reading Before Emancipation consider not only the words their subjects' read or wrote, but rather examine their literary activities as culturally and politically significant practices. For their subjects, word and deed were not distinct categories but enmeshed practices demonstrating what they thought, how they encountered ideas, and the ways they enacted them in the world. However, these books reveal that readers of the nineteenth century did not uniformly interpret what this text's proposition that in Christ there is neither slave nor free meant in their own context. They show the divergence between communities of interpreters, with some who celebrated Black humanity and fostered revolutionary social restructure, and others whose tacit or overt support upheld ideas of white superiority and the institution of slavery in the early United States.

In the early nineteenth-century United States, to read, talk about, recite, or share printed material sometimes took on significant civic meaning. Spires and Schweiger each contribute to an expanding field of studies on the practices of literacy and print culture during this period that push the field beyond the literary and print culture of White cosmopolitan elites. *The Practice of Citizenship* and *A Literate South* both problematize the view that literary culture was a normative, uniform, or straightforward building block for citizenship and public virtue in the early American republic. Neither relies upon discussion of the public sphere initiated by Michael Warner that serves as a dominant paradigm for understanding the broader subject of literacy and print culture in this period.[1] Spires examines the practices and agency of African American thinkers and activists and Schweiger explores the access and agency of rural, mostly White women in Southern states. Each show how their subjects' reading, writing, and participation in print culture represented important cultural and political practices.

The Practice of Citizenship was awarded the St. Louis Mercantile Library Prize from the Bibliographical Society of America. It offers an exceptional balance between recovery of under-examined sources and a powerful framework for understanding the significance of Black ideas and practices of citizenship in the early-nineteenth century United States. Spires, an associate professor of English at Cornell University, takes care to recognize literary historians such as Frances Smith Foster, Jocelyn Moody, Carla Peterson, and others, on whose work he builds. In contrast to asking where Black print culture of the nineteenth century fits within theorization of the early American public sphere so commonly considered since Warner's application of Jürgen Habermas' theory, or as creating a what Joanna Brooks has theorized as a Black counterpublic in print, Spires method of "black theorizing" takes Black writers of the nineteenth century at their word.[2] Instead of considering how Black ideas of the period fit scholarly paradigms "in a largely white-defined discourse," Spires pays close attention to primary sources, textual details, and social practices of Black writers, preachers, authors, and their communities whose thought and action developed "a practice of citizenship." Spires offers a refreshing suggestion to "base our working definitions of citizenship on black writers' proactive attempts to describe their own political work."[3] This method of "black theorizing" in Spires draws upon the

work of Barbara Christian and Black Feminist thought, but also echoes Walter Johnson's call to focus on the agency of enslaved people and attention to their theories about their actions and political participation. This redirects that effort toward understanding the implicit and explicit political practices of Black writers living and working in the North, and the print culture in which their work participated.[4]

The texts selected by Spires follow the scholarship of P. Gabrielle Foreman, John Ernest, and Eric Gardner identifying diverse texts outside the traditional African American literary canon. Following Spires' substantive introduction explaining his method and argument, his book is organized into five chapters. Each examines a particular media or genre within African American print culture as prime cases where citizenship is theorized and enacted, and does so in conversation with the recent work of Jeannine Marie De Lombard, Nazera Wright, Benjamin Fagan, and other scholars invested in the African American print culture of this period. Spires' approach to print culture succeeds in showing the intellectual significance of the theories of citizenship in these nineteenth-century Black-authored texts, and is perhaps most innovative in his argument that the multiple genres and forms of print proved critical in enacting those very ideals of citizenship. He explores pamphlets, minutes of conventions, and various literary forms and letters in Black periodicals, making compelling cases for how each type of media offers different theories and necessitates different practices of citizenship due to their diverse print formats, production processes, and methods of distribution or sharing.

