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ADOLESCENCE, EDUCATION, AND INTELLECT:
THE SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE OF PRIVILEGED,
WHITE, ADOLESCENT WOMEN IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

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ADOLESCENCE, EDUCATION, AND INTELLECT:
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By

Teresa Marie Goforth-Piselli

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ABSTRACT

ADOLESCENCE, EDUCATION, AND INTELLECT: THE SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE OF PRIVILEGED, WHITE, ADOLESCENT WOMEN IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

By

Teresa Marie Goforth-Piselli

Antebellum, southern, wealthy, white, adolescent women have either been ignored or simply misrepresented by historians and popular authors over the past decades. This thesis assumes the challenge to bring forth their voices and to show the ways in which they were educated, they embraced their education, and in many cases found ways to express themselves through diaries, journals and sometimes novels. They experienced and accomplished all of these things within the context of the adolescent experience which was frought with the stress and conflict associated with a transitional life stage as well as within a very unique society during a very tumultuous period. Through their journals and diaries as well as through various secondary sources it becomes very clear that these women have a place in the history of the American South because they were not only the subjects of a great deal of the prescriptive literature of that region, but more importantly because they were actors within their society.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful and supportive husband, Joseph L. Piselli, and my incredible parents, Davis K. Goforth and Stella F. Halbritter.

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I would like to express my appreciation to a number of people for their support and guidance. First, very special thanks go to Professor David Bailey who has not only been my advisor throughout my graduate career, but who has been my mentor since my days as an undergraduate. From the very first semester that I showed up in one of his lecture courses, he has made me enthusiastic about doing history and he has always helped me to see that I was capable of moving much further than I ever thought that I could. If it were not for him I would not be where I am now. Thanks also go to Professor Gordon Stewart for his support and undying interest in a field of study other than his own. He has been someone who I could look up to ever since I became his teaching assistant. He is someone that I hold in very high regard. To Professor Lisa Fine, I give a great big thanks for stepping in at the last minute when I was one committe-member short and for offering some very important criticisms of this work which helped to make it what it is. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Wilma King who was able to read parts of this work and who has opened up a whole new world of subjects for me. Next I would like to thank Juan Alvarez, my friend and colleague who continually repeated the phrase "you can do it." Last, but certainly not least I want to thank those who have helped me in a less formal, but certainly not less important, way. First, to my fellow graduate students who were always willing to offer advice and encouragement through what can sometimes be a very grueling process. Second, to the wonderful staff in the history department office who have always greeted me with a smile and a "how are you?" and have always been able to answer my questions and encourage me to keep moving toward the future. Thank you Mary, Peggy, Nancy, Patience and Dale.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This project has been a continuing process of attempting to find southern women in American history. As I read more and more about "southern women" I consistently stumbled over short references to southern, white, adolescent women. There was no substance or explanations offered for blanket statements about lack of intellectual abilities and simple references to the social activities of these young women. At the same time that I noticed these secondary references, I was reading the diaries and journals of these same women and taking note of the fact that they seemed to be very preoccupied with learning and reading and developing their intellect. There was a severe contradiction in this fact which begged to be researched further, and thus this project was born.

The lives of antebellum, wealthy, southern, white, adolescent women were complex and varied, just as are the lives of nearly any group that a researcher might choose to study. They were steeped in the conflicts and characteristics which accompany a transitional life stage (which I have chosen to call adolescence, even though these subjects preceded the coining of that term). Added to the complexities of adolescence, many of these women received some sort of a higher education which included, at the least, rhetoric, "the classics", and history. From that education they were able to participate in a female community which allowed them to develop not only specific social skills, but also for some, an intense interest in reading and learning. Neither social skills nor academic interest were mutually exclusive. They functioned side by side and were often a great source of internal conflict. Finally, these women took their education to heart and read prolifically as well as carried on journals where they cited what they read, and in some cases used it as a forum for their

own literary analysis. Some women went so far as to publish their own works, many of which had an obviously prescriptive nature as in the case of Augusta Jane Evans.

These young women lived intricate lives which also serve as powerful examples for the way in which women functioned within the social constructs and conventions which surrounded them without questioning or revolting against them. Rather, it is possible to see from their own words to what extent they were aware of those conventions or "rules" as well as to what extent they supported and carried on those conventions. Offering only blanket statements about a group of historical subjects based on only surface observations is insufficient and is an injustice to those who are, in a way, denied their agency and experience in the present day. These women were vibrant and intelligent and made choices in their own lives and should be acknowledged for that fact.

A colleague once recited the line of a poem to me which said something like "Without the nail, the war was lost."[1] That is how the study of these women should be approached. When the same colleague read this work, his primary question was "so what?." It is a valid question, otherwise this research is really for naught. I would argue that, like the line of the poem, that this country, any country, is made up of individuals. Those individuals are the people who make that country what it is. In times of war, they are the ones who manufacture the nails, and the shoes, and the weapons necessary to win the war. These women were a part of a society which has been a fascination to all Americans for centuries and it is important to understand the people who made up that society and allowed it to continue in its hierarchical, patriarchal, almost feudal manner to the point of a disastrous Civil War. The individuals of a society are the building blocks of larger events and situations that occur which historians

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[1]Unfortunately, he could not find the exact citation and was unsure of the author.

have discussed since the beginnings of the profession. They are not only valid subjects of research, they are essential for the relation of a holistic story of the American past.[2]

[2]It is important to remember that the term "southern women" does not mean only white, wealthy women small to do justice to all of the women of the South at any age or in any time period. All are equally interesting and deserving of study and therefore should be treated with the respect they deserve which can only be accomplished through a concentration on their experiences. Also, there are various, recently published works and works in progress which deal with some of these other individuals. For example, Victoria Bynum's work *Unruly Women* very successfully addressed the issues of poor white women and African American women in the South within a legal context. (Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992)). In the matter of age, Wilma King is working on a soon to be published work dealing with slave children. The information is available, and perhaps eventually, after the individual stories have been written, it will be possible to write a truly comprehensive work of southern women.

Chapter 1
Adolescence

Perhaps the most obvious but most profound fact of human experience is that age circumscribes the lives of human beings. Socially, it is a powerful determinant both for what one is able to do and allowed to do by those around her.[3] Moreover, age helps determine the level of a person's abilities in any given situation. It evokes varying degrees of respect, helping to determine social position and perception of an individual by her society. Finally, age helps set parameters for individual responses to the outside world, both one's emotional response and one's decision-making abilities. For example, an adolescent woman of the nineteenth century, when confronted with the prospect of a formal boarding education, might look upon it with disdain or dislike or dread due to the constrictions that would be placed upon her freedom and the discipline that such an education would entail. She might, if allowed, choose not to take advantage of such a situation. The adolescent woman remains in a stage of her life where she is certainly aware of the intense changes that will occur after she marries, but she is not necessarily prepared for those changes. When an adult woman, on the other hand, encumbered with the responsibilities of marriage and the care of children, as well as the conventions observed by the society in which she lives, is given the prospect of enriching her intellect and learning, she might be overjoyed at the opportunity to use her mind in a way that she ordinarily is unable. It is this change over time, in perceptions and in actions that makes it so very important to try to understand the experience of the child, the adolescent, and the adult.

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[3]For simplicity and because of this particular subject matter, I have chosen to use the pronouns she and her in place of he/she and him/her.

What is Adolescence?

Adolescence is not only one of the most formative periods in the human life cycle, it is also fraught with turmoil, doubt, and uncertainty produced through internal and external conflicts or stresses. Internally, turmoil is created as a result of physical and physiological changes related to puberty. Externally, this conflict is created socially as the expectations placed upon the same adolescent by her society are often contradictory. The adolescent is often expected to meet standards which apply to the child and others to the developing adult. These social conventions, which vary according to gender, socio-economic class, and race are created and enforced by the society in which the adolescent lives and grows, shaping development into adulthood. Therefore, the way in which the adolescent perceives herself and the society in which she lives varies from one culture to another. This holds true for young, wealthy, white women in the American South in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Before entering into a discussion of the qualities associated with adolescence, it is first important to lay a foundation for what has been termed by some, the "invention" of adolescence. It is necessary to do this so that there is no misconception regarding the origin of the perception of the life stage of adolescence as separate both from childhood and adulthood. Adolescence originated as a late nineteenth and early twentieth century conception spawned by the industrial revolution in American urban centers. "Adolescence, as we know it, is a 'cultural invention'--a product of industrialization, of the need to extend the period of education and training for adult roles in the face of expanding technology, and of the need to keep young people out of the labor force in order to assure job opportunities for adults in times of scarcity."[4] The

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[4]Aaron H. Esman, M.D.,*Adolescence and Culture,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.16.

process of removing a certain group of young people from the work force and therefore eliminating the muddy lines between children and adults, was a turn-of-the-century phenomena delineated and explained by renowned psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall and Sigmund Freud. The social definition of the adolescent was based on "a biological process of maturation," partly including puberty, but also entailing the psychological and emotional development into adulthood.[5] After these theories and characteristics of adolescence were established, historians then began to take those characteristics and theories and study young people of the applicable ages in past centuries. Through this analysis, they found that a separate adolescent period existed before the turn of the twentieth century. Historians, such as Joseph Kett in *Rites of Passage,* have studied the adolescent period as far back as the eighteenth century in the United States. So, the term "adolescence" was created at the turn of this century, but the characteristics of that youth group most certainly existed prior to its theoretical articulation. One very critical point regarding these authors is their inattention to understanding and analyzing the differences between male and female adolescents. The majority of them either saw no distinction, ignored gender completely, or placed it as an afterthought at the end of their work. I have attempted here to keep the discussion of the nature of adolescence in very general terms that seem to apply to members of both sexes. The specific experiences of adolescent women are apparent in their own words later on in this work.

Adolescence is often described as the period from around the onset of puberty to the point when the young person enters into such adult roles as marriage and financial independence.[6] She is caught between childhood and the

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[5]Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage, Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present,* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publicshers, 1977), p.215.

[6]Glen H. Elder, "Adolescence in the Life Cycle: An Introduction," in Sigmund E. Dragastin and

responsibilities of being an adult. Variance in environmental facts may make it dangerous to propose a specific definition of adolescence in terms of specific experiences or characteristics. Nevertheless, some psychologists are willing to offer "unique phases of adolescence" which young people experience at different stages. These include the transitional nature of adolescence, overlapping childhood and adulthood; the cultural determinants of adolescent experience and development; the rapid biological changes which create stress in the adolescent; and the "developmental tasks" to be accomplished by the adolescent in a given time period, as determined by the society.[7]

Adolescence is a period of very rapid and radical physical change, requiring emotional and behavioral changes in the individual. Puberty is a basic but critical factor in adolescent development. It is one of the primary catalysts for the conflict and emotional and psychological changes which are so characteristic of the adolescent period. The adolescent's "physical appearance would be substantially altered, leaving only a vague image of [her] former self. Others would respond to [her] differently and expect [her] to change [her] behavior accordingly."[8] Along with these physical changes, and responsive behavioral changes, the adolescent also experiences new desires and feelings which are often suppressed or at least tempered by the society which surrounds her. She understands that she now has the desires and the capabilities of an adult, yet she is expected by those around her to suppress those sexual feelings, therefore causing a conflict between nature and social expectations.

Glen H. Elder, Jr, eds., *Adolescence in the Life Cycle, Pschological Change and Social Context*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), p. 3.

[7]Harold W. Bernard, *Adolescent Development in American Culture*, (New York: World Book Company, 1957), pp. 19-20.

[8]Rainer Twiford and Peter Carson, *The Adolescent Passage, Transitions from Child to Adult*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), p.11.

The nature of adolescence or its characteristics has been debated since its conception. Puberty is certainly a very large part of the makeup of these characteristics, but it is a piece of a larger puzzle or theory. One of the first psychologists to propound any theories about what adolescence entailed was G. Stanley Hall. In 1904, he published *Adolescence and Its Relation to Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education.* In this work he sets forth the idea that adolescence is really a period of immense conflict. According to Hall, adolescence is the "alternation between inertia and excitement, pleasure and pain, self-confidence and humility, selfishness and altruism, society and solitude, sensitiveness and dullness, knowing and doing, conservatism and iconoclasm, sense and intellect."[9] In other words, the outward behavior of the adolescent is the direct result of internal conflict.

Another psychologist, Edgar Friedenberg, wrote fifty-five years after the publication of Hall's work, "adolescence *is* conflict--protracted conflict--between the individual and society."[10] So he has moved the parameters of conflict from the internal realm to the external realm as well. The conflicts of the adolescent do not exist only in her mind, but also manifest themselves externally between the individual and her society or, more specifically the rules of the society. The other very important contribution made by Friedenberg is his assertion that the adolescent experience is culturally determined. He says, "there are cultures in which this conflict seems hardly to occur; but where it does not, the characteristic development of personality which we associate with adolescence does not occur either."[11]

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[9]G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence and Its Relation to Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education,* (New York: D. Appelton & Co., 1905), v.2, p.40.
[10]Edgar Z. Friedenberg, *The Vanishing Adolescent,* (New York: Dell, 1959), p.32.
[11]Ibid.

