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JENNIFER ANN STOLLMAN

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of the requirements for

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"BUILDING UP A HOUSE OF ISRAEL IN A LAND OF CHRIST": JEWISH WOMEN IN THE ANTEBELLUM AND CIVIL WAR SOUTH

VOLUME I

By

Jennifer Ann Stollman

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

2001

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ABSTRACT

"BUILDING UP A HOUSE OF ISRAEL IN A LAND OF CHRIST:" JEWISH WOMEN IN THE ANTEBELLUM AND CIVIL WAR SOUTH

BY

Jennifer Ann Stollman

This dissertation analyzes the lives of southern antebellum and Civil War-era Jewish women. In addition to uncovering the historical experiences of these women, this dissertation argues that existing methodologies in American Jewish and southern women's history obscure the reality of these women's experiences and their contributions to the maintenance of Judaism in the south. American Jewish antebellum and Civil War historians have either assumed that Jewish men's history equaled American Jewish history, or frequently, used celebratory and denigrating paradigms to uncover these women's experiences. Additionally, southern women's historiography has not fully explored how religion affected women in the antebellum and Civil War south. In general, scholars have not recognized how subtle anti-Semitism and Jews' ambiguous racial status might have contributed to the different strategies developed by certain southern Jewish women in order to observe Judaism.

After providing a brief discussion regarding Jewish settlement in the south in chapter one, chapter two argues that antebellum southern Jewish families used academies, Jewish "friendly" schools, Sunday Schools, seminaries, sibling tutoring,

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European travel, and correspondence to fight proselytization, assimilation, shield their daughters from anti-Semitism, and promote faith in Judaism. Using James Scott's theories of hidden transcripts, chapter three explores how, in an oppressively Protestant south, certain southern Jewish women modified their religious practices, promoted Judaism in their private writings, and altered their schedules on holidays in order to keep practicing their faith and encourage observance in friends and relatives. Chapter four examines how certain Jewish women used poetry and essays to contest literary and legislative anti-Semitism, and promote religiosity among southern Jews. Chapter five explores how southern Jews, as a racially ambiguous population, supported myths about slavery, black inferiority, white superiority, and white female guardianship to exercise their whiteness. Chapter six argues that during the Civil War and its accompanying rise in anti-Semitism, southern Jewish women acted as Jewish ambassadors to the southern white community because their husbands, brothers, and sons had been marginalized through rumors of profiteering. As fundraisers, war supply collectors, smugglers, nurses, volunteers, belligerents, these women provided alternative images of southern Jewish loyalty and thus tempered anti-Semitism. This study encourages scholars to further understand the complex and interconnected nature of race, gender, and religion, and how such identity characteristics shaped individual historical experiences in the antebellum and Civil War south.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a great number of scholars, friends, and family members whose academic and personal support allowed me to pursue my dreams of teaching and research and more materially, ensured the completion of this dissertation. I am grateful to the staff and archivists at the College of Charleston, Duke University, The Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, The Jacob Rader Marcus Archives at Hebrew Union College, Georgia Historical Society, Richmond Historical Society, Congregations Beth Elohim, Beth Ahabah, and Mickve Israel. Their interest, ready assistance, and suggestions made for a much more nuanced project on antebellum southern Jewish women.

I must thank several scholars for their guidance during my tenure as a graduate student and as a researcher. My conversations with Dr. Lisa Fine, my committee advisor, and Dr. Dagmar Herzog, fundamentally shaped the direction of my project with respect to addressing the historiography, employing an interdisciplinary approach, and critically examining the experiences of these women. Most importantly, conversations and interactions with these two advisors inspire and remind me of the importance of knowledge and teaching. I hope to emulate their research and teaching styles in my own career as an historian. Dr. Eric Goldstein, Dr. Robert Bonner, Dr. Kenneth Waltzer, Dr. Susan Sleeper-Smith, Dr. Darlene Clark-Hine, Dr. Maureen Flanagan, and Dr. Crisca

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Bierwert have provided invaluable advice regarding concepts of community, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and region and therefore, enabled me to create a more complete historical narrative.

I am grateful to several other friends and family members for their support. I am fortunate enough to come from a family of women who prize knowledge and throughout this process were willing to engage in conversations well into the night as to how best to read the sources. Annette Stollman, Shirley Latessa, and Dr. Faye Moskowitz, each outstanding academics, writers, and teachers in their own right have my unending gratitude for providing life-long models of intelligent and strong women and allowing me to travel in their footsteps. Dr. Sharon Hochman encouraged me to traverse beyond intellectual realms. I cannot amply convey my appreciation for her assistance. I must thank Dr. Amy and Karl Lagler for their willingness to read and re-read my manuscript. I am indebted to Amy's devotion to the project and to our friendship. She has made this journey intellectually stimulating and more importantly, her constant encouragement enabled me to see this dissertation to its completion.

To my parents and sister, Dr. Gerald, Leila, and Victoria Stollman, I thank you for encouraging and allowing me to pursue my dreams of research and teaching. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your support and encouragement. Your love, faith, strength, and intelligence inspires and sustains me.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Philip Stollman.

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Introduction

Hidden, Silenced, and Caricatured: Antebellum Southern Jewish Women's History

Beginning in 1809, Rachel Mordecai, a teacher at her father's all-female academy in Warrenton, North Carolina, sought advice on pedagogy from the manuals of the most famous educational treatise writers, father and daughter Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Maria Edgeworth. Intent on schooling her charges according to Enlightenment principles, she frequently relied upon the advice of the Edgeworths for guidance on how best to mold the minds of young women at a time when such schooling was considered not relevant. Empowered by the Edgeworth's pedagogical philosophies, Mordecai found herself attracted to other writings by Maria Edgeworth. She read her children's literature with delight and then began to read her popular novels. In 1812, Mordecai read Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* and was profoundly moved by what she read. Though enamored with the charming Irish characters, she happened upon a not so attractive character, who shared her name. Mordecai, a London coachmaker, was the novel's villain. Rachel Mordecai was appalled at the character's description, actions, and interactions with the novel's other characters. To Rachel, the fact that his manifestly Jewish name was linked to such undesirable activities smacked of blatant and undeserved anti-Semitism. Three years after the book was published, Rachel Mordecai decided to write Maria Edgeworth a letter expressing her dissatisfaction. In her letter she questioned how such an enlightened and sophisticated intellectual could draw such an uninformed

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portrait of a Jew. In defense of her race and religion, she courageously questioned the famous novel writer's actions. She wrote "Relying on the good sense and candour of Miss Edgeworth, I would ask, how can it be that she, who on all other subjects shows such justice and liberality, should on one alone appear biased by prejudice: should even instill that prejudice into the minds of youth!"[1] Both the father and daughter Edgeworth were shocked and dismayed at this young Jewish woman's critiques and responded in letter and deed. In her next novel *Harrington* (1817), Maria Edgeworth drew a more favorable picture of Jews by making the main heroine, Berenice, a Jew.

Unlike Mordecai, Penina Moise primarily operated in a distinctly Jewish milieu. Charleston, South Carolina, possessed a thriving Jewish community and it was in this environment that Moise felt most comfortable. A dedicated poet since the tender age of twelve, Moise enjoyed composing poems that explored her feelings about Judaism as well as her feelings about her own personal experiences as well as national and international current events. A devoutly religious Jew, Moise belonged to Congregation Beth Elohim. In 1841, that synagogue became embroiled in a religious controversy over how best to practice Judaism in a modern American context. Moise's brother Abraham was a leader of the splinter group, the Reformed Society of the Israelites in Charleston. Moise fully supported the trend towards reform and, in 1843, as a supportive effort, she

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[1]Edgar E. MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 6.

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composed 165 out of 210 hymns in the first American Reform Jewish hymnal. The hymnal was divided into nine sections which included consecration hymns, hymns on the relationship between God and Man, duties toward God, duties toward oneself, duties toward others, daily prayers, festival prayers, confirmation hymns and school hymns. Several of her hymns can still be found in American Reform Jewry's standard hymnal.

Octavia Harby Moses was also raised in Charleston, South Carolina. At the age of sixteen after having married Andrew Jackson Moses, she and her family moved out of the Jewish community and to more remote rural areas. They initially lived in Cheraw, South Carolina, and after three years, they permanently moved to Sumter, South Carolina. The city had no Jews other than those intimately related to the Moses family. Undeterred by the lack of a Rabbi or synagogue and determined to uphold Jewish traditions and observances, every Saturday Moses assembled her family in her home and she led *Sabbath* services.

Unfortunately the American southern Jewish historical record is silent about these women. In large part this silence is due to problems with the methodology which scholars have utilized in traditional Jewish history, American Jewish history, Jewish women's history, and southern women's history. By employing different methodologies including cultural studies, gender history, and anthropology, this dissertation analyzes the lives of antebellum southern Jewish women. In an overwhelmingly fundamentalist Protestant south, and through their efforts in education, writing, religious observance,

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paid and unpaid labor, and relationships with Protestant whites and enslaved African-Americans, southern Jewish women displayed distinctly American southern Jewish identities, encouraged tolerance of Jews, countered anti-Semitism, and encouraged the development of a viable and distinctive southern Judaism.

Traditional and American Jewish Historiography

Jewish history has always been more than the neutral record of the experiences of the Israelites and later, the Jewish nation. Jews constructed a history that verified their religious choices and used celebratory and survivalist themes in Jewish history to encourage Jewish religiosity, galvanization, strength, and perseverance in the face of marginalization, proselytization, and violence and additionally, quell Gentile suspicion of Jews.[2] To accomplish this, early Jewish scholars traditionally deployed certain pious

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[2]One might argue that all minority history existed initially with political aims specifically, the right to interpret one's own historical experiences, celebrate their successes, mourn their failures, articulate their responses to historical changes, or voice their resistance to unwanted political, economic, or social intrusions. This ideology became more widely accepted in the 1960s' radical revolutions in the political and academic arenas. Despite the fact that several American minorities including African-Americans, marginalized ethnic groups, religious minorities had for over a century worked to create their own historical canon, and the new social history of the sixties and seventies legitimized the history of ethnic and religious minorities.

Historically, majority populations viewed Jews with suspicion, believing that they could not pledge full allegiance to their native country because of their fidelity to an alternative God and their adherence to perceived foreign rituals. For the last two thousand years, Jews all over the European and African continents existed under these conditions. Such long-standing anxiety towards the Jews encouraged the development of pervasive and long-lasting stereotypes. Negative characterizations like Christ-killers, blood libelists, Shylocks, rapists, white slavers, slave traders, blood-thirsty murderers, effeminate men, emasculating women, Jewish American Princesses, and conspirators constructed and restricted Jews' political, economic, and social opportunities. In addition to the loss of certain opportunities, Jews, no matter where they lived, existed under exceptionally repressive and frightening conditions. They endured massive and often violent religious conversions, inquisitions, European pogroms, violent state-sanctioned and marauders' attacks. Jews carried the scars of such attacks and

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notions and stereotypes. Subsequent Jewish historians also relied on celebratory narratives that emphasized the importance of family, education, business aptitude, and liberal tendencies. Over time, these discourses shaped the historiography and served as parameters under which historical Jewish experiences were explored and analyzed. Accordingly, scholars seemed reticent to cover negative aspects of Jewish experiences because they were fearful that portraying historical Jews in a less favorable light placed contemporary Jews in danger.[3] Consequently, when mentioning the unsavory activities

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stereotypes into the American setting. Centuries of terror and insecurity certainly contributed to the development of several survival and defense mechanisms. Recent scholars have argued that American Jews' feelings of marginalization continues to shape their identities despite enjoying political equality. In his book, *Jazz Age Jews*, Michael Alexander argues that because Jews have been by and large accepted in the assimilation process, this threatened Jewish identity and therefore, American Jews continue to practice outsider identification, that is identifying with "less fortunate individuals and groups, people who remain in America's economic, political, and cultural margins." Alexander argues that having crafted an outsider identity over several millennia, Jews used the "language of exile," to both explain their identification with marginalized groups and to reinforce their own definition of themselves as outsiders. See Michael Alexander, *Jazz Age Jews* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 1-6.

Similar to Michael Alexander paradigm of outsider identification, in her article, "Fag-Hags and Bu-Jews," Naomi Seidman discusses the existence of parenthetical Jewish identification. Seidman charges that several Jewish scholars, (in this article Judith Butler, Nancy Miller, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) exhibit their Jewishness by repudiating Jewish particularism and instead "champion another marginalized group." Seidman argues Jewish scholars, uncomfortable with their own Jewishness, engage in "vicarious outsider identification. " See Naomi Seidman, "Fag-Hags and Bu-Jews" Toward a (Jewish) Politics of Vicarious Identity" in David Biarle, Michael Galchinsky, and Susan Heschel eds., *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 254-68. In both of these authors' arguments, Jewish identity is found in the identities of others. These two authors astutely point out that Jews' discomfort with their identity, whether as a result of assimilation, anti-Semitism, self-hatred, or according to Alexander's argument, the loss of their exile status, contributes to the fracturing of Jewish identities. See Seidman, "Fag-Hags and Bu-Jews," pg. 267.

[3]Even now, the historian who wishes to explore the nineteenth century still suffers under these ideas. When I traveled throughout the south, archivists and Jewish enthusiasts always met my initial requests of exploring southern antebellum Jewish females with suspicion. Many wanted to know why I was studying them and cautioned me to carefully construct my narrative so as not to promote any existing negative stereotypes. Some suggested that I avoid evidence that might be used as a weapon against the American Jewish population. I suspect that my gender and my physical appearance as a blond and light-

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or philosophies of Jews, Jewish historians tended to describe their behaviors as anomalous.[4]

Such a tendency to emphasize a celebratory Jewish history eventually surfaced in American Jewish history. By emphasizing the importance of education, the family, industriousness and American philosophies on freedom and individual rights, American Jewish historians, beginning in the early nineteenth century, endeavored to construct a history that presented a respectable image of Jews. Thus, American Jewish scholars have preferred to focus on the experiences of American Jews that present them as virtuous and

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skinned individual often hampered my access to Jewish sources in synagogues and archives. I found some sources and archivists were not open with me about their sources and knowledge until somehow I let it slip that I was a Jew. Synagogue Rabbis checked my Jewishness by opening their conversation with the question: What congregation are you from? Jewish and synagogue archives were extremely protective of their sources and seemed reticent to be completely open unless I revealed to them how I intended to employ the sources. Throughout my research trips, I found myself having to proceed beyond the usual justifications for my studies. I felt that I had to perform a sort of psychological triage on the general and academic public. I had to reassure them that I would respect the material and was merely hoping to produce an historically accurate account of these women's lives. More than once it was suggested to me to "bury" certain facts that I uncovered and over-emphasize those experiences that portray southern Jewish women in a liberal and enlightened manner.

[4]The founders of American Jewish history, Jacob Rader Marcus and Bertram W. Korn, have diligently worked to not only prove the legitimacy of the field, but also to enlighten Jews and non-Jews about early American Jewish contributions to the development of the republic and how they retained a sense of Jewishness. For examples see Jacob Rader Marcus' *The American Jew: 1585-1990, A History* (New York: Carlson, 1995), *Early American Jewry: The Jews of Pennsylvania and the South, 1655-1790 Volume Two* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953), *The Jew in the American World: A Source Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), and *United States Jewry: 1776-1985* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), and Bertram W. Korn, *Jewry and the Civil War* (Marietta: R Bemis Publishing, 1995), "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival of Judaism in the Antebellum Period" in *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* June 1964 vol. LIII no. 4., and *Jewry and the Civil War* (Marietta: R Bemis Publishing, 1995).

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productive citizens.[5] In their historical narratives, American Jewish historians created a composite Jew—one that argued that despite religious differences, American Jews, without hesitation, fully subscribed to American political, economic, and social systems and ideologies.[6] Colonial and early republic American Jewish historians stressed "Jews' legacy of service to the nation" and emphasized that American Jews were in fact, loyal citizens.[7] Additionally, these historians emphasized the similarities between American Jewish historical experiences and Gentile experiences. Creating and controlling the historiography in this manner principally served as a political project designed to protect

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[5]Though these works are pious in nature, this does not devalue the importance of their historical scholarship. These initial local and national histories demonstrate the existence of Jews prior to the eastern European migration and begin to record how they assimilated and retained a sense of Jewish identity. Generally written in the post World War II era and proliferating after the advent of the new social history, they are celebratory but equally important in their investigative quality. For examples see Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia,1979, Stephen Birmingham, *The Grandees: America's Sephardic Elite* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), Mark Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (Mobile: The University of Alabama Press,1974). Eli Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), Harry Golden, *Our Southern Landsmen* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1974), Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), Rufus Learsi, *The Jews in America: A History* (Cleveland: World, 1954), Elma Ehrlich Levinger, *Jewish Adventures in America: The Story of 300 Years of Jewish Life in the United States* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1958), Milton Meltzer, *The Jewish Americans: A History in Their Own Words 1650-1950* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1982), and Harry Simonhoff, *Jewish Notables in America, 1776-1865* (New York: Greenberg, 1956).

[6]Stephen J. Whitfield, *Voices of Jacob, Hands of Esau: Jews in American Life and Thought* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984), 56. As a corrective, Stephen Whitfield concludes that American Jewish historiography cannot confine itself to the recreation of heroes and heroines because it provides an extremely limited and idealistic interpretation of Jewish history. He argues that resistance to these stereotypes and pious themes is difficult but stresses Jewish historians must continually resist the impulse to stress those socially accepted positive aspects of Jewish behavior in order to construct a more comprehensive and nuanced history.

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American Jews against a resurgence of long-standing anti-Semitic feelings and violence and encouraged the non-Jewish population to assimilate Jews.[8]

In addition to the celebratory nature found in American Jewish historiography, the field has employed specific paradigms that have further obscured the historical experiences of American Jews and, specifically, antebellum southern Jewish women. By framing their narratives on American Jewish history or the development of American Jewish identity solely around overt instances of anti-Semitism, from the perspective of New York eastern European experiences, or examining Jewish women's historical experiences through assimilationist paradigms, American Jewish scholars have distorted or overlooked both the context and activities of southern Jewish women's lives.

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[7]Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish History: The Colonial and Early National Periods, 1654-1840* (New York: Routledge, 1998), xiii. Gurock concluded that the historians of the colonial and early national period focused on Jewish colonial first settlers, documented Jews' military service, and patriotism.

[8]This imperative became even more important in the wake of the Holocaust. Nazi Germany's ghettoization and extermination of Europe's Jews had a profound impact on American Jewish historians and the construction of their history. The state-sanctioned extermination of six million in the twentieth century, well into the twentieth century, powerfully demonstrated to Jews that their stability and safety were still far from assured. This "Holocaust Perplex" has invaded the narrative and has influenced the portrayal of American Jewish historical events both prior to, and after the Holocaust. In the post-Holocaust era, scholars worked overtime at demonstrating Jews' patriotism, virtuousness, and productivity to both reassure Jews of their safety and quell Gentile anxieties about Jews. Though a very effective political project, the resulting historical analyses have worked to obscure the Jewish historical experience. This transhistorical narrative of Jewish patriotism and productivity effectively eliminated the diversity in American Jewish historical experience. Consequently, it blurred the line of historical accuracy and implied that external contemporary events guided the narrative. This technology of fear operated in much of the early historiography. Scholars constructed an American Jewish history that inspired and protected Jews from larger societal threats. It cannot account for all of the problems that existed within American Jewish historiography, but it tends to weaken the accuracy of the American Jewish historical experience.

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There is no question that American Jewish history has been shaped to a large degree by anti-Semitism, a fact scholars have recognized. But American Jewish scholars' tend to emphasize that only overt anti-Semitic events affected the development of American Jewish identity.[9] Since overt anti-Semitism did not exist in the early republic, historians have argued that anti-Semitism virtually did not exist and therefore did not

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In his excellent historiographical survey, David Gerber traced this phenomenon. He found that initial American Jewish scholars found anti-Semitism to be a distinctly minor feature in the nation's development. It was not until Bertram Korn in 1951, Leonard Dinnerstein in 1971, and Howard Rabinowitz in 1981, finally began questioning the existence of American anti-Semitism that scholars began to focus their attention on the topic. According to Jonathan Sarna, several reasons existed for why Jewish scholars were less focused on anti-Semitism as a viable category of American Jewish historical analysis. He stated that prior to 1945, American Jewish historians were "coworkers in the discovery, settlement, and development." They did not want to discuss anti-Semitism so much as to prove that "hatred of Jews was unpatriotic, a deviation from the country's noble past." See David Gerber, " Anti-Semitism in American History, *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16, no.3 (1988): 135-6. 9. Jeffrey Gurock suggested that the first American Jewish historians were reticent to discuss the existence of American anti-Semitism because they feared it "would injure the status of Jews" and such public discussions of anti-Semitism "deterred them from taking long, hard looks at the historical roots of prejudice and discrimination." They feared that "unsympathetic Americans" might accuse Jews of "dual loyalty." See Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish History,* viii-ix. After World War II, scholars like Oscar Handlin and John Higham began to trace the historical genesis and manifestations of anti-Semitism. They attributed the rise of anti-Semitism, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, due to urbanization and industrialization. According to Sarna, these historians adhered to a liberal conceptual framework that stated that anti-Semitism emerged as a late and alien phenomenon. In the 1970s, scholars developed alternative paradigms to the liberal framework. Instead, American Jewish scholars began to critically analyze the American Jewish experience. These scholars found that anti-Semitism in the American context was older and more pervasive. Recent scholars like Stephen Whitfield and Jonathan Sarna however, argue that these scholars have greatly exaggerated the extent of American anti-Semitism. Whitfield argued that "anti-Semitism has been so mild in America that Jewish leaders have been preoccupied with demanding that public officials protect Jews abroad." Instead, he accused American Jewish historiographers of "historical pessimism." Still other scholars contested that conclusion and instead stated that "the degree of Jewish acceptance in America has been greatly exaggerated and that incidents and waves of anti-Semitism only seem innocuous in retrospect but were terrifying to those who lived in the midst of them; and that the negative regard in which Jews have been held throughout American history... has at least rendered society indifferent or hostile to Jewish interests." See Gerber, "Anti-Semitism in American History, 9-12.

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affect life choices made by these Jews.[10] They have instead opted to argue that these Jews primarily freely assimilated and consequently surrendered their Jewish identities. Consequently, the field of southern Jewish history has been compromised because in the American south, new and more modern strains of anti-Semitism developed and substantially influenced the construction and display of southern Jewish identity. Differently from old overt and violent forms, American southern society recreated subtle and insidious forms of anti-Semitism in developing and upholding new Christian ideologies, Christian laws, and Christological oaths.[11]

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[10]For examples see Gary L. Bunker and John Appel, " "Shoddy" Anti-Semitism and the Civil War" in *American Jewish History* vol. 82 nos. 1-4, Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), David Gerber, " Anti-Semitism and Jewish Gentile Relations 3-54. (get full cite) Rudolf Glanz *The Jew in Early American Wit and Graphic Humor.* (New York: KTAZ Publishing House Inc., 1973), Mark I. Greenberg, "Ambivalent Relations: Acceptance and Anti-Semitism in Confederate Thomasville" in *American Jewish Archives* Spring/Summer, 1993 vol. XLV no. 1., Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1989), Stephen Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), Frederik Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), Louis A. Mayo, *The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth-Century America's Perception of the Jew* (London: Associated University Press, 1988), Laurence R. Moore, R., *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Abraham J. Peck, "That Other Peculiar Institution: Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth-Century South," *Modern Judaism* 7, no.1 (1987): 99-114. and Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South" in *American Jewish History* March 1988 vol. LXXVII no. 3.

[11]It is my contention that the lack of critical analysis of antebellum southern Jewish history is directly dependent on the fact that scholars have argued that anti-Semitism virtually did not exist in the southern context. Scholars assumed that after the revolution, all citizens were granted political equality. Aside from being technically incorrect, historians argued that legislative equality must have meant economic and social equality. Because they have so often relied on an anti-Semitic paradigm to explore American Jewish experiences, they believed that Jews and Christians lived similar lives and that the general American historical narrative sufficed. The consequence of this logic is that any choices or changes that American Jews made with respect to religious observance were insular ones, unaffected by

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Another problem plaguing the field of American Jewish history and subsequently antebellum southern Jewish women's history is its eastern European centered bias.[12] Beginning in the 1890s, the field of American Jewish history has been created and developed by eastern European Jews. Consciously or not, their histories privileged eastern European culture, community formation, and religious observance.[13] Celebrating their own styles of acculturation and preservation of Jewish identity, historians developed an American Jewish historiography that solely reflected and celebrated their achievements, tragedies, victories, and accented their own political projects. In exhaustively detailing their eastern European experiences, American Jewish scholars have not comprehensively explored the pre-1880s Jewish populations, specifically the Sephardic and German waves of immigration. Additionally, scholars have not investigated how the early republic and region affected later Jewish immigrants and their celebrated styles of religious preservation. Rather than providing such a comprehensive

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existing secular political, social, or economic systems. This assumption misleads the constant negotiating that antebellum southern Jews engaged in to live fulfilling lives as Jews and as Americans. Legislative and social forms of anti-Semitism infect many aspects of antebellum society and affected the choices made by Jews both individually and collectively.

[12]With exception of localized studies and clearly marked titles that address colonial and early republican Jewry, most surveys of American Jewish history only devote a small portion of their analysis to the earliest Jewish migrants.

[13]Historian Hasia Diner argued that American Jewish historians being largely children and grandchildren of Eastern European immigrants, painted a stilted portrait of earlier American Jews. Additionally, she argued that they have contrasted the eastern-European migration experiences as "more interesting, more Jewish, and more willing to confront and criticize the demands of mainstream American culture." See Hasia Diner, *The Second Migration, 1820-1880: A Time for Gathering* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 2.

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analysis of pre-1880s Jews and examining the links and interdependencies of each wave, scholars frequently, whether consciously or not, used early nineteenth-century American Jewish historical experiences as foils for reconstructing their own historical narrative or those of their ancestors. Consequently, a negative undercurrent in the narrative developed in many of the histories. Post-1880s eastern European Jews appeared more dedicated to their religion and native culture in subsequent histories than German Jews.[14] Conversely, historians portrayed early American and southern Jews as uninterested in reconciling their obligations as Jews with their goals of material prosperity and American ideological expectations. These histories imply that the first wave of Jewish immigrants were ready and willing to shed their Jewishness.[15] Unlike early Jewish migrants,

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[14]It should also be noted that perhaps this bias in American Jewish historiography occurs because of the German Jewish migrants' responses to the eastern European migration. As historian Arthur Hertzberg has pointed out in his study, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History*, German Jews had a different vision as to how one should undergo the immigrant adjustment process in America. According to the author, "immigrants came, bringing with them foreign ways, but they soon unlearned them and became Americans." The single distinction however, for German Jews, was religion and so they retained their Jewish faith. According to Hertzberg, ""German Jews" were proud of their acheivement in becoming such Americans, and they fully expected the "Russian Jews" to remake themselves in this long-existing pattern." Even though Hertzberg disputes the reality of such a philosophy, German Jews were angered by Russian émigrés insistence on retaining many aspects of their culture. German Jews feared such behavior destabilized their identity as Americans. See Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, pp. 186-7.

[15]In the process of constructing an eastern-European/American Jewish historiography, early American Jewish scholars constructed a rather ahistorical, reductive, and not very useful paradigm which served more to obscure nineteenth-century American southern Jewish history. I term this methodological framework "assimilation/acculturation." The dichotomy did not simultaneously exist, rather the 1880s eastern-European migration served as a demarcation point. Though no one specific piece of historiographical literature actually points this out, an examination of the literature collectively revealed a startling phenomenon. The pre-1880s narrative progresses like this: the Spanish, French, Caribbean, English, Portuguese, Brazilian, German, and Netherlands emigres quickly shed their Jewishness in hopes of fully taking advantage of America's social, economic, and political opportunities. These Jews failed the

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historical narratives implied that eastern European Jews (although they also immigrated to America for economic reasons) were committed to negotiating between their material and spiritual goals. Scholars and readers alike are left with the impression that earlier Jewish migrants denigrated their Judaism while eastern Europeans eventually rescued Judaism from those who did not respect it nor try to preserve its heritage and legacy.[16] These histories imply that it was these victorious eastern European Jews within the ghettos of New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia who

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traditions of thousands of years as they compromised their religious convictions and prohibitions, marital preferences, dietary restrictions, and holiday observances for the sake of personal gain. As a result, scholars failed to historically contextualize early nineteenth-century American Jewish history. Instead of locating the American Jewish experience within the relevant social, political, regional, or economic context, they often relied on a rather benign and ahistorical portrayal of Jewish assimilation. American Jewish historian Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus fully accepted this argument and stated that Jews' desperate desire to assimilate was often accompanied by "degradation and apathy." Consequently, the pursuit of Jewish culture was not a major goal of the antebellum Jews. See Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jew: 1585-1990 A History* (New York: Carlson, 1995), 84 and 100. It should be noted that historian Arthur Hertzberg has argued that though such a philosophy of assimilation existed among earlier Jewish immigrant generations, it was not the reality. According to Hertzberg, earlier Jewish migrants did not abandon their Judaism, and additionally, colonial, revolutionary, and early republic America wrestled with the presence of Jews and debated on their ability, since church and state were not in reality separated, to be full and trusted citizens. See Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, pp. 186-7.

[16]Twentieth-century American Jewish historians have exhaustively analyzed the collective and individual responses of American Jews with respect to their adjustment and involvement in Jewish and secular life. They continue to uncover important patterns, strategies, and responses to the major and minor changes throughout the United States and internationally. They employ a respectful, reverential, and even sympathetic tone when depicting and critically analyzing events involving or affecting American Jews. One is amazed at historians' tenacity and seemingly unending voraciousness for uncovering American Jewish responses to twentieth century anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, the establishment of the state of Israel, relations within and without the community, an d United States' political, social and religious events and changes. As dedicated as twentieth-century American Jewish historians have been, these same scholars fail to cast a critical and analytical eye on their nineteenth-century compatriots. According to Arthur Hertzberg, it seems that German Jews lost the "historiographical war" because of the presence of Zionism in America. The appearance of Zionism, Hertzberg argues, galvanized the overwhelmingly Russian Jewish immigrant groups and thus monumentally shaped American Jewish ethnic identity within Jewish communities and their roles in American politics. See Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, pp. 217-8.

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ultimately managed to create a lively, engaging, productive, and influential American Jewish presence. Constructing such a negative/positive dichotomy between the two waves of Jewish immigrants has obscured the historical experiences of early republic and southern Jews and their impact upon eastern European Jewry's settlement success.[17] Consequently, uncovering the southern Jewish experience has often been left to amateur historians interested in recovering their own personal historical legacies and therefore often appears provincial, celebratory, and disconnected to other southern Jewish historical experiences.

Similarly, the popular method of exploring American Jewish historical experiences through an assimilation paradigm also presents problems. First, the thrust of these narratives is highly formulaic with the end pre-scripted, and merely follows the Jewish individual and communal experiences until the assimilation process was completed.[18] According to these narratives, foreigners enter the country where they are

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[17] Many American Jewish scholars overlooked the obstacles that the initial American Jewish community faced. Jews arrived from numerous ethnic backgrounds, with different ideas about religious observance, beliefs, and value systems. Instead of exploring how Jewish communities managed to manufacture a collective Jewish community against this diversity, historians have dismissed their efforts as assimilative, superficial, and devoid of Jewish tenets. Aptly stated by Hasia Diner in *A Time for Planting:* "most of the institutions created by these Jews have been viewed as... devoid of Jewish content, shallow in larger meaning--their charity, social clubs, and synagogues have been presented as ***slavish*** imitations of the Christian models around them rather than as serious efforts to transplant traditional forms into new terrain." 2.

[18] An example of this is Oscar Handlin's book *Adventures in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1954.) Historian Paula Hyman challenged scholars to rethink the problems associated with employing assimilation as an effective method in recovering nineteenth-century American Jewish experiences and especially American Jewish women. She argued that scholars must understand the concrete differences between assimilation and its subset, acculturation. She

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first viewed by the larger society as alien and suspect but successive generations gradually acquired the ideologies and behaviors of the majority populations and therefore achieved societal tolerance and eventually, acceptance. In theory, the assimilation process is complete when the immigrant population is, for the most part, indistinguishable from the Gentile and therefore enjoys full economic, social, and political rights. The paradigm presents several problems. First, the end of the process is completely pre-determined. Scholars search for assimilation indicators and subsequently, construct the history around the paradigm. Therefore, with the methodology thus determining the historical narrative, the actual circumstances in which American Jews were operating, including the social, economic, political, and regional environments becomes somewhat tangential. Finally, there is abundant historic evidence that assimilation was never the goal or the fate of the majority of Jewish immigrants who strove to preserve their Jewish identity and rather *acculturated* to country and regional customs of culture.

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concluded that assimilation functions as both a sociological process and a project. As a sociological process, assimilation undergoes several stages. The first step includes acculturation that means acquiring larger societal modes of dress, language and values. At the same time, the minority groups' commensurate customs are weakened. Assimilation is successful when the minority desires to be like and join the majority and the majority population accepts this relationship. Thus as a process assimilation requires acculturation and integration. Hyman argued that American Jews operated under the second aspect of assimilation, that of a project. The American Jewish community desired to take advantage of America's cultural, social, and economic opportunities but wanted to retain certain forms of Jewish identity based on a shared religious culture as well as a shared historical memory. See Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 13-16).

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Additionally, the assimilationist paradigm presents specific problems for uncovering antebellum southern Jewish women's history because historians have used these women, historically, as paragons of assimilation, something which, in American Jewish history, is sometimes viewed negatively.[19] Linking Jewish women to the negatively viewed topic of assimilation left scholars and laypeople alike with the impression that women were solely responsible for the disintegration and potential disappearance of Judaism in America and specifically in the American antebellum south.[20] To study assimilation in the antebellum south, many scholars focused on the social lives and marital patterns of southern Jewish women. They have read exogamy rates among southern Jewish women as a rejection of their Judaism. In this view, antebellum southern Jewish women rushed to total assimilation and the social and economic advantages this wrought. Scholars concluded that material advantages meant more to these women than their religious convictions and religious communal

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[19]Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation.* Jewish women desired to continue practicing Judaism. Hyman and Kaplan's research demonstrated that in order to assess the extent and affect of Jewish assimilation one must factor gender, meaning both men and women, into the equation.

[20]This phenomenon centrally begins with the historical actors themselves. Routinely, religious and lay leaders delivered sermons and speeches that were later published in the *Occident* that castigated antebellum southern Jewish women's involvement with Gentile men. See Jacob Rader Marcus, *Early American Jewry: The Jews of Pennsylvania and the South, 1655-1790* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953) and Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 198), 9. Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), 160. In a single paragraph however, Hasia Diner attempts to correct this

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solidarity.[21] In reality, recent treatments have hinted that, in fact, Jewish men more frequently practiced exogamy. Scholarly speculations regarding nineteenth-century American Jews' reasons for assimilation reveal very little about actual women's historical experiences, and instead, serve as an effective diatribe against assimilation. Aside from the fact that intermarriage does not necessarily mean a wholesale rejection of Judaism, this dissertation will show many Jewish women resisted intense pressure to assimilate and worked instead to construct and maintain viable southern Jewish communities.

American Jewish Women's Historiography

Another central problem in American Jewish historiography is the reticence to incorporate the category of gender in any comprehensive manner. Jewish women's historians, like Paula Hyman and Marion Kaplan, have persuasively argued that previous scholars tended to view the history of Jewish men as Jewish history. These scholars relied on sources written by men and assumed that men and women shared similar historical experiences and were reluctant to accept or understand how Jewish women's

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historical axiom. See Hasia Diner, *The Jewish People in America*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.), 139

[21]Paula Hyman argued that employing assimilation as the primary analytical tool for uncovering gendered experiences "obscures the varieties of behaviors and nuances of identity that characterize modern Jewish identity." She argued that the main reason historians constructed the early American Jewish women narrative through the assimilation paradigm was because it served a useful tool in the Jewish community's political project to improve Jews' status within public opinion. Jews employed the actions and motivations of Jewish women to emphasize Jews' Americanness and their worthiness of citizenship. Thus, in the Saidian sense, the discourse of the Jewish woman becomes the constructed Other serving to boost Gentile acceptance of the Jews. The demanding pressures of this political project hindered any attempts to uncover

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historical experiences differed from their male counterparts.[22] Consequently, early American Jewish historiography and specifically southern Jewish historiography is rich in studies of prominent male Jewish politicians, merchants, businessmen, and philanthropists and analyses of how their Jewishness did or did not affect their experiences or actions. The heavy focus on men, however, has left Jewish women's experiences shadowed by the historical experiences of their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons.[23]

Still some scholars have begun to focus their attention on American Jewish women's experiences but the historiography primarily remains in a celebratory stage. Consequently, recent efforts at incorporating gender into their analyses have created a rather flat composite of antebellum southern Jewish women. Essentially, the existing analyses follows two general trajectories. The first focuses on uncovering the existence of Jewish women in American history. This is an important first step for, as Anita Libman Lebeson points out, Jewish women and southern women are virtually absent

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American Jewish women's experiences for the sole purpose of historical curiosity or the intellectual project of history. See Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 11.

[22]Kaplan also astutely pointed out that Jewish women's history has been placed under the category of women's history, without attention to different religious experiences. In other words, Jewish women's experiences are rendered invisible in both Jewish history and women's history. See Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity, in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), vii.

[23]Until recently scholars interested in exploring the experiences of antebellum women have explored the anomalous cases. These include the female spies, the radical activists, and the grand dames.

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from the American historical record.[24] Seeking to rectify this, scholars combed primary and secondary source materials to explore any evidence of Jewish women's experiences. Interesting, celebrated, or anomalous examples of these women were the first to surface in the narratives.[25] Though still in its early stages, American Jewish women's scholars are slowly making the transition to exploring the general American Jewish female population.[26] This scholarship not only serves to enlighten readers about American Jewish women's lives but also proves the legitimacy and importance of this sub-discipline. In doing so, scholars have unfortunately often limited their analyses to viewing women's experiences only through their familial roles and have also distorted

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[24]Anita Libman Lebeson, *Recall to Life: The Jewish Woman in America* (New York: Thomas Youseloff, 1970).

[25]These initial histories of Jewish women are found within general surveys. Scholars like Marcus, Kohler, and Korn devoted several paragraphs and up to a few pages on these women and essentially framed their analysis around traditional notions of womanhood. For examples of celebratory portrayals of Jewish women, see Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980* (New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc., 1981), Stanley R. Brav, "The Jewish Woman, 1861-1865," *American Jewish Archives* (April, 1965): 34-75, Rudolf Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America: Two Female Generations 1820-1929, Volume II: The German Jewish Woman* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976), and Walter Sullivan, *The War Women Lived: Female Voices from the Confederate South.* (Nashville: J.S. Sanders and Company, 1995)

[26]I believe Joan Scott's description of the progress of women's history aptly demonstrates where the field of American Jewish history and especially antebellum southern Jewish women sits today. It is my contention that this field is still in transition caught between the first and second stages. This first stage, according to Scott, is descriptive as it refers to the existence of phenomena or realities but fails to interpret, explain, or attribute causality. The second stage seeks to explain realities of women's experiences. See Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 180. The field of nineteenth-century American Jewish women's historiography has only cautiously moved between and beyond these stages. Existing theoretical frameworks that emphasize essentialism and idealism have hampered the progress of this project.

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Jewish women's experiences by reading their activities through biblical models, such as "*Eshet Chayal*" or "woman of valor." [27]

The most popular method used to explore Jewish women's experiences is through the family. Jacob Rader Marcus' early twentieth century work began the conversation on early American southern Jewish women. His prolific and well-respected scholarly contributions have made scholars reticent to question his initial assumptions about American Jewish women's historical experiences and their inextricable links to the family. Marcus relied on traditional Jewish and Victorian notions of womanhood, the centrality of the family, as well as biblical models to frame his understanding of American Jewish women's historical experiences. Summing up his ideas, Marcus stated: "American Jewish history owes almost everything to the family, and the family is the wife."[28] This statement and these frameworks served as historical models and have shaped decades of scholarship on American Jewish women. Present day scholarship still tends to examine Jewish women's experiences through the lens of her husband and family. Consequently, the uniqueness of their experiences, responses, and activities, were subverted under a paradigm that overlooked individual choices and identity constructions apart from family life. For example, echoing Marcus and other male-biased historical frameworks, Stephen J. Whitfield similarly lauded the primacy of the family in

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[28]Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewish Women*, 15.

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American Jewish history. Because the family included women, he suggested that it served as the perfect paradigm by which Jewish women's experiences could be examined.[29] Similarly, Rudolf Glanz stated that domestic responsibilities absorbed Jewish women's energies so much that little time was left for them to engage in the public sphere.[30] This historiographical conclusion has obscured American Jewish women's very active roles and influence in America's economic, political, and social spheres. The transhistorical notion that women's historical lives were inextricably linked to the family remains an abiding assumption in American Jewish women's scholarship.[31]

Along similar lines, several recent American historical analyses rely on Marion Kaplan's study of German Jewish women and their primary role in the family as caregivers and intermediaries of Jewish culture. Without specific attention to the

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[29]His interest, however, is not in revealing Jewish women's actual historical experiences, instead he advocated that women be used as a category for historical analysis to fully understand the pivotal role that the Jewish family had on the emergence of American Jewish culture.

[30]Rudolf Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America*, 21.

[31]For a related critique on this see Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz's *Written out of History*. Henry and Taitz argue that the discourse on Jewish women renders them invisible by portraying them as women who preferred to be silent in voice and deed while they worked for the betterment of their home, family, and Jewish community. The authors point out that scholars have incorrectly argued that these women did not wish to be involved in public religious and secular issues and instead preferred to defer to superior male opinions. Henry and Taitz summarized these scholarly conclusions as ones which perceived "(the Jewish woman) gave life and continuity to Judaism...(and) was quiet, unostentatious, and active." See Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz., eds. *Written out of History: Our Jewish Foremothers* (Fresh Meadows: Biblio Press, 1983), 1. This paradigm is extremely popular because it excuses scholars again from researching Jewish women's historical experiences and allows them to continue to privilege male experiences and agendas. This framework reinscribes the notion that men's history equals history and that men and women's history is the same. The framework also implies that women are mere facilitators and not active participants in history. Such a narrative also implies that these women neither possessed nor fashioned individual or collective identities.

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American setting, recent dissertations on the topic have transferred Kaplan's argument to the United States and argued that Jewish women acted as liaisons to their families with respect to Jewish and secular traditions.[32] These studies argue that these women encouraged their children and family to imbue certain secular ideals that improved Jews' social, political, and economic standing, but also encouraged them to retain important elements of their Jewishness.[33] While such work recognizes women's contributions towards the preservation of Jewish culture **and** secular acceptance, it also reinforces the ahistorical notion that women's productive efforts relating to Jewish identity and communal development came solely through their actions on behalf or within the family. This dissertation will describe how and why antebellum southern Jewish women played active and influential roles in politics, education, the preservation and defense of Jewish culture. Secular and religious concerns frequently propelled antebellum southern Jewish women into the public. Economic necessity, creating and sustaining public educational structures, the development of local and regional Jewish communities, and contesting national and international anti-Semitic events represent just a few of the reasons why these women pushed for greater public roles and responsibilities.

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[32]For examples, see Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah Georgia, 1830-1880" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1997), and Emily Simms Bingham, "Mordecai: Three Generations of a Southern Jewish Family, 1780-1865" (Ph. D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 1998.

[33]Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class.*

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Scholars also find comparing Jewish women's experiences to female biblical models an appealing device. The ideal of *Eshet Chayal* is celebratory in nature and reinforces traditional concepts of womanhood.[34] The *Eshet Chayal* paradigm follows a strict progression. The Jewish woman enters the narrative as a self-involved woman without much fortitude. The catalyst to her self-actualization involves a physical or moral crisis involving herself, her family, or her community. The event forces her to re-examine herself, discover her own strength, re-engage her relationship with Judaism and God, and sacrifice herself for the benefit of her family or community. Trusting this model to reveal contemporary Jewish women's experiences, scholars further justified using this formula by assuming that Jewish women were aware of these models and consciously molded their aspirations and actions after famous biblical heroines.[35] According to these analyses, Jewish women focused their life energies solely on the material and spiritual preservation of the Israelite nation and the Jewish family. As in the assimilation archetype, these women's historical experiences are ahistorical and are limited to fit the model. Like the family paradigm, this framework eliminates any individual specificity with respect to Jewish women's life experiences. In reality, the *Eshet Chayal* seems to

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[34]See Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America* and Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980.*

[35]Frequently, the earliest scholarship framed discussions of contemporary southern female heroines against the legacy of Judaism's foremothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, or Leah or the prophet Deborah and a myriad of other biblical heroines.

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reveal more about biblical and masculine conceptualizations of appropriate womanhood rather than revealing antebellum southern Jewish women's experiences.[36]

The existing scholarship on antebellum southern Jewish women neglects class. Scholars have tended to limit their focus to southern elite Jewish women who left a plethora of public and private documents.[37] They have, in effect, neglected to fully

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[36]Those women who aspired to move beyond the veil of domesticity were deemed anomalous and either celebrated, castigated, or were simply excluded. Several southern Jewish American women have been researched through this *Eshet Chayal* paradigm. Some of the more famous examples include Eugenia Levy Phillips, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, and Phoebe Pember Yates.

[37] In addition to limiting their analyses to middle and upper class women, scholars have also distorted their experiences by transferring the obnoxious recent post-World War II constructions of the American Jewish Princess onto them. See Rudolf Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America,* 19. Respected historian Rudolf Glanz suggested that Jewish women's motivations were generally free from economic fears when making personal choices. Such a flippant assessment reflects post World War II Jewish males' misogynist feelings towards Jewish women rather than an accurate portrayal of southern Jewish women's economic and social experiences. See Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble between Jewish Women and Jewish Men* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999). This era-affected assessment has been transplanted into antebellum southern Jewish historiography and led scholars to conclude that southern antebellum Jewish women's choices were frivolous, not serious, and certainly detached from their religious communities. Aside from insulting and belittling the decisions of bourgeois women, this historical myth has done much to render invisible the many working class and middle class Jewish women.

In addition to bourgeois notions about Jewish women, the image of the "salon Jewess" has also greatly influenced the discourse on antebellum southern Jewish women. Though developed during the Enlightenment and primarily located in the European setting, American Jewish scholars frequently project the motivations, actions, and consequences of European salon Jewesses onto elite southern Jewish women. Underscoring their reasons for doing so, scholars argued that though salons did not develop in the American setting, certain Jewish women shared many savory and unsavory characteristics with their European salon predecessors. Like their European counterparts, elite antebellum southern Jewish women were economically well off, socially popular, and influenced intellectually by Enlightenment ideologies. In a race to prove their worthiness to secular American society and close the distance between themselves and Gentiles, certain Jewish women dropped or substantially questioned the validity of their religion, believing it archaic, outmoded, and ill-suited for the new modern American society. According to historians, salon Jewesses and eventually elite American Jewish women did this to demonstrate their respectability to general society and in order to take advantage of the new privileges that the Enlightenment conferred on gentile citizens. For example see Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America,* 9. This analysis does not utilize the salon Jewess model because none of the research completed in preparation for the dissertation points to the existence of any such phenomenon in the American or southern context.

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research Jacob Rader Marcus' brief conclusion that during the colonial and early republic period the typical Jewish woman was the wife of a craftsman, retailer or a storekeeper.[38] In addition, there is evidence that during the post-Revolutionary period, many widows and unmarried women opened shops of their own. Though sources are extremely difficult to find, it is vital that scholars broaden their notions of class in their analyses of Jewish women to fully understand the development of the southern Jewish community or the subsequent forms of Judaism that emerged. Public documents, city directories, newspapers, synagogue and cemetery records and letters reveal a southern merchant and working class female Jewish world. These women were part of Jewish history.

Antebellum Southern Women's Historiography

Aside from these problems in American Jewish women's historiography, antebellum southern women's historians also need to rethink the ways in which their paradigms, including their continued usage of black/white dichotomies, the regular omission of class, and the assumption that the only white religious population occupying the antebellum south was Protestant have obscured antebellum southern Jewish women's experiences.[39] Much of the historiography on southern women is framed through the lens

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[38]Marcus, *The American Jewish Women,* 17-18. Mothers, wives, and daughters were generally familiar with the family business as it was not unusual for them to clerk for the head of the house when he was absent.

[39]Southern women's scholars, beginning with Anne Firor Scott and Catherine Clinton in the seventies and gaining serious momentum in the last decade, have spent a great deal of time working on the discovery and recovery of southern women. See Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to*

of slavery, relations between free whites and enslaved African-Americans, and the connected economic and social systems. Recent scholars broadened their understanding of the racial and class terrain of the south. The black/white dichotomy fails to address religious difference, class and gender issues, the fluidity of racial definitions and other, ethnically, religiously and marginalized populations' historical experiences. With respect to Jewish women, southern scholars have heretofore primarily classed Jews as white and were content with assuming that their historical experiences were similar to Protestant white women's.[40] In so doing, they have neglected to explore how their marginalized

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Politics 1830-1930 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970) and Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within a Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). In a later effort, Catherine Clinton appropriately termed southern women "half sisters of history" because most women's scholars failed to consider southern women serious historical subjects worthy of analysis. Anne Firor Scott, in *Women of the South: A Multicultural Reader*, summarized contemporary historiographical efforts. She concluded that the scholarship has come a long way in including the employment of theory, literary criticism, and an increase of black and lower class women's history. Recent books addressing such topic in southern women's history include Caroline Dilman Matheny ed., *Southern Women.* (New York: Hampshire Publishing Corporation, 1988), Christine Ann Farnham ed., *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), Jean S. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity ," Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila L. Skemp, *Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), Sally G. Mc Millen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South* (Chicago: Harlan Davidson, 1992), Walter Sullivan, *The War Women Lived: Female Voices from the Confederate South* (Nashville: J.S. Sanders and Company, 1995), and Marli F. Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[40]Recently, newer scholars have addressed the existence of ethnic plurality in the South. Several brief case studies have superficially explored Jewish, German, and Irish populations. They have tested the southern white female paradigm to explore whether the women of these populations acted or responded differently to Southern events because of their ethnicity. See Lauren Kattner, " The Diversity of Old South White Women: The Peculiar Worlds of German American Women," in Patricia Morton, *Discovering the*

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religion might promote a uniquely different historical experience and have generally neglected to consider, employ, or critically examine sources about or written by southern Jewish women.[41]

While scholars have classed Jews as white, however, it is clear that antebellum southerners distinguished between certain "desirable" and "non-desirable" "white" minorities and did not always designate Jews as white.[42] Historical evidence does suggest that though Jewish and southern Protestant white women frequently socialized, Protestant women viewed their Jewish friends differently than themselves.[43] Depending

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Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past (The University of Georgia Press, Athens & London, 1996, and James Hagy, "Not Subject to his Control: Jewish Women as Free Traders in South Carolina, 1766-1827," (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1988). Christine Farnham's recent editorial effort, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, represents one of the most recent pieces of southern antebellum women's historiography that explores the minority experience. The researchers in Christine Farnham's book completed several case studies of different minorities living in the antebellum south, including one on two southern Jewish women.

[41] I found it fascinating after surveying the historical canon, that none of the scholars employed any Jewish sources. I find this especially interesting given the existence of abundant material in the major southern state and university archives. One must ask why these scholars, even in constructing a general narrative, resisted or excluded these sources.

[42] I am uncomfortable placing southern Jewish women under the category of "white" because a great debate took place in the antebellum south regarding Jews' whiteness. Social theorists held conferences in the south debating Jews' racial designation and failed to achieve a consensus. Jews could be the "purest" of Caucasians or they could be the worst "hybrids." Racial propagandist Josiah Nott supported this theory and to lend credence to his hypothesis, used pseudo-science, and, specifically, craniometry and scriptural testimony to confirm that Jews were Caucasian. Nott presented his findings in Charleston in 1850, coincidentally or not in the city which housed the largest American southern Jewish population. The paper title was "An Examination of the Physical History of the Jews in Its Bearings on the Question of the Unity of the Races."

[43] Edward Said's observations regarding the *other* prove especially valuable in understanding how the historical image of the white Christian woman has come to dominate the narrative. Most recently British historian, Billie Melman's research has revealed how white women were complicit in the creation and silencing of *others*. Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918 Sexuality, Religion and Work* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992). Similarly, in the

on the individual and the tenor of the times, bourgeois and elite Protestant white women generally vacillated on their opinions of Jewish women. Yet, even during the best of times, Protestant white women did not entirely accept Jewish women as equals or as whites even as they socialized with them. In the face of economic hardship, religious upheaval, and political turmoil, southern white women were less than magnanimous in their feelings about Jewish women. During these times, and especially during the Civil War, southern white women viewed Jewish women suspiciously.[44] Scholars must understand that religious differences fundamentally affected these women's life experiences and actions. Antebellum southern Jewish women's religious differences influenced their communal and individual activities, their display of identities, and their responses to southern upheaval in social and economic realms.

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antebellum southern context, Protestant white women also engaged in this project in order to strengthen their stability and to preserve their status by denying non Gentile-women their own nuanced identities and more proactively reinforcing anti-Semitic stereotypes. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes" in Patrick Williams and Laura Crisman ed., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Columbia University Press, 1994), Mohanty first introduced this theory in her study of the relationship between British white women and colonized non-white women. Similarly, antebellum southern women's scholars achieved visibility for their subjects by denying the existence of other women. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak concluded that historical subjects and historians impulsively construct these subaltern identities to suit their own psychological and scholarly aims. See Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Willams and Crisman, *Colonial Discourse*, 90. This dissertation addresses relationships between Jewish women and Protestant white and African American men and women and how those interactions influenced how Jewish women created a different historical voice, protected their religious heritage, and created a unique regional identity based on religion and race.

[44]David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991). Though Roediger restricted his study to Irish laborers, I believe that his argument regarding the wages of whiteness is crucial to understanding how Jewish women constructed their identities. I would add to Roediger's thesis that the white privilege included several obvious and subtle benefits and that depending on the historical context, these benefits frequently changed.

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Theory and Methodology

Several theoretical paradigms from cultural studies, African-American women's history, anthropology, and philosophy inform the direction of this dissertation and my understanding about individual and communal identity construction and ethnic or religious community development. First and foremost, the project begins with the most basic understanding first articulated by Gayatri Spivak, that scholars cannot construct a single, all-encompassing progressive, linear narrative and that to construct a single and coherent narrative is not only impossible, but is also counterproductive.[45] Thus it is impossible in this venue not to neglect certain voices. Instead, this dissertation selects specific aspects of antebellum southern Jewish women's lives to demonstrate their influence on the development of southern Jewish individual and communal identity, and their assistance in gaining Jewish acceptance in southern society, and in contesting anti-Semitism. Similarly, this dissertation is also informed by Elsa Barkely Brown's framework which supports examining women's historical experiences as if one were listening to many simultaneous conversations or "multiple rhythms" within the historical narrative.[46] Issues of southernness, religiosity, Judaism, class, race, and gender

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[45]Spivak,Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 66-112.

[46]Elsa Barkely Brown, "What Has Happened Here": The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics" in Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed eds., ***"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible" A Reader in Black Women's History*** (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1995), 297. In several articles, she employs several analogies that effectively convey the same methodology. These include Gumbo Ya Ya, jazz, or African quilt. She states that those who construct symmetry and melody in

simultaneously occupied the minds of these women and affected their actions and motivations. Specifically, this dissertation addresses the question of how these women's different voices worked individually and collectively to preserve Judaism while simultaneously strengthening their secular position as southerners.[47]

Central to analyzing these varying "voices" or identities is understanding how, when, and why they were performed. Other theorists have explored this and what they have concluded about identity development plays a pivotal role in this project's investigation of how these women tapped into their gender, racial, and religious identities to effect change.[48] Two specific frameworks are, a priori, used in this project. Both

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their narrative obscure historical reality. Instead, she challenges scholars to look for poly-rhythms, multiple conversations, difference, or asymmetry in the historical experience.

[47]Brown, Elsa Barkely. "What Has Happened Here," 298-300. Also according to Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, a comprehensive understanding of women's gender is not "extractable from the context in which one is a woman--that is their race, class, era and place they lived in." See also Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race", 3-24.

[48] Samuel Delaney's article, "Coming/Out" provides an axiomatic foundation for the understanding of identity. Delaney challenges the finality of the term identity and instead suggests that an individual's identity is never complete and is in constant development. Throughout their lives, individuals are always in the "gradual, continual, and constantly modulating process of becoming." Additionally, Delaney argues that "while certainly (single events) contribute to what we are or are becoming, single events simply do not carry the explicative strength "definition" denotes." See Samuel Delaney, "Coming/Out" in Patrick Merla, ed., *Boys Like Us: Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories* (New York: Avon Books, 1996).

A complex understanding of the term identity is required in order to recover antebellum southern Jewish women's construction. Michael Krausz described identity as a discursive production of the self. He suggested: "An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed-end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our and others' lives." See Michael Krausz "On Being Jewish" in David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz eds., *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 265.

explore identity but through the different lens of gender and ethnicity. With respect to gender, theorist Judith Butler argued:

> Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.[49]

Cultural theorists David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz developed the second framework used in this analysis. They examined identity development as it pertained to ethnicity and suggested:

> Social identities are not just given, they are not simply established facts. What one is...is produced and reproduced against a complex of social, political, cultural, technological, and economic conditions. In being reproduced from one moment to the next, from one social setting to another, one's identity is often transformed by the push and pull of politics, economics, and ideology, by the identities of others with

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Additionally, Stuart Hall's discussion of identity in his article, "Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identities" is also very useful in discovering the complexities of identity. Principally, Hall argues that an investigation of identities must necessarily situational and thus be contexutalized historically, and specifically, culturally. Culture, according to Hall, positions individuals' speech and actions and consequently, their identities. Accordingly for Hall, identities, like culture and history are never static and are continuously fashion and refashioned. To more effectively explore the development of identities, Hall maps a specific course in which scholars must understand original and changing conceptualizations about tradition, the disappearance and reemergence of cultural and identity signifiers, the dialectics of "(o)thering," the individual crafting and recrafting one's racial and ethnic histories, the development of cultural and racist nationalism, and the distribution of power in society. See Stuart Hall, " Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identities," in Wahneema Lubiano ed., *The House that Race Built: Black Americans, U.S. Terrain* (New York: Pantheon Books) pp. 289-99.

[49]Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" in *Theater Journal* 40, no.4 (1988): 519-31. It should be noted that Butler's theories are especially relevant for uncovering the various ways in which ethnic identities are situationally performed. Additionally, in her article "Fag-Hags and Bu-Jews," Naomi Seidman underscores Butler's theory that ethnicity is also a variation of a drag performance. See Seidman, "Fag-Hags and Bu-Jews," pg. 263.

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Echoing Butler's, Goldberg's, and Krausz's sentiments, this project assumes that no core ethnic or gender identity exists. Rather, aspects of identity, specifically those under scrutiny in this context, represent a conscious and stylized corporeal act whereby the self continuously reinvents itself. In other words, identity is situational and all identity characteristics reinvent themselves depending on the context.[51] Krausz and Goldberg suggested that identity is "historically and culturally emergent...(and) persons are seen as positions in culturally and historically conditioned discourses." Its development is processual, in constant production, and is, therefore, never complete. If identity characteristics are dependent on others for their development and on context, this calls into question essentialist and transhistorical American Jewish historical assumptions about gender, religiosity, and community development. This dissertation specifically explores how antebellum southern Jewish women called up these identity characteristics, separately and collectively, to project an empowered Jewish identity, develop the

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[50]Goldberg and Krausz, *Jewish Identity*, 1.

[51]This scholar relies on a non-essentialist or non-foundational concept of identity. This stipulation calls into question previous American Jewish historiographers reductive definitions of Jewishness. As Krausz suggested "a single discourse cannot be privileged as the one that captures the singularly right construal of Jewish identity (and) Jewish history cannot be equated with the observance of certain practices." Thus, several Jewish selves may be constructed depending on the historical context and the discursive interaction.

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Stuart Hall and Riv-Ellen Prell's theories on cultural identity are especially useful in understanding the complexity of American Jewish cultural identity formation. Cultural identity contains two components. The first component suggests that communal identification can only be established through past experiences. This involves a shared culture or a collective self in which people possess a shared history and ancestry. Common historical experiences and shared cultural codes construct one people with a stable reference.[52] Jewish identities, according to Riv Ellen Prell are built by a succession of collective ethnic memories and experiences.[53] Hall credits Diasporic beliefs with the formation of Jewish cultural identity. Jews' exiled status into the Diaspora while awaiting the return of the Messiah, linked Jews across geographic boundaries and timespace. Subsequent events further solidifying cultural identification

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[52]Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Williams and Crisman eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 392- 403. Hall explored the African Diaspora. Jews also invoked the concept of Diaspora as a mechanism designed to preserve the Jewish nation and religious observance, and galvanize the Jewish nation across the world and time.

[53]Riv-Ellen Prell added to the discussion in her latest book on the effects of assimilation as it related to Jewish gendered stereotypes during the late nineteenth century and through the twentieth century. With respect to ethnic groups she argued that groups "invent their identities by building on collective memories and experiences." See Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble between Jewish Women and Jewish Men* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 15.

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Hall and Prell's assertions exist as a fundamental axiom in this dissertation. It is the Jews' historical legacy as a victorious though persecuted group that encouraged antebellum southern Jewish women to want to preserve Judaism in the southern context through their efforts in education, writing, and the development of religious communities. Additionally, Judith Baskin's understanding of the Diasporic paradigm sheds light on how they constructively created and deployed their identities to effectively negotiate religious obligations with secular ideologies and systems. She suggested:

> Jewish societies in the Diaspora attempted each in its own way, to achieve balance between assuming the language, dress, and customs of their gentile neighbors and maintaining loyalty to the guidance and demands of Rabbinical dicta.[55]

Despite living in a Protestant society, the majority of the evidence suggests that many Jews never intended to fully assimilate. They wanted to take advantage of all of the

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[54]Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 394. Though not directly dealt with in this dissertation, Hall also touched upon the effects that the construction of the *other* had on cultural identity development. He suggested that minority cultures oftentimes internalized negative or even positive *other* constructions. Jews, certainly in the southern context, contested negative assessments about their collective character. In some instances they employed certain stereotypes as mechanisms of empowerment. But within the historical evidence, one can see that certain southern Jews employed essentialist Jewish characteristics as strategies for individual, congregational, ethnic origin, or class empowerment. In certain instances they claimed they had overcome essential negative components of their character. By this I mean that American Jews not only had the majority white population's "knowledge" of what they were as Jews imposed upon them but also by the "power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm" came to internalize this *other* construction of themselves. According to Hall "this inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms. "

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opportunities that southern society offered them but not necessarily at the expense of their religious beliefs. Their religion always stood as a proud but sometimes uncomfortable marker of difference. Jews recognized that the United States tolerated Jews better than any other nation across historical time and were anxious to not let their religious difference raise the ire or anxiety of Protestant whites. Cognizant of this, southern Jewish women endeavored to create a more modern and less suspicious Jewish identity and community--one they felt was more suitable to the antebellum southern context. Creatively, these women not only subscribed to southern customs of dress, language, and regional ideologies, they used certain secular ideologies and strategies to advance their goals of Jewish preservation. In addition to traditional Judaism and influenced by Protestant reforms and Enlightenment thinking, antebellum southern Jewish women assisted in the development of a distinct form of Jewish identity and communal development coupled with an assertive white southern identity. Such complex identity constructions enabled southern Jews access to the privileges conferred upon middle class whites.