Spires' opening chapter offers a timely view of a public health crisis and response that was racialized and disproportionately impacted African Americans. His exploration of Black pastors Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's response to the 1793 yellow fever epidemic shows how these leaders defended their reputations. Though a number of authors have examined this event and pamphlet, Spires offers a fresh and substantive claim about Jones and Allen's civic engagement. Their 1794 pamphlet does more than just rebut White editor Matthew Carey's writing that maligned the city's African Americans despite their bearing some of the heaviest costs of the public health crisis. These leading ministers theorized "neighborly citizenship" and enacted structures of collective aid and concern. This understanding and the very print they produced that theorized it challenged the prevailing White elite notions of "citizenship as commerce" in which only a veneer of reciprocal responsibilities masks a social and political order controlled by White elites for their exclusive benefit.[5]

Spires' second chapter jumps from the 1790s to the 1840s to dig through minutes of the gatherings of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio state-level gatherings of the Colored Conventions movement. His analysis of the print culture of the broader convention movement argues that delegates and communities theorized citizenship that required a circulation of people and ideas. Thought and action linked the public meetings and printed minutes in what Spires terms "an archive and repertoire of black citizenship."[6] This argument confirms an organiz-

ing principle of the germinal Colored Conventions Project (ColoredConventions.org), leading archival recovery, transcription, and teaching around the convention events and minutes in order to understand the texts, sites, and networks of Black activism in the nineteenth century.[7] Shifting from organizing to economy, Spires' third chapter argues that Black intellectuals William J. Wilson, James McCune Smith, and other pseudonymous writers to *Frederick Douglass's Paper* in the early 1850s theorized a model for "economic citizenship." They considered how Black elites' use of money and political power might engage structural realities in the United States and around the world and what impact that would have in terms of advocacy. In these theories, the pages of Black newspapers represented a public forum revealing the literary vibrancy and vigorous intellectual debate around the meaning and terms of Black participation in the republic and the market.

Spires' fourth and fifth chapters show that African American writing theorized a "critical citizenship" and "revolutionary citizenship" on the pages and practices of Black periodicals. His discussion of "critical citizenship draws upon the writings of Frederick Douglass and other writers in the *Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859-1860, to highlight the intrusive practices of Black citizens that upset the norms of White citizenship and the white supremacist cultural and legal assumptions that defined and dictated political practice in the U.S. *Anglo-African Magazine* submissions from the pseudonymous S.S.N. theorized White America advancing a "fugue citizenship" designed to smooth and erase "difference in and through formal politics, judicial decisions, historiography, and, most prominently, the ecstatic performance of public speech through 'poetic license used with the facts of history.'"[8] For S.S.N, consensus as the core rhetorical pattern of public life in the United States stifles public empowerment of critically engaged citizens and regulates a White supremacist society. It is interesting to note that "critical citizenship" articulated by these Black writers challenged such a consensus but were "not necessarily against structures and institutions; rather, they work to ensure that these structures and institutions remain accessible and self-reflexive."[9] Not only did these practices disrupt and demand a recognition of Black citizenship, they took an even more revolutionary character in the poems of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in her printed collection of 1857 and her writings published in the *Anglo-African* in 1860. Spires discusses how her poems sanction and embrace violent rejection of systems of slavery and dehumanization in the context of radical antislavery ferment in the 1850s and offer up the promise of practices of revolutionary citizenship in a nation on the brink of civil war.

Spires' conclusion offers a brief gesture toward the ways these efforts to practice Black citizenship have reverberated beyond the period of his study in post-Civil War reconstruction efforts to empower Black voters and politicians, and in more recent social media and organizing of the Black Lives Matter movement. Spires' work is compelling. He invites awareness of the significance of the practices of Black citizens of the nineteenth century and encourages his readers' own ethical reflection about issues of racial injustice and the practice of citizenship today. Spires interprets historical "theorizing" and offers his own theory in the

process, that citizenship is not a defined identity endowed by the state but rather a contested and dynamic set of thoughts and practices engaged in by citizens themselves. At times Spires theorizations seem too neatly classified, and some readers may desire more discussion of how these theories related to one another or develop over time or in other texts. Still, his detailed work offers an inspiring treatment of those who wrote of and also sought to enact neighborly, informed, crucial and revolutionary citizenship through practices of print.