After Hall's work, subsequent authors, such as Friedenberg, have argued that adolescence is much more complex than a list of conflicts experienced by all adolescents. The more recent authors argue that adolescence is experienced differently by different people.[12] This is certainly true and is a point that should be argued by historians and psychologists alike, that by attempting to understand our world, we should not fail to remember that individuals experience the same or similar events in very different ways dependent upon a number of variables, among the most important of which are cultural and social background.

In Erik Erickson's famed work, *Childhood and Society*, published in 1950, he reconciles a number of these ideas by arguing that adolescence revolves around "the consolidation of a sense of 'identity".[13] These three perspectives are certainly not mutually exclusive. It is self-evident that adolescents are conflicted in numerous ways, socially, sexually, and emotionally, but there is no rule that every adolescent experiences the same conflicts to the same degree. One adolescent may have to cope with all of the conflicts listed by G. Stanley Hall, but another may be less conflicted or perhaps better able to cope with conflict. Much of this is contingent upon her environment and how easily she can express herself in that environment. The passage through these conflicts is the focus of Erickson's search for "identity". The way in which each individual solves any particular conflict is a determinant of identity and subsequently individuality.

The outward appearance of the adolescent is also important because it determines the way in which she is treated by her peers, her parents and other outsiders. Presumably because of the various conflicts experienced by the

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[12]Esman, p.24.
[13]Ibid., p.4.

adolescent, she displays a "heightened emotionality." This "heightened emotionality" includes not only such characteristics as an inability to deal constructively with frustration, quarrelsomeness and a "general restlessness and rebellion against adult authority,"[14] but also, in young women at least, a strong tendency toward sentimentalism which carries through not only relations with and perceptions of members of the opposite sex, but also into daily activities such as reading and schoolwork. There also appears to be, in the adolescent woman, a tendency toward self-criticism and a feeling of despair. This fact could very certainly be related to the "low tolerance for frustration" mentioned above.[15]

The Cult of True Womanhood and the Continuum of Experience

Beyond the theoretical framework of adolescence lie the young women who were experiencing this life stage in a very unique region of the United States, during a tumultuous period in American history. As in most other instances, men and women experienced adolescence differently from one another. To understand the adolescent experience of young southern women it is first helpful to look at the roles and perceptions of women in general during this period. Women of the nineteenth century, young and old, were expected to function within certain societal premises regarding their code of morality, and to participate in activities and public interactions which were deemed appropriate or validated by their society, which also held a certain amount of indirect control over their private activities. All of these social conventions or

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[14]Twiford, p.7.
[15]Ibid.

controls achieved different degrees of success through the use of emotional tools such as guilt and shame. [16]

By now, many historians have broached the subject of women's place in nineteenth-century American society. Among them are authors such as Barbara Welter, Nancy Cott, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Katherine Kish Sklar. Although each has approached the subject from a different direction and each allows her subjects a varying degree of agency, they all uphold a basic premise. According to letters, diaries, and prescriptive literature, white women in the nineteenth century were expected to maintain certain qualities or characteristics. These qualities supposedly defined what it meant "to be a woman" in the eyes of the contemporary society. Through her research, Barbara Welter attempts to define a phrase commonly found in nineteenth century periodical literature -- "true womanhood" -- which can be considered a collective term for the "qualities" mentioned above. "True Womanhood," according to Welter, required "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity."[17] The woman of the nineteenth century had "to uphold the pillars of the temple [the Republic] with her frail white hand."[18] The actual "frailty" of that hand is what has come into question more recently. Regardless, these are the standards set by American society under the guises of which the American woman was supposed to function. Such prescriptions were then reinforced through various social and sexual controls related to female psychology and biology, effectively eliminating any possibilities of stepping outside of these set

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[16]See various works on women's history in the nineteenth century: Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood;* Barbara Welter, *Dimity Conviction;* Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor;* Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress;* among others, as well as diaries and journals of the women themselves. That is where the feelings of guilt and shame are seen so often and so poignently.

[17] Barbara Welter,*Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), p.21.

[18] Ibid.

social boundaries.[19] These ideas are the foundation for the study of all white, middle and upper class women in the nineteenth century, to be built upon with blocks representing age, region, race, and class.

These social conventions presented impossible ideals for women to live up to, both in the North and South and eventually were internalized by many women so that they would set standards for themselves that were not within the reach of any human, male or female. The obvious consequences of setting unattainable standards are feelings of guilt, shame, and a sense of failure. Although these feelings are certainly prevalent in the diaries and journals of many women, it is important to avoid a general pitfall of women's history in the past. These women were oppressed by their society and bound in many ways by the internalization of social conventions, but they were not victims. Within their own time and culture, they created spaces in which they could exercise judgement over right and wrong. It is critical when utilizing primary sources, to read between the lines and discover the portions of their journals where they left openings to express themselves within the context of their times.

The focus of this particular work is on women of the southern states, where these conventions and prescriptions could be even more rigid and intense and seem to have been internalized and ritualized to a greater extent than in the North. A young bride during this period, Anne Beale-Davis, serves as an excellent example of a young woman trying to achieve unattainable *perfection*. This young woman falls just outside the boundary of adolescence, having crossed a particular milestone, marriage, but her reaction to marriage is a direct result of her adolescent development if we accept the theory that human

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[19] For one example, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg. "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America." *Journal of American History* 60(Sept., 1973), 332-356.

life and personality are developed over time with previous experience informing future experience. She wrote a list of daily goals for herself which included:

1. To read the Bible and pray after rising in the morning and sometime after breakfast
2. To pray again before dinner and read the Bible in the evening and pray before bed.
3. To obey my husband in all things reasonable.
4. 'I will endeavor to use patience and forbearance towards my son [her husband's son by an earlier marriage] and correct him in a spirit of mildness for every offense of which he may be guilty.'
5. 'I will endeavor to offend not with the tongue, but hold it in with bit and bridle and speak charitably of all persons.'
6. 'I will endeavor to do good unto all as far as it is in my power, especially unto the household of faith.'
7. 'I will endeavor to subdue every evil propensity by the assistance of Divine Grace, and by practicing that degree of fasting and abstinence which my health will admit of.'[20]

No one, male or female, could possibly be the person that the achievement of these goals would require; such goals suggest moral and pious perfection. Also, nowhere in these goals did the young woman allow room for the development of herself, except in the context of being a better person for the good of others. She did not permit herself any indulgence or pursuit of her own happiness within her goals. Such an omission would make it even more difficult for her to achieve the goals which she had composed. There was no outlet for her anger, fear, or sorrow because, according to the social myths and conventions, and to her subsequent goals, those emotions should not exist for a woman. Because her journal was intended for her own eyes, there is no obvious reason why she would omit these outlets from her goals, such as reading and writing, except that she felt they were not worthy ambitions.

But there are a few places in Anne's list which allow her to use her own discriminatory skills in relation to her husband and her son. For example, she

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[20]Diary of Anne Beale-Davis, Beale-Davis Papers, SHC UNC. Quoted in Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady, From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.10.

says that she will do her best to obey her husband in "all things reasonable." Who is to determine what is reasonable? Her list is written for herself so it must be assumed that she is the one to make that determination. That is not to say that she will challenge her husband often or even at all, but she reserves the right, and sees no contradiction in the use of that right with the high standards which she has set for herself, to decide what is "reasonable". There are other words in this passage which offer a window into the life and concerns of their author. First, throughout her list she says that she will "endeavor" to accomplish these goals. In other words, she will *try*, to the best of her abilities, to accomplish what she has set forth. It allows for room to fail as long as she puts forth the greatest effort that she can. In her seventh goal it is apparent that she is concerned for her health. She is aware that the goals which she has proported to achieve are beyond the realm of possibility in that she understands that "fasting and abstinence" could very well affect her health, which for women during this period was already precarious. It would take all of her will and her energy to do what she had set forth.

It is this approach which "assumes the ironic truth that 'the child is father to the man'; it also assumes that each culture fosters the development of certain dominant character traits or styles."[21] Specific to the case of wealthy southern women, it assumes and presents the evidence that the ideal of the southern belle and the southern lady, were introduced in childhood and were developed by society and their surrounding culture, privately, publicly, and institutionally, through marriage and adulthood. The same could be proposed for northern women in northern cultures as well. There are no distinct points in a woman's life where at once she is a child and then suddenly she is an adult.

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[21]John Demos, "Developmental Perspectives on the History of Childhood," in Harvey J. Graff, ed., *Growing Up in America, Historical Experiences.*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 86.

Aging is a process and is shaped by the world which surrounds the woman as it does for a man. This particular young woman brought to her marriage the ideals which she had learned immediately before, in her adolescence. Adolescence, at this stage in historical scholarship, seems to be the forgotten or ignored "middle child" of historical research, at least in the American South. How can we understand the adult experience if we do not understand the adolescent experience?

Historians and Antebellum Southern Women

One author has said "...American historians have too often failed to take children and youth seriously, and this failure has had lamentable consequences."[22] Historians of southern women are certainly not exempt from this accusation. They have accepted these young women as embodying the image which was expressed and promoted by southern society without taking the time to look at the women themselves. Although there was a great deal of frivolity and freedom of activity in the lives of these women, it is far too simplistic to leave them within an image which expected them to be perfect in their appearance and in their demeanor and to have the ability to capture men in a manipulative spell in order to marry them. To do so means to deny their reality. It is critical to acknowledge that they also experienced all of the pain and chaos characteristic of adolescence within the context of southern society in the pre-Civil War period. Beyond the theories and the jargon lie the women's voices and subsequently, their experiences.

Although numerous historians have contributed immense volumes of important scholarship to the study of southern women, there are still certain

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[22]N. Ray Hiner, "Adolescence in Eighteenth-Century America," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 3 (Fall), p.253.

factors of their lives that have not been explicated. One of these factors is the impact of various stages of the life cycle on life experience and the relationship between the characteristics of that life stage and the events that occur during that life stage. One example involves studying the adolescent years of the southern woman in relation to an issue which had great impact on her life during the early nineteenth century -- education. A young woman's experience was not only formed by her education, but also by her age as well as her society. Contrary to passing comments of previous historians of southern women, to be explained below, these women should not be passed over as insignificant, frivolous, game-playing manhunters. Instead they need to be understood in terms of the complexity of their lives, both socially and intellectually in order to more comprehensively understand all of southern society. It is time to look beyond the surface and to explore both their experiences as adolescents and the issues in their lives which were molded by these experiences.

In the explosion of literature about antebellum southern women, the issue of the social conventions which dominated their lives has served as a major historical focus. By looking at the omissions of some of these authors in regards to age and the very good framework set forth by others, in terms of the social context, it is possible to create a synthesis of their ideas and to then paint a more complex picture of the southern belle, her relation to her education, to intellectual pursuits, to her society, and perhaps even to herself.

By following these societal prescriptions, the belle could become "the lady." In fact, "by the time they arrived at their teens most girls had absorbed the injunctions of the myth. One young woman wrote in her diary that she longed to die because she had not found a husband, adding, 'I know I would make a faithful, obedient wife, loving with all my heart, yielding entire trust in my

husband.'"[23] The southern belle was the adolescent counterpart to the southern lady, but the constraints on each were the same, the primary difference being that while one woman was *preparing* for marriage, the other was expected to maintain the ideal *through* marriage. Anne Firor Scott provided the classic definition of the image of the southern belle/lady in *The Southern Lady, From Pedestal to Politics.* She argues that the southern lady was "a submissive wife whose reason for being was to love, honor, obey, and occasionally amuse her husband, to bring up his children and manage his household. Physically weak, and 'formed for the less laborious occupations,' she depended upon male protection." Yet Scott also argues that the southern lady was surrounded by a "magic spell" which affected all of the men around her; "she was timid and modest, beautiful and graceful...."[24] While the southern woman was expected to be physically weak, she also was expected to enthrall a potential suitor and to intoxicate him with her supposed charms. This set of social conventions was reproduced and reinforced, Scott argues, through a massive amount of advice literature and other material written by men. The indoctrination of women by "churches, schools, parents, books, and magazines" delivered the same message: "be a lady and you will be loved and respected and supported. If you defy the pattern and behave in ways considered unladylike you will be unsexed, rejected, unloved, and you will probably starve."[25]

It was these social expectations which shaped the lives of young and wealthy southern white women, whether they were plantation daughters, or daughters of businessmen, politicians, or lawyers. Young women were to be submissive and obedient, marry well (which meant marrying a wealthy man or

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[23]Ibid., p.7 from "Anonymous Diary of a Young Woman Living near Natchez," Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University as quoted in Anne Scott.
[24]Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady, From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930.*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.4.
[25]Ibid., pp. 20-21

a man from a prominent family, or ideally both) and in the process, embody this "perfect" image. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in *Southern Honor* , explores a related question regarding the formality of the image and to what extent the image was internalized by southern women. Brown's illustration of southern women (adult women) is more complex than that of Anne Scott because he takes apart this image to reveal various layers. While Scott dwells upon submisiveness and weakness, upon the victimized nature of the southern belle/lady image, Wyatt-Brown contends that buried in this image were a number of different levels of ideal behavior. Beneath the delicate, ladylike surface lay the more important necessity of appearing cool in the face of adversity. In other words, he says that women were not concerned with tarnishing the ladylike image, but rather were more concerned with maintaining poise and strength in bad times in order to please those around her...friends and family. Wyatt-Brown says, "women were expected to nurture a capacity to bear burdens with grace, courage, and silence. That social ideal far outweighed any girlish dreaming about being a belle, a fancy to be indulged only in the brief sojourn from paternal control to husbandly dominion."[26]

Wyatt-Brown acknowledges a very important life cycle transition in this passage -- an acknowledgement that the experience of the adolescent differed from that of the adult -- but fails to work out the complexity of this concept. He says that only in the "brief sojourn" between father and husband could women entertain frivolous dreams of being the belle, such as that conjured up by Margaret Mitchell's Scarlett O'Hara. The complexity lies within that period between the domination by the father and that by the husband where the young woman was allowed a certain amount of independence within the realm

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[26] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor, Ethics and Behavior in the Old South,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 235.

of education and societal constraints. It is not fair to speak of the adolescent southern woman as a frivolous, carefree youngster with nothing to occupy her mind but marriage fantasies and dreams of grandiose social activities, as do historians such as Scott and Wyatt-Brown, although in not so many words. Such a limited view denies an important change during this period regarding education. Moreover, the evidence available in personal journals and diaries suggests that adolescents had a great deal of leisure time when living at home, but that time was not always spent in frivolous daydreaming, but rather was spent reading, both works of intellect and the often forbidden novel. They also wrote both in journals and in letters about a range of fears and self-criticisms for not working and reading as diligently as they thought that they should. Wyatt-Brown's vision of women's strength during this period is an important one and critical to understanding these women, but his vision must also reach the world of the adolescent as well, because she was truly indoctrinated with the same ethic of strength in appearance as was the adult. The indoctrination began in girlhood.