This dissertation is as much about exploring useful alternative methodologies for studying antebellum Jewish women as it is about uncovering their historical experiences. Chapter one provides a brief discussion regarding Jewish settlement in the south as well

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[55]Judith Baskin ed., *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 17-18.

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as a brief description of several of the more prominent women whose writings provide the basis of this dissertation's conclusions. Chapter two addresses antebellum southern Jewish women's education and argues that southern Jews employed certain traditional and non-traditional forms of female education to fight proselytization, assimilation, and shield their daughters from anti-Semitism. Academies, Jewish "friendly" schools, Sunday Schools, seminaries, sibling tutoring, European travel, and correspondence represented just a few of the educational systems used by antebellum southern Jews to preserve Judaism and instill Jewish pride in their daughters. Using James Scott's theory of hidden transcripts, chapter three examines how--in an atmosphere that privileged Christian culture, housed small Jewish populations, supported evangelical Protestantism, and encouraged anti-Semitism--antebellum southern Jewish women forged innovative ways in order to practice their Judaism. Modifying traditional religious practices, promoting Judaism in their private writings, altering their schedules on Sabbaths and holy days, retaining ancient practices such as Jewish marital contracts and Hebrew names enabled Jews to preserve their Judaism away from the watchful eyes of southerners who disdained Jews and aimed to convert them. Borrowing from literary theory, chapter four employs Joyce Warren's analysis of nineteenth-century women's literature and specifically her categories of domestic and "questioner" literature, and Diane Lichtenstein's theory that a nineteenth-century Jewish female literary tradition existed to uncover how antebellum southern Jewish women writers countered literary and legislated

anti-Semitism and promoted Judaic religiosity and practice. Chapter five examines how, in a black and white south and existing as a racially ambiguous population, antebellum southern Jewish women used the only place in which their race was not questioned, in the southern slaveholding household, to reinforce their whiteness. In their writings and actions, southern Jewish women supported the myth of slavery as a benevolent institution, the paternal myth of the family, assumed positions as white female guardians, and supported notions of white superiority and black inferiority in order to reassure themselves of their own whiteness and establish legitimate authority over enslaved African-American. Doing so enabled southern Jewish families to accrue the benefits of whiteness. Chapter six applies Glenda Gilmore's thesis in *Gender and Jim Crow* to explore southern Jewish women's activities during the Civil War. The chaotic and fearful nature of the war encouraged an assault on southern Jewish businessmen. Cartoons, editorials, articles, military orders, and sermons accused these men of profiteering. Attempts by these men to defend themselves were fruitless and therefore southern Jewish women acted as Jewish ambassadors to the southern white community. Through their activities as fundraisers, war supply collectors, smugglers, nurses, volunteers, and belligerents, southern Jewish women provided alternative images of southern Jewish loyalty and subsequently, tempered southern anti-Semitism.

Chapter One
The First Step: Southern Jewish Settlement

Brethren! Let hearts and voices blend
In one deep and earnest prayer,
That Heaven's blessing may descend
Upon Freedom's hallowed sphere;
Where untrammeled faith may sing
Fearless of the bigot's frown,
But to One Celestial King
Bowing her pure spirit down.
Where, upon wisdom's equal plan,
Conscience no controller dreads,
Secure that on the rights of man
No usurping despot treads;
Where unto the highest throne,
Free-will offerings are brought,
Homage to that One alone,
In whose image we are wrought.
Fountain of justice, truth and peace!
May these virtues animate,
Until life itself shall cease,
All the sons of freedom's state.
Grant, that when transferred to earth,
(As religion's charter shows,)
In heaven, where our souls had birth,
They at last may find repose.[1] ("Our Country" by Penina Moise)

When Penina Moise composed these words for the newly created Reformed Society of the Israelites, she invoked the main reasons why Jews, from western and northern Europe as well as South America and the Caribbean, migrated to the colonies and later to the United States. Jews settled in northern and southeastern America because

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[1]Moise, Penina, *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise with a Brief Sketch of her Life* (Charleston: Nicholas G. Duffy, 1911).

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they believed the country offered them liberty, an escape from anti-Semitism, economic opportunity, the chance to exercise free-will, and achieve equality. Before settling on American shores, Jews had survived a long history of persecution, isolation, and exclusion. They looked to America and its rhetoric of freedom and equality to pursue unencumbered religious practices and economic opportunities. Newly immigrated and native-born Jews soon discovered that such rhetoric did not exactly translate into reality. Despite the absence of violent and prolonged attacks on Jews, as they had experienced in Europe and in the Caribbean, Jews still encountered anti-Semitism that prevented them from fully assimilating into American society and thereby denied them full access to civic equality and economic opportunities. This coupled with the extremely difficult task of recreating a solid and viable Jewish community, in the face of a small and dispersed population, frustrated Jews' effort to acculturate to their new surroundings and Gentile neighbors while preserving their own sense of Jewish identity.

Before exploring the various ways antebellum southern Jewish women exercised their Jewish identity or assisted in the creation and maintenance of southern Jewish communities, their lives must be situated within the larger Jewish migration into the southern United States. Southern Jewish women's understanding of their roles and responsibilities as Jewish women, their European legacy, and immigration and settlement experiences, fundamentally influenced their education, how they displayed their

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Life. Charleston: Nicholas G. Duffy, 1911.

religiosity, expressed their Jewish identity in their writing, created alternative southern Jewish sites, related to enslaved African-Americans, and acted during the Civil War.

European Immigration

Historians of the American Jewish Experience tend to segregate the different Jewish migrations into three segments, the Sephardic Era (1654-1820), the German Era (1820-1880), and the Eastern European migrations commencing in 1880.[2] In all three migrations, Jews left Europe mainly because of political, economic, and social inequality. General European society despised Jews and restricted them to geographical peripheries and economically non-productive areas. Exclusion from national political, social, and economic systems forced Jews to set up their own viable communities.[3] Because religion historically separated them from the rest of society, Judaism and its laws acted as the primary agent of government.[4] They established a *Kahal*, a Judaic legal system, that

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[2]Hasia R. Diner, *A Time For Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1. Diner represents one of the current historians who challenge simple migration categories. Diner suggested that these labels are misnomers. For example, in her discussion of the German experience, she questioned the notion that German-American represented a homogeneous group. She persuasively argued that in fact Germans made up a slim majority of the Jewish immigrants of this period. Along with Germans, Jews form Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, Galicia, Alsace, Russia and parts of Lithuania migrated to American during the nineteenth century. Her suggestion begs other historians to examine the veracity of such migration distinctions. This dissertation includes Jewish women of various ethnic origins. The label *Sephardic* is also a misnomer as many Jewish southerners had migrated from aside from England, the Germanic states, South America, and the Caribbean. Also, many of these women claimed American heritage as far back as 1654.

[3]Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 43. European states forbid most Jews to work or marry legally. They prevented them from possessing any real political rights.

[4]Joseph L. Blau, "The Spiritual Life of American Jewry, 1654-1954" *American Jewish Year Book* (1955): 110. The Jewish community consisted of synagogues, schools, cemeteries, orphanages, almshouses, slaughterhouses, and ritual bathing establishments.

prescribed appropriate religious and secular behaviors and meted out punishments for transgressors. This system provided foundational stability for marginalized European Jews. Additionally, in the place of sanctioned State or societal aid, European Jews responded by turning inward to provide goods and services required for the Jewish community. Jewish men and women primarily engaged in peddling. For law and order, European Jews relied on *Talmudic* commentary and deferred to community elders to govern all aspects of their lives. According to Hasia Diner, the Jewish community's structured and regimented nature, based on foundational Jewish principles, ensured the survival of Judaism in the midst of an extremely hostile environment. Judaism formed the cornerstone for their social, economic, and political lives.[5]

Eventually, tumultuous events, societal reorganization, constant border changes, and the subsequent dissolution of peasant life profoundly altered Jew's public and private situations. Jews found their already precarious position further endangered. Dislocated from their homes, their religious communities destroyed, and an inability to find employment forced many European Jews to reconsider their situation. For those who could afford to, migration represented the only realistic option.[6]

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[5]Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 10.

[6]Several European Jews engaged in step migration, that is, they temporarily settled in other places before finally settling in the American south. Many Jewish families first settled in the Dutch West Indies, the Caribbean, or Brazil. Employing their expertise in peddling and the merchant trades, many became successful traders. National defeats resulting in new national leadership coupled with anti-Semitic edicts forced Jews to migrate.

Jewish Settlement in America

The first Jews to land on the American shores were the Spanish Jews, known as the *Sephardim*. They left Spain because of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's Royal edict demanding that all Jews convert to Christianity or leave the country. Many converted and remained in Spain while others became crypto-Jews and outwardly professed their devotion to Christianity, while secretly continuing to practice Jewish ritual. Jews who fled Spain eventually settled in England, Holland, France, the West Indies, Brazil, and the Caribbean and many established themselves as prosperous merchants. Eventually, the Dutch established control in Brazil in 1654 and demanded that all Jews depart the country. Consequently, twenty-three merchants sailed up the St. Charles River towards the colonies and landed in New Amsterdam.[7] The majority of colonial Jews settled in the port cities along the tidewater region--including Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, and New Amsterdam--and quickly involved themselves in coastal and overseas trade.[8] Contrary to the popular belief that all Jews

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[7]Bertram Korn estimated that in 1790, the entire Jewish population in the United States was about three thousand. See Bertram W. Korn, "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival of Judaism in the Antebellum Period," ***American Jewish Historical Quarterly*** LIII, no. 4 (June, 1964): 342 fn. 1.

[8] The existence of several growing port cities in the south motivated as many as one quarter of America's Jewish population to settle in the South. In later decades, Charleston and Savannah housed the two major Jewish communities. The establishment of a Jewish community was an extremely complex and complicated task. According to Abraham Lavender, a successful Jewish community depended on two factors: an active and prosperous local Jewish population and an allowance by the greater Gentile population to accept an active Jewish population. During the colonial era, the establishment and progression of a Jewish community followed a linear progression. Jews first migrated, became successful economically and socially, acculturated into the surrounding Gentile community, and retained their own

entered the merchant trades, other early Jewish settlers labored as plantation owners, craftsmen, tailors, shoemakers, saddlers, bakers, butchers, and candlemakers.

Eventually the success of a few Jewish dry goods store owners, commercial traders, and peddlers, translated into cautious respect and reverence among the wealthiest members of colonial society as well as the locals in their respective towns. Despite the fact that some Jews, due to their wealth, acquired rights and privileges accorded to other citizens, most colonial Jews did not enjoy full emancipation.[9] Depending on their

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separateness, specifically, the customs, and traditions of the Jewish world. See Abraham D. Lavender ed., *A Coat of Many Colors: Jewish Sub-Communities in the United States* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 9.

[9]Learsi, *The Jews in America: A History* (Cleveland: KTAV Publishing House, 1972), 34. Initial Jewish settlers did not experience what could best be termed as state sanctioned discrimination. The sparseness of population, the non-existence of a Jewish collective ideology, and a reliance on Jewish merchants' goods protected them from state-sanctioned discriminatory legislative acts. Additionally, early colonists directed their energies at establishing their own communities, developing trade routes, and constructing political, economic, and social systems rather than develop overarching negative attitudes towards Jews. Despite a lack of national anti-Semitism, most colonists harbored anti-Semitic attitudes. The lack of a collective anti-Semitism but the presence of general anti-Semitism has led to much historical confusion in assessing the extent of colonial anti-Semitism. Scholars contradict each other with respect to general societal acceptance of Jews and place that date somewhere between colonial settlement until after the revolution. Gerald Sorin suggested that upon arrival, Jews received a very chilly reception and several restrictions hampered their entrance into politics, economic venues, and social society. He maintained that ancient stereotypes and general suspicion of Jews prevented Jews' full acceptance into society. See Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3. Eli Faber qualified this conclusion and described a much freer experience. Accounting for historical context with respect to democracy and republican freedoms, and the establishment of Jewish communities, he pronounced that Jews were predominantly free from religious oppression which spawned social, political, and economic inequality. He concluded: "The Jews of early America, were among the first Jews in the modern world able to choose among separation from the larger society (and to choose)...acculturation (or) assimilation." See Faber's *A Time for Planting*, 69-71. Perhaps failing to critically analyze the Christological aspects of the American philosophy of religious freedom, he implied that Jews voluntarily segregated themselves from the Gentile society. He forgot to account for existent legislative acts or social norms that prevented Jews from fully integrating into society. Granted the colonial society was much freer than the European or South American state-sanctioned anti-Semitism, he assumed that this freed Jews to make choices based not on external factors but on internal communal or

location, at one point or another most colonies and states severely restricted Jews' voting rights and land ownership.[10]

A restriction of certain civic rights did not impede Jewish migration, however, because the British allowed Jews freedom of worship. Upon arrival and where they were able, Jews established Jewish communities by supporting religious congregations, kosher butchers, educational institutions, cemeteries, ritual baths, schools, and benevolent

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individual choices. Oscar Handlin also assumed that more freedom meant complete freedom in his assessment of initial Jews' settlement in the colonies. He maintained that Jews went into the peddling trades, not because colonists carried the British tradition of restricting Jews to the merchant trades but that their centuries of expertise caused Jews to naturally gravitate to trading. See Oscar Handlin, ***Adventures in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America*** (New York: MacGraw Hill, 1954), 16-20.

[10]Colonists did not only discriminate against Jews. Quakers, Baptists, Roman Catholics, and Huguenots were also often prevented from voting, harassed, and restricted economically and socially even more than Jews. Leonard Dinnerstein, ***Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Experience*** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 85.

institutions.[11] By 1820, there were approximately four thousand Jews in the United States.[12]

Early republic Jews hoped that Enlightenment and American Revolutionary rhetoric might encourage their Christian neighbors finally to accept Jews as virtuous and able citizens. Additionally, several new American leaders and prominent Jews asserted that Jews had proven themselves loyal citizens, individually and collectively, during the revolution and therefore deserved emancipation. [13] Similarly, revolutionary Jews,

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[11]Sorin, *Tradition Transformed*, 3 and Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 69-71. Recent scholars seem to be having trouble drawing any historical conclusions regarding Jews' social, economic, and political positions within colonial society. Eli Faber argues that until the nineteenth century in America, Jewish people defined themselves as "a people in exile--strangers in the lands of others, largely unwelcome and subject to recurrent expulsion--while their host societies agreed for the most part that the Jews were outsiders." Faber argued that despite the fact that Jews were excluded from voting and office holding during the colonial and revolutionary eras, they mingled freely with fellow Americans, conducted commercial ventures with them, intermarried in some cases, and, in general, encountered comparatively little in the way of anti-Semitism. See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 1, 85. Despite Gentile society's exclusion of Jews, Gerald Sorin contended that the Jews of colonial America enjoyed a tolerance and inclusiveness in residence, trade, and religious practice unknown to other Jewish communities. He admitted that Gentile hostility kept Jews from being fully absorbed into the surrounding society. Sorin also supported the notion that Jews generally did not possess a political voice. Despite the restrictive nature of American society, he concluded that the American Jewish community represented the first Diasporic Jewish community to experience choices that went beyond isolation and assimilation. See Sorin, *Tradition Transformed*, 3, 16.

[12]Population statistics vary. Malcom Stern contested this statistic and believed that in 1820, there were only two thousand seven hundred Jews in the United States. See Jeffrey Gurock, *American Jewish History: The Colonial and Early National Period, 1654-1840* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 539. Bertram Korn estimated that there were five thousand Jews in the country. See Korn, "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival," 342, fn 1.

[13]According to Gerald Sorin, though the Jewish population numbered fewer than fifteen hundred, their participation far outdistanced their population representation. See Sorin, *Tradition Transformed*, 1-2. Materially, Jews raised funds and supplied money to purchase revolutionary supplies. See Stephen Birmingham, *The Grandees: America'sSephardic Elite* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 158-9. Aside from acting as soldiers and supporters of the revolution, several Jewish patriots assisted in financing the war through loans or gifts made to the Continental Congress. The Noah, Sheftall and Minis families of

cognizant of their marginalized status and existing anti-Semitism, employed revolutionary rhetoric both as an affirmation of their American citizenship and as a Jewish collective pronouncement to American society that they deserved equal political, economic, and social equality.[14] Revolutionary rhetoric and a general revulsion for hypocrisy did indeed encourage the granting of equality to some wealthy Jews, but most American Jews possessed only abridged civil rights. [15] Gradually however, during the

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Savannah assisted in this project. Additionally, Jewish women produced and collected necessary war materials. See Learsi, *The Jews in America*, 44.

[14]As colonists, the revolutionary struggle attracted Jews because of economic grievances against the imperial system, a sense of nationality and patriotic duty, and their subscription to republican concepts of freedom and inalienable rights.

[15]Historians have drawn several theoretical conclusions regarding Jews' citizenship rights during the post-Revolutionary era. Rufus Learsi maintained that Jews, who had previously existed under more repressive regimes, were content with America's limited extension of freedoms toward Jews. Jews, according to Learsi, preferred to work on promoting their economic welfare and practicing Judaism. See Learsi, *The Jews in America*, 48. Other historians concluded that because American Jews achieved partial legal and political equality that they had achieved overall equality.

Consequently within the historical narrative, scholars argued that the struggle to maintain Jewish identity in the post-Revolutionary era was an individual choice and not subject to external influences. Eli Faber also concluded that few societal barriers existed for Jews and thus Jews worked quickly and efficiently to fully participate in civic and economic affairs. To achieve their economic goals, Faber posited that Jews embarked on an assimilative project and imbibed American forms of fashion and modern mores that regularly contradicted traditional Jewish directives. Additionally, the "blessings of toleration, equality, and citizenship" forced the Jewish community to devise different strategies from those employed in Europe to maintain a Jewish identity and community. See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 2 and 85. Supporting Faber's argument, Gerald Sorin concluded that Jews transformed their Judaism to accommodate American customs. See Sorin, *Tradition Transformed*, 4-5.

This dissertation somewhat contradicts Sorin and Faber's conclusions. The idea that Jews, in their difference, were free to establish their own sense of Jewishness devoid of external and powerful anti-Jewish sentiment is not entirely supported by sources written by and about antebellum southern Jewish women. Centuries' old suspicions and anti-Semitic stereotypes existed and affected Jews social and economic interactions with the non-Jewish Americans. Widespread anti-Semitism can be detected in newspapers which were filled with anti-Semitic discourse that conjured up anti-Jewish images. Within cartoons and editorials, Jews were summarized as theocrats, shady business dealers, conspirators, rapacious, dishonest, and profiteers and, therefore, reminded Jews that they had not achieve full equality. Contradicting his own evidence, Faber maintained that anti-Semitism in the media did not lead to "the

last half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth-century, American society allowed Jews to move from the periphery of economic and political participation because state governments granted Jews the right to vote, to serve in political office, and permission to participate in civic affairs.[16]

Aside from restriction of political activity, antebellum Jews faced internal and external events that also contributed to their marginalization. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, New England and the south experienced an unprecedented revival of evangelical religion, known as the Second Great Awakening. Its religious philosophies declared that all accept Christ according to Protestant precepts. The potency of this philosophy gradually inserted itself into democratic discourse as the success of the American republic experience relied on faith in Christianity. Consequently, non-practicing Christians and non-Christians became targets for religious conversion.[17]

In addition to a rise in evangelicalism, antebellum Jews dealt with another attack on their tenuous stability, the migration of thousands of German Jews. After the failed 1848 German Revolution, thousands of German Jews decided to migrate to the United

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sustained, organized opposition" of Jews in America. See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 95-6. This dissertation supports the notion that non-legislated anti-Semitism existed as a potent force in restricting the rights and opportunities of American Jews and affected how they operated within society.

[16]Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 1. According the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the right to grant political equality fell under the control of the states. Certain states desired to declare Christianity the state religion. Jews were prevented from holding public office because of their religious difference and their loyalty to the State was therefore questioned. It was not until 1825 that the "Jew Bill" went through the federal legislature. It removed religious tests that targeted Jews who ran for public office. See Learsi, *The Jews in America*, 48-49.

States and many went south and settled in the port cities. By 1850, the German migration pushed the Jewish population in the United States to fifty thousand.[18] Native-born American Jews perceived that the enormity of this population threatened their already tenuous status in southern society. Despite belonging to the same religious group, the two ethnic groups adhered to different philosophies regarding religious practices and assimilation.[19] The vast majority of German émigrés were Ashkenazim and, therefore, performed Jewish ritual differently than the native-born Americans who observed Sephardic customs. Additionally, German Jews experienced civic life differently than their counterparts in Europe. The German Enlightenment extended more political rights, economic and social opportunities to its Jews, and therefore, German Jews had differently negotiated their secular and religious roles. Consequently upon their arrival in the United States and the south, German-born Jews, according to native-born American Jews, seemingly did not worry about anti-Semitism or sense the need to galvanize as an ethnic or religious group like they had done. Native-born American Jews, familiar with different and more obvious forms of anti-Semitism, feared that German Jews' boldness might compromise their own status and security. These Jews felt that the massive influx of German Jews and their different expectations and behaviors might threaten American

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[17]It should be noted that Roman Catholics were even greater targets of intense proseltyization.

[18]Korn, "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival of Judaism," 342, fn 1 and Learsi, *The Jews in America*, 64. By 1860, there were 150,000 Jews. In 1870, the Jewish population was 200,000. In 1880, there were 250,000 Jews. See Sorin, *Tradition Transformed*, 27.

non-Jews and, therefore, interfere with Jewish goals to achieve economic, social, and political equality. Consequently, native-born Jews feared that anti-Semitic stereotypes might reemerge, proselytization campaigns might increase or recur, calls for expulsion might be heeded, or physical violence might occur. In an effort to preserve their political, economic, and social status, the older established Sephardic communities mostly distanced themselves from the new immigrants. When possible, they established separate synagogues, maintained separate welfare services, and traveled in different social circles.[20]

In addition to the spread of evangelical religion, several international anti-Semitic incidents, including the Damascus blood libel, Switzerland's refusal to admit American Jewish tourists, and the abduction by papal decree of a Jewish child increased American society's antagonism towards Jews.[21] Together, this heightened American southern society's suspicion of southern Jews.

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[19]Handlin, *Adventures in Freedom*, 39.

[20]Ultimately these two groups did intermarry. The power of the German Jewish merchants meant a preservation of class status for *Sephardic* daughters. The two groups became even more solidified during the 1880s as more and more Eastern European Jews migrated. The Sephardic and German Jews reacted to the 1880s Jews similarly to the *Sephardim* and *Ashkenazim* conflict.

[21]Learsi, *The Jews in America*, 79-89. In February 1840, American Jews learned about a rumor in Damascus, Syria, that accused Jews of murdering the head of a Franciscan monk and used his blood to make Passover *matzoh*. The French consul investigated the matter and thirteen Jews, including three rabbis, were arrested and tortured. Sixty Jewish children were confined and starved to force confessions from their parents. This event encouraged violence and slander against Jews in Turkey, Rhodes, France, Belgium, and Italy. Colonial infighting between Britain and France resulted in acquitting all of the accused. Nine of the original thirteen accused survived to be released. In Switzerland, America and Switzerland negotiated a treaty where citizens of each country could enter and "be treated upon a footing of

Despite a rise in evangelicalism, the German Jewish migration, and a surge in international anti-Semitism, expanded economies also broadened Jews' economic and, consequently, public power. The emergence and expansion of commercial agriculture, the boom crops of grain and wheat in the Connecticut River valley and the Chesapeake, and cotton in the south expanded opportunities for both Jewish maritime and land traders in the seacoast cities. Jewish merchants involved themselves in both wholesale and retail operations. Several of these families did extremely well and expanded their economic holdings as well as their economic power. The creation of the federal government in the 1780s also helped ease trade barriers established by the states. Consequently, Jewish merchants freely moved their goods across state lines and further involved themselves in lucrative business ventures. Additionally, the market revolution facilitated transportation improvements and encouraged Jewish families' economic prosperity.[22] Consequently, more and more Jews settled in the tidewater area to take advantage of these economic opportunities.

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reciprocal equality." Implicit in the treaty was the word *Christian* thereby preventing Jews from being admitted into the country. Jewish and Christian Americans strongly protested this anti-Jewish policy. Under pressure from Britain and France, Switzerland amended its policy and granted full emancipation to the Jews living inside her borders. In 1858, the Catholic Church removed a Bologna boy from his parents. On June 23, Papal guards stormed the house of Edgar Mortara and took him to live in a convent and to be raised as a Catholic. They did this because a nurse, who had cared for the boy some four years before when he was seriously ill, had secretly baptized him. The Catholic Church believed that once the sacrament had been administered, the child belonged to the church. The plight of the Mortaras caused the Jewish communities around the world to protest. Pope Pius IX was unmoved and the boy was raised a Catholic.

Jewish Settlement in the South

Though most Jews settled in the north, religious freedom and potentially lucrative economic opportunities encouraged a few Jewish commercial merchants and their families to relocate to certain southern port cities. According to Leonard Dinnerstein's research in the south, the Jewish population has always been small—less than one percent of the entire southern population.[23] At the start of the American Revolution, there were less than five hundred Jews living in the south.[24] By the late 1830s, between 10,000-15,000 Jews lived in the United States and approximately twelve hundred Jews lived in the south.[25] Jewish migration increased over the decades but less than fifteen thousand Jews lived in the south at the start of the Civil War.[26] Encouraged by profits and

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[22]During the first half of the nineteenth century, networks of canals, road, steamboats, and railroads increased the transportation of goods. The south specifically benefited from federal and private business construction of roads and creating navigable rivers.

[23]Dinnerstein and Pallson, *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 3.

[24]Dinnerstein and Pallson eds., *Jews in the South*, 3.

[25]Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jew1585-1990, A History* (New York: Carlson, 1995), 93. In 1820 census, Virginia boasted three hundred Jews, two hundred of them lived in Richmond. South Carolina housed the nation's largest Jewish population in 1820. There were one hundred and nine Jewish households and contained six hundred and seventy-four individuals. Jews made up five percent of the white population in Charleston. In Georgetown, South Carolina, there were fifteen Jewish households with eighty individuals. In Savannah, Georgia, there were twenty-one Jewish households with a total of ninety-four individuals. In 1828 in the city of New Orleans, there were approximately sixty-eight Jews.

[26]Dinnerstein and Pallson eds., *Jews in the South*, 3. It should be noted that the dramatic increase in Jews in the south was due to the huge settlement of Bavarian Jews.

expanding labor opportunities, southern Jewish men and women labored primarily as artisans, financiers, peddlers, and merchants.[27]

Despite the availability of economic opportunities, southern colonial Jews found their liberties still restricted. Though they were certainly not subjected to episodes of violence, expulsion, and compulsory conversion as they had in Europe and South America, newly established laws and statutes in southern colonies hampered their full acceptance into American social, political, and economic society. For example in 1703, one hundred and fifty residents of Colleton County, South Carolina advocated denying "Jews, Strangers, Sailors, Servants, Negroes and the French" voting privileges. Similarly, a 1705 Virginia statute stated that those who denied the existence of the Trinity could be imprisoned. Up until 1838, North Carolina barred Jews from the legal profession and its constitution denied Jews the right to hold office. Jews were granted the vote in Virginia in 1787, South Carolina in 1790, and Georgia in 1798.[28]

By 1860, there were one hundred and fifty thousand Jews in the United States and fifteen thousand lived in the south.[29] Savannah, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans housed the largest established southern Jewish populations.[30] The first formal Jewish

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[27]Dinnerstein and Pallson eds., *Jews in the South,* 4.

[28]Dinnerstein and Pallson eds., *Jews in the South,* 5-6.

[29]Korn, "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival of Judaism," 342, fn 1.

[30]Atlanta and New Orleans were cities dominated by German Jewish immigrants. Because this dissertation focuses on the actions of predominantly *Sephardic* women, more attention will be focused on the developments of Jewish identity and women's contributions in Savannah, Richmond, and Charleston.

settlement in the south was established in 1733 in Savannah, one month after James Oglethorpe founded Georgia. Through a stroke of luck, forty Sephardic Jews settled in Savannah.[31] Jews, relying on their contacts with other Atlantic Jewish communities, helped to create and sustain an extremely profitable merchant economy in Savannah.[32] Religious freedom, transportation improvements, its profitable land and sea trade networks, developments in banking and insurance agencies and its reputation as a social and cultural center drew Jewish businessmen and their families.[33]

During the first century of the Savannah's development, the Jewish population slowly expanded. In 1742, there were eighty Jews in the city. In 1820, between eighty and one hundred Jews lived in Savannah.[34] Thirty years later in 1850, the census listed one hundred and thirty-nine Jews.[35] In 1860, there were three hundred and forty-five

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[31]Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry 1733-1983* (Copyright, Saul Jacob Rubin, 1983), 1-2, 6. Oglethorpe's action allowing Jews to settle in Savannah was unusual. Trustees for colonization sent a note requesting that Oglethorpe bar Jews from settling in Savannah. Though the edict was dated October 18, 1733, Oglethorpe had not received the order when the Jews arrived on July 11, and therefore he admitted the Jews. According to Rubin, of the forty-two who came to Savannah, only eight were Germanic. The majority of the settlers were of Iberian birth who had lived as Catholics but converted to Judaism once they arrived in London. See also Dinnerstein and Palsson eds., *Jews in the South*, 3.

[32]Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 42.

[33]Mark I Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah Georgia, 1830-1880." (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1997). Savannah effectively expanded it economic productivity by building several railroads that connected to Atlanta, Augusta, Thomasville, Charleston, and Chattanooga. By the late 1840s, several shipping lines carried passengers and goods between Savannah and Charleston, New Orleans, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Liverpool. See Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class and Southern Identity," 29-30.

[34]Learsi, *The American Jewish Experience*, 10-1.

[35]Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity," 61-2.

Jews listed in the census.[36] Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Savannah enjoyed continued Jewish migration, because Jews from other southern cities like Charleston and Georgetown heard of Savannah's economic opportunities and religious tolerance. Typically, brothers and their spouses migrated with younger and unmarried siblings within the first few years of marriage.[37] To support themselves most Jews worked as common laborers, skilled builders, grocers, bakers, butchers, dry goods and clothing salesman.[38] By mid-century, Savannah Jews gradually moved into commerce and shipping.

Demonstrating the strength and devotion of the Jewish community, it was only two years after Jews arrived to the colony on July 12, 1735, that Jews established the Mickve Israel synagogue.[39] But the original Jewish settler population in Savannah was rather contentious because it contained both German and Iberian Jews who differed on religious practices. Subsequently, a second congregation was established in 1737 or 1738.[40] Despite tensions between the two groups, in 1735, Savannah's Jews collectively

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[36]Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity," 65. Prior to 1860, most of the Jews that lived in Savannah were southern born.

[37]Greenberg found marriages between prominent Savannah, Georgetown, and Charleston residents created strong kinship networks. Because the southern Jewish population was small, families often intermarried several times and therefore created "an intricate web of marital unions." See Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity," 62 and 86.

[38]Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity," 37.

[39]Learsi, *The Jews in America*, 33-34 and Rubin, *Third to None*, 5.

[40]Lavender ed., A *Coat of Many Colors*, 8-9.

purchased land to build a Jewish cemetery.[41] In 1738, the Jews of the city established a ritual bath or a *mikvah*.[42]

Earliest records locating Jews in Virginia date back as early as 1658. Though eventually it would house a large Jewish population, economic, political, and religious factors initially stunted Jewish migration.[43] Eventually recognizing Virginia as an untapped resource for land speculation and trading, several wealthy Jewish merchants migrated, bought land, developed businesses, and settled in Richmond. Their success encouraged other Jews to settle in Richmond. Early Jewish settlers in the Virginia colony labored as "merchants, artisans, silversmiths, watchmakers, chandlers, and fur traders."[44] Unlike their counterparts in Savannah, Jewish migrants tended to migrate as individuals and not in family groups.[45] New settlers established dry goods, grocery, hardware, and clothing stores.[46] Consequently, Richmond's Jewish population expanded. In 1790, the

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[41] Rubin, *Third to None*, 5.

[42] Rubin, *Third to None*, 5.

[43] Jacob Rader Marcus, *Early American Jewry: The Jews of Pennsylvania and the South 1655-1790 vol. 2.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1953), 165-6. A Jewish community could not be established in Virginia due to the fact that the state was made up mostly of plantations and, consequently, no towns existed. Additionally during the eighteenth century, you could not become naturalized without taking an oath that professed faith in Jesus as the son of God and non-Christians could not testify in courts. Also, colonists were taxed on behalf of the Anglican Church. For more information on the development of Jewish community in Richmond, see Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979) and Herbert Ezekiel, *The History of the Jews of Richmond from 1769 to 1917* (Richmond: Herbert T. Ezekiel, 1917).

[44] Marcus, *Early American Jews*, 169.

[45] Louis Ginsberg, *Chapters on Jews1658-1900* (Petersburg, 1969), 92. See also Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976*, xi.

[46] Ginsberg, *Chapters on Jews*, 13-4.

federal census listed twenty-nine Jewish households in Richmond.[47] In 1820, the federal census indicated that there were one hundred and ninety-one Jews in Richmond.[48] In 1826, there were an estimated four hundred Jews in all of Virginia.[49]

It was not until August 24, 1789, that Richmond's Jews established their religious congregation named Kahal Kadosh Beth Shalome, though they did not have the funds to build a synagogue.[50] Two years later in 1791, the Jewish community purchased land for a Jewish cemetery.[51] Twenty years after forming a religious congregation, in 1809, with a donation from the New York congregation, Shearith Israel, Richmond's Jews finally erected their first synagogue building. During the 1840s and because of the German Jewish migration, more and more Jews settled in Richmond. Similar to the experiences of Savannah Jewry, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews could not agree on religious practices and philosophies. Consequently, German Jews established their own synagogue, Beth Ahaba. Despite disputes over religious practices, Richmond's relatively small Jewish community successfully created a formal Jewish community by establishing their own synagogues and "literary, welfare, educational, and mutual aid societies."[52]

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[47] Ginsberg, *Chapters on Jews*, 92.

[48] Abraham J. Karp, *The Jewish Experience in America*, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969), 9.

[49] Ginsberg, *Chapters on Jews*, 13.

[50] For a detailed explanation of Beth Shalome and its members, see Jacob Ezekiel's article, "The Jews of Richmond," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 4 (1896): 21-7.

[51] Ezekiel, " The Jews of Richmond," 24.

[52] Ginsberg, *Chapters on Jews*, 36.

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Economic opportunity and a state constitution that guaranteed religious freedom initially encouraged Jews to migrate into the Carolinas and especially into Charleston beginning in 1695.[53] With respect to political rights and as early as 1702, Jews were allowed to vote in general elections. Despite increases in economic and political opportunities, by the late seventeenth century there were only a handful of Jews and settlement remained weak during the first half of the eighteenth century. Between 1695-1750, only fifteen adult Jewish men were known to have resided in the city.[54] During the last half of the eighteenth-century, Jewish migration into Charleston steadily increased as evidenced by the presence of fifty-one Jewish family names in the Charleston directories between 1750-1783.[55] Jewish population continued to increase in the nineteenth century. In 1820, there were approximately six hundred and seventy-four Jews in Charleston.[56] The Jewish community peaked in1830, when it was estimated that there were approximately seven hundred Jews. Rumors of more lucrative opportunities and expanded civil rights encouraged Jews to migrate to other southern cities, like

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[53] John Locke penned the Carolina Statute, the Fundamentals Constitution. It stated that "No person whatsoever shall disturb, molest, or persecute another for his speculative opinions in religion, or his way of worship." Though the constitution was not officially adopted by the settlers, "it may have created a climate of favorable opinion." See Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, 228-9.

[54] Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 29 and 41.

[55] Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 41.

[56] Learsi, *The Jewish Experience in America*, 10.

Savannah.[57] Therefore, the Jewish population gradually decreased. According to the 1850 census, Charleston had only five hundred Jews.

Several reasons account for the anemic increase and subsequent decrease in Jewish settlement. Charleston's doctrine of religious tolerance waned when Christianity became the colony's official religion. Because Jews refused to accept Anglican Church doctrine, Charleston's colonial society began to perceive Jews as "aliens" and "foreigners." Reflecting this sentiment, Charleston passed certain statutes, during the eighteenth century, that restricted Jews' civic rights. For example, Jews could not sit in the Charleston Commons House of Assembly. Additionally, by the mid-eighteenth century, Charleston rescinded its extension of political rights to Jews and restricted their voting rights and office holding abilities. Despite these events, Jews continued to settle in Charleston because the doctrine of freedom of worship was still upheld by Charleston society and Jews were free to engage in business and commerce. Charleston Jews worked as shippers, merchants, and shopkeepers and found Charleston an especially favorable place to distribute their goods.[58]

The initial weak settlement of Jews did not, however, hamper the development of a Jewish community. In 1750, Charleston Jewry founded the second synagogue in the United States named *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim*, translated as House of God. By 1800,

[57] Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity," 65.
[58] Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, 232.

Beth Elohim synagogue boasted the largest membership of any in America.[59] Like the pattern established in Richmond and Savannah, the Jews of Charleston, in 1764, purchased land to establish a Jewish cemetery.

Antebellum Southern Jewish Women's Employment

Existing data on southern Jewish communities reveal that many southern Jewish women supported themselves and their families working as teachers and tutors.[60] Additionally, an examination of public records demonstrates that many southern Jewish women owned stores or ran businesses.[61] Though statute language regarding women and labor varied from state to state, most states prohibited women's labor without the consent of their male guardians. Antebellum married women primarily existed under femme couvert laws. Women who desired to labor, with the sanction of their husbands or male guardians, could petition the court for femme sole or free trader status. Surveying existing city directories, court and public records, and wills, it is clear that many southern Jewish men advocated and depended on Jewish women's labor and routinely took legal

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[59] Lavender ed., *A Coat of Many Colors*, 9-10.

[60] Chapters on preservation of Judaism through religious observance and instruction detail antebellum southern women's employment as teachers and tutors.

[61] Traditional Judaism accepted female labor so, unlike their Christian counterparts, these women incurred little resistance from their husbands or male family members when they decided to open shops. According to Jewish law, Jews have always privileged scholarship over material prosperity. Jews often erected *Kolelim* (places of Talmudic learning) where Jewish men spent their days studying while their wives supported them by running small businesses. The early nineteenth-century southern context did not provide hospitable conditions to sustain a *kolel* for their husbands to engage in Torah scholarship. Spread out across the region, a large enough Jewish population did not exist in a single city to erect such an

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steps to ensure that the women connected to them achieved free or sole trader status to jointly or independently own and run business ventures.[62] According to James Hagy, several reasons existed for why southern Jewish husbands granted their wives the ability to work and profit from their labor. Granting femme sole status to a wife served as a way that husbands could legally protect themselves and their assets. Husbands turned their businesses over to their wives as a way to bypass repossession of their property for repayment of debts.[63] Husbands also discovered that their wives might have had a better business acumen and, for the family's financial success, they turned their businesses over to wives. Finally, in the event of male desertion and illness, courts granted women more expansive control.[64] Hagy discovered that equipped with free or sole trader status, hundreds of southern Jewish women in Charleston, South Carolina revealed that most

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institution. Despite the virtual disappearance of the *kolel* in the American setting, Jews still accepted the notion that women could run businesses.

[62]For examples see James Hagy, Charleston, South Carolina City Directories for the Years 1816, 1819, 1822, 1825, 1829 (Baltimore: Clearfield, 1996), City Directories for Charleston, South Carolina for the Years 1803, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1813 (Baltimore: Clearfield, 1995), Directories for the City of Charleston, South Carolina for the Years 1830-31, 1835-36, 1836, 1837-38, 1840-41 (Baltimore: Clearfield, 1997),"Merchant Women of Charleston, 1704-1830" (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1988), "Not Subject to his Control: Jewish Women as Free Traders in South Carolina, 1766-1827 (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1988) and "Listing of Applications for Sole Trader Status" American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati. See court records from the years 1824-1857 of southern Jews held in the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[63]James W. Hagy, "Not Subject to his Control: Jewish Women as Free Traders in South Carolina, 1766-1827" (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives). Hagy examined forty-eight Jewish female sole traders--the majority of them worked in the Charleston marketplace. He found that as a sole trader "[women] could keep all profits and advantages which might arise from her business and the stocks and utensils that she used should be for [their] sole use." Additionally, "she was to remain...without any interruption, hindrance, disturbance of molestation." See Hagy, "Not Subject To His Control," 3.

[64]Hagy, "Not Subject to His Control," 22.

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southern Jewish women typically operated fruit shops, dry goods stores, slop shops, millinery boutiques, fancy stores, and dressmaker shops.[65] In Savannah, Georgia, Jewish women were more likely to own dressmaker, millinery, and fancy stores.[66]

Cast of Characters

Exploring antebellum southern Jewish women's lives is exceptionally difficult given the paucity of resources. Based on limited research, it appears that most antebellum Jewish women had neither the time nor inclination to write. Much of their time was divided between household upkeep, raising children, and running a business. There were, however, some southern Jewish women who did write letters, journals, poetry, editorials, and essays describing their experiences and their opinions regarding the environment and era in which they lived. Below is a brief description of the women who most frequently enter into the narrative because of the written sources they left behind. Personal history is sketchy and uneven, but as much information as was pertinent to the dissertation and could be definitively gleaned has been provided. It is apparent that the best sources on antebellum southern Jewish women come from those whose families emphasized literacy and also used writing as a form of expression and communication.

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[65] Hagy, *City Directory for Charleston 1816.* Rachel Alexander, Eliza Hart, Rebecca Hyams, and Abigail Seixas owned fruit shops. Bella Hart, Sarah Levy, Pricilla Lopez, and Esther Moses owned dry goods stores. Lucy Jacobs owned a grain shop. Eliza Moses and Sarah Solomons operated a slop shop.

[66] David H. Galloway, *Savannah City Directory 1858* (Savannah: George N. Nichols, 1858), Eugene W. Ferslew, *Directory for the City of Savannah 1859* (Savannah: John M. Cooper and Co., 1859), *Directory for the City of Savannah 1860 Volume II* (Savannah: John M. Cooper and Co., 1860), *Purse's*

This dissertation predominantly relies on these middle and elite women's writings but its conclusions are not solely dependent on their life experiences. Other middle class and working class women who did not leave personal writings still leave an historical legacy through public records such as court records, synagogue books, grave markers, and advertisements.

Caroline Myers Cohen--The granddaughter of Jacob Mordecai, she was born in 1844. Cohen is unique and especially important because she was the descendant of three major southern Jewish families, the Mordecai, the Hays, and the Myers. Additionally, she married into another famous southern Jewish family, the Cohens. Cohen left an important genealogical and bibliographical record of her ancestors. Her work enables scholars to explore patterns of marriage and demonstrates attempts by southern Jews not to intermarry. She died in 1928.[67]

Fanny Cohen--Cohen was the daughter of Octavus Cohen, a commission merchant and cotton exporter. At the age of twenty-four, she composed a diary describing Sherman's occupation of Savannah from December 21, 1864 to January 3,

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Directory for the City of Savannah 1866 (Savannah: Purse & Son, 1866), and *Savannah City Directory* 1867 (Savannah: N.J. Darrell & Co. 1867).

67 Cohen, Caroline. "Records of the Myers, Hays, and Mordecai Families" Published for the Family.

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1865. She lived at Lafayette Square in Savannah. Her family shared their home with well-known Brigadier General William Babcock Hazen.[68]

Septima Marie Levy Collis--Born in Charleston, South Carolina, she married northern General Charles H.T. Collis on December 9, 1861. In 1889, she published *A Woman's War Record* that detailed her experiences during the war. She frequently accompanied her husband to various military camps, helped smuggle goods, and frequently assisted in the care of wounded soldiers. Her journal recounted the violence and gruesome nature of the Civil War. Her husband commandeered a group of Zouaves. In her diary, Collis also described an encounter with President Lincoln in which she expressed her concerns regarding the sectional crisis.[69]

Margaret Mordecai Devereux--The granddaughter of Jacob Mordecai, she was the daughter of Moses Mordecai and Ann Wilson Land. She married into the Devereux family, an extremely wealthy southern plantation family. She supervised fifteen hundred slaves as well as a large plantation household. Devereux left quite a personal record of her life. She saved letters, she wrote several essays and poems nostalgically recounting

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[68] King, Spencer B. ed., *Fanny Cohen's Journal of Sherman's Occupation of Savannah*, Georgia Historical Society.

[69] Collis, Septima M. Levy. "Civil War Reminiscences of a General's Wife," American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

plantation life. Additionally, Devereux frequently corresponded with her aunts, Ellen and Emma Mordecai about her life as a southern plantation mistress.[70]

Julia Lazarus--She was the daughter of Aaron Lazarus and Rachel Mordecai Lazarus. She enters this dissertation's narrative as an adolescent when she faced a spiritually-based mental crisis. Influenced by her Christian schoolmistress and aunt, Lazarus originally favored Christianity. Her Jewish family members ordered her to leave school in order to stop her conversion. Julia's religious confusion divided her family and those who remained Jewish often ignored her as a method to stop her conversion. Ultimately, she denounced Christianity and cited her fidelity to her family as the reason. This event set forth a lifetime of confusion and indecision. Consequently, for the rest of her life she suffered from a series of nervous disorders. Her family spent a great deal of money and energy trying to cure her. Julia traveled with her brother, Marx Edgeworth, to New York and became acquainted with a radical subset. Once again, her family encouraged her to return home. Lazarus broke from the family in 1856 and eventually died in poverty.[71]

Rachel Mordecai Lazarus--Born in 1788, she was the eldest daughter of Jacob Mordecai and Judith Myers. She was the principal teacher in her father's academy for

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[70]See Margaret Mordecai Devereux Papers, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, and Jacob Mordecai Paper, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[71]George Mordecai Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

young girls. After her mother died, Lazarus was primarily responsible for raising her siblings. Lazarus chronicled her experiences educating her young half sister, Eliza Kennon Mordecai. Additionally as a devout Jew, she prided herself in setting the perfect example of an American southern Jewish woman. She engaged in several correspondence campaigns to those writers who constructed negative Jewish literary characters. She frequently exchanged letters with the famous nineteenth-century pedagogical philosopher, Maria Edgeworth, and is known to have briefly corresponded with George Eliot. She married Aaron Lazarus of Wilmington, North Carolina. He was a widower with seven children. Together, they had four children: Marx Edgeworth, Ellen, Mary Catherine, and Julia. In the 1830s, Lazarus experienced a religious crisis and felt herself drawn to Christianity. Friends and neighbors had pressured her for years to convert. She secretly confided her feelings to her sister, Ellen, in a series of letters. Her father and husband, both Orthodox Jews, forbade her from publicly discussing her feelings and her husband threatened to take away her children if she attempted to proselytize them. Her letters to her sister detailed her intense spiritual conflict. Lazarus described feeling torn between her duties towards her family, the legacy of the Jews, and God. In 1838, on a journey to visit her ailing father, she became ill and died. On her deathbed, she converted to Christianity. Lazarus was buried in a church cemetery.[72]

[72]See George Mordecai Family Papers and

Penina Moise--Penina Moise was the daughter of Abraham Moise, a native of Alsace on the Rhine. He moved to the island of St. Eustace in the West Indies and met and married his wife Sarah, a native of the French colony. Abraham Moise had amassed a considerable fortune when the slave insurrection of St. Domingo occurred in 1791.[73] The Moises fled to the United States with only their clothing and a few valuables. Three years later, Abraham and Sarah settled in Charleston because it was considered "Jew friendly." Under the 1790 South Carolina constitution, the state guaranteed Jews religious freedom, the right to vote, and hold office.[74] Settling in Charleston, the family actively engaged in the commercial, religious, and social life in a Jewish community that was reputed for its hard work, devotion to orthodoxy, and social consciousness.[75] Like many other Jews in Charleston, Abraham Moise traded and owned a shop. His youngest child, Penina, was born in Charleston on April 23, 1799.[76] Antebellum southern Jewish poet Penina Moise's poetry career began at age twelve when her father died. His death forced her to leave school to help support her large family of three brothers and two sisters. Despite ending her formal education, Moise continued to read voraciously and

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[73]For a detailed biography see, Barnett A. Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise with a Brief Sketch of Her Life* (Charleston: Nicholas G. Duffy, 1911), 1.

[74]See Solomon Briebart, "Penina Moise, Southern Jewish Poetess" in Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier eds., *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 32.

[75]See Briebart, "Penina Moise," 33.

compose poetry. After the marriage of her elder sister Rachel and her mother's paralysis in 1838, Penina also became her mother's sole companion and caregiver.[77] A devoutly religious Jew, Penina Moise was a member of Charleston's Congregation Beth Elohim. She followed the laws of Kashruth, Sabbath, holy days, and lived the life of a traditional Jewish woman. Moise frowned upon intermarriage and ceased communication with friends and relatives who intermarried. It has been rumored that she never wed because only Gentile men proposed to her. As a demonstration of her commitment to Judaism, Moise also acted as the superintendent of Beth Elohim's Hebrew Sunday school. When religious conflict embroiled Beth Elohim, Moise fully supported the emergence of the Reformed Society of the Israelites. Moise is most famous for her collection of poems published in 1833. She was the first well-known American Jewish female poet. Themes in her poetry included Judaism, anti-Semitism, the newly created Reform Judaism, and politics. A supporter of Reform Judaism, Moise contributed 190 hymns for the official reform hymnal. Moise died on September 13, 1880 in Charleston.[78]

Ellen Mordecai--Born in 1790, she was a daughter of Jacob Mordecai and Judith Myers. She worked as a teacher in her father's academy and later as a governess. Ellen

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[76]For a brief description see Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer eds. *Notable American Women 1607-1950* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 559-60.

[77]See Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 11.

[78]Elzas, Barnett. "Penina Moise, Leaves from my Historical Scrapbook" in *The Sunday*,March 2, 1908.

caused a scandal in her family when she openly converted to Christianity and, consequently, attempted to convert other members of her family. She composed many essays and articles with the central theme of conversion experiences and devotion to Christianity. Her most famous publication, *The History of the Heart*, provided her with royalties throughout her life. Mordecai never married. She died in 1884.[79]

Judith Ellen Mordecai--Born in 1820, she was the half sister of Margaret Mordecai Devereux. She resided in Raleigh, North Carolina. Mordecai wrote letters describing her schooling in Philadelphia and Petersburg, VA., and her experiences on Devereux's plantation, Runiroi. Ellen married her first cousin Samuel Fox Mordecai (the son of her father's brother) and had two children. She died in 1916.[80]

Emma Mordecai--Born in 1812, she was the daughter of Jacob Mordecai and Rebecca Myers. She resided in Richmond and worked as a teacher in her father's academy. She never married. A devout Jew, Mordecai diligently worked to prevent her female family members from converting to Christianity.[81]

Miriam Gratz Moses--She was the niece of and partially raised by Rebecca Gratz, a prominent Philadelphian Jew. Her letters, composition, and poetry books include

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[79]George Mordecai Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[80]Devereux Family Papers, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham.

[81]George Mordecai Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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details of southern Jews, and secular, religious, social, and cultural events in Philadelphia and Charleston.[82]

Octavia Harby Moses--Born in 1823 in Charleston, she was the daughter of one of the founders of the Society of Reformed Israelites, Isaac Harby. She married Andrew Jackson Moses at the age of sixteen and moved to Sumter, South Carolina. Most famous for her published work, *A Mother's Poems: A Collection of Verses*, she wrote as an American and Jewish woman. Most of her poems honored maternal roles, the family, daily activities, as well as national and international events. She bore seventeen children of which fourteen survived to adulthood. She died in 1904.[83]

Eliza Kennon Mordecai Myers--Born in 1809, she was the daughter of Jacob Mordecai and his second wife, Rebecca Myers. Her half sister, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, assumed the responsibility of raising her and she chronicled her experiences in Lazarus' diary. When Lazarus married and moved away, Myers accompanied her to assist in housekeeping and babysitting her brother-in-law's seven children from a prior marriage as well as the four more children that Aaron and Rachel had. She married Samuel Hays Myers and settled in Petersburg, Virginia. She had two children. After her

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[82]Miriam Gratz Moses Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[83]Moses, Octavia Harby. *A Mother's Poems: A Collection of Verses*. Published by her children, 1915.

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husband's death, she lived with her mother, sisters, and brother Samuel in Richmond. She died in 1861.[84]

Phoebe Yates Levy Pember--Born in 1823, she was the sister of Eugenia Levy Phillips. During the Civil War, Pember was the chief matron at Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, the confederacy's largest military hospital. During her tenure, she composed a diary detailing hospital life during the war. Her diary provides much information regarding how Civil War hospitals operated, medical treatments, and wartime diseases. After the Civil War, she continued to journal on political events, social and economic conditions, personal finances, living arrangements, literature, and religion. She died in 1913.[85]

Eugenia Levy Phillips--Born in 1820 in Charleston, Phillips made a name for herself as one of the most ardent Confederate loyalists. She was twice imprisoned during the Civil War by federal authorities. Phillips was charged as a southern sympathizer and in one instance was charged with insubordination to General Benjamin F. Butler. While imprisoned in Washington, D.C., and on Ships Island, Louisiana, Phillips kept a journal.

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[84]See Myers and George Mordecai Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[85]See Phoebe Yates Levy Pember Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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She married South Carolina and Alabama politician and Washington, D.C. Jewish lawyer, Philip Phillips. She died in 1901.[86]

Ellen Lazarus Shutt--She was the daughter of Aaron Lazarus and Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and lived in Richmond Virginia and Wilmington, North Carolina. She married John Allen, a Christian, and moved to the Midwest. Her trust fund enabled her husband and herself to buy a farm. She routinely corresponded with her uncle and guardian, George Mordecai, to solicit funds. Shutt and her husband had two children and after he died, she remarried and worked as a school teacher.[87]

Clara Solomon- -She was born in 1845, into a well-established New Orleans merchant family. She was the second of six surviving daughters of Solomon and Emma Solomon. During the Civil War, Solomon kept a diary from 1861-1862. She wrote about her personal life, southern customs, gossiped about friends and enemies, her role as a daughter and sister, her education, relatives, friends, the Jewish community, and her religiosity. Sentimental and serious, her diary described the experiences of an antebellum southern Jewish girl coming of age. After the Civil War, Clara and her family remained in New Orleans. Her family fortune devastated, Clara worked to help support her family and rebuild the family business. She married Julius Lilienthal in April 1866. He died

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[86]See "Journal of Mrs. Eugenia Phillips, Wife of Philip Phillips of the City of Washington, Counsellor Law" in Philips-Myers Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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one year later. Solomon remarried her first husband's doctor, Dr. George Lawrence, in 1872. They moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where they had four girls. After her second husband died in 1889, Solomon moved back to New Orleans and lived there until she died in 1907.[88]

Conclusion

These women along with other antebellum southern Jews lived in places where opportunities for economic advancement far exceeded any other place that they had previously settled, however, the south also was a place where anti-Semitism was so institutionalized it was normalized. In an environment where the pressure was to assimilate and convert, antebellum southern Jewish women endeavored to maintain their Jewish identities, created southern Jewish infrastructures that allowed for the preservation and strengthening of southern Judaism, encouraged Judaic practice, and contested anti-Semitism while still demonstrating their southern white loyalties.

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[87]See George Mordecai Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[88]Ashkenazi, Elliot. *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing up in New Orleans, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1995).

Chapter Two
A Race Between Education and Catastrophe: Antebellum Southern Jewish Female Education

When Rachel Mordecai embarked on the task of tutoring her young half sister, Eliza Kennon Mordecai, she adopted a two-pronged approach. First, because Eliza was a young white middle class girl, Mordecai would school her charge in literature, classical language, arithmetic, history, and mythology. Second, Eliza was also a young Jewish girl, and, as such, Mordecai believed it essential that her half sister be given a comprehensive education in Jewish history, faith, and morals. Of her mission, she wrote:

> Should it seem good to the most High to suffer it, and me, to continue on this great theatre of existence, I will watch over, and mark its daily progress, I will endeavour to destroy each canker that would enter its bosom to render it less sweet and lovely. And O! May I be rendered capable of forming the materials which nature has bountifully placed in my hands, may reason combined with virtue, and nourished by education, form a character eminently fitted to discharge every duty of this life and when called from this transitory state of being, worthy to repose eternally in the presence of its Creator.[1]

Mordecai wanted to be sure that Eliza's schooling emphasized not only reason but also virtue, and duty to her family and God. Mordecai's aim, through private tutoring, was to shape her young sister's moral character as much as to afford her a solid liberal arts education. Private tutoring under Mordecai's supervision, ensured that Eliza would be schooled according to the methods, mores, and expectations of Judaism.

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[1]Rachel Mordecai, Journal, 1816-1818, Myers Mordecai Hays family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1-2.

Scholars of antebellum Jewry have previously researched sites and strategies used by southern Jews to promote Judaism and Jewish community within a religiously Protestant environment but they have generally neglected to examine educational experiments by southern women like Rachel Mordecai, or how female education served as an effective strategy to combat proselytization, exogamy, and a decrease in Jewish religiosity. Scholars have argued, instead, that synagogue organizations, men's clubs, an active clergy, and lay leadership were predominantly responsible for this project and, therefore, worked to retain a sense of Jewish religiosity in the antebellum south. As this chapter will demonstrate, women and education were also crucial to the maintenance of Jewish religiosity in the antebellum south.

Changes in public education and assumptions about female education during the early nineteenth century forced southern Jewish families to address the benefits and drawbacks of educating their daughters. Beginning in the first few decades of the nineteenth-century, secular American society began to discuss the utility of female education as a means to promote morality and nationalism, and assist in creating a virtuous and productive citizenry. Southern Jews, as American citizens, recognized the importance and potential of female education but, as Jews, they also recognized that the developing pedagogical systems and philosophies of female education conflicted with the observation of and the preservation of Judaism. Public and private school classes often met on Saturday, on Jewish holidays, privileged Christianity, and, subsequently,

denigrated Judaism. Additionally, southern Jews were faced with internal communal problems like assimilation, exogamy, and increasing anti-Semitism, problems which were not addressed by the emerging philosophies of female education. Obviously in the case of assimilation and exogamy, these were also problems which could be worsened by educating Jewish girls in Christian-based schools.

Southern Jews responded to these problems by developing alternative forms of schooling for their daughters. In doing so, southern Jewish parents endeavored to both provide their daughters with a first rate education and instill pride and fidelity to Judaism. Borrowing recently developed female educational practices and systems and influenced by Enlightenment and traditional Jewish philosophies, southern Jews devised female educational systems and philosophies that preserved Judaism and Jewish identity, while still providing southern Jewish women with an appropriate secular education.[2] Distinct

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[2]The Enlightenment was a philosophical movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its chief ideology was that "reason could achieve all knowledge, supplant organized religion, and ensure progress toward happiness and perfection." Enlightenment philosophy supported absolute trust in reason, not revelation or authority, and provided "knowledge, truth, ...and an adequate understanding of God and the Universe." See Northrop Frye, *The Harper Handbook to Literature* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 168 and 385. Traditional Judaism had always advocated at least a rudimentary education for Jewish girls. The very basis of Judaism for men and women rested on three precepts--*Torah*, *Avodah*, (work) and *Gemilut Hasidim* (good works). Such religious obligations required, at a minimum, literacy from Jewish women. Because of their history of persecution and their desire to keep Judaism alive, Jews for centuries recognized the importance of female education. More quickly than their Protestant counterparts, southern Jews accepted female education as necessary and desirable to improve the lives of women, their families, and their nation.

Additionally, it is reasonable to assume that the process of transculturation occurred, specifically the carrying of German-Jewish philosophies to American southern Jewish communities, and subsequently influenced the development of southern Jewish pedagogical philosophies. According to historian David Sorkin, during 1780-1840, "German Jews experienced political emancipation, were socially transformed,

southern Jewish female pedagogical practices proved to be invaluable weapons against proselytization, assimilation, exogamy, and anti-Semitism, as well as an important strategy for future southern Jewish community development.

Female Education in the Early Republic

From the colonial period, women had always undergone an apprenticeship-type of education and were schooled in their gendered domestic responsibilities, yet as American society underwent political, social, and economic expansion, female education broadened.[3] Additionally, as colonial society expanded women's economic roles, their

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new anti-Semitisms emerged, and consequently an intense "cultural productivity within the Jewish community occurred." According to Sorkin, this encounter with German culture and society produced the Jewish Enlightenment or the *Haskala* when "disaffected Rabbis and lay elites called for a regeneration of German Jewry because of their acquisition of equal rights." German-Jewish elites hoped that political emancipation would create a new conceptualization of an ideal Jew and consequently would create new and better Jews and Jewish communities. According to Sorkin, "the new Jew and Jewish community would necessarily fashion a new Jewish identity, one that borrowed from German bourgeois pedagogical conceptions about the individual. However, Sorkin reasoned that the failure to achieve full political emancipation fundamentally interfered with original philosophies and instead encouraged the developed of a "twofold revolution of German Jewry." Specifically addressing the majority subculture of the German-Jewish community, (as opposed to German-Jewish high culture), Sorkin demonstrates how German-Jews "borrowed from the majority German culture and fused it with elements of Judaism" to create their own subcultural distinctiveness and cohesion. The new subculture produced a new German-Jewish identity that encompassed new religious and intellectual forms. In arguing that German-Jews created a new subculture, Sorkin challenges the historiographical notion that *Haskala* encouraged the acceptance of Jewish assimilation. This phenomenon resonated in the American context with respect to, among other things, education. Previous historical investigation into exploring the changes in Jewish education has led many scholars to assume that Jews, through new pedagogical practices, were beginning the assimilation process as a result of their newly but partially acquired political rights. Like Sorkin's German-Jewish subjects, American southern Jews borrowed from the majority southern Christian culture and fused it with traditional Jewish philosophies to create a distinctive subculture. This chapter discusses the southern educational subculture that southern Jews developed. See David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 3-9.

[3]Barbara Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 2.

educational opportunities also expanded.[4] The influence of Puritan religion encouraged literacy among American girls. Beginning in New England at the turn of the seventeenth century, many young girls were taught to read and some girls were taught to write as Puritan religion accepted greater religious roles form women. Frequently, daughters from the wealthiest families received liberal education. By the end of the eighteenth century, many women enjoyed reading and private writing.[5]

The eighteenth-century expansion in female education was due to the advent of Newtonian physics, Rationalism, Evangelism, and especially Lockean political philosophies. According to historian Barbara Solomon, philosopher John Locke's gender-blind hypothesis regarding human intellectual capacity undermined misogynist ideals about female intellectual inferiority and opened up new educational opportunities for women.[6] Many eighteenth and nineteenth-century Americans recognized the practical aspects for educating women. An educated daughter might financially assist a struggling family or increase her marriage potential.[7]

After the War for Independence, revolutionary rhetoric, discourses of freedom, individual rights, and women's crucial contributions towards winning the war firmly

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[4]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 3.

[5]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 4, 14. Additionally, Solomon concluded that a "convergence of social, religious, political, and economic developments" encouraged national support for female education in the United States."

[6]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 5.