Those seeking a book that discusses questions of access, the role of literacy and pedagogy, and the significance of print practices in everyday life will find a textured, ground-level view of a very different set of citizens of the early republic in Schweiger's *A Literate South*. Schweiger mostly looks at the journals of four White women to examine the racial, cultural, and political dimensions of the literary practices of rural southern readers. The archival sources recovered by Schweiger point her most sustained investigations on the activities of these women in rural Virginia and North Carolina, as well as other people in the slave society in which these women lived. Although it will come as no surprise to scholars of the period, Schweiger challenges the myth that literacy promotes a more free society and shows that practices of literacy and access to print did not necessitate a turn away from retrenched ideologies of White supremacy and defenses of slavery common to the cultural and legal framework of the early U.S.

A Literate South reveals Schweiger's broad knowledge of early American religious and print culture of the nineteenth-century South, a field that the former University of Arkansas faculty member explored previously in *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and the excellent co-edited collection *Religion in the American South: Protestant and Others in History and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Schweiger's new monograph reads well alongside other scholarship on American reading, writing, and practices of print that has moved beyond the documentary record of elite men to recover the practices and agency of women, working-class people, those enslaved or those who experienced various states of unfreedom or marginalization in the early republic. *A Literate South* builds upon Michael O'Brien's magisterial treatment of Southern intellectual life before the Civil War.[10] The book also is in conversation with insights about literacy and pedagogy from E. Jennifer Monaghan's important monograph *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*.[11]

Schweiger draws much material from her recovery and close reading of diaries written in the 1840s and '50s by four White southern women from two families who lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains in the states of Virginia and North Carolina. These provide the fascinating archival core and human textures of *A Literate South*, and as Schweiger's primary evidence for the book's central argument that "print permeated the rural south," featuring a "rich give-and-take in which printed texts reflected speech and speech incorporated texts" in ways that shaped "the poetics of everyday life in the nineteenth century."[12] In her preface, Schweiger states ambitious goals of the monograph: to show access

to print even in rural southern locales, to situate reading in nineteenth-century pedagogy, to demonstrate how even those who could not read played a role in print culture and patterns of circulation, and "to challenge the nineteenth century perspective that literacy and slavery were incompatible."[13] While Schweiger does not venture a theoretical framing akin to Spires' work on the significance of the practices of literacy engaged in by her subjects, she offers closer treatments of material texts and grapples with big questions about reading, writing, learning, and cultural creation in the nineteenth-century United States.

In her introduction Schweiger explains the availability of print in the rural South in the early nineteenth century that reads well along the work of other scholars of educational and religious print culture in the region, such as Patricia Crain and Stephen A. Marini. The rest of *A Literate South* is structured into six chapters split into two parts. The first is comprised of three chapters that look at "Spellers," "Grammars," and "Rhetorics," examining educational strategies and the significance of pedagogy on differentiating a range of reading practices. The second part comprised of chapters on "Songs," "Stories," and "Doctrines" evaluates music, literary productions, and religious practices that reveal a dynamic rather than proscriptive relationship between reading and oral tradition in the rural South during this period. Although examples draw most closely from the daily life of these White women, many explanations of how people read and how print culture was embedded in local oral culture and everyday life seems to be applicable beyond the South as well. Schweiger's categories for learning and of media and genre offer a clear organizational structure for the book, and her fascinating journal sources offer intimate examples of how individuals, families, and communities variously engaged a range of practices and texts.

Schweiger's detailed introduction offers a fantastic view of the modes of distribution for print in the rural American South, including book and periodical agents, colporteurs for religious or benevolent societies, or peddlers out to make money without putting hand to plow. The historian carefully includes examples beyond the White southern families at the center of her study, but Schweiger's central repository for her ground-level accounting of the lives of these southern White women follows them to early untimely deaths, the last of the four dying in 1858.