In *The Plantation Mistress*, Catherine Clinton adds another dimension to the understanding of the adolescent period of these southern women, a fascination with marriage due in part to the nature of the life stage (to be discussed later) and to social expectations regarding a girl's future. Adolescent belles certainly spent a large fraction of their time contemplating and discussing marriage. Clinton says, "these few years between puberty and marriage were the closest that most women came to freedom. The great decision of their lives - the choice of when and whom to marry - lay ahead, and their time to choose was filled with fun and frivolity."[27] Again, this is a very limited view of the belle, focusing

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[27]Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress,Woman's World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p.62.

on only one aspect of their adolescent period and not taking into account the development of a higher education for young women which occurs in the later years of Clinton's study.

Finally, in *Within the Plantation Household,* Elizabeth Fox-Genovese offers her readers a more realistic and full-bodied impression of the southern belle, although still relatively conservative in her treatment of their intellectual activities. She, like the historians before her, still seems to focus upon the belle's social activities, such as large parties and courtship, but she, unlike the others, allows the belles more agency within this context. According to Fox-Genovese's sources, "being the belle" was sort of a game played by these vibrant young women. For example, one woman, Cary Bryan had declared in confidence to her friend that "she meant to have as many declared lovers as she could bring to her feet to be a reputed belle."[28] Fox- Genovese even goes so far as to say that these belles had a certain degree of "power" in their ability to manipulate those around them. This declaration of a certain degree of control and participation in at least one aspect of the proscribed image is an important step in understanding the experiences of these adolescent women. They were conscious of certain implications of the belle image and, in many cases, were willing participants. The next critical step that Fox-Genovese takes is to offer up the possibility that these young women had some intellectual interests. She makes the important distinction between "a deep love for the intellectual life" and "systematic learning."[29] In other words, the love of things intellectual and the love for institutional schooling were and are not synonymous. Fox-Genovese is the first historian, although in a very low-key manner, to acknowledge that these young women could have an interest in intellectual

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[28]Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household, Black and White Women of the Old South,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p.209.
[29]Ibid., p.259

pursuits, but she fails to move beyond that implication and to explore their activities. Regardless, through Fox-Genovese's work we have moved one step closer to hearing these adolescent voices.

As Kenneth Stampp so eloquently presented, what appears to be on the outside of a person is quite possibly and very likely different from what is on the inside. Many people during this period and beyond played roles in their own lives in order to reach specific ends or to avoid punishment, retribution or shame (slavery is obviously the most extreme example). Regardless, it is simply another directive to historians to look beyond the surface of their subjects.[30] Although these particular authors have certainly failed in terms of recognizing the reality and experience of adolescent women in the antebellum South, they have certainly made powerful strides toward the understanding of southern women in general. Each has built upon the works of the others to create what is becoming a comprehensive understanding of this particular group of people. Each new work is a step closer to understanding the whole picture as opposed to only specific details of that picture. In time, as historians begin to widen their horizons of experiential understanding, all historical subjects will be given back their own voices.[31]

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[30]Kenneth Stampp, *The Imperiled Union, Essays on the Background of the Civil War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). This is the premise of his essay entitled "Rebels and Sambos: The Search for the Negro's Personality in Slavery" found within this volume.

[31]One of the most recent additions to this literature is a work whose subject is very similar to this work. Christia Ann Farnham's *The Education of the Southern Belle* is another step in the right direction in regards to southern women's history. Her work differs from this one in that she discusses more the environment nd structure of female education, whereas I am first, interested in a broader picture of the adolescent experience, and two, in the perspective of the young women toward the structure and environment that Farnham describes.

Chapter 2
Relationships

Martha Crawford lived in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama in the early part of the nineteenth century, the daughter of a wealthy family. She was a young woman with a voracious appetite for learning and intellectual stimulation. Along with this eagerness to utilize her mental abilities came powerful frustrations. These frustrations were products of her own self-criticisms regarding her tendencies toward the many "vices" which attracted other young women of her age such as the reading of novels, interest in young gentlemen and the social activities going on from time to time. But Martha Crawford was not extraordinary for her time. She was neither a budding feminist nor someone who stood out from her peers at this point in her life.[32] She was one of many white, wealthy, adolescent females of the antebellum South, and she left behind her a powerful, very emotional journal of her daily life, including her reading habits, her bouts with depression, her crushes on local gentlemen and at times interesting insights into her views of the position and effects of woman in her society. She was one of a new generation of women who were caught between the budding interest in female education and the maintenance of the social constructs and constraints surrounding the famous myth of the southern belle. She also is a wonderful example of the ways in which the characteristics of adolescence affected the actions and experiences of the young women within this life stage. It would be simple to present a number of generalities about adolescence, and call them factors of the experience of all

[32]Later, Martha was to become a very successful missionary overseas with her husband.

adolescents during a given period, but that would be misleading. As with any theoretical model or factor of analysis, it is critical to look at the individual. "The phenomena of adolescence are firmly rooted in physical fact and cultural setting."[33]

In looking at these particular young women, it is important to attempt to understand their relationships to and perceptions of various people and situations in their lives in order to understand their experiences. The first, and certainly most fundamental, would be their perception of the role of women in their society and, at the same time the relationship they had with their parents. As discussed earlier, women were expected to embody an angelic image, become "accomplished" in some domestic arts and simultaneously achieve great success in various tasks throughout their lives such as marriage, childbirth and childrearing. Although most southern, wealthy, white women grew up to attempt to fill these social "responsibilities," for various reasons their impressions of those duties while still in adolescence were often quite negative.

This negativity might simply be attributed to the natural aversion of adolescent women for household chores and the potential of having to answer to a husband just as she currently did to a father. Wealthy southern daughters maintained a certain extent of freedom and independence in their adolescence, especially if they were fortunate enough to board at one of the various academies or female colleges in the South. At school, she was able to determine her daily schedule beyond the institutional curriculum, and when at home she maintained even greater control. The diaries of these women are full of references to their daily routines. Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas said, "I can scarcely tell how today has been passed. I have done little or nothing but

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[33]Bernard, p.17.

arrange my room and the contents of my port folio." Later, she ate a "hearty supper," and claims that "this morning I indulged in my old habit of lying in bed late so I did not take breakfast untill all the rest had partaken of theirs."[34] This is a very leisurely agenda by any standard. Gertrude had the opportunity to choose her agenda, and she chose to lounge in bed and to do very little during the day, even if that meant creating extra work for servants by taking meals at different times than the rest of the family. It would only be natural for a young woman of Gertrude's position to not see any appeal of a position that required early beginnings to her day as well as a day filled with various responsibilities. It is also possible to interpret this passage as rather self-critical. Although she has made these choices of leisure over responsibility, but she refers to staying in bed as an "old habit." Ordinarily, it is habits that are desired to be broken. It is clear from the tone of this passage that while she certainly enjoys lounging, she understands that it is not necessarily proper in the eyes of the adults around her and the feeling that she has accomplished nothing frustrates her.

There were certain primary household responsibilities for wealthy southern daughters. Normally they were required to take care of their own rooms and their clothing, to gather and arrange flowers for the family residence, to help put up preserves, as well as to take the place of the mother in the household when she was away.[35] When Martha Crawford's mother was away from the home, it became Martha's responsibility to see that the household continued to run in her absence. This meant overseeing the preparation of food and other daily activities. It is clear from her words that this responsibility dampened her spirits and her enthusiasm. She says, at the end of the day, that she feels as

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[34]Virginia Ingraham Burr, *The Secret Eye, The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas., 1848-1889*, (Chapel Hill: The University fo North Carolina Press, 1990), pp.71-72.
[35]Fox-Genovese, pp. 113-114.

though she has accomplished nothing and learned nothing during the day in which she has had to administer and take care of the household.[36] Martha's journal is filled with energetic references to improving her mind and her intellectual skills, and she loved learning. However, when she is required to take on adult responsibilities, her tone becomes dejected and possibly resentful at having to leave her independent world even momentarily. This experience is an illustration of the young woman's relationship to her own future. In her mother and in her mother's duties she sees what society expects her to become. It is a relationship of animosity.

It is possible that the frustration and sometimes despair expressed by these young women might have been the result of their knowledge of what awaited them when this youthful period of independence faded into marriage where they would no longer have the pleasures of rising at late morning hours as did Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas or to make their primary concern the development of their minds or their writing skills. Their temporary reign as mistress of the household gave them a very realistic taste of the life and responsibilities of the adult, married woman. They could very easily see the benefits of one experience over the other.

Marriage, specifically, is a second relationship which laid heavily on the minds of these young women, especially at times when a member of the immediate family was the one to be engaging in the nuptials. Kate Carney, at age 17, relates her perception of her sister's upcoming marriage. She says, "just to think the last day, that she will belong to Ma and Pa, she will have somebody else after this to obey, if I was in that little lady's place, I should be feeling pretty much frightened about this time."[37] First, there is a clear

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[36]Martha E. Crawford (Foster), Journal, 1830-1881. Repository: Duke University, Perkins Library, Microfilm Series: *Diaries of Southern Women* , March 5, 1846, p.7.
[37]Kate Carney. Murfreesboro, TN. Repository: University of North Carolina, Southern

implication here that Kate understands that woman's role in southern society is to "obey" her husband, just as she has obeyed her parents in her youth. Only the statement that her sister should fear this life change implies that there is something different between parental control and the marital realm. The evidence shows that although young women obeyed their parents, their parents often allowed them certain amounts of freedom. Once a part of the marital realm, freedom, for the most part, is eliminated. The southern matron has little time to determine her own agenda; she must contend with the daily necessities of running her household. Moreover, upon marriage she must obey the will of someone who, at one point in her life, might have been a peer, rather than her superior. While not all marriages were solely power relationships and many were based on love and companionship, the understanding and the reality remained that the husband was the primary decision-maker in the relationship.

A third key relationship for these women involved their attachments to their female siblings. Independence was not the only thing to be lost with marriage and subsequent removal from the childhood household. Often, there was a strong familial bond, as attested to by a sixteen-year-old young woman. She says, in response to the marriage and departure of a sister, "we are most truly, *truly* sorry to give you up and there was a day or two since delivered of a little dead-born wish that you might never have married but we two have been nice snug old maids living always together as 'happy as the day is long.' But this wish was too selfish to live."[38] This particular passage is rich with clues to the adolescent woman's understanding of her position and of her future. First, there is the obvious sense of loss which accompanies the departure of her

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Historical Collection, January 18, 1859, p.14.

[38]Maria Bryan, as quoted in Catherine Clinton,*The Plantation Mistress, Woman's World in the Old South.*

sister, almost as though she might never be seen again. Second, an interesting feature of the passage is her reference to her sister and herself as "old maids" even though she is only sixteen years of age. This particular expression could have several meanings. It might have simply been a phrase used in fun to describe any unmarried young woman, but it also can be interpreted as a possible wish. Maria uses the term in a very endearing manner, so that one might assume that there is a desire present that their situation never change. If neither marries then it is possible for them to remain together in a very "safe" environment. The last, but possibly most important clue in this passage is Maria's understanding that marriage is a part of a woman's life and that her sister very well might have wanted to get married and to leave her adolescence behind with her sister and in her memories. She understands that her wishing is very "selfish."