[7]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 6.

swayed the country's opinion in support of female education. Additionally, several prominent American female activists like Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, and Judith Sargent Murray openly questioned the country's failure to educate women. In their private letters and public editorials, these women persuasively argued that female education was essential to the success of the young republic. They argued that female education would develop women's powers of reason, improve their abilities to make judicious decisions, and make them better wives and mothers.[8] Though the founding fathers, however, were not seeking to create a mass of intellectual women, they were interested in reordering society so that all people would be productive and contributing members of society.[9] Additionally, they believed that male citizens needed to be

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[8]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 9-10.

[9]In his book, *Pillars of the Republic*, Carl Kaestle argued that rudimentary education was widespread in Revolutionary America. Middling rank migration coupled with Protestant emphasis on literacy encouraged the growth of a fairly literate population. See Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 3-6. In the early republic, white families and local schools assumed responsibility for education. Some towns provided schools while in others, families formed "subscription schools." Most white children attended schools, but churches, family tutoring, and the work place also existed as sites where children gained an education. Literacy rates varied according to region and were lower in the south. Kaestle posited that the founding fathers were faced with creating order after the revolution. They decided on a republican government and decided to use education to reconcile revolutionary rhetoric about freedom and order in the minds of its ordinary citizens. As Kaestle stated: "Republicanism united concepts of virtue, balanced government, and liberty." Education was central to creating order in the new and volatile republic. Furthermore, he asserted: "Education would prepare men to vote intelligently and prepare women to train their sons properly. Moral training based on the Protestant Bible would produce virtuous, well-behaved citizens." Additionally, the founding fathers decided that a specifically American curriculum could homogenize the nation and familiarize them with the new language and culture of America, while "weaning America away from a corrupt Europe." Thus the common school was developed. Development of such schools was slow and initial attendance was light. During the era of social reform in the 1830s, common schools were targeted. Educators more forcefully advocated a national educational system that instructed the nation's students on issues of morality and good citizenship and thereby strengthened the fragile republic.

surrounded by an informed citizenry. Eventually, "female education became linked to the republican ideal."[10]

Aside from post-Revolutionary rhetoric, Second Great Awakening ideologies also helped shift public opinion on female education.[11] Religious leaders believed that educated women could be used to create a moral citizenry.[12] Thus they advocated a specific female educational curriculum which instructed women on how to train their sons to be good citizens and to pass that knowledge onto their daughters. [13] The

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Reformers drew upon middling rank, Anglo-American, and Protestant ideologies. Believed to be superior, capitalist, Protestant, and republican ideologies provided the context for the creation of state schools systems. See Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 75-6.

[10]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 12.

[11]In surveying common school primers and educational treatises, Carl Kaestle found that young girls were schooled in such philosophies. For a more detailed explanation, see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 84-8. It should be noted that the Second Great Awakening gained strength both as a result of and in contention with Enlightenment. Second Great Awakening philosophies relied on principles of reason and individualism to create a religiously observant population. At the same time, sermons frequently chastised the freedom and individuality and its resulting moral code that the Enlightenment supported.

[12]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 16. Around the same period as the emergence of the Republican Motherhood philosophy, the northeastern and southern part of the country underwent the religious revival termed the Second Great Awakening. Hoping to reinstitute the influence of religion in people's everyday lives, Protestants groups—including Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Methodists, Quakers, Baptists-- enlisted women in their efforts. Protestants called for women to strive to the ideal of "Christian wife, mother, and teacher." Such philosophies further increased calls for female education.

[13]Linda Kerber's book, *Women of the Republic* described this emergence of "republican motherhood." Rather than ignore white women's potential contributions, United States' society recast women as vital participants in the project of national advancement. According to Kerber, social theorists located women's roles within their biological and spiritual abilities. They linked women's ability to having children and their socially assigned roles as primary caregivers to an ability to effectively influence their offspring's proper citizenship development. During children's most influential stage, they advocated that women actively intervene to encourage literacy and impart democratic and republican principles. See Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 19800.

More thoroughly than Kerber, Ruth Bloch's article "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," explores not only the impact that the Revolution had on women's status, but how

developing female pedagogical philosophy emphasized a modified liberal education coupled with training in domestic responsibilities.[14] In the wake of this cacophony of calls for female education, a variety of female educational institutions were established between 1790-1850.[15] Academies, seminaries, and female colleges proliferated and town schools, adventure schools, and other schools began admitting women. [16]

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concepts of sexual difference "underlay some of the most basic premises of the Revolution and shaped important ideological changes in the early Republic" and how it changed ideals about female education. Providing a clearer historical link between rejection and acceptance of female education, she explores other gendered meanings of the term "virtue" and its importance to the success of the republican experiment. See Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,"*Signs* 13 no. 1, (1987): 39-52.

Finally, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's article "Dis-Covering the Subject of the "Great Constitutional Discussion," 1786-1789," explores the "production" of a new American identity during the constitutional period. Recognizing the need to reconcile themselves as both colonized and colonizers, Americans sought to "produce" a new American identity, which turned out to be white, male, and middle-class. In "producing" this new racialized and gendered national identity, those who were not middling, white, or male, (the poor, the rich, African-Americans, and women) also had their subjectivities reproduced, specifically as "others." Most often, these "others" possessed those characteristics that the new American feared, hated, rejected, or were "internally contradictory." For the author, the American and the "other" subjectivities are mutually dependent and constitutive of each other. Consequently, according to Smith-Rosenberg, these subjectivities are "ideologically, linguistically, and psychologically decentered but socially destabilized as well." Specifically the identities of women were produced to reinforce the new white, male, identity as virtuous, protective, dominant, intelligent, and frugal. See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Dis-Covering the Subject of the "Great Constitutional Discussion," 1786-1789," in *The Journal of American History* (December 1992): 841-873.

[14]Women's economic status determined how much education they would receive. According to their class or social status, nineteenth-century Americans enlisted certain women in the project of both fulfilling the idealistic republican vision for society as well as solidifying political deference, gendered economic systems, and social castes. In her book, *Reading in America* Cathy Davidson surveyed primary and secondary source materials and found that the early nineteenth-century United States employed both men and women to "perpetuating the status quo and fostering loyalty to the federal government." See Cathy Davidson ed., *Reading in America: Literature and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 64.

[15]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 14.

[16]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 15. For a more detailed discussion of the increased popularity of female academies of this time, see pages 15-20.

Early in the nineteenth century, formal female education in the south was slow to catch on as southern ideals about appropriate womanhood differed from those espoused in the northeast. This occurrence, in turn, differently affected the development of female pedagogical philosophies in the south.[17] Initially, southerners believed it was inappropriate to educate southern elite women in order to teach others. Instead, they believed female education should be centered on instructing young ladies in refinement and their duties as subservient but competent plantation mistresses.[18] Those parents who wanted a more classical liberal education for their daughters often sent them up north for schooling.[19] As the century progressed, favorable public opinion toward female education increased and southerners called for more formal southern female educational

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[17]Carl Kaestle posited that in general, the south was less enthusiastic about local common schooling and forcefully resisted the creation of state systems. Originally, southern children were educated by local schooling authorities and less students actually went to school than their northern counterparts. Wealthier families privately tutored their children, while families in the middling ranks attended academies, denominational schools, and subscription schools. The most popular form of secondary education was the academy and by 1850, the south had 2700. There were also cheaper "old-field schools." Small communities hired teachers for a period of time and both teacher and families agreed upon the subjects that would be taught. In addition to old-field schools, benevolent societies often created separate charity schools meant to educate the impoverished or the orphaned. Gradually during the antebellum period, southerners changed their opinions, through a series of debates and reform acts, regarding state schooling. By the Civil War most of the south had accepted the concept but added regional philosophies to its pedagogy. Issues like slavery, the importance of agrarianism, and class marked southern school children's education. See Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic,* 192-203.

[18]Elizabeth Fox-Genovese suggested that most southern plantation women were not schooled in liberal arts but were instead trained in household maintenance and comportment. Southern historiographers argued that access to education was restricted to the elite classes and that even fewer women attended female academies. Instead, they have argued that most plantation women received much of their education from their mothers. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 110.

[19]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women.*

institutions. Southerners established all-female academies or set up companion female schools to existing male academies.

As southerners, particularly elite southerners, began to advocate the values of education, regional differences continued to influence female educational practices and philosophies in the south.[20] Considered an important display of success and a method to retain white superiority, wealthy planters, prosperous farmers, businessmen, professionals, and ministers specifically set aside income to go towards their daughters' education.[21] Additionally, southerners advocated a formal female education that fortified racial hegemony, class, and gender hierarchies through the deployment of a female pedagogical philosophy known as the "Southern Belle."[22] The "Southern Belle" was the paragon of white purity, respectability, morality, and grace. Respected and protected, her

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[20]Christine Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 2.

[21]Other scholars have noted this phenomenon. In her article "Discourses of "Forced Sterilization" in Puerto Rico" and specifically in an investigation into American national and feminist involvement against and for forced sterilization of Puerto Rican women, Laura Briggs demonstrates that an increase in nationalist and feminist power is frequently accompanied with an intensification of racism and an infantilization of non-white peoples and women. Briggs demonstrates that as feminists acquired a more empowered political voice they often repeated colonialist moves by acting as colonizers of "other" feminisms, authoritatively speaking for others without first acquiring their consent, and using the political issues of others to empower their own white feminist agendas. See Laura Briggs, "Discoursed of "Forced Sterilization" in Puerto Rico: The Problem with the Speaking of the Subaltern" in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10 no. 2 (1998): 30-66.

[22]Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 2. Recognizing that they might employ women to strengthen and maintain white dominance, the south was incredibly supportive of women's education. In fact, eventually they were the region that was most dedicated to the project of women's education. The southern Belle or Lady represented the ideological manifestation of white southern superiority. In its construction, Farnham claimed that an entire regional social and subsequent economic system was

education reflected her elite status. Southern female schools endeavored to construct a curriculum that achieved a delicate balance of intellect and grace. In seminaries, academies, and colleges, southerners schooled their female students in reading, writing, simple arithmetic, the domestic arts, correspondence, as well as classical languages, botany, chemistry, physics, geology, physical education, philosophy, rhetoric, hygiene, and ornamental subjects such as dance, music, drawing, and needlepoint.[23] Additionally, girls were taught conversational and written language arts.[24] Southern families also preferred that their daughters be well-read in classical literature because they reasoned that the classics contained moral lessons and gender role prescriptions appropriate to antebellum southern elite white culture.[25] Finally, southern girls took instruction in manners, morals, and ladylike behavior as well as how to attract suitors and how to be skilled oral conversationalists. Creating such a curriculum both reflected the southern white woman's family status and assured them of desirable future social and economic

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revealed. Simultaneously, strong and weak, empowered and defenseless, victimizer and victim, the southern belle embodied southern society's greatness and vulnerability.

[23] Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women,* 14. In her analysis, Christine Farnham found that southern families placed great importance on correspondence as one of the most important skills that southern women possessed. See also Solomon, 23 and Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle,* 42-43. Southern parents desired that their daughters be skilled in letter writing especially because southern society carried on much of their social life through letters. An elegant writing style and penmanship demonstrated class and refinement.

[24] Parents hoped that their daughters would pepper their correspondence and parlor conversation with French phrases indicating that knowledge of French was considered a sign of elite status.

[25] Farnham argued that the classics emphasized the concept of honor, a central ideology in the south. More importantly the lessons contained therein, reified white bourgeois ideologies and justified.

opportunities.[26] Southern female education guaranteed educated and refined southern women's access to societal protection, respect, reverence, and by association, these benefits were extended to her family.[27] Southern female education was devised to help these women perform their assigned duties as wives, mothers, and mistresses of the household.

Problems Posed by Common and Public Schooling for Southern Jews

Despite the fact that, in theory, all Americans, including Jews, supported the philosophies and goals of national education, one fundamental pedagogical concept posed problems for Jewish parents and their daughters. Embedded within American pedagogy was the purported superiority of Protestantism and this was inextricably linked to foundational American philosophies.[28] In Carl Kaestle's words, "larger American Protestant groups translated their sense of Protestant superiority and mission into an ethnocentric faith in American mainstream culture and institutions."[29] Gradually, Protestantism became inextricably linked to republicanism, economic progress, and

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[26]Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 2, 4-5. Because one of the main purposes of women's education in the south was to mark and improve women's status with the expressed purpose of making an economically and socially desirable marital union, the south had no problem in constructing a curriculum commensurate to male education. They believed this would retain male suitors' interest.

[27]Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 3.

[28]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 92.

[29]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 93.

virtue.[30] Protestantism was also directly linked to another philosophy, the special destiny of America. Under the Protestant vision and according to Protestant ethics, Americans were destined to demonstrate that humans could improve nature and continue the westward progress of civilization.[31] According to Kaestle, "such beliefs combined to suggest to Americans that their nation was destined to reach the peak of human civilization and, with God's help, to overcome all obstacles to material preeminence and spiritual elevation."[32] The Protestant belief that fulfillment of such duties would bring the Second Coming of Christ reinforced the links between Protestantism and American progress, thereby excluding Jews and their religious beliefs from America's destiny. According to Kaestle:

> The image of God's providential Protestant express promoting commerce, westward expansion, schools, and churches is a fulsome metaphor for native Protestant ideology. Its core—the beliefs that related an emerging view of human nature to a developing government and economy—was basically this: human beings are born malleable and potentially good but need much careful guidance; all men are equal in some formal ways, but some groups are more able, wise, and refined than others; and therefore it is important that in education, economics, and politics, institutions be shaped to maintain the values and leadership of cultivated native, Protestant Americans."[33]

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[30]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 93. Conversely, Kaestle points out that in this world view other religions contributed to tyranny and the ruin of the nation leading him to conclude that "Catholics and Jews must have felt marginal."

[31]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 94.

[32]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 94.

[33]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 95.

This was to be done through Protestant-influenced national education.[34] Therefore, despite professing a separation between church and state, national schooling supported a religious bias.[35] According to Kaestle, if one questioned the reigning pedagogical philosophy that proper morality was solely linked to Protestant ideals, "one must also be against morality, good order, intelligent citizenship, economic prosperity, fair opportunity and a common American culture."[36] Protestant morality infused itself in schooling and, subsequently, in all aspects of American life—including political, social, and economic arenas. Kaestle argued that those nineteenth-century Americans who did not believe in Protestant ideology or any of its beliefs "could be portrayed as assaulting the entire belief system, because the beliefs were interdependent."[37]

In actual pedagogical practice and philosophy, Protestantism remained the dominant moral philosophy. Dissident religions like Catholicism and Judaism, were utilized as foils or examples of amorality in textbooks, primers, lesson plans, and teacher dialogues, which resulted in the emergence of anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish discourse in school curricula. For example, the most popular primer, McGuffey's (which sold more than 150 million copies in the nineteenth century), often included anti-Semitic

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[34]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 98.

[35]According to Kaestle, such policies caused dissent among the growing Catholic and Jewish populations. According to Kaestle's research, "Jews generally (though not unanimously) acquiesced in the common-school idea, following a policy of accommodation toward public schools while arranging Jewish religious education outside of school hours." Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 98.

[36]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 95.

stereotypical cartoons and moral tales. As Leonard Dinnerstein argued, McGuffey's contained "Protestant homilies while portraying Jews as crafty, greedy, dishonest, sly, selfish, unkind, unethical, disobedient, and wicked. Biblical accusations were so continually repeated in these works that hatred of the Jews was almost universally instilled."[38] Southern white Protestant children discerned their proper religious and secular morality against the indecent immoral actions of Jewish characters. [39] Aside from inherently anti-Semitic course materials, the evangelical Protestant atmosphere in the south was very difficult for Jews. In academies, seminaries, and secondary schools, southern Jewish female students frequently found themselves targets of proselytization and ridicule because of their Judaism.[40]

Debate on Female Jewish Education within the Jewish Community

For some reason, nineteenth century Jewish scholars have assumed that antebellum southern Jewish girls' education were solely modeled on Gentile southern white women's education. The heated debates in the southern Jewish community belie this assumption. During the antebellum period and, specifically, during the Second Great

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[37]Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 101.

[38]Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18-9

[39]Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism*, 18-9.

[40]For example Clara Solomon, a Jewish teenager from New Orleans, remembered being embarrassed when her teacher singled her out in front of classmates as Jewish. Her teacher asked Solomon to be present on Saturday to assist a new student. Because of the Jewish prohibition of working on the Sabbath and knowing that her mother would not allow it, Solomon declined. Afterwards, her teacher

Awakening (1790-1850) Jews regularly discussed female education. Southern Jews, desirous of acceptance and eager to take advantage of the south's economic and social opportunities, found themselves struggling between their religious beliefs and secular goals as drastic increases in exogamy and conversion alarmed Jewish religious and lay leaders. In the *Occident*, the leading national Jewish newspaper, some Jews went so far as to argue that traditional Judaism did not fit in the American context.[41] Traditional religious leaders responded that Judaism had not persevered through four thousand years of victory and persecution just to fade away in the United States. Within these arguments over the future of American Judaism, Jewish female education was heralded as both a problem and a solution. The question arises as to why such a concerted interest in Jewish female education emerged in these debates and what crucial roles Jewish leaders believed women could play in the survival of southern Judaism.

Clearly, antebellum Jewish leaders believed that women were the lynchpin to Judaism's survival. Subscribing to the *Halachic* (Jewish law) custom that Judaism is carried through the mother, antebellum Jews believed that it was crucial that Jewish women retain a sense of Jewish religiosity. Southern Jewish women who assimilated or

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chastised her for not being able to attend classes on Saturday. Solomon was so mortified and embarrassed that she had a difficult time returning to the school. See Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary*, 196.

[41]One might ask whether southern Jews read the newspaper. I would suggest that many did because southern businesses frequently advertised in the *Occident*. Additionally, the paper reported on happenings within the southern Jewish community. These included Purim balls, fundraising efforts, philanthropic endeavors, Sunday school openings, and Hebrew school end of the year examinations.

converted placed the future of Judaism in America in jeopardy. Consequently, southern Jewish leaders launched a campaign directed at Jewish women. Editorials in Jewish newspapers castigated southern Jewish women for their supposed materialism, vanity, and susceptibility to proselytization and conversion.[42] Due to the high rate of conversion, southern Jews feared that Second Great Awakening philosophies might entice Jewish women away from Judaism. Because Judaism forbids proselytization in order to expand the Jewish population, the antebellum southern Jewish community strengthened their existing Jewish community and by putting forth programs that tempered the effects of proselytization.[43]

Editorial debates and rabbinical sermons indicate that the American Jewish community was divided on the best way to approach female Jewish education. Some religious and lay leaders advocated a female pedagogy based solely on *Halacha* as it related to women. They advocated that daughters should be educated strictly by Jews and according to Jewish precepts. In 1836, in the *Occident*, the editor and the country's leading rabbi, Isaac Leeser, formally spoke out against the dangerous ramifications that

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[42]This strategy proved most effective because it deflected Jewish males' own responsibility for the emptiness of synagogues on the Sabbath, the rejection of *Kashruth*, the ignoring of holy day directives, and high rates of intermarriage among southern Jewish males.

[43]The existing Jewish community at this time consisted of the first migration Jews, the *Sephardim* and the second migration of Bavarian states Jews. Because of their differing ideas about Judaism, (*Sephardim* preferred to adhere to traditional Judaism while German Jews followed a more Enlightenment-influenced Judaism), they developed separate philosophies regarding the appropriate development of American Judaism. In this chapter, I chiefly focus on the actions of the established Jewish families, the *Sephardim*.

an Enlightenment or Protestant-based female education had on Judaism. Denouncing newly developed forms of education that emphasized liberal arts and Enlightenment thinking, the Rabbi proclaimed that it would be better if "our daughters" should learn to grow up to be devoted Jews and competent housewives and not "elegant musicians, skilful [sic] painters, graceful dancers or pretenders to sciences."[44] Leeser felt that an education based solely in the arts, sciences, and socialization wasted female Jewish potential, transgressed Jewish religious responsibilities, and endangered American Judaism's survival. Influenced by earlier notions regarding the feebleness of women's minds, Leeser advocated the tempering of currently popular Enlightenment-based pedagogical philosophies regarding the Lockean ideal about the unlimited intellectual potential of man and women. According to Leeser, such thinking interfered with Jewish female responsibilities biological and maternal responsibilities.[45] Training women in liberal arts, he proclaimed, " would indeed unsex her."[46]

Leeser posited that a specifically designed Jewish-based female education would be an effective antidote to the damage being done to the entire southern Jewish

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[44]Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., *The Jew in the American World: A Sourcebook* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 161.

[45]Marcus, *The Jew in the American World*, 160-161.

[46]Marcus, *The Jew in the American World*, 160-161. Rabbi Leeser relied on the biblical passage commanding "There shall not be man's apparel upon a woman." [Deuteronomy 27:3] to support his contentions.

community by Protestant-influenced secular education and socialization.[47] In *The Occident* and in an article titled "Demand for Education or Education of the Young American Israelites," Leeser called for a continuation and increase in Jewish communal support for female religious education in order to hold onto Jewish women and dissuade them from intermarrying and converting. In place of the unsatisfactory education system currently being used, Leeser suggested that Jewish girls be given an education tailored to their eventual religious, wifely, and maternal responsibilities. Centrally, he advocated that Jewish women should be instructed in certain Talmudic principles that emphasized human dependency on God.[48] Leeser also suggested that Jewish women should be taught those *Mishnaic* (Torah Commentary) and *Torah* verses that disdained vanity, materialism, submission to flattery, and secular wisdom, and, instead, focused on those parables that discussed meekness and modesty. He believed instructing these women on such religious tractates would encourage a resurgence of traditional notions of Jewish womanhood which, for Leeser, represented a crucial strategy to ensure the survival of Judaism in the south. Others who supported Leeser's program suggested that other

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[47]While praising those Jewish women who have upheld their religious responsibilities, he suggested that more focus must be attached to the female portion of the Jewish community. He wrote: "Much Praise, we acknowledge, is due to the natives of this land, and especially to the female portion, for their generally pious feelings, and unostentatious devotion to the religion of their fathers. Still no one can deny that very large numbers have fallen off into irreligion or association with Gentiles, which to a certainty would not have occurred, if we may judge from accompanying circumstances, had their religious education been different." (*Occident* V no 1. (April 1847): 1-2.

[48]At its most basic, this directive reinforced gender and religious hierarchies and therefore helped to establish and maintain Jewish communal order within Protestant southern society.

Talmudic teachings be employed to further reinforce traditional Jewish female roles. They suggested that Jewish girls should abandon secular philosophies and instead rely on the *Tanach* (*Torah*, prophets, and writings) for wisdom, hope, and faith. Rabbi Leeser and his supporters firmly believed that a Jewish female educational philosophy firmly rooted in *Halacha* (Jewish Law) and *Torah* represented the most effective strategy to counteract growing intermarriage, assimilation, and conversion rates among southern Jewish women. Despite a call for such an education, most southern Jewish families and communal organizations failed to put such pedagogical philosophies into practice.[49]

The majority of the southern Jewish population felt that Jewish women's retreat back into the Jewish community was counterproductive because it would cut the Jewish community off from beneficial secular philosophies and opportunities that might advance southern Jews material, intellectual, and social aims. Instead, they argued that a female education that combined mainstream American philosophies on womanhood, education, virtue, and morality, with Jewish philosophies and history was a more desirable and sensible approach.

Antebellum Southern Jewish Female Education

Influenced by and supportive of new ideals regarding female education, republican motherhood, and traditional notions regarding Jewish women's

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[49]As will be discussed later, southern Jewish parents utilized some of Leeser's suggestions in their Hebrew and Sunday school and academy curricula, and in their tutorials.

responsibilities, antebellum southern Jewish families searched for alternative female educational systems and pedagogical philosophies that facilitated both their secular and religious goals regarding Jewish acceptance and the preservation of Judaism. Many southern Jewish parents supported the course of secular female education and firmly believed that national education was indeed crucial to developing good wives and mothers, and raising virtuous republican citizen sons. Consequently, they had no qualms about sending their daughters to already or newly established Protestant-influenced schools. They clearly believed that a solid liberal arts education could best be gotten in these schools. Well-funded by churches, ministers, lay leaders, and congregants, these schools possessed excellent teachers, good facilities, and comprehensive curriculum. For example, Hannah Grausman's parents felt that St. Mary's college in Raleigh, North Carolina, represented the best educational program to achieve their daughter's social and economic ambitions. At St. Mary's, she learned to skillfully play music and paint. This does not mean that these families abandoned their Judaism. Though the sources do not reveal the extent to which these girls received a Jewish education, it is probable that they received instruction in Judaic matters in their homes. Synagogue records and cemeteries indicate that the families of these daughters were members of synagogues and were buried in Jewish cemeteries. This indicates the families' continued affiliation with Judaism, despite their support of a Protestant-influenced education.

Still for many antebellum southern Jewish families, sending their daughters to Protestant-based schools was unacceptable and sought out ways to implement new pedagogical philosophies without compromising their Jewishness. They did this by continuing to use old educational practices such as private tutoring. Additionally, southern Jewish families attempted to appropriate newly developed or reformed educational institutions such as Hebrew educational institutes, private, classical, and commercial schools, academies, "Jewish friendly" schools, and normal schools to their cause. For poorer southern Jewish families, southern Jewish communities established and supported benevolent or inexpensive schools. They also borrowed from the newly established and Protestant-based "Sunday School" model and established their own Hebrew Sunday and Day schools. Finally, southern Jewish families employed rather unorthodox educational practices to further Jewish female education that did not include a denigration of their religion. These practices included overseas travel, correspondence, and self-education. Devising these alternative Jewish female educational systems allowed antebellum southern Jewish families to demonstrate support of and benefit from newly developed American pedagogical systems without having to sacrifice their Judaism and, in the process, create a stronger and more empowered southern Jewish community.

Traditional Forms of Jewish Female Education

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, southern Jewish families often sent their daughters away for schooling. Small Jewish populations unable to fund a Jewish school in their native cities often sent their daughters from their small villages, towns, and rural areas to larger urban private schools. These included educational institutes, Hebrew commercial schools, and Hebrew classical schools.[50] Often found in the major port cities, Jewish families from all over the south sent their daughters to these schools because they promised a curriculum that provided a liberal education coupled with instruction in Hebrew language, Jewish practice, and religious education.[51] Because these schools existed at the genesis of female education, curriculums centered on the three "Rs." Young Jewish girls were also schooled in Hebrew letters and instruction in Jewish ritual and prayer. Typically from Richmond to Charleston, southern Jewish girls boarded from fall to spring with a semester break during December. Isaac Harby, one of the founding members of the Reformed Society of Israelites, opened a Hebrew private co-educational school in Charleston and instructed young Jewish boys and girls in

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[50]Uriah Zvi Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, South Carolina, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* XLII nos. 1-4 (September, 1952 to June 1953): 53.

[51]Engelman argued that the increased demand for Jewish private schools arose because existing private tutors failed to successfully teach Hebrew. See Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, 53-6. In the city of Charleston, however, the development of Jewish private schools also failed in this mission and, ultimately, the Sunday school movement developed. Additionally, a lack of books in English on the Jewish religion made it difficult for Jewish private schools to complete their mission of religious education. Oftentimes these schools utilized Christian catechisms and eliminated "Christological" references.

Hebrew and religion.[52] Similarly, Charleston's Congregation Beth Elohim supported the development of a co-educational Hebrew classical school for young Jews. In 1824, the Congregation adopted a provision regarding Jewish education. It stated:

> a youth or youths (would be) classically (educated) in the English, Latin and Hebrew Languages, so as to render them fully competent to perform divine service, not only with ability, but also according to the true spirit of Judaism.[53]

This Hebrew classical school prototype which combined liberal arts training and Jewish ritual, was primarily open to wealthier Jewish families.[54] With respect to its female students, this education was designed to prepare young southern Jewish women for their responsibilities as helpmates to their husbands in the home and in their businesses as well as for their future roles raising virtuous and productive citizens.

Academies

Setting up academies that provided training in Jewish religious observance and Jewish philosophy allowed southern Jewish women to participate in the national project of republicanism and progress, to individually benefit from Lockean ideals regarding human potential and reason, and preserve Judaism in a highly Protestant environment.

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[52]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 53.

[53]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 55. In his article, Engelman claims that such a provision was meant to focus on the members' education and not the members' children. This assertion is questionable given the verbiage of "youths." Along similar lines, the verbiage speaks to Jewish youths and is not gender specific. Apparently, Jewish girls would also be allowed to attend these schools

[54]According to Engelman, tuition fees "were high and out of reach for a number of Charleston's Jewish parents." See Engelman, " Jewish Education in Charleston," 54.

Jacob Mordecai, an Orthodox Jewish man, developed the first female Jewish academy in the south. Seeking to turn his love of learning into a financially beneficial enterprise and searching for an appropriate venue to educate his daughters and other southern Jewish girls, Mordecai decided to establish a female Jewish academy. He felt that the educational options available to young Jewish girls promoted assimilation, encouraged them to abandon their religion, and denigrated Judaism itself. Yet, he fully subscribed to newly developed ideals regarding the importance of female education as it related to the moral and financial success of the family and the nation. He also believed in the philosophies of the academy type schooling and, therefore, set out to create a pedagogical experiment that combined Enlightenment and Protestant philosophy with Judaic tradition and philosophies. Mordecai believed that such an education could accomplish both the goals of creating virtuous Jewish wives and daughters and assist in creating virtuous male citizens and observant male Jews. Erecting his school in 1809, in Warrenton, North Carolina, and naming the Academy the "Institute for Female Improvement," Mordecai's school developed into the first successful school for women in the South.[55]

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[55]Christine Farnham found that by the end of its tenure, the school had amassed $18,000. See Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 44. Sheldon Hanft concluded that by the end of the first spring term in 1809, the student body had expanded. Consequently, the family purchased a parcel of land at the northern edge of town, a partially completed structure was purchased and finished, and the house which sat on the land was modified to accommodate both the students and the Mordecai family. See Sheldon Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy" *American Jewish History* LXXIX no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 84. Hanft argued that Mordecai's school provided the model employed by southern society to encourage formal education for southern antebellum women. Hanft suggested that Mordecai broke new ground in the arena of female education by providing an education for young women usually reserved for elite white males.

Mordecai taught few classes and devoted much of his time supervising the school, paying bills, purchasing supplies, and admissions. He charged his second wife, Rebecca and his older daughters, Emma, Rachel, and Ellen with the task of teaching the majority of the school courses and supervising the young ladies. Together, they devised and taught courses in the liberal arts, mathematics, and the sciences.[56] Additionally, the Mordecai women schooled their young female charges in how to prepare their toilette, etiquette, correspondence, elocution, and liberal arts appropriate to young southern white women. Commonplace books, textbooks, letters, diaries, and journals revealed that they were instructed in "the English language, grammar, spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, composition, history, and geography."[57] Intent on fulfilling gender-blind Enlightenment pedagogical philosophies, Mordecai's curriculum for women exceeded accepted standards for female education. For example, advanced female students examined the *Iliad* in its original language, thereby demanding that the young women have at least a

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Hanft posited that Mordecai's school played a significant role in the changing of educational institutions in America. It encouraged the south to accept the free public school movement and, in addition, liberated women to exit the domestic sphere and become teachers. Finally, he concluded that the success of the institution encouraged a southern appreciation for formal female education. Hanft claimed that several of the Academy's graduates became successful authors, prominent women, and members of influential families. Additionally, Hanft concluded that female Jewish educators modeled their own classrooms and schools after Mordecai's academy. Women like Penina Moise opened both private and Sunday schools and combined Lockean pedagogical philosophy, liberal arts, and Judaism in a single curriculum. See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy 73-80.

[56]For a short period, their younger brother Moses seemed to have been hired to teach. He appeared to dislike teaching and did not teach every year that the school was in existence.

[57] Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 80.

reading knowledge of Greek.[58] In addition to basic liberal arts, Mordecai's school offered several "ornamental" courses designed to school elite southern white Jewish women in parlor skills.[59] According to one advertisement, the academy offered tutoring in "drawing, vocal and instrumental music, and fancy needlework." While boarding at the Warrenton Female Academy, Phila Cohen boasted in a letter that, at age seven, she learned to perform her toilet.[60] Under the tutelage of Rachel, Ellen, and Caroline Mordecai, Cohen learned how to bathe, groom, and dress for appropriate occasions. Designed to "cultivate a taste for neatness in their persons and propriety of manners," the curriculum taught students proper etiquette and grooming techniques.[61]

Mordecai's experiment endeavored to combine liberal arts and Jewish education within a religiously Jewish context. Seemingly designed in response to the inherently anti-Jewish Protestant academies, Mordecai, his wife, and his daughters created an

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[58]Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 81-88 fn. 39. Mordecai's enthusiasm for advanced female education caused a bit of scandal in the south. Rival educators believed that the curriculum was deficient and inappropriate. Hanft argues that in a slave society marshaled by gender and racial responsibilities, critics believed that female education commensurate to white males' endangered the social structure of society. Rumors proclaimed that the Academy provided a substandard education. Critics asserted that schools should educate southern women mainly on social behaviors. Malicious gossip invoked age-old stereotypes regarding Jews and business. Critics reasoned that southern gentlemen did not want wives who were possibly intellectually equal or superior. Ultimately, Mordecai's respected position helped the school weather this brief storm and the school thrived.

[59]According to Hanft, excluding extra ornamental courses, the basic education cost $105 a year plus an additional charge for books, paper, and writing materials. See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 80. Mordecai hired a "Mr. Miller" to teach music courses.

[60]Phila Cohen was the daughter of Aaron Marks Lazarus and Esther Cohen Lazarus. Aaron Marks Lazarus would later marry Rachel Mordecai. "Biographies" in the Calder Family Collection, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[61]See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy" and Mordecai family papers, 1806-1819.

educational institution that instilled pride in Judaism and its heritage and encouraged Jewish observance. At its most basic, the school countered accepted Protestant customs in the school setting by planning the school's schedule around Jewish holidays. The school, unlike other southern urban academies, privileged the Jewish calendar, customs, rituals, and laws.[62] Classes were cancelled on Jewish holidays and shortened on Sabbath eve.[63] Learning ceased on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays and Jewish students were advised to attend synagogue.[64] Young Jewish girls were taught certain gender appropriate passages and events from the Torah, ancient and modern Jewish history, and Judaic practice.[65] Letters to the young Jewish female students and journal entries suggest that they actively observed Jewish holidays. For example, families routinely sent holiday packages that included among other things *matzot* and other Sabbath supplies to their daughters.[66] Also since the Mordecai family, as traditional Jews, observed all dietary laws, the academy's facilities also maintained a strictly kosher environment.

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[62]The school adhered to the laws of ***Kashruth.***

[63]See Mordecai and Jacob Mordecai family papers 1806-1818.

[64]Mordecai family papers and Jacob Mordecai papers. See file folders containing letters written during the school's existence, 1809- 1819.

[65]Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the Jacob Mordecai papers, Special Collections, Duke University, Raleigh-Durham. See file folders containing letters written during the school's existence. (1809- 1819) The dating of letters is sketchy. Archivists at the Southern Historical collection have compiled folders that include information about the Academy within the dates that it was opened.

[66] Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 83, fn 30.

Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon in the success of this school was the fact that Mordecai's student body was predominantly Christian.[67] Despite the Jewish focus evident in its schedule, several elite southern parents supported the school's curriculum and overlooked the inherently Jewish bias.[68] Anti-Semitic criticisms, when they came, came from rival educators. Mordecai and his family were pleased that their religious difference did not affect the credibility of the academy or its curriculum. Perhaps sensitive to the importance he placed on observing his Judaism, Mordecai arranged for and encouraged non-Jewish students to attend the church of their choice.[69] He believed that religion played a central role in "molding the character and intellect of his students.[70] Within the classroom, Mordecai utilized religion to encourage the moral development of his students. Historian Sheldon Hanft argued that Mordecai scrupulously avoided discussing doctrine or sectarian differences, and, instead, used the universalist purposes and lessons of religion as a basis for the discussion of philosophical and ethical issues.[71] Unlike the reigning pedagogical practices of the day, universalizing issues like

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[67]Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 85.

[68]Hanft argues that during the Academy's tenure, "the brightest young ladies of the south" were instructed at the school. Consequently, the Female Academy retained a position as one of the finest schools in the region. Continued graduation further enhanced the school's reputation. Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 90.

[69]He accepted that many of his students went to church on Sundays and as the headmaster, he was often required to go. He wrote: " I, however, decline attending or as seldom as possible." See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy, 87.

[70]Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 87.

[71]Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 87.

piety absent of sectarian specifics, enabled Mordecai to effectively encourage the intellectual and moral development of his female students without denigrating non-Protestant religions.

Mordecai, his wife, and his daughters carefully selected educational materials, textbooks, and literature that were devoid of anti-Semitism. Within Protestant academies and seminaries, Christianity was inextricably linked to civilization and human progress and mainstream textbooks supported the notion that the success of western civilization and subsequent human progress occurred because of the spread of Christianity and its economic, political, and social systems. Dissident religions and ethnicities entered the narrative as the conquered or as the recipients of Christian superior knowledge. Popular textbooks, therefore, argued that Christianity and civilization achieved its success by denigrating, dominating, or eliminating the customs and behaviors of other racial, ethnic, and religious groups. As a deeply religious man committed to the legacy of Judaism and proud of its successes and longevity, Mordecai only used texts that did not denigrate Judaism or, more frequently, emphasized Old Testament experiences so that Christian and Jews would not feel alienated. Additionally, Mordecai focused on Israelite history and Jewish holidays. He did not, however, create a philo-Semitic narrative or one that solely celebrated the efforts of Jews. Rather, through history, geography, and literature, Mordecai attempted to contextualize the Jewish experience within western civilization. Female students at the academy learned about Jews not from a pro-Christian and,

therefore, inherently anti-Semitic stance, but as a minority religious group trying to preserve their religion and culture while existing in this Christian milieu.[72] Consequently, southern Jewish and non-Jewish girls were raised on a pedagogy that did not enforce the superiority of Christianity through the denigration of Judaism.

The beneficial effects of such an education were several-fold. First and foremost, popular blatant anti-Semitism in pedagogy was eliminated. Second, the academy's educational style encouraged non-Jewish students to question the validity of anti-Semitism as it existed in other avenues of their life—whether it was in conversation, print, or religious sermons. Such an education countered pervasive and long-standing anti-Semitic conceptions held by non-Jews. Additionally, Jewish and non-Jewish girls studied, ate, slept, and socialized side by side. This environment promoted an atmosphere of camaraderie and must have countered anti-Semitic notions prevalent outside the school. Daily exposure to Jewish practices enabled southern Christian girls to better understand the Jewish faith and, therefore, be less suspicious of it. Their positive experiences reverberated into general southern society. As southern white Christian girls relayed their favorable experiences with Jews and better understandings of the Jewish faith to the larger Christian community, they consciously or unconsciously served as

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[72]See Mordecai family papers and the Jacob Mordecai papers. See file folders containing letters written during the school's existence, 1809- 1819. Such a conclusion is culled from a number of letters, journals, and scrap pieces of paper, found in these folders. Jacob Mordecai, his wife Rebecca, daughters

ambassadors for southern Jews because they had access to spaces that for the most part, Jews did not. Gradually, the academy's practices became well-known to, and eventually earned the respect of, the larger southern community. This translated into greater respect for not only the Mordecai family but for Jews in general in the south.

The Mordecai Female Academy provided young southern Jewish girls with a site that promoted active engagement with their Judaism. For the Jewish female students who were a minority within the academy, the education instilled a sense of pride in Judaic history, culture, and rituals. In classes and in synagogue, young Jewish female academy attendees were schooled in Jewish history with specific attention paid to tests of faith, biblical heroines, and the importance of maintaining the covenant made between God and the nation of Israel in the face of adversity.[73] Most importantly, it was in this Jewish educational space where young southern Jewish girls studied Judaism, were free to practice their religion without threat of chastisement, and constructed empowered female Jewish selves. Within this educational space, young southern Jewish girls negotiated their secular and religious selves. Mordecai's Warrenton Female Academy provided a discursive arena where young southern Jewish girls formed oppositional identities that contested those nationally accepted Protestant imperatives which degraded Judaism and, instead, encouraged them to develop a sense of ethnic and religious pride. Such an

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Rachael and Ellen, and son Solomon endeavored to create and implement such a curriculum and frequently mention their efforts in their diaries and letters to each other.

experience not only benefited the individual girls themselves, but also paid dividends to the larger southern Jewish community. These same southern Jewish girls who studied at the Mordecai female academy and developed strong secular and religious selves were the same individuals who, as women, acted as female leaders in southern Jewish communities. These would be the same women, who beginning in the 1840s, would develop and fund local southern Jewish infrastructures—including synagogues, educational institutions, benevolent societies, and social clubs. Additionally, such a positive experience in being able to negotiate religious and secular identities served as an example to other southern Jewish men and women. This potentially prevented a further dissolution of Judaism in the American south.[74]

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[73]Mordecai family papers and Jacob Mordecai papers.

[74]Combining Enlightenment pedagogy within a Jewish environment did not hurt Mordecai's academy which was, by any standard, incredibly successful. During the second year of the school's operation enrollment increased to such a degree that Mordecai had to hire additional teachers. Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 85-88, Mordecai family papers, and the Jacob Mordecai papers. He hired several new faculty members to teach liberal arts, music, dance, and embroidery. In the second year, the school accepted sixty students. By the end of July in 1810, enrollment rose to eighty. By the third year, the Warrenton female academy boasted a class of more than ninety students. Ultimately, Mordecai and his family decided that for optimum academic achievement, enrollment should be limited to 100-110 students. Students hailed from all over the south including the Carolinas, Richmond, and Petersburg. Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 87-91. Despite a fire in 1811 and war with Britain in 1812, the Academy continued to increase enrollment and bring in a tidy profit. After ten years in operation, the school closed in 1819. After ten years in operation, Mordecai closed the academy. The school had produced a nice profit and Mordecai believed that he and his family could survive on its earnings and therefore retired. Less than three years later, individual family members went back to work. Ellen and Rachel returned to teaching. Rachel eventually married but Ellen continued to rely on her teaching as a source of income. See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy, 91, fn 48, Mordecai family papers, letters dated 1818-1819, and Rachel Mordecai' Journal 1816-1818. In the last six months of the journal, Rachael hints at the closing of the school to her half-sibling, Eliza. Hanft suggested that Mordecai's educational experiment succeeded because he strategically located his school and followed pedagogical philosophies that attracted the larger southern population. Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 93. He created an institution and devised a

"Jewish Friendly" Schools

It is clear from several young female students' letters that some southern Jewish families were sending their daughters to other "Jewish friendly" schools which emphasized a solid liberal arts education and were free of anti-Semitism.[75] In such schools, young southern Jewish women thrived. Several letters detail the advanced education received by southern Jewish women in these schools. Young Judith Marx proudly demonstrated her proficiency in French when she wrote her entire letter in the language to her family.[76] Similarly, one of Jacob Mordecai's daughters, Ellen, described her two favorite subjects, also French and grammar.[77] Graduating from Girl's High School in Savannah in 1873, Josephine Gardiner Sheftall filled her composition book

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curriculum that prepared young southern Jewish and non-Jewish women for their roles and responsibilities in the home, with their families, and in their communities. Hanft discovered in his research that one woman, Rebecca Myers (a Jew) felt that the Female Academy had provided her with a solid education and prepared her for her roles and responsibilities as the wife of an ambassador, John Y. Mason. She felt that her instruction in linguistics and culture prepared her for this career. In her capacity as an ambassador's wife, she promoted the value of such an education. See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy," 92.

[75]I am assuming that these places were less anti-Semitic than others because in these young girl's letters, they happily spoke about their education and social experiences at these schools. They detailed how they fit in, developed friendships among all of the students, regardless of their religion, and did not report feeling ostracized because of their religion. This is in marked contrast to the diary and letters of Clara Solomon and Julia Lazarus who often wrote of the intense proselytization and the anti-Semitism that they experienced at their schools.

[76]Judith Marx to George Marx, 9 September 1813, Myers family papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[77]Ellen Mordecai, "Boarding School in Warrenton" in *Gleanings From Long Ago*, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

with essays on historical figures, science, moral issues and copied poetry.[78] Similarly, Cecilia Cohen copied in her commonplace book patriotic-themed essays and poetry by Byron, Crabbe, and Moore, certain verses and elegies that celebrated women, paid homage to historical figures like George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, or Sir Walter Scott, and Talmudic passages.[79] Caroline Myers transcribed Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Adam's Hymns.[80] Miriam Gratz Moses delighted in the study of biology and especially sea life. In her composition book, she demonstrated a real interest and aptitude in marine biology and entomology as she meticulously detailed various species of sea animals and insects. Revealing the advanced nature of her education, Moses displayed her proficiency in science as she routinely commented on the complex "Kidds Physical Condition of Man" and Prout's Chemistry.[81] Likewise, Maria Minis' letter discussed her plans to study astronomy.[82] In addition to liberal arts and ornamental class, these schools also provided a cultural component for the young female students. Outside of school session, girls were encouraged to attend music concerts, lectures on a variety of topics,

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[78]Josephine Gardiner Sheftall, Composition Book 1871-1873, Josephine Gardiner Sheftall papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

[79]Cecilia Cohen, Commonplace Book, Cohen-Hunter papers, Georgia Historical Society, item 1.

[80]Caroline Myers, Commonplace Book, Myers family papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[81]Miriam Gratz Moses Cohen, Composition Book, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[82]Maria Minis to Sissy, Ridie, Old woman 13 May 1866, Minis family papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. Her letter also described her southern school's inclusion of athletics and physical exercise for women. In the same letter, she raved about boating.

and classical and contemporary theater performances. In their letters, these girls never mentioned experiencing outright anti-Semitism or felt excluded because of their Judaism.

Tutoring

Aside from Jewish or Jewish "friendly" female academies and schools, tutoring existed as an effective educational alternative to Protestant evangelical influenced common schools. Elite and middling rank families used tutoring because it possessed financial and pedagogical benefits. Less well-off families used elder siblings as tutors. As in the case of Rachel Mordecai and Alice Solomon, female sibling tutors attended secondary or normal school in the afternoon and oversaw their siblings' education in the morning and in the later evening.[83] It appears, however, that wealthier families also hired governesses and tutors to provide their daughters with an education.[84] Far beyond a demonstration of an individual family's wealth, tutoring served more practical purposes.

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[83]See Rachel Mordecai, Journal 1816-1818, Myers, Mordecai , Hays family papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College and Elliot Ashkenazi's *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon Growing up in New Orleans, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1995).

[84]It is unclear as to the religion of these tutors. There is nothing in the historical evidence to suggest that these tutors were Jewish. Tutoring of secular subjects was often done by these women. Religious training seemed to be the province of parents, elder siblings, or clergy. Almost all of the elite and middling rank southern Jewish women surveyed recorded at one time or another having had tutors who specialized in certain liberal arts subjects such as French or ornamental classes like music, art, correspondence and etiquette. For examples see Georgeann Cohen, "Diary of Trip to Europe, Liverpool, England, London, England, Paris, France, and Geneva, Switzerland" May 22, 1867-December 18, 1867, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Microform 2607, Mathilde Kohn, Correspondence and Diaries Reflecting the Experiences and Thoughts of Adele and Mathilde Kohn, Daughters of Antonie Kohn. May 24, 1866-April 29, 1889, American Jewish Archives, box no. 111, Emma Mordecai, Diary 1838, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Isabel Mordecai, Journal 1858-1859, Special Collections, Duke University, Raleigh-Durham, Josephine

Tutoring allowed southern Jewish parents more control over their daughters' education. Mothers and fathers completely determined and supervised their daughter's education including the courses their daughters took, course materials, and assignments.[85] Tutoring allowed parents to individually craft their daughters' education according to what they perceived as best for their daughters' intellectual and social future. It also meant that they could create an educational experience that emphasized Enlightenment and American ideals regarding female education and women's future roles as Jewish wives and mothers. From a very young age, Jewish girls were schooled in Hebrew, the Ten Commandments, Jewish biblical history, Jewish holidays, Jewish female ritual, and Maimonidean morals as listed in the "Thirteen Articles of Faith." [86] Tutoring enabled

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Sheftall, Composition Book 1871-1873, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia, and Miriam Gratz, Journal 1824-1828, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[85]As in the case of Eliza Mordecai, her parents and her half sister Rachel specifically devised a secular and religious curriculum that employed their pedagogical philosophies regarding Jewish female education. See Rachel Mordecai's journal from 1816-1818, Myers Mordecai Hays family papers, American Jewish Archives.

[86]Maimonides, widely known as Rambam, lived from 1135-1204 C.E. Born in Moorish Cordoba, he was trained as a physician. Due to constant persecution, the Rambam lived in a variety of places throughout the Moorish lands of Spain, the Middle East, and North Africa. He eventually became the leader of the Jewish community in Cairo. The Rambam was heavily influenced by Greek thought and, especially, Aristotle. He was the author of the *Mishneh Torah* (Torah commentary) which is considered one of the greatest codes of Jewish law. Within the *Mishneh*, he compiled every conceivable topic of Jewish law in simple language. (http//www.jewfaq.org/sages.htm). Though Judaism has no dogma or formal set of beliefs that one must hold to be a Jew, the closest thing that anyone has ever come to creating a widely-accepted list of Jewish beliefs is Maimonides' creation of the Thirteen Articles of Faith in his commentary on the *Mishnah*. See http://www.jewfaq.org/beliefs.html. Maimonides created the thirteen articles of faith from Judaism's six hundred and thirteen commandments as found in the Torah. They are as follows: 1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, be He Blessed, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists. 2. The belief in God's absolute and unparalleled unity. 3. The belief in God's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling. 4. The belief in God's eternity. 5. The imperative to worship

young southern women to acquire an education in secular and Jewish knowledge in an environment that did not expose and press them to support Protestant evangelical ideals, and, consequently, was anti-Semitic. Practically, this type of education facilitated southern Jewish female intellectual development and enabled southern Jewish women to participate in both the American public and Jewish private arenas.

After surveying parents', tutors', and young southern Jewish women's diaries, composition books, letters, and marginalia it is apparent that young Jewish girls received an extremely sophisticated and rigorous education—well beyond the suggested female literacy of the times. Because pedagogical philosophers, booksellers, and pamphlet makers created an entire industry devoted to self and tutorial education, parents and tutors had a wide array of educational materials available to them to create a well-rounded education.[87] Young southern Jewish women took lessons in a wide array of topics providing them with an education similar to that received by young men in common

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Him exclusively and no foreign false gods. 6. The belief that God communicates with man through prophecy. 7. The belief that the prophecy of Moses our teacher had priority. 8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah. 9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah. 10. The belief in divine omniscience and providence. 11. The belief in divine reward and retribution. 12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era. 13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead. See http://www.fordham.edu/halsal/source/rambam 13.html.

[87]Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 64. Cathy Davidson concluded that a huge market emerged which sold a myriad of self-education materials. These included " self-help books and social guides, textbooks, and teacher's manuals, histories and biographies, children's books, readers for adults, travelogues, captivity stories, crime narratives, and novels." Additionally, informal reading groups and lending libraries did a booming business. Jewish tutors relied upon these self-help educational materials to devise curricula that emphasized morality, virtue, and republican ideals without resorting to anti-Semitic foils.

schools, academies, and seminaries.[88] Young Jewish girls studied western civilization, biology, language, botany, literature, language, and poetry. Additionally, these young girls took instruction in moral and religious philosophy, virtue, and popular republican ideals. Composition books contained essays, poetry, and transcribed passages that emphasized honor, morality, religion, God, love, romance, death, fidelity, allegiance, spirituality, national history, and current events.[89]

Jewish female education also reflected a regional bias. Southern Jewish parents were not content with rudimentary female education that emphasized the three "Rs." According to historian Barbara Solomon, southern female pedagogical practices also emphasized lessons designed to teach young Jewish southern girls how to be ladies.[90] In practice, this meant that southern women were frequently tutored in classical languages, art, literature, and music. For example after moving to New York City, Charleston native Rebecca Alexander described how her father immediately set out to find suitable tutors to continue her education in liberal arts and ornamental classes. As was the custom, Alexander attended the local public school, but her father felt that the curriculum was not

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[88]See Kaestle's *Pillars of the Republic*. Several of his chapters discuss the development of an advanced male education.

[89]For examples see Georgeann Cohen, Diary of Trip to Europe, Mathilde Kohn, Correspondence and Diaries, Miriam Gratz Moses, Journal 1824-1828, Rebecca Ella Solomon Alexander, "Memoirs of Life in Charleston South Caroline, 1854-1935, June 24, 1929, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati and Rachel Mordecai, Diary.

[90]Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 21. According to Solomon, a southern girl's education "should fit her to be a lady—polished, competent, and subservient.

advanced enough. After her common school classes, Alexander was also tutored in French, German, correspondence, and music.[91] When she returned to Charleston in the spring of 1870, she continued her tutorials in French, English, and for a short time, German.[92] The importance of learning the classical languages is also evident in Emma Mordecai's efforts in her 1864 composition book to translate a French play (Le Marriage au Tambour).[93] Mordecai worked for months trying to achieve an exact translation. The necessity of a balanced education is best seen in the composition book of Caroline Myers. Myers, at age ten, composed a sophisticated essay that distinguished the importance of maintaining a delicate balance between learning and fancy. In Myer's "fairy tale," Lilly, the main character, came upon two fairies named "Learning" and "Fancy." Each vied for the protagonist's affections. Lilly exhibited astuteness and diplomacy when she decided that she would take both, "Learning to teach me, Fancy to amuse me."[94] The composition books of Alexander, Mordecai, and Myers reflect the southern emphasis on female education that privileged cultured, moral, and lady-like behavior.

Southern Jewish female tutorials also reflected nationalist philosophies. Southern Jewish parents carefully included lessons on patriotism, republicanism, and

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[91]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life in Charleston,"13-14..

[92]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life in Charleston," 19.

[93]Emma Mordecai, Journal, 24 Sept 1864 to 24 November 1864. Mordecai devoted over two months to translating this play. She read it several times in French, translated and copied it countless times. She fantasized that it might be produced on the Richmond stage.

civic virtue in their daughters' education. In her composition book, Josephine Sheftall's wrote several essays that demonstrated her understanding of sophisticated republican philosophies, particularly those that focused on labor, productivity, economy, and virtue.[95] For example during the period 1871-1873, she routinely worked on an essay titled "Labor Conquers All Things" in which she debated the importance of intellectual and economic labor and explicated the personal and societal consequences of lazy and unproductive behavior.[96] In this essay, Sheftall demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of Lockean moral and political philosophy. Supporting contemporary ideals regarding women and education, she reasoned that female education led not only to personal enrichment but also to communal and national development. Sheftall wrote: "many of us think that when our school days are over, we have completed our education and there is nothing more to be learned. We are mistaken, for an education never ceases."[97] Echoing nineteenth-century American views on female education within the essay, Sheftall equated education with progress within her essay.

Trying to create a composite of southern Jewish female tutorial education is exceptionally difficult because writings on this type of education were sporadic. One

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[94]Caroline Myers, Composition Book 11 March 1853, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[95]Per a conversation with Dr. Dagmar Herzog on October 26, 2001, Sheftall's essay demonstrates American ideology about linking profit with productivity.

[96]Sheftall, Composition Book 1871-1873.

[97]Sheftall, Composition Book 1871-1873.

antebellum southern Jewish woman, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus has, however, left a journal chronicling her tutorial experiences with her own half sister, Eliza Kennon Mordecai. A more detailed investigation of how Lazarus supervised the education of her young sister produces a more comprehensive portrait of typical southern Jewish female tutorial education—including its curriculum, goals, and success. From a decidedly middling family, Lazarus was assigned the role as tutor because her stepmother, Rebecca, was too busy running her household, taking care of three small children, and helping her husband Jacob run the Warrenton Female Academy. As previously discussed, Lazarus took her role as a teacher very seriously.[98] For ten years, Mordecai chronicled her half sister's educational progress.

As she was already a teacher at her father's academy, Lazarus decided to view Eliza and her education as a pedagogical experiment. In keeping with her preparation as an academy teacher, Lazarus read endless education treatises regarding children's and, specifically, female education. She read all of Scottish pedagogical philosophers Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth's works, who were, in turn, influenced by Lockean educational philosophy. The Edgeworths believed in *tabula rasa* and understood child intellect and morality as not essential to human beings. Instead, they believed these qualities needed to be carefully cultivated and molded by teachers. The Edgeworths pushed for an advanced, sophisticated, and rigorous liberal arts education together with

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[98]See Hanft, "Mordecai's Female Academy,"81 fn 26.

strict instruction in morality, virtue, and advocated that both philosophies both be tempered with love and affection. Lazarus was so impressed by such educational theories that she sought to put them into practice with her young sibling.

Though Edgeworthian educational philosophies often privileged Christian ideas about morality and virtue, Lazarus, as a religious Jew, was not interested in passing these ideas onto her sister. Instead, she used Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of faith and the Ten Commandments to shape her sister's religious education. Substituting Jewish conceptions regarding morality and virtue did not seem to Lazarus to compromise the experiment as she found Christian and Jewish senses of morality quite similar.[99] To ensure that her sister developed a Jewish self, Lazarus devised an education that addressed Jewish history, ritual, and ethics. Tutoring her sister at home and completely overseeing all aspects of her education allowed Lazarus to construct a curriculum that befitted an American southern and Jewish woman. By using Enlightenment and Maimonidean philosophies in tandem, Lazarus devised a solid liberal arts education that would not come at the expense of a Jewish education. Both philosophies seem to operate effectively within Eliza's education. Though Lazarus wanted to foster the development

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[99]Mordecai eventually engages in a correspondence relationship with Maria Edgeworth and among other things tried to convince Edgeworth that the two religions shared similar views on morality and righteousness. See MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

of a solid secular intellect through liberal arts, she believe that Eliza's eventual role as a Jewish wife and mother and supervisor of a Jewish household was equally important.

In practice, Eliza Mordecai was exposed to an extremely worldly education which went far beyond national calls for female literacy and basic instruction.[100] At a very young age, she mastered basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Each year, Lazarus increased the level of her sister's education and, early on, Eliza was ensconced in very advanced modes of study. Lazarus' journal and Eliza's composition book chronicled her lessons in classical and mythological history, Greek poets, philosophers, artists, architecture, forms of amusement, and ancient and contemporary geography.[101] Additionally, young Eliza frequently translated difficult French compositions.[102] Eliza's curriculum was strict and rigorous. Every morning she worked alone on her lessons and, then, in the afternoon presented her progress to her sister. Gradually, Eliza came to understand the Edgeworthian philosophy which linked education with morality. In one

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[100]As has been previously pointed out, female education was only in its embryonic stages during the time of this experiment. It was believed that young girls should be schooled in the three Rs as well as in morality. Eliza Mordecai pushes the boundaries of this accepted education and in fact is more in keeping with instruction given to young middling and elite boys.

[101]Eliza Kennon Mordecai, Composition Book 1809-1861, Myers family papers. In her composition book, she listed the celestial, terrestrial, marine, sylvan, infernal, and subordinate deities, demi-gods, monsters, metamorphoses, and mythological legends. At the end of her twelfth year, her sister recorded her progress. Eliza Mordecai had completed "Elements of Morality" (translated from the German by Mary Wollstoncraft), *Evenings at Home, Robinson Crusoe, Tales for Children* by M.J. Crabbe. She also memorized several poems and her penmanship progressed. Young Eliza studied geography, mapskills, grammar, principles, and successfully played many piano pieces.

[102]Eliza Kennon Mordecai, Translation of "The Rose of Salency," Myers family papers. This was revised and corrected by Rachel Mordecai Lazarus.

exchange Eliza demonstrated her cognizance of this by stating: "I would read a great many books, because that would do more good than having so much company."[103] At a very young age, Eliza understood that education was more important than social pursuits and her dedication to her intellectual and moral development was rewarded with more challenging lessons. When Eliza behaved, her sister allowed her to advance in liberal arts and ornamental subjects. Often she was treated to a new vocabulary list, a French lesson, a history book, a new volume of literature, piece of music, or lessons in gardening.

In her essay "The Politics of Pedagogy and Judaism in the Early Republican South: The Case of Rachel and Eliza Mordecai," Jean Friedman explored how Rachel Mordecai Lazarus transformed "secular female ideology into Enlightenment Jewish practice." [104] In this article, Friedman implied that Enlightenment philosophies was the predominant method that Mordecai used to foster a sense of morality in her young half sibling. This section argues, however, that Lazarus continued to use and even favored traditional Jewish and Maimonidean ideals about morality to shape her sister's religious

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[103] Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary 1816-1818, Myers Mordecai Hays papers.

[104] In Christine Farnham's editorial effort, ***Women of the American South***, Jean Friedman explored the same diary chronicling the education of Eliza Kennon Mordecai in her article "The Politics of Pedagogy and Judaism in the Early Republican South: The Case of Rachel and Eliza Mordecai." Similar to this dissertation's project, Friedman analyzed the diary to explore how women defined themselves in the early republic and how ethnicity and religion affected the development of southern society. Analyzing Jewish tutorial practices, Friedman explored how within an Enlightenment-influenced context, southern Jewish women resisted, accepted, or negotiated such vanguard philosophies with traditional Judaism. See Jean Friedman, "The Politics of Pedagogy and Judaism in the early Republican South in Christine Farnham ed., ***Women in the American South: A Multicultural Reader*** (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 58.

and moral self.[105] Despite her devotion to Lockean educational philosophy to shape Eliza's curriculum, Rachel relied on Judaic philosophies to shape her sister's moral character.

First and foremost, Eliza's school schedule was set according to traditional observance of Jewish holidays, and not new southern Jewish adaptations, in keeping with the Mordecai's Orthodox beliefs.[106] Eliza did not have classes and did not study secular subjects on the Jewish Sabbath or holidays. Additionally, Rachel made sure that Eliza understood the upcoming weekly *Torah* portion known as the *parsha*. As she advanced in age, her lesson plans on the *parsha* grew increasingly more challenging. At the earliest of ages, Rachel instructed Eliza in Jewish prayers, female Jewish ritual, and traditional expectations regarding moral human behavior. Frequently, Rachel used Maimonides' distilled version of the six hundred and thirteen Jewish commandments and the Old Testament to instruct her sister. Such religious pedagogical practice was not completely foreign and out of line with secular religious education. Gentile girls and

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[105]In her letters to Maria Edgeworth, Rachel carefully crafted her Jewish, southern, and female self in a much more publicly acceptable manner. Knowing that Edgeworth privileged Enlightenment practices, Mordecai makes little mention in her letters to her regarding her religious instruction and goals for Eliza. Instead, she focuses on her sibling's progression in liberal arts. In her journal, however, Mordecai was less aware of an audience. The fact that she included more religious references in her journal than in her public writings demonstrated several things. First, she revealed the importance she placed on being a good Jew. In her letters to Maria, she did not want her Jewishness to mark her as different. She wrote many letters and provided many examples demonstrating the similarities between Judaism and Christianity. See McDonald, *The Education of the Heart.*

[106]See this dissertation's chapter on the religious identity of antebellum southern Jewish women for further explanations.

boys also understood morality in terms of the Old and New Testaments as well as subsequent apostles' writings.