Schweiger's structure that features three chapters on pedagogy includes excellent studies of the most commonly printed and distributed teaching resources of that day and how they would have been used and accessed in the rural South and elsewhere. In contrast to scholarly misperceptions or popular assumptions about what constituted literacy in the early U.S., getting a good English education was a phased process. The most common form of education only allowed people to master letters and the most basic form of reading known as spelling. Lower class people in places such as the Blue Ridge mountains increasingly gained access not only to spellers, but also to grammar books that inducted them into a second tier of reading education enabling them to exchange and practice their own writing in letters or journals or in recording the details of their daily

routines or items they read, as Schweiger reveals in the Cooley journals. The third level of literacy was that of rhetoric, which even in the rural Blue Hills was sought after and enjoyed by lower-middle class families such as the antislavery oriented Speers, which allowed them more interest in historical, philosophical, and poetic texts as a window to more abstract thought than was afforded those whose competency was limited to spelling or grammar.

But this organization reveals differences in the levels of education and reading and writing practices of Cooley and Speer families. The Cooley sisters were more practical readers and the Speers read with more classical and romantic notions as their level of educational attainment shaped their choices of texts and how they read them. Amanda and Betsey Cooley's journals recorded what they read, whereas Jennie and Ann Speer offered more sentimental responses and expressions of how those texts informed their ideals. This difference in taste and reading practices is directly linked to the pedagogical progression at play in the nineteenth century, moving learners from the stage of basic spelling to an intermediate knowledge of grammar and offering fewer mastery in rhetoric. It is also of note that the Cooley family with just a grammar education enslaved, bought, sold, hired, and hired out African Americans and the Speer family trained in the higher levels of belletristic pursuit alternatively opposed the institution of slavery.

A look at the practices of spelling provided a particularly important chapter that sought to highlight the experience of Jincy, who was enslaved by the Cooley family. Schweiger mines a rather meager record in the Cooley sister journals to reveal that the enslaved Jincy was permitted to read but most likely only was afforded the most basic level of education through use of Webster's blue back speller. The journal entries concerning Jincy mention fewer occasions of her reading and more detailing how the Cooley family enslavers whipped her. In her attempt to understand Jincy, Schweiger is careful to recognize the difficulty in recovering her perspective. This constrains the book's claim to show how both free and enslaved people read in the rural South, even as Schweiger diligently brings together other texts that cite practices of spelling among African Americans found in other biographical accounts of the period. Much more could be explored concerning pedagogy, reading and writing practices among the enslaved residents of the region, subjects pursued by Janet Duitsman Cornelius in the early 1990s and more recently by Christopher Hager.[14] Beyond difficulties getting at the experience of Jincy and how enslaved and free Black readers in the South engaged in personal and collective practices of literacy, one solid argument in Schweiger's text is her rejection with the idea that literacy necessarily enacts freedom. As with the case of the Cooley family and Jincy, access to literacy and even an acceptance or encouragement of some level of literacy among the enslaved proved perfectly compatible with the persistence of the institution of slavery.

Schweiger's second part entitled "A Musical, Literary, and Christian Miscellany" explores what kinds of texts rural Southern people encountered and how practices of oral and print culture existed in dynamic relationship in everyday life. In her chapter is how religious songbooks circulated through the formal

and informal movements, Schweiger demonstrates the vibrant interplay between the printed word and oral tradition in the rural South and makes a good case for the dynamism of this relationship. Her look at hymnals and religious material offers a new way to think about the ways Christian theology was contained in a range of texts increasingly available even to those living in rural areas of the nineteenth century, with print serving as "a vessel of cultural memory and a source of remarkable creativity."[15] Her fifth chapter looks at "Stories," discussing the circulation of chapbooks and almanacs, English novels, serial fiction, histories and biographies. The fascinating sixth chapter entitled "Doctrines" reveals the remarkable range of ideas that circulated the rural Blue Ridge region. Universalist and Quaker texts, Mormon missionaries, Moravian preachers, Catholic priests, and noted Protestant revivalist preachers such as Barton Stone and Lorenzo Dow all made appearances in the region even as printed bibles and tracts circulated through the region among frequently splintering Baptist and Methodist faith communities. Schweiger's work on these subjects provides a useful model for scholarship attentive to the details of how a range of printed material actually moved through the region, and how the movers of print, including some distributors of antislavery sermons and materials, represented a range of theological, educational, and social positions. Throughout the book, Schweiger does an excellent job detailing the economic realities and challenges of the exchange of print, and wherever possible indicates details such as the numbers of copies printed and modes for distribution or use of serial format to reduce printing costs.