These familial bonds between siblings were not only between same-sex siblings and based upon companionship and understanding. A fourth relationship existed between these young women and the male members of the family. Brothers and fathers played a very important role in the lives of their adolescent daughters and sisters, although this relationship seems to have varied from family to family. The image of the southern belle was created and reiterated in southern literature over and over again by various male writers and reverends such as Thomas Dew in the *Southern Literary Messenger* and others. In order for southern society to insure that their female members embodied the above image, it required that someone help to guard that image. Brothers and fathers were, in a way, keepers of their sisters' and daughters' reputations. "Female virtue was a concern of brothers and uncles, nephews and cousins, as well as the 'pater familias'."[39]

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[39]Fox-Genovese, p.58

This specific guardianship could take on various forms. What seems to be the most prevalent in the works used here is a situation in which the young woman sought out the advice or approval of a father or an older brother. It is unclear to what extent the approval of the father or brother was wanted or, rather, if it was a necessary and required element of courtship. Gertrude Clanton noted in her journal instances where she consulted her father about her immediate plans with the man that she would eventually marry. Her manner is nonchalant and offers no hint of annoyance at having to do such, even when writing in a venue that was very private and for her own eyes only.[40] More importantly, it is intimated in her journal that she also discussed her relationship to Jeff Thomas in more general terms with her father. She says that she "was conversing out in the Piazza for some time with Pa. Came in with an assured and lightened heart with regard to one important subject ....[41] The entries previous to this one are filled with Gertrude's references to her budding romance with Jeff Thomas. It is certainly possible that in some families the male members may have dictated the romantic activities and partnerships of their daughters and sisters, but in other situations, such as Gertrude's. either there was a strong relationship between father and daughter and she relied on her father's *advice* regarding her beaux or it was simply a necessary step in the courtship process in which she went to him hoping for a very particular answer to her wishes. The specific context is unclear, yet it is certain that Gertrude at least felt as though she could go to her father for such answers.

The diaries and journals of these young women are filled with references to various loves and desires, but in many of these references little is said of

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[40]Burr, p.99.
[41]Ibid., pp.98-99.

familial interference. This may be partly due to the fact that there seems to have been a difference between girlish infatuation and the eventual meeting between young woman and potential husband. The loves before this meeting, although very important to the emotional state of the young woman, had little bearing on her future and perhaps that was perceived by her brothers. Martha Crawford, from Alabama, offers a wonderful example of romantic, sometimes unrealistic love. She says,

> Being of a romantic turn of mind, and at an age suitable for such (14 to 16 years) I was so to except (sic) by far too much so to be happy. But thanks to my dear Sally, she has cured me. She was about my own age, but of a different turn of mind, her days for 'romancing' did not last long. She knew all my feelings and ridiculed me, representing my conduct in such a light as to look absurd, and becoming ashamed of myself I was soon cured. Though I sometimes thought her ridicule unkind, I now know it was only for my own happiness."[42]

It is important to note here that these women had a very specific understanding of their position within their society and how their age was indicative of certain qualities in their personalities and the ways in which they thought and the feelings which they experienced.

Martha is concerned with her own romanticism, fearing that it will interfere with her ability to function "properly" among her peers. She implies that one should be ashamed of being "romantic" and therefore employs the supposed wisdom of a friend who has overcome her "romantic" feelings to encourage Martha to be rational and therefore happy.

Martha's sentimentality is most evident in her discussions of her relationship with a former teacher, Mr. La Tashe. Even after leaving school, Martha has remained in relatively consistent contact with her teacher

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[42]Crawford, March 3, 1846, p.2.

discussing lessons as well as the development of personality traits such as stamina and responsibility. But through her discussion and relation of her letters to him and vice versa, it is apparent that Martha has feelings for Mr. La Tashe that go beyond education. Martha says, in relation to a letter that she had recently received, "he desires me to take more pains in writing. I must do it, for who has more right to claim it than he? He has done so much for me, and if I loved him much less than I do, I should feel it my duty to do as he wishes, and advises."[43] Martha has clearly fixed her feelings of love on Mr. La Tashe for reasons which can only be speculated upon, but all of which encompass the adolescent. It is possible that Martha has become attracted to her teacher because he has offered her something that no other man, or possibly person, had ever offered her. He had given her knowledge, and over time, through personal contact and letters, he had given her confidence in her own intellect. He had recognized her as a person and an individual. It is only natural that she would begin to feel an attraction or a bond for the man who had offered her that confidence. This "relationship" represented the unrealistic or overtly romantic feelings of love.

There was another kind of love for these women, the love of men within their own circle, sometimes referred to as "puppy love." Martha had many of these "loves". She seemed to fall in love often and then to proclaim her inability to love after her feelings were unrequited. Martha's apparent fickleness was a result of her quest to define "love". She says, "I heard an able debate - whether love proceeds from the heart or a diseased imagination - such love as mine must proceed from a diseased imagination, or at least what I called love, I do not love none at all."[44] Again, as Martha contemplates the meaning and source

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[43]Ibid., March 22, 1846, p. 22.
[44]Ibid., July 8, 1846, p.31.

of love she, in a roundabout manner, separates reality and romanticism, or as she calls it here, imagination, into two very different realms. From her words, love that comes from the heart is real love, based in reality. The love which she feels for this particular suitor, because unrequited, becomes the product of her own "diseased imagination," not true love or the love that will one day lead to marriage. The realm of romanticism is not held with the same sort of esteem as the realm of reality, in terms of love. The love of the imagination can often be empty and intangible, as it was for Martha in this instance. Eventually, Martha found this love from the heart for which she had been searching, but as with many adolescents, only after several attempts. Marriage was the final goal for the adolescent woman of the South, both according to her society, and at least on the surface, to herself. Young women were not only looking for a husband of status, but as seen through the loves of Martha Crawford, they were also looking for passion and love in the man with whom they were to spend the rest of their lives.

Beyond the cloistered, isolated world of adolescent love lies the bleaker, darker side of their southern reality. A discussion of southern women during the antebellum period cannot occur nor be valid without addressing the very important relationship of these women to the institution of slavery. Related to virtue and to the notion that women were supposed to uphold a certain image of southern womanhood was the issue of slavery in their lives. "Warned from an early age about their contact with slaves, white children were indoctrinated with a sense of suspicion toward blacks and a demeanor of superiority."[45] Young, southern white women were expected to remain aloof from the slaves surrounding them. This fact may actually partially explain a phenomenon that occurs in the journals of these women. There is often little to no mention of

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[45]Clinton, p.49.

slaves or of slavery. On occasion might come a remark regarding a particular slave and his or her actions on a particular day, but only briefly and with little detail. For example, a young woman at Wesleyan Female College complains that she "had never dressed myself nor tied my own shoe. So, when my father got me ready to enter Wesleyan, Nellie [her slave] quite naturally went along too."[46]

This lack of mention of the enslaved and slavery is also a possible indication of the acceptance of the institution as a way of life without question or doubt. Again, in one of the few instances where the topic arose in a journal, Kate Carney relates a very telling incident. She says, "it was a *bitter cold* day, and we let Betsy ride inside [the carriage] with us, but Nannie Black did not let her waiting girl ride inside but maybe she did not think of it."[47] Kate offers Nannie Black the benefit of the doubt that she would have allowed her slave to come in out of the cold if she had simply thought of it. She makes no comment about Nannie Black's personality or her demeanor to indicate that what she did was done out of a lack of kindness, superiority, or hatred, but rather only that she did not think to shelter the girl from the "bitter cold." It does not seem that these young women had *no* contact with slaves, but rather they simply did not spend time discussing them in their journals.

Another very important relationship for these women was between themselves and other adolescent women. Relationships between adolescent women were far from uncommon during this period, north and south, and are seriously debated among historians. Connections between adolescent women were prevalent and took on very romantic, ritualistic characteristics. In some cases, a pair of women might tag each other with pretend names, one male and

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[46]"24 Reminiscences with '63," *Wesleyan Alumnae,* (April 1925):13, as quoted in Farnham, p,121.
[47]Carney, January 22, 1859, p.19.

one female. Flowers were exchanged, and upon greeting kisses and hugs were sometimes exchanged.[48] Some historians have interpreted this physical closeness as an indication of homosexuality, but many others have refuted this interpretation including the oft-quoted Carroll Smith-Rosenberg.[49] According to Smith-Rosenberg,

> the essential question is not whether these women had genital contact and can therefore be defined as heterosexual or homosexual. The twentieth-century tendency to view human love and sexuality within a dichotomized universe of deviance and normality, genitality and platonic love, is alien to the emotions and attitudes of the nineteenth century and fundamentally distorts the nature of these women's emotional interaction.[50]

In other words, historians who attempt to label these antebellum relationships in terms of sexuality are taking twentieth-century labels developed within the context of twentieth century sexual definitions and retrospectively imposing them onto commonplace nineteenth century social interactions. It is Smith-Rosenberg's argument that these relationships were created and existed out of a need for companionship and for someone with whom to share hopes, dreams, and fears. Although Smith-Rosenberg's work focuses primarily on women of the northern states, the evidence from southern women supports this theory as well. The close relationships between sisters and between mothers and daughters was a very strong one which has been discussed above. Most of the relationships between adolescent women occurred within the context of the

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[48]Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1(1975):1-29, reprinted in Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Women and Health in America, Historical Readings*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p.79.

[49]See Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle, Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South.* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) for discussion of homosexual theorists.

[50]Smith-Rosenberg, p.73.

boarding school experience. Usually, in her first time away from home and these nurturing family members, the young student reached out for the nearest replacement or comforter. For example, when Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas arrived at Wesleyan Female College in Macon, Georgia, she mentioned her unhappiness after three weeks in residence. Even before this time, on the trip to Macon she says, "I was crying a good deal but the excitement of the ride on the cars soon engaged my attention."[51] Also in that entry at three weeks, Gertrude began to discuss her classmates as a factor in her change of disposition. She had made the necessary connection to alleviate some of her homesickness and sadness. She says, "I love all the girls. Oh my heart is so much changed. ..."[52]

The physical relationship between adolescent women also arose out of a functional practicality. These young women often shared beds with one or more of their classmates in order to keep warm on cold winter nights. From this fact, there are numerous references of snuggling with a roommate and feeling lonely when a partner chose to sleep in the bed of another.[53] This physical closeness went beyond sleeping arrangements and was prevalent in public as well. "Mothers and daughters, aunts and nieces, cousins, and friends often hugged and kissed. Hand holding on the streets, during church services, and the like was widespread."[54]

Female relationships also functioned very similarly to what are now called "cliques" in the adolescent realm. Christie Anne Farnham argues, with help from a passage of Agnes Lee's journal, that there was a non-consoling side to these relationships at times. Speaking of one pupil, Agnes Lee says, "I pity the

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[51]Burr, p.82.
[52]Ibid., p.83.
[53]Farnham, p.163.
[54]Ibid.

girl who blindly loves her & tells her so, in a short time the once devoted Sue quarrels and casts her off for some new worshipper."[55] Like the quest for popularity of today's youth, the young students of the Virginia Female Institute saw some quality in "Sue" which was desirable and grounds for them to vie for her attentions. Along the same lines, Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas relates the beginnings of a "club" at the Wesleyan Female Academy consisting of primarily senior girls. At first, Gertrude is dejected because she has not been asked to participate in the group. When she is approached to join, she gracefully refuses. Privately, she admits her reason as wanting to avoid contact with a classmate she dislikes. She is willing to sacrifice this popular invitation in order to avoid one person who was later to be one of her closest friends.[56] These popularity contests were often fickle illustrations of adolescent affections and needs for identity and a place to belong.

In short, these intimate relationships between adolescent women were far too complex simply to be labeled in psychosexual terms. Although it is certainly possible that there was, in some cases, a homosexual component to these relationships, as the pairings were powerful pieces of the maturation process when a woman was away from home. They served as comfort, as practical warmth, and as socialization. In terms of the rituals associated with these relationships, such as the practice of having only one "lover" at a time, and the exchange of flowers (courtship rituals), this period may very well have served as a practical period before heterosexual courtship and eventually marriage. It is also important to remember that although young women's journals were, for the most part, *personal* outlets, there were certain topics

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[55]Mary Custis Lee deButts, ed., *Growing Up in the 1850's, The Journal of Agnes Lee,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press for Robert E. Lee Memorial Association, Inc., 1984), p.83.
[56]Burr, pp.84-85.

which probably remained taboo for fear of the journal falling into the wrong hands. For example, after marriage Kate Carney burned the majority of her journal that she had kept since she was fifteen deeming it foolish. Even if there were a sexual component to these relationships, there is a very good possibility that such things would not have been included in the diary or journal.

Religion also played an important role in these adolescent lives and it seems also to have played very different roles in the lives of different girls. For some, such as Gertrude Clanton, religion was a very emotional and oftentimes social subject. Her most profound contact with religion and spirituality seems to have come with her attendance at Wesleyan Female College, a Methodist institution. She first relates her sadness at coming to Wesleyan and being alone but then says, "But now Thank Heaven I am glad I did come as it has been the means perhaps of my conversion."[57] Conversion to Gertrude meant more than spirituality. It was her initial connection to her fellow students and thus some of her first friends at Wesleyan. Gertrude nearly always relates her relationship to religion in the context of group conversions and prayer meetings. Rarely is religion a private experience for Gertrude except for one instance where she says that she feels the acceptance of God, but in the same breath she relates the conversions of other students that occurred on the same day as her personal revelation.