As an Orthodox Jew, however, Rachel privileged the Old Testament and traditional Jewish commentary's understandings of virtue and morality to frame her sister's moral self. As evidenced in Rachel's journal, Eliza, at a very early age, drew analogous conclusions from her daily experiences to happenings that occurred in the Old Testament. For example, on one occasion the young girl observed two elderly African-American women standing at a well while a young African-American boy drew water for them as well as their dogs. Eliza remarked to her sister that the scene reminded her of Jacob drawing water for Rachel and her animals.[107] In the bible, this scene is pivotal. It is where Jacob demonstrates his purity, strength, and devotion.[108] In the portion before this, God has promised to give the land to Jacob. At the well, he meets his beloved and his future and favorite bride. Demonstrating his love for Rachel, he single-handedly removes the forbidden stone to water her animals.[109] It is in this moment that the future father of the Israelite nation and the mother of one of the tribes of Israel meet. Rachel

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[107] Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary 30 August 1816.

[108] Jacob was sent away from his home in Beersheba because he tricked his father, Isaac into giving his birthright, rightfully owned by Esau. After having left his home he was visited by God in a dream. In the dream God promises to give him the land. In this dream, Jacob consecrated his love and devotion for God.

[109] This event is considered the opener to one of the greatest loves stories in the *Torah*. Rachel and Jacob demonstrate their love for each other by Rachel allowing her elder sister to marry Jacob—as was the custom. In turn Jacob worked an additional seven years to marry Rachel.

represents the paragon of purity, righteousness, and selflessness. Jacob exists as the epitome of the good Jew. He is dedicated to God, a devoted caretaker, a dedicated worker, and a righteous Jew. In keeping with most young women of the era, Eliza was intrigued by the sentimental tone of the passage. What is unique is that in a racially charged south, she read the three African-American actors differently than perhaps Lockean philosophy might have. Emphasizing the selfless morality displayed by the biblical Rachel for the runaway Jacob, Eliza understood the woman's actions as exemplary of female virtue and as helpmates to men. The boy, in Eliza's mind, was a young Jacob, still immature, but who showed great promise in his actions. Eliza did not read these African-American actors through southern philosophy as inferior or sub-human, instead, her understanding of the incident was framed by the *Torah.*

Aside from biblical parables, Rachel employed traditional Jewish precepts regarding observance to shape Eliza's moral self. Rachel's journal is filled with incidences where Eliza had innocently and purposely fallen short morally. Eliza constantly tested the boundaries of acceptable behavior for a young Jewish woman. Rachel regularly utilized simple Jewish ethics to correct Eliza's immorality. For example Eliza, like any precocious seven-year-old, had a difficult time with the truth. Several times within the journal, Rachel recorded Eliza's habit of lying. She found that the yearly *Yom Kippur* practice of contrition was a useful method to get Eliza to critically

analyze, admit, and atone for her lying.[110] Judaism demands that Jews self-monitor, recognize their sins, and seek forgiveness from the transgressed. During *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) Jews are commanded to recite the prayer *"Ashamnu"* in which Jews confess and atone for a myriad of human sins. At its most basic, this law requires Jews to admit their sins and ask forgiveness from the slighted. The elder sister used this Jewish requirement as a practical philosophy to govern Eliza's behavior. Several times, after finding out that Eliza lied, Rachel demanded that Eliza confess her errors and make restitution. Rachel and Eliza understood this to be an appropriate moral course when one lied. Regularly using the *Yom Kippur* practice of contrition as a model proved to be very successful. Eliza quickly learned the process, regularly self confessed, and asked for forgiveness.[111]

When faced with dilemmas, Eliza, herself, most often did not rely on her own Lockean human capabilities. Instead through conversation, she prayed to God and asked for guidance. Most often, she prayed that God might help her to correct her bad habit of

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[110]Friedman and this observer differ in the reading of these incidents. Friedman argued that this system of rewards and punishment was drawn from Enlightenment practices of reason. One, however, could persuasively argue that this represented one of the instances in which Rachel fused religious and Enlightenment ideologies. Challenging Friedman's thesis, this article argues that Rachel relied more on religious principles to morally educate her half sister.

[111] Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary 30 August 1816. Much to Rachel's dismay, Eliza also comprehensively understood other aspects of this directive and used it against her sister to wield her own form of power over her elder sister's morality. Acts of contrition must be commensurate to the transgression. If the forgiver is unrelenting or asks for restitution not equal to the crime, he becomes the erring party and the original transgressor is forgiven. Eliza shrewdly relied on the second half of the

not listening to her sisters when they gave her directives or advice. In one instance when she recognized that she had made a mistake in her failure "to listen to reason," she "prayed to God to make her a better girl."[112] Similarly, when completely baffled by her younger sister's behavior and finding Edgeworthian educational strategies ineffective, Rachel frequently sought God's help and counsel in educating her sister. After having seen her sister apologize and make restitution for lying, Rachel prayed "may heaven grant to this beloved child a continuance of those amiable dispositions, which blessed her infancy and promised so a fair a progression."[113] In another instance when Eliza refused to admit lying, Rachel preferred to use the threat of God's love, and not Lockean thought, to remedy her behavior. Rachel found that invoking God's disappointment was an effective tool to encourage truthful and moral behavior. She often told Eliza that "God does not love people who tell lies."[114] Such threats clearly worked because Eliza immediately admitted to the lie and sought forgiveness from the transgressed.

By far the most effective strategy that shaped Eliza Mordecai's moral religious character and kept her behavior in line was the Ten Commandments. Throughout her diary, Rachel relied on the simple ten directives as an understandable way to teach Eliza the importance of morality and virtue. Consequently, Eliza frequently understood

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directive when she felt that her punishment was too severe. When Eliza believed the punishment too extreme, she refused to admit that she was wrong and accused the transgressed of being the transgressor.

112 Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary, 25 October 1816.

113 Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary, 9 February 1817.

incorrect and correct behavior by referencing the Ten Commandments. As a young girl, Eliza understood that her duties as a Jew and, subsequently, a virtuous woman depended on her ability to follow these laws. Exploring the journal by tracing when and how Eliza referenced the Ten Commandments provides insight as to Rachel's pedagogical goal and its success. The first time Rachel chronicled Eliza's understanding of her responsibilities as a Jew was when Eliza broke the laws of the Sabbath. On one Saturday afternoon, Eliza was playing with friends when they happened upon some boards. Carrying them halfway home, she realized that it was the Sabbath and that she was therefore prohibited from carrying anything. Distressed, young Eliza, as a form of self-punishment, abandoned her friends and confined herself to her room. Rachel was delighted to discover that her sister understood the Sabbath laws and, by extension, her responsibilities as Jew. She gently responded "God will not be angry with you, for he loves those who try not to offend him, only be cautious in future not to do anything like work on the Sabbath, because it is that day, which God has appointed us..."[115] In another instance, Eliza demonstrated her understanding of another commandment that prohibited using the Lord's name in vain. Eliza overheard a conversation that frequently invoked the name of God. Concerned because she knew such practice was forbidden, Eliza questioned her sister as to why society frequently used God's name in vain in

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[114]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary, 9 February 1817.

[115]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary.

conversation, literature, and plays. Despite receiving an unsatisfactory answer from her sister, Eliza decided to uphold her responsibility as a Jew and not frivolously use God's name.[116]

Throughout her childhood, Eliza continued to demonstrate an understanding of the Ten Commandments and used them as a framework for her moral character. In one incident that caused much havoc and distress in Eliza's life, she learned of the prohibition against slander and the child's duty to honor their parents. After taxing her father's energies, he responded by calling Eliza "stupid." Hurt and angry, Eliza criticized her father in a conversation with Rachel by questioning his wrongful actions. Rachel tried to impress upon Eliza that *lashon hara* (evil tongue) is strictly forbidden in Judaism, especially when it is directed towards one's parents. Next, Rachel explained to Eliza the importance of honoring your mother and father. She cited:

> It is the duty of a child, to submit, without complaining, to the blame or punishment which a parent thinks proper to inflict. We should feel sorry for having displeased our parents, but never allow ourselves to feel angry, at any thing they say or do to us.[117]

The commandment that frequently occupied Eliza's mind and Rachel's energies was the one that prohibited coveting. Like any other child of seven, Eliza ran into trouble with this directive. Eliza frequently wanted something that was not hers and often disliked the person who possessed it. She was quite up front with her feelings to Rachel

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[116]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary, 23 January 1818.

and Rachel often endeavored to counsel her on censoring these emotions.[118] As demonstrated in the few examples above, Lockean educational philosophy may have been used by Rachel to shape Eliza's curriculum but, instead, Rachel relied on Judaic prescriptions to shape her sister's moral character. Rachel was devoted to the new pedagogical philosophies but also was equally devoted to her faith. These several incidents in her religious and moral education suggest that Eliza more readily grasped traditional Jewish ideals than Lockean moral philosophy. The case of Eliza Mordecai suggests that tutorials represented yet another effective method to achieve both secular and religious goals for Jewish families in the South.

Normal Schools

As the number of southern Jewish female graduates increased, calls came from within the Jewish community to develop a normal school for Jewish female students. According to the editorials, southern Jews desired to develop a cadre of female Jewish teachers who would, in turn, train their sons and daughters both secularly and religiously. For example, in an address given to the Columbia, South Carolina, Jewish community, a Mr. J. Levin summarized the growing support among the southern Jewish community for female education as it related to both Jews' adjustment to secular society and the preservation of Judaism. Using the current popular discourse on women, virtue, and

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117 Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary, 15 February 1818.

118 Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Diary, 21 July 1818.

republican motherhood, Levin spoke of Jewish women's unique abilities to create a safe haven for their husbands and families and to educate their children. He wrote:

> Man, from his daily vocation and intercourse with the world, is incapable of bestowing or devoting his attention to those domestic duties which woman seems destined by nature to preside over.
>
> Oh, woman whose form and whose soul,
> Are the spell and the light of each path we pursue,
> Whether sunn'd in the Tropics or chill'd at the Pole,
> If woman be there, there is happiness too.
>
> Tis from you then, mothers! as the infant learns to lisp its father's name, that the seed of virtue, honour, and every moral worth is implanted and inculcated; but it is for you, fathers! to enforce this by precept and example, to watch and shield the blooming of the bud till it ripens to honourable maturity.[119]

Levin, like Jacob Mordecai, used Enlightenment and Protestant ideals regarding women's abilities and responsibilities to encourage the education of Jewish women. Using sentimental language, Levin employed well-known gendered terms like "virtue" and "moral" to encourage the southern Jewish community to financially support a female Jewish educational institution. Despite Levin's and others' support, the development of a Jewish female normal college never occurred during the antebellum period. During the Civil War, however, Jews in South Carolina, began debating the issue anew. Clearly responding to an earlier editorial, the *Charleston Daily Courier* ran another editorial that defended those in favor of opening a private Jewish Columbia Female College and the

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[119]*Occident*, 2 May 1844.

training of Jewish female educators. The editor stressed the important effects that such an institution would have on the southern Jewish community. He wrote:

> All will admit the importance of educating the girls who will be the mothers, and if properly qualified the best teachers of another generation... (counteracting) the rapid progress and increase of academies and colleges moreover less denominational in its influence and tendencies.[120]

Discussing the negative effects that common female schooling had on southern Jews, the editor lamented that such schooling led to the de-Judaising of southern Jewish children. To combat these anti-Jewish forces, he reasoned that a Jewish female normal school would produce Jewish teachers to educate southern Jewish children in the liberal arts and Judaism. Again, though this idea continued to be bandied about in subsequent editorials, the southern Jewish community found itself unable to raise enough funds to sustain a southern Jewish female teaching college.

Jewish Sunday Schools

Southern Jews sought out other venues for religious education. Most southern Jews could not afford to send their children to philo-Semitic day schools but were still quite concerned with the dissolution of Judaism in the south. The eventual success of an expansive southern Jewish educational system largely depended on the already established southern Jewish female networks formed while fundraising for synagogues, clergy, and religious items. Also, southern Jewish women modeled their own schools

after other southern and northern cities' Jewish educational institutions. Southern Jewish women assiduously worked to convince the community that religious schools benefited and strengthened local Jewish communities. Southern Jewish women, interested in starting a Jewish school, used word of mouth, newspaper announcements, and editorials to garner support.[121] Encouraging the children of friends, relatives, and acquaintances to send their children to the school, southern Jewish schools promised a religious educational program that instructed Jewish children in the history of Judaism, its people, obligations, and rituals. Again relying on southern Jewish female educational networks, superintendents, teachers, and mothers forwarded primers. Additionally, southern Jewish women tirelessly worked to raise funds for buildings, school supplies, and hiring. [122]

Charleston's Jewish population became one of the first southern Jewish communities to voice concern over the issue of Jewish education and, subsequently, expand Jewish educational in that city. Originally the synagogues' ministers and cantors conducted schools and privately prepared young Charlestonian boys for their *Bar-Mitzvoth* on an ad hoc basis. [123] Recognizing that this type of religious training did not

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[120]*Charleston Daily Courier*, 13 June 1864.

[121]http://www.jewishhistory.com/Occodent/volu,e2/may1844/columbia.html

[122]Ibid. The descriptions in the *Occident* often detailed the circumstances of the opening of the Hebrew educational schools, who the local Jewish communities modeled their schools after and who they relied upon for learning materials and curricula.

[123]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, South Carolina," 55. Engelman discovered that as part of their regular contracts, many Rabbis and Cantors were obligated to teach the synagogues' children.

adequately meet Charleston's Jewish community's goals for preserving Judaism, Miss Sally Lopez, a prominent Jewish woman, petitioned the board of trustees at Congregation Beth Elohim to open an Hebrew school in 1838.[124] According to her petition, this school, temporarily named "The School of Israel," would promote "a knowledge of our sacred religion among the children of our congregation."[125] The Board of Trustees passed the petition, agreed to set aside twenty-five dollars for the school, suggested it meet on Sundays, and renamed the school "Religious Exercise for Jewish Youth."[126] With the board of trustees permission and suggestions, Lopez modeled the Beth Elohim Sunday school after the one developed by Rebecca Gratz in Philadelphia.[127] Sixty women assisted Lopez and worked to raise money for the Beth Elohim religious school. In its opening year, they admitted sixty students. Female teachers volunteered their

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[124]Uriah Engelman argued that Charleston represented an excellent case study to explore the growth of Jewish education in the South. During this period, the city housed the region's largest Jewish population. The author argued that Charleston's geographic position, her slave economy, social stratification within the general and Jewish communities, as well as its intellectual, artistic, and economic atmosphere created favorable conditions for a formal Jewish education system. Charleston's Hebrew Sunday school development is representative because after surveying the *Occident*, the popular national Jewish newspaper of the time, it becomes clear that subsequent southern Sunday schools modeled their institutions after Beth Elohim's school. For example, Beth Elohim's religious instructors frequently copied their primers and sent them to remote Jewish populations with the expressed aim of allowing those Jewish populations to open their own religious schools.

[125]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, South Carolina," 56.

[126]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, South Carolina, 56.

[127]Begun in the newspapers, there is evidence that a female network regarding educational practices and tools developed among northern and southern Jewish women. Rebecca Gratz shared her design of an Hebrew Sunday school with many southern and northern synagogues wishing to develop a Hebrew or Sunday school. For more information on Gratz and her sharing of her course materials and school models, see Diane Ashton, ***Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America*** (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 121-170.

services. In its first year, the Sunday school offered six classes.[128] Because Beth Elohim was the first formal Jewish Sunday school in the south, Lopez found herself without course materials and was forced to initially use Christian catechisms from which she had deleted Christological references.[129] Eventually through financial support, the Charleston Sunday school borrowed the texts and primers from Rebecca Gratz's famous Philadelphia Sunday school. In1844, due to doctrinal differences, several Orthodox members of Charleston's Congregation of Beth Elohim split off to form their own synagogue, Shearith Israel and, subsequently, established their own Sunday school named "The Society for the Instruction in Jewish Doctrine." Headed by Henrietta Hart, the school boasted fifty-five students after its first year.[130]

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[128]*Occident*, 6 May 1844, 164.

[129]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, South Carolina," 56 and Jacob Rader Marcus, ed., *The Jew in the American World: A Source Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 154. Sally Lopez relied upon Rebecca Gratz's lesson plans and Gratz forwarded her lesson book weekly to Congregation Beth Elohim. Copies were made for each of the teachers. Engleman found that six years later the school utilized C&E's Pyke's *Scripture of History;* Isaac Leeser's translation of J. Johlson's *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion,* and Simha C. Peixotto's *Elementary Introduction to the Scriptures for the Use of Hebrew Children* and H.A. Henry's *Class Book for the Jewish Youth.*

[130]Engelman and Charles Reznikoff, historians of Charleston Jewry, are unclear as to whether young girls attended the Sunday school. Traditional Jews restricted formal education to boys but there are many acceptable aspects in Judaism that girls were allowed to and expected to learn. Their verbiage uses the gender-blind term "children" and one might assume that children included both girls and boys. See Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engelman, *The Jews of Charleston: A History of an American Jewish Community* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950).

Both congregations maintained a Sunday school up to the Civil War. On the eve of the Civil War, Beth Elohim had twenty-five students and Shearith Israel had fifty-one children. See Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 61. One should note that the more orthodox synagogue had the most students. This suggests that southern Jewish parents were intent on training their children according to Jewish orthodoxy and less eager to have them assimilate.

Similarly, several Jewish ladies in Columbia, South Carolina followed their Charleston sisters and, one year later, opened their own Hebrew Sunday School.[131] Other southern Jewish women followed suit as evidenced by notices in the *Occident*. Savannah also established a Sunday school and sent in a notice which proudly declared that two-hundred and fifty Israelites had produced forty students.[132] The ladies of the Portuguese synagogue in Richmond, Virginia, established a Sunday school in 1846.[133] Ladies in Augusta, Georgia, in 1847, also established a Sunday school and held their first set of Sunday school examinations.[134] Within a span of ten years, almost every single southern Jewish community established a local religious school.[135] The *Occident* diligently reported on school openings, described curricula, listed student enrollment, and reported on public examinations.[136]

In general, southern Sunday school curricula instructed young southern Jewish girls and boys about ancient Jewish traditions, history, culture, and religious

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[131]*Occident*, November 1846, 390.

[132]Rubin, *Third to None*, 112.

[133]*Occident*, 1846, 405.

[134]*Occident*, August 1847, 267-69.

[135]See *Occident* from 1838-1850 for descriptions of attempts and successes at opening Jewish community funded educational institutions.

[136]For examples of examinations, see "Hebrew School of Columbia, South Carolina," *Occident* Volume II, No. 2 May, 1844 and "School for Instruction 1846 Jewish Youth, Charleston, South Carolina," *Occident*, IV, no. 4 June. For an example of a description of a Hebrew school, see *Occident* III, no. 2 May 1845.

obligations.[137] Lessons centered on religious dogma and moral principles.[138] Early instruction was primarily oral and traditionally opened with prayers devoted to the omnipotence of God. As southern Jewish children grew older, tests became more comprehensive. Traditionally on a weekly basis, Sunday school students focused on a chapter of the bible and studied moral lessons and religious dictates.[139] Students also memorized Hebrew hymns. Additionally, young girls and boys studied the Ten Commandments, maps of Palestine, psalms, and used Hebrew and English primers to instruct the children in Hebrew. Such an education guaranteed for southern Jewish parents that their children would be well educated in matters of Judaism and Hebrew and that as they matured, married, and had children, they would instill in them a sense of Jewish identity and religiosity.

In addition to encouraging the propagation of Judaism, Hebrew Sunday schools, because of their acceptable curriculum, were approved by non-Jewish southerners and, therefore, advanced the project of Jewish tolerance and acceptance. Aside from borrowing Protestant Sunday school methodologies, female Hebrew Sunday school

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[137]For further explication see Engelman's "Jewish Education in Charleston," Jacob Rader Marcus' section on Educating Young Jews, 1821-1850s in *The Jew in the American World*, 147-57, and Penina Moise papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Special Collections, Duke University Archives, Raleigh-Durham.

[138]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 59-60.

[139]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 60-61.

teachers also made their end of the year examinations public.[140] Jews and non-Jews attended these examinations. Halls were packed with spectators interested in Judaism, Jewish history, and Jewish students' performance. At present, scholars have failed to speculate why female Jewish teachers made Hebrew Sunday school education so public and, conversely, why these examinations so intrigued Christians. Conclusions explaining Christian interest in the examinations are mere speculation but they may have served as another southern Jewish communal strategy of defense against southern anti-Semitism. Hebrew Sunday school openness potentially served to demystify Judaism, decrease suspicion, and reduce anti-Jewish anxiety among southern non-Jews.

Several nineteenth-century American Jewish commentators praised southern Jewish women's efforts and credited them with the success of Jewish educational experiments. These southern Jewish female educators were named "*guardians of* (the Jewish) *faith* and the ministering angels of its divine precepts."[141] Echoing national sentiment, an editor of the *Occident* wrote on May 6, 1844:

> It is a source of much pleasure to me, and it will no doubt be gratifying to yourself and the readers of your valuable periodical, to learn of the establishment of a school for instructing Jewish youth of both sexes in the faith, principles and ceremonial of our holy religion. This sacred and laudable undertaking emanates from the mothers and daughters of Israel who are opposed to the innovations

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[140]Beginning around the 1840s, the May and June editions of the *Occident* frequently ran blurbs on Hebrew Sunday school examinations. In the details, the paper reported who headed the institution, how many students, the questions, who and how many passed, and, approximately, how many were in attendance.

[141]*Occident*, 6 May 1844, 164.

> lately established in this congregation and whose zeal and energies will be actively employed in impressing upon the tender minds of their pupils the *orthodox* tenets of our religion.[142]

The larger American Jewish community viewed antebellum southern Jewish women's success in opening Jewish schools as revolutionary and acknowledged the importance of the development of these educational arenas in strengthening southern Jewish communities. A subsequent editorial in the *Occident* cast southern Jewish women's efforts in these exact terms by stating:

> Women have caused all revolutions. The Peloponnesian War was produced by Aspasia; Helen caused the famous Trojan war, and we have here in this city the daughters of Israel in an interminable war against immorality and irreligion, by imbuing the tender minds of our youth with a knowledge of our ancient faith and a practice of its divine precepts.[143]

According to national and southern Jewish leaders, southern Jewish women, in creating these southern Jewish educational institutions, successfully waged wars against proselytization, exogamy, and assimilation. Another writer in the *Occident* summarized these sentiments when he wrote:

> For many years the Israelites of our city though ever adhering to their faith, have been so thoroughly mingled with the Christian population, that their identity as a religious sect has been destroyed ...the establishment of a Hebrew Sunday school...and the consequent intercourse which it produced among the Jewish families, paved the way to this gratifying result; (successful examinations) a result which must gladden the heart of every Israelite who loves his

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[142]*Occident*, 6 *May* 1844, 163-164.

[143]*Occident*, 5 May 1845, 36-137.

> time-honoured and holy religion. To those ladies who originated and have since presided over this valuable institution...praise must be awarded...by the enthusiasm it has kindled in the cause of Judaism.[144]

Southern Jewish women's efforts at establishing Jewish educational systems proved absolutely crucial to the development, fortification, and maintenance of southern Jewish communities.[145]

Benevolent Schools

Sunday schools were sometimes too expensive for southern Jewish families and often required synagogue membership. Additionally, several southern Jewish communities had an increasing orphan population in need of an education. To stave off the dissolution of Judaism due to poverty or lack of parental guidance, southern Jewish communal associations established benevolent schools. For example, the leaders of Charleston's Hebrew Orphan Society decided to establish a school in 1801, to provide basic Jewish education to the children of poor Jewish parents or those without parents at all.[146] Its mission was to:

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[144]*Occident*, 1846, 390. For another editorial echoing these sentiments see http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume2/may1844/columbia.html and http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume2/june1844/columbia.html. Both of these editorials compliment the efforts of the Hebrew Sunday School of Columbia, South Carolina.

[145]This contradicts the traditional portrayal of southern Jewish women as responsible for assimilation. See Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*, and Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*,

[146]Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston, South Carolina, 43-67. In his article, Engelman concluded that "the private schools were either traditional *Hederim*, usually attached to a congregation and

> inculcate strict principles of piety, morality and industry, and designing at the same time to cultivate any indications of genius they may evince for any arts or sciences...So that they (the students) may thereby become qualified for the enjoyment of those blessings and advantages to which they are entitled—kind Heaven having cast their lot in the Unites States of America, where freedom and equal rights, religious, civil, and political, are liberally extended to them, in common with every other class of citizens.[147]

Though the records for this society were lost as a result of the Civil War, American Jewish scholars have, based on later curricula, discerned that benevolent school attendees learned basic reading and writing, were taught Hebrew, translation, and spelling, and the Ten Commandments in both Hebrew and English.[148] By educating poor Jewish girls and boys in their religion and heritage, the schools' leaders fortified southern Judaism by encouraging the development of an individual and communal Jewish identity among the community's most marginalized populations. Simultaneously, providing the indigent and the orphaned with a liberal arts education enabled young girls (and boys), despite their destitute status, to participate in the national goals of literacy, virtue, and republicanism.

Home Schools

Southern Jews also established private home schools designed to provide young southern Jews with a balanced secular and religious education. Charlestonian native

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conducted on a free basis, or secular schools, which taught general subjects including Jewish religion and Hebrew." See Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 53.

[147]Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina*, Appendix E, 285.

[148] Engelman, "Jewish Education in Charleston," 64. Engelman discovered that many southern Jewish leaders were dissatisfied with student performance. In 1852, several Jewish leaders recommended

Penina Moise decided to establish such a school for Charleston's youngest Jews. Moise, relying on her past experience as the post superintendent of the Congregation Beth Elohim's Sunday school, applied Reformed Judaism and American southern philosophies to her own small home school.[149] Moise, her sister, and niece devised a curriculum which included classical learning, biblical Jewish history, and American history, and the three "Rs." To do so, Moise created stories, flashcards, recitations, primers, games, and examinations. She and her niece eliminated anti-Semitic references, and emphasized those texts and stories which celebrated the Jewish experience and instilled ethnic and religious pride. Additionally, Moise's curriculum familiarized her young southern Jewish students with basic western history. For example in one particular game, "The Amusing and Instructive Game of Facts for you and Me," Moise created flash cards to encourage young girls and boys to memorize important facts from both Christian and Jewish history. These cards also tested children on classical history, Greek, and Roman mythology.[150] In teaching Jewish and world history together, young students could see where their Jewish history fit in with world history. Through her games and lessons, Moise attempted to create an education for boys and girls that allowed them to retain a Jewish identity, while

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that schools should be converted into parochial schools and instruct students in Hebrew and English education. Due to finances, the suggestion was never carried out.

[149]See Solomon Briebart's introduction in Penina Moise, *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise with a Brief Sketch of her Life* Charleston: Nicholas G. Duffy, 1911.

[150]Penina Moise, "Facts for You and Me," Congregation Beth Elohim Museum, Charleston, South Carolina

providing them with an education commensurate to those received by southern non-Jews. In Moise's school, young southern Jews learned of their Jewish heritage but were taught to not feel restricted by it.[151]

After the Civil Wa, and until her death in 1880, Moise's school proved to be an especially important southern Jewish space. Despite increased anti-Semitism, Moise's school continued to provide southern Jewish children with a solid secular southern and a Jewish education. This southern Jewish pedagogical practice, once again, enabled southern Jews to effectively negotiate their secular and religious selves. Moise's school setting and curricula enabled young southern Jews to develop a safe but empowered southern Jewish identities.

Travel

Extensive European travel represented another available educational method that balanced secular and religious education for wealthy young Jewish southern girls. Their travel plans, and, consequently, their educational curriculum was completely supervised by parents or guardians who tried to protect their daughters from assimilation and anti-

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[151]Much of the information gleaned about Moise's school is derived from an ongoing exhibit at Charleston's Beth Elohim Synagogue Museum set up by Solomon Briebart. On display are several board games, flash cards, and primers. Additionally see Penina Moise, "*Facts for You and Me: The Amusing and Instructional Game of Facts for You and Me*" (Charleston, South Carolina, 1867), *Fancy's Sketch Book* (published 1833), "Leaves From my Historical Scrapbook" in *The Sunday* 2 March 1908, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

Semitism. [152] A few southern Jewish girls recorded their extensive travel experiences and impressions in journals. Generally, these European sojourns lasted from between six months and two years. During their travels, these girls went with guides and visited the major European art museums, battlefield sites, castles, villages, churches, and towns. While at these sites, guardians, guides, and tutors provided their young female charges with extensive historical information. For example, from 1858 through 1861, Isabel Mordecai traveled through Europe including England, France, Italy, and Belgium.[153] In her daily journal entries, she comprehensively documented the history of the sites she visited. Mordecai demonstrated a rigorous intellect and tirelessly recorded the minutiae of each site's importance. Demonstrating her background knowledge, she often located her experience within books and histories that she had read while stateside. For example on her sea voyage to England, she identified the sights, sounds, and impressions described by Walter Scott in his novels. Aside from visiting historical sites, Mordecai's

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[152]Scholars like Bertram Korn and Jacob Rader Marcus have noted that sending daughters overseas represented an expression of one's wealth and status. In settling on this explanation, scholars have neglected to examine these travel diaries as indicators of alternative educational forms. Isabel Mordecai's and other young southern Jewish girls' diaries exist as portals into understanding many facets of nineteenth-century adolescent southern girls' lives. This observer has searched for any articles synthesizing or assessing nineteenth or even twentieth-century girls' travel diaries. Though not the central focus of this dissertation, future scholars need to utilize these sources as important evidence revealing nineteenth-century female education, maturation, emotions, prescriptive behaviors, and their internalization of class, ethnic, gender, and racial assumptions.

[153]Isabel Mordecai, Diary, 1858-1859.

historical education was also supplemented with her cultural experiences at several theatres, museums, art monuments, and religious sites. [154]

Other southern Jewish girls' European educational travel experiences mirrored Isabel Mordecai's. For example, Georgeann Cohen and another Miss Cohen experienced a traveling education on the history of Liverpool Paris, London, and Geneva. [155] Additionally on days when the girls did not sightsee, they were instructed in literature, botany, and entomology.[156] Aside from learning history, literature, and science, the two misses Cohen were also schooled in current events which included lessons on the social issues of class, race, and poverty. Another southern Jewish girl, Hortensia Mordecai also described a similar education while traveling in Europe, with visits to sites, being schooled in hotels on other subjects, and being exposed to social ills. Mordecai was tremendously impressed by Rome and the Vatican and devoted much of her journal to describing her experiences. In excruciating detail, she described the significance and

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[154]Isabel proved her vast intellectual ability through several pages in which she discussed certain paintings, sculptures, and architecture. She historically contextualized each and every one. At famous battle and religious sites, she usually provided their surrounding history. See Isabel Mordecai, Diary 1858-1859.

[155]Georgeann Cohen, Diary, 22. She described the discomfort of thirteen days of sea travel, shopping, visiting, dinner engagments, and illnesses.

[156]Georgeann Cohen, Diary.

history of several paintings and sculptures housed in the Vatican art collection, the Sistine Chapel panels, the delightful Italian piazzas, and Rome's ancient sites.[157]

Southern Jewish parents did not, however, only use continental European travel in order to provide sophisticated liberal arts educations for their daughters. They also used travel to foster a strong Jewish identity. Continuing to observe their Judaism in foreign lands, visiting Jewish and anti-Semitic sites allowed young southern Jewish women to explore their Jewish cultural heritage, express pride in their Judaism, and practice their religion without threat or condemnation. These young Jewish female travelers often visited synagogues to tour and attend services, toured Jewish ghettos, cemeteries, and frequented sites where Jewish or anti-Semitic events occurred. These excursions familiarized young Jewish girls with Jewish heritage, culture, ancient customs, and practices. Visiting these sites reinforced these young girls' connections and responsibilities to Judaism. For example, Isabel Mordecai refused to travel on certain days because it coincided with holy day observances.[158] Georgeann Cohen strictly observed both holy day restrictions and dietary laws, to the best of her ability, and visited

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[157]Hortensia included so many details that reading it bordered on tedious. Yet one must wonder why she wrote so much and, by anyone's standards, such minutiae. Perhaps it was a desire to record her experiences for posterity. Potentially, however, Hortensia was engaging in a project of intellect. Mordecai demonstrated a sharp mind by being able to recall each work of art, architecture, religious and secular site. Perhaps she proved her own capability by her ability to retain knowledge and critically analyze in the face of overwhelming gendered assumptions regarding her body and mind. See Hortensia Mordecai, Diary 1859, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[158]Isabel Mordecai, Diary 1858-1859.

Jewish sites of interest.[159] In spite of her favorable impression of the Vatican, Hortensia Mordecai traveled in a large group and distinguished herself as an observant Jew by taking individual treks to Rome's Jewish sites and by refusing to attend church with the other tourists.[160]

Additionally, visits to anti-Semitic sites politicized some of the young Jewish female travelers. Upon traveling to London, Isabel Mordecai insisted on visiting the House of Lords during a debate over the "Jew Bill." Present while the British debated and eventually dismissed Jewish emancipation, Mordecai was incensed. Several times throughout her journal, she chronicled her disdain over England and France's refusal to extend full political rights to Jews.[161] European travel, therefore, provided southern Jewish families with an alternative form of education that ensured that their daughters would receive both the most elite of secular education as well as one that emphasized Jewish history, heritage, and obligations.

Correspondence

After their formal or informal education ceased, antebellum southern Jewish women did not abandon intellectual endeavors. Through correspondence, antebellum southern Jewish women created informal and educational networks to continue their

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[159] One of the highlights of her trip was a trip to Grace Aguilar's grave, a famous Jewish female poet, and the famed Rothschild museum.

[160] Hortensia Mordecai, Diary 1859.

[161] Isabel Mordecai, Diary 1858-1859.

academic and religious education. Literary scholar Catherine Hobbs suggested that nineteenth-century women often created such imaginary societies or networks to keep themselves intellectually and intimately connected. [162] Within these networks, according to Mary Kelly, women measured and interrogated responses... and books (served) as a medium of exchange as they constructed a common intellectual and cultural world."[163] Based on their correspondence, Jewish southern women clearly were engaged in creating these intellectual and cultural worlds.

Taking their newly revised roles as virtuous republican and Jewish wives and mothers seriously, antebellum southern Jewish women created educational networks that transcended village, state, and country boundaries to recommend and discuss books on many topics, as well as discuss local, national, and international secular and Jewish current events. In their letters, these women discussed novels, poetry, biographies, textbooks, medicine, economics, metaphysics, chemistry, botany, architecture, politics, world civilization, pedagogical practices, philosophy, and social issues. [164] For example,

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[162]Hobbs argued that American women's literary clubs have a long history dating back to Anne Hutchinson. Hobbs was referring to those women who were able to meet on a regular basis to discuss literature. See Catherine Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995). The Mordecai women did not live in close proximity with each other and therefore carried on their literary discussions through correspondence.

[163]See Mary Kelley, "Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America" in *Journal of American History* 83 no. 1-2 (September 1996): 401-424.

[164]Based on their private writings, antebellum southern Jewish women favored novels. Previous scholars have argued that American women preferred novels because of their escapist component and their ability to live vicariously through the heroine's experiences and adventures.

sisters Ellen, Emma, Margaret, Eliza, and Rachel Mordecai, and her daughters, Ellen and Julia Lazarus, created an extensive informal educational network. Through hundreds of letters, the Mordecai sisters initially developed their correspondence network in an effort to stave off boredom and loneliness. Having run out of salutations and gossip, the sister began to focus on novels, textbooks, and literature. Although the women's original intent

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Reading represented more than escapist fantasy. Literary scholars Catherine Hobbs and Mary Kelly claimed that reading women employed novels as educational tools. According to Hobbs, reading encouraged the development of effective literacy. Effective literacy was achieved when women reached a certain degree of literacy that enabled them to effect change in their own life and in society. Effective literacy gave these women "the power to act in society, a phrase that suggests both empowerment and transformation." As reading women, they learned female potential. Hobbs posited that reading novels, as it related to women, brought about "economic gain, social status, freedom, suffrage and a more ethical society." See Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write*, 1-2. Antebellum southern Jewish women, like their Christian counterparts, may have used knowledge and skills learned through novels to improve women's status and increase their responsibilities. They may also have used the knowledge and skills as a strategy for Jewish acculturation, tolerance, acceptance and to maintain a sense of Jewish identity. Additionally, according to Mary Kelly, reading women identified with and internalized heroines' fortitude, morality, and good sense and incorporated it into their own construction of self. Female novel readers imbibed, idealized, and emulated female protagonists and heroines. Kelley argued that women chose them as companions on voyages of discovery, relished the play of ideas, delighted in unexpected insights, and meditated upon newly found knowledge. They looked to books to spark flights of fancy, relieve solitude, provoke laughter, and furnish refuge. She argued: "consistently, books served as the ground in which women readers built a dense and diversified mental life." See Mary Kelley, "Reading Women/Women Reading," 402-3. Gradually reading women, Cathy Davidson contends, employed "useful knowledge, learned through example, and engaged in associational thinking" to affect change in their individual and communal religious and secular lives. See Cathy N. Davidson ed., ***Reading in America: Literature and Social History*** (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 66.

Aside from providing a framework for political activity, novel reading revealed appropriate class and gender prescriptions, race assumptions, Enlightenment and democratic philosophies, and Protestant morality. See Kelly, "Reading Women/Women Reading, 401-424.

Novels also exposed women to information and experiences that, because of their female sex, they would not normally have had access to. According to Cathy Davidson, novels familiarized these young women with information regarding science, mathematics, classical literature, political doctrine, and philosophy. It provided these women with a more masculine and, therefore, egalitarian education. See Davidson, ***Reading in America***, 73. Frightened by such exposure, several prominent Jewish leaders, including Isaac Leeser, argued that this type of knowledge was dangerous for women. Society feared it weakened women's minds and bodies. This public outcry did not, however, lead to a censoring of Jewish women's access to printed knowledge. See Marcus, ***The Jew in the American World***, 160-161.

was to solidify social connections, ultimately, the Mordecai women created a thriving intellectual forum.[165] They filled their letters with suggested titles, notices of books being forwarded, solicited impressions from one another, and commented on each other's marginalia. Examining these letters en masse reveals that the Mordecai women loved literature and especially favored biographies, novels, plays, and poetry. Preferred biographies included Washington Irving's *Life of Columbus*, Sir Walter Scott's nine-volume seminal work, *Napoleon*, Southley's *Joan of Arc*, Miss Pardoe's *Louis XIV*, and *King George IV*. They also read certain novelists religiously, including James Fenimore Cooper (*The Pilot*), Thomas Hope (*Anastasius*), Marc de Havel (*Delphina*), Daniel Defoe, anything by Walter Scott and, especially, his *Ivanhoe*. The reason that so many of these women favored this novel was because the author created an extremely beautiful and smart Jewish heroine as the protagonist's object of desire. Rebecca was intelligent, charming, and, seemingly, escaped anti-Semitic constructions. Southern Jewish women revered Rebecca. In journals and diaries, the Mordecai women frequently referred to her fictional trials and accomplishments and attempted to model their own public and private life after Rebecca. In a sea of negative Jewish stereotypes, antebellum southern Jewish women found relief and hope in this portrayal of a Jewish heroine. Additionally, the Mordecai family women voraciously read plays by Shakespeare, Johnson, Clermont,

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[165]Kelley, "Reading Women/Women Reading."

Sheridan, Jefferson, Crowe, and Moore. Their favorite poets included Lord Byron, Wordsworth, Milton, Coleridge, White, and Hazlitt.[166]

Bypassing the isolation that accompanied domestic duties, these vast informal educational networks allowed southern Jewish women, like the Mordecais, to further extend their intellectual faculties. Through correspondence, southern Jewish women created a private sphere where they intellectually empowered themselves. Far from the disapproving eyes of their male relatives and evangelical Protestant conceptions about appropriate female education, the Mordecai women directed and supervised their own continued education according to their own interests and goals.

The Utility of Southern Jewish Female Education

Like other American women, antebellum southern Jewish women valued their education and understood the responsibilities that came with an advanced education. Barbara Solomon suggested that the acquisition of an education caused nineteenth-century women to reassess their positions within their families and the household.[167] Nineteenth-century women recognized that moral responsibilities accompanied female education. In addition, literary scholars Mary Kelly and Catherine Hobbs suggested that educated women eventually used their advanced education to improve their own lives,

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166 For examples see the Cohen-Phillips papers, Phillips-Myers papers (correspondence of Eugenia Phillips), Devereux Family Papers, Margaret Mordecai Devereux papers, Harby family papers (correspondence of Octavia Harby Moses), Penina Moise papers, Mordecai family papers, and Jacob Mordecai papers (correspondence of Rachel, Emma, Ellen Mordecai).

the lives of their families, and their communities.[168] Southern Jewish women also followed this pattern. Their education, which encouraged women's assistance in creating virtuous and productive families, encouraged southern Jewish women to join reform movements and become more active in their communities. Armed with the practical and moral lessons acquired through education, antebellum southern Jewish women set out to reform the Jewish community by funding and staffing educational institutions, orphanages, welfare societies, social activities, and religious institutions.[169]

Education also politicized some southern Jewish women and encouraged them to speak out on social issues that went beyond the concerns of their southern Jewish communities.[170] For example in her correspondence to Maria Edgeworth, Rachel Mordecai traded opinions on several class and labor issues. In one letter written in 1832, Mordecai discussed the cholera outbreak in several cities. Imbibing intellectual ideas linking disease and class, she blamed the outbreak on working class physiology and morality. She wrote: "the ravages of this disease has been principally confined to the lower class, to the imprudent, and the dissipated."[171] In another letter, Mordecai

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[167]Solomon, *In the Company of Education Women*, 27-8.

[168] Kelly, "Reading Women/Women Reading," 402-3 and Hobbs, *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write*, 1-2.

[169]This dissertation addresses such activities in the chapter on Jewish women's paid and unpaid work.

[170]Solomon, *In the Company of Education Women*, 30.

[171]Rachel Mordecai to Maria Edgeworth, 10 August 1832, quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart.*

addressed United States and British women's social activism. After touring the factories in Lowell, Massachusetts, Mordecai described her impressions of working women's labor experiences in the United States. In support of the female labor experiment, she commented:

> Between four and five thousand young women neatly dressed and arranged in companies by the different proprietors formed a novel procession to welcome the President on his arrival at their town. Their appearance is at all times decent and respectable; all look healthy and cheerful, indeed they have no cause to be otherwise. Their wages are in proportion to the skill and industry and there is sufficient incentive to both.[172]

In another letter, Mordecai criticized the fact that the middle class lifestyle for women discouraged education which, she believed, was harmful to women. Faulting the cult of true womanhood, Mordecai believed that domestic responsibilities and social expectations stunted southern women's intellectual development and wrote:

> Few read with any view to mental cultivation, the turn of conversation is consequently frivolous and tho' we associate with and cordially esteem many, yet "the feast of reason" is denied us. There exists not that interchange of opinion and reciprocity of sentiment which awaken the faculties, exercise the mind and improve it.[173]

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[172]Letter from Rachel Mordecai to Maria Edgeworth, 10 March 1832, MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart.* Thomas Dublin's study *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* explores the motivations and experiences of these rural women workers. He suggested that education encouraged working class women to both exhibit individual and collective agency and to internalize white bourgeois values.

[173]Rachel Mordecai to Maria Edgeworth, 24 June1827, quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart.*

To further emphasize her point, Mordecai cited herself as an example. Charging that domestic drudgery interrupted her intellectual growth, she wrote: "my reading hours are now very limited. The care in education of my children, with domestick (sic) duties, engross almost my whole time... not unprofitably, nor undelightfully and yet do I often wish that my hours could be lengthened."[174]

Aside from encouraging women to become active in their communities or politicizing them, historian Barbara Solomon suggested that nineteenth century women believed that knowledge encouraged discipline, autonomy, and personal will to develop.[175] For example on chastising her sister for playing too much at school and being too concerned with fashion and friends, Emma Mordecai effectively summarized the importance of female education when she reminded her sister that school was a place that "produces scholars, not airs."[176] Similarly, Margaret Mordecai also realized the importance of her education despite suffering from terrible homesickness. She requested that her mother call her back home but recognized that it was best for her intellectually

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[174]Rachel Mordecai to Maria Edgeworth, 3 November 1828 quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart.*

[175]Solomon, *In the Company of Education Women*, 30.

[176]Emma Mordecai to Ellen, 21 July 1836, Mordecai family papers.

and socially to remain at school. On April 19, 1837, she wrote: "I would give anything to be at home now, I never felt so homesick in my life." [177]

For many southern Jewish women, education staved off the family responsibilities of getting married, bearing children, and supervising a home. Perhaps knowing that once she completed her education her freedom would be severely curtailed due to domestic responsibilities, Mary Lazarus begged her guardian and uncle to allow her to remain at boarding school after his repeated requests for her to come home. Responding to her uncle, she wrote:

> I feel very grateful to you for your kind offer...I should dislike very much to leave school, and its enjoyments altogether. I do not think that I am yet sufficiently advanced in my studies to dispense with assistance of my teachers.[178]

Education also enabled women to be financially independent. After her extensive education, Ellen Mordecai financially supported herself for the rest of her life through writing and teaching.[179] Her sister Rachel Mordecai Lazarus also financially supported

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[177]Margaret Mordecai Devereux to Ellen (sister), 19 April 1837 and 10 October 1837, Margaret Mordecai Devereux papers, Southern Historical Collection at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Her letters to her mother reflected similar sentiments.

[178]Mary Lazarus to George Mordecai, 5 August 1843, George Mordecai papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[179]Ellen Mordecai became a celebrated author when she wrote *The History of the Heart.* Describing her conversion to Christianity, the book was very popular and underwent several printings. She continued to receive royalties from the book until the end of her life. Education also encouraged several women to write privately. Composition books, letters, and papers reveal that women wrote poetry, essays, and short stories. For an excellent example, see Margaret Mordecai Devereux, *Plantation Sketches* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1906) or Octavia Harby Moses, *A Mother's Poems: A Collection of Verses,* (Published by her children, 1915).

herself by teaching at her father's academy and by private tutoring. Similarly, Penina Moise supported herself as a poet, essayist, and teacher.[180] Continuing education enabled Ellen Lazarus to make a living as a writer, teacher, lecturer, and a homeopathic advisor.[181]

Such extensive secular and religious education must have also assisted in southern Jews' long standing fights against local and national anti-Semitism.[182] Training their daughters according to widely accepted Enlightenment educational and Protestant-influenced moral philosophies as well as in the liberal arts, allowed Jews to further insert themselves into American society as virtuous, productive, and worthy citizens. Jewish girls' education created a new image of the southern female Jew and must have encouraged southern society to re-examine the preconceived anti-Semitic notions they gleaned from conversations, print, and sermons. Simultaneously, Jewish girls' education encouraged a formal southern Jewish communal identity to develop. Similar pedagogical practices and extensive female teaching networks that moved across local and state boundaries, created links between local, state, regional, and national Jews and thus must have forged a stronger Jewish community. These women would later rely on these

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[180]See Solomon Briebart's introduction in Penina Moise, *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise with a Brief Sketch of her Life*. Charleston: Nicholas G. Duffy, 1911.

[181]See letters from Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai in George Mordecai papers.

[182]This section is speculative because the sources make it exceptionally difficult to trace with absolute confidence how female education fought anti-Semitism. Southern Jewish communal and

networks for advice on how to counter anti-Semitism, establish educational and benevolent institutions, devise philanthropic strategies, encourage the development of southern Jewish identity, and preserve Judaism in the American south. Alternative educational forms allowed for young southern Jewish girls to become pivotal actors in the development of a Jewish infrastructure that included education, financial institution, venues for socialization, and synagogues. These educated daughters became the activist wives and mothers who conceived of, developed, engaged in fundraising for establishing the schools, synagogues, and benevolent and social institutions that further galvanized and strengthened the southern Jewish community.[183]

Conclusion

The development of national common schooling and female education in the south during the first half of the nineteenth century privileged Protestant ethics and philosophies, and in ways which propagated anti-Semitism. This encouraged southern Jewish families to seek out alternative educational systems that combined a solid secular and religious education. Consequently, southern parents sent their daughters to Hebrew educational institutions, private, commercial, academies, Jewish friendly schools, Sunday schools, hired tutors, or sent them on extensive European travels. Less wealthy southern

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individual actions regarding female education clearly demonstrate that they were making a concerted effort to assimilate certain prevailing doctrines.

[183]This dissertation addresses these women's activities in a chapter on southern Jewish women's paid and unpaid labor.

Jewish parents sent their daughters to privately run informal home or benevolent schools. In choosing these educational paths for their daughters, families minimized their daughters' exposure to anti-Semitism, proselytization, assimilation, and exogamy but still gave their daughters an education that allowed them to fully participate and benefit in white southern society and preserve southern Judaism. As adults, antebellum southern Jewish women continued their education individually or through correspondence networks. These actions represented still another defensive strategy developed by southern Jews to accommodate American customs while retaining Jewish identities and maintaining religious pride.

Chapter Three:
"In the Eye of the Storm": Fighting Proselytization through Religious Conviction

Clara Solomon was a typical antebellum southern Jewish adolescent from New Orleans. Like most contemporary teenagers, she despised going to religious services. Saturday entries in her 1861 diary reveal a myriad of creative and banal excuses designed to avoid attending services. She routinely feigned illnesses, blamed homework, and housework for her inability to attend services. Previous American Jewish scholars might use Clara Solomon as an excellent example of the dissolution of Judaism in the antebellum south. They might blame her youthful selfishness, her female materialism, and a marginalized person's obsession with fitting in for why she resisted maintaining a Jewish identity. Yet if scholars carefully read through her diary, they would discover that Solomon was faithful to Judaism and in many circumstances accepted and readily performed her responsibilities as a Jew. For example on *Yom Kippur*, Solomon did not spend her entry on how best to avoid attending arduous daylong services. And she did not secretly cheat on her obligatory fast. Rather, Solomon knew that these activities must be performed if one wished to fulfill the responsibilities of Judaism. Solomon described the significance of the holiday: "as a penance for our sins, and were the sacrifices not great, the punishment would not be felt. It is a voluntary punishment for our past sins, to

expiate them and on that day pray for the past, present and future." [1] Clearly even at the age of thirteen, Solomon understood Judaism and her responsibilities as a faithful adherent.

Antebellum southern Jewish scholars have frequently misread the writings and actions of other southern Jewish women in much the same way that they might have misread Clara Solomon's diary. They have understood a decrease in the obvious indicators of Judaism like endogamy, synagogue attendance, *Kashruth*, and holiday observance to be clear signs that southern women disdained or rejected their Judaism. Instead of seeking context and questioning how the southern environment might have affected antebellum southern Jewish women's religious practices, scholars have instead implied that nothing inhibited southern Jewish practice and, consequently, indicted these women as materialistic, and intent on assimilation, and as women dropped their Jewishness for social and economic advancement.

This historical assessment is, in part, due to the ways in which contemporaries blamed southern Jewish women for decreases in Jewish practice. Antebellum editorials in the *Occident* tended to view southern Jewish women as easy targets of proselytization, ready assimilators, and social and economic opportunists more interested in fulfilling their individual desires than fulfilling some abstract sense of inherited religious

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[1]Elliot Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing up in New Orleans, 1861*(Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1995), 111.

responsibility.[2] Principally Jewish editors and religious and lay leaders faulted Jewish women for increases in intermarriage, decreases in religious observance and, consequently, the dissolution of American Judaism.[3] A December 1867 editorial in the *Occident* effectively summarized the misogynistic Jewish communal attitudes toward Jewish women:

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[2]In his article "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival of Judaism in the Nineteenth Century," Bertram Korn argued that the general population was not involved in the preservation of Judaism. He argued that the acculturation process (dress, diet, travel, communication and earning a living) as well as a decrease in overall religious adherence in the country caused Jews to be less involved in observing Judaism. Instead, he claimed that "the survival of Judaism was secured not by the dedication of the multitude, but by the unremitting, unyielding, stubborn, inventive, improvised, dynamic efforts of a small number of self-appointed leaders who took it upon themselves to do battle with the forces of dissolution." See Bertram W. Korn, "Factors Bearing Upon the Survival of Judaism in the Antebellum Period" ***American Jewish Historical Quarterly*** LIII no. 4 (June, 1864): 347. Korn clearly credits lay and religious leaders with the preservation of Judaism. Korn based his conclusions on the public speeches, editorials, correspondence, sermons, and actions of Jewish religious and lay leaders. This chapter centrally argues that southern Jewish women were also involved in the project of preserving Judaic observance.

[3]Riv-Ellen Prell's recent study of the fight for assimilation traces the misogyny prevalent in Jewish male and female relations. See Riv-Ellen Prell, ***Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble between Jewish Women and Jewish Men*** (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999). Though her research is limited to eastern European migrants, many of her conclusions can reasonably be transplanted into the antebellum south. In their editorials, it is clear that antebellum Jewish leaders were incensed at Jewish women's desire to also claim equality. They reasoned that Jewish women's push for expanded public and private roles meant a blatant rejection of patriarchal Jewish traditions. Editors and religious leaders believed that good Jewish women could not effectively maintain their responsibilities in the Jewish home and family and be active in secular affairs. For these leaders, Jewish women's demand for increased access to social or economic opportunities tacitly implied that, for these women, their Judaism was unimportant. Religious leaders' editorials reasoned that women's failure to uphold traditional gender roles doomed American Judaism. Desperately pleading their case to encourage women to remain in the traditional Jewish fold, they reasoned that these women would ultimately suffer because American secular equality could not offer the same respect and reverence held within the Jewish community. Setting up Jewish women as the scapegoats for the disintegration of American Judaism may have proven to be an effective strategy that encouraged Jewish women to be faithful to Judaism, but it did not reflect reality. In fact, recent works by Hasia Diner and Eli Faber has revealed that Jewish men intermarried and abandoned religious observances in greater numbers than Jewish women. Whereas Jewish women devised alternative ways to observe Judaism, Jewish men frequently did not factor it into their daily lives. See Eli Faber, ***A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654-1820*** (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992

> and herein we fear the female portion are greatly at fault; they are hugely tickled with respect paid to women's rights or the apparent equality which the moderns concede to them (some are letting women count as a *minyan*) and for this if no other reason, they join in the shout of *progress*, not knowing, poor things that with its advance much of the ancient chastity and retiringness of the old women of Israel have evaporated into thin air, and that they are the actual losers in the estimation they formerly held at home as wives, mothers, daughters, friends, the true characters in which women should excel.[4]

The opinions of post-Civil War Jewish leaders are not, however, enough evidence to conclude that southern Jewish women were responsible for the decrease in southern Judaism. In fact if one considers the larger historical context that included an atmosphere of Christianity, evangelical Protestantism, and consequent anti-Semitism, it becomes clear that nineteenth-century American Jews and, subsequently, American Jewish historians have been scapegoating southern Jewish women and have failed to see that

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and Hasia Diner's *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

[4]"Education," *Occident*, December 1867, 424. The editor's reference to equality and progress suggest that they feared losing female Jews to other social systems that granted broader rights and responsibilities. American Jews recognized that in addition to fundamentalism, modern issues of equality and civil rights also caused Jewish women to question their own position within Judaism. It is also important to recognize that this quote reveals the anxieties between southern Jewish men and women. In concert with Riv-Ellen's assessment about the emergence gendered self-hatred among Jewish men and women in their "fight to become Americans,"this editorial reveals a similar tension between mid-nineteenth-century Jewish men and women during a time of political and social upheaval when Jewish men are trying to retain their power dynamic over Jewish women simultaneously while Jewish women are trying to gain more political power. See Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*. Though women's political and religious actions frequently occupied the minds and editorials of Jewish men, Jewish men's actions and religiosity rarely presented itself in Jewish women's editorials. Critiques of religiosity were most often directed at the entire Jewish community and when these editorials specified problems in gender groups, they most often directed their criticisms and advice to women. This does not reflect women's own misogyny, however, but rather this reveals that Jewish women believed in Judaism's and growing nineteenth-century American religious ideas that positioned women as their families' spiritual models.

many southern Jewish women were wholly committed to maintaining Judaism.[5] The southern historical context fundamentally influenced southern Jewish women's abilities to practice traditional Judaism.[6] Historian Joseph Blau argued that

> There are, at all times and all places where Jews reside, two chief constellations of forces operating to shape the spiritual life of the Jewish people—one of these is the aggregate of external forces working on the Jews from the host-culture, the other is the aggregate of the internal forces of the varieties of Judaism brought by the Jewish group from its previous places of residence. The resultant of these two constellations of forces ultimately is the new variety of Judaism.[7]

Accepting Blau's thesis, this chapter demonstrates that the inhospitable southern context—complete with a backdrop of evangelical Protestantism, anti-Semitism, and intense proselytization-- encouraged certain southern Jewish women to creatively

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[5]First, southern Jews lived not only in an environment dominated by Christian principles, rather, the entire region, its laws, customs, and culture was wholly influenced by Christian doctrine. Second, the religious phenomenon of the Second Great Awakening encouraged an even more forceful dedication to Christ in the lives of antebellum southerners. Finally, the heightened evangelical and fundamentalist atmosphere encouraged a tremendous resurgence in anti-Semitism in the south. It should be noted that many antebellum southern Jewish women believed that Judaism in the American context lacked utility, and consequently sought out other religions that seemed especially relevant to their lives as nineteenth-century American southern women.

[6]Previous scholars have effectively addressed how southerners used reform Judaism to accommodate the southern context and more effectively assimilate into southern society. This chapter will explore individual acts of religious behavior designed to preserve Judaism rather than the collective reform movement.

[7] See Joseph Blau, "The Spiritual Life of American Jewry, 1654-1954" *American Jewish Year Book* (1955): 100-101. According to Blau, the "multiplicity of races, creeds, ethnic groups, and cultural antecedents" conditioned how American Jews observed their Judaism differently from the European analogues. He astutely states: "Every activity of any group in America is modified not only by the specific conditions of life in America but also by the opportunities that are forever at hand to see how other groups handle the same activity." Blau, "The Spiritual Life", 107. In this case, the incidents modifying Jews' activities were the Second Great Awakening and acceptance of Lockean political and moral philosophies.

construct and project their religious identities in safe and acceptable ways.[8] Far from indicating a rejection of their religion, active fundraising for and within the private realm of the synagogue, certain innovations in Judaic practice acted as defensive strategies which allowed certain southern Jewish women to both observe and preserve Judaism in an atmosphere that was intolerant to their religion.[9]

Anti-Semitism in the Antebellum South

There are several historiographical reasons why American Jewish scholars have interpreted changes in Jewish practice as an intentional turn away from Judaism on the

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[8]Blau points out that at "no time is it completely accurate to identify the spiritual values with religious faith or spiritual life with religious organization. In the United States, such an identification would be completely inaccurate." Consequently, he concludes that in America, "there is a wide variety of spiritual "outlets" through any of which, or any combination of which, Americans express and expand their spiritual horizons." See Blau, "The Spiritual Life," 108.

[9]In exploring the religious actions of certain nineteenth-century Jewish women, it is important to keep in mind Joan Scott's challenge in *Only Paradoxes to Offer* regarding the "teleological nature of the history of nineteenth-century French feminism as one of cumulative progress in which all women fought for either equality or difference and that women existed as autonomous political agents. Scott's investigation into the history of French feminism requires that all women's scholars must engage in a "closer interrogation of the ideological discourse within which feminisms are produced and operate." In Scott's eyes, scholars must resist reflexive actions which cause them to engage the sources as women's responses to outside nationalist misogynist ideals and without attention to "repetitions and conflicts of feminism as symptoms of contradictions in the political discourses that produced feminism and that it appealed to and challenged at the same time. Scott correctly argues that within feminism and larger *politi*cal discourses exist among others, several "conflicting discourses and paradoxes on individualism, *indivi*dual rights and social obligations" which may shaped the political systems of any country. With this in mind and for purposes of this brief dissertation, I have read the sources on women's religiosity with a focus that does not exclude the other conflicting or contradictory discourses apparent in their actions and letters, but specifically challenges existing American Jewish historiographical notions which implied that changes in antebellum southern Jewish women's religious behavior indicated that women were attempting to assimilate their religion to suit the economic and social goals. Rather this dissertation spotlights the possibilities that nineteenth-century southern Jewish women's rather unusual approaches to their religiosity might have been real attempts by some women to preserve their Judaism. See Joan Wallach Scott, ***Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*** (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 1-5.

part of southern Jewish women. First and foremost, scholars have argued that since they cannot find many overt examples of anti-Semitism--specifically, blood libels, criminal cases, anti-Semitic attacks, and genocidal efforts--the south for the most part harbored philo-Semitic attitudes.[10] Scholars have only uncovered a few instances of overt anti-

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[10]In surveying anti-Semitism in Jewish-Gentile relations, David Gerber continuously argues that though Jews were subject to certain penalties for their Judaism, "Jews were certainly not the only immigrant people subjected to prejudice, hostility and discrimination." See David Gerber, "Anti-Semitism in American History," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16, no.3 (1988): 4. Gerber also argues that "competition, rivalries, and disparities in the relations among a broad array of ethnic and religious groups have deflected hostility toward Jews. Throughout much of American history, anti-Semitism has been less pervasive than hatreds and hostilities growing out of racial prejudice and domination, intersectarian divisions among Protestants, and various ethnic tensions. In short, Jews have been one target and most of the time a relatively minor one." See Gerber, "Anti-Semitism," 17. Though these statements are true, statements like this made by Gerber, and others, obscure scholarly examination into the exact types of legislative and cultural anti-Semitism felt by nineteenth-century Jews. Articles exploring Jewish-Gentile relations hotly debate the extent that anti-Semitism truly existed in the American setting. Early twentieth scholars tended to purposely downplay anti-Semitism and stress assimilation and not alienation. Post World War II scholars, like Oscar Handlin and John Higham, re-examined anti-Semitism and found it to be more pervasive than was previously thought. Recently, scholars like Stephen Whitfield now argue that their conclusions were exaggerations. One consensus about this debate stands out however, these scholars focused much of their attention on the experiences of eastern European migrants and white America's responses. Conversely, they have tacitly accepted that prior American Jews experienced relatively little anti-Semitism. American Jewish scholars tend to particularize legislation, literary stereotypes, proselytization efforts, and anti-Semitic incidents which leads to the illusion that anti-Semitism, for the most part, did not hamper Jewish tolerance. Reading these incidents in context and in concert with one another, a less congenial and more anti-Semitic environment emerges.

Strangely, David Gerber contradicts himself later in his article when he states that "American anti-Semitism has been somewhat insidious. When and where it has existed, it has been more difficult to take seriously or even to detect than its European counterpart, because it has tended to lack a confident voice." See Gerber, "Anti-Semitism," 19. His point is an important one and one that this dissertation hopes to emphasize. Anti-Semitism emerges in many forms beyond overt violent acts. The type of normalized anti-Semitism existent in the south is potent enough to affect how southern Jewish women projected their Jewish selves.