Schweiger's broader conclusions grant that print contributed to the increasingly sectional divide between slave and free states in the nineteenth century but continued to reveal that these regional boundaries were porous. White women such as the Cooleys and Speers had access to a broad range of educational texts, fiction, and religious print, resulting in not only different levels of literacy, but positions on social and political issues including slavery. Schweiger argues that despite its power, the institution of "slavery failed to create a coherent or cohesive culture in the South."[16] The book is successful in Schweiger's aim to locate rural southern families like the Cooleys and Speers in an increasingly literate republic wherein "people in both the Northern and Southern states nurtured market capitalism, vibrant religions, and vigorous racism." Although she indicates a turn wherein citizens of the young republic came to value and gained access to a "good English education," Schweiger's treatment offers more of a snapshot of these dynamics in the 1840s than an exploration of how questions of how such phenomena changed over time. She adeptly rejects assumptions about an ideology of literacy that considers reading the bedrock of progress, freedom, and happiness in liberal civic society. *A Literate South*'s study of pedagogy shows that literacy cannot be understood as a blanket category. Readers and writers not only evidenced different levels of education—they also encountered print and oral traditions in varying states of freedom or bondage. The book also shows how access to print did not necessitate a proscriptive response to questions of race and slavery among White women readers in the rural South.

Schweiger explicitly engages Raymond Williams' theories about the role of ordinary practices in the making of culture and how an age of republican revolution changed the ways that reading was a tool for conservative adherence to religious and social order and came to embody more radical dissenting traditions and trajectories over the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the English-speaking Atlantic world.[17] This, perhaps, is where Schweiger and Spires' scholarship enter into conversation. *A Literate South* offers a reminder that we should not overestimate the power of reading in the lives of these women who made and did so many things and found meaning in their lives beyond the page, nor in embracing a mythic liberative power of literacy upon the citizens of the early U.S. republic. Schweiger's careful investigation of White Southern women's reading practices reminds us, with her paraphrase of Williams, that that "lettered people are too quick to make reading the most important work of the world." [18] This remains an important reminder in terms of the normative understandings and expectations of not only historic subjects but also the twentieth and twenty-first century scholars who study them. Neither the White and Black women of Schweiger's study nor the Black women and men of Spires' book were so naïve. Access to and engagement with literacy and print involved practices situated in people's complex nineteenth-century lives and their society. Those practices in the case of Schweiger's subjects were not circumscribed by geography and regional political culture and were also not summative of their political and cultural beliefs or actions. The literary involvements of African Americans in Spires' book not only articulated in print ideas of citizenship, but also used print to put those notions of citizenship into personal and collective practice.

As scholars search for innovative and careful ways to study print culture, attentive to the literary and intellectual significance of texts but also their materiality, the monographs of Spires and Schweiger represent useful approaches. They employ very different methods, as *A Literate South* pays closer attention to the material texts and the social histories of local communities and *The Practice of Citizenship* links print culture to intellectual histories and the ways form and genre function to enact those ideas. Future scholarship would benefit from bridging some of these methods. Possibilities in this regard may be through further recovery of additional details about the processes of print production, strategies and modes of distribution, textual cycles set off by serial and other formats for reprinting, and other ways of evaluating reception and linkages to actions outside of reading practices or off the printed page. Scholars of these subjects would do well to situate new investigations in dialogue with the complex ways people read, wrote, and learned to read, and how the texts they composed and read offer both ideas and practices of political and social life in the nineteenth-century United States.