Religion functioned very differently for Agnes Lee in that it affected her self-esteem and her feelings of worthiness, already a weak point in many adolescent lives. Most of these young women discuss religion and its importance to them and some, including Agnes, dwell on their supposed inability to live up to Christian doctrine. Agnes says, "I solemnly determined to dedicate myself to God & I have tried, but Oh! I don't think I have improved in

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[57]Ibid., p. 82.

the least there is so much to try me. I do wish I was a christian! but it is so hard to be one."[58]

All of these issues, love, intellect, emotion, slavery, made up the world of the adolescent southern woman. A common theme which runs through any discussion of adolescent women, whether southern or otherwise, is the questioning which occurs throughout all of these issues. They are asking about the meaning of love, about what their place in society should be, and to what extent they could utilize their knowledge and intellect. Finding answers to those questions is the meaning of growing up. As seen with Martha Crawford, she would eventually find her answers to the meaning of love, when she was older, and had experienced more of life. Although each of these issues was important not only to their existence, but also to their development, one of the most pressing, and often creating the greatest amount of tension within the thoughts of the adolescent girl was education and intellect. People such as Mr. La Tashe, taught young women to respect themselves and to utilize their education, but society was not as liberal. A woman's place remained in the home with a certain destiny of marriage for most. These young women were forced to take their education and to do with it what they were able, usually privately, but sometimes publicly as well.

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[58]deButts, p.18.

Chapter 3
Educational Experience

While education can provide power to the student, it also often has a specific purpose determined by the educators. This is precisely the situation in the American South in the early part of the nineteenth century. Although educational institutions for women were being opened and developed at a quick and steady pace, offering young women a curriculum very close to that being offered to males, they offered this education within the boundaries of particular societal constructs.[59] The purpose of female education in the South was to prepare young, adolescent women for their roles in southern society as the supposed southern belle or southern lady.

The mythological southern belle, as presented by Anne Firor Scott "was described as a submissive wife whose reason for being was to love, honor, obey, and occasionally amuse her husband, to bring up his children and manage his household....She depended upon male protection. To secure this protection she was endowed with the capacity to 'create a magic spell' over any man in her vicinity. She was timid and modest, beautiful and graceful."[60] But this image went beyond mythology and was incorporated into certain institutions that had become integral parts of elite southern society, such as the female colleges and academies which became prominent during the 1830's, 40's, and 50's. It is within these institutions and within the mission statements of their founders

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[59]It is difficult to say exactly how many opened during a given period because, although few were of the size and stature of Wesleyan Female College, many smaller, local institutions opened and closed with similar curriculums and intentions.
[60]Scott, p.4.

and trustees that hints of the southern woman's duty to her society, her husband, and her children were incorporated and imparted to adolescent women, who were expected soon to embody the image. Antebellum southern education was a paradox. It offered young women new windows of opportunity as well as more options within their personal world, but at the same time its rhetoric set boundaries located within the realm of the southern belle image.

Reverend George F. Pierce, coeditor of the *Southern Ladies' Book* and founder of Georgia Female College, stated in the first issue of his periodical, "Intellectual Female society is the surest, most efficient instrumentality for the literary elevation of the State. Summon Woman's magic power to the aid of Literature, and you will refine taste, ennoble sentiment, awake emulation, and diminish temptations to vice by multiplying the sources of rational enjoyment."[61] Another religious leader who had given speeches at various female academies and colleges said in 1847 in an address to the Sedgewick Female Seminary, "Give us such girls as can understand and delight in such works as the Paradise Lost, more than in trashy novels...and I will show you a new race of *men*, ambitious to merit and to win the noble hearts of such a race of women."[62] It is not only the image of the southern belle that is present here, but also the concept of republican motherhood which was so popular in the early national period. Women in all parts of the country were seen by society as moral superiors to males and as the nurturers of the nation's children...the new generation of republicans.[63]

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[57]Reverend George F. Pierce. "Address on Female Education." *Southern Ladies' Book.* Volume I, number 1, January 1840, p.13.

[62]Reverend William Hooper. *An Address on Female Education: Delivered before the Sedgewick Female Seminary, February 27, 1847.* (Raleigh, N.C.: Press of the Register, 1848), p.16 as quoted in Farnham.

[63]For more information on republican motherhood see works such as Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters* or Nancy Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood,* among others.

Reverend Pierce's passage explains that by offering women more "sources of rational enjoyment" they will refrain from other pursuits not seen as proper by their society. In other words, Pierce argues that if a woman is given access to higher subjects such as classic literature, history, and science, she will refrain from reading "trashy" novels, or other pursuits which he believed could interfere with a woman's ability to fulfill her role as wife, mother, and southern lady. Reverend Hooper, the author of the second passage, makes a similar case with his emphasis on the reading of novels not considered proper by religious and societal leaders. He says that a woman who is educated and not prone to reading these novels will be a woman desired by good men.

There is an apparent contradiction between the beliefs of the two ministers and of other members of southern society. In the May 8, 1835, edition of the *Western Weekly Review* in Franklin, Tennessee, an author said, "there is an unaccountable antipathy to clever women. Almost all men profess to be afraid of blue stockings--that is, of women who have cultivated their minds; and hold up as a maxim, that there is no safety in matrimony; or even in the ordinary intercourse of society, except with females of plain understanding."[64] This is one of the common reactions to the early development of female institutions. Many of these institutions drew harsh criticism in their early years because a large portion of society believed a higher education would hinder a woman's ability to be a good wife and mother by giving her inappropriate aspirations. There was a fear that a woman with a higher education might be looking to possibilities in her life other than the roles of wife and mother, especially if this education came during a woman's adolescent years where she is the most impressionable.

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[64]Wyatt-Brown, p.201.

There were moments where this conflict or contradiction materialized in the political realm. In 1825 there was an attempt in the Georgia legislature to pass a bill, "An Act to Establish a Public Seat of Learning in this State for the Education of Females," regarding the regulation of female education , including provisions for a Board of Trustees comprised of fifteen men and fifteen women. The bill passed the House, but was opposed and voted down in the Senate. Although a female academy was chartered at this time, it lasted for only a short period due to a lack of support from the community.[65] It is unclear from this particular source what the motivation might have been for this impetus except that it was an attempt "to enlarge the opportunities for women.'[66] This reasoning seems unlikely considering both the social environment during this period as well as the fate of the school which was subsequently chartered.

Shortly after this confrontation in the Georgia legislature, there were changes in some attitudes toward educating women since the early part of the nineteenth century, especially the decades from 1830 to 1860 saw the creation and development of various female academies and colleges throughout the South with curricula geared toward a more vigorous education than was previously available to women. For example, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, one of the more successful female academies was founded by a community of Moravians, followers of "the Unity of the Brethren" religious order, in Salem, North Carolina. By 1804, according to one of its circulars, its curriculum for young ladies consisted of reading, grammar, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, and "plain needlework", generally basic

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[65]Elizabeth Barber Young, *A Study of the Curricula of Seven Selected Women's Colleges of the Southern States*. (New York City: Bureau of Publications Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1932), pp. 46-48.
[66]Ibid.

skills. By 1840, the Salem Female Academy added more advanced subjects such as Latin, French, natural philosophy, chemistry, and botany.[67]

Georgia Female College is an example of an institution that experienced a shorter evolution. In its development, Georgia Female College skipped a step taken by academies such as Salem Female College due to the time of its founding. The school in Salem, North Carolina was founded in 1772 as Salem Day School, a period of limited female education and its curriculum reflected that limited outlook. It needed to evolve into the newer educational concepts of the 1830's, 40's, and 50,s. By 1810 it was called Salem Academy and eventually Salem College.[68] On the other hand, Georgia Female College, later to become Wesleyan College, opened its doors on January 7, 1839 in Macon, Georgia, founded and supported primarily by Methodist ministers and members. By this time it opened with and already established advanced curriculum.[69] These institutions, though certainly not the only two southern female educational institutions, were two of the strongest due to their longevity and especially their ability to survive the Civil War, which was the end of many southern colleges. There were many others all over the South including the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton, Virginia with pupils such as Agnes Lee, daughter of Robert E. Lee and Judson Female Institute in Marion, Alabama.

These institutions were meant for a very specific group of students, with few allowances for those who did not qualify. Due to their cost as well as to the nature of their purpose, access was limited to the daughters of the wealthy, whether they be planter daughters, daughters of businessmen, or political leaders. Reverend Pierce published the fees that would be incurred by a student and her family at the Georgia Female College in 1840:

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[67]Ibid., pp. 46-48.
[68]Ibid., pp., 10-11.
[69]Ibid., p.45.

Regular College course per annum	$50.00
Extras	
Music, per quarter	$15.00
Drawing & Painting, per quarter	8.00
Latin & Greek, per quarter each	5.00
Italian & Spanish, per quarter each	6.00
Board (exclusive of washing and candles) per month	15.00
General repairs to College building	1.00
Fee of Testimonial, at graduation	3.00[70]

While the extra fees were optional, many of the young students and their parents saw them as necessary to the development of a young southern lady. The extra courses were seen to make a crucial difference in the socialization of the young woman. To uphold her status in her society she needed to be accomplished in her domestic and ornamental "duties", but also to possess the ability to educate her sons in an academic manner. It was not enough to only be an ornament any longer; the southern woman needed to be functional as well, according to societal prescriptions.

There was a backlash toward solely ornamental education in the 1830's and 40's in favor of this higher, more academic education. It was argued by some that an ornament was useless, but an educated woman was more suited to complete the duties assigned to her by her society. One author blamed this early ornamental education on its teachers, claiming that they were lazy and greedy. The author said that the teacher could charge more for the instruction of art, music, and needlework than for math, science, or literature, and these ornamental instructions were easier to teach.[71] "But the world is beginning to learn that life is not a holyday, in which woman simply ministers to man's

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[70]Reverend George F. Pierce, "The Georgia Female College--Its Origin, Plan, and Prospects," *Southern Ladies' Book*. Volume I, number 2, p.72.

[71]E.W.H. "Thoughts on Female Education." *Southern Ladies' Book*. Volume I, Number 2, February 1840, pp. 96-97.

amusement, but that there are sober duties--domestic responsibilities--to be provided for, requiring more substantial qualifications than *polite* education (so called) can ever furnish."[72] There is a clear belief or understanding here that women are capable of *being given* higher education (as opposed to pursuing it). Regardless of the implication that women should be given a very specific canonical education, it is still a step toward the understanding that women were the intellectual equals of men. If women received an education beyond the ornamental talents previously associated with the belle image, a southern woman was less likely to be taken financially while the husband was away and more likely to make wise and rational decisions without her husband's assistance. In other words, the husband's business did not have to halt or be entrusted to an overseer or someone without the same vested interest as the husband and wife in the case of the husband's absence. Female education was utilitarian for southern elite males.

The change in the curriculum during this period arose out of a vision that a higher education would make women more marriageable. Moreover, the concept of republican motherhood in the early national period led advocates to argue that educated women would pass on the same educational knowledge and standards to their children. Instead of studying only needle work, music, art, and basic academic skills, the young women in these institutions were beginning to study subjects such as philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, algebra, geometry, botany, rhetoric and works of literature written by authors such as Maria Edgeworth, Sir Walter Scott and John Milton among others. Subjects such as these were not meant to prepare women for careers. It could be rationalized by the fathers of the students that subjects such as math and science would help their daughters to think coherently and rationally and to

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[72]Pierce, "the Georgia Female College...," p. 73.

make wise decisions in their lives outside of the academies. One father, Alfred Hennen, an attorney from New Orleans wrote to his daughter, "the discipline of mathematicks is most invigorating to the mind. They will learn you to think clearly, reason accurately, & decide logically."[73] And therefore to function more successfully in their lives as plantation mistresses, doctors' and lawyers' wives, or whatever their futures might hold. It is important to remember that this education was not offered liberally and was not expected to be taken and manipulated by the student. "It was taken for granted that the liberal arts embraced a canon of received knowledge to be bestowed on and accepted in toto by the rising generation and that this canon was essential for a civilized, cultured lifestyle."[74]

But students often defied this set agenda by taking part in activities which were not sanctioned by the administration. One aspect of the personal lives of their adolescent students which the teachers and administrators often condemned and acted against was the reading of popular novels. Southern women, adolescent and adult, read numerous types of literature. They read some intellectual material outside of the academy, such as Martin Farquhar Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* and George Lippard's *Legends of the American Revolution*[75], but it was only the most educationally committed young women who found these works of interest. The intellectual materials stimulated their minds and allowed them some sense of control in their lives. Although they were unable to debate any of the issues that they read about in mixed company, by reading these types of materials they were able to reaffirm to themselves their intelligence and their mental power. They knew that they

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[73]Father [Hennen] to Ann Marie [Hennen],6 January 1835, Hennen and Jennings Papers. as quoted in Farnham, p.79.
[74]Farnham, p.69.
[75]Burr, 1990, various references.

were able to read, analyze, and discuss the issues if they ever received the opportunity to do so. This type of reading was most certainly sanctioned by academy administrations, most of which were made up of and created by different religious denominations. Most of these young women were interested in the major romantic novels, primarily British, because the works offered something that was forbidden to them in their own lives, and as they became adult women because the novels offered the emotional relief from their daily routine. In many adolescent women's journals and diaries, novels such as *Jane Eyre* were mentioned and in small ways carried into their daily lives. Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, when she was young, named one of their family plantations "Rochester" after the novel.[76] There were also numerous serialized novels in British periodicals such as *Blackwoods* and *Cornhill Magazine*. The authors of these serials included William Makepeace Thackeray and Anthony Trollope.[77] It was the romance and adventure that appealed to the women, qualities that they could not find or were not yet allowed to have in their own lives. "For the large available audience of unmarried young women, sentimental novels fulfilled the social function of testing some of the possibilities of romance and courtship -- testing better conducted in the world of fiction than in the world of fact. [78] Not all novels were forbidden by society and the administration. Young women were allowed to read works written by Sir Walter Scott and others as long as their content fit into the moral framework created by southern society in general and the academy specifically.