Additionally, I disagree with Gerber's assessment that proselytization and Christian statutes are not anti-Semitic. Principally, he argues that for missionaries not to proselytize Jews it would be considered anti-Semitic because they assumed that Jews could not be spiritual equals in Christ. Gerber also considers Christian Sunday laws not intentionally anti-Semitic but rather because Jews were a minority population, their religious concerns were often overlooked by Christians. Since this chapter argues that these types of

Semitism during the post-Revolutionary era. In 1787 during the Ten days of Penitence between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, a Charleston synagogue was broken into and a silver ritual spice box was stolen. Additionally, the Torah had been removed from its place and was strewn across the floor. In two separate incidents in 1800 and 1812, the gate and walls of Savannah's Jewish cemetery was vandalized.[11] Consequently, because these are the only recorded incidents of anti-Semitism, scholars have assumed that anti-Semitism was simply not a factor in the religious lives of southern Jews. A brief examination of foundational American principles, antebellum southern legislation, and, especially, antebellum culture reveals that, in fact, anti-Semitism was wholly evident in the south and had a serious impact on the daily lives of southern Jews.[12]

Despite professions of religious freedom, American society strategically employed Christianity as a hegemonic philosophy for its new citizens. American leaders and citizens espoused the philosophy that, a priori, to be good citizens of the early republic, individuals had to be good Christians and linked national observance of

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anti-Semitism were fundamental in creating an anti-Semitic environment, I think that Gerber misreads the sources and is not fully cognizant of the hatred directed at Jews in religious and secular circles.

[11]See Faber, *A Time for Planting*, 134.

[12]It must also be said that Jews, in the colonial and early republic, experienced far less anti-Semitism than they previously did in Europe or South America. Southern Jews freely practiced their religion and had more access to social, economic, and political spaces than any other time in history. In addition, certain positive discourses about Jews existed in the American south. For example, Christians often hailed Jews as ancestors in antiquity, bearers of the Old Testament, and bearers of ancient customs crucial to Judeo-Christian philosophies.

Christianity to national success.[13] Consequently, Christianity remained a crucial fundamental national philosophy and governed every aspect of American life. Ultimately, Christianity acted as a tool for the development of nationalist consciousness. Striving for homogeneity, order, and cohesion within different ethnic groups, classes, regional populations, races, and genders, Revolutionary-era religious and lay leaders deployed Christianity as a nationalist strategy through national symbols, rituals, observances, and philosophies.[14] This simple, but foundational, philosophy presented problems for Jews who did not accept Christianity or Jesus Christ as the Messiah.[15] Colonial and early Republic Jews' unwillingness to do so immediately set them apart from the rest of American society. In its embryonic stages, the United States became overwhelmingly Christian, and according to Michael Krausz, "anti-Jewishness" became

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[13]Laurence R. Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 201. Laurence Moore argued the early American republic was initially prepared to accept religious diversity but ultimately recognized that such diversity problematized their goal of a virtuous republic.

[14]Naomi W. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America: The Pursuit of Religious Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3. Cohen explores how Jews fought for separationism through legal channels. Cohen argued that the United States naturally gravitated toward its Christian roots given the nature of the settlement as well as the majority population who subscribed to Christian doctrine. As such, she argued the general population believed they could "rightfully impose Protestant religious forms upon the entire nation." Cohen discussed how Jews fought Sunday Laws, Christological oaths, and Christian influenced statutes. The author spends little time exploring, how within the social situation, Jews also strived for separation of church and state.

[15]At its most basic Christians, in their acceptance of Christ as the Messiah, rejected Judaism. Once believers in Judaism, Christians believed God's delivery of Christ advanced them spiritually and, therefore, eliminated the utility of Judaism. Though they continued to study the *Torah* (renamed the Old Testament) and observed many of the moral codes contained within, Christians rejected essential Judaic tenets. Established Jewish rituals and observances like Sabbath observance and *Kashruth* were dispensed

entrenched within American culture.[16] Subsequently, disloyalty to Protestant ethics or, conversely, loyalty to Judaism was viewed by Americans and, especially, southerners as disloyalty to the nation. Consequently, Americans Christians viewed Jews with suspicion and created what Frederic Cople Jaher has termed illusionary anti-Semitism. [17] This ideology demonized Jews and Judaism and had real material consequences for Jews in the south.[18]

According to David Gerber, suspicion of Jews caused Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary society to limit Jews' rights of settlement, citizenship, suffrage, and office-holding, as well as their ability to serve as witnesses and jurors, and to practice law.[19] Similarly, Frederic Cople Jaher concluded that Americans also enacted legislation that

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with. As in the European and South American settings, antebellum southern Christians felt threatened and offended by Jews' refusal to accept Christianity as the *true* religion.

[16]Michael Krausz, "On Being Jewish" in David Theo Goldberg, and Michael Krausz, *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 266.

[17]Frederic Cople Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). Cople argued that anti-Semitism represents a primarily psychogenic phenomenon or is socio-pathological in nature. Anti-Semitism in the post-Holocaust era has been treated as "an emotional disorder produced by intra-psychic tensions and sexual and social anxieties and frustrations." Cople correctly argued that locating this within psyches ignores the importance of social factors. Perhaps this type of anti-Semitism identification is the culprit for why scholars have argued that anti-Semitism did not really exist in the nineteenth-century America south. He juxtaposed this with realistic and reactive anti-Semitism. Realistic anti-Semitism occurs in situations like war. Antagonisms subside when conflicts end. Reactive anti-Semitism occurs when a group "is feared or disparaged because it has been conditioned by circumstances into antisocial, or at least unpleasant, behavior." See Jaher, 2-12. This description is more in keeping with the situation in the antebellum American south.

[18]Jaher, *A Scapegoat,* 3. Jaher suggested "since the advent of Christianity, Jews have been stigmatized as the antipodal antagonists of virtue and order. In contrast to the community of grace, they were the unredeemed disciples of the devil. To the Disciples of Christ, they were the tribal enemies. To militant Christianity, they were enfeebled relics and yet also terrifying intruders. In the triumph of spiritual purity, they were the corrupt materialists."

strongly encouraged the suppression of Jewish worship, restricted Jews to certain living and workspaces, and "supported secular anti-Semitic rulers, parties, and policies."[20] Naomi Cohen's research has also demonstrated that the doctrine of Christianity embedded itself in American common law. According to Cohen, state constitutions, state laws, and local statutes, frequently invoked the importance of Christianity in one way or another. Laws routinely appealed to Christological philosophies and public offices required Christological oaths from all political and judicial participants.[21] Legislative restrictions against Jews were also prevalent in the south.[22] The state constitutions of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina affirmed the constitutional right of religious

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[19]Gerber, "Anti-Semitism in American History," 14.

[20]Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 10.

[21]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 3. Cohen persuasively argued that although Jewish liberties expanded in the American setting, Jews failed to achieve full equality. She pointed out that "Christian oaths for state officeholders, Christian practices, and requirements for the observance of the Christian Sabbath were common inequities." See also Moore, *Religious Outsiders*. I borrow much of my understanding of the course of American religious history from Moore's assessments. I believe his assessment, challenging the previous historiographical notion of religious tolerance, is correct and especially insightful with respect to the nineteenth-century American Jewish southern experience. By now, the consensus argument has been pretty much dispelled in the general historiography of American religion. This thesis, however, has not made its way into American Jewish historiography which still argues that nineteenth-century religious tolerance for Jews dominated.

[22] Several scholars have argued that, within the southern antebellum context, Jews experienced less anti-Semitism. Howard Rabinowitz argued that several reasons account for decreases in anti-Semitism in the southern setting. He argued that not as many Jews lived in the south and many lived in rural areas. Those Jews that did live in towns, lived in the major port cities and this served as a mechanism of protection. Additionally, Jews had been in the south since its European settlement began and had established themselves as some of the first families in these towns. Finally, Jews posed less of an economic threat because they were less likely to engage in the professions and instead worked in the family mercantile businesses. In making the assessment that anti-Semitism did not exist, he neglected to explore the heretofore presented subtle forms of anti-Semitism which this dissertation makes use of. See Howard Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-Semitism in the South" *American Jewish History* LXXVII, no. 3, (March 1988): 447.

freedom but specified that only Protestants could hold political office.[23] Naomi Cohen found that in South Carolina, the constitution extended only "toleration" to citizens who, like the Jews, accept[ed] only one God but did not believe in Christ.[24] Furthermore, it was not until 1868, that North Carolina allowed Jews to vote.[25] Despite being influenced by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson's calls for religious liberty, the Virginia State constitution emphasized the importance of "Christian forbearance, love, and charity."[26] Furthermore, of all the southern states Jews could only practice law in South Carolina.[27] Though such laws and statutes eventually eliminated anti-Semitic wording within national and state documents, certain local statutes and social ideologies continued to discriminate against Jews by restricting their land ownership, employment, entry into social circles, and abridged their civil rights.[28]

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[23]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 23. South Carolina enfranchised Jews between the years 1789-1792.

[24]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 23.

[25]Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 177. North Carolina tried twice, in 1835 and in 1858 to amend its state constitution to give Jews the vote but it failed to achieve majority support in the legislature.

[26]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 26.

[27]Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 121-2. Jaher's research demonstrates, however, that Jews held minor political offices, including city councils in Virginia and Baltimore, in the Georgia assembly, the North Carolina House of Commons, as acting mayor of Richmond, and as assemblymen in the South Carolina legislature. Jews also served in the military, were Masons, founders of Georgia medical societies, social clubs, and cultural societies in Georgia and Charleston.

[28]Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 6. Individual state constitutions rescinded anti-Semitic wording during the period 1789-1792, but some constitutions still restricted Jews' civil rights well into the nineteenth century.

In addition to statutory anti-Semitism, southern culture served as the backbone for the creation of an anti-Semitic environment. According to Frederic Cople Jaher, anti-Semitism eventually infused itself into every American cultural discourse:

> Unguarded by the rules of restraint, evidence, reason, or politeness that disciplined public discourse, private and informal communication not only nourished socially respectable grievances against Jews as miserly, covetous connivers. It also preserved primitive obsession with a people labeled Christ killers, Christian haters, ritual murderers, sorcerers, and lascivious, blood thirsty creatures with hornstails, and other devilish peculiarities.[29]

Thus, cultural anti-Semitism, especially present in daily discourses, literature, and religion, existed as an extremely potent force for changing southern Jewish women's observance of Judaism. Simply, Frederic Cople Jaher's concluded that anti-Semitism was embedded in American daily language as he discovered a prevalence of widely known anti-Jewish charms, aphorisms, hymns, ballads, songs, tales, and other folklore.[30]

In addition to public conversations, American literature was also infused with anti-Semitic characters. Writers, editors, and illustrators printed a vast array of literature, plays, editorials, and cartoons that portrayed Jewish men as effeminate, predatory, lecherous, usurious, shoddy business dealers, spendthrifts, and henchmen. Popular characters like Shakespeare's Shylock or Dicken's Fagin came to embody Jews in the

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[29]Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 166.

[30] Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 69. Scholars have not done a regional treatment of anti-Semitism but base their research on a wide array of printed sources available and widely read by southerners.

minds of most Americans.[31] Though nineteenth-century scholars have spent a great deal of time exploring the emergence of male anti-Semitic literary stereotypes, scholar Harley Erdman recently uncovered two nineteenth-century anti-Semitic female characterizations prevalent in plays, comedy routines, and in literature—the *Belle Juive* and the domineering hag. In literature, the Jewish female body seemingly existed as a literary site where Jew and Christian battled for superiority.[32] Positive but tragically constrained,

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[31]For more information on such stereotypes, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home Anti-Semitism and the American Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of An American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), Louise Mayo, *The Ambivalent Image: Nineteenth-Century America's Perception of the Jew* (London: Associated University Press, 1988), Anne Arresty Naman, *The Jew in the Victorian Novel: Some Relationships Between Prejudice and Art* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1980), Bryan Cheyette, *Between "Race" and Culture Representations of "The Jew" in English and American Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), and Glanz's *The Jew in Early American Wit and Graphic Humor* (New York: KTAZ Publishing House Inc., 1973). These authors have concluded that the negative physical, mental, and behavioral characteristics attributed to Jews were clear manifestations of the needs, anxieties, and repressed desires of the Gentile population. Gentiles constructed Jews as the antithesis of the way they believed Christians ought to be. So much has been written about the construction of the mythological male Jew and central to this construction, is the effeminate Jew. The male Jew construction co-opted both masculine and feminine genders. According to Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz, in *Written out of History,* this effectively rendered the female Jew invisible. See Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz, *Written Out of History: Our Jewish Foremothers* (Fresh Meadows: Bibilo Press, 1983).

[32]Christians projected their anxieties and insecurities about Jews onto the Jewish female body. During the nineteenth century, other minority women also found their bodies to be the sites of religious, sexual, and racial colonization. In "The Pocahantas Perplex," Rayna Green explores the construction of the native-American women in American folklore. Since 1575, Americans have sought to make sense and categorize Native Americans. The "Indian" came to represent the New World as an "earthly, frightening, and beautiful paradise." Native-American women also became fictionalized in the minds of the explorers and colonizers. Like the *Belle Juive* and the domineering hag, whites created positive and negative stereotypes of native-American women. She was either a Princess or a Squaw. Such mythical constructions were similar to other female mythical "virgin/whore constructions. Like others, these mythical constructions were racialized. The positive benevolent princess image was lighter, while the negative Squaw was dark and dangerous. In the first construction, the Native American woman was a Mother-Goddess queen. She was "exotic, powerful, dangerous, beautiful, and a representative of American

the *Belle Juive* was "the object of gentile white male fantasy, an exotic, oriental figure, and sometimes dangerous creature associated with ancient sufferings and alien customs" designed to be sexually conquered and religiously converted.[33] Though a paragon of female Judaism, lovely, noble, full of grace, Jewish female literary characters were

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liberty and European classical virtue...she represented, even defended America." She represented the New World and "crude native nobility." Her image became aligned with American virtue and civilization. In cartoons and stories, this archetype saved white men. Oftentimes, she sacrificed herself and her culture to help white men succeed in "civilizing" the New World. The Squaw represented the other less exotic and ethereal mythical construction. The Squaw was the exact antithesis of the Princess. She was overtly sexual and subject to "drunkenness, stupidity, thievery, and venality." Far from being exotically beautiful, these women were often portrayed as fat, lusty, dark, and primitive. These constructions were clearly the manifestations of the anxieties felt by white European conquerors and settlers as they entered the New World and encountered Native Americans. It also justified their project of civilization. See Rayna Green's article "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture." in Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz eds., *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 698-714.

Likewise, antebellum plantation whites constructed dual images of African-American enslaved female as either Jezebels or Mammies. In her book *Ar'n't I a Woman*, Deborah Gray White examines these constructs. The Jezebel was the exact opposite of the nineteenth-century ideal of the Victorian lady. She was viewed as exceptionally sexual, sensual, and preyed upon white men. White argued that their circumstances during slavery only accentuated the connection between sexual predator and enslaved African-American women. Their semi-nudeness in their work, during punishment, and at auction imprinted the erotic and exotic enslaved women in the minds of antebellum nineteenth-century Americans. She was, in White's words, "obsessed with matters of the flesh...a slut..." The second image of enslaved African American women embraced by southerners was the Mammy. The Mammy excelled in domestic matters and was in charge of running the entire household. Despite her slave status, the Mammy was a close confidant and surrogate mother. She served as a friend and advisor to her white family members and often a surrogate mother and mistress and accordingly, was respected and trusted within the white plantation household. She was devoted to her white family and charges even more so than she was to her own family. Mammy was the ultimate mother figure—self-sacrificing, devoted, moral, and deeply religious. Such inverse images reconfigured the virgin/whore dichotomy and applied it to African-American women. These stereotypes, firmly entrenched in the minds of white southerners, helped justify slavery and the sexual mistreatment of enslaved African-American women. See Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 29-49.

[33]Erdman, *Staging the Jew*, 40-41.

constricted and, ultimately, devastated by her ethnicity and religion.[34] The second prominent female Jewish literary character, the domineering hag, represented the complete antithesis of the *Belle Juive*.[35] The hag or married Jewish woman, effeminized her spouse, cheated, was aggressive, materialistic, masculine, abusive, and suffocated male family members.[36] Similar to the *Belle Juive*, the domineering hag could not be rescued, saved, or converted. Reading was a common past time for many nineteenth-century middle and elite class non-Jews and due to the prevalence of these two stereotypes, they assumed these literary conceits to be true and, consequently, viewed their Jewish neighbors through a literary lens.[37]

Arguably more powerful than anti-Semitic daily discourses and literary stereotypes in creating an anti-Semitic south, was the phenomenon of the Second Great Awakening.[38] The Second Great Awakening began in New England during the 1790s.

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[34]Erdman, *Staging the Jew*, 43. Often, the *Belle Juive* transcended her embodiment of the "femme fatale [and moved], to noble savage, and, finally, to a tragic mulatto." The most popular dramatization of this character was Sir Walter Scott's Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*. Bourgeois and elite literate Gentiles were familiar with this literary stereotype and, therefore, shaped their understanding about Jewish women. According to literary scholar Anne Aresty Naman, nineteenth-century readers believed that Rebecca the "savioress, a seductress, and a sorceress," represented all Jewish women. See Naman, *The Jew in the Victorian Novel*, 26.

[35]Erdman, *Staging the Jew*, 58. Erdman argued "if she were not young and unmarried, and, therefore, not the potential object of a gentile's advances, she could be only old and ugly."

[36]Erdman, *Staging the Jew*, 58.

[37]Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 166. For an example see C. Vann Woodward, C. *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), .288-289.

[38]For an exhaustive exploration of the Second Great Awakening, see Sydney Ahlstrom *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972). Much of my understanding of the Second Great Awakening is largely drawn from his chapter "The Golden Day of

Espousing evangelical ideals, fundamentalist Protestants aimed to renew American morality, encourage missionary efforts, and humanitarian reform. The crux of the new Protestantism's message was to bring the gospel to all American citizens and to make America the "world's greatest example of a truly Protestant republic." Believers used fiery revival meetings, scary sermons, religious tracts, newspaper editorials, and pamphlets that preached hell, fire, and damnation to infidels who refused to convert.[39] Ministers especially targeted Jews, Mormons, Masons, and Catholics.[40] These groups

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Democratic Evangelicalism," pp. 385-511. Ahlstrom cites power as the central reason for why the Second Great Awakening occurred. Sensing a dissipation of their power and genuinely fearful of creating a country without a pronounced religious moral compass, religious fundamentalists engaged in a campaign that reasserted Protestant Christianity's power within American society. In the Second Great Awakening, Protestant fundamentalist leaders and their followers sought to create an evangelical Christianity relevant to embryonic and shaky political, economic, and social systems. They hoped to fashion a distinctly new American religion that did not decrease Christianity's influence over individual lives and national culture. Church leaders creatively and cleverly developed a nationalist ideology that linked democratic ideals to fundamentalist Protestantism. Theologically, they reasoned that the country's material and spiritual success wholly depended on national acceptance of society's Protestant ideologies. Evangelical Protestants believed that only Protestants could effectively balance the base impulses brought on by new and advancing individualistic capitalist systems and the mob nature of democratic ideologies. Fundamentalist Protestantism privileged its philosophies above any others. Furthermore, religious adherents believed that spiritual salvation had to take place before individual or national economic or social success could happen. Protestants assiduously labored to convince Americans that adherence to such fundamentalism was vital to achieving national philosophical and material goals.

Naomi Cohen also suggested that the success of the Second Great Awakening was due to "an acceptance of denominationalism or the legitimacy of sectarian theological differences (that) allowed them to construct a network of Bible, tract, missionary, and educational societies; those, transcending church lines, mobilized resources and reaped advantages that accrued to strong, unified endeavors." See Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 37.

[39]Leaders and believers spread the Protestant message through a methodical campaign of educational systems and voluntary associations that promoted antidueling, Sunday schools, abolition, temperance, and Sabbath keeping.

[40]Catholics were even greater religious targets during this period. Much of my understanding of the development of anti-Catholic nativism in the United States is drawn from Sydny E. Ahlstrom's chapter thirty-four in *A Religious History*. During the first half of the nineteenth century, due to massive immigration, the Roman Catholic Church became the largest church in America. Nervous about this shift

were the subjects of intense and often violent proselytization campaigns. The Second Great Awakening, therefore, represented a "rude awakening" for southern Jews.[41]

Fundamentalist Protestants believed that individual and national salvation depended on

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in religious sentiment, Protestants launched the largest and most violent campaign against Catholics ever seen in United States history. Anti-Catholic nativism pervaded the country's politics. Speeches, articles, and editorials claimed Catholicism would destroy the young country. They were worried that the country, founded upon Protestant ethics and influenced by Enlightenment ideas, would disintegrate due the number of new citizens who subscribed to Catholicism rather than Protestantism. Leaders, like Thomas Jefferson, argued that "the (Catholicism) was simply the most powerful and therefore the most dangerous--- institutionalization of medieval superstition, sectarian narrowness and monarchical despotism in religion." Though anti-Catholic sentiment had always been present during the colonial era, in the late 1820s a new and more powerful anti-Catholic sentiment emerged. Anti-Catholic sentiment "grew increasingly political both in action and ideology." Respected and lay church leaders engaged in a "Protestant Crusade," designed to reestablish Protestantism as the dominant religion and philosophy in the United States. Protestant reformist groups grew in record numbers and sought to convert Catholics to the religious ideologies of the Protestant reformation. Additionally, sermons warned against papist conspiracies. Anti-Catholic nativism quickly spread throughout the country. The hatred culminated on August 11, 1846, when a well-organized group burnt down the Ursuline Convent of Charlestown, a Catholic girls' school. Such violence shocked the nation but anti-Catholic feelings grew and permeated political discourse. The country's leaders warned that Catholicism threatened American democracy. Like Jews, Catholics became ugly, evil, and suspicious *others*. During the Mexican war, anti-Catholic sentiment waned as Protestants focused less on demonizing Catholic and more on promoting Protestantism in every aspect of American life. In 1849, and again due to a large Catholic immigration, the anti-Catholic political group, the secret society "Know Nothings," was born. To belong, one had to be Protestant, American born, and have no Catholics in their families. Their mission was to swear to oppose the elections of foreigners and Roman Catholics and to renounce political ties with either of these groups. For a period of about ten years, the Know-Nothings enjoyed a great deal of political clout, especially in the south. The group ultimately failed because the country became increasingly focused on the slavery issue and not ethnic or religious issues. Though anti-Catholic nativism dissipated during the Civil War it soon re-emerged in the late nineteenth century because of continued large Catholic immigrations. See Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 556-69.

[41]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 37-8. According to Cohen, after throwing Jeffersonian principles of religious freedom aside, Protestants embraced the romantic notion that "held Christianity to be the progenitor of individual rights and social values." New laws began to reflect the closer relationship between Christianity and the government. Cohen argued that Jews felt the pressure of this militant Protestantism. Though based on voluntarism, the author correctly pointed out that the lines between "voluntarism and coercion easily blurred" as new forms of legislation clearly supported evangelical Protestant doctrine.

acceptance of Christ and Protestant philosophies.[42] Consequently, southern ministers, friends, neighbors, and converted family members attacked Judaism.[43] Protestants campaigned hard to convert Jews and publicly declared that the continued existence of Judaism in American society would ruin the nation.[44] Proselytization groups like the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews and the American Sunday School Union formed in order to proselytize to Jews and correct the damage that Jews were causing the nation.[45] To them, Judaism was a "dead religion" and, consequently, Jews were "morally dead."[46] Church sermons and published religious tracts regularly disparaged Jews and Judaism. From their pulpits, ordained and lay clergy railed against Judaism, demonized Jews, and re-invoked anti-Semitic stereotypes.[47] Similarly, Sunday school primers often reflected anti-Semitic stereotypical cartoons and moral tales.

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[42]In his article "The Jewish Response to Christian Missions," Jonathan Sarna traced the history of Christian proselytization efforts towards Jews. He concluded that conversion attempts date well into the colonial period. Individuals like Cotton Mather and Ezra Stiles commented on their desire to convert Jews. See Jonathan Sarna, "A Jewish Response to Nineteenth Century Christian Missions" *Journal of American History* 68, no.1. (June 1981): 36.

[43]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 39. Cohen's research demonstrated that Jews feared missionary campaigns. Through a strategy of separationism, Jews attempted to stave off zealous missionizing. For example, Isaac Leeser wrote several editorials contesting the upsurge of anti-Semitism that Second Great Awakening Protestantism caused. In two other examples, Jews vigorously supported "the Jew Bill" which extended civil rights and legislation that ended Sunday laws.

[44]To reiterate, the Second Great Awakening involved the efforts of several Christian sects, including Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. For further discussions see Ahlstrom's, *A Religious History*, 403-491.

[45]The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews formed in 1820, and the American Sunday School Union formed in 1824. Both developed as a direct response to the Second Great Awakening. See Jaher, *A Scapegoat in the Wilderness*, 143-147 for a more detailed explanation.

[46]Ibid.

Employing Jewish characters as foils, southern white Protestant children discerned their proper religious and secular morality against the indecent immoral actions of Jewish characters. [48] Such attacks, coupled with Jews' refusal to convert to Protestantism, further alienated Jews in southern society, thereby, forcing southern Jewish women to observe and preserve Judaism in non-threatening and acceptable manners, and in ways that did not draw unwanted attention from evangelical Protestants. The more obvious methods included fundraising for the building and maintaining synagogues, purchasing religious and ritual items, hiring clergy, and funding their salaries.

Fundraising for Synagogues and Clergy

One of the principal ways in which southern Jewish women demonstrated their dedication to Judaism was through their attachment and dedication to their synagogues. [49] The synagogue was the single most important structure within the Jewish community--as a site of worship, socialization, community outreach, education, and observance of lifecycle events. The synagogue also represented a discursive site where ideas were

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[47] Jaher, *A Scapegoat*, 154.

[48] Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18-9. Dinnerstein found that the most popular primer, *McGuffey* (during the nineteenth century, it sold more than one hundred and fifty million copies), used in both Sunday and secular schools contained "Protestant homilies while portraying Jews as crafty, greedy, dishonest, sly, selfish, unkind, unethical, disobedient, and wicked. Biblical accusations were so continually repeated in these works that hatred of the Jews was almost universally instilled."

[49] A survey of benevolent association minutes, offering books, dues books, and newspaper articles reveals that the majority of a synagogue's female membership, regardless of their class status, contributed to the development and maintenance of southern Jewish synagogues. For examples, see Offering Books for

exchanged, where southern Jews developed and disseminated southern Jewish ideologies and agendas, and a place where southern Jews negotiated their identities against each other, southern society, and the State. Serving as both a place of Jewish empowerment and defense, non-Jewish communities recognized the strength of the synagogue. The existence of a synagogue solidified the southern Jewish community and, therefore, hampered proselytizing efforts.[50] The physical presence of the synagogue demonstrated to Jews and Gentiles the real existence of a Jewish community--one to be recognized and negotiated. Southern Jewish women's material and philanthropic endeavors were crucial to the establishment and maintenance of early synagogues in the south.

Once an urban southern Jewish population grew large enough, concerted efforts were made by southern Jewish women to amass funds for the building of a synagogue. The first step to establishing a synagogue was to raise funds for building materials, religious articles, and the hiring of clergy. To amass funds, these women solicited

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Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim in Charleston, found in the Jewish Heritage Project at the College of Charleston and Congregation Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia.

[50]Early republican synagogue architecture mirrored the magnificent churches of the day. Synagogues housed majestic ceilings, imported exotic woods, and elaborate and intricate carvings. Synagogue and church structure worked towards awe inspiring architecture to encourage individual awe and religiosity as well as command wider societal respect. Kahal Kadosh, the birthplace of Reform Judaism, was known in 1792, to be the largest and most impressive synagogue in the United States. Dedicated in 1794, Lafayette described the structure as "spacious and elegant." This was a "handsome supolated Georgian synagogue." When it was destroyed in the great Charleston fire of 1838, it was replaced in 1840 in the same space. It was also an imposing structure with its colonnaded temple. Architectural historians often describe this synagogue as "one of the country's finest examples of Greek Revival architecture." See "Since 1749, The Story of K.K. Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina," Pamphlet given to tourists of the synagogue.

friends, family, and neighbors. They planned and executed fairs, balls, and sold sewed items and food products.[51]

Once synagogues were built, southern Jewish women continued to fund the maintenance of synagogues through contributions. For example, in Charleston Congregation Beth Elohim's offering books, several women made yearly pledges. From 1810-1811, three prominent women in the southern Jewish community, Mrs. Azavado, Mrs. DeLieben, and Sarah Moise, contributed funds totaling forty-three dollars.[52] In 1813-1814, several women made substantial contributions totaling approximately $1500.[53] Similarly in 1815, Mrs. Isaac Motta contributed $9.50.[54] Even after the Civil War and despite widespread bankruptcy, southern Jewish women recognized the importance of continued support and rebuilding of the southern Jewish community and

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[51]For examples see Minute Books of Hebrew Ladies Aid Association, Natchez Mississippi Temple Bnai Israel". American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati and "Minute Book of Ladies Hebrew Association, Baton Rouge, LA, 1871-1923, " American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[52]Offering Books for Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim 1810-1811, Jewish year 5571, Jewish Heritage Project, College of Charleston, Charleston. Mrs. Azavado gave four dollars, Mrs. DeLieben gave twelve dollars and three dollars, and Sarah Moise gave twenty-five dollars.

[53]Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Offering Books 1813-1814 Jewish Year 5574 College of Charleston. The following is a partial list of the women who donated and the amount of their donations. Rachel Alexander, $123.00, Flora Emanuel, $126.00, Mrs. Sol S. Cohen, $11.00, Rebecca Canter, $117, Rebecca Cohen, $120.00, Rachel Dearvedu, $111.00, Elizabeth Hart, $107.00, Amelia Henry, $108.00, Rebecca Harris, $110.00, Cecelia Jacob, $121.00, Pricilla Lopez, $114.00, Catherine Labatt,$115.00, Rachel Seixas, $125.00, and Rachel Woolf, $115.00

[54]Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Offering Book 1814-1815 Jewish Year 5575. When a fire destroyed Beth Elohim synagogue, Jewish leaders feared that this would lead to the destruction of Judaism in Charleston. The city's Jewish women engaged in an extensive fundraising campaign to raise funds to rebuild the structure. For a description, see Gene Wadell, "An Architectural History of Kahal

the synagogues. Consequently, several women continued their pattern of making several small donations.[55] Additionally, antebellum southern women purchased bonds with extra funds. Dividends from purchased bonds were put into a synagogue building fund.[56]

Aside from fundraising for building materials, antebellum southern Jewish women also directed their fundraising efforts to the purchasing of mandatory ritual objects and decorative synagogue items. To raise funds, synagogue women sold memorial and honorary plaques to adorn synagogue walls. Additionally, local southern Jewish synagogue women's groups regularly raised money for and purchased several pieces of decorative silver to adorn Torahs, Arks, stages, *Kiddush* cups, candlesticks, *Yads* (silver Torah pointers) and ritual washing pitchers.[57] Ritual objects were absolutely necessary to fulfilling Jewish religious obligations of cleanliness, *kiddush* (ritual wine prayer), *nerot Shabbat* (Sabbath candlelighting), and *rachatz yadayim* (ritual handwashing). In addition to purchasing ritual objects, southern Jewish synagogue

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Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, January (1997): 6-55 and *Occident* (1838-1839).

[55]Congregation Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Offering Book, 1867-1868. The following women made the following donations: Ms. S. Cohen, $10.00, Miss S. J. Cohen, $25.00, Miss S.R. Cohen, $10.00, Miss L.M. Cohen, $2.50, Miss S.J. Cohen, $12.50, Miss S.R. Cohen, $5.00, Miss DeLaMatta, $7.50, Mrs. J. DeLeon, $2.50, Mrs. Myers Jacoby, $6.25, Mrs. Myer Jacobs, $1.25, Mrs. J.W. Jacobs, $40.00, Mrs. R.M. Levy, $10.00, Mrs. Josh Lazarus, $5.00, Mrs. R.M. Levy, $5.00, Mrs R. Levy, $10.00, and Mrs. Joshua Lazarus, $2.50. Please note several women made multiple donations during that year.

[56]The Ladies Hebrew Association of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, frequently donated their dues and dividends from their bonds to the synagogue's building fund. Minutes of the Ladies Hebrew Association of Baton Rouge, LA., 1871-1923, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[57]To consecrate the rebuilding of the synagogue, the teachers of the Beth Elohim Sunday school presented a marble slab on which the ten commandments had been carved. It was hung in the main

women raised funds to adorn the Torah. The Torah exists as the single most galvanizing artifact for the Jewish people because it contains the history of the Jews and Judaism's directives. Twice a week, monthly, and on Holy Days, the Torah was removed from the Ark and appropriate passages were publicly read for all Jews to hear. Recognizing the centrality of the Torah to Judaism, southern Jewish women fundraised for silver Torah plates and lush Torah covers.[58] Visible to the entire congregation, each time the Torah was removed from the Ark, synagogue members were reminded each time that the synagogue's Jewish women were central in demonstrating the holiness of the Torah and, subsequently, the preservation of Judaism in the southern context.

Aside from raising funds to purchase ritual objects and adornments, antebellum southern Jewish women recognized that the development and maintenance of a southern Jewish community depended on religious leadership, and, consequently, they were central in fundraising efforts to hire clergy. Jewish prayer ritual requires a *minyan* (quorum of ten men over the age of thirteen), a cantor, or a prayer leader. Additionally, the Rabbi served as counselor and spiritual leader for the Jewish community. Through classes, sermons, meetings, and individual counseling, Rabbis offered spiritual leadership, inspired congregants, morally indoctrinated listeners, informed them on

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sanctuary. Additionally, they collected a large sum to provide "rich satin damask draperies for the Sepharim (Torah books)." *Occident*, August 1847, 313.

secular and religious issues, educated, organized campaigns which benefited the community, and instructed the congregation on Jewish history and their responsibilities to Judaism.

To hire clergy, southern Jewish women came together and engaged in extensive fundraising campaigns. In one instance, the women of Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia, initiated a project that allowed the "congregation to move forward in a direction not seriously entertained before," a fundraising project that provided for a permanent Rabbi. Headed by Mrs. Solomon Cohen and Octavus Cohen, the ladies of the congregation established a community fair. Ultimately, the fair lasted several days and raised over fifteen hundred dollars.[59] In Savannah, the Jewish ladies of the city launched a large fundraising campaign to establish a permanent fund for the support of a cantor. After two and one-half years, they successfully raised fifty-three hundred dollars and retained an Hazzan. [60] For southern Jewish women, Rabbis and cantors existed as both spiritual leaders and as signifiers. The retention of Rabbis and cantors demonstrated the existence of strong and viable southern Jewish communities dedicated to the preservation of Judaism in the Second Great Awakening Protestant south.

The Religious Observances of Antebellum Southern Jewish Women

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[58]The leading Jewish newspaper, *Occident*, is filled with hundreds of citations of southern women's fundraising efforts. For examples check news briefs under the various states and synagogues during the years 1834-1864.

[59]Rubin, *Third to None*, 101.

Aside from their fundraising efforts and despite contrary assessments stating that they hastily abandoned traditional Jewish practices to take advantage of social and economic opportunities, these women both recreated religious identities that preserved their spiritual integrity and challenged prevailing negative conceptualizations as a means to remain Jewish while still taking full advantage of southern society's social, political, and economic systems. In other words, these women creatively modified or adapted religious obligations to suit a world that viewed their traditional practices suspiciously and refused to accommodate their special religious needs. Certain antebellum southern Jewish women did not sacrifice Judaism. Instead, they took steps to preserve their religion in an aggressively Protestant atmosphere.

These women's private activities become clearer when viewed through the lens of recent historical theories on power and resistance, which offer the possibility of reading new meaning into these women's religious activities. James Scott's theories on hidden transcripts are especially useful for uncovering antebellum southern Jewish women's religiosity. Framing his argument around Michel Foucault's notion "where there is power, there is resistance," Scott argued that in the face of domination, the dominated do not openly contest the terms of that domination. Rather "behind the scenes, though, they are likely to create and defend a social space in which offstage dissent to the official transcript of power relations may be voiced." The dominated, according to Scott, create

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[60] *Occident*, October 1845, 357-8.

hidden transcripts as a form of resistance and as a strategy of empowerment.[61] Similarly, antebellum southern Jewish women individually and collectively fought to defend such social spaces, developed alternative hidden religious rituals in order to practice southern Judaism, and developed hidden transcripts through a number of locations including in correspondence, in marital contracts, homes, in public spaces, as well as in synagogues.[62] With its acceptance of the diversity of sites and methods of resistance, Scott's theories provides an excellent framework for understanding the meaning and importance of southern Jewish women's modification of religious practices and the retention of certain rituals.

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[61]James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts* (New York: Yale University Press, 1990), xi. Hidden transcripts have three components. "First the hidden transcript is a social product and, hence, a result of power relations among subordinates. Second, like folk culture, the hidden transcript has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted, and disseminated within these offstage social sites. Third, the social spaces where the hidden transcript grows are themselves an achievement of resistance, they are won and defended in the teeth of power." See Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 119.

[62]According to Scott's explication, in order for an activity to qualify as a hidden transcript, it must be coordinated and communicated within the entire subordinated group. As Scott indicates, the central goals of these hidden transcripts were the forging and strengthening of a community body beyond the reach of those who would oppress the community. In addition, Scott argued that the subordinated group's "homogeneity and isolation of their community and work experience, their close mutual dependence, and, finally, a relative lack of differentiation within were excellent conditions to maximize the cohesion and unite of their subculture." Antebellum southern Jewish women found themselves in exactly these circumstances. Their undesired religion often isolated them in their work and social lives, and resulted in a marginalization which encouraged them to develop hidden transcripts. The ways in which these women carved out spaces to develop their community and the methods by which they shared their beliefs with other Jewish women and the larger Jewish community is also in keeping with Scott's theory. For instance, Scott argued that the subordinated must carve out for itself social spaces insulated from control and surveillance from above, which were "unauthorized" and "unmonitored" and thus far from the control of, in this case, anti-Semites and proselytizers. As Scott notes, however, these sites were not necessarily congregational spaces. See Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, 118-35.

There is no question that maintaining Judaism in the face of anti-Semitism and proselytization campaigns was a difficult proposition, but the historical evidence reveals that many antebellum southern Jewish women were able to resist attacks on their religion and conversion attempts. Southern Jewish women were able to modify their religious practices, retain an affinity to their Judaism, combat both institutional and cultural anti-Semitism, as well as Jewish communal misogyny by developing several effective defensive strategies.[63] Some women continued to rely upon traditional Jewish practices while others, cognizant of the anti-Semitic context in which they were operating, modified certain religious and secular behaviors to ensure Judaism's survival within a fundamentalist context. These women faithfully fulfilled their religious obligations, projected their Jewish identities, and encouraged other Jews to be observant by employing Hebrew phrases in correspondence and verse, modifying holiday observance, holiday ritual preparation, fraternizing with other Jews, signing *Ketuboth*, retaining Hebrew names, insistence on Hebrew burials, abstention from travel on holy days, and visiting holy sites and places where anti-Semitism took place or currently exists.

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[63] Historian Naomi Cohen suggested that antebellum Jews, pushing for equality, based their arguments on Constitutional rights and the doctrine of separationism. Jews, most often, failed in their attempts to demand a separation of church and state. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, 3. In another strategy, Laurence Moore suggested that Jews employed their "outsiderhood as a way of inventing their Americanness." They employed their alien status to galvanize other Jews. Employing their alien status, they demanded equality under the law, "a law that demanded neither repudiation of Jewish identity nor acceptance of Christian forms as preconditions to the enjoyment of rights. Moore, *Religious Outsiders*, xi.

One of the most overlooked sources of evidence demonstrating antebellum southern Jewish women's dedicated relationship to Judaism is their usage of Hebrew and references to God in their letters and diaries when discussing a wide range of lifecycle topics. Despite the Protestant environment's dismissal of the language as archaic, Jewish women continued to use Hebrew and praised God in their correspondence as a mode for religious expression and as a declaration of their faith. For example in one letter describing her children's favorable response to the climate, Georgian "Aint Phillips" wrote to Abraham Minis in 1857, the familiar phrase "Baruch Hashem." loosely translated as "Thank God" or "Heaven grant it may continue so."[64] In another instance, a mother reminds her son of the Israelite God's all-encompassing presence. At the end of a newsy letter in 1869, Georgian Hannah Florance signed her letter to her son Abram with "God in his great mercy bless you all."[65]

Antebellum southern Jewish women frequently referred to God and prayer during illness, deaths of loved ones, and celebrations. For example, Dinah Cohen wrote, from Savannah, to her daughter in 1849, that she prayed to God that her daughter's health would improve. She recited "daily and nightly prayers for your restoration."[66] In death, antebellum southern Jewish women relied on their faith in Judaism and God to comfort

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[64]Aint Phillips to Abraham Minis, 14 August 1857, Minis Family Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, box 2 folder 26.

[65]Hannah Florance to Abram, 7 November 1869, Minis family papers box 2 folder 28..

[66]Dinah Cohen to Rebecca, 1 August 1849, Minis family papers, box 1 folder 13.

them. They employed religion to make sense of things they did not understand and as a way of offering solace. For example 1849, Hannah Florance consoled a friend grieving over the death of a dear friend. She wrote: "when her blessed spirit departed to Him that give it, blessed be his holy name."[67] Similarly on the death of her sister, Richmond resident Emma Mordecai wrote in 1839, to her friend and distant relative, Rebecca Hays Meyers, "we bow our head in submission to God almighty and ...that he will not see fit always to afflict us—but that there yet may come a time when long uninterrupted peace may again be ours."[68] Dinah Minis recorded in a letter, in 1850, that her daughters sat *Shiva* (the holy period of six days after a Jewish person die) for their father. She wrote at the end of the period of mourning that "your sisters have taken off their veil and black collar."[69] Southern Jewish women also invoked their Judaism during happier times including wedding preparations. In celebration of an upcoming nuptial, Belle Cohen wrote, in 1836, to future daughter-in-law Henrietta Cohen that she was "thankful to the God of Israel that he has granted my prayer" and "that the God of Isreal (sic) may ever bless you with health and prosperity is the argent prayer.[70] In a later letter to her son

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[67]Hannah Florance to children, 17 December 1850, Minis family papers, box 3 folder 34. Hannah Florance frequently sprinkled her letters with Jewish phrases invoking the glory of God.

[68]Emma Mordecai to Rebecca Hays Myers, 18 July 1839, Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[69]Dinah Minis to Fanny, 23, 1850, Minis Family Papers, box 1, folder 13.

[70]Belle Cohen to Henrietta Y. Levy, 23 September 1836, Levy, Cohen, and Phillips papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 22 Folder C.

Octavus, she wished him and Henrietta "all the blessings that the God of Isreal (sic) can bestow is the prayer of your fond mother."[71]

These seemingly innocuous signatures demonstrate deliberate attempts by these women to proclaim their faith in Judaism and indicate that Judaism played a central role in their lives. Furthermore, the presence of such religious references represented a sort of hidden transcript whereby Jews privately avowed their Judaism without overtly threatening fundamentalist Protestant southerners. These women continued to declare their faith in the Israelite God and the laws of Judaism, despite an oppressive Protestant environment. Additionally by adding these signature lines, these women reminded their families of their heritage and responsibilities and perhaps strengthened their own convictions. Against a backdrop where Protestants made concerted efforts to convert Jews, southern Jewish women employed these innovative, yet non-threatening, ways to affirm their Jewish identities and strengthen the identities of others.

The outbreak of the Civil War accelerated southern Jewish women's use of biblical discourse. In part, this was due to what historian Drew Gilpin Faust identified as a tendency for women to use religion as "a framework for understanding and coping with the ordeals of the war." According to Faust, "women used divine language and belief to explain the frightening new circumstance that confronted them and to provide

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[71]Belle Moses Cohen to Octavus, 5 June, Levy, Cohen, and Phillips papers.

themselves as well with the strength and consolation that derives from faith." [72] Similarly, in their diaries, southern Jewish women used biblical discourse to pray for a Confederate victory and later, southern survival. For example, Emma Mordecai certainly invoked divine language in order to understand the April 1865 Yankee conquering of Richmond. While she prepared to evacuate the city, Mordecai expressed distress and wrote "let me cause to thee, God of my fathers you call me to thee, my fathers trusted in thee and were not deceived, Lord let me trust in thee though Thou slay me!"[73] The phrase "God of my Fathers" is a traditional lead-in sentence to several prayers within the Jewish service. Mordecai's usage of this phrase and invoking God's help during the war represented another way that southern Jewish women demonstrated their faith in Judaism.

Curiously as the war continued, southern white Protestants began to make analogies between the Confederate south and the "chosen" Israelite nation. This mingling of religious discourse and the current situation served as both an effective galvanizing mechanism to encourage southern support for its existing social and economic systems and perhaps a pathway towards southern Gentile acceptance of Jews.

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[72]Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 180-1. Interestingly, she notes that preachers employed Old Testament discourse of the "chosen people" and the "Israelites" as a metaphor to "support their sacred reading of national circumstance." Faust found several instances where southern women compared themselves to the Israelites and likened the separation of the confederacy from the north to the removal of the Israelites from the Jewish nation under Rehoboam's oppressive rule." Other preachers likened Israel's withdrawal from Egypt or David's departure from Saul as a foretelling to southern withdrawal from the Union.

For example, southerners frequently invoked First Jeremiah as both a rallying cry and a prophecy:

> The Lord said unto me, out of the North and evil shall bread forth upon the Inhabitants of the land and they shall fight against thee, but they shall Not prevail against thee; for I am with thee."[74]

Clearly, southerners located themselves within the biblical narrative and by assuming the Israelite position, southern Gentiles co-opted the biblical Jewish experience. They used the bible in this way to understand their situation and to use it as a source of continued faith in the Confederate cause. Faust suggested that southerners did so to reconstruct the hardships of war into "a narrative of punishment, reformation and deliverance."[75]

Recognizing an opportunity to display ethnic pride in their religious heritage and hopefully bring themselves closer to Protestant white southerners, antebellum southern Jewish women used this religious rhetoric to advance their own interests. Assuming an "authoritative position," they also invoked direct links between the Confederate nation and persecuted Israelites. Such rhetoric allowed them to use their Jewishness as a vehicle to promote their southernness and devotion to the southern cause. For instance, in a

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[73]Emma Mordecai, 6 April 1865, Myers family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[74]Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 181.

[75]Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 182. Faust does not discuss the rise of anti-Semitism during the war, but it seems plausible that Christian southerners ran into conflicts when they co-opted the Jewish experience. How can they be metaphorical Israelites when real ones existed? They denied Jews the validity of their own narrative, while simultaneously co-opting that narrative. Still, Jews recognized this opportunity to further prove their southern loyalty and endeavored to utilize the discourse to further tolerance and acceptance between Christians and Jews.

poem written for the *Charleston Courier* in 1864, Jane Gross used her ancestral biblical heritage to make sense of the situation and to encourage Confederate victory. She framed the Confederate experience by using the David and Goliath story in her poem "A Prayer for our Cause."[76] Employing well-known Old Testament stories as analogous to the current southern experience, Gross provided yet another link between southern Jews and Gentiles. Both groups understood, respected, and related to the discourse. In this liminal space, using the currently accepted and understood discourse of ancient Israelite experiences gave Gross access to public print in order to vocalize her concerns regarding the crisis and to demonstrate her loyalty to the southern cause. In this instance, her Judaism was not a marker of difference but served as a galvanizing mechanism for Jews and Christians alike. To draw the analogy between Israelites and Jews, Gross wrote:

> We Pray—we wait—we hear!
> Thou speakest—and we go!
> Our Strength is the Almighty Arm,
> Wo to the Northerners, Wo!
> Armed with a sling, our Youthful Land,
> Like Israel's Champion—child shall stand
> Shall bring to naught Goliath's boasts,
> And scatter all Philistia's Hosts![77]

Using David as a metaphor for the Confederacy, Gross creatively used Jewish historical experiences to promote confederate support and stamina. Expressing herself by drawing

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[76]David, the Israelite hero, successfully bested the giant Goliath in a fight. Overpowering, violent, ugly, anti-God, and Philistine, the giant could not fight the meek, cunning, and faithful David. During the Civil war, Gross utilized this story as an effective metaphor for the sectional crisis.

links between biblical Israelites and confederates represented another acceptable method whereby southern Jewish women used Judaism to advance their goal of southern acceptance while retaining a sense of pride in Judaism.

In addition to invoking Hebrew or Israelite discourse, the private writings of antebellum southern Jewish women suggest that Judaism continued to play an important role in these women's lives throughout the antebellum period. Women's frequent references to holidays, observances, and rituals imply that though perhaps somewhat subverted, these women continued to observe Jewish practices. Letters, diary entries, cookbooks, shopping lists, and expense accounts regularly referred to aspects of holiday observance. Holiday preparation, synagogue attendance, food purchases, and cleaning and preparing the house demonstrated that these women were dedicated to the project of keeping a Jewish home and also that their Judaism was absolutely crucial to their well-being and understanding of who they were.

The most sacred of Jewish holidays happened on the seventh day of every week. *Shabbat* (from the Hebrew word, *lashevet* meaning to rest) required Jews to refrain from working and exchanging money on Saturday. Living in a Protestant society that instead observed Sunday as a national day of rest made it exceptionally difficult for southern Jews to observe their Sabbath. Jews needed to decide whether to sacrifice another day of business, lose out on much needed profits, and run the risk of losing customers who

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[77]Jane Gross, "A Prayer for our Cause," *Charleston Courier* 25 March 1864.

depended on their goods and services on the major day of business, Saturday.[78] Many southern Jews found that observing the Sabbath by shutting down their stores and not trading money for services was financially impossible. Scholars have incorrectly judged that such conditions led to a gradual rejection of Jewish practice and Sabbath observance. A survey of their private writings reveals that southern Jewish women struggled within their homes to appropriately observe the Sabbath. They devised private and non-traditional methods to commemorate the sanctity of the day. Some simply noted the date in their diaries. Others were more forthright in their observances by substantially altering their daily routines.

Though antebellum southern Jewish women were aware of how difficult it was to observe the Sabbath, they also knew that the Sabbath was important to them.[79]

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[78]Joseph Blau points out "that the Jew either is or is not an integral part of the economic life of the country in which he happens to live at a particular time...If the economic activities of Jews are fully integrated into the common economic life of the country, they would be largely carried on with non-Jews." Such is the case in America and, therefore, "patterns of Sabbath and holiday observance would be conditioned by the pattern of economic life." See Blau, "The Spiritual Life of American Jewry, 99-170.

[79]Southern Jewish women's benevolent associations appear to have promoted Judaism and religious observance through what Marion Kaplan, in her book *the Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, and Jenna Weisman Joselit in her study, *The Wonders of America*, have identified as the domestication of Judaism. Kaplan demonstrates, in Imperial German,y and Weisman, in the early decades of twentieth-century, United States that women sought to preserve Judaism by restricting it predominantly in the home and synagogue. Faced with economic, political, and social changes, both German and American Jewish women promoted Jewish community, culture, and family. See Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Jenna Joselit Weisman, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture 1880-1950* (New York: Hill and Wang), 1994. Southern Jewish women acted similarly. Through articles, essays, and brief reminders in newspapers, these women promoted the domestication of Judaism in the south and instructed other southern Jews in *Halacha* (ritual law). Ladies benevolent associations sponsored reminders about candle lighting times, upcoming holidays, religious obligations with respect to birth, Bar-Mitzvah,

Therefore, they decided to modify religious customs to make it more relevant to their lives. They used the Sabbath as a time of celebration or as a period of reflection during which they reaffirmed their faith in God and Judaism. For example, Rebecca Alexander moved to her first real home on a Saturday. To celebrate, she went to services.[80] Though moving forced her to work on the holy day, she still observed the sanctity of the day by attending services. In another example, Emma Mordecai wrote to her niece Ellen and described how she observed the Sabbath.

> I sought God not in faith but in helplessness. I prayed not for deliverance from my trick but for strength to bear them and to go forth steadily in the path of duty...I begin in the week praying that I may go walk in God's presence, go obey his commands so discharge all of the duty of the six days labor, that the holy Sabbath we may find me prepared in all respect to enjoy it, repose...God's blessed Sabbaths are my stepping stones through life.[81]

Additionally, most Jewish women did not live in a community that possessed a Jewish infrastructure that allowed them to fulfill all Sabbath obligations. Many, for instance, did not live near a synagogue where they might attend services. In spite of this, private writings revealed a pattern of behavior that suggested that some Jewish women broke from their domestic routines to fulfill certain *Halachic* (Jewish law) expectations.

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marriage, and burial. For examples see " Minute Book of Hebrew Ladies Aid Association, Natchez Miss. Temple Bnai Israel" and "Minute Book of Ladies Hebrew Association, Baton Rouge, LA, 1871-1923."

[80]Rebecca Ella Solomon Alexander, "Memoirs of Life in Charleston South Caroline, 1854-1935, June 24, 1929," American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, 20.

[81]Emma Mordecai to Ellen, 1 May 1846, Mordecai family papers, folder 80.

For example, traditional Scripture commanded Jews to study on the Sabbath. To fulfill her religious obligation, Emma Mordecai recorded on September 10, 1864, that she spent most of her Saturdays reading in her room.[82] Other Jewish women recorded in their diaries that they read classical literature, bible stories, and academic textbooks. Jewish law, or *Halacha*, also stressed the importance of family and community. Mordecai observed this directive by visiting friends and family on the Sabbath. Though she broke the moratorium of traveling on the Sabbath, Mordecai broke Jewish law in favor of celebrating the spirit of the holiday. Other antebellum southern Jewish women often planned their visits over Sabbath or spent the entire day paying those visits. True to the Jewish law commanding studying and debate and commemorating the family on the Sabbath, southern Jewish women spent the entire day catching up with friends and family and discussed contemporary and classical literature, academic topics, biblical subjects, and social issues. In another instance, one woman observed the prohibition of writing on the Sabbath. Sixteen-year old Clara Solomon, a daily diarist, refused to pen an entry on the Sabbath.[83] Observing the *Sabbath* in this way allowed antebellum southern Jewish women to privately recognize the holiday without attracting the negative attention of non-Jews or interfering with their other mandatory secular obligations.

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[82]Emma Mordecai, Journal, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, 10 September 1864.

[83]Quoted in Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary*, 337.

Antebellum southern Jewish women used the Sabbath to remind their loved ones about their heritage, legacy, and its attached responsibilities. One of the central commandments for Jews is to instruct their children about the Israelite nation and its laws. In one of the holiest prayers, the *Shema* commands Jews to

> "love your eternal God with all your minds, with all your strength, with all your being. Set these words, which I command you this day, upon your hearts. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up..."[84]

As evidenced in their letters, several southern Jewish women fulfilled this commandment. Southern Jewish women frequently reminded fiancés, husbands, and children to mark the sanctity of the Sabbath. For example, Savannah native Lavinia Minis observed the Sabbath and encouraged her fiancé to also observe: "I do not think you will ever regret having kept the Sabbath holy Abram dear, although it is no more than a right minded man should do."[85] In another example, Mrs. Minis, a Georgian Jewish woman, frequently reminded her children to refrain from traveling and making purchases on the Sabbath.[86] The pressure placed on the children is revealed in the letters. Her children wrote back and reassured her that they were following their prescriptions and observing the Sabbath. They understood the importance their mother placed on transmitting her Jewish faith to them and feared her response when they did not uphold

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[84]*Gates of Repentance: New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (Central Conference of American Rabbis 5738 New York 1978).

[85]Lavinia Florance to Abram Minis, 26 January 1851, Minis family papers.

the Sabbath laws. Consequently, Rosina Minis was worried that her mother might find out that she had failed to complete her shopping before the Sabbath and that she shopped after Saturday morning services. In a hasty letter to her brother, Minis recounted the incident and hoped that he might intervene on her behalf. To her brother, Jacob, she made a "clearheart of [her] sins" and promised to never repeat her misbehavior.[87] Though it is unclear whether he helped his sister, Jacob Minis also frequently tried to assuage his mother's anxieties and assure her that her children did their best to keep "Shabbos."[88] Clearly, her children attempted as best as they could to observe the Sabbath because of their mother's directive and their own dedication to Judaism.

Failure to observe the Sabbath was also a concern for Petersburg resident, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus. Writing to her parents in 1792, and describing her despair regarding her inability to observe the Sabbath, Lazarus stated:

> Dear Parent, I know quite well you will not want me to bring up my children like Gentiles. Here they cannot become anything else. Jewishness is pushed aside here. There are here ten or twelve Jews, and they are not worthy of being called Jews. We have a *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) who...buys *terefah* (nonkosher meat)... On Rosh Ha-Shanah and on Yom Kippur the people worshipped with one sefer torah and not one of them wore the tallit...You can believe me that I crave to see a synagogue to which I can go. The way we live is no life at all. We do not know what the Sabbath and the holidays are. On the Sabbath all the Jewish shops are open; and they do business on that day as they do through the whole week. But

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[86]Minis family papers, Box 3 Folder 34.

[87]Rosina Minis to Brother. 29 November 1846, Minis family papers, Box 3 Folder 34.

[88]Minis family papers.

> ours we do not allow to open...You must believe me that in our house we all live as Jews as much as we can."[89]

Mordecai did her best to observe the holiday but found it exceptionally difficult given her isolation from other Jews.

Southern Jewish poet Penina Moise used religious verse to encourage southern Jewish women to assume greater responsibility for the survival of Judaism in the American south. To accomplish this, Moise composed a hymn within the Reform Judaism hymnal that directly spoke to Jewish women's responsibilities and capabilities. In *Hymn 154*, Moise enumerated the various ways that Jewish women could positively influence the Jewish identities of their families. In keeping with the custom of the day, Moise situated women's responsibilities squarely in the home. Moise charged women with the crucial role of maintaining Judaism within the domestic setting, a place where they could effectively control the religiosity of their family. Using the language of true womanhood and its Jewish companion, the "mother of Israel," Moise reminded Jewish women that through their control of the domestic sphere and their spiritual efforts, they possessed the unique capability to temper materialism and the decreases in Jewish observance. In this particular hymn, Moise argued that Judaism could best be preserved if women regularly observed Sabbath laws and customs. In *Hymn 154*, the poet placed holiness and reverence of the Sabbath above materialism, economics, and social

advancement. Additionally, Moise reminded Jewish women of their assigned duties to counterbalance avariciousness with faith in Judaism. This hymn forcefully reminded Jewish women that they played crucial roles in winning the battle against assimilation, acceptance of Gentile customs, acquisition of reigning Protestant values, and conversion. The poet wrote:

> Daughters of Israel, arise!
> The Sabbath-morn to greet,
> Send songs and praises to the skies,
> The Frank incense more sweet.
>
> Take heed, lest ye the drift mistake,
> Of Heaven's hallowed hours,
> And from those dreams too late awake,
> That show you but life and flowers.
>
> Leave not the spirit unarranged,
> To reck the mortal frame;
> With gems of grace let women aid,
> Charms that from Nature came.
>
> With Jewels of a gentle mind,
> More precious far than gold
> Brightened by love, by faith refined,
> And set in chastest mould.
>
> Wife! Mother! Sister! on ye all
> A tender task devolves
> Child, husband, brother, on ye all,
> To nerve their best resolves.
>
> Your hands must gird the buckler on,

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[89]Jacob Rader Marcus ed., *The Jew in the American World: A Sourcebook* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1996), 142-3.

The mortal weapons cleanse,
By which that battle may be won,
That in self-conquest ends.[90]

Sentimentality abounded in Moise's words but the hymn effectively expressed her ideas about Jewish women's responsibilities. Likening the situation to a war, Moise believed that southern Jewish women represented an important line of defense against the effects of the Second Great Awakening and its subsequent lapses in Jewish religiosity. Invoking the cult of true womanhood, the poet reinforced the notion that southern Jewish women were spiritually and morally superior. Consequently, Moise instructed Jewish women to use their *essential* power and their influence as wives, mothers, and sisters to cleanse their families of materialistic dirt, maintain Jewish homes, and encourage Judaic practice within the homes. According to Moise, maintaining a Jewish home and guiding their families' morality through holiday observance ensured the preservation of Judaism in the American context. Like other domestic southern female poets, Moise used the home as the principal site where Jewish women could effect the most change. According to Moise, Jewish women could use their important stature within the home to wage battles against those aspects of society that caused a dissolution of Judaic practice. Within this hymn, she both enlisted these women in the project of American Judaism's survival and development and encouraged respect for those women who attempted to do so. Enjoining the cult of true womanhood and the "mother of Israel," Moise used poetry as

an effective medium to encourage Jewish women's active efforts in the pursuit of Judaism's survival. *Hymn 154* had a wide readership because the hymn was located in the hymnal used by the newly formed *Reformed Society of the Israelites* and, consequently, was read weekly on the Sabbath.

Isolation from other Jews was also a problem for Jews who wanted to gather for congregational prayer services but lived too far away from a synagogue or lacked the necessary quorum (*minyan*) required by Jewish law to properly recite prayers.[91] In the early nineteenth century, southern rural Jews found it exceptionally difficult to gather a *minyan*. Even without a quorum but still wanting to pray, one woman created her own "*minyan*" using all of her available family members. Octavia Harby Moses lived in a remote rural area with few inhabitants and no Jews. Despite the absence of a Rabbi, a synagogue, or even a place to hold formal services, Moses organized her own informal services. As a deeply religious women, she refused to let circumstance prevent herself, her children, and grandchildren from proper worship. Every Saturday morning and on all holidays Moses rearranged a large sitting room in her home and assembled the family at

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[90]Moise, "Hymn 154" in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*.

[91]Larger southern port cities, like Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans, had at least one and sometimes two synagogues. Rural areas did not have synagogues let alone ten Jewish men needed to form a *minyan*.

home to recite prayers.[92] Despite a lack of a formal site, Moses created a religious space to observe her Judaism and ensured the continued religious observance of her family.

These examples demonstrate that Sabbath observance was extremely important to many antebellum southern Jewish women. Recognizing the difficulty of observing traditional Judaism in a fundamentalist Protestant environment and in areas where other Jews and synagogues were in short supply, these women altered their religious observances in innovative ways to keep the Sabbath holy. Reading, refraining from travel, visiting, holding services and encouraging their children to remember and honor the day represented methods by which these women retained a sense of Jewishness and tried to maintain the Jewish community against Protestantization. The actions of these antebellum southern Jewish women demonstrate that modifying traditional Jewish practices did not necessarily mean, as Jewish historians have previously argued, a wholesale rejection of Judaism.

Antebellum southern Jewish women also reaffirmed their commitment to Judaism through the ritual observance of Jewish holidays. Passover, marking the Jews exodus from Egypt, was a particularly important holiday for all Jews and was extremely labor intensive in its preparation. Working within the parameters of a Christian society, the effects of sectional crisis, and a small Jewish population, antebellum southern Jewish

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[92]Octavia Harby Moses, *Mother's Poems, A Collection of Verses*4. Moses' father was one of the founders and prime movers in the Society of Reformed Israelites.

women were again unable to strictly keep Passover traditions but they did observe the holiday in ways that they felt preserved the integrity of the holiday. Though many southern Jewish families could not observe the holiday according to its traditional precepts, which included removing and refraining from eating any leavened bread products, observing holiday statutes prohibiting travel, labor, and purchasing, these women maintained the holiday by altering their routines and modifying traditional practices to suit their environment. For example before Passover commenced, most southern Jewish women thoroughly cleaned their houses. They enlisted the services of all the women, servants, and small children in the household to scrub the walls, roll up the carpets, clean chimneys, sweep floors, clean pantries, air out linens, and paint and repair the house. This project was laborious and women frequently noted in their diaries the exhaustion they felt.[93] If they could afford it, southern Jewish families also changed their dishes, covered food preparation surfaces, and purchased foods that guaranteed they had not come into contact with bread products. Additionally, most Jews regardless of their religiosity, attempted to purchase *matzot* as a symbolic demonstration of their commitment to Judaism.[94]

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[93]For a description see Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary*, 331.