Both Spires and Schweiger's new monographs are highly recommended to scholars interested in the cultural and social impact of reading practices and print culture in the early U.S. republic. At the nexus of literary history, social and cultural history, African American studies, and American studies, these works

are important reading for graduate students and scholars of these fields. They offer rich historical examples and utilize methods that will be of value to scholars who work in literacy and orality, the history of the book, cultures of print, and rhetorical studies. They model careful rereading of some well-known sources in these fields—both, for example, cite writings of Frederick Douglass—but also recover and interpret sources that will be unknown even to specialists of these periods and subjects. In addition to this broad range of scholars, the lucid prose and compelling portraits of each book's central historical figures make them well suited to public audiences specifically interested in African American or Southern history.

In the concluding moments of the sixth episode in the second season (2020) of the Hulu original television series *Ramy*, the title character's mother is before a judge repeating the oath of citizenship in a room full of prospective citizens. Meditating on her pledge to defend any threats foreign and domestic, Maysa, brilliantly played by Hiam Abbass, stares at the portrait of the current U.S. President and closes her oath directly addressing his picture with an expletive-ridden tirade whispered under her breath. She denounces his well-publicized sexual violence against women and declares her own ambitions to vote him out of office, proclaiming "I am here to stay." Her intense refutation gives way to a bright smile and deep sigh of relief as the judge concludes the ceremony saying "Congratulations, you are now citizens of the United States of America." The scene suggests that the critical substance of citizenship was revealed in her participation and deviation from the consensus text of the oath. The new citizenship of the Muslim, Egyptian immigrant woman was enacted by herself rather than conferred upon her by the words of the justice. This scene reveals a dynamism between written texts and speech, and that those practices of textual and oral culture often signal the performance of citizenship and social engagement beyond formalized political structures and by many whose practices and identities may often be presented as marginalized by those systems of political and social power.[19]

The complex interrelationship between word and deed, literacy and orality, political thought and action, impress upon us the agency of people in making and remaking culture and the world around them. We do well to interrogate what practices define our historical subjects' reading and writing and engagement in the broader world of ideas and culture and politics. These considerations are essential to understanding how readers and citizens are made, and by whom, and through what means. Even as they recover very specific contexts for reading and print and political practices, Spires and Schweiger's excellent books offer insights into specific historic subjects and elucidate aspects of these very large questions. Questions of access, positionality, and power are as relevant in our historical scholarship as they are in our own acts of reading and writing and civic participation or dissent in our own day. We learn much from Spires and Schweiger about what these practices meant for people whose participation reflected or sought to reshape the early republic through both word and deed. Perhaps in engaging such questions and subjects, we as readers and writers might find ways

in and beyond our practice of words to do the work of informed, neighborly, just, and liberating citizenship.

Notes

1. Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

2. Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 62.1 (2005): 67-92. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship*, 251, describes his own early efforts to situate early African American literature in relation to these paradigms and impetus to pursue his work of theorizing in the book.

3. Spires, *The Practice of* Citizenship, 2.

4. Walter Johnson, "On Agency." *Journal of Social History* 37, 1 (2003): 113-124.

5. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship,* 34, 55.

6. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship*, 81.

7. Colored Conventions Project, Co-Directed by P. Gabrielle Foreman, and Jim Casey. Online at ColoredConventions.org

8. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship*, 171.

9. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship*, 200.

10. Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

11. E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press in association with the American Antiquarian Society, 2005).

12. Schweiger, *A Literate South*, x-xi.

13. Schweiger, *A Literate* South, xvi-xvii.

14. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *When I Can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1992). Christopher Hager, *Word by Word: Emancipation and the Act of Writing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

15. Schweiger, *A Literate South*, 149.

16. Schweiger, *A Literate* South, 199.

17. Schweiger, *A Literate South*, 47-48.

18. Schweiger, 37, citing Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (1958; Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1977), 297.

19. This powerful scene illustrates explicit political engagement and agency by one of the shows key female characters, but viewers may be warned the scene contains misogynistic vulgarity and descriptions of sexual assault in reference to the 45th president of the United States. In response to the first season, some criticized how the show *Ramy* portrays the lives of women practicing Islam in the United States, such as Shamira Ibrahim, "What *Ramy* Gets Wrong About Muslim Women," *The Atlantic* (23 April, 2019).