Among those speaking against the reading of novels by the student body were the faculties of the various institutions. As with many of the tutors

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[76]Ibid., p.72.
[77]Woodward, C. Vann and Elizabeth Muhlenfeld, *The Private Mary Chestnut, The Unpublished Civil War Diaries*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.9.
[78]Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word, The Rise of the Novel in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 113.

utilized by the southern elite, the faculty of female colleges and academies often were dominated by women who were raised and educated in the North. For the most part they filled the more general teaching positions but rarely, by the 1840's and 50's, did they assume any leadership roles within these institutions. Leadership positions and the teaching of the more advanced subjects, for the most part, were assumed by male teachers and clergyman.[79]

The faculty and staff of the academies were expected to provide a very specific discipline for their students, teaching and protecting social proprieties as well as encouraging a certain rigor in daily routine. An 1876 catalog for the Virginia Female Institute explained some of the institution's regulations which coincided closely with the descriptions of one of its more prominent students, Agnes Lee, in the 1850's. Mornings were consumed with religious activities and then the students were excused to various classrooms for their daily lessons.[80] The daily routine at the Georgia Female College was laid out more specifically and seems even more rigorous than that of VFI:

> Sunrise: summoned by bell to chapel for family prayer
> Until breakfast: study
> Breakfast to 8 or 9:00, depending on the season: recreation
> 8 or 9:00: Morning prayer
> Until 11:00: Recitations (classes)
> 11:00-12:00: Study
> 12:00-2:00: dinner and recreation
> 2:00-4:00: study
> 4:00: Recitation
> 5:00: "prayer and dismission"
> Until 7:00: supper and recreation
> 7:00-9:00: study
> "afterwards retire to sleep at will"[81]

Such a schedule obviously left little time for personal activities, but it is clear that there are openings for the students to create their own personal time. It is

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[79]Farnham, pp. 97-98.
[80]de Butts, p.74.
[81]Pierce, *The Georgia Female College...*, p.70.

not clear from the passage where the study times took place: in the students' rooms or in a more structured environment. If the study took place in the rooms of the students and was not supervised, odds are that the students could slip in some journal writing or novel reading time, things that they wished to do, not that they were assigned to do..

While Georgia Female College presented a more rigorous daily routine than did Virginia Female Institute, VFI published a much stricter set of proprieties, mainly regarding the social interactions between students and non-students. The same catalog mentioned above also presented these regulations:

1. parents must inform Principle "in general terms as to the visits they [the student] may make and the calls they may receive."
2. gentlemen "who may be strangers to the Principle and not specified by the parents are not received by pupils unless authorized by letters of introduction
3. "*Pupils will not be allowed to receive calls on the Sabbath unless under very extraordinary circumstances.*"
4. "Pupils will not be allowed, *under any circumstances*, to spend the night out of the Institute."[82]

It was such rules as these that may have prompted a student like Agnes Lee and her fellow classmates to say upon their return from an excursion to a concert, "we've come to jail again."[83] It was these two forms of discipline in conjunction with one another that created part of a formal structure for societal expectations. The southern belle or southern lady was expected to be the optimal manager of time and to be able to utilize the greatest discretion in her social relations, whether male or female. These types of regulations served, again, as part of the "training" for the image of the southern belle.

Any study of female education would be seriously remiss without a discussion of the experience of the students. One of the experiences of the female academy or college of this period which seemed to have the greatest

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[82]de Butts, pp. 74-75.
[83]Ibid., 86.

impact on the students was the relations with their fellow schoolmates. "These academies were intended to bring groups of girls into a safe, social, and intellectually appropriate world which they would share while becoming women."[84] There was a bond created between the young women at these institutions. They experienced their education, their joys, their sorrows, and their homesickness with one another. They exchanged their feelings about the tribulations of adolescence. In fact, many young women kept rosters in their journals after leaving the academy as sort of a reminder of their close relationships with fellow students.[85] These familial relationships with fellow students often functioned as sort of temporary replacements for the family left behind. Young women needed strong ties with fellow schoolmates to cope with the initial separation and has been discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.[86]

Leaving the academy often became as stressful as the arrival. There was often a great feeling of loss when the time came to pack and move on to the next stage of their lives. "Away from friends, perhaps not yet courted by a man nor wishing to be, women felt filled with hopes raised by the academy, hopes for beauty. intellectual purpose, usefulness, now cut adrift from the community that had nurtured them."[87] Once beyond the academy it was necessary for the young student to attempt to apply her newly acquired knowledge to the outside world. This process created frustration and doubt, because her knowledge could not be applied to a society that did not allow her any public forum. What society and academic administrators intended as the purpose of female

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[84]Steven M. Stowe, "The Not-So-Cloistered Academy: Elite Women's Education and Family Feeling in the Old South," in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Web of Southern Social Relations, Women, Family, and Education*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), p.92.
[85]Martha Crawford, 3 March 1846, Duke University, Perkins Library.
[86]Farnham, p.147.
[87]Stowe, p.97.

education was very different from what the girls actually took away. Or more precisely, they took away something *more* than was expected.

Often this attempt to move from academy back to the world and family included a need to communicate with a former teacher . Once in the outside world, there is a very real possibility that the young women had no place to apply their knowledge due to their expected gender roles. Leaders of southern society felt women's education was only supposed to prepare them for marriage and motherhood, but instead it fostered a frustration and a self-doubt which emerged from stifled thoughts and ideas. Martha Crawford, in her early journals after leaving the academy constantly chides herself for neglecting her studies and makes numerous resolutions to do better. She remained confident that her education would surely make her a better person. She asked herself, "Where now are all my solemn resolutions? my promises? my burning thirst for knowledge? All of these are forgotten since I no longer am with my teacher."[88]

Martha Crawford spends numerous pages of her journal writing of Mr. LaTashe, her favorite teacher and continued correspondent, asking for advice, encouragement and a way to discipline herself. There are points in the journal where one might question Martha's feelings for her teacher. At one point she receives a letter from him and writes, "He is surrounded by opposition, but still retains a few warm, noble hearts."[89] The reader immediately questions the nature of the opposition, but also notices her mention of "warm, noble hearts." Although never stated explicitly, it is relatively clear that Martha has an adolescent crush on her former teacher, perhaps due to his good looks, but more likely due to his role as mentor and supporter. Martha, like many adolescent women at any point in history, had very deep insecurities and self-

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[88]Martha Crawford, 4 June 1846.
[89]Ibid., 4 March 1846.

doubts, often playing into bouts of depression with suicidal thoughts.[90] Mr. La Tashe was the adult male figure who gave her encouragement, reaffirmed her intelligence and therefore gave her the emotional support that so many adolescent women desperately sought.

These feelings toward male teachers do not seem to be uncommon. Agnes Lee wrote about a member of the male faculty at Virginia Female Institute, "Mr. Phillips is handsome and attractive but I am still not so perfectly fascinated as most of the girls."[91] Some schools even had difficulty "finding faculty whose charms did not elicit romantic attachments on the part of the students."[92] With or without the romantic interests of the students there was a very special intellectual relationship between teacher and student. As Martha Crawford stated, there was a "thirst for knowledge" within her that seemed to only be nurtured by her former teacher. Through her letters she received the discipline that she could not give to herself as well as reassurance that she was an intelligent, but proper young woman.

The academy functioned in many different ways both within society and within the lives of its young students. Socially it served as a formal structure or framework for imparting the ideals of the southern belle, the republican mother, and the pious lady within the context of higher education. The lives of the adolescent students were vastly altered by their experiences in the academies and colleges. They were, for the first time, being offered an education similar to that of their male brothers and friends. They were being

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[90]Although it is clear through many women's journals, adolescent and adult, of this period that there is a certain fascination and preocuupation with death and going to "the other side," Martha's discussions of death in this period of her life seem very different. Whereas most women speak mostly of life on the other side and joining those who have already departed, Martha is more preoccupied with alleviating her own mental anguish which included these self-doubts.

[91]de Butts, p.76.

[92]Farnham, p.109.

given the tools for independent thought and enjoyment. Even though these tools were enveloped in the social rhetoric which solidified the gender roles of the period, the young women could pull these tools out of the rhetoric and eventually make use of them in their own ways. Their education was a source of feelings of self-worth and strength as well as a source of coping mechanisms in a life to come that was often lonely and disheartening. Education gave these women the power to think independently, regardless of whether or not those thoughts were ever publicly expressed.

It is important to understand that it was not only formal education which both shaped the conduct of southern women and indoctrinated them with societal expectations. It was also a process that involved formal education, parental supervision and discipline, and a system of honor and shame within the family as well as the society.[93] "[Education] does not come from scholastic books alone....It begins at the cradle, it does not end even at the grave; but being the development of the soul and its faculties, it is commensurate with immortality."[94]

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[93]See Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor.*

[94]Judge Herschel V. Johnson as quoted in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,*Within the Plantation Household,,* p.257.

Chapter 4
Literature

In order to approach an understanding of these women's intellect, it is necessary to look at what materials they were reading, as well as what they were writing. There are a variety of materials which were prevalent in the adolescent woman's "library". Most often noted in diaries and journals are novels, both socially accepted such as those written by Sir Walter Scott, as well as the sentimental novel which was not regarded with as much esteem by the adult community. Most importantly, there were a number of southern women who had chosen to write novels for publication. One of the most popular, Augusta Jane Evans, offered a genre of novel which appealed to the interests of young women and yet, through her words, supported the doctrine of upholding the ideal of the southern belle/lady. Her life and her work will be discussed at length here because it is an excellent illustration of the development of a young adolescent woman and the relation of that process through her words. Just as importantly, as mentioned before, it is very difficult to find references to slavery in diaries and journals. It is possible to detect a little more information regarding perceptions of African-Americans and other white women in the novels.

Also, it is evident that adolescents of either gender were interested in periodicals which were directed precisely at them, creating a sort of adolescent consciousness in the South during this period. It is from a work such as the *Southern Rose,* published in Charleston, South Carolina, that we see a great deal of propaganda for the southern woman. In addition there also exist letters,

stories, and editorials written by the young women themselves. These contributions are only a portion of the written record which gives modern explorers a glimpse at the intellectual response to the materials to which they were exposed, as well as to the situations occurring around them and their understanding of their place in their society.

Along with these written responses, there are, of course, numerous diaries and journals left behind. Many journals that were available for this research unfortunately dealt with women who were already married and past adolescence. This fact raises a very important question in the mind of the historian. It is very clear that the keeping of a diary or a journal was a very common activity for women in the South as well as the North, but few remain from the childhood or adolescent period. One possible explanation for this absence may be revealed in the final entry of Kate Carney's journal in 1875 when she was thirty-three years old and had been recently married. She says that she has burnt all of the other volumes of her journal because "I'm married now, foolishness must be laid aside."[95] Fortunately for historians, her words were incorrect and some of her early journals do still exist. The keeping of a journal served many functions both in the life of the adolescent and that of the adult southern woman.

Novels seem to take up the most space in the diaries and journals of adolescent southern women and also seem to have occupied the pages of more than one periodical. There was a concerted effort to discourage the reading of novels by adolescent girls, mostly by clergy and educators, who were often interchangeable in the antebellum south. One reason that romantic novels appealed to southern women was that "southerners saw a resemblance between those far-off times of serfs and manors, lords and ladies, and knights-

[95]Carney, final entry for 1875.

errant, and their own society of slaves, large plantations, and cavalier masters."[96] There was a connection that seemed obvious between many of the "gothic" and "sentimental" novels which were being devoured by young women and their own lives. For example, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* was a popular work at this time, carrying enough weight for the young Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas to name one of her family's homes "Rochester". More important than this, the parallel between the world of the southern woman and that of Jane Eyre is most clearly seen in the pages which relate Jane's experiences at the Lowood school and her relationship with Helen Burns. Although certainly more dismal than the experience at Virginia Female Institute or any of the other southern academies, Jane still experiences loneliness and fear upon her arrival and is comforted in time by a friend with whom she shares a close physical relationship, culminating in the death of Helen Burns in the arms of Jane Eyre. *Jane Eyre* is a very dramatized, romanticized exaggeration of the lives of any of the young women mentioned here.