[94]The availability of *matzot* was scarce and, consequently, most Jews continued to eat bread during the eight-day holiday. They still, however, believed that it was important to commemorate the holiday by purchasing and discussing reasons why Jews ate the unleavened bread. By eating the bread, southern Jewish families reminded their families that the Exodus Jews did not have enough time to allow their bread to rise. Instead, they grabbed the bread before it rose and through the centuries, Jews have

In addition to house preparation, antebellum southern Jewish women marked the holiday by visiting other Jewish friends and relatives. Perhaps recognizing that keeping the holiday was individually difficult and hoping to strengthen ties among Jewish families and friends, southern Jewish women traveled long and short distances to meet up with other Jews. Because of the week-long holiday and the fact that the first and last days are considered holy days, when traveling was forbidden, some women opted to stay with their hosts for the entire Passover holiday.[95] While there, they spent their days attending services, socializing with other Jewish friends and family, assisting with meal preparation, and cleaning the house. Despite the holiday's labor intensive nature, most women looked forward to it. In one instance, Emma Mordecai expressed excitement over her impending departure from her isolated home, the Rosewood plantation, (located on the outskirts of Richmond) to travel to Richmond to spend Passover with her cousins. There, she attended services and visited friends.[96] For much of the year, Emma Mordecai was isolated from other Jews. As a deeply religious woman, this was an opportunity for her to socialize and pray among fellow Jews, thereby strengthening her faith in Judaism and displaying a forceful Jewish identity.

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commemorated the Passover holiday by telling the Exodus story through the presence of *matzot* on their *Seder* table.

[95] In the Diaspora, the first and last two days of the Passover holiday are observed as holy days, whereby Jews are forbidden among other things to travel, exchange money, and ignite fire.

[96] Emma Mordecai, Journal.

Aside from visiting, some Jewish women modified their behaviors to commemorate the sanctity of the holiday. For example in 1857, Rosa Mordecai observed Passover by altering her correspondence behaviors. Mordecai apologized for not having answered her uncle's letter sooner but explained that his letter arrived the first day of Passover. Feeling that it was inappropriate to correspond during a holiday, Mordecai refrained from writing during Passover. She returned his letter at Passover's conclusion.[97] Though Mordecai did not observe all of Passover's laws, she still wanted to indicate her dedication to Judaism. She did this by extending the prohibition on writing through the entire Passover holiday instead of just the first and last days. Additionally, Mordecai altered her daily routine in other ways to honor the holiday. Setting aside social pursuits, Rosa spent the holidays reading, visiting, and engaging in self-reflection. In another example, Julia Lazarus refused to meet her Uncle George on a certain date because it involved her leaving during the Passover holiday which coincidentally fell on another holy day, the Sabbath. She informed her uncle that Passover ended at sundown on a Thursday and that she intended to leave two days later.[98] None of the other primary evidence suggested that Julia considered herself an Orthodox woman. During the week, she ate bread products and other non-kosher foods. Her

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[97]Rosa Mordecai, Rosa to George Mordecai, 7 April 1857, George Mordecai family papers, folder 82. Technically, the first and last two days of the holiday require Jews to abstain from writing. A devil's advocate might speculate Mordecai used the holiday to avoid answering unpleasant questions or fulfilling requests. Subsequent letters do not clarify this.

commitment to upholding the laws that she could, however, indicate that her inability to observe Passover *kashruth* may speak more to the unavailability of the special foods, than a lack of religious devotion. In other words, though southern Jewish women could not always control the availability of ritual foods, they could control their movements and personal behaviors and, consequently, they demonstrated their religiosity and proclaimed their devotion to Jewish laws in ways that were available to them.

Even the upheaval caused by the Civil War could not prevent Rosena Hutzler from stopping her war activities in order to travel home to Richmond to spend the Passover holiday.[99] Similarly despite a war time scarcity of food and supplies, Jews still managed to observe the prohibition against leavened bread and ordered *matzot*.[100] Observing the Passover holiday by purchasing m*atzot*, visiting with family and friends, refraining from travel and correspondence, and reflecting upon their commitment to Judaism represented active acceptable and non-threatening ways for these women to express their devotion to Judaism as such private domestic acts did not incur the wrath or dismay of the larger Protestant community.

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[98]Julia Lazarus to George Mordecai, 31 March 1846, George Mordecai family papers.

[99]Rosena Levy Hutzler to her children, 31 May 1907, Leopold Levy papers, Beth Ahabah Archives, Richmond.

[100]Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary*, 295. She recorded in her dairy that on Saturday April 12, 1862, "Mrs. N. went to sea about the matsas and after much difficulty succeeded in obtaining hers and ours. They are of an very inferior quality and I agree with her in thinking that it is a mere farce as they are surrounded by bread and biscuits. " and "the tempting biscuits before me, I refused but there is not sacrifice in keeping a fast, if temptation are not placed before us." See Askenazi, *The Civil War Diary*, 325, 336.

Southern Jewish women were even more committed to the maintenance of their Jewishness during the two universally acknowledged most important holidays which were the Jewish New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) and the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). Beginning with *Rosh Hashanah*, following the Ten Days of Penitence, and culminating with the fast of *Yom Kippur*, Jews as individuals and as a nation came together to celebrate the Jewish new year and, more solemnly, to reflect and atone for their individual and communal past sins. For ten days, Jews are commanded to ponder their religious obligations, set goals as Jews for the next year, and reaffirm their faith in Judaism. More than any other time in the year, the holy days mark a time during which Jews are more cognizant of their Jewishness and prioritize their religious identities over their secular identities. During the two days of the *Rosh Hashana* and on the day of *Yom Kippur*, antebellum southern Jewish women completely ceased their regular routines. Aside from self-reflecting on *Rosh Hashonah*, they cleaned the house, hosted large groups of families and friends, and prepared elegant festive meals. On the eve and day of both of the holidays, southern Jewish women attended long synagogue services. By and large, the entire Jewish community turned out for these holidays. To not attend would raise the critical eye of other Jews. On *Yom Kippur* Jews observe this solemn occasion by fasting.[101] According to Jewish law, they fast in order to focus all of their attention on

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[101]Healthy Jews over the age of thirteen are required to fast from nightfall the first night until the presence of three stars in the sky the second night. They regularly fast from food and drink for twenty-six

spiritual matters rather than corporeal desires. The entire day demands complete attention towards their devotion to the Israelite God, devotion to Judaism, and their responsibilities as Jews. In order to fulfill their religious obligations, these women removed themselves from public spaces unless they were walking to synagogue. Much can be learned about the importance of Judaism and the experience of being Jewish in a Protestant environment by reading southern Jewish women's diaries. During these days, women who otherwise seemed fully acculturated stepped back from secular society and into the Jewish community. These women completely altered their schedules during this period. Diary entries are filled with solemn reflection. They attended services, read, journaled, and generally stayed close to home unless they were traveling to synagogue. For example, Emma Mordecai traveled to Richmond to attend services.[102] Ten days later, she returned to Richmond to spend *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) with friends. Like other women, Mordecai understood that the evening prayers of (*Kol Nidre*) were solemn and impressive.[103]

While away from home during the holy days, southern Jewish women were still conscious of their religious responsibilities with respect to synagogue attendance and fasting. Despite the inconvenience, southern Jewish women often altered their schedules to accommodate their Jewish obligations. While traveling in Europe, for example, many

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hours.

[102]Emma Mordecai, Journal.

southern Jewish girls sought out synagogues or arranged to stay with Jewish families. For instance, while traveling through Germany on *Rosh Hashonah*, Isabel Mordecai stopped her travels, sought out a synagogue, and attended services.[104] While still in Europe the following year and far from a synagogue, Mordecai could not attend services but still altered her schedule. She refused to go sightseeing because she felt it was improper and sinful to travel on such a holy day. Instead, she and her other travel companions arranged to recite their prayers together. While waiting to rejoin the larger tourist group, the young women visited an art gallery.[105] Evidence of the importance of these holidays for all Jewish women regardless of their religiosity is best explored by examining the actions of the less religious. Even those women who rejected outward displays of their Jewishness, disdained synagogue attendance, and aggressively assimilated, altered their behavior and marked the holiness of the days.

One woman's paid labor also crucially contributed towards fulfilling her family's religious obligations during *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year). Originally from a wealthy New Orleans family, Alice Solomon graduated, attended the New Orleans Normal school, and

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[103]Emma Mordecai, Journal, 10 October 1864.

[104]Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 9 September 1858.

[105]Mordecai was clearly traveling with non-Jewish people. Several times throughout her travels, during *Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur*, and Passover, she altered her travel arrangements and her sightseeing plans to observe the holidays. For an example, see Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 29 September 1859.

taught there. For her labor, Solomon received a $600.00 per year salary,[106] Upon attending *Rosh Hashanah* services at a New Orleans synagogue, The Dispersed of Judah, Solomon discovered that her father had been unable to pay mandatory pew dues, which resulted in their seats being sold to another family. This event affected Alice on two levels. First, the incident embarrassed Solomon and her family. The entire congregation knew that the Solomons had been unable to pay for their usual seats because a new family now occupied them. Second, aside from being publicly humiliated, a lack of funds prevented the Solomon family from satisfactorily fulfilling their obligations as Jews. This event fundamentally affected Solomon. She decided to increase her teaching hours in order to pay the synagogue dues herself. This simple act represented more than just fulfilling a financial obligation. Solomon's efforts enabled her family to continue to fulfill their religious obligations and retain a Jewish identity in a less than tolerant south.

A much less somber holiday but one that engaged entire urban Jewish communities was *Purim*, which celebrated Jews' escape from a death plot in ancient Persia. [107] The southern Jewish community's major yearly fundraising event, southern

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[106]See Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary*, 11, 58-9. The combined factors of an inability to acquire supplies and funds as well as a growing distrust of Jewish businessmen, substantially weakened Solomon's father's merchant business. To save his business, Solomon's father tried borrowing money and buying supplies on credit but these efforts proved fruitless. Desperate, her father took several advances on his daughter's paycheck without informing her. She learned of this several months later when he wrote her and included partial payment in the envelope. Thus, the Solomon family fundamentally depended on Solomon's teaching paycheck to pay for material necessities such as food and heating supplies.

[107]Purim was a major holiday for Jews. It celebrated the averted destruction of the Jews. Persian King Ahashverus signed a decree, written by his primary henchman Haman, declaring the extermination of

urban Jewish women gathered to plan, fund, and execute a masquerade ball in their city.[108] The event was formal and southern Jewish women took great pains to prepare exquisite food, hang intricate decorations, hire excellent musicians, and plan wonderful dances. The *Purim* masquerade existed as one of the major events in Savannah, Charleston, Richmond, and New Orleans. Weeks before the event, hysteria and frenzy over potential meetings and courtships filled the private writings of these women. Letters and journal entries described the exquisite fabrics used, the elaborate masks, the jewelry to be worn, and the expense of these costumes. As Gentiles were also invited, this was also a major event in Christian society. Together, Jews and Gentiles danced, drank, socialized, and caroused all night. Newspaper articles detailed the reading of the Scroll

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the Jews. His wife Queen Esther, a Jew, was beseeched by her Jewish cousin, Mordecai, to intervene. She did, Haman's plot was uncovered, and he was sentenced to hang. The King rescinded the edict and the Jews were saved. Jews traditionally celebrate this holiday with much merriment. Aside from reading the scroll of Esther, Jews are commanded to party until they do not recognize their enemies. This often took the form of heavy drinking and masks.

Purim and Mardi Gras often fall within two weeks of each other. In surveying the local newspapers and accounts of these events, though they were celebrated similarly, there is no clear evidence whether southern Jewish women modeled their festivities after Mardi Gras. Historically, Jews have celebrated Purim in this manner for several centuries.

[108]The Natchez Mississippi congregation Temple Bnai Israel, perhaps one of the smallest established congregations in the United States at the time, raised substantial sums by having a ball. In 1870 and as a result of the monies raised at the dance, the society donated almost twenty-six hundred dollars to the burial society. See Minute Books 1865-1940 Hebrew Ladies Aid Association in Natchez, Mississippi, Temple Bnai Israel, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati. As their lead-off function, the newly established Mobile Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society hostessed a Purim ball where Jews and Gentiles attended. They raised one hundred and eighty-one dollars. See *Occident*, June 1850, 199.

For descriptions of *Purim* balls, see the *Occident* 4, no.1, April 1846 and the *Daily News and Herald* 10 March 1868.

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of Esther, who attended, announced the best costumes, critiqued the music, dancing and drinking, and divulged the cost. [109]

The fact that this event was so public and so well-attended by Jews and non-Jews meant that the event was more than just a celebration, it was a political act. The secular and open nature of the event potentially decreased anxiety about Jews among southern Gentiles and encouraged them to rethink pre-existing anti-Jewish ideologies. Specifically, both Jews and non-Jews alike listened to the recitation of the Scroll of Esther, describing the trials and tribulations of the Jews in ancient Persia at the opening of the ball. This brief history lesson coupled with the dynamics of socialization encouraged fraternity and sorority between Jews and non-Jews. Additionally, *Purim* balls represented a place where southern Jewish communal solidarity developed. Congregating together, southern Jews from the city and its outlying areas potentially became politicized, socialized, developed friendships, and courted prospective mates, all within a distinctly religious Jewish atmosphere. This encouraged southern Jewish communal solidarity and potentially led to decreases in intermarriage, conversion, and assimilation. The Purim ball atmosphere, acceptable to Southern Gentiles, enabled southern Jews to openly observe a Jewish holiday. Finally, the magnificent splendor of the Purim ball, largely at the hands of Jewish women, inspired Jewish pride. To accomplish these tasks, southern Jewish women transformed a holiday, mostly celebrated

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[109]For an example, see *Occident* 4, no. 1, April 1846.

in the synagogue and among Jews, and modernized it to make it relevant to southern Jews and interesting for non-Jews. Secular music, fashion, food, and socialization allowed Jews to openly reveal and celebrate their history and, subsequently, their religion.

Thus three times during the year, in the fall (*Rosh Hashonah)*, late winter (*Purim)*, and early spring (*Passover)*, antebellum southern Jews came together to reaffirm their connection to Judaism and outwardly proclaimed their Jewishness. In the face of proselytization and anti-Semitism, such activities and the way that they chose to express them allowed antebellum southern Jewish women to retain their Jewish identity, a sense of Jewish community, and ethnic pride.

Aside from holiday observance, these women projected their devotion to Judaism and their comfort with other Jews in several, often overlooked, ways. The easiest way to determine whether and how these women retained Jewish identities is by examining their social milieu. A survey of archival records reveals that most Jewish women preferred to socialize with other Jews. Again, this contradicts the pervasive historiographical assumption that southern Jewish women raced to socialize with Gentiles to improve their social and economic status. Among others, Rachel Lazarus, Ellen Mordecai, Eugenia Levy Phillips, Penina Moise, and Clara Solomon, women who heralded from cities as diverse as Charleston, Richmond, New Orleans, and Savannah, purposely surrounded

themselves with their Jewish friends and relatives.[110] These women had gained the respect of secular society and enjoyed many invitations, but they continued to travel in primarily Jewish circles and confined much of their interactions with non-Jews to correspondence relationships. Such socialization patterns promoted several things. The all-Jewish milieu served as a site of resistance against proselytization, allowed southern Jewish pride to be openly displayed, facilitated Jewish observance without the threat of anger from outsiders, and, in socializing together, encouraged the preservation of Judaism through marriage. Though southern Jewish women often socialized with non-Jews, Phila Calder remembered that her grandmother "never lost connection with her Jewish groups.[111] By maintaining Jewish peer groups, southern Jewish women demonstrated another method of retaining Jewish identity, preserving Judaism, and fighting proselytization.

Another non-threatening act that proclaimed southern Jewish women's fidelity to Judaism was to enter into marriage according to the laws of ancient Israelite tradition. Signing the Jewish marital contract, or *ketubah,* represented a private and safe method whereby Jewish women continued to generationally reaffirm their commitment to Judaism. As the southern archives are filled with *ketuboth*, it is clear that many antebellum southern Jewish women opted to marry according to Jewish law and to use

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[110]For a detailed list of diaries and journals consulted, see the bibliography.

their marriages as occasions to reaffirm their Jewishness.[112] Following ancient tradition, these contracts were strict in their language and employed the exact Aramaic and Hebrew phrases used by Jews for thousands of years.[113] By signing this contract, Jewish women deliberately linked themselves to biblical Jewish tradition. In order to be legally married in the United States, a woman did not need the permission or supervision of a religious person. Jewish families, and specifically women, in one simple act of affixing their signatures to the Jewish marital contract, reaffirmed their commitment to the preservation

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[111]Phila Calder, "Phila Calder's Recollections," American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 11.

[112]Large numbers of Jewish marital contracts from the southern Jewish community may be found in the College of Charleston, Duke University, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill archives. Additionally, several southern Jewish marital contracts may be found in the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. The *Ketuba* is a contract designed to protect the material and emotional interests of Jewish women. The Jewish marital contract also offered benefits to these women that a secular contract did not. According to Marylynn Salmon, in her book, *Women and Property*, most early and mid-nineteenth-century women possessed few property and inheritance rights. Under the legal term, *feme couvert* women's legal and economic status rested in the care of their husbands, fathers, and guardians. See Marylynn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986). In the *Ketuboth*, parents arranged for their daughter's to hold their own property, not to be touched by their husbands. For example, Mary Hyams and Fannie Adler brought silver, gold, dresses, bedding and furniture totaling a value of five hundred dollars. (Marital contract of Judah Polock to Mary Hyams. 1 November 1848, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, small collections SC 6275) and marital contract of Maurice (Moshe) to Fannie Adler (Frumet), American Jewish Archives, flat file, cabinet 5 drawer 13. Leah Cohen entered into her marriage with gold, silver and clothing worth $1050. See marital contract of Jacob D. Harby to Leah Cohen 11 May 1869, American Jewish Archives, small collections 4525.)

[113]To further punctuate this point I offer forty-two Jewish marriages performed between 1843-1845 at the Congregation Gates of Mercy, the eighty marriages performed between 1843-1862, at the Congregation of the Gates of Mercy, in New Orleans. (These contracts are entirely in Hebrew and their English translations are housed in a separate book and sixty-two Jewish marriages performed in 1848 at the Touro Synagogue, a Portuguese congregation in New Orleans. See microfilm 2447 and box no. X-361, American Jewish Archives.

of the Judaism, Jewish marriage, family, and community. The standard translation for the English marital contract was as follows:[114]

> On the ___day of the week, the ____day of the month of the (Hebrew) month. In the year five thousand _____ after the creation of the world, we reckon in this city of ____occurred that the unmarried ____son of _____said unto the unmarried Miss _____ daughter of _____ **according to the Laws of Moses and Israel** (Hebrew translation: *Haarei Mikudeshet Li*) and I will have honour, support, feed, and clothe their wives in faithfulness and I will give thee a dower of thy virginity, **200 pieces of silver** (*zuzim*) appertaining to thee, according to the law, and they food, clothing, support and be thy husband according to the rule of all earth. Morevover...the marriage portion she brought unto him... whether it be silver or gold, to____lawful money of the above named place and this said unto the bridegroom____ I receive upon myself and acknowledge the ____ of marriage contract as obligatory upon myself and my heirs after me in the same manner as all contracts of marriage that has been made according to the ordinance of our wisemen, of blessed memory.[115]

First, the document privileges the Hebrew date and year above the Christian-based secular calendar. Second, women still signed these contracts despite the archaic verbiage. They clearly felt that it was important to maintain spiritual and written links to their biblical Jewish heritage. Another significant indicator that antebellum southern Jewish women retained a strong Jewish identity was that alongside their English signatures, these women also signed their Hebrew names.[116]

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[114]The bold lettering represents words that have been included in every ***ketuba*** ever recovered

[115]I have culled this translation from several ***ketuboth.*** The verbiage across state lines is virtually identitical.

[116] Other examples include Jonathan Scheyer and Johanna Lekesch, New Orleans, LA., 1859, American Jewish Archives, small collections 10937, Hardy Solomon and Frances Levy, Columbia, S.C.,

Several things can be discerned about southern Jewish women's religiosity by this swift and seemingly simple act. Beginning with Jewish women and their parents, they must have felt deeply connected to their religion in giving their daughters Hebrew names. Despite pressures to do otherwise, to give their daughters Hebrew names is another private and non-threatening act whereby antebellum southern Jews preserved Judaism and resisted conversion. Additionally, these women's ability to sign in Hebrew signifies that they had at least a rudimentary knowledge of the Hebrew language. Aside from writing their names, it is probable that these women knew the alphabet, and as such could probably read voweled versions of the Torah and prayed in Hebrew.[117] These innocuous signatory acts led to other private proclamations of Jewish faith and further solidified antebellum southern Jewish women's relationship with their Jewish heritage. Continuing the tradition of *Ketuboth* and signing one's name in Hebrew existed as yet another hidden

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1864, American Jewish Archives, small collections 6272, Joseph Solomon to Rebecca Abraham, Charleston S.C., 1857, American Jewish Archives, small collections 5882, J. Joseph Jr. Charleston, American Jewish Archives, small collections 1822, flat file cabinet 5 drawer 14, Alexander Hart to Leonora (Leah) Levy Richmond, V.A. 1866, American Jewish Archives, flat file cabinet 5 drawer 14, Nathan Grossmayer to Sarah Baum Savannah, G.A. 21 January 1855, American Jewish Archives, small collections 4380, Henry S. Henry (Tzvi) to Justina L. Hendricks 15 November 1856, Minis family papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 5 Folder 53, Clavius Phillips to Miss Georgina B. Cohen 17 December 1868, Levy Cohen Phillips papers,Georgia Historical Archives, box 22 folder K Several ***Ketuboth*** also included a secular English contract that did not necessarily translate exactly but did indicate women's property.

[117]It is probably not likely that Jewish women possessed anything beyond a rudimentary understanding of Hebrew--perhaps good enough to recite prayers and follow along with the Torah reading. I am not implying that they were fluent and could translate the Hebrew as Jewish women, generally, were not exposed to Judaic learning. ***Halacha*** only obligated Jewish men to the pursuit of Torah study and prayer.

transcript whereby antebellum southern Jewish women resisted proselytization, assimilation, and the abandonment of Judaism.

Another safe and navigable way that Jews could continue their relationship with Judaism in an era of proselytization was their insistence on a Hebrew burial. According to *Halacha,* burial of Jewish bodies had certain specifications. Jewish bodies were never left unattended, were ritually bathed, and were ensconced in a shroud. In addition, special prayers were recited and bodies were buried in simple wooden boxes, in specifically Jewish burial grounds. Such laws were in keeping with Talmudic ideals regarding honoring the dead, humility, and the belief that certain prayers assured the dead person's ascendance to the *Olam Habah,* or "world to come." *A* survey of southern Jewish cemetery records indicated that many Jewish women requested and received a traditional Jewish burial. A few southern Jewish communities maintained detailed records of those individuals buried in Jewish cemeteries according to the name, date, year, age, sex, and country of origin. The New Orleans Congregation of Dispersed Judah, also known as the Judah Touro synagogue, maintained such lists from 1846 until 1891. Between the years 1846 and 1871, one hundred and thirty-seven women were interred in that cemetery.[118] Historian Herbert Ezekiel amassed early nineteenth-century death records of Richmond Jews in the Hebrew Cemetery. His work estimated that

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[118]Record of Internments for the Congregation of Dispersed Judah, New Orleans, American Jewish Archives

several hundred women were buried there between the years 1816-1871.[119] Even in death, antebellum southern Jewish women continued to defy Protestantization and instead consecrated their faith in Judaism. Jewish cemeteries were private spaces not monitored by Gentiles. Through burial, antebellum southern Jewish women freely evoked their sense of Judaism without evangelical Protestant interference.

Still another safe method where women proclaimed their commitment to Judaism was through continental European travel and visiting Jewish sites. Surveying the travel journals, it would appear that these wealthy young Jewish women were so acculturated and so elite that they had completely dropped any hint of their Jewishness.[120] Yet through descriptions in these young women's diaries, it is clear that they deliberately made side trips into Jewish quarters, visited synagogues, Jewish buildings and even sites where anti-Semitic events took place. They recorded in detail the circumstances surrounding the site or the events. Despite their outward appearance as bourgeois and/or elite southern white girls, they clearly felt their Judaism was an important aspect of their identity. Visiting sites and later recording the visit in their diaries allowed these young women a private space where they could reflect on their Jewishness and explore their

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[119]Herbert Ezekiel, The *Jews of Richmond During the Civil War* (Richmond: Richmond Press, 1915).

[120] For example in the early journal entries, young Isabel Mordecai made little mention of her Jewishness. She identified herself as an elite white woman not as a Jew. It is only after several weeks of daily diary entries that the reader is sure that she was Jewish. See Isabel Mordecai, "Journal," 3 March 1859.

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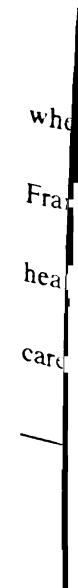

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history. Their tours, for the most part, did not include such sites and it was up to these women to seek out and visit the sites on their own. For example, Isabel Mordecai frequently visited old European synagogues, because of the opportunity to view centuries' old synagogue structures and Jewish practices. She marveled at the ancient architecture and was fascinated by European Jewish rituals. She routinely joined in to pray with the congregation. While in Leghorn, she purposely attended a synagogue service on a Tuesday when she could enjoy prayer and *Torah* services.[121] Though feeling distance between American and European Judaic practices, Mordecai still appreciated the link between her modern Jewish self and these unrecognizable ancient Jewish practices. Impressed by the magnificence of the synagogue's architecture and moved by the Jews continued observance of the separation of the sexes, (*mechitza*) Mordecai penned:

> we first went to see the synagogue, this is a magnificent building with beautiful marbles, it is built so entirely different from ours. The women having seats upstairs (traditional orthodox gender segregated seating).

Mordecai also displayed her interest in Jewish affairs by traveling to those sites where anti-Semitism and violence against Jews was perpetrated. While sightseeing in France, Mordecai visited the St. Sacrements des Miracles. She was shocked when she heard the tour guide relay an anti-Semitic rumor as a matter or truth. In her diary, she carefully recorded the incident:

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[121]Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 22 February 1859.

> In the chapel called St. Sacrements des Miracles are deposited the miraculous wafers; these are said to have been stolen by a Jew, and as they stuck their knives in them jets of blood burst out, and by a second miracle they were struck senseless they were then denounced by a pretended spectator who had been converted to Christianity, they were then seized and put to death by the most cruel torments having their flesh torn off by hot irons before they were burnt at the stake, this is said to have happened at at the end of the fourteenth century, this is celebrated once every year, it having taken place last Sunday.[122]

Mordecai was stunned by the story and was shocked that this rumor had made its way into religious and French history. She expressed dismay that such a sophisticated and intelligent nation not only subscribed to the myth but also celebrated the torture of the Jews.

This incident seemed to strengthen Mordecai's relationship to her Judaism. Thereafter, she purposely sought out other sites of anti-Semitism. While traveling in western Europe, Mordecai learned that a ghetto existed and insisted on taking a long side trip to visit the site. Upon arrival, she recorded shock and disgust at what she saw, describing the ghetto as a "place of filth since the gates were closed and the Jews were not allowed to leave this quarter.[123] Again, Mordecai recognized the ghetto dwellers as fellow Jews but felt no connection to their way of life. Still, her Jewish link to them obligated her to visit and see their circumstances. Mordecai also displayed her fidelity to Judaism by avoiding certain Christian holy sites. Mordecai passed on viewing a piece of

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[122]Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 1858-59.

[123]Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 3 March 1859.

wood rumored to be from Jesus' cross. She and her Jewish travel companion were not interested. Her guide assumed that they were Christians and expressed disbelief at them not begging permission to view the holy relic.[124] These events left an indelible impression on her and seemed to leave her feeling vulnerable, reminding her that despite her wealth, sophistication, and bourgeois education, her religion still marked her as different and always in potential danger. This fear did not encourage the young woman to subvert her Judaism. Her later writings indicate that she continued to proclaim her Jewishness. Such anti-Semitism encouraged a stronger identification with Judaism despite her having the opportunity as a bourgeois young white woman to "pass" as non-Jewish.

Not all Jewish women evoked their religious identity by observing laws or visiting Jewish sites. Some declared their Judaism by using its philosophies as a base for political action. One woman in particular, Ellen Lazarus, was not a devout Jew but believed that the moral code contained within Judaism demanded that she fight capitalism and its deleterious effects. In writing to her uncle to explain her very unfeminine radical activities, she stated that Jewish ethics required that she become politically involved. Privately declaring her devotion to Judaism, she proclaimed: "It is my religion as a

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[124]This is quite curious. As a demonstration of their allegiance to and faith in Judaism, *Halachic* law prohibits Jews from entering churches. Mordecai did enter churches, but she seemed to draw the line at holy relics. Perhaps for Mordecai, viewing relics tacitly accepted their holiness--something she could not bring herself to do. See Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 252.

Jewess, I am especially called to this work which is to bless all the families of the Earth."[125] Judaism's commandments and moral code, to Lazarus, required her to speak out on behalf of destitute families, workers, and women. In this instance, one woman's Jewish identity did not necessarily reveal itself in religious observance, rather, it encouraged her to be socially aware and active. As a result, she moved to Boston and New York, lectured, studied with radicals, joined a free-love liberal collective and wrote several articles that criticized the plight of American workers and women.[126] Though not a religiously observant Jew, she borrowed from Judaism those ideologies that were relevant to her life. She used such laws as a framework for her activism. Because she fought on behalf of women, workers, and the poor, this display of Judaism was entirely acceptable and in some circles acted as a pathway into the political arena. This demonstration of religious identity did not threaten evangelical Protestants because they too were engaged in reforming the conditions of American workers, women, and children.[127] This Jewishness was acceptable, desirable, and quite effective for both

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[125]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 13 December 1847,George Mordecai family papers. It should be noted that eventually Lazarus' subsequent activities, her first and second marriages to Gentile men, encouraged her to work and socialize in Gentile circles. It is unclear whether she actually converted, but she does later in life attend church and places her children in a Christian school for a good education.

[126]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 25 September 1846, George Mordecai family papers. Ellen Lazarus' behavior greatly distressed her family, especially the female members. They feared the "free love" mentality, they felt illicit behavior went on in the brownstone, that adulterous affairs, questionable sexual liaisons went on, and the poor character of her acquaintances of, her new friends, and mentor would encourage unladylike and "unsouthern" behavior.

[127]For more information see Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977).

Lazarus and evangelicals because it furthered the interests of the fundamentalists and did not force Lazarus to abandon her Jewish identity.

The pressure to abandon one's Jewish identity in the proselytizing south was not, unfortunately, restricted to the public sphere. Instead, antebellum southern Jewish women also found that already converted family members worked assiduously to convert them. Certainly influenced by the Second Great Awakening, many southern Jewish women eventually converted and espoused Protestant ideologies. This made some southern Jewish homes religious battle grounds because families voraciously debated theology and fought either for or against conversion. In some instances, this caused southern Jewish women to strengthen their commitment to Judaism. For example, Wilmington native, Eliza Mordecai realized that her elder sister Ellen's invitation to stay with her in 1839 was for proselytization purposes. Believing that her stay with Ellen would be marred by Ellen's constant efforts to convince her to accept Christ and convert, Eliza excused herself from the invitation by blaming her husband's ill health. Still, Ellen was insistent and continued to campaign for her sister's conversion. In a later letter, Ellen enraged Eliza with her suggestion that in her continued misguided faith in Judaism, she failed her religious and spiritual duty. Eliza angrily retorted:

> I have not forgotten my creator" but on the subject of religion, let me commence with my own heart. My feelings are sacred...I never speak of them nor write them but communicate only to him to whom alone they belong...There was a time...when the foolish arrogance of youth led me to live without God in the world as your statement which you so ardently

> wish were mine...I have returned to my long forsaken God and he is again in my world[128]

Eliza's strategy worked. When Eliza forcefully proclaimed her faith, Ellen ceased her missionary campaign. Clearly, Ellen's constant proselytizing forced Eliza to reaffirm her faith. Far from acquiescing to proselytization efforts, this example demonstrates that missionary efforts actually may have encouraged female Jewish identities to crystallize.

Interestingly, even some southern Jewish women who converted, retained a sense of Jewish identity by continuing to observe specific Jewish rituals. As Christians biblically descendant from Jews, these women modified certain Jewish rituals to fit their new Protestant identities. For example, Phila Calder, a converted Jew, remembered enjoying Passover *matzot* sent to her by the Rabbi every season.[129] Additionally Ellen Mordecai, who became a devout Protestant in the 1830s, continued to observe the solemnity of Passover and wrote in 1838, that the Passover "holy days" prevented her from traveling.[130] This evidence, that even converted southern Jewish women continued to find relevance in Jewish ritual, speaks to the tenacity of Jewish identity among southern Jewish women.

Conclusion

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[128]Eliza Mordecai to Ellen Mordecai, 25 August 1839, Mordecai family papers.

[129]Phila Calder, "Phila Calder's Recollections," American Jewish Archives, 11.

[130]Ellen Mordecai to Emma Mordecai, per archivists suggestion, this letter is dated prior to 1838, Mordecai family papers.

Previous scholars have maintained that antebellum southern Jewish women relaxed their religious observance in order to take advantage of social and economic opportunities. This may be true for some women, however, it was not the case for others. The southern antebellum context was not an atmosphere where traditional Judaism could easily coexist with the dominant Protestant religion. Small Jewish populations, religious fundamentalism, anti-Semitism, sectional crises, and a society that operated according to Protestant customs forced antebellum southern Jewish women to be innovative if they wanted to continue to practice their Judaism. Far from rejecting their religion, some women intentionally developed creative ways to commemorate Judaism and the spirit of Jewish holidays. They sought to preserve their religious integrity in a way which would not alienate them from southern society and its daily rhythms. Fundraising efforts to establish and maintain synagogues, hire clergy, purchase religious and ritual items, pay for synagogue dues, and, especially, modifying traditional religious practices to suit the fundamentalist Protestant atmosphere enabled these women to continue to observe their Judaism and retain a sense of ethnic pride. In addition to invoking their Judaism in public and private writings, southern Jewish women also altered their schedules on the Sabbath and other holidays by visiting, refraining from being seen in public, studying, refusing to write, attending services, planning and purchasing ritual foods, or executing Purim balls. In addition, private acts that retained certain ancient practices such as marital contracts, Hebrew names, reminding their children in their correspondence to

observe their Judaism, and using religious signature lines, acted as hidden transcripts whereby southern Jews safely expressed their Judaism and resisted proselytization. Southern Jewish women's trips to European Jewish religious and anti-Semitic spaces also existed as unmonitored and safe sites where southern Jewish women could more forcefully engage their Judaism, study their religious heritage, and understand their present position in society. These modifications preserved the integrity of Judaism in the south and enabled antebellum southern Jewish women to develop and display Jewish identities while not encouraging unwanted attention from proselytizers.

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"BUILDING UP A HOUSE OF ISRAEL IN A LAND OF CHRIST": JEWISH WOMEN IN THE ANTEBELLUM AND CIVIL WAR SOUTH

VOLUME II

By

Jennifer Ann Stollman

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

2001

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Chapter Four:
"The Pen is Mightier than the Sword": Southern Jewish Female Writers Question Anti-Semitism and Promote Domestic Judaism

Strive with earnest, strong endeavor
Though as well to act, to guard.
Aid the weak, the sorrowing comfort,
Loving others, love thy God!
Thus before His awful presence
Let thy great Atonement be,
Mercy's wings shall shield His splendor,
While His peace descends on thee.

"Lines for the Day of Atonement and Ten Penitential Days" by Octavia Harby Moses[1]

When Octavia Harby Moses, a southern Jewish woman, wrote "Lines for the Day of Atonement and Ten Penitential Days" in 1860, she displayed not only a poetic talent but also a central aspect of her identity, her Judaism. Writing allowed Moses to develop and express her own ideas about her faith in Judaism and she was not unique among southern Jewish women writers. Southern Jewish female writers frequently used public and private writings to develop and express their Jewish identities as well as to affect the thoughts of others as they related to Judaism and Jews. American Jewish history scholars, however, have virtually overlooked Jewish women's writings as a way to understand how southern Jewish women developed Jewish identities, questioned anti-Semitism, and promoted religiosity among fellow southerners. This chapter explores

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[1]Octavia Harby Moses, *A Mother's Poems: A Collection of Verses* (Published by her children and grandchildren, 1915), 30-1.

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how through three acceptable forms of female writing; correspondence, composition, and poetry, nineteenth-century southern Jewish women expressed their opinions on national, and international anti-Semitism and encouraged fidelity to Judaism.

The Rise of Nineteenth-Century Female Literacy, Writing, and its Utility

As discussed in the last chapter, the achievement of "effective literacy" was crucial for nineteenth-century women. Their ability to read, write, and express themselves fundamentally influenced the development of American women's agency and their ability to carve out not only individually satisfying lives but also to affect the lives of their families, friends, and other Americans.[2] During the colonial era, most young girls possessed at least the basic skill of reading. The Revolutionary War, the Second Great Awakening, and Republican Motherhood encouraged a more sophisticated level of female literacy. As "republican mothers" and "true women," nineteenth-century women were given important jobs as wives, mothers, and moral educators. These new responsibilities encouraged widespread literacy among middle class white women.

According to literary scholar Catherine Hobbs, at the start of the nineteenth century, the overall illiteracy rate in the North was twenty-five percent, and forty to fifty percent in the South.[3] Remarkably, by 1840, the illiteracy rate dropped to about nine

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[2]For a more detailed explanation, see Catherine Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write* (Charlottesville: University Press, of Virginia, 1995), 1-2.

[3]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 11.

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percent among all adults.[4] This rise in literacy was primarily due to the acceptance of national education and advances in public and private education. Additionally, the expansion of the printing industry and the availability of books specifically increased literacy rates among nineteenth-century middle and upper class white women. According to Hobbs, advanced female education in academies, seminaries and colleges pushed women's literacy to an even more sophisticated level.[5] Within these educational institutions, the shift in writing pedagogy from rhetoric to composition and from oratory to literary print, ultimately encouraged more women to write.[6] Consequently, thousands of "scribbling women" surfaced during the nineteenth century.[7] Hobbs also posited that aside from benefiting from changes in opinions regarding female education and pedagogical practices, nineteenth-century women, through their involvement in educational activities, increased the rates of female literacy. After having attended local common schools, these women frequently taught in them or used monies earned to pay for courses in higher education.[8] Additionally, some of these women opened schools of

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[4]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 11.

[5]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 12.

[6]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 13.

[7]The term "scribbling women" is taken from a statement made by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1855, in which he criticized female sentimental novel writing and charged that this form and the women who wrote novels were single-handedly responsible for the ruin of American literature. Recent feminist scholars have taken issue with this term and appropriated it to signify those women who "refuse to be silenced by critical standards that trivialize the subjects of women's lives, and who write with energy, intelligence, and commitment." For a more detailed explanation, see Elaine Showalter, *Scribbling Women: Short Stories by 19th-Century American Women* (New Brunswickk: Rutgers University Press, 1997), xxxv.

[8]See this dissertation's chapter on education for a more detailed explanation.

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their own. Hobbs concluded that, consequently, "women themselves were primarily responsible for ensuring the continuance and improvements of institutions in which women gained advanced literacy, and teaching itself was often the bootstrap by which they raised themselves into higher literacy."[9]

Aside from formal education, female literacy spread as a result of informal educational networks. Women often achieved literacy through the women's study club movement. Mid-nineteenth-century women worked together to form informal study groups where they would improve their writing, reading, and analytical skills.[10] Begun as study groups, these informal educational networks grew into formal literary societies. Within these clubs, white middle class and upper class women read and discussed "art, music, history, geography, and literature."[11] According to Hobbs, participants' primary goal "usually centered on higher literacy and the refinement of women's abilities to speak and write."[12]

Catherine Hobbs stated that female literacy not only occupied women's leisure time, it also gave them self-esteem and enabled them to expand their "proper" sphere.[13] According to Hobbs, increased female literacy led to "effective literacy"--"meaning a

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[9]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 13.

[10]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 16.

[11]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 16.

[12]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 16-17. Informal study clubs have a long history in America. Anne Hutchinson led the first well-known discussion group. According to Hobbs, female literary clubs spanned the nineteenth century.

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level of literacy that enables the user to act to effect change, in her life, and in society."[14] Literacy politicized many nineteenth-century women and gave them the tool by which to express their opinions and affect the ideas and actions of others. The articles in Hobb's editorial effort on nineteenth-century female writers have proven that increased nineteenth-century middle class white women's literacy rates encouraged American women to be quite comfortable writers, active participants in the antebellum reform movements, and Civil War commentators. Similarly, Nina Baym persuasively argued that in their writing, nineteenth-century female writers could not "imagine the self apart from society" and thus they concentrated on forming a literature concerned with "manners, morals, social class, and social value."[15] To affect these changes, nineteenth-century female writers wrote in a myriad of acceptable writing forms. These included diaries, letters, poetry, speeches, essays, articles, short stories, and novels. [16]

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[13]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 17.

[14]Hobbs ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 1-2

[15]Judith Fetterley ed., *Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 9.

[16]Janet Gray ed. *She Wields a Pen: American Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), xxviii. According to the Gray, nineteenth-century women composed poetry to express their life and labor experiences.

With respect to other forms of writing, Judith Fetterley argued that women did best in writing forms other than the novel because it was the "big" form for nineteenth-century women's fiction. It was the most serious, literary, popular, profitable, and famous writing form. Therefore it received the most interference from male critics, was the most scripted form, and was burdened by "thematic and formal conventions." According to Fetterley, American female novelists were "conceptually totally dependent." Therefore, female writers "who wished to avoid such conceptual dependency or who wished to experiment with artistic form might well have chosen to work in genres less formalized, less pretentious, less predetermined, and, therefore, more open, fluid, and malleable to their uses." See Fetterley ed., *Provisions*, 14-15.

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Joyce Warren posited that though "women dominated the literary scene in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, the twentieth-century canon of nineteenth-century American literature has been predominantly white and male."[17] Warren credits politics and gender bias for this strange phenomenon.[18] Warren suggests that because individualism represented the reigning philosophy of the nineteenth-century, books about individualism (most often written by men) dominated the canon.[19] Warren argued that nineteenth-century female writers tended to not write about the male individual, instead they focused on the "other" members of the community, especially women, and privileged their experiences.[20] To understand the different types of writing genre employed by nineteenth-century female writers, Joyce Warren divided the nineteenth-century female literary canon into five writing styles—seduction, frontier, domestic individualist, domestic community writings, and those writings that question race, class, and gender norms.[21] This chapter argues that southern Jewish female writers predominantly used "domestic" and "questioner"-type literature to question anti-

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[17]Joyce W. Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions Nineteenth-Century Women Writers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 2.

[18] Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 2

[19]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 3.

[20]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 3

[21]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 5. According to Warren: "The works by nineteenth-century American women represent dissenting voices in American literature; they represent the perspective and concerns of persons who were defined as other by the dominant culture." (Warren, 15).

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Nineteenth-Century Female Jewish Writers

Accepting Warren's argument that a nineteenth-century female literary canon existed, literary scholar Diane Lichtenstein argued that scholars must break down the female literary canon even further. In her study *Writing their Nations*, Lichtenstein concluded that a distinct nineteenth-century Jewish female literary canon existed and posited that these women's ethnicity and religion made their writing different from other nineteenth-century female writers.[22] Lichtenstein posited that a Jewish female literary

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[22]See Diane Lichtenstein, ***Writing Their Nations: The Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Women Writers*** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), ix. Diane Lichtenstein suggested that prior literary scholars developed a "metonym" for nineteenth-century female writers. Specifically, scholars' analyses implied that white, middle-class, Christian women's writing spoke for all nineteenth-century women and their motivations for writing represented all white women's motivations.

Lichtenstein suggested that a Jewish female literary tradition emerged when Jewish women, regardless of regional or religious background, recognized a shared religiously based cultural system. In order to create this Jewish literary tradition, Lichtenstein suggested that these women employed the tenets of the cult of true womanhood and replaced Christian influences with Judaic ones. Nineteenth-century Jewish women developed their own writing subjectivities and specific roles through "formal advice, conversations with mothers and grandmothers, and through newspaper articles, rabbi's sermons and male-penned speeches." In their writings, these female writers frequently employed mythological discourses that privileged the superiority of the Jewish family and the fortitude of the Israelite nation. Lichtenstein hypothesized that these female writers helped to create a philosophy for nineteenth-century Jewish women to think, feel, and identify with Jews and an exteriority for non-Jews to identify them. These myths functioned as a sort of "cultural glue," which bound Jews individually and collectively and therefore created a cohesive culture. Finally, Lichtenstein argued that nineteenth-century female Jewish writers also "superimposed the myths of one culture on to those of the other" to improve their societal positions. Lichtenstein believes that it is essential to recognize the importance of nineteenth-century female Jewish writers because they both "form part of the canvas which was nineteenth-century literature, and provide us with vivid examples of how women, Jews, and other outsiders struggled to be seen on that literary canvas." See Lichtenstein, ***Writing Their Nations***, 1-27.

tradition developed when nineteenth-century female writers' used specifically "Jewish, American, and female codes to address their differentness."[23] To demonstrate their American identities, according to Lichtenstein, southern Jewish women tended to use familiar American middle class genres, subject matters, and structures available to female writers. Like other nineteenth-century female writers, Jewish women writers frequently used the True Woman as a literary voice. Lichtenstein posited that Jewish female writers used these conventions because as a doubly marginalized population, as women and as Jews, they needed to use acceptable and easily recognizable literary devices to express

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According to Lichtenstein, literary tradition occurs when "a group of texts which share particular concerns—concerns born of authors' common cultural values, myths, status, and approaches—coalesce into a tradition." Lichenstein argued that a plurality of traditions exists within nineteenth-century Jewish female literature. This dissertation supports her assertion. Lichtenstein demanded the recognition that a female Jewish literary tradition exists because it is incorrect to categorize Jewish female writers elsewhere. Rather than privilege one aspect of their identity, be it gender, nationality, or religion, Lichtenstein argues that identities cannot be separated and are inextricably linked and work together. In other words, an American Jewish female writer is never solely an American, a Jew, or a female in their writing. To prove her point, Lichtenstein suggested that identities coalesce and conflict as women try "to reconcile the conflicting demands of their multiple loyalties." In calling for a Jewish female literary tradition, Lichtenstein advocates a specific creative space or "a sentence of their own." See Lichtenstein, ***Writing Their Nations***, 2-5.

[23]Lichtenstein, ***Writing their Nations***, 5. Similarly Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Derrida, and Henry Louis Gates have all spoken about semiotic codes and the need to recognize how important language is in expressing ones' self and individual experiences. Quoting Bakhtin, Gates wrote: "language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive language." See Lichtenstein, ***Writing their Nations***, 1. Influenced by Derrida in ***Race, Writing, and Difference***, Henry Louis Gates wrote: "we must, I believe, analyze the ways in which writing relates to race, how attitudes toward racial differences generate and structure literary texts by us and about us." See Henry Louis Gates, ***Race, Writing, and Difference*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 15.

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their opinions to a larger audience.[24] To demonstrate their religious identity, Lichtenstein argued that female Jewish writers created a literary tradition by using "sacred texts, ancient wisdom," myth and "combined beliefs and values that individuals use to define themselves within and outside the culture and which others may use to distinguish one culture from another." Lichtenstein suggested that these writers also employed certain well-known literary devices including, the Mother in Israel, and certain Jewish ideals, including the importance of the family in the preservation of Judaism, and the uniqueness of Jews."[25] Finally, Lichtenstein argued that their marginality was the most recognizable theme in American Jewish woman's literary tradition.[26] Lichtenstein suggested that their marginality forced these women to "negotiate among the complex fractions of selfhood:

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[24]Lichtenstein, *Writing their Nations*, 7. According to Lichtenstein, "marginal writers not only represent the larger culture in vivid forms, but they develop a special vision of the dominant culture from their distinctive vantage point on the periphery looking over and in."

[25]Lichtenstein noted that because they were so similar, Jewish myths of women "easily melded into Christian ideals of womanhood in the nineteenth century and that the transition from Jewish to American notions of womanhood was not difficult." The "mother in Israel" "dedicated herself to the well-being of her family and, through the family, the Jewish nation. She was the biblical matriarch transposed into the modern world; religiously committed and capable, she could conquer any task if it benefited the family, parents, children, husband, or the societal temple and Jewish community." She established a safe home which could function as a sanctuary from a world that distrusted Jews." See Lichtenstein, *Writing their Nations*, 28, 240.

Jewish female writers were not the only ones to use the mother in their writing as an effective literary device. In fact, maternal imagery in nineteenth-century writing was quite commonplace. In her book *Conceived by Liberty*, Stephanie A. Smith posited that sanctified motherhood formed the cornerstone for successful writing in the United States during the nineteenth century. Smith wrote that the mother signified utopian perfection, making "mother" a sacred, natural symbol of perfect, reciprocal relations." According to Smith, the mother represented the "moral lynchpin" in society. See Stephanie A. Smith, *Conceived by Liberty: Maternal Figures and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1-3.

[26]Lichtenstein, *Writing their Nations*, 7. Lichtenstein posits that nineteenth-century female Jewish writer were quite conscious of their "doubleness" or their dual loyalties.

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the true womanhood ideal of American middle-class Christian society, the expectations of Jewish womanhood, their identity as Americans, and as Jews."[27] Also according to Lichtenstein, nineteenth-century female authors used their writing to "explore, justify, and demonstrate the premise that dual national loyalties were possible."[28] Perhaps most crucially, these women, aware of their audience, began "to function as translators of ethnicity to ignorant, and sometimes hostile, outsiders."[29]

Both Warren and Lichtenstein provide excellent initial frameworks to explore the writings of nineteenth century southern Jewish female writings. While they are attentive to these women's religious, national, and gender identities, they do not discuss how women's regional location altered their display of identities in their writings or motivations for writing. Many of the women writers addressed by Lichtenstein were southerners, yet she does not factor regionalism into her analysis of their writings. Thus, she implied by her silence that northern and southern female Jewish writers wrote from

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[27]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 19.

[28]Lichtenstein, *Writing their Nations*, 8. In her analysis, Lichtenstein concludes that society forced Jews to choose between the "safe path of secularism" and the more dangerous path that openly pronounced Judaism. She argues that through writing, Jews endeavored to "clear a middle way which would permit them to live as American Jews, celebrating both of their identities." See Lichtenstein, *Writing Their Nations*, 1.

When invoking their American identities, Lichtenstein found that Jewish female writers invoked myths of freedom, tolerance, and opportunity. Lichtenstein posited that these writers did so as a way to assure other Americans that they "understood and appreciated their civil rights and that they were loyal citizens." See Lichtenstein, *Writing Their Nations*, 9. This chapter broadens her analysis and argues that southern female writers invoke such ideals as a strategy to fight anti-Semitism and force non-Jewish Americans to tolerate Jews and their religion.

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similar vantage points. In their analyses, southern scholars like Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Mary Weaks, Carolyn Price, and Michael Price, suggested that there is a difference in the reading and writing styles of southern women and that their regional differences are contained within them.[30] The south with its dominance of patriarchy, white superiority, regionally-specific brand of anti-Semitism, racial hierarchies, enslavement, evangelical Protestantism, home economies, and its philosophies of gender and race surely created a different type of writing style in southern women's and especially Jewish women's writings. For example, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese argued that though southern women's private writings resembled the writings of northern domestic sentimentalists, some

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[29]Diane Lichtenstein, "The Tradition of American Jewish Women Writers" in Warren, *The (Other) American Traditions*, 245-6.

[30]Working to erase the reputation of the southern lady as vapid and less intelligent, southern scholars have endeavored to seriously analyze these women's writings and their effects. In ***Within a Plantation Household***, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese posited, that like northern women, southern women were avid members of the "literate culture." She wrote: Whether through light fiction, religious literature, or the prose, fiction and poetry of their own region and general Western culture, reading helped them to define moral, political, and personal issues. Through reading they extended the implications of their everyday lives and sought models of personal excellence, sources of personal consolation, and standards of social and political good. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, ***Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 242. Similarly according to Michael Price, southern females used their writings as a tool for self-examination and reflection in their personal search for identity in a patriarchal world. Some treasured the opportunity to speak their minds without worrying about the restrictions polite society imposed on a woman's public discourse, but most accepted and wrote within the formal guidelines of what was considered proper for a lady. See Michael E. Price, ***Stories with a Moral: Literature and Society in Nineteenth-Century Georgia*** (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000), 129. Michael Price argued that women kept records of the letters, writings, and journals to leave records for their descendants. This represented "a common way to achieve a measure of immortality in the nineteenth century that also imparted a degree of ideological unity across generations." Additionally, according to Price, personal writings provided southern women with: "A means to measuring their progress against the gender conventions and religious ideals of plantation society and helped them to judge their successes and failures at living according to the dictates of their station in

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differences existed. She noted that by the1850s, northern women writers had forged a literary tradition of their own while southern women had not. Northern women, according to Fox-Genovese, were more authoritative about a "woman's distinct view of the world."[31] Mary Louise Weaks and Carolyn Perry persuasively argued that southern women wrote differently and traditionally wrote about the "plantation system, southern agriculture, slavery and the Civil War and their pervasive repercussions, and wrote in specifically southern dialects and storytelling traditions...bound together in patriarchal families...in gender specific ways."[32] According to Weaks and Perry, northern and southern women viewed themselves as "democratic mothers," as "Eves born into the masses—not into wealth" but, according to Weaks and Perry, southern women exercised their roles differently, as graceful, lovely, sympathetic, protective and loving women.[33] According to the authors, southern female writers replaced the northeastern democratic mother with the young southern belle who was beautiful, statuesque, virtuous, dependent

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life. See Price, *Stories With a Moral*, 129. Price and Fox-Genovese's analyses provide substantial and important insights for analyzing Jewish women's writing as it relates to the expression of Jewish identities.

[31]Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 246.

[32]Mary Louise Weaks and Carolyn Perry eds. *Southern Women's Writings* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), xii-xiii. To date this represents the only text available that surveys southern women's literature from the colonial era to the present.Despite attempts to counteract the myth of the southern lady, however, it was common in the private writings of southern women. According to Weaks and Perry, it was most often used by these writers as a guide, an ideal to aspire to, or as a means to critique the ideology itself. Southern women used their writings to encourage young women "to fashion identities in conformity with the expectation of their near kin and to learn the rudiments of graceful style." Personal writings often included southern women's own reflections about their lives, desires for self-improvement, addressed religious concerns, western traditions, and coming to terms with their roles as women in southern society. See Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 247-9.

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and possessed both good breeding and economic standing.[34] When portraying married or elderly women, southern female writers drew them as sensible, mature, and reserved.[35] Southern society, Judaism, and anti-Semitism contributed to the development of a distinctive early nineteenth-century southern Jewish women's literary style.[36] Through

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[33]Weaks and Perry eds., *Southern Women's Writings*, 3.

[34]Weaks and Perry eds., *Southern Women's Writings*, 3.

[35]Weaks and Perry eds., *Southern Women's Writings*, 4.

[36]Scholars of female private writings argue that literary scholars need to examine women's private writings as serious historical documents and as political acts performed by the writers themselves. Female writings have previously not been taken seriously because according to Joyce W. Warren, "the major criterion for being a "good" writer in America during most of the nineteenth century was that the writer must be a man." See Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 1. Elaine Showalter suggested that during the nineteenth-century, certain types of writing were demeaned. Often categorizing the legitimate masculine and the illegitimate feminine, previous historiography has often derogated female language forms and labeled it as gossip, vapid, and chatter. Consequently, scholars considered those forms where women excelled, such as memoirs, diaries, personal essays, and letters, as somehow subliterary. See Cinthia Gannett, *Gender and the Journal: Diaries and Academic Discourse* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 68, 120.

An interesting body of work examining why women write has developed over the last two decades. Several reasons compel women to privately or publicly record their opinions, emotions, anxieties, and dreams. Central to the writing process is the construction of self, individual subject formation, and the exertion of agency. In their editorial effort, *Women Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest that this process entailed a negotiation between personal desires and communal imperatives. For further explanation, see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson eds. *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 4-5. Similarly, according to Gannett, personal writings represent chimeric sites that "move between dominant and muted discourses between writing and literature, between convention and self-construction." See Gannet, *Gender and the Journal*, xi. Additionally, Elaine Showalter suggested that muted voices existent within diaries (and other personal writings) represent an acceptable medium where women mediated their beliefs and negotiated, subscribed to, or resisted dominant philosophies. Diaries (and other writing forms) "allowed the kind of recursive intellectual dialogue with the self...to develop a voice from which to speak, question and know." (Writing) encouraged a "close observation of and reflection on the physical world, the social world, and the inner world of sense and sensibility." See Gannett, *Gender and the Journal*, 136 and 113. Similarly, Leigh Gilmore echoed these assertions when she added that contained within female private writings is the complex nature of the formation of self. She suggested that women used writing as an effective arena where they constructed multiple and conflicting identities. See Smith and Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory*, 22. Though Watson and Smith primarily addressed autobiographies, and Gannet, Showalter, and Gilmore formulated their arguments regarding reasons for female private writing around diaries, this dissertation posits that these theories may be applied to other forms of female public and private writing.

According to Smith and Watson, female private writings pass through several distinct stages. In the first stage, these models are experiential in nature and privilege certain "female specific" moments in their lifecycle—childhood, adolescence, marriage, and aging. Such models differentiate male and female experience and in many cases establish "a structure of resistance and self-authorization." In the second stage and moving beyond experiential forms, women's autobiography engages in female "dialectical negotiation" with a history of their own representation." In this stage, female writers reveal the "reality of difference." According to Patricia Meyer, it is in this stage that scholars may read women's writings critically and analytically to uncover the "characteristic patterns of self-perception." See Smith and Watson eds., *Women, Autobiography, Theory,* 7-11.

This dissertation employs Foucault's understanding of power, specifically that it emanates from all places and exhibits itself in diverse forms. Like their non-Jewish counterparts, in their writings, antebellum southern Jewish women responded to patriarchy, resisted and defied gendered, class, racial, ethnic and religious assumptions, and empowered themselves. Foucault's conceptualization of power is particularly useful in reexamining Jewish women's writings as exertions of power and agency rather than quaint and "womanly," as American Jewish literary scholars have previously concluded.

Althusser's theory regarding subject formation and politicization is very useful in understanding how and why antebellum southern Jewish women used the acceptable medium of writing to express their political views. He argued that subject formation occurred between the individual and the State. Althusser posited that repressive state apparati (police, military, and judicial system) and ideological state apparati (social services, educational institutions, the family, and cultural formations) act upon the individual and shape ones' own subjectivity. Supporting his theory, antebellum southern Jewish women wrote their writings in concert with and, in resistance to the reigning economic, political, and social philosophies of the United States.

Finally, Katherine Goodman's article on autobiography challenges scholars to re-examine attacks on the legitimacy and the usefulness of autobiography because doing so eliminates an important evidentiary source for studying the experiences of women. Goodman argues that much of the critiques of the genre relate to the study of male autobiography. The author believes that in order to make autobiography a viable and useful source for examining women's lives one must "redefine the categories of the genre" as it relates to women. Most importantly autobiographical scholars must re-examine the female self and situate her within the female experience--often modified by race and class. Additionally, Goodman suggests that even though the self that women create in autobiography is oftentimes a "pretend, instantial, or not an all-inclusive self," she cautions against castigating that self as unreliable. The author also asks autobiographical scholars, to re-explore definitions of female personal experience, women as historical subjects, instantial female subjectivities, interiorities, the development of the female "I," personal discovery, and within this, the language, scripts, and signifiers socially acceptable or available to these women in order to describe their experiences. Goodman asks that in reshaping women's autobiography in this way, scholars avoid "teleological, ontological, harmonious, unified, monolithic, uniirectional, idealistic selves." See Katherine Goodman, *Dis/Closures: Women's Autobiography in Germany Between 1790-1914* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. i-xvii.

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their writing, antebellum southern Jewish women proved their southern loyalty, countered anti-Semitism, promoted tolerance, acceptance and religiosity among Jews.[37]

Southern Jewish Women's Writings

To accomplish their goals of questioning anti-Semitism, promoting tolerance of Jews and religiosity among the Jews, antebellum southern Jewish women utilized two writing styles. "Questioner" literature queried existing philosophies on gender, class, race, and for purposes of this chapter, religion. Domestic writing celebrated domesticity and centered their writings around women, the home, and their responsibilities regarding morally guiding and protecting the community.[38] Though female writers of this genre accepted the general ideals of women as "passive, dependent, and domestic," they demonstrated that these very qualities gave women significance and important influence.[39] Pastoral and sentimental writing styles enabled female writers to assert their power and influence over others and challenge the established order.[40]

As "questioners," nineteenth-century southern Jewish female writers frequently used writing to question "sacrosanct concepts that underlay nineteenth-century American

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[37]In her article, "Literacy as a Tool for Social Action Among Nineteenth-Century African-American Women," Shirley Wilson Logan also examined the ways in which several prominent nineteenth-century black women achieved literacy and used it as a weapon against slavery, discrimination and mob violence in the struggle to achieve full citizenship rights. Literacy allowed women to voice the concerns of black people. She wrote that "literacy was an essential tool of change." See Shirley Wilson Logan, "Literacy as a Tool for Social Action Among Nineteenth-century African-American Women, " in Hobbs, Catherine ed., *Nineteenth-Century Women*, 194.

[38]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 7.

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society."[41] These "questioners" challenged dominant assumptions about nineteenth-century American culture. What distinguishes southern Jewish female writers in this category is the subject matter of their questions. Southern Jewish female writers questioned anti-Semitism and the validity of anti-Semitic characterizations. Age-old stereotypes about Jews coupled with the emergence of the Second Great Awakening and its new anti-Semitic philosophies compelled certain antebellum southern Jewish women to use their writing to contest damaging stereotypes. Anti-Semitic literary characters, laws that barred Jews from full emancipation, and international and national anti-Semitism caused great concern among nineteenth-century southern Jewish women writers.[42] These women understood the potential danger that such characters, laws, and events could have on the current and future local, national, and international Jewish community and they used writing as a political strategy to defend their religion, fight anti-Semitism, and demand equal rights for Jews. Through correspondence, composition, and poetry, certain southern Jewish women publicly questioned and chastised those who knowingly or unknowingly promoted anti-Semitism.[43]

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[40]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 9.

[41]Warren ed., *The (Other) American Traditions*, 12.

