Now You See Me, Now You Don't: Fanny Fern's Private Theatricals in *Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time* (1854)

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Abstract

The essay discusses Fanny Fern's autobiographical narrative *Ruth Hall* (1854) in the context of the emerging entertainment industry in antebellum America. A brief analysis of Fern's narrative strategies, focusing on aspects of the characters' visual exposure, reveals that Fern's self-portrait as the "authentic" and independent *Ruth Hall* is in complex ways implicated in the very mechanisms she purports to confront.

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Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time, Fanny Fern. I am convinced that there are times in everybody's experience when there is so much to be done, that the only way to do it is to sit down and do nothing. - Fanny Fern. What a pity when editors review a woman's book, that they so often fall into the error of reviewing the woman instead. - Fanny Fern. Can anybody tell me why reporters, in making mention of lady speakers, always consider it to be necessary to report, fully and firstly, the dresses worn by them? - Fanny Fern. To the Pilgrim Mothers, who not only had their full share of the hardships and privations of pioneer life but also had the Pilgrim Fathers to endure. Copyright-evidence Evidence reported by marcus lucero for item ruthhalldomestic00fernrich on Sep 14, 2006; no visible notice of copyright and date found; stated date is 1854; not published by the US government; Have not checked for notice of renewal in the Copyright renewal records. Copyright-evidence-date 2006-09-14 20:23:49. Copyright-evidence-operator marcus lucero. Copyright-region US. Identifier ruthhalldomestic00fernrich. Identifier-ark ark:/13960/t6nz81623. Identifier-bib GLAD-17083498.