Novels, regardless of their subject, are often windows to the soul, the intellect, and the prejudice of their authors. They can be used as tools with which to gauge the perceptions of a person or similar kinds of people, of the world and the society by which they are surrounded. These prejudices and perceptions are necessarily products of background and environment and, as a part of the author's lifelong socialization, cannot be completely eliminated from the author's product. An interesting case in point involves authors born and raised in the American South at different points in history with similar backgrounds and social foundations, but with different circumstances. By delving into the novels of these particular "white", southern women, it is

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[96]Clement Eaton, "The Role of Honor in Southern Society," *Southern Humanities Review*, Special Issue (1976): 47.

possible to illuminate their perceptions of the characters of African-American women, as well as their perceptions of the position and characters of wealthy, southern, white women. By observing the traits of various African-American and white characters or the absence of these characters in their novels, it is possible to catch a glimpse of the author's own feelings. A study of Augusta Jane Evans and her work, *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice* is an excellent integration of the function of the novel, the intellectual response of the southern woman to her society, as well as the illustration of the internalization of southern mythology toward women.

Augusta Jane Evans was born in Columbus, Georgia on May 8, 1835, the daughter of a marriage of two "old Southern families" embodied in Matt Evans and Sarah Skrine Howard.[97] Augusta had a number of brothers and sisters and, by the time she was about four years old, the family had already fallen on hard times. Matt Evans was known to lack a certain business sense and even before Augusta was born, he had demonstrated his sometimes foolish endeavors. For example, shortly after his marriage to Sarah Howard, he began construction on a magnificent mansion, unrivaled by any other in the area. This sort of extravagance, especially for a couple just starting out, was considered unusual, but many neighbors simply explained it by the fact that Sarah brought a very large dowry to the marriage. Regardless, it was termed "Matt's folly" by the many observers of its construction.[98] By 1839, Matt Evans filed bankruptcy, mortgaged the mansion, the land, many of their belongings and thirty-six slaves and moved into a small plantation house outside of Columbus. Although their standard of living was substantially

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[97]William Perry Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909, A Biography,* (Birmingham: The University of Alabama Press, 1951), p.12.Although many of the works cited contain some biographical information, Fidler's work is the only full length biography of Evans to date, and will be cited for the basic biographical information here.
[98]Ibid., p.14.

diminished, judging by the home to which they relocated, they were certainly not destitute. [99]

Eventually, the Evans family migrated westward looking for opportunity and settled in San Antonio, Texas from 1845 to 1849. Due to the onset of the Mexican War and violence among settlers and Native Americans, the family moved to Mobile, Alabama in 1849 when Augusta was fourteen or fifteen years old.[100] It was while they were living in Mobile that Augusta began work on her first novel, *Inez,* to be published in 1855. It is important to note that at this point, the Evans' still owned at least one slave. It was while writing *Inez* that Augusta "plotted with an old slave named Minervy to provide oil to write by at night, to 'destroy evidence of her night's labors,' and to hide the manuscript during the day."[101] This plot was necessary, in Augusta's mind, because she knew it to be very likely that her father would disapprove of a woman writing to potentially make money.

By the early 1850's Matt Evans had become very ill and Augusta saw an opportunity to ease the financial strain on her family. Although *Inez* was not a spectacular success, "it did have fourteen printings by 1912, by eight different publishers" and therefore offered some relief to the trials of her family.[102] Augusta's writing continued with one of her most profound successes and the work that brought her fame as one of the major domestic, sentimental novelists of the nineteenth century. She published *Beulah* in 1859 to many favorable reviews. 22,000 copies were printed in the first nine months after its

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[99]Ibid., p.19; photograph of "Georgia Cottage" where the family had relocated appears facing page 84.
[100]Ibid., p.35.
[101]Anne Godwyn Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day, The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936,* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp.70-71.
[102]Ibid., p.58.

publication.[103] The proceeds from this novel allowed Augusta to purchase a home for her family and to become a very wealthy woman.

When secession, and eventually the Civil War, came to the South, Augusta was ready to find a way to support the cause. She was an avid secessionist and supporter of the Confederacy, organizing nursing corps and women to sew sandbags to aid in the fighting. Eventually she began nursing as well, in a camp outside of Mobile flatteringly called Camp Beulah.[104] It is in this camp that Augusta wrote her third novel, *Macaria*, the work to be examined here. "*Macaria* became a wartime bestseller, read widely not just by women...but by men in the intervals between battles or during periods of convalescence."[105] Augusta went on to keep publishing novels until a few years before her death, one of her most commercially successful being *St. Elmo* in 1867. Augusta Jane Evans Wilson died May 9, 1909 in Alabama a number of years after the death of her husband and shortly after the death of her brother, Howard Evans, with whom she had been very close for many years. Augusta Jane Evans was loved by her readers until the day of her death.[106]

This life experience can be taken as a guide in looking at and analyzing the author's work, *Macaria; or Altars of Sacrifice,* while remembering that that life experience included growing up as a southern adolescent woman. Her story is, in part, a representation of her own adolescent conflicts within the boundaries of southern society. *Macaria* is the story of two young women in the South who, throughout their lives continuously make sacrifices of their own desires for the good of others. Irene Huntingdon is the beautiful belle with the conscience of an angel, always wishing to give of herself to those who were in need of shelter, or

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[103]Fidler, p.74.
[104]Ibid., p.91.
[105]Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice:Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History,* 76 (March 1990):1217.
[106]Fidler, p,214.

medical care, or some other necessity, yet she always seems hindered in some way by her father who clearly believes that a young southern woman's mind should be concerned only with the procurement of a suitable husband. He is frustrated by the fact that Irene consistently rejects the young men with whom her father attempts to create a marriage. Electra, on the other hand, is the orphan for whom fate has been unkind, except for the friendship with Irene and the opportunities which are presented to her through that friendship. The novel follows these two young women, primarily Irene, as they struggle between their own desires and Victorian ideals, always sacrificing desire for the ideal or convention. As Drew Gilpin Faust has noted, *Macaria* is the story of Irene's "pilgrimage toward 'Womanly Usefulness,' which she ultimately realizes in the Confederate war effort."[107]

Evans, like other southern women writers, offers female characters with ambition, strength, independence, and determination. The difference between them lies in how the authors allow their characters to utilize that strength and independence. It is not hard to see a connection between the life and experiences of Augusta Jane Evans in her time and the ways in which her white, female characters develop. "...While Evans personally challenged both social and literary convention in her explicit discussion of contemporary politics in *Macaria*, she continued to endorse a traditional, albeit considerably expanded, gender role for her predominantly female audience. [108]

Evans had a unique perspective on the position and role of the wealthy woman in southern society. She had been born into a family surrounded by wealth, but which eventually lost its fortune. This reversal of fortune, though, does not necessarily mean that she was not raised with the ideals of the upper

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[107]Faust, p.1217.

[108]Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novels in the Old South, Defenders of Southern Culture,* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p.188.

classes. She attended private school for a short period, and then was educated by her mother, but almost always had access to a library of books of some sort. She was simply unable to take part in the social and financial activities of the upper class. It is important to remember that even in the hardest of times, the Evans' had at least one slave. Looking in from the outside, Evans colored a very critical picture of this privileged class as is seen in her novels.

Irene, the main character of *Macaria* is supposed to epitomize the ideal adolescent southern woman in the eyes of the author. For example, in a confrontation with her unmarried Aunt Margaret over allowing a slave to carry her books to school because it is not proper for aristocracy to do such labor, Irene hastily replies to her Aunt,

> And I expect that is exactly the reason why you are for ever complaining, and scarcely see one well day in the three hundred and sixty-five. As to what people think, I don't care a cent; as to whether my ancestors did or did not carry their lunch in their own aristocratic hands is a matter of no consequence whatever.[109]

There are a number of important characteristics in Irene's chastisement of her aunt. First, Evans is striking the first, most important blow against what she sees as the greatest problem with aristocratic women of the South. In her eyes, they often are unwilling to lift a hand to the simplest labor. They are so self-involved in the maintenance of aristocratic image that they are unable to properly care for their husbands and their families because they "scarcely see one well day." This is not simply an issue which shows itself in her novel. In correspondence between Augusta and Confederate congressman and friend Jabez Lamar M. Curry in 1863, Curry was asking Evans' advice for a lecture

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[109]Augusta Jane Evans, *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p.14.

that he was supposed to give on the topic of southern women and slavery. Her response to his enquiry was sharp, and certainly to the point. She said,

> 'Enervated, lethargic, incapable of enduring fatigue, and ... afflicted with chronic lassitude,' they lack the motivation, if not the ability, to care for themselves and their families. Having a number of servants always at hand, the Southern matron accustoms herself to having every office in the household performed by others while she sits passive and inert.'"[110]

Clearly, only by attempting to engage in certain active endeavors can the southern woman rid herself of these curses and become the wife, mother, and household manager which August Jane Evans seems to envision. Throughout her work, there runs a very strong thread of the idea that one of these endeavors should be to help those in need, whether that need be financial or otherwise. Irene's begging her father for a small piece of land on which to build and begin an "orphan asylum" is an excellent example.[111]

It is really no surprise that Evans advocates strength in her female characters, yet expects them to remain within the constraints of their society. When she was growing up, she knew that her family needed some sort of income. She took it upon herself to procure that income through the use of her talent and her intellect at the early age of nineteen with the writing of *Inez*. It is not as though Evans advocated a conservative observation of southern values for wealthy white women, but rather she saw a more liberal and versatile role for the southern woman as seen through the eyes of her character Irene. Irene makes impassioned statements and sometimes speeches such as in the situation when she is directly confronted by the prospect of marrying her cousin Hugh, to whom she has been promised by her father. She says to Hugh, "Father has no right to give me to you, or to anybody else. I tell you now I

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[110]Augusta Evans to J.L.M. Curry, July 15, 1863, in J.L.M. Curry Papers, Library of Congress, as quoted in Moss, pp.30-31.
[111]Evans, *Macaria*, p.

belong to myself, and only I can give myself away."[112] Evans' character wants it understood by the men who surround her that she must have agency in her own life. Never in this work does she utter the desire to strike out on her own or to find some sort of career outside of the female sphere, but rather when she returns from boarding school, she throws herself into the care of her father and his household (her mother had been dead since she was very young) and often espouses the importance of the business of domesticity in the life of a southern woman. It should be the calling of most women to perfect her individual household. It is most important to her, that within this domestic realm, she be allowed to make those choices which affect her life and her future.

Evans' treatment of the issue of race in *Macaria* is very intriguing, especially in light of the fact that, as mentioned previously, most of these young women did not address slaves or slavery in their journals or did so only very briefly. *Macaria* was written both as a reaction to contact with wounded Confederate soldiers during the Civil War and as a call to "arms" for southern women. It was written at the bedsides of wounded men as Evans was attempting to nurse many of them back to health. More importantly, it was a piece of propaganda, intended to bring to the attention of southern women their duty to the Confederate cause. "...White southern women, unlike their men, were not conscripted by law. They had to be enlisted by persuasion. The resulting discourse about woman's place in Confederate society represented the rhetorical attempt to create a hegemonic ideology of female patriotism and sacrifice."[113] *Macaria* was probably one of the most commercially successful examples of this wartime rhetoric.

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[112]Ibid., p.114.

[113]Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," p.1201.

It is more the absence of African-American characters than their presence that is intriguing in this work, as well as indicative of young southern women as a whole. It is not until approximately one third of the way through the novel that an African-American character is mentioned and actually given a name. "Aunt Nellie" is Irene's nurse. The first conversation involving Nellie begins as Irene chides her for staying up too late. "What are you sitting up so late for? You will have another spell of rheumatism, tramping about this time of night."[114] This, of course, is one of the pat arguments of the southern propagandists. Most would argue first and foremost that the institution of slavery was a paternalistic one where white masters cared for their slaves, seeing that they were fed and taken care of when they were ill and in their later years. In this passage, Irene seems the motherly figure, encouraging a child to button up an overcoat or some other cliché in order to keep from becoming ill.

It is the remainder of this conversation that is the most interesting because it is an indication that Evans understands the position of a slave that has been with the family for a long time and is often privy to intimate conversation. There is a short exchange where Irene and Aunt Nellie discuss the arrival of a crippled uncle that Irene has not seen in a number of years. Nellie also pushes Irene in this conversation to "let things take their course" in terms of marrying her cousin Hugh.[115] Irene replies,

> "Who has put this into your head?"
> "Nobody put it into my head! I should like to know where my eyes have been these many years? I haven't been so near blind all my life. Don't you suppose I know what master's been after since you were eighteen months old? Was n't I standing by the bed when Hugh's mother died, and did n't I hear master promise her that, when you were grown, you and Hugh should marry?