[42]For a more detailed explanation about southern Jews' concern about anti-Semitism see this dissertation's chapters on Jews and the Civil War and Jews' relationship to slavery

[43]Mary Louise Weaks and Carolyn Perry argue that correspondence was a distinctly southern form of writing. Southerners used letterbooks and social correspondence to write about southern business and social worlds as well as plantation life. In their words, letter writing "not only recorded historical

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One young southern Jewish woman used correspondence as an effective method to contest anti-Semitism, defend her religion and race, and put forth a more respectable Jewish image. Ultimately, culminating in a twenty-two year correspondence relationship with the well-respected Anglo-Irish educational philosopher Maria Edgeworth, young Rachel Mordecai contacted Edgeworth after being offended by an extremely anti-Semitic character in one of Edgeworth's novels.[44] In the popular fiction *The Absentee* (1812), Edgeworth created an ugly, dishonest, and shady coachman character who happened to share Mordecai's last name. Mordecai revered Edgeworth's pedagogical philosophies and was shocked by the author's unenlightened portrayal of Jews. Mordecai felt that Edgeworth's portrayal was unfair and untrue and was so outraged that she felt compelled to both solicit an explanation from the author and to defend the entire Israelite nation against this unwarranted assault. After praising the author for her previous "justice and liberality," Mordecai confronted Edgeworth on the veracity of such a character portrayal

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events but also revealed the tensions and disparities between women's public and private lives." Weaks and Perry eds., *Southern Women's Writing*, 8.

[44]Maria Edgeworth and her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth wrote the most respected nineteenth-century educational treatise *Practical Education* (1798). During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Edgeworths distinguished themselves as the foremost pedagogues in the western world on children's education. Maria Edgeworth penned the famous *Moral Tales*, known to most children in France, England, and America. Additionally, Maria Edgeworth distinguished herself as a well-respected novelist. Her novels were often sociological and psychological in nature.

Mordecai also corresponded with George Eliot detailing her dismay at her negative portrayal of Jews through her character, Felix Holt. Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, published ten years later endeavored to portray Jews in a more favorable light. See "Biographical Sketch," Calder family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 28.

and suggested that the author had been duped by anti-Semitic stereotypes.[45] Creatively, she expressed her surprise at Edgeworth's logic at portraying a Jew in this manner. Mordecai forcefully asked: "Can it be believed that this race of men are by nature mean, avaricious, and unprincipled? Forbid it, mercy." Linking her development of the productive American Jew to education, Mordecai suggested that where Jews "are oppressed and made continually the subject of scorn and derision they...deserved censure" but, she stressed, the Jews in her family, community, and country did not behave like the unscrupulous coachman found in Edgeworth's novel. Mordecai suggested that circumstance and not blood led Jews and others to be evil and untrustworthy. Mordecai reasoned that Jews and perhaps anybody who was submitted to unintelligent and uncivilized surroundings might become unsavory. To support her argument, Mordecai used her own and other Jews' experiences in the United States to prove that Jews were not essentially evil. She hoped to prove, through her letter, that despite their religious difference, Jews lived virtuous and productive lives. In the United States, she described:

> where religious distinctions are scarcely known,

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[45]Intent on gaining Edgeworth's attention, on August 7, 1815, Mordecai introduced herself through flattery and her familial and educational pedigree from her Warrenton, North Carolina home. She described herself as "a young American lady who had long felt towards Miss Edgeworth those sentiments of respect and admiration which superior talents exerted in the cause of virtue and morality never fail to excite." Before arriving at the letter's intent, Mordecai devoted much of her letter to commenting on and complementing each of the father and daughter's tandem philosophical treatises. Quoted in Edgar E. MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 3.

> where character and talents are all sufficient to attain advancement, we find the Jews to form a respectable part of the community. They are in most instances liberally educated, many following in the honourable professions of the Law, and Physick with credit and ability and associating with the best society our country affords.[46]

According to Mordecai's argument, in the intelligent and civilized United States, Jews, despite their religion, pursued respectable avocations and demonstrated themselves to be quite capable in their labors. Despite the obvious existence of anti-Semitism, Mordecai stated that Jews were respected and accepted.

To further support her argument, Mordecai offered herself and her family as representative of modern enlightened Jews. In response to a request by Edgeworth to provide more information about her background, Mordecai defended Jews and Judaism by portraying herself as a typical Jewish woman from a typical Jewish family that had successfully assimilated. Creating a portrait of Jewish productivity and respectability, Mordecai scrupulously avoided mentioning the existence of anti-Semitism or exclusion, (although it surely existed) and, instead, presented a perfect picture of complete tolerance and acceptance of Jews in the United States. She hoped that her description proved: "the

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[46]In a later letter, dated 28 October 1817, Rachel qualified this statement. She wrote: "I say in this country, tho' I acknowledge myself but imperfectly acquainted with the opinions entertained in some parts of it. So far as regards some of the Southern States, I speak with confidence. The Northern might, I think, be included; the Eastern are perhaps somewhat less liberal, but of this, I am not certain." Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 15.

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estimation in which persons of our persuasion are held in this country."[47] In relating her experiences in a Jewish family in America, she defended her heritage and explained to Edgeworth that her Jewishness and that of her family's did not, in fact, lead to a diseased morality. Employing sentimental language, she carefully constructed a respectable family history narrative that Edgeworth could relate to, save the fact that the family was Jewish. In providing short biographies of herself, her father, and stepmother, Mordecai described the family's involvement in providing female education, a subject that Mordecai knew was quite dear to the Edgeworths. Mordecai praised her stepmother, who taught her "patience, perseverance, and cheerfulness in the school of adversity."[48] She also described her own involvement in her younger sister, Eliza's, formal instruction in etiquette and classical education and stressed that Eliza was schooled according to Edgeworthian pedagogical philosophies.[49]

Her description of a southern Jewish family closely mirrored domestic perfection--a hardworking patriarch who sacrificed much to provide his daughters with a solid education, a loving and strict stepmother, and a responsible devoted daughter and sister. By describing her father as a revered scholar, headmaster, and respected businessman

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[47]Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 11. She also included the fact that her father had been the commissioner of peace in Warrenton for more than twenty years.

[48]Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 10.

[49] MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 11-12. Describing Eliza's progress, Mordecai wrote: "She possesses an excellent disposition and a degree of intelligence which, while it delights, often causes

while bragging about her own economic and educational background, Mordecai appealed to Edgeworth's bourgeois sense of class. Through this portrait, Mordecai countered Edgeworth's subtle implications that Jews were clannish, unethical, and unscrupulous. Mordecai informed the author that in her hometown, despite being the only Jewish family, the Mordecai family had successfully assimilated and bonded with non-Jews.[50] Through a description of her family, Mordecai politely, but effectively, countered Edgeworth's anti-Semitic literary stereotypes and suggested that the author rethink her Jewish character portrayals. Replacing Edgeworth's negative construct with positive role models, Mordecai suggested that the author had fallen victim to stereotypes and implied that this mistake caused an injustice to herself and to her readers. Her letter gently insinuated that Edgeworth's description revealed the author's own ignorance.

Mordecai received two responses from her first two letters, one from the author's father and one from the author herself. Mortified at the charges of anti-Semitic, Richard Lovell Edgeworth voraciously defended himself and his daughter by announcing that they always strove to practice balance and judiciousness in their own lives, in their writings, and in their counseling of others. Much chagrinned, Richard Edgeworth also

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me to sigh, at my incapacity to cultivate it as it deserves. I seek by fixing your principles and precepts in my mind and making them as far as I can my guides."

[50]Mordecai described her upbringing as being the only Jewish family for miles around. Subsequently, all her juvenile friendships and attachments were formed with those children of different persuasions from her own. Because of their American setting and its philosophies, she argued that she and her friends had been trained to look upon religious variations as a matter of course--differences which take place in every society. See MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 6.

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apologized for the offense and assured Mordecai that his daughter would make amends immediately in a forthcoming novel.[51]

Mordecai did, in fact, cause Maria Edgeworth to reconsider her conceptualization of Jews but in Mordecai's mind, Edgeworth did not go far enough. In her first letter, Edgeworth promised that she had rectified the situation in her upcoming novel and asked for a forwarding address from Mordecai in order to mail her a copy. After reading the new novel, Mordecai again found herself disappointed at the promised reconstruction of the Jew in what would become Maria Edgeworth's best-selling novel, *Harrington*. True to her word, the author portrayed the novel's main heroine, Berenice, as a virtuous and religious Jewish woman. In fact, the author modeled her character after many of Mordecai's letters and projected many of Mordecai's thoughts and expressions onto Berenice. Though Mordecai was quite satisfied with the character construction of Berenice's father, Rachel was unhappy to discover at the end of the novel that Berenice's mother was not Jewish, and, consequently, according to Jewish law, Berenice was not Jewish.[52] Though she believed that Edgeworth did this so that both the hero and heroine could be reunited at the novel's conclusion, without the complications and implications of intermarriage, Mordecai suggested that this plot device had a much more detrimental

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[51] Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 7.

[52] According to Mordecai, "The portrait of Mr. Montenero is rendered the more gratifying by its contrast with even the very few of those Israelites who have, in fictitious writings, been represented as estimable." Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 15.

effect. Making Berenice a Christian severed the novel's established links between Jewishness, respectability, and virtuousness. Mordecai felt that the ending implied that Berenice's goodness essentially existed because she was really a Christian. Again, Mordecai felt compelled to question Edgeworth's character portrayal and her implication that only Christians could truly be good and virtuous. As an antidote, Mordecai suggested that deep religious conviction, regardless of faith, determined a person's worth. In a letter to Edgeworth, she wrote:

> ...provided the heart is sincere in its adoration, the conduct governed by justice, benevolence, and morality, the modes of faith and forms of worship are immaterial; all equally acceptable to that Almighty Being, who looks down on all his creatures with an eye of mercy and forgiveness.[53]

Angrily, Mordecai questioned Edgeworth's intelligence and judiciousness. In an acerbic tone, Mordecai wrote that she expected that a woman as intelligent as Edgeworth would be more enlightened and sophisticated in her opinions of people who maintained different religious beliefs. Further chastising the author, Mordecai suggested that such a moral philosopher might examine and question her own character flaws rather than spending time philosophizing or judging those of others. Finally, the young southerner advised Edgeworth to take a lesson from herself and all Jews, who "regard our own faith as sacred, but we respect that of others, and believe it equally capable of conducting them to

[53]Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 16.

the Throne of Grace." [54] Contesting anti-Semitism with Maria Edgeworth proved to be a life-long endeavor. For over twenty-two years, Edgeworth and Mordecai exchanged queries and discussed a range of topics, including Jews and Judaism. Mordecai continued to confront Edgeworth when she included anti-Semitic characters in her writings and while the end result was not always satisfying to Mordecai, Mordecai's letters did cause Edgeworth to ponder her long held assumptions regarding Jews.

In another example of southern Jewish women using their literary skills to question anti-Semitism, Charleston native Penina Moise, frequently published poetry in local, regional secular, and Jewish newspapers in a campaign to question and, subsequently, eradicate anti-Semitism. [55] In 1823, at the age of twenty-three, Moise

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[54]Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 16. Edgeworth skirted Mordecai's questions and criticisms directly because her father died in the interim. When she resumed her correspondence, Maria defended herself and claimed that perhaps Jews failed to receive *Harrington* as it was intended. She neglected to further explain. Edgeworth further deflected criticism by implying that Jews themselves were responsible for presenting positive literary examples of Jews.

The author requested Mordecai forward a female Jewish authored book, knowing full well that such an American example did not exist. In a letter from Maria Edgeworth dated 15 January, 1823, she cited the Jewish New Yorker Mr. Noah's travelogue detailing his experiences in England, France, Spain and the Barbary States. She explained to Rachel "It is besides peculiarly valuable to me as at once proof of Jewish ability and of Jewish gratitude." She requested that Mordecai send any demonstration of Jewish female's ability in the form of a book or needlework. Mordecai responded in a letter dated 20 December 1823, that most women in America did not write. She explained that especially in the southern states, a lack of support of female education and domestic and family duties prevented mental cultivation.

[55]The Charleston Jewish community provided a stimulating intellectual atmosphere and supportive environment that encouraged Jewish and other literary efforts. In 1830, Penina Moise began publishing her poetry. The young poet submitted her verse to the local *Charleston Courier* and to other national periodicals including *The Boston Daily Times*, the *New Orleans Commercial Times*, and the *Washington Union*. She also composed poetry for other widely circulated journals such as *Godey's Ladies Book* and the *Home Journal of New York*. See Edwards et al. *Notable American Women*,559. In 1833, Moise published a volume of secular poems titled *Fancy's Sketch Book*. The poetry in this volume addressed historical events, political issues, social commentary, contained romantic, sentimental, and

submitted the poem, "To Persecuted Foreigners," to the *Southern Patriot*. She wrote the poem to describe her dissatisfaction with and to confront American anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant sentiment. Fiercely patriotic, Moise was annoyed that a purportedly democratic and ideologically tolerant nation, like the United States, harbored xenophobic feelings. Wielding treasured and well-known American philosophies of liberty, freedom, union, and reason, Moise guided her readers in a rethinking of their anti-Semitic feelings and suggested that they betrayed their most deeply held beliefs by subscribing to anti-Jewish sentiment. In the first stanza, Moise penned:

> Fly from the soil whose desolating creed,
> Outraging Faith, makes human victims bleed
> Welcome! Where every Muse has reared a shrine,

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classical themes, emotional issues, and non-denominational religious issues. The poet employed classical mythological allegories, sophisticated allusions, biblical analogies, and was adept at elevated and whimsical style, prose, rhyme, and meter. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Moise distinguished herself as the first American Jewish woman to achieve any fame in the field of American literature.

Much of the material written about Penina Moise has been celebratory and rather uncritical. Historians have used her as an ideal example of a nineteenth-century Jewish woman. Their historical descriptions seem more polemical instead of analytical. Readers are left with a solid understanding of nineteenth-century American Jewish female prescriptive behaviors rather than an assessment of Moise's specific life experiences and her reasons for writing. Instead, American Jewish historians and literary scholars posit that like most southern women of the genteel class, Moise led a sheltered life and one devoid of worldly experience. Summarizing her life experience through her writing, they concluded that Moise confined her experiences to her domestic circle, the school, the hospital, and the "bed of suffering." See Briebart, "Penina Moise,"36. Assessments of her writing are vapid. Reviews of her work include reductive adjectives like "delightful" and "fanciful." Though scholars acknowledged that serious problems concerned Moise, they maintained that much of her work reflected the limitations placed upon female writers of the period. In order for her to publish, they argued, Moise had "to be feminine, to rhapsodize over the beauties of nature and orthodox religion, and to avoid social and moral problems." To make such assessments of her poetry, scholars focused on those poems that dealt with chivalry, protection of the weak, valor in battle, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and others that supported traditional assumptions about nineteenth-century American women's writing. This benign portrayal of Moise's writing obscures scholarly understanding concerning the concerted efforts made by her to effect change through her compositions. Moise spoke forcefully about her southern Jewish identity.

The respect of wild Freedom to refine.[56]

Employing one of the basic credos of the United States, Moise patriotically reminded her readers that freedom of religion was a basic and prized right for all Americans. Fleeing from countries that shed the blood of dissident religious populations, this basic right allowed and even encouraged members of different religions to immigrate to the United States. Perhaps quelling initial fears of American citizens when faced with new religions and their foreign customs, she suggested that freedom ultimately would appropriately refine their customs. To emphasize her point, she wrote in the second stanza: "Upon OUR Chieftain's brow no crown appear." Distinguishing the United States from England, she emphasized that no King's decree appointed a specific national religion, and stressed that religion was a personal matter, and its freedom to practice one's religion was a fundamental American right. Additionally, Moise deliberately used the word "our" to include herself and all other Americans, Christians or not, as people who had the right to their own religious practice. Asserting that right reminded her readers of their responsibility to extend that freedom to other Americans regardless of how different the religion was. In writing this poem, Moise openly questioned American hypocrisy at not extending religious freedom to all of its citizens.

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[56]Penina Moise, "To Persecuted Foreigners" in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise*, 177.

Writing this particular poem against the backdrop of the newly forming democratic republic and amidst the evangelical tenor of the Second Great Awakening, Moise reminded her readers to control their religious zeal with reason. In the third stanza she wrote

> Zeal is not blind in this our temp'rate soil;
> She has no scourge to make the soul recoil,
> Her darkness vanished when our stars did flash;
> Her red arm, grasped by Reason, dropt the lash.[57]

Moise suggested that her readers use that other important American philosophy, Lockean reason, to temper their evangelical feelings. Employing popular female sentimental language, Moise cleverly used allegorical zeal and reason and set them in an ideological wrestling match. Moise suggested that Reason ultimately triumphed over Zeal but reason did not necessarily devastate zeal. Rather Zeal, according to Moise, and should exist but only under Reason's control. Within this stanza, Moise clearly aimed her pen at would-be proselytizers, who were seeking to reform or convert Jews, other non-Christians, and Catholics. Within this poem, Moise demanded that her readers uphold their responsibilities as Americans, who should be reasonable, democratic, and religious citizens, by tolerating both immigrants and religious dissidents.[58]

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[57]Moise, "To Persecuted Foreigners," 177.

[58]Moise frequently addressed national and international anti-Semitism in her poetry. In her "Lines on the Persecution of the Jews of Damascus," Moise expressed her angry feelings regarding the violence directed at Jews in Damascus after a Christian cleric was murdered and public opinion immediately indicted the Jews. Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 271.

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Works, 212.

Moise also frequently questioned international anti-Semitism through her poetry. Upon reading that the Parliamentary "Jew Bill," which would extend political and economic rights to British Jews, had been defeated, Moise expressed her anger through poetry. In her poem "The Rejection of the Jew Bill by the House of Lords," Moise was clever in how she both denounced British anti-Semitism and manipulated her American readers into rejecting anti-Jewishness by playing upon their desires to distinguish themselves from Britain. She accomplished this by simultaneously employing several different well-known British and American discourses and by framing her poem through a series of questions designed to encourage the British to rethink its actions. Initially, Moise tapped into British propriety and civility. Chastising the House of Lords, Moise wrote:

> why against Folly point satiric swords?
> Rise scornful Muse and sing the House of Lords!
> Let bigot pride your boldest stroke cleave...[59]

And then further on in the poem;

> who could have dreamed a faggot yet would blaze,
> Far more unquenchable than zealots raise,
> Felled from the highest branches of a tree,
> Rooted within the soil of Liberty?
> Spotless are not the records of old Spain!
> For Acts of Faith leave not so deep a stain,
> Nor structures based on erring superstition,
> As this Aristocratic Inquisition.[60]

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[59]Moise, "The Rejection of the Jew Bill by the House of Lords," in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 212.

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Initially Moise demanded that the House of Lords, as a civilized governmental body, uphold its responsibility to fight against bigotry and pride and confront the failure represented by the defeated "Jew Bill." Next, she remarked that it was not religious zealotry, as was often the case in British political life that was responsible for the defeat of the "Jew Bill," but overall political sentiment. In a highly critical remark, Moise argued that British defeat of the "Jew Bill" was far worse than the Spanish Inquisition's torture and expulsion of its Jews for Spain was driven by religious zealotry and "superstition." According to Moise, Britain had committed its crime because of aristocratic greed, which to Moise was a more egregious sin. To further emphasize her point, throughout the remainder of her poem Moise battered the parliamentary decision by stating that Britain had failed its civilizing mission. By stating that Britain had neglected to uphold its prized philosophies of "mercy," "liberty," "justice," "virtue," "glory," "honor," "freedom," and "emancipation," Moise stressed that it had failed its supreme mission of judicial government. In addition to utilizing lofty philosophies to drive her point home, she also employed a gendered framework. Using sentimental and maternal discourse and playing the morally superior mother, Moise effectively redressed

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[60]Moise, "The Rejection of the Jew Bill by the House of Lords," in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 212.

Britain for its behavior. The intended aim of this chastisement was to encourage Parliament to rethink its anti-Jewish policy.[61]

Moise recognized, however, that her American audience might also not understand how British Parliament's defeating of the "Jew Bill" compromised their own national democratic goals. Hoping to arouse support from other Americans, Moise used another subtle, but apparent subtext, in addition to discourses of civility and republicanism. Writing in 1823, Moise recognized that the United States was insecure about her victory against the British. American scholars have generally acknowledged that the United States set up its political, economical, and social systems against that of Britain's.[62] Americans believed that they would succeed where the British had failed by perfecting the republican and democratic experiment. In her poem, Moise cleverly played upon American anxieties and aspirations and provided the young country with another venue to best its parent. She hoped that in challenging the British and pointing out where the British had failed in their undemocratic anti-Jewish bill, American citizens would reject any formal legislation that prevented Jews from achieving full political,

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[61]This concept of manipulating discourse to force a dominant population to address their contradictory ideologies and behavior is derived directly from Gail Bederman's article "The White Man's Civilization on Trial: Ida B. Wells, Representations of Lynching, and Northern Middle-Class Manhood" in her book ***Manliness and Civilizations: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 45-6. In this article, Bederman explores how Ida B. Wells used ideologies of manhood to undermine racism against African-Americans. Additionally, Wells also effectively chastised lynching by charging that Americans were being uncivilized in allowing lynchings to happen.

social, and economic equality. Through intense questioning, Moise aimed to encourage Americans to question whether they materially practice their philosophical beliefs.

Southern Jewish female writers also used other literary forms to question existing ideas about Jews. Jewish Confederate hospital matron Phoebe Pember Yates composed a short story designed to decrease anxieties about Jews and encourage tolerance of Judaism. Against a wave of anti-Semitic popular literary types, Yates created a moral Jewish hero. In her short story "Miss Magdalena Peanuts" submitted to the *Atlantic Monthly*, Yates fashioned a story about a young Christian girl and her terminally ill mother. Recognizing that she was going to die, her mother feverishly pondered on whom should take care of her daughter Lizzie after her death. Finally, the mother made an unusual and, for some of the other characters in the story, an unthinkable choice--she arranged for a Jewish druggist to adopt and rear her daughter. Word of her decision spread through the various religious communities within the city. Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, and Catholic clergy raced to the woman's deathbed to question what they believed to be her poor choice and to seek custody of this child in order to prevent a *Jew* from raising a Christian child. The mother refused all clergy requests. Even the Jewish pharmacist was amazed at this woman's decision because he did not know this woman well or why she would want a Jew to raise her Christian child. During a visit, the

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[62]For the best example see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967).

Jewish man kindly resisted her wishes and questioned her decision. The mother cited the druggist's moral character and stressed that she felt that he would allow Lizzie to make her own religious choices. Furthermore, the mother stated that she feared the religious zealotry of the other Christian individuals would indoctrinate her daughter and prevent her from exercising any free will. In this sense, Yates echoed Moise's sentiment that the right of religious freedom should prevail in America and not religious zealotry. In mapping religious zealousness onto existing and prominent Christian religions, Yates encouraged her readers to question whether religious freedom really did exist in the country and whether her readers were upholding that right. The Jew in this story is humble, modest, and, above all, rational.[63] It was the Christian clergy, according to Pember's characterization, that was irrational and in need of reminding of their duties as American citizens to uphold fundamental secular American philosophies.

Domestic writers represent the second type of nineteenth-century southern female Jewish writers discussed in this chapter. Though these southern Jewish women writers used similar techniques of questioning as an effective strategy to encourage change, they wrote from an authoritative domestic standpoint to encourage a growth in the religiosity among American Jews. As domestic writers, these women celebrated women, the home, and privileged women's abilities to bring about moral change within their families and

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[63]Phoebe Yates Pember, "Miss Magdalena Peanuts," Phoebe Yates Pember papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, folder 5.

communities. These writings promoted Judaism in the context of the Second Great Awakening environment and emphasized devotion to Judaism, the empowering nature of religious belief, and women's unique abilities and responsibilities to promote and maintain Jewish religiosity. Like other domestic writers described by Joyce Warren, southern Jewish female writers hoped to challenge the established order, in this case the trend toward a dissolution of Judaic practice and a growing detachment from Judaism among southern Jews.[64] Such writings emphasized the importance of the Jewish community and individual's responsibility to support it.

Poetry was the most popular writing genre for southern female domestic writers who desired to address problems within the southern Jewish community. Both religious hymns and secular poetry aimed to promote Judaism and encourage adherence to Jewish ritual. In their writings, these Jewish women poets suggested that continued fidelity to Judaism not only upheld their responsibilities as Jews but was also a means to garner the respect of non-Jewish religious individuals. During the Second Great Awakening, faith was extremely important as a measure of one's character. Southern female poets clearly felt that religious Jews countered images of Jews as avaricious and unscrupulous.

In addition to writing "questioner" type poetry, Penina Moise frequently used the domestic literary paradigm to promote a strong American Jewish population dedicated to Jewish practice. Moise's greatest achievement, in this vein, was when the founder of the

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[64]Joyce Warren, *The (Other) American Traditions*, 9.

Reformed Society of the Israelites, Isaac Harby, commissioned her in 1843, to compose the newly formed sect's hymnal. Consequently, Moise composed 165 out of 210 hymns in the first American Reform Jewish hymnal.[65] Dedicated to both the celebration of Judaism and desiring to encourage communal and individual fidelity to Judaism, the poet divided the hymnal into nine sections. These included consecration hymns, hymns on the relationship between God and man, duties toward God, duties toward oneself, duties toward others, daily prayers, festival prayers, confirmation, and school hymns. Separately and collectively, the hymns were designed to promote a continued faith in Judaism in the midst of a highly evangelical Protestant south.

In these hymns, Moise frequently assumed an authoritative maternal voice. Accepting women's unique moral superiority, Moise's hymn "Number 40" spoke directly to the pressures of intense proselytizing, national and international anti-Semitism, and the need for Jews' continued fidelity to Judaism. In the third stanza Moise wrote:

> Resolving the path of duty to tread,
> Though our fondest wish this may frustrate;
> Never by temptation's voice to be led,
> The sacred laws of God to violate:
> Faith only nerves the soul
> To this great self-control.
> To live harmoniously with all mankind,
> With favors our hurts to requite[66]

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[65]By the second edition published in 1851, the hymnal contained 190 hymns composed by Penina Moise. See Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 39.

[66]Moise, "Hymn 40" in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*," 40.

And in the next stanza:

> Undazzled by gold, by menace unmoved,
> One sole Supreme Being to cherish;
> To be firm in the faith our fathers loved
> Though for this as martyrs we perish[67]

Assuming an authoritative maternal voice, Moise instructed her congregants on the dangers and temptations facing Jews living in the secular American world and advised them on how best to fight outside onslaughts designed to shake Jews' faith. The poet advised congregants to remain on the path of righteousness, to not be strayed by proselytizing voices, and to uphold fundamental Jewish laws. Encouraging congregants to harvest feminine traits of repression, self-control, and denial, Moise demanded that Jews continue to be firm in the faith that Jewish ancestors had sacrificed their lives for centuries before. Additionally, Moise's hymn helped create what Benedict Anderson termed an "imagined community."[68] Collective recitation of Moise's hymns assisted in the development of a Jewish community in a space where Jews forcefully recognized their distinct ethnicity. The hymn's performance served as a strategic tool whereby the Jewish community constructed and strengthened themselves against conversion or castigation campaigns while simultaneously forging themselves into a unified body.[69]

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[67]Moise, "Hymn 40" in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*," 40.

[68]See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

[69]The daily recitation of hymns allowed individual congregants to renew their faith in a personal and spiritual way. Repetition of Moise's words accompanied by music and body movements, transported

Moise also wrote secular poems designed to increase Jewish religiosity. Again assuming a superior motherly voice, in "Thoughts on the Ten Days," she chastised southern Jews for their lack of religious conviction, their lapse in the performance of their religious duties, and their materialism. In keeping with assumptions about female moral superiority, Moise naturally maintained an objective and virtuous position. She admonished Jews and questioned whether the ten days of penitence between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* were adequate for Jews to absolve themselves of the sins of the past year. She wrote "Oh! Can these periodic tithes of time, suffice to expiate whole years of crime?"[70] Moise also accused Jews of straying from their responsibilities during the ten-day period. Instead of self-reflection and self-actualization, she charged Jews with using the period only to achieve absolution. Rather than use the period as a strategy to absolve themselves of past sins, Moise urged her Jewish readers to use the ten days as a time to refocus on their Jewishness. According to Moise, their efforts would both benefit Jews as individuals and as a community. Aside from spiritual fulfillment, Moise

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the person praying into an alternative private performative space where Jews reaffirmed their religious choices and performed a Jewish identity. Recitation of Moise's hymns did more than help Jews achieve spiritual satisfaction. The performance of hymns provided one of the few outlets available to individual Jews to display their religious identities.

When hymns were sung during congregational services, a different, but no less powerful, communal Jewish identity was created and performed. Congregational performance of Moise's hymns served as a galvanizing mechanism for Jews in the face of religious, political, and social adversity. Surrounded by other Jews, the congregant existed as both a performer and an audience member. As a congregational "body" and as individuals, they constructed, performed, and observed the spectacle of a collective religious identity formation. Congregants chanting words and swaying in unison, created a unifying experience.

posited that Jews' improved moral behavior might decrease anti-Semitism. She wrote: "then prejudice its rancor would resign...fierce malice then from falsehood would desist... shallow pretension would its pride forego ill and dignity and true essence learn."[71]

Another Jewish female Charlestonian native, Octavia Harby Moses, also wrote domestic style poetry to encourage fellow southern Jews to re-engage their Judaism. Positioning herself as a spiritual, moral guide, and, in Lichtenstein's words, a "mother of Israel," she suggested that despite Jews' inclination to decrease their focus on Judaism, in the context of an evangelical Protestant setting, Jews should return to Judaism and traditional practices. Rather than focus on achieving material or social goals, Moses argued that Jews would derive more satisfaction in their daily lives if they oriented themselves around their religion. Mapping domestic imagery onto traditional Jewish female responsibilities of "building a house of Israel," Moses attempted, through her poems, to strengthen the Jewish community through a revival of Judaism.[72]

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[70]Moise, "Thoughts on the Ten Days" in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 285-7.

[71]Moise, "Thoughts on the Ten Days," in Elzas, *Secular and Religious Works*, 285-7. Clearly, like Rachel Mordecai Lazarus did in Petersburg, Moise is castigating those southern Jews who have already abandoned their religious obligations by not observing the solemnity of the holy days. Both Moise and Lazarus demonstrate the intra-Jewish tensions that existed as southern Jews internally wrestled over the relevance of or how best to practice Judaism in the American context. Additionally, Moise's quote reveals the existence of anti-Semitism in the south and the poet's feelings that a more orthodox observance of Judaism might reduce anti-Semitism. This poem must be situated in the context of the Second Great Awakening whereby in some southern circles fervent adherence to religion acquired the respect of others.

[72]It is also possible to read Moses stanza as a political statement made by the Jewish community echoing southern Christian society's notions about the dangers of materialism.

Systematically, Moise made her argument through a moral voice in "Lines for the Day of Atonement and Ten Penitential Days:"

> Dost though walk abroad in daylight
> Lifting up thy head in high
> ...Dost thou scan thy brother's frailties
> Seeking for each hidden sin
> ...At the thing thou hast not been.
> Tremble! For thy footsteps falter
> On the brink of sin's dark wave
> 'Whelmed beneath its surging water,
> Thy vain soul shall find its grave.
> But with swift and even motion,
> Another year has passed around,
> One more day of grace is granted,
> ...Search the chambers of thy heart,
> Pluck from out its dark recesses,
> Every thought where sins has part.
> Learn to screen thy neighbor's feelings,
> With the gentle hand of love.[73]

Like Moise, Moses counseled Jews to use the ten penitential days to examine their own faults of the past year. In a "let he who walks without sin cast the first stone" tone, Moise advised her Jewish readers to practice self-reflection.[74] Like other nineteenth-century women writers assuming a maternal voice, Moses was clearly comfortable in assuming an authoritative position chastising Jews for their misguided behavior and was

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[73]Octavia Harby Moses, "Lines for the Day of Atonement and Ten Penitential Days" in *A Mother's Verses*, 31.

[74]Moses employed the Orthodox practice of self-reflection during the period of *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* in concert with Second Great Awakening concepts of sin and grace to encourage Jewish religiosity. One can read this quote as a Christianizing of Judaism to make Judaism more relevant to

equally at ease in counseling them on the right path toward Jewish righteousness. Employing acceptable sentimental language often found within domestic literature, Moses effectively and gently criticized the existing norms within the Jewish individual and community. Using her moral superiority as a nineteenth-century southern and traditional Jewish female, readers tacitly acceptance her spiritual guidance.

Other "scribbling southern Jewish women" did not formally publish their poetry like Moise and Moses but still used composition as a venue to express their own faith in Judaism and the Israelite God and to encourage the development of the same sentiment in their fellow Jews. Though composition books were not formally published, they were frequently passed around, while friends read and committed their own thoughts to the books. Thus, though the circle of readers exposed was small, composition books served as a vehicle through which women's private writings received a larger audience.

Miriam Gratz Moses wrote her thoughts in an elaborate leather-bound composition book. In one particular poem, the amateur poet tried to rekindle faith in Judaism by composing an historical overview of Jewish biblical ancestors and the ancient Jewish historical experience. In doing so, Moses hoped that she and others might be inspired to become more observant. Accepting her role as a morally superior and spiritual guide, Moses felt quite comfortable leading her readers on an historical journey

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southern Jews who were arguably more inundated with Christian philosophies in their daily lives, given that they lived in a Christian environment.

through the Jewish exodus experience. In this untitled poem, Moses traced the inception of man, Jews in slavery, God's giving the word at Mount Sinai, and, finally, the importance of continued faith in God. She wrote:

> Faith came at first in Purity from heavn...
> Upon Creation's glorious day:
> A bright effulgent spark to darkness givn
> To light man grovling on his way.
>
> ...This spark celestial, warm'd the man of God
> Extreme afflictions to endure:
> Preferring Judah's bondage and the Rod
> To Egypt's richest gifts and lore
>
> Its light the bright prophetick vision shew'd!
> The burning bush his eyes regard.
> And as with kindling joy his nature glow'd
> Rejoic'd to see his sure Reward.
>
> Warm'd by its gentle beams, the drooping soul
> On God, through Faith, alone relies!
> Through it alone, our passion, we control
> Through it, alone man, Death Defies...[75]

Operating from a spiritually superior position, as bestowed on all elite white nineteenth-century white women, Moses employed lofty language readily accessible to herself and readers. Moses counseled Jews that even though they were faced with political, economic, and social circumstances that made Judaism inconvenient, they should remember their ancestral experiences in Egypt, with Moses, and God's benevolence

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[75]Miriam Gratz Moses, "Untitled," Commonplace Book 1824-1828, Miriam Gratz Moses papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

towards the Israelite nation. From such a vantage point, Miriam Gratz Moses reminded other Jews of their "chosen" status and its inherent responsibilities. In the face of increased proselytization, anti-Semitism, or the general lure of materialism, Moses reminded southern Jews that they were still responsible for fulfilling the convenant made between God and the Israelite nation. Modernity, she argued, did not dissipate Jewish responsibility.

Domestic literature privileging women's morally authoritative position coupled with biblical analogies were frequent themes in the poetry found in Moses' composition book. Several of her poems likened American Jews' marginalized existence to the experiences of Jewish prophets like Abel, Noah, and Moses.[76] Like southern Jews, such biblical characters were commanded to perform certain duties as testimonials of their faith in the Israelite God amidst an environment of intolerance and skepticism. Demonstrating her knowledge of the Bible, Moses purposely used recognizable heroic biblical figures to remind her readers of their responsibilities as Jews. To make the poem even more relevant to her readers, Moses chose biblical figures that repeatedly questioned the validity of God's existence, power, and importance. Rather than creating poems like Moise or Octavia Harby Moses that chastised fellow Jews for their lack of observance, Moses' poems encouraged readers to understand that even the greatest Jewish heroes strayed in their Jewish beliefs by revealing how the Israelite God allowed

and even encouraged them to return to their faith. Through such poetry, Moses gently guided Jews back towards a re-engagement of their Judaism.

Jewish female poets used verse to express their belief that Judaism encouraged strength and success in its adherents in the face of loneliness and loss. Octavia Harby Moses, in particular, advocated active faith in Judaism as an effective antidote to Jewish loneliness. To do so, Moses favored Sabbath-themed poems whereby she relied on Judaism to comfort her during the absence of her husband and family. In "To My Absent Children" Moses penned:

> Today, the Sabbath day, I sit alone,
> Profoundest quiet falls on all I see,
> Far from my side my little ones have roamed,
> And God and Nature dwell alone with me.[77]

During intense periods of loneliness, the poet clearly relied upon her Judaism as a source of comfort. In writing this poem, she not only relieved her own loneliness but also hoped to demonstrate to her children the importance of Judaism as a source of comfort and strength. Moses also marked other important moments in her life by invoking the importance of Judaism and faith in God in her poetry, writing that no celebration was without homage to or no trial was overcome without the power of God and faith in Judaism. For example in celebration of her daughter's marriage, Moses gave her

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[76]Moses, Commonplace Book.

[77]Octavia Harby Moses. "To My Absent Children" in *A Mother's Verses*," 33.

daughter a bible with an inscription that advised her to rely on Judaism throughout her life. She wrote:

> When youth and grace have fled.
> Clothed in religion's lovely garb, afflictions form shall gave
> The softened aspect angel's hear, who wound us but to save,
> Many and rich thy bridal gifts, but turn these pages o'er.
> And thou shalt gather gems that earth can boast not in her store,
> When friends are cold, and gifts are gone, their steady radiance given,
> With brightened lustre still shall shine and point the way.[78]

Moses reminded her daughter that only Judaism would provide her with guidance, companionship, and consolation.

Other southern Jewish women frequently invoked Judaism, in much the same way that Moses did, as a source of strength and consolation. On the death of her daughter's son, Grace Seixas Nathan, a Charleston native, invoked Judaism in a poem as a means to console her distraught daughter. Nathan composed a poem about a frostbitten geranium as a metaphor for the death of her grandchild on January 19, 1810. She had raised her grandson from birth and was overwrought that he had died. Despite her sadness, Nathan took great comfort in knowing that her grandson was with God and hoped that her daughter might also find solace knowing this. Nathan wrote:

> I had a bud so very sweet—its fragrance reached the skies.
> The angels joined in holy league—and seized it as their prize.
> They bore it to their realms of bliss—where it will ever bloom,
> For in the bosom of their God they placed my rich perfume.[79]

According to Nathan, faith and the knowledge that God had collected her son would assuage her daughter's sadness. Like Moses, Nathan hoped to influence her daughter and future readers regarding the importance in faith in God as it related to daily experiences.

Similarly, Mrs. S. J. Cohen composed several poems for her daughter as a source of consolation regarding her daughter's tragic loss of her son. Titled "To My Daughter Ellen, on the Death of her First Born Son," she transcribed her feelings about her daughter's loss and the depression that she had sunken into. Again through the acceptable medium of sentimental poetry and spirituality, Cohen believed that a renewed faith in Judaism could guide her daughter out of the depression and encourage her to get out of her bed and back into her normal routine. Cohen wrote:

> ...But now a Mother's heart is rife
> And now with wasting form she lies
> In closely darken'd room,
> And friends press round most anxiously,
> Watching with silent gloom.
>
> ...Her cherished views, her earthly hopes,
> Have vanished, and are lost
> But hope's bright star doth buoy her up!
> By Faith in God we see
> Enshrined within a spirit gem,

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[78]Moses, "To My Daughter on Her Marriage Day with the Gift of a Bible," in *A Mother's Verses*, 32.

[79]Grace Seixas Nathan, "Written on a Geranium Plant Which a Severe Frost Blasted," January 1810, Jacob Rader Marcus' *Jews in the American World: A Sourcebook*: (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 117.

Calmly resign'd to thee![80]

For Cohen, like Nathan and Moses, only faith in God could ease the distress that her daughter felt because of her loss. Domestic poetry which invoked the importance of Judaism encouraged their intended readers to more actively rely on Judaism during trying times. Echoing their nineteenth-century Christian female writers, Moses, Nathan and Cohen tried, through poetry, to promote a re-engagement and reliance on Judaism for strength.

Conclusion

Using "questioner" and "domestic" literary paradigms, nineteenth-century southern Jewish female writers created their own distinctive literary canon. Faced with regional differences, including slavery, fundamentalist Protestantism, intense proselytization, and different concepts of appropriate gender roles, these female writers melded traditional discourses about Jewish and American womanhood to counter literary and legislated anti-Semitism, fundamentalist assaults, lazy Jewish observance, and to promote Judaic religiosity and practice among American Jews. Through their published and private poetry, compositions, and letters, antebellum southern Jewish women used writing as an effective method to strengthen Jewish identities in the south as well as promote tolerance of Jews nationally and internationally.

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[80]Mrs. S. J. Cohen, "To My Daughter Ellen, on the Death of her First Born Son," in *Memoirs of My Life*, Holly Springs, Mississippi September 9, 1859, 158.

Chapter Five:
"Relationships in Bondage": Antebellum Southern Jewish Women and their Relationships with Enslaved African Americans

After the defeat of the south, plantation mistress Margaret Mordecai Devereux decided to write about her memories of slavery and the plantation system in a series of essays later published in 1906 as *Plantation Sketches*. Devereux fondly remembered the familial nature between plantation family members and enslaved black laborers. Central to her essays was the importance of the black Mammy whom she privileged with a daguerreotype on the inset of the front cover of her book. The Mammy represented the epitome of a family member in Devereux's plantation memories. She was loyal, maternal, a trusted confidante, a source of family memories and lineage, a fierce protector of her white charges, and well-respected by other enslaved plantation laborers. Each essay in Devereux's text was a solid defense of slavery where slaves enjoyed a bountiful life and willingly entered into economic and familial partnerships with whites. In Devereux's first essay, she described slaves living on her husband's plantation, Runiroi. Using pastoral language, Devereux claimed that slaves' enjoyed a "piazza" in the front and, in the back, a garden "which was cultivated or allowed to run wild according to the thrift of the residents," filled with peach and apple trees, and concluded that the quarters were as "pretty as a picture."[1] Of slaves' homes, Devereux created a homey and healthy portrait. Slaves quarters she claimed, were, thanks in part to a little assistance from white

women, clean. Devereux wrote: "Floors were clean, the beds comfortable with white and wonderfully clean blankets...everything was homey...and thoroughly clean."[2]

Aside from describing the positively pastoral life supposedly enjoyed by slaves, Devereux used the essays in *Plantation Sketches*, to defend the slave system not as something that benefited whites, but rather, as a labor system that really helped African Americans. The slave labor system, by their rationale, accorded slaves certain benefits that free laborers did not receive. According to Devereux's themes, unlike other poor working classes, slavery removed poverty as a real threat and afforded slaves clothing and shelter "whether they earned it or not." Aside from very comfortable living arrangements, Devereux suggested that slaves also enjoyed a very nutritionally rich diet. According to her, servants were given and grew sweet potatoes, were regularly furnished with cornmeal, bacon, or pickled pork, various meats, salt fish, molasses, dried peas, and pumpkins. Devereux pronounced "I don't suppose any laboring classes ever lived in such plenty."[3] In addition to bountiful meats, fruits, and vegetables, she claimed that she and her husband always provided any woman with children with the use of a cow, "a good cow, a Holstein or Devon" to bolster their nutrition.[4]

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[1]Margaret Mordecai Devereux, *Plantation Sketches* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1906), 25.

[2]Devereux, *Plantation Sketches*, 35.

[3]Devereux, *Plantation Sketches*, 30.

[4]Devereux, *Plantation Sketches*, 30.

Upon reading *Plantation Sketches*, one might assume that Margaret Mordecai Devereux's description reads like any other plantation mistress' nostalgia for the way of life that slavery afforded. However, Devereux was Jewish and, as such, her Judaism separated her from other Protestant white plantation mistresses. Southern Jewish women's reactions towards the institution of slavery were complex and contradictory. Existing in a society that often marginalized Jews, was unsure of Jews' racial status, and was increasingly anti-Semitic, Margaret Mordecai Devereux's pro-slavery tracts had a different meaning because she was Jewish.

Historiography on Jews and Slavery

Getting at the relationship between antebellum southern Jews and African Americans in the context of southern slavery has been particularly difficult for historians, particularly since the publication, in 1991, of the Nation of Islam's *The Secret Relationship between Black and Jews*.[5] In *The Secret Relationship*, the Nation of Islam's historical department argued that a southern Jewish conspiracy existed and that Jews overwhelmingly and systematically endeavored to enslave Africans and profit from their labor and pain. Cleverly, the research department omitted and twisted facts to present Jews as the controllers and masterminds of the African slave trade. Because of the factual inaccuracies and, more importantly, the explosive nature of the anti-Semitic

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[5]Nation of Islam Historical Research Department, *The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews* (Chicago: The Nation of Islam, 1991).

charges, this book created an upheaval in the American Jewish community and encouraged several Jewish historians to undertake a careful examination of the charges.

Saul Friedman's recent endeavor, *Jews and the American Slave Trade*, directly responds to and refutes claims made by the Nation of Islam's historical research department that indict Jews as conspirators in black annihilation. Responding to those assertions that credited Jews as being the chief perpetrators of the "Black Holocaust," masterminds of the slave trade, and brutal and exploitative in their relationships with African Americans, Friedman read through hundreds of documents to discover that Jews were remarkably absent as a group in the slave trade. Only passing references were made to Jewish families who owned or traded slaves. Point by point, Friedman refuted each of the Nation of Islam's charges.[6]

In his book *Jews and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight*, Eli Faber also argues against charges that Jews were the predominant actors in the African slave trade. In his analysis, Faber focuses on the British Empire and assesses the extent of Jewish participation in the institution, investment in slavery, their role as owners of slave ships, and the commercial activity of Jewish slave auctioneers. His research concludes that Jews were minimally involved in the trafficking and ownership of African-American

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[6]See Saul Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

slaves.[7] In interpreting Jews' minimal participation in slavery scholars, like Hasia Diner, in her text *A Time for Gathering*, read Jews' moderate economic investments in slaves as indicative of their disdain for the institution. Different from Friedman, Diner concluded that biblical mythology, western marginalization, a legacy of persecution, and Jewish exceptionalism, forced Jews to confront their own philosophies concerning freedom and equality. Saul Friedman, Hasia Diner, Eli Faber, and other scholars' research has proven that though Jews owned slaves, they were not the principal actors in the perpetuation of and profiting from slavery.[8]

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[7]See Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[8]Charting actual Jewish ownership of slaves is difficult but some credible numbers do exist. In 1790, Jacob Rader Marcus stated that in Richmond, there were thirty adult Jewish males. In a population of one thousand slaves, Jews owned ten slaves. Therefore, they owned .9 percent of Richmond's slaves. See Saul Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 156-7). According to the federal census of 1820 in Richmond, there were twenty-five Jewish slaveholding households with eighty-eight slaves. Two free African Americans lived in these homes. See Rufus Learsi, *The Jewish Experience in America* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1969), 19A-B. In 1820, Ira Rosenwaike argued that thirty-seven of forty-nine Jewish families in Richmond, Norfolk, and Petersburg owned one hundred and forty-nine slaves. In 1830, twenty-eight Richmond and twenty-four peripheral Jewish households in Virginia held eighty-three and thirty-eight slaves, respectively. Based on projections, its is estimated in 1840, that Jews probably owned no more than six hundred slaves or four percent of the city's slaves. See Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade*, 135, 156-7,185. Malcolm Stern investigated the 1790 manuscript census returns for South Carolina and found that there were seventy-three Jewish heads of households. Thirty-four of them held one hundred and fifty-one slaves. See Bertram Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South" *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* xiii, no. 1 (April 1962): 16. James Hagy discovered that in Charleston in 1790, there were seventy-three households headed by Jews. Thirty-four households owned one hundred and fifty-one slaves, less than one percent of the states' total population. See Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade*, 156-7. In 1820, Rufus Learsi found that in Charleston, there were ninety-two slaveholding households which held four hundred and eighty-one slaves. In addition, there were eleven free African-American persons in these households. See Learsi, *The Jewish Experience*, 19A-B. In 1830, one hundred and four Jewish households owned four hundred and twenty slaves, or three percent of the slaves in Charleston. In 1850, Hagy listed fifty-one individuals who owned two hundred and eighty-eight slaves or two percent of the slave population. See Friedman, *Jews and the American Slave Trade*, 156-7. In 1820, in Savannah, Georgia, there were

Historians have, of course, recognized that Jews in the south did own slaves, but, unfortunately, they have argued that southern Jews' responses and motivations mirrored other southerners'. The founder of American Jewish history, Jacob Rader Marcus, wrote several articles on Jews and slavery and persuasively argued that southern Jews accepted slavery for the same reasons that their Protestant counterparts did.[9] Quoting Bertram Korn, Robert Weisbord and Arthur Stein concluded that Jews were not different than Gentiles in their treatment of African Americans and that they participated in "every aspect and process of the exploitation of defenseless blacks."[10] As Devereux's text makes

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seventeen slaveholding households with one hundred and sixteen slaves. There were seven free people living in the homes. See Learsi, *The Jewish Experience in America*, 19A-B. According to Mark Greenberg's research, by 1860 approximately forty percent of Savannah Jewish households contained slaves and twenty-six percent of the homes had white servants. See Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah Georgia, 1830-1880" (Ph. D. diss., University of Florida, 1997). In 1830, in New Orleans, twenty-two Jews were identified in the census. Ten of them owned seventy-five slaves. In New Orleans in 1820, there were only six identifiable Jewish heads of households. Together they owned twenty-three slaves. In New Orleans in 1840, there were fifty-five identifiable Jewish slaveowners and they owned three hundred and forty-eight slaves. In 1850, Mobile's census listed seventy-two Jewish heads of household with ninety slaves. Jacob Rader Marcus has estimated that perhaps one fourth of all southern Jewish adults were slaveholders. See Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South," 25-26.

[9] Southern Jews relied on their regional loyalties rather than some abstract sympathy towards slaves based on their own Exodus experiences. Marcus often read Jewish communal silence as tacit approval. Yet, silence can be read in a myriad of ways. True, silence could be interpreted as approval but it could also be the result of a community unsure of its own position in society. Publicly supporting or criticizing slavery could potentially have threatened Jews' own security. The southern Jewish community only spoke out on slavery on the eve of the Civil War and even then, Jewish reverends delivered guarded sermons regarding slavery. They echoed the southern position for states' rights and lambasted northern federal intervention, but hesitated just short of issuing support for paternalistic philosophies or those philosophies that demonized or infantilized African Americans. See Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jew: 1585-1990, A History* (New York: Carlson, 1995) and *United States Jewry: 1776-1985, Volume 1* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

[10] Robert G. Weisbord and Arthur Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter: The Afro-American and the American Jew* (Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 20.

clear, Southern Jewish women did echo Gentile pro-slavery ideologies, including a belief in paternalism and slavery, but scholars still need to expand their understanding of how southern Jewish women responded to and operated under the slave system and how being Jewish may have affected their responses.

To comprehensively understand Jews' relationship to slavery, one must first understand the context under which Jews lived in the south. As argued elsewhere in this dissertation, southern evangelical Protestant society viewed Jews as different, suspicious, and threatening.[11] Because of their religious difference, southern society frequently questioned Jews' racial status. Centrally, this chapter argues that because of religious differences, Jews' racial ambiguity contributed to why southern Jews, and specifically women, used the slaveholding household as the central place to demonstrate and reinforce their whiteness. Accepting Leonard Dinnerstein's conclusion that since slavery existed as the "chief distinguishing characteristic of the South and, therefore, the test of the true southerner was [their] acceptance of the institution," this chapter argues that the Jewish slaveholding household represented the only place in the south where Jews' race

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[11]In his book *Anti-Semitism in America*, Leonard Dinnerstein concludes that southern Jews grew up in an environment where the majority of the population considered them different. Jews combated southern white Protestant anxieties by "always watching themselves and never engaging in activities that might antagonize members of the dominant society." Furthermore, Dinnerstein argued that the "almost total acculturation of Jews in the South allowed them to maintain a facile cordiality with Gentiles, even though just beneath the surface lay a bed of prejudice ever ready to label Jews as Christkillers and Shylocks." For more information on this see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), "Anti-Semitism and Jewish Anxieties in the South (1865-1980s) and specifically, pg. 177.

went unquestioned. Consequently, in the household southern Jewish women reassured themselves of their whiteness by rigidly subscribing to popular white notions regarding slavery and enslaved African-Americans thereby securing themselves as white within the south's rigid racial hierarchy.[12]

Southern Jews thought that slavery was *the* issue that might promote Jewish acceptance and tolerance in southern white society and would help shed their non-white and outsider status. They recognized that in order to assimilate it was mandatory that they prove their whiteness. To protect themselves physically, stabilize their own tenuous status, and, ultimately achieve psychological and social parity, southern Jews accepted the institution of slavery, its racist ideologies, and its hierarchies.[13] Southern Jewish women understood that they gained in status and security by the mere presence of a racial underclass and worked hard to do their part in preserving slavery. Only by assuming the "white" position and aligning themselves with prevailing southern white racist social and

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[12]See Leonard Dinnerstein, "A Neglected Aspect of Southern Jewish History," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 52-68.

[13]Bertram Korn found that Jews' need to be accepted as equals motivated them to accept slavery. Korn, quoted in Weisbord and Stein in *Bittersweet Encounter*, argued: "By copying the example set by Gentile slave masters," Jews gained southern society's approval. Southern Jews understood that in order to "achieve a psychological and social parity" they would have to accept slavery and its racist ideologies. It was during this moment in time that tensions between the two minorities emerge. Korn directly linked Jews' success in American society to the degradation of African Americans. He wrote "Thus their accommodation to a new and potentially uncomfortable milieu was accomplished at the expense of the black man. Though not specifically employing whiteness as a theoretical framework, Korn recognized that enslaved African Americans: "acted as an escape valve in Southern society. The Jews gained in status and security from the very presence of this large mass of defenseless victims who were compelled to absorb all of the prejudices which might otherwise have been expressed more frequently in anti-Jewish sentiment." See Weisbord and Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter*, 22.

economic systems could antebellum and Civil War Jews effectively secure their own status in a society that regularly viewed them as alternatively black and white, or sometimes simply racialized their Jewish religion. [14]

The Ambiguous Racial Status of Southern Jews and the Benefits of Whiteness

Central to the uniqueness of their relationship to African Americans was southern Jews' own racial ambiguity. The recent popular usage of race as a tool for historical analysis has encouraged American Jewish scholars to examine the racialization of Jews during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [15] Many American Jewish scholars

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[14]Several recent studies address racial formation and the process of becoming white. Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States* is pivotal to understanding why racial formations develop. Though Omi and Winant's analysis addresses the last four decades of the twentieth century, it is quite useful. See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Ronald Takaki also explores racial domination during the nineteenth century. Using Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, Takaki analyzes how cultural "reality" was created and diffused through racist ideologies. According to Takaki and using the metaphors of republican, corporate, and industrial "iron cages," specific political, social, and economic developments occurred as a result of racial formations and were modified by racial domination and oppression. See Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in the Nineteenth-Century Americ*a (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[15] There has been much discussion regarding the racial ambiguity of Jews. Present Jewish scholars prefer to locate the emergence of the discussion regarding Jews and race after the 1880's Eastern European immigration. Sander Gilman's book, *The Jew's Body* explores vacillating racial designations of Jew at the turn of the twentieth century. See Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991). Similarly, Leonard Rogoff's article "Is the Jew White? The Racial Place of the Southern Jew" examines the changing racial definitions of Jews in the south during the nineteenth century. Rogoff asserted that mid-century a "new scientific historicism opened Hebrew origins to debate. Jews were described variously as purely Caucasian Semites, dark Egyptians, ruddy Edomites, black Cushites, and mixed-blood Chaldaeans." Claiming Jews represented a "litmus test" for race, Rogoff's work suggests that Jews and non-Jews endeavored to fight subtle claims that Jews were non-white. His work reveals that southern Jews' racial status was tenuous and reflected their status in society. In other words, when they were accepted, southern Jews were viewed as Caucasian, when they were not, during periods like the Second Great Awakening, the Civil War and the rise of scientific racialism, southern society darkened them. Rogoff's work reveals that Jews in the south never possessed a fixed racial identity. See Leonard

have briefly alluded to the fact that antebellum whites were often confused when they tried to racially locate Jews. For example, in his article, "Is the Jew White," Leonard Rogoff concluded, "Jews were a racial tabula rasa upon which anything could be

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Rogoff, "Is the Jew White? The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85, no. 3: 197.

In his article "That Other Peculiar Institution," Abraham Peck has discovered one instance where southern Jews attempted to imitate and therefore assert their whiteness. Southern Jews imitated antebellum southerners' creation of their own *Sonderweg* or special course. Initially, southerners were made up of hard working "horse trading farmers." After they had established themselves as plantation owners, they decided to "create a new social and economic status for themselves, a status that would elevate them above the lowly origins they had left behind." Thus, southern plantation owners created a "race of gentlemen" and convinced themselves that they were descendants of a "superior race emanating from England." They named themselves "Anglo-Normans." Peck argued that the myth arose because these nineteenth-century "nouveau riches" were scared of the "rugged excesses of their own individualism and that of the entire south's." Fearing a breakdown of southern society and propelled by their own quest for power and status, the Revolution's abolishment of birth status, power, and meritocracy led writers like George Fitzhugh to reassert the theory that "each individual remained locked into the station to which that individual was born." Essentially the south re-instituted feudalism. Jews entered the south at the very beginning of the establishment of feudalism in the south. According to Peck, they were a "highly vulnerable group" and thus strove for a position within the southern myth. Recognizing the benefits of a *Sonderweg*, southern Jews developed their own myth that linked heritage, elite status, and financial success. American southern Jews claimed they descended from Sephardim, a Spanish aristocratic population whose ideologies and superiority mirrored southern elite plantation aristocratic mores. Though very few could actually claim Sephardic heritage, they hoped this aristocratic claim would encourage gentile society to accept them as whites and allow them full political, religious, and economic rights. See Abraham J. Peck, "That Other "Peculiar Institution": Jews and Judaism in the Nineteenth Century South," *Modern Judaism 7, no.1 (1987)*: 100-02.

In her recent study of Jews and whiteness, Karen Brodkin Sachs concluded that "Jews' unwhitening and whitening were not of their own making. Rather, their movement from one racial category to another was effected by changes in national economic, institutional, and political practices, as well as by changes in scientific and public discourses about race in general and Jews in particular." According to her findings, Jews' entrance into higher education and professions and their moving to the suburbs--both facilitated by government legislation--enabled Jews to establish themselves as white. See her article "How Did Jews Become White Folks" in Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek eds., *Race* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 78-102 or her full-length study, ***How Jews Became White Folks & What that Says About Race in America*** (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

Unlike the aforementioned works, Eric Goldstein's article demonstrates how late nineteenth-century Jews used a racial self-definition to galvanize Jews in a time when the familiar markers of Jewishness were eroding due to Jews' desires to Americanize. See Eric Goldstein, "Different Blood Flows in our Veins: Race and Self-Definition in late Nineteenth-Century America" *American Jewish History* 85 (March 1997): 29-55.

written."[16] He discovered that some southerners described Jews as black, mixed, mongrelized, non-white, mulattos, or degenerate.[17] His article and Sander Gilman's research on Jewish bodies has shown that during the first half of the nineteenth century, a folklore developed casting Jews as "dark and ugly" solidified.[18] In distinguishing favorable and non-favorable Jews, southerners designated the latter as "black Jews."[19] Ascribing blackness to Jews in this way hampered their economic, social, and political acceptance. Simultaneously, a small cadre of theorists who proposed that Jews were white also existed. Relying on Scripture, several Americans classified Jews as Semitic or the purest of Caucasians. Relying on biblical mythology, they reasoned that Jews could not be black because they descended from Noah's son Shem while African Americans descended from his other son Ham. For example, in a symposium in Charleston in 1850, racial propagandist Josiah Nott presented a paper titled, "An Examination of the Physical History of the Jews in Its Bearings on the Question of the Unity of the Races." In his

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[16]Rogoff,"Is the Jew White?" 195.

[17]Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?" 196.

[18]Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?" 196 and Sander Gilman, "The Jewish Nose: Are the Jews White? Or, the History of the Nose Job in *The Jew's Body*, 169-93. Founding father, John Adams regularly manipulated the discourse equating Jews and Africans for his own political aims. For example, in attempting to thwart the first Jewish senator's political ambitions and clout, he accused David Yulee of having a "dash of African blood in him." Employing the discourse in such a way practically assured that Yulee's policies and voice would not be heard in the Senate. Additionally, during the Civil War, he again employed racial discourse to disparage Confederate official Judah Benjamin and labeled him the "dark prince." Ruining Benjamin's political persona and power by associating his Jewishness with blackness placed other Jews' racial classification under scrutiny. By heaping the dual anti-Semitic and racist discourses upon Jews, Adams effectively prevented southern Jewish equality because the southern racial hierarchy in general prevented those of African descent from assimilation.

paper, Nott supported the theory of Jews as Caucasians and to lend credence to his hypothesis, used pseudo-science, specifically craniometry and scriptural testimony, to confirm that Jews were Caucasian.[20] Still sometimes through obituaries, southerners often placed Jews in their own separate racial category, the Israelite race. Being Jewish in southern society accrued no visible benefits and, in fact, due to anti-Semitism, often was a liability, and, conversely, being white possessed tremendous economic and social benefits, southern Jewish women preferred to consider themselves as white and consequently lived their private lives accordingly.

Nineteenth-century scholars recognized that whiteness conferred benefits.[21] W.E.B. Du Bois, for instance, surmised that whites, specifically laborers, possessed certain privileges not extended to non-whites.[22] Consequently, Du Bois argued that

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[19]Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?" 207.

[20]Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?" 198- 200. Coincidentally or not, Nott presented his paper in the city that housed the largest American southern Jewish population. The emergence of new ideologies that linked success and equality with whiteness excluded Jews whom southern society considered at times non-white. For example, one such ideology, manifest destiny, was inextricably linked to whiteness. Because of their non-white status, Jews could not participate in manifest destiny, a central component of Americanness. Two excellent studies examine America's attempt to solidify racial categories in America. See Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: the Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: 1981 and William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815-1859* (Chicago: 1960).

[21]Much controversy over the term whiteness has emerged over the last few years. Though I do not wish to enter the debate about the veracity of the paradigm or even the term, this dissertation makes use of its most basic tenet, that being white affords certain privileges in western societies.

[22]David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), 12. In this Marxist discussion, W.E.B. Du Bois specifically addressed black and white laborers. Steven Hahn and Stephanie McCurry's recent analyses on poor whites reveal that because their experiences closely mirrored those of poor and enslaved African Americans, this population relied on slavery and racist ideologies as a way to distinguish themselves from African Americans. Racial

whites "embrace, adopt, and murderously act upon those ideas."[23] The privileges extended to white laborers were not merely economic, rather, being white, according to Du Bois, provided whites with "public and psychological wages."[24] Historians have, of late, begun to investigate the phenomenon that Du Bois identified. For example, David Roediger argued whiteness conferred material and psychological benefits.[25] Further delving into the privileges of whiteness, feminist scholar Ruth Frankenberg refined the definition of whiteness. For Frankenberg, whiteness exists as a location of structural advantage or position of privilege where white people analyze themselves, others, and society, develop a set of cultural practices, create power structures, and, consequently, order society."[26] Thus, according to Frankenberg, "race privilege translates directly into

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superiority conferred a psychological wage that prevented poor whites from aligning with poor blacks and revolting against the plantation aristocracy. See Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[23]Ibid.

[24]Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 12.