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[114]Faust, *Macaria*, p.166.
[115]Ibid.

> Don't I know how your poor dying mother cried, and wrung her hands, and said 'Harm would come of it all, and she hoped you would die while you were a baby?'"[116]

Evans has very clearly created the character of Aunt Nellie to be able to be the carrier of intimate knowledge from one generation to the next, and especially to be a guide and confidante for her main character. Aunt Nellie really is the embodiment of family wisdom and there is a certain sense that there is a mutual nurturing quality to the relationship between these two people.

There is a logical parallel that can be drawn between the character of Aunt Nellie and the author's own experience. As stated earlier, while writing *Inez* in the 1850's at the age of 19, Augusta employed the assistance of an elderly slave of her family to keep her writing from her parents. This sort of partnership implies a certain amount of trust between Minervy, the slave, and Augusta as a young woman. Although there is certainly the undeniable issue of the power relationship and the fact that it is possible that the only reason Minervy assisted Augusta was because she had to obey the orders of her mistress, it could also be argued that Minervy's true mistress was Augusta's mother and therefore Minervy would be jeopardizing herself by participating in Augusta's secret.

Other than Aunt Nellie few other slaves are given names in the novel, and those that are only mentioned briefly. Nowhere does Evans use the terms "slave" or "slavery". It is only after Irene returns from school to take over the responsibilities of running the plantation household that "servants" are discussed in ambiguous terms with Irene again reiterating her strong feelings that it was the imperative duty of every woman to superintend and inspect the

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[116]Ibid., pp.166-167.

management of her domestic affairs" without the aid of a "housekeeper".[117] Even the narrator, presumably the voice of Evans, presents slaves as if they were hired help by her comment that, "Fortunately for Irene, the servants were admirably trained..."[118]

Evans' personal views on race and on the state of northern literature come out very explicitly in a series of articles which were published anonymously in the Mobile *Daily Advertiser* in 1859. In one particular article on October 10, 1859 entitled "Northern Literature" she says that northern authors were "concerned not with the truth but with what would sell...."[119] She avows that the "low sensual African is dragged up from his normal position and violently thrust into an importance [by northern authors] which the Creator has denied him by indications as strong as physical inferiority and mental incapacity could make them."[120] The fact that these passages were printed anonymously is an interesting fact and is a potential explanation for the discrepancy between the depth of feeling toward African-Americans stated here and the almost absolute absence of African-American characters in her book, except for the well-informed Aunt Nellie. When she was writing for commercial publications with her name upon her work, it was important that she first of all maintain the general storyline of southern propaganda, that African-American slaves were well-treated and loved by their white masters. Second, as with any work that attempts to achieve the support of the most people, there was certainly a limited necessity to remain somewhat restrained in the presentation of race.

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[117]Ibid., p.159.
[118]Ibid.
[119]Moss, p.165.
[120]quoted in Moss, p.165.

Evans' *Macaria* is a verbose, yet engaging story of a southern woman's search for the ability to reconcile her desire for agency with her acceptance of social conventions as proper and necessary. In the process of presenting these very strong and often saintlike creatures, Evans virtually ignores the issue of race in her novel at a time when most would believe that race would be central to a work that functioned also as Confederate propaganda. This absence of race follows very closely the evidence in southern women's' diaries and journals.

Another popular source for additional reading material was periodical literature, especially publications that spoke directly to the adolescent. A very nice example of one of these publications in the South was the *Rose Bud*, later the *Southern Rose*, in Charleston, South Carolina. This weekly (Saturday) periodical, published by a woman named Caroline Gilman from 1832 until 1839, was organized and presented as advice literature for children, helping them to be good children and good southerners, and eventually responsible southern citizens. In the beginning, it is clear from its content, that Gilman was hoping to reach an audience of boys and girls ranging in age from beginning readers to late adolescents of fifteen or sixteen years of age. It included, according to the "Editor's Address," "original prose and poetry, notices of new books and toys, extracts from children's works that are not common, and many other interesting things...."[121] Along with these weekly features were also short works written by young subscribers as well as moral advice from Gilman herself written explicitly and sometimes also couched in contrived little letters from fictional characters such as "Sally Hatebook." "Sally" has written a hideously spelled and composed letter to the editor asking why her parents force her to attend school and to study when she sees it as boring and quite unnecessary. Gilman offers a reply filled with various reasons by which

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[121]Gilman, Caroline. *The Rose Bud*. Volume I, Number 1, 1832, p.1.

attending school will make a young woman a better person. Some of the young subscribers also respond to "Sally's" letter chastising her obvious ignorance toward the necessity of education. Throughout the periodical's contrived and true editorial letters, stories, and advertisements, Gilman presses young children to be "pious and humble."[122]

It is through a vehicle such as this that young women in the South were beginning to have a voice within their own culture. This was a publication that in its early years was written to some extent by children and adolescents and always for the same. Mrs. Gilman's publication was in circulation for nine years, through various name changes, and it grew with her initial audience. Its content followed southern young people from childhood through late adolescence and it was successful. Success of a periodical or newspaper is dependent upon demand. In this particular case there was an audience of children and adolescents who were interested in expressing their own thoughts, reading the expressions of others, as well as receiving advice from Mrs. Gilman.

The keeping of a journal or a diary also gave women a sense of control in their lives as well as a sense of individuality. Journal writing had three functions in the lives of these women. The first is strictly for leisure and relaxation, the second was as a way to relieve tension and frustration, and the third was as a method of "self acquaintance". Collectively, these functions created the sense of control by allowing the woman to assert her individuality, even if only in private.

In its most simplified form, journal writing was pleasure, relaxation, and relief, as was reading. The pleasure function of journal writing occurred primarily in the adolescent years of these women and then the function was transformed as the life of the woman changed and progressed. Kate Carney,

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[122]Ibid., pp. 1-2.

who began her diary in her early teens said at its commencement, "today I commence a journal. It may last for years, and may continue only, a few years, or even months, but I do it, just for my own pleasure and gratification."[123] As young girls, these women did not yet have the duties and responsibilities of the plantation mistress. They not only had more time on their hands, but they also had more freedom as to what could be done with that time.

As time progressed and the adolescent became southern lady and mistress, the pleasure of journal writing was more of a relief. It was a relief from daily chores, but it was also a relief from loneliness. It was a way to participate in an individual, one-sided dialogue where there were no constraints or boundaries without the presence of another individual. In solitude, this one-sided conversation allowed a woman to occupy herself during the times that were normally devoted to her husband and after the work day had been completed. "Sarah Gayle wrote her journal in part to combat her loneliness during her husband's long absences."[124] Even surrounded by slaves, a woman was relatively alone. She was not able to have substantial conversations with her slaves, first, because of her position as mistress, but also because they had few if any shared experiences that would warrant discussion as a husband, a close friend, or a sister would.

The second function of journal writing as a release from tension and frustration, was probably one of the most important."...there are some moments when I must write - must speak or else the pent up emotions of an overcharged heart will *burst* or *break*."[125] Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas wrote this after an "exciting conversation" with a new female friend at the conclusion of which Thomas found herself so agitated that she could not relate the event

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[123]Carney, January, 1859.
[124]Fox-Genovese, p.247.
[125]Burr, p.128.

until the following day. Although Thomas' emotions were those of excitement and pleasure, the same would hold true for the emotions of anger and sorrow. None of these emotions were permissible, in the extreme, publicly or verbally in southern society. A woman was expected either not to experience certain emotions, or she was to suppress those emotions and maintain the demeanor of the southern belle. Suppressed hostilities opened up a great potential for emotional instability and writing in journals and diaries allowed women to vent their anger and their frustrations, for their eyes only, without crossing the boundaries established by southern society.[126]

The third function of journal writing was "self-acquaintance". Charlotte Beatty, speaking of the writing of journals, "reflected upon the deplorable lot of 'those who by their situation and engagements in the great world are deprived of the necessary and sweet enjoyment of self-acquaintance.'"[127] Self-acquaintance bred independence and individuality which, in turn, worked as catalysts to the development of empowerment, or control over choices. Women had to come to terms with their own intelligence and capabilities in order to overcome the myth of the southern belle and the understanding that women were inferior creatures to men. Even though she could not verbalize this understanding, it was important for her emotional status to know this. As Martin Farquhar Tupper, one of the authors read by many women at this time, wrote,

> Husband up thine ideas,
> and give them stability and substance;
> Write often for thy secret eye.
> So shalt thou grow in wisdom.[128]

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[126]Some journals were intended for others to read, such as daughters, but it is very clear from content which diaries were intended thus.
[127]The Diary of Charlotte Beatty, as quoted in Fox-Genovese, p. 249.
[128]Burr, title page.

In other words, to write one's emotions and one's thoughts for only the eye of the self, is to be self-acquainted and, in turn, to strengthen wisdom. Self-reflection is critical to the mission of doing for others and making others improve themselves.

Each of these intellectual stimuli had its own function. Novels served sometimes as escape for their readers and sometimes, as in the case of the works of Augusta Jane Evans, as reaffirmation of the social code. Other novels such as those written by Sir Walter Scott and Cervantes' *Don Quixote* which were condoned and encouraged by the establishment almost as reaffirmation of the southern social structure.[129] "Southerners 'grasped for symbols of stability in order to stem their feelings of drift and uncertainty and to quiet their uneasiness about the inequities within Southern society.' One such symbol was medieval feudalism which transformed southern men from simple country squires into gallant knights. The immense popularity of Scott's novels is quite logical in this context."[130] Numerous other works appear in passing in various journals including "Prescott's criticism on Cervantes and Sir Walter Scott," the works of an author named CB Brown and other critical works such as Prescott's criticism of Chateaubriand's English Literature.[131] Among the mere mention of various works being read, this particular young woman at times drifted into very detailed analysis of various literary works.[132] It is this diligence in writing down analytical material and keeping track of works being read that denies the idea that adolescent southern white women during this period were lacking in intellect. They devoured the reading materials available to them and criticized them and attempted to learn from them what they

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[129]Crawford, April 23, 1847.
[130]Kathryn J. Seidel, "The Southern Belle as an Antebellum Ideal," *The Southern Quarterly*, 15, no.4, (1977): 389. Inner quotation from William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee*.
[131]Ibid.
[132]Ibid., pp. 5-7 as one example.

could, even if only in the privacy of their journals or in conversation with other female friends or a kind teacher. In many respects, what these young women read became a discourse for which they longed and yet could almost never find except within the sanctity of their own hearts and minds.

CONCLUSION

It is clear, even from these few sources that southern adolescent women led complex and dynamic lives which were molded by their adolescence, their environment and their intellect. After exploring this particular regional question the question that begs to be answered is how many other groups of young women (and men?) remain without voices in the historical present. Youth, in general, has not been addressed sufficiently by historians and, as I have presented here, is not only a valid subject for historical research, but an important one as well if we accept the theory that aging is a developmental process, a process of building blocks placed one upon the other.

The primary difficulty that I encountered in this project was the unavailability of appropriate sources. Although there are huge manuscript holdings of southern women's journals, letters, and diaries at places such as the University of North Carolina, Duke University, and the University of South Carolina, for many researchers who do not have or are unable to get funds to travel to these places, such manuscript collections are inaccessible. These researchers include undergraduates, masters candidates and those who may not be affiliated with any public institution but have a driving interest in the subject matter. What seems to be the case in many northern libraries is a situation where there is a subject with two very fascinating and volatile sides, but only one can be truly explored through the primary evidence. This may work vice versa as well. The solution to this dilemma may offer considerable amounts of work to historians. It is time that more southern manuscripts are researched and published so that they can be enjoyed and researched by a

wider audience. It is not only the diaries and letters that need to be published, but also works of fiction that have been out of print for decades, if not a century. One project is seeking to remedy that particular problem by taking some of Augusta Jane Evans' works, writing long and detailed introductions which place the work in its context and then publishing them in beautiful new editions.[133] If these things are done, the field of southern women's history, both black and white, could and would be so much richer than it is. There are stacks of material that only a select few are able to view and I am sure some which others have not taken the time to explore at all. It is a vast treasure that needs to be shared with the rest of the country, including non-academics.

This project has the potential to be a step in two different future directions. First, it very easily could be the chapter of a larger work which examines the life-cycle of these women as a whole. As I have presented throughout, adolescence has been badly neglected, but children and the elderly have been neglected even more. Second, through the reading of two very exciting unpublished primary sources, there is the certain possibility of creating a small anthology of a couple of unpublished diaries. Martha Crawford and Kate Carney left very telling and passionate stories of their lives. Unfortunately, Kate Carney's is short because she burned a great deal of it when she married, but Martha Crawford's is long and detailed and offers insight into issues of gender, education, as well as various perspectives on contemporary events. This research is certainly not the end. It has, more than anything else, served to open more doors to me and made me look to the future and to a time when I can make these voices accessible to a larger audience.

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[133] The two works that I am aware of are *Macaris; or Altars of Sacrifice* and *Beulah,* edited by Drew Gilpin Faust and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese respectively in 1992 in a series entitled the *Library of Southern Civilization* edited by Lewis P. Simpson.

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