[25]Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness.*

[26]Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1 and 6. According to Frankenberg, "naming whiteness displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its domination." Whiteness directly owes its existence to the development of the larger paradigm that distinguished between Western Empire and Other societies. Succinctly stated by Ruth Frankenberg, the process of colonization "occasioned the reformulation of European selves." While westerners believed themselves to be stable or white selves, in fact, their contact with Others refashioned their own identities. Colonial legacy has left the western self thinking of itself as autonomous, white, unmarked, and dominating whereas the racial or cultural other is marked and dominated. In their research, feminist scholars have recognized that the western self was never stable and that it was always in co-production with the Other. Centrally, their research has proven that white women were actively engaged in stabilizing the dominant western self to suit their own aims. For Frankenberg, racism "is not merely an option for white people—that, rather,

forms of social organization that shapes daily life."[27] Early nineteenth-century southern Jews recognized that a racially-based economic and social system existed in the south and obviously preferred to be considered white in order to receive the rights and privileges that whiteness bestowed.

Southern Jews did their best to racially distinguish themselves from African-Americans and swiftly dealt with anyone who would dare to draw parallels between the Israelites' bondage experience and African-Americans. In several editorials, southern Jews differentiated their experience from and justified the bondage of African Americans by citing differences between Jews and blacks. In an article published in a Jewish newspaper in 1863, one defender of slavery wrote: "We know not how to speak in the same breath of the Negro and the Israelite. The very names have startling opposite sounds--one representing all that is debased and inferior in the hopeless barbarity and heathenism of six thousand years; the other, the days when Jehovah conferred on our fathers the glorious equality which led the Eternal to converse with them, and allow them to enjoy the communion of angels. Thus, the abandoned fanatics insult the choice of God

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racism shapes white people's lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from (others)." See Frankenberg, ***White Women, Race Matters***, 6.

[27]Frankenberg, ***White Women, Race Matters***, 11. Frankenberg briefly alludes to Jews as having "at different times and from varying political standpoints, been viewed as both "white" and "nonwhite." Similarly, but with an attention to blackness, Evelyn Brooks Higganbotham's article "The Metalanguage of Race" explores the construction and technologies of race and how it acts as a metalanguage because of its "all-encompassing effect on the construction and representation of other social and power relations, namely, gender, class, and sexuality." See Evelyn Brooks Higganbotham, "African-American Women's

himself in endeavoring to reverse the inferiority which He stamped on the African to make him compare even in bondage to His chosen people. These is no parallel between such races...The judicious in all the earth agree that to proclaim the African equal to the surrounding races would be a farce which would lead the civilized conservatives of the world to denounce this outrage." [28] In this manner, southern Jews distanced themselves from the black race, and if southerners were not ready to fully accept them as part of the white race, hopefully moved themselves closer to being white. Still editorial attempts like this did not completely convince white southerners that Jews were white.

White Women's Relationship to Whiteness

As scholars in other contexts have argued, women, no less than men, utilized discourses on white racial superiority to expand or solidify their social roles and public power and vehemently supported white systems of domination.[29] Like their European

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History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17 no. 2 (1992): 252.

[28]See Bertram Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Marietta: R Bemis Publishing, 1995), 20.

[29]In *Beyond the Pale*, Vron Ware was among the first of the feminist scholars to indict western female activists with respect to their relationship to the colonial project. Ware's work on both nineteenth-century white American and British activist women demonstrates that these women supported the Empire and fully subscribed to imperialist and racist ideologies. Ware's brilliant study demonstrates how the construction of white femininity played a pivotal role in negotiating and maintaining the British Empire's concepts of racial and cultural difference. See Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (New York: Verso, 1992). Echoing her sentiment, Catherine Hall's study, *White, Male, and Middle Class* explores how British women's involvement in Empire helped "organiz(e) ideas of "race" and "civilization." See Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 21. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock demonstrates within the British colonial context, the "intimate relations between imperial power and resistance; money and sexuality; race and gender." In her exploration, she argues that the cult of domesticity, and men and women's roles within

counterparts, American white women did this by merging the discourse on white supremacy with the discourse on domesticity, a construction which they used to argue that they, as white women, were the appropriate people to care for and exercise guardianship over non-whites.[30]

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it, was central to imperial power and the development of racism. It was, in McClintock's words, "an indispensable element both of the industrial market and the imperial enterprise." Despite being subjected to the disadvantages of their gender, McClintock argues that the "rationed privileges of race... put white women in positions of decided...power, not only over colonized women but also over colonized men. As such white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting." See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5-6. Similarly in her *Burdens of History*, Antoinette Burton reveals how middle class feminists were central actors in constructing gendered, national/imperial identities. According to Burton, British women's quest for equality centered upon an argument about white women's abilities and responsibilities regarding the preservation and health of the British empire. Consequently, British feminists employed imperialist rhetoric that viewed women as saviors of the nation, the race, and the empire to justify their political participation. Burton persuasively argues that British feminists developed an imperial identity to justify their own activities. Centered on the relationship between British women and Indian women, imperial rhetoric encouraged white British feminists to engage in reform activities such as anti-prostitution and missionary work. See Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). In her discussion of travelogues, Mary Louise Pratt also found evidence that in women's sentimental writings, they too supported tales of white domination and colonization. White women travel writers, according to Pratt, assumed a position of white European superiority, privilege, and unaccountability. See Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

In her essay focusing on American feminists, Vron Ware reveals how early nineteenth-century American white feminists used anti-slavery rhetoric to draw analogies to their own subjugated conditions. Ware reread classic texts written by Wollstonecraft to demonstrate how feminists employed racial constructs to forward their own aspirations for equality. Gail Bederman's exploration of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's linking of white and civilization demonstrates one late nineteenth-century feminist's attempts to use whiteness to further her own political projects. In Gilman's *Women and Economics*, Gilman naturally linked civilization, racial advancement, and women to whiteness to convince men that white women deserved political rights. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 145-6.

[30]Frankenberg has persuasively argued that "given the inception of the United States as a colony settled by Europeans, and given continued transnational traffic in modes of knowing associated with racial domination, there continued to be close ties in the United States between racist and colonial discourses, as well as between constructions of whiteness and of Westernness." Frankenberg makes a compelling

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Southern women's scholars have persuasively argued that southern white women frequently used ideas about domesticity and white womanhood to assert their own authority, assure themselves of their racial superiority, achieve deference from enslaved and freed African Americans, and justify their complicity and involvement in the slave system. Barbara Welter's and Nancy Cott's initial research on gendered roles demonstrated that early republic American society developed an American ideology, heavily influenced by British discourse, which assigned white women greater responsibility in the home known as the "cult of true womanhood" and the "canon of domesticity."[31] As pious, chaste, submissive, and domestic beings, the household became women's domain and white women defined their roles around their family. They sacrificed their mental and physical energies to provide a safe haven for their husbands and children and act as moral guardians.[32] These ideologies about domesticity and womanhood were inextricably linked to notions of whiteness. Such notions of

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argument for applying British colonial discourses to the American setting. See Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters*, 16.

[31]Marli Weiner provides an excellent overview regarding gender roles and expectations in her book, *Mistresses and Slave*, chapter three titled "Expectations for White Womanhood." See *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[32]Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood:"Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 63-101. Central to domesticity was the contrast between home as sanctuary and the world. Cott argued that the "contradistinction of home to world had roots in religious motives and rhetoric." The canon of domesticity emerged out of a changing world in which differentiation and specialization took place. "The home contrasted to the restless and competitive world because its "presiding spirit" was woman..." See Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 65-67. The cult of domesticity literature encouraged women to help ease great social and economic transitions that occurred during the last half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century.

superiority and new responsibilities were reserved for and explicitly targeted middle-class white women. Southern female scholars like Ann Firor Scott, Catherine Clinton, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Marli Weiner have also persuasively pointed out that racialized and gendered ideas about domesticity and womanhood also developed in the southern context for similar reasons that such discourses were developed in the northern American context. For example in *Mistresses and Slaves*, Marli Weiner demonstrated that southerners used notions about whiteness and domesticity to affirm racial hierarchies.[33] She stated:

> For white southerners, increasingly on the defensive in the antebellum

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[33] Scholars of the antebellum south have accomplished much in recovering antebellum white women's experiences, their complicity or resistance to slave and economic systems, and, among other things, how they perceived enslaved African-American experiences. Anne Firor Scott began the conversation with her assertion that gender did indeed affect the experiences and perceptions of individuals and demanded that white women be given a place in the narrative. Scott explored the distinctive upbringing, education, labor, and social life of southern ladies. Catherine Clinton continued the discussion and focused her scholarly attention on the plantation mistress. She examined the important roles that plantation mistresses played in the home-centered agrarian economy, domestic upkeep, and their pivotal roles in supervising and caring for the slaves. The plantation mistress routinely dispensed foodstuffs and clothing, hired and trained slaves, and oversaw their healthcare, nutrition, and moral, and labor education. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese suggested in her study *Within a Plantation Household*, that a comprehensive exploration of the plantation experience had to include African-American perspectives. She explored the complex dynamic between enslaved African Americans and white plantation women, strategies used by both groups to effect change and assert power, and white women's unique place as both dominated (by white men) and dominating (over enslaved African Americans). See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, ***Within a Plantation Household Black and White Women of the Old South*** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

Virginia Kent Leslie provided an excellent discussion of the function of the myth of the southern lady through an examination of Thomas R. Dew's writings. According to Leslie, Dew employed the myth of the southern lady to justify slavery. His argument went as follows: the existence of slavery encouraged progressive cultural development, therefore women's position was elevated. Slavery was also necessary because it frees women up to raise their children with "virtue, intelligence, and purest affection." Her elevation changed the very nature of man. Thus according to Dew, without slavery, civilization could not progress culturally. See Virginia Kent Leslie, **get cite.

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> years, an articulated ideology of domesticity for white women helped to confirm both their regional superiority and the virtues of their racial beliefs and institutions.[34]

Southern Jewish women absolutely used such Protestant and gendered discourses of whiteness as a means to uphold white supremacy, assert their own authority, and gain access to the benefits of whiteness itself, specifically in their own households. The household was perhaps the only environment where southern Jews did not have their racial status challenged. As one's race is directly achieved through context, since enslaved African-Americans racial status was virtually immutable in the slaveholding household, Jews were automatically viewed as white by themselves and by the slaves. In the household, unlike in the public social, economic, and political arenas, Jews' white racial status was unchallenged and, therefore, within their homes, southern Jews achieved both the benefits (and problems) associated with being white. As unquestionably white, slaveholding southern Jewish women seemingly thrived and fully acted the part of the southern slaveholding mistress in much the same vein as their Protestant sisters-- by defending the institution of slavery, propagating the paternal myth of the family,

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[34]Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves*, 56. According to Weiner, domesticity was defined in exclusively white terms.

Echoing these sentiments, Karen Brodkin Sachs, in her study *How Jews Became White Folks* concluded "the alleged virtues of white womanhood and those of white manhood have justified not only the natural rightness of patriarchal and heterosexual domesticity, but also the superior class positions and entitlements of whiteness. The alleged character deficiencies and lack of sharp gender distinctions among peoples designated as nonwhite have been portrayed as confirmation of the myth that nonwhites are not fit to be actors on the national stage or to parent the nation's children, that their only place is to produce—but not to consume—its wealth." See Sachs, *How Jews Became White Folks*, 176.

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assuming positions as white female guardians, and contributing to racist stereotypes. Employing the same narratives, ideologies, and strategies that other Protestant female slaveholders used within their homes to demonstrate racial superiority clearly empowered southern Jewish women in ways that they had never experienced and would never experience in the antebellum southern public that viewed Jews as suspicious and not completely white.[35]

"A Better Solution Doesn't Exist"

Southern Jewish women avidly espoused the racial discourse of white domination. To assert their own white status in their writings and like their Protestant female counterparts, southern Jewish women defended the humanity of slavery by supporting the notion that African Americans could not care for themselves and that whites served as guardians. Southern Jewish racist philosophies echoed Protestant notions of white superiority as southern Jewish women viewed African Americans as helpless, ignorant, primitive, infantile, and in desperate need of guidance and civilization. One such woman, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, contended that slavery was far preferable for slaves than capitalism. Under capitalism, as non-whites, Mordecai claimed that

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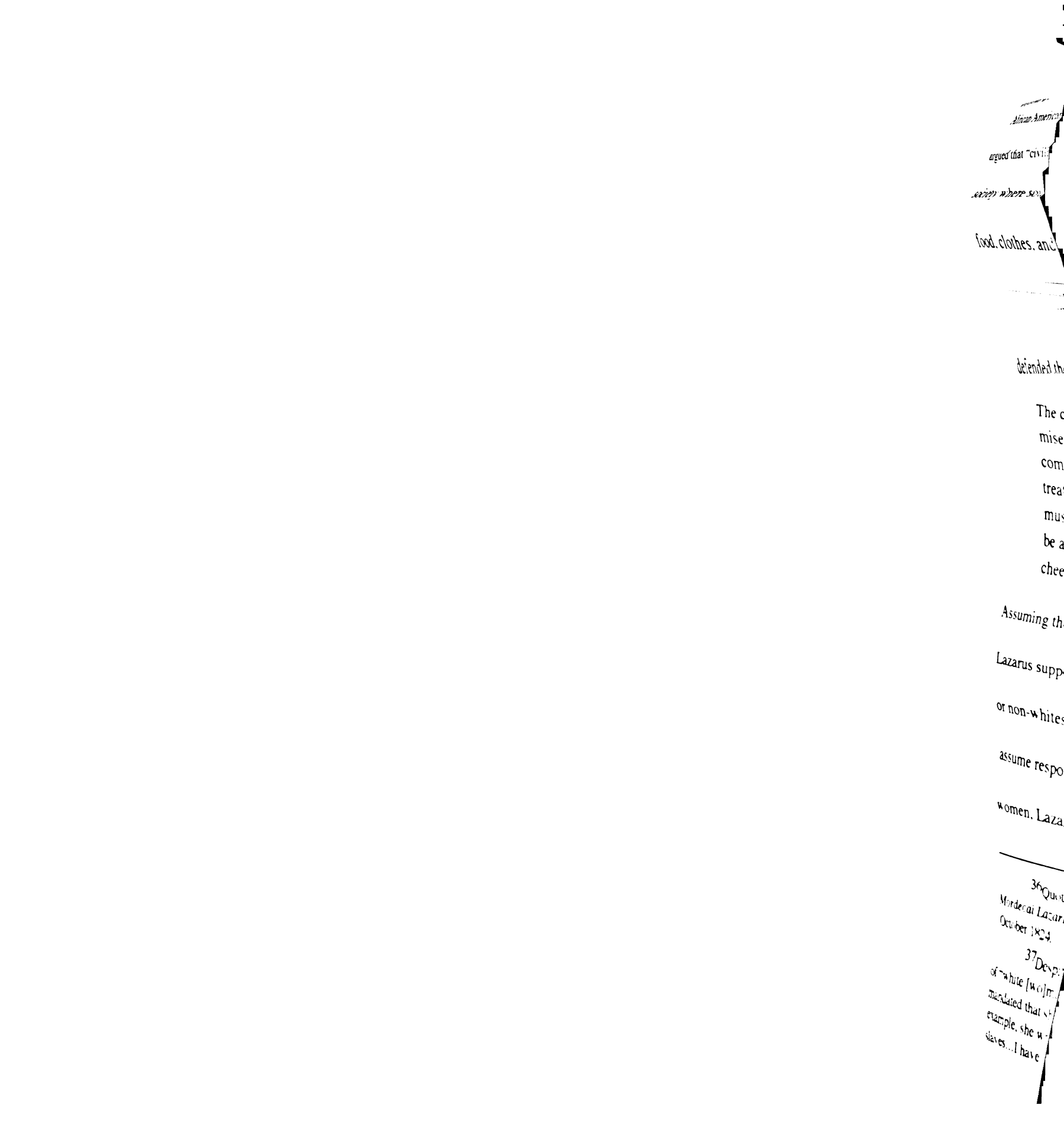
[35]Such actions must have worked. In examining the Worker's Progress Administration slave narratives and the few letters written by slaves found in southern Jewish family collections, not one single ex-enslaved African-American made reference to or differentiated Jews from other slaveholders. From this evidence one may reasonably assume that enslaved African-Americans did not view southern Jews as less white than Gentile slaveholders despite the public controversy over their racial classification. Conversely, this data disputes the claim that because of their biblical experience as slaves, that Jews were more benevolent slaveholders than non Jewish slaveholders.



African Americans would be unable to compete with "superior" white laborers and argued that "civilized" southerners had opted for a more humane system by devising a society where southern whites acted as guardians over blacks and provided them with food, clothes, and education. Responding to charges made by her friend and long time correspondent, the famous pedagogical philosopher Maria Edgeworth, Rachel Lazarus defended the institution and the condition of the slaves:

> The condition of our slaves both in this and the sister states is far less miserable than that of the poorer classes of white people. They are comfortably maintained and with very few exceptions kindly treated so long as the benefits of education are denied them, their state must be abject , and the necessity of retaining them is by all admitted to be an evil tho' at present an unavoidable one; but their usually cheerful demeanor argues well for the humanity of their masters.[36]

Assuming the racialized narrative of white superiority and benevolent guardianship, Lazarus supported slavery. Like other southern whites, Lazarus believed that since slaves or non-whites could not take care of themselves, white ethics demanded that whites assume responsibility for African-American welfare.[37] Like scores of other Protestant women, Lazarus often cast the relationship between whites and enslaved African

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[36]Quoted in Edgar E. MacDonald ed., *The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 21 October 1824.

[37]Despite the fact that she disdained slavery, Lazarus frequently employed the colonial discourse of "white [wo]man's burden" to support the institution. Specifically, Lazarus believed that being white mandated that she and other whites fulfill their responsibilities to supervise African Americans. For example, she wrote: "I do hope that means will be adopted for the gradual and judicious emancipation of slaves...I have long averred that I would willingly undergo the hardship and inconvenience of waiting on

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Americans as parental. Superior whites acted as "benevolent" parents and "protectors" to "ignorant" and "helpless" African Americans.

Though the debate over the morality of the institution lasted the entire twenty-two year correspondence relationship, the tenor of Lazarus' letters to Maria Edgeworth rarely changed. Lazarus claimed to abhor the system of slavery, but, in the true spirit of antebellum Protestant white superiority, she blamed non-whites for the continuance of slavery and criticized ignorant anti-slavery advocates. African Americans' supposed inability to deal with freedom and capitalism, in Lazarus' words, hampered southern philosophers' efforts to find a suitable system of transition for slaves. According to Lazarus, southern white philosophers worried about black safety, white stability, and economic security. To further secure her position as a true white southerner, Lazarus castigated those northern and European critics who demanded an end to slavery and incited African Americans to arm themselves and demand their freedom. Lazarus wrote:

> But what can be said of men who blindly, madly urge the slave to seek his freedom through a sea of blood, who promise to aid him in the commission of crime. Without even glancing at the too certain consequences, and who, while pledging themselves in the cause of suffering humanity, would spread horror and devastation among land? Their mischievous purposes will I trust in Heaven be averted and the removal of this mighty evil, of which we of the south are not insensible, be left to our own legislators whose wisdom will find means gradually but surety to effect the end.[38]

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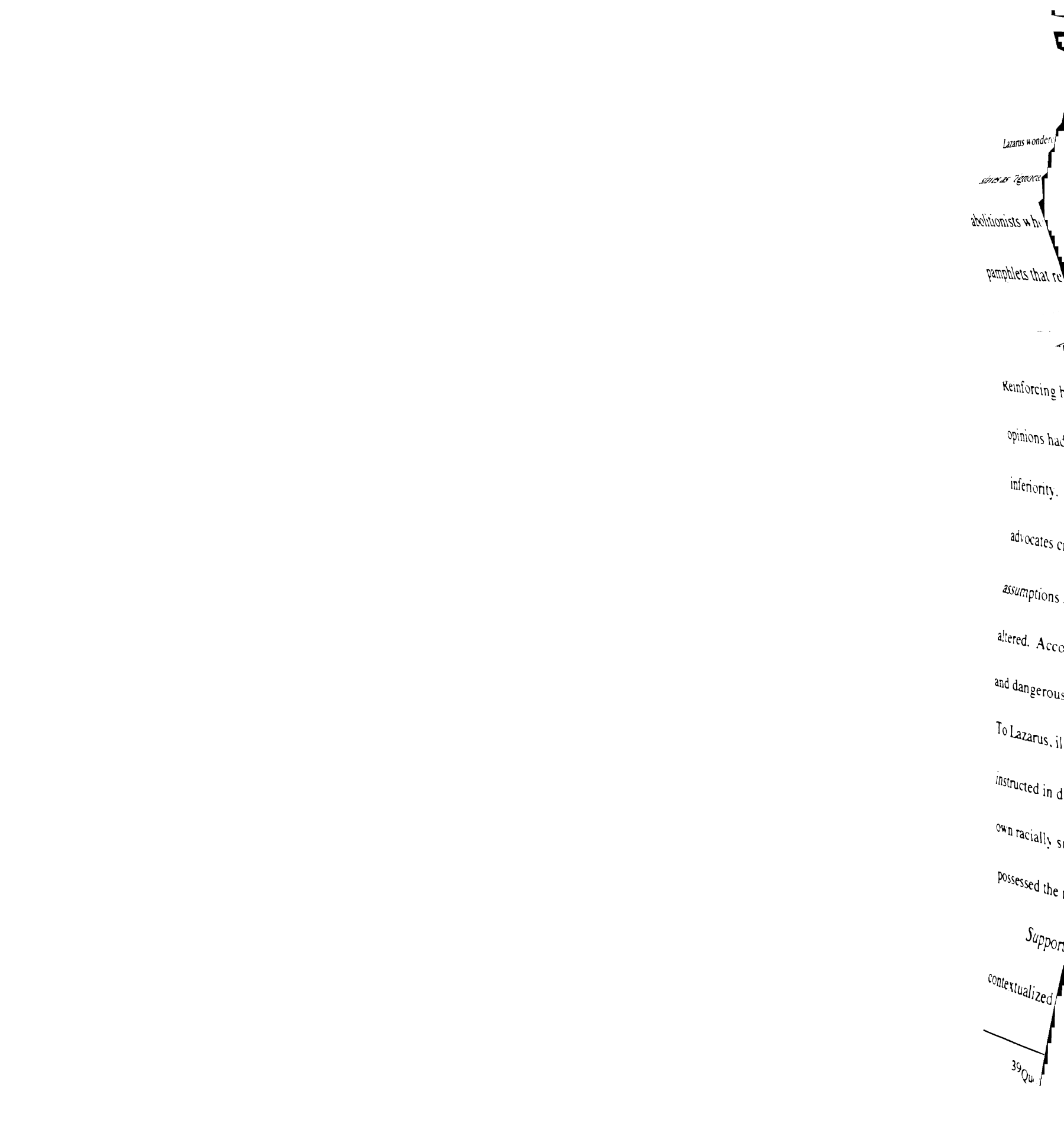
myself were that the only alternative to be freed from the charge and responsibility of living in a slave state." Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart,* 18 March 1838.

[38]Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart,* 18 October 1836.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Lazarus wondered what effect immediate manumission would have on the condition of slaves as "ignorant and inconsiderate as they were."[39] Additionally, she criticized abolitionists who supported manumission achieved through revolt or who distributed pamphlets that reported false accusations and pictures of whipped slaves. Such actions, Lazarus charged, recklessly played with southern society's economic and social stability. Reinforcing her argument, Lazarus suggested that those who ventured abolitionist opinions had no direct experience with African Americans, slavery, or African-American inferiority. Further on in her letter, Lazarus argued that should these anti-slavery advocates cross the ocean or the nation's borders and come south, their abstract assumptions about African Americans and their ability to handle freedom would be altered. According to Lazarus, freedom for African-Americans would be irresponsible and dangerous and would hurt the very population that abolitionists sought to liberate. To Lazarus, ill-gotten freedom was dangerous and slaves needed to be appropriately instructed in dealing with the responsibilities and privileges of freedom. To support her own racially superior legitimacy, Lazarus included herself among the whites who possessed the responsibility as guardians over enslaved African Americans.

Supporting the ideology of whites as benevolent guardians, Lazarus contextualized slavery and the slave experience within American history in a way which

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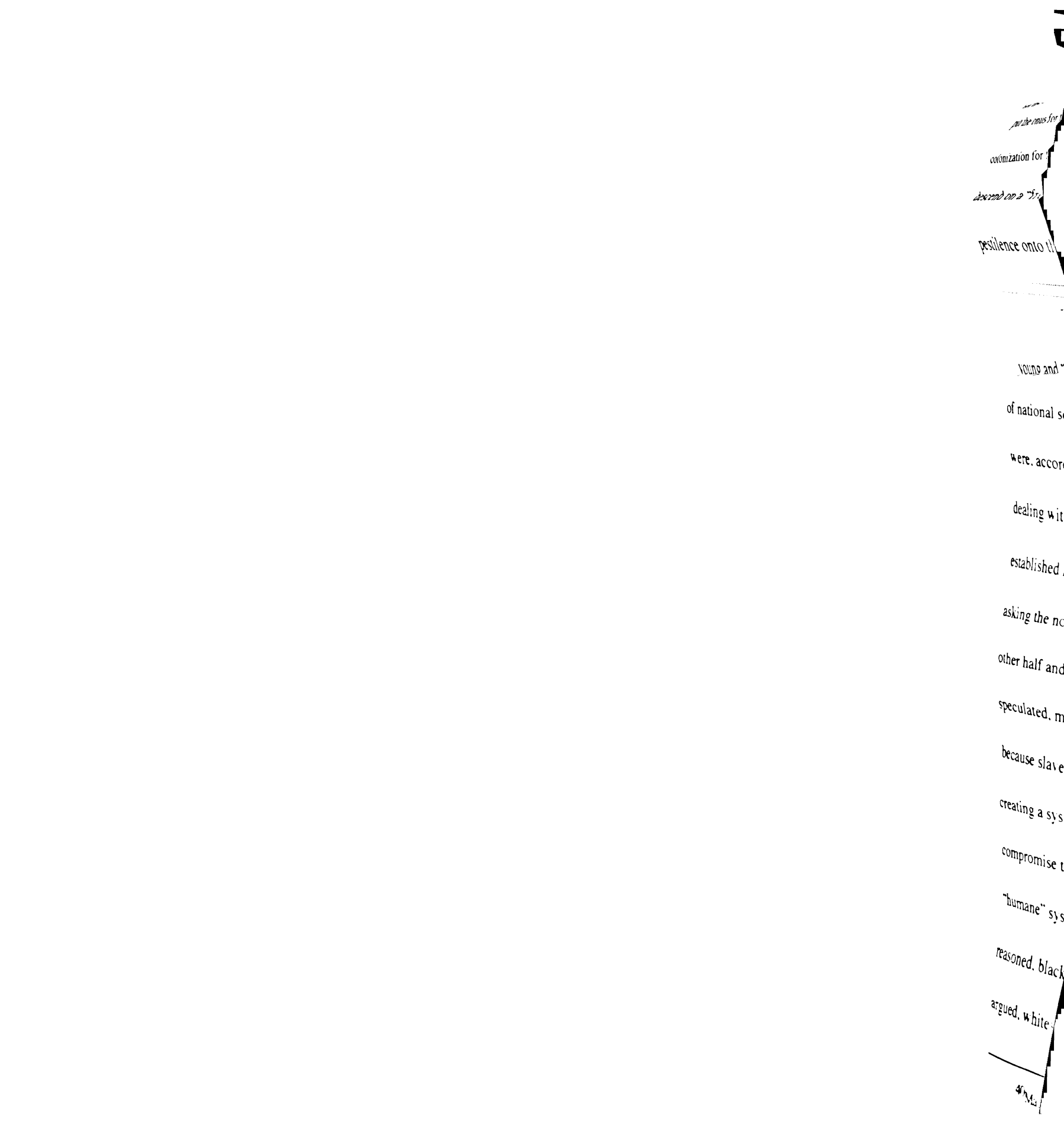
[39]Quoted in MacDonald, *The Education of the Heart*, 18 March 1838.



put the onus for the institution on foreigners. Lazarus indicted English tyranny and colonization for filling their ships with African human cargo and allowing slavery to descend on a "freedom-loving" nation, charging that the English had unleashed a pestilence onto the south. According to Lazarus, civilized southern whites naturally abhorred the system of human bondage but, she stated, that because the republic was too young and "too impoverished by war," it had been too weak to challenge slavery. Issues of national security and how to effectively establish a system of government and laws, were, according to Lazarus, the only issues that prevented the young republic from dealing with the complexities of slavery. She also claimed that after southern society established itself as a viable region, that southerners, endeavored to abolish slavery by asking the north for half the value of their slaves. In return they would "relinquish" the other half and "labour and till the ground with our own hands." The north, she speculated, must have replied that they were bankrupt and could not pay the price because slavery continued.[40] According to Lazarus, faced with the massive problem of creating a system that incorporated blacks and whites in a "productive" way and did not compromise the safety of either group, southern whites devised and institutionalized a "humane" system of slavery. Modeling their system after old feudal societies, Lazarus reasoned, black and white interests were effectively protected. Naturally, Lazarus argued, whites assumed the superior guardian and protector position.

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[40]MacDonald, Edgar. *The Education of the Heart*. 18 March 1838.

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According to Lazarus, civility, responsibility, and humanity, not capitalism, governed southern society. Like Edgeworth, Mordecai claimed that southern Jewish women disdained slavery and viewed it as an evil but necessary institution. Defending southern society's slavery system through themes of guardianship, humanity, civility, feudalism, and chivalry further distanced southern Jews from African Americans and more closely linked Jews to southern whites. Rachel Lazarus' employment of the exact same narratives that Protestant white women used with respect to slavery minimized the distance between southern Jews and Gentiles and further secured her own position as a legitimate white southern woman within her household. By supporting Protestant ideals about slavery and black inferiority, Lazarus' status as a white woman went unquestioned in her household and in her relationship with the extremely prominent Edgeworth.

Rachel Lazarus was not the only southern Jewish woman who defended slavery as beneficial to African Americans. In fact, the evidence indicates that a number of southern Jewish women avidly supported the "peculiar institution" through their writings and their interactions with slaves. Another way by which southern Jewish women asserted their whiteness and, therefore superiority within the household was by supporting the paternalistic myth of the family. Reinscribed and more forcefully articulated in the southern context was the belief that whites acted as parents charged with vocationally and secularly instructing, civilizing, and morally educating black slaves, whom southern whites preferred to view as children and incapable of caring form

themselves.[41] Like Protestant white women, southern Jewish women worked hard to prove that a familial relationship between blacks and whites existed and that they rightfully existed as the white maternal figures within the household. Supporting the existence of a hypothetical bond between blacks and whites enabled southern Jewish women to forge the racially-based social organizational system which was crucial to making a slaveholding household productive. In establishing such a relationship, southern Jewish women established themselves as white, legitimated their authority over enslaved African-Americans, and, finally, like other southerners, assuaged their anxieties over slavery.

At its most basic, southern Jewish women expressed a genuine belief in the mythical familial bonds between blacks and whites in their insistence on traveling with

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[41]Their own fears, as evidenced in their writing, demonstrated that some times, these women doubted the myth of the plantation family. Assuming themselves as white, they also feared slave insurrection. In their writings, southern Jewish women frequently and fearfully noted that slaves outnumbered whites. African-Americans' different culture, their perceived irrational behavior, their "infantile nature," and African-American hostility made these women anxious on the plantation. Emma Mordecai recorded in her diary: "the fact is that we are in a state of undefined terror all the time." After Nat Turner's rebellion, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus described "a scene of indefinable terror and confusion around me." She recounted feeling of being under siege, in great danger, and with very little power except her own female fortitude. To her brother George she wrote: "To be necessarily surrounded by those in whom we cannot permit ourselves to feel confidence, to know that unremitted vigilance is our only safeguard, and that sooner or later we or our descendants will become the certain victims of a band of lawless wretches who will deem murder and outrage just retribution is deplorable in the extreme." Desperate and frightened, Lazarus hoped that the government would "find a remedy by rendering some equivalent to slave owners and exporting the slaves in as large numbers as practicable to Africa." Lazarus recognized the problem with this solution and admitted that few would accept a solution that essentially upturned the entire southern labor and social system. She criticized those people "who (were) too short-sighted, to unwilling to relinquish present convenience from the fear of the future ill or for the prospect of future good." See Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to George Mordecai, 6 October 1831 Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

their enslaved African-American maids and by expressing their reluctance to leave them. For example, Eliza Kennon Myers insisted on traveling with her servant Caroline to a vacation spot in Hampton. In a letter, she assured her uncle that everyone was enjoying a wonderful vacation and specifically mentioned Caroline's own pleasure: "not even Caroline, the servant, I believe has been at all homesick."[42] Despite the fact that Caroline was a slave, Myers positioned her as a companion who was as desperate for her mistress' company as she was for the servants'. Similarly, despite her family's objections, Caroline Mordecai Plunkett always traveled with her servant and "companion," Charity, and in letters announcing her arrival, she demanded that ample room be made for Charity.[43] In another example, Mary Lazarus recounted the tearful parting between herself and her servant, Ellen; "Poor Ellen, who waits on us cried bitterly, she was so

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[42]Eliza Kennon Myers to George Mordecai, 10 January 1853, George Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. It is curious that Myers continued to employ the word servant in discussing her relationship with Caroline, perhaps as another way to distance themselves from the institution of slavery and the "master-slave" relationship. The reader will note that other antebellum southern Jewish women also prefer to use servant to describe African-American slaves.

[43]Emma Mordecai to Ellen Mordecai, 8 July 1849, Mordecai family papers. In a study of southern Jewish wills, Bertram Korn has located a few instances where southern Jews expressed "warm generosity" towards their slaves. Sarah Levy of Kershaw District South Carolina wrote in her will read in 1839: "It is my directions, desire and earnest request, that old Kennedy shall be kept with his wife and each treated with kindness and all reasonable indulgence." Additionally, Rachel D'Azevedo of Charleston wrote in her will dated February 23, 1843, that after the death of her daughter Mrs. Sarah A. Motta, those slaves and their children whom she bequeathed to her "shall work for their own use and time or services, being the same to all intents and purposes as if they were entirely free." See Bertram Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South," 28-9.

sorry we were going."[44] Casting relationships between slaves and southern Jewish women as familiar, reinforced the myth of the family and, therefore, reinforced links between southern Jews and other southern whites.

Even more frequently, southern Jewish women routinely propagated or created the myth of the family in their letters through conveying salutations and by recording slaves' *elation* at the presence of their owners and informing African Americans about their relatives.[45] Consequently, they reveled in relating servants' salutations. For example while staying at Runiroi plantation, Ellen Lazarus wrote to her Uncle George and informed him that "the Negroes seem mighty glad to see Aunt Nance (his wife) and all inquire very affectionately after Aunt Harriet and Tempe."[46] As a coda to most of her

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[44]Mary Lazarus, 6 December 1848, Jacob Mordecai papers, Special Collections, Duke University, Raleigh-Durham. One must critically analyze Ellen's response. Did Ellen state that she was sad to see the ladies leave because she possessed genuine affection for them? The letter did not record an exact statement by Ellen. One could also speculate that Ellen's sadness occurred because the ladies departure left her own position in the home insecure and she was unsure about her future.

[45]In her study of family in women's slave narratives, Jennifer Fleischner has exploring the "complex structure of the family emerged under slavery. The family on the plantation often involved not just the extended kin of real and fictional aunts, uncles, and grandparents, it also involved "to a degree, a web of feeling between owners and slaves." Slave children grew up playing with the white plantation children and remembered being raised by white plantation mistresses. Fleischner correctly identifies that though the existence of the black and white plantation family was "necessary for the psychological and physical well-being of slaves as children, it was a tainted wellspring for nourishing theself." According to Fleischner, beyond the reality of blacks and whites commingling in somewhat complex familial relationships, the family, as other southern scholars have shown, was "a metaphor of master-slave relations and was usefull for pro-slavery ideologues for it served as a justification for slavery." Fleischner echoes many scholars before her when she wrote "the plantation household family served rhetorically to sentimentalize and naturalize slavery as a structure of relations based on domination and dependence." See Jennifer Fleischner, ***Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives*** (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 28-31.

[46]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 16 March 1848, George Mordecai family papers.

letters, Lazarus frequently added "Tell all the servants howdy for me."[47] In another example, Rachel Lazarus wrote to her sister Ellen and asked her to "remember me kindly to the servants of whom I often think and hope to see them well when the day arrives for me."[48] In a letter to her husband, Mary Gerst wrote: "the overseer sends his respects to you" and " all of the Negroes desire to be remembered to you and wish you success."[49] Ellen Mordecai noted that after her stepmother recovered from an illness and returned home, she reported to her uncle that "the children and the servants rejoice to have her at home again."[50]

Further solidifying the mythical familial relationship between white Jews and enslaved African Americans, southern Jewish women informed slave relatives on other plantations about news in their family. For example in a letter to her sister Ellen, Margaret Mordecai Devereux asked her to "tell Missouri that her mother has a little son...tell Sally that her mother and all her folks are well."[51] Similarly, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus informed her sister that "Anna is a mother, she calls her son James Clifton, not of

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[47]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 1 April 1850, George Mordecai family papers. Emma Mordecai, Julia Lazarus, and Margaret Mordecai Devereux frequently extended salutations to their servants or their family's servants.

[48]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, letter, Mordecai family papers.

[49]Mary Gerst to Emanuel Gerst, Gerst family papers, Beth Ahabah Archives, Richmond.

[50]Ellen Mordecai, to George Mordecai, 19 October 1853 in the George Mordecai family papers.

[51]Margaret Mordecai.Devereux to Ellen Mordecai, 11 January 1851, Margaret Mordecai Devereux, family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

course a family name...both mother and son were doing very well."[52] In assuming responsibility for delivering of important enslaved African-American news, exchanging salutations, and recording slaves' happiness at the return of their mistresses and masters, southern Jewish women effectively used the myth of the family to emphasize a false sense of slave dependency on and familiarity with Jewish white women.[53] Fulfilling their role as southern white women by casting themselves as family members who were, nonetheless squarely in positions of authority, southern Jewish women effectively inserted themselves within the southern racial hierarchy.[54]

Southern Jewish women also relied upon and perpetrated the myth of the Mammy to support and defend slavery, and thereby assert their whiteness in the slaveholding household. According to southern women's historian Catherine Clinton, projecting the

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[52]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to Ellen Mordecai, 28 December, 1835, Mordecai family papers.

[53]Elizabeth Fox-Genovese posited that mythical relationship between slaves and slaveholders arose out of close proximity between them during childhood and throughout their adult lives. Slave mistresses recalled having slave playmates, recorded that older slaves often acted as surrogates for absent parents, and also feeling protective of their children. Strong bonds and dependency encouraged mistresses to support the myth of the family. See Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 24-7.

[54]In another example demonstrating the belief held by southern Jewish women that a familial and respectful relationship existed between slaves and owners was that they regularly attended each others' funerals. For example, sad about the death of a favorite servant's son, Emma Mordecai and several members of her family went to the funeral and described his African church burial and servants' behavior as extremely respectable. See Emma Mordecai to Ellen Mordecai, 21 April 1850, Mordecai Family Papers. Mordecai cast herself as another attendant rather than in her capacity of slaveholder. In her published work, *Fading Scenes Recalled*, Ellen Mordecai echoed the myth of black and white familial relations when she described the funeral of a prominent and respected white man. At the service, blacks and whites co-mingled to mourn and celebrate the passing of a beloved person. She described a pastoral scene when she recalled: "it was pleasing to hear in the open air so many voices uncertain harmony of feeling, if not of sound. Men and women, white and black, all sang together." See Ellen Mordecai, *Fading Scenes Recalled*, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 242.

traits of domesticity onto enslaved African-American women as mammies reified the myth of the southern family, justified white superiority over blacks, legitimated slavery, and, worse, it implied that enslaved African Americans accepted white superiority.[55] According to the Mammy myth, the Mammy worked within the white household, was maternally connected to the white family, took "pride and pleasure" in servicing the

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[55] Hine, Darlene Clark, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn eds., *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 744. Clinton has suggested that most female house slaves were young, bi-racial, and, more than likely, "wore the mask demanded of them by white southerners." Clinton suggests that the Mammy was more a product of fiction than reality. According to Deborah Gray White in her book *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, Mammy was the woman southerners perceived as capable of doing everything better. She was an expert in all domestic manners, was religious, moral, maternal, she loved her white charges, was accorded a reverential position by whites and blacks on the plantation, and was completely dedicated to her white family. Though White's research reveals that such conceptualizations were indeed a myth, she concludes that the myth was significantly important in defending slavery. The Mammy was the perfect image for southerners. She was an ideal slave, an ideal woman, and an ideal symbol of patriarchal tradition. According to White "she was not just a product of the "cultural uplift" theory, she was also a product of the forces that in the south raised motherhood to sainthood. As part of the benign slave tradition and as part of the cult of domesticity, Mammy was the centerpiece in the antebellum southerner's perception of the perfectly organized society." Furthermore, because whites were uncomfortable with the presence of black women, they created a complicated set of myths about black womanhood. In order to assuage white anxieties concerning potential slave revolt, they developed notions about black womanhood that were non-threatening and even argued that black women actually enjoyed and individually profited from the institution. As White's analysis reveals, southern whites employed the Mammy and Jezebel constructions to reaffirm the rehabilitative power of slavery. See Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 47-58.

American feminist scholars recognize that nineteenth-century women frequently deployed racially encoded domesticity and motherhood ideologies to assert their own power and power over others. Though she limited her discussion to maternalism, Eileen Boris suggested that different groups of women have successfully employed ideals about motherhood to achieve their own gendered or racial aims. The author persuasively argued that black and white women invoked the image of the mother differently. Boris' argument is extremely persuasive and lends credibility to the theory that other groups of women might have employed motherhood discourse to achieve their own individual goals or the goals of their ethnic or religious group. Boris argued that for white women, motherhood emphasized the differences between men and women and the importance of their roles. For African-American women, motherhood served as "a touchstone of racial equality." See Eileen Boris, "The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the "Political" in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds. *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 8

family, gained status from this role, and was revered and respected by the black community.[56] For their own goal of legitimating their authority as whites over enslaved African-Americans and distancing themselves from slaves within the household, southern Jewish women recognized the utility of supporting the Mammy narrative.

Recalling pastoral scenes of love, warmth, and comfort, southern Jewish women fondly remembered their African-American Mammies. Essays echo sentiments revealed in Protestant women's private writings as several southern Jewish women recalled with affection their Mammies who reared and protected them. In her work *Gleanings from Long Ago*, Ellen Mordecai centrally remembered her Mammy in describing her sublime childhood summers at Spring Farm plantation. Recounting her summers, Mordecai spent much of her free time with her Mammy, her husband, and their children. Left alone by her white family for days on end, Mordecai frequently followed her Mammy and the slaves under her supervision around the house and to the slave quarters. During these summers, Mordecai believed that she learned important life lessons and credited her Mammy and her Mammy's family with her guidance, rearing, and protection.[57] Rebecca Alexander's "Mammy" further detailed the perceived closeness that Mammy purportedly felt towards their white charges. Referring to her eldest son Harry's wetnurse, Susan

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[56] Hine, et. al., *Black Women in America*, 744-7. According to Catherine Clinton, the development of the "Mammy" stereotype emerged solely for "racial exploitation and commercial gain."

[57] Ellen Mordecai, *Gleanings from Long Ago*, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 44.

Walkins, Alexander maintained that both she and her children formed a strong emotional bond of dependency with the slave. While in the Alexander's home for three years as a wet nurse, Alexander praised her own good fortune at finding a woman of "unusually fine character."[58] Alexander imagined the relationship between herself and Walkins as companions and saw Walkins as a surrogate mother to her children. Failing to critically analyze Walkins' behavior, she assumed that Walkins' frequent visits to her and her children were out of devotion to Alexander and her family. To Alexander, Walkins performed her duties because of her familial relationships to the Alexanders and her maternal feelings towards the white children. To emphasize her defense of such a relationship, Alexander cited her children's expressive acts of affection when they saw Walkins who, in response, asked them to cease their hugs and kisses because she felt they were too old to be so expressive.[59] Rather than admitting to the benefits that slavery and enslaved wetnurses provided for white mothers, Alexander focused on the wages of love conferred on Walkins. Alexander brilliantly defends slavery by emphasizing reciprocal devotion of blacks and whites. Assuming that Walkins preferred white people's love over her personal freedom effectively masked the brutality of the slave system, and deflects Alexander's own complicity in the system.

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[58]Rebecca Ella Solomon Alexander, "Memoirs of Life in Charleston South Carolina, 1854-1935, June 24, 1929" American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 23.

[59]Alexander, "Memoirs of Life in Charleston South Carolina, 23.

Perhaps the best and most detailed example of southern Jewish women's support of the Mammy myth is Margaret Mordecai Devereux's book of essays, titled *Plantation Sketches*.[60] Written over a period of fifteen years before and during the Civil War and later published at the turn of the century, Devereux utilizes the Mammy narrative to voice

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[60]Though I have chosen to highlight her usage of the Mammy device to praise the system of slavery, Devereux's *Plantation Sketches* is an excellent source describing one woman's experiences with slavery. Through fiction, she described the supposed familial relationship between the slaves and slaveholders. The subtle white female narrator described her own role within the plantation. She supervised the reformation of African-American morality, education, comportment, and hygiene. She described her great joy at successfully teaching a slave a skill, whether it was domestic, reading, personal hygiene, or morality. Aside from creating a host of characters who were incompetent and therefore needed white supervision, she also constructed the archetypal "Uncle Toms." She included composites of "Uncle Jim" the carpenter who was a skilled carpenter and a wise preacher, Bob, the competent head of the blacksmith shop, and praised the efforts of "Skip" the weaver in the loomhouse. Again under the moral supervision of whites, the narrator was elated to report that a black church existed where her husband, John, worked as a chaplain with Jim as the preacher. "Old Aunt Betty" was the excellent and proud dairy woman who Devereux described as "the neatest creature imaginable." She admired her lovely colored turbans and her spotless appearance. The narrator praised another slave, "Gentleman Joe" for his impeccable manners and who was "so deeply respectful and so full of courtesy." These slaves seemingly accepted the narrator's authority and therefore were gifted with her flattery and respect.

Despite essentializing and infantilizing the slaves in her story, the narrator strayed from the common character portrayal of slaves as helpless and potential victims. She described several slaves who possessed certain "supernatural powers." She wrote of Joe who presented himself as courteous who also was suspected of being a "trickster Negro." He was rumored to have the gift of possession and the power to cause the death of anyone wearing any of his "products." She feared him and the power he wielded and proclaimed "nothing was as productive of more evil on the plantation than was the existence of a "trick" or "groomer" Negro, so insidious was their influence and so secret of their machinations." The power he possessed paralyzed whites and blacks on the plantation. She fearfully described the rare occasions of voodoo practice on the plantation.

Throughout each short story, Devereux, as the narrator, remained devoted to the system of slavery and justified it according to the benefits its provided African Americans. She neglected to include a description concerning the benefits that the narrator and her family accrued as a result of slavery. Instead, she employed the present late nineteenth-century and the general state of African-American poverty as a foil for her celebration of the system which purportedly protected the slaves.

Devereux continued her argument that slavery was much more complex than an evil and sinful institution by further describing the humanity that her family demonstrated towards the servants. She claimed that her family never required an African-American woman with children to do field work. Instead, the family designated those daily tasks that allowed women "ample time to take care of their houses and children." Devereux claimed that certain women preferred fieldwork but once they expressed their

her support for slavery. Like other southern Jewish slaveholding women were trying to accomplish in their own household, writing Mammy narratives enabled Devereux to comfortably participate in slavery and occupy a superior position in her household. In those writings that have been preserved in the Devereux and Mordecai family collections, Devereux utilized the Mammy narrative several times. Though the Mammy may appear differently in each essay—as the savior, the protector, the family confidante, and the supreme parent—Devereux intentionally used the Mammy as a narrative device to proclaim her support for slavery and expound upon the institution's benevolence.

Devereux frequently invoked the popular myth of black women's supreme dedication to white men by repeatedly describing the mythic maternal relationship that existed between black Mammies and white boys in her several of her essays.[61] In "The Junior Reservist," a young soldier named Billy was called to serve to "drive the Yankees from Dixie." Fiercely protective of him, his former nurse Serena was so distraught over the prospect of injury to Billy that she sacrificed her own son and demanded that he be sent into battle with Billy to protect the "young master." Reacting as a mother mourning

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dissatisfaction in the fields, they were moved to other, less demanding work. See Devereux, *Plantation Sketches*, 23-34.

[61]For the best example of the almost sexual relationship between white men and non-white women within an uneven power dynamic, see Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

her own son upon hearing a rumor that Billy was mortally injured, Serena descended into uncontrollable hysteria.[62]

In another essay titled "Mammy Cherry," Devereux described a similar relationship reinforcing the notion that Mammies' happiness centered around the happiness and safety of her white male charges. As a surrogate mother to the plantation's white male heir, Mammy Cherry cared for, educated, and provided for the material needs of the young "master." Her happiness was directly connected to the white boy's contentment. Through Devereux's description, Mammy Cherry nostalgically recalled, with fondness, the times that she rocked the blue-eyed white baby to sleep while sitting in front of the hearth. Devereux emphasized Mammy Cherry's pride when the youth succeeded in school and sport. According to Devereux's plot line, Mammy Cherry's happiness was compromised when her white charge's life was at risk. Devereux spotlights a scene where Mammy Cherry and the young master reunite during a break from the war. Relieved at seeing him unscathed, Mammy Cherry dropped to her knees and thanked her maker. When he was again called up to service, Mammy Cherry insisted on packing his provisions bag. After he had returned to the front, Mammy Cherry heard that the young soldier had been caught and sent to prison and, risking her own safety, left the plantation to rescue her young charge. Tragically, she reached the jail and released a

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[62]Margaret Mordecai Devereux, "The Junior Reservist," Devereux family paper, Special Collections, Duke University, Raleigh-Durham.

trap door moments after he died. According to Devereux, Mammy Cherry herself nearly died of a broken heart.[63] Using the narrative of Mammy's emotional well-being as centrally dependent on a young white boy's happiness and safety reinforced the myth of the slaveholding family. Subscribing to and penning such well-known southern racism reinforced Devereux's whiteness to herself, her slaves, and subsequent readers. Repeatedly ocating her narratives within the slaveholding household was not an accident. It was the principal setting where Devereux as a southerner and a woman exercised her whiteness and superiority, without question and despite her Jewishness.

Like other Protestant southern white slaveholding women, southern Jewish women tended to view daring actions or acts of kindness performed by their servants as concrete proof that slaves subscribed to and respected the notion of the family and, especially, that they accepted and required the guardianship of whites, regardless of their religion. In one example, Caroline Myers noted that when northern troops barged into their house, Phoebe, the family's servant saved the family from arrest and persecution by

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[63] In another demonstration of slave loyalty to whites, Devereux composed an essay titled "The Hogfeeder and Day Old Jerry." Jerry, a plantation slave, was in charge of feeding and tending to the hogs. He happened upon an accident where the young master of the plantation had injured his brother. The boy failed to return and the town presumed him dead. Another observer said he saw Jerry near the scene and he was indicted for the death of the boy. In an act of extreme loyalty, Jerry refused to reveal of his master's primary role in the incident and, therefore, he himself was scheduled to hang. When both boys turned up alive and unharmed and found about Jerry's fidelity, the master offered Jerry his freedom. In conclusion Jerry "obstinately declined to accept his freedom" and later revealed that he thought his master was setting him free because he had done something wrong. Ultimately, Jerry still decided to stay on the plantation. See Devereux, *Plantation Sketches*, 85-112.

racing to hide incriminating letters.[64] While under house arrest, Eugenia Phillips noticed from her window one afternoon that all her servants had dressed up and arrayed themselves to say hello. "I called a cheering "How d'ye" to them and it seemed that I loved their old shining black faces more than ever."[65] In another example, Ellen Mordecai described another Mammy, old Aunt Betty Plunkett, who, after the slave revolt in San Domingo, chose to escape with her mistress and children bringing along her own son and a quadroon girl. According to Mordecai, Plunkett's loyalty to her mistress and children was greater than her freedom.[66] Similarly, in Margaret Mordecai Devereux's fictional essay titled "Mammy Cherry," upon hearing that union soldiers might pillage the house, the black heroine raced to rip open a feather bed to hide the family's valuables. Interpreting slaves' daring acts as acts of compassion and as a rejection of their freedom, further supported southern Jewish women's beliefs that slaves, in fact, regarded them as superior parental figures. Enslaved African-Americans' recognition of Jews' superior status was especially important for Jews because it emphasized to them that they were indeed white.

Again like their Protestant sisters, southern Jewish women assumed the role of white female guardians to further achieve a superior position within the racially-based

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[64]Caroline Myers, Note, Phillips Myers papers.

[65]Eugenia Levy Philips, Diary, Phillips family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 29 August, 1861.

[66]Mordecai, *Gleanings from Long Ago*, 64

social and economic organizational system within the plantation household. In another of her short stories which centered on the character of Mammy Cherry in *Plantation Sketches*, Margaret Mordecai Devereux depicted white women as proper benevolent guardians for slaves. Born and raised in Madagascar, Mammy Cherry served under the tutelage of her white female owner, Mrs. Pollock. Believing her to be "tractable and intelligent," Mrs. Pollock taught Mammy Cherry English and trained the slave as her personal assistant. After her mistress' death, the new Mrs. Pollock assumed Mammy Cherry's training and gave Mammy Cherry greater parental responsibilities over the deceased woman's children. According to Devereux, the gendered relationship between the two white females and non-white female was absolutely crucial in this story. As drawn by Devereux, the guidance that the Mrs. Pollocks gave to Mammy Cherry could only have been given to her by white women and such instruction enabled Mammy Cherry to successfully expand her familial responsibilities and subsequently encouraged the Pollock family to bestow on her "offices of trust."[67] For example, Mr. Pollock frequently solicited her opinion on matters of the slaves and relied upon her as the repositor of family traditions and family lore. Additionally, Mammy Cherry's high status within the Pollock family purportedly translated into greater respect among the plantation's enslaved African Americans. Devereux wrote: "Overtime, everybody in the

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[67]Devereux, "Mammy Cherry," Devereux family papers.

family and on the estate regarded Mammy Cherry as a "person of consequence."[68] Ever thankful for her training by her white female guardians, Mammy Cherry, according to the narrator, supposedly never regretted being in slavery and owned by the Pollock family. Giving herself, the narrator, the last word, Devereux proclaimed: "so it seems from this tale of Mammy Cherry and her family, good blood told, for the Pollocks of gentle blood, were ever good masters and they made good servants of their servants."[69] Privileging white females' roles in the education of Mammy Cherry enabled Devereux to voice her support of gendered Protestant philosophies which underscored the benevolence and rehabilitative aspects of slavery, and emphasized the crucial role that southern white slaveholding women played in creating a productive and moral work force.[70] In doing so, Devereux reinforces her own importance and legitimacy to herself as a white woman in charge of the care and supervision of enslaved African-Americans on her own plantation at Runiroi.

Aside from using this narrative in personal writings to proclaim their support of slavery, southern Jewish women used the discourse of white female guardianship to shape their daily relationships with slaves, to vocationally and spiritually educate their slaves, and to reward or punish their slaves' behaviors. It is in day to day interactions

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[68]Devereux, "Mammy Cherry."

[69]Devereux, "Mammy Cherry."

[70]For a more comprehensive discussion on the perceived reformative nature of slavery, see Deborah Gray White's explanation in *"Ar'n't I a Woman?"* 44-45.

that scholars can see where southern Jewish women actively and without question, asserted their whiteness and superiority. Like other Protestant slaveholding women, their own success as white southern female guardians depended on their ability to parent and train their slaves, and, most importantly, achieve deference from their slaves.[71] When southern Jewish slaveholding women succeeded in their efforts, they congratulated their superior abilities as white women and when they failed, they cited essential African-American inferiority.

As was often the case, the southern Jewish mistress would take house servants under their wing and instruct them in their household duties. Letters by southern Jewish women were filled with their triumphs and frustrations. Emma Mordecai bragged about her sister in law Rose's success in training the cook's daughter as a maidservant.[72] Ellen Lazarus wrote to her uncle George deeply pleased that their new servant. Fanny was a

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[71]Several letters described southern Jewish women's involvement in the health care of adult slaves and their children. Letters detailed that these women had an economic and an emotional investment in their slaves. They worried over slaves' illnesses and epidemics and individually endeavored to stave off illness among the servants. Margaret Mordecai Devereux spent many pages detailing her concern for the health of her servants and their families. See Margaret Mordecai, Letter, 16 April 1847, Margaret Mordecai Devereux papers. This letter is representative of Devereux's constant concern over the health of her slaves. Like most plantation mistresses, the health of her servants and their families fell directly under her jurisdiction. A sister of Margaret Mordecai Devereux happily reported that not much sickness existed among their "black families" but that cases arose every so often and needed to be handled. See author unknown, to Margaret Mordecai Devereux, 15 September 1853, George Mordecai family papers. When Flemming, a small African-American child, burned himself Emma Mordecai applied "a plaister of castile soap, and steep the lien [sic] bandages with a dilution...which proves very soothing and efficacious." See Emma Mordecai, Diary, 2 November 1864, Mordecai family papers.

[72]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 1 November 1864, Mordecai family papers. She wrote: "The cook's daughter whom her mistress is training to be an admirable servant."

"useful, ready servant, who does her business well and gives no trouble."[73] Similarly, in a letter, Margaret Mordecai Devereux happily described her success in training the same Fanny's young daughter Priscilla. Devereux had taken Priscilla, into the house, made her proficient in sewing, was "right amused" at her womanish acting over her needlework, and made "a nice little maid of her."[74] Ellen Lazarus was delighted about her success in teaching her servant Sally how to sew. Delighted and crediting herself with Sally's labor output, Lazarus bragged that "she cut and made twenty-four little homespun frocks for the little Negro girls...several garments for...the boys." [75] Southern Jewish women fully believed that it was their instruction as white female guardians that was responsible for slaves' success in performing household duties. Successfully training their slaves proved to other southerners that southern Jews were white because they possessed unique white abilities to successfully supervise slaves.

In addition to training servants in domestic arts, southern Jewish women took their role as moral guardians equally seriously. In keeping with the slavery discourse that non-whites necessarily needed to be rehabilitated or civilized, southern Jewish women's letters and diaries recounted several instances where they tried, unsuccessfully, to influence their servants' morality. Most of the experiences that southern Jewish women

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[73]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai , 16 March 1848, George Mordecai family papers.

[74]Margaret Mordecai Devereux, Letter, 16 February 1851, Margaret Mordecai Devereux family papers, Special Collections, Duke University, Raleigh-Durham.

[75]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 17 August 1850, George Mordecai family papers.

chose to recount in their letters demonstrated both their limited success and the distress their failures caused them. In one example, Ellen Mordecai attempted to affect her servant Miss Patsey's sense of materialism. Carefully, Mordecai selected an appropriate biblical passage and asked Miss Patsey whether she understood its intent. Sadly, Miss Patsey smartly replied "I haint heard a word, for I been thinkin' how I mout alter my silk habit."[76] In another example, Margaret Mordecai Devereux was displeased by one of her new kitchen servant's poor hygiene and ill-kempt nature. This servant's "inclination" to be dirty required extra attention from Devereux and she worked diligently with Annie to improve her hygiene—again to limited success.[77] When southern Jewish women failed in their efforts to influence their servants' productivity or morality, they blamed black inferiority and thus, conversely, reinforced their own white racial superiority. While southern Jewish women professed anger at slaves' incompetence, they actually depended on their supposed incompetence to secure their own superior positions and affirm their utility within the slaveholding household.

Not surprisingly, some southern Jewish women continued to assume their positions as white female guardians even after slaves had been sold off of the plantation. When, in 1850, Richmond resident Julia Lazarus returned to her home town of Warrenton, North Carolina she informed her uncle and legal guardian, George Mordecai

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[76]Ellen Mordecai, *Fading Scenes Recalled*, 268.

that she was "anxious to see the servants" who had been with her on their old estate. Her warm and nostalgic feelings abruptly changed when one by one each of her ex-servants visited her and recited various abuses endured by them after they had been sold. Her favorite old nurse, Rachel had been hired out to people who "had no consideration for her," who "forced her to cut wood, washing, and scouring...and work to which she was never in her life accustomed." Rachel was "exposed to the cold, bad weather, suffered from a bad cold, and was recovering from being paralyzed on one side." When selling her, Julia assumed that Rachel's advanced age surely exempted her from such manual labor. In another instance, a sixteen-year-old ex-servant of hers was assigned to a "proverbially hard master" and was sorely abused. In Lazarus' home, the young boy had been a house servant. In his current situation, he was now made to work in the "burning sun," was "heavily tasked," and in continual "fear of the whip." When she asked about an ex-washerwoman, Lazarus was shocked to learn that she had been sold to an especially brutal man who mercilessly overworked her. Eventually the frail woman "suffered from a low fever, wasted away, and died miserably, without any comfort around her." One by one, many of Lazarus' ex-slaves visited her and recounted their

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[77]Margaret Mordecai Devereux, Letter, 16 February 1851, Margaret Mordecai Devereux family papers.

trials and tribulations of sale, labor, and abuse.[78] Each sad and violent story ended with the same request, the servants begged her to take them away with her.

Stunned by the litany of abuses that her favorite ex-servants had endured, Lazarus decided to act. In a letter to her uncle she emphatically stated "I wish to do something for these people, I long to do them some real good." [79] Lazarus knew that her deceased parents had left her with a trust fund managed by her uncle. She also believed that she might take a portion of her trust fund to repurchase some servants. In attempting to convince her uncle to release some funds for this purpose, Lazarus appealed to her uncle's sympathy when she wrote: "a portion of our property was derived from the sale of these servants, but it is hard that they should have so much to suffer from our advantage." Should he send her a check, Lazarus decided that she would first hire or purchase Rachel "to aid her in sickness and relieve her of her present situation." In keeping with the true role as a white female guardian, Lazarus, herself, would oversee her care. She also wanted to purchase Mary, another washerwoman, and place her with her sister, Ellen, who would also supervise her health. With respect to other ex-slaves, Lazarus wrote to other family members and campaigned for funds or asked whether they might not find room in their homes for the servants. Her sister Ellen Allen responded

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[78]Julia Lazarus to George Mordecai 15 May 1850, George Mordecai family papers. Lazarus proudly recounted the experiences of two other slaves who successfully paid for their freedom and that one woman comfortably supported herself.

[79]Julia Lazarus to George Mordecai, 15 May 1850, George Mordecai family papers.

favorably and offered up one half of one year's income over and above expenses to help provide for the ex-servants. Finally, Lazarus waged a dispute with her uncle to release as many funds as possible from her trust fund to carry out her plan. In doing so, Lazarus asserted her perceived responsibilities as a white female moral guardian. As a white woman, and despite the fact that she no longer possessed any material responsibility over her ex-slaves, she felt duty-bound to oversee their well-being and protect them from harm.[80] Lazarus' actions demonstrate that her own status as a white female guardian depended on her ability to continue that relationship even after her ex-slaves had been manumitted or sold. Her slaves' continued attention and requests reinforced to Lazarus that she still reigned supreme, that her ex-enslaved African-Americans still depended on her emotionally and spiritually and, consequently, reaffirmed her own superior status as a white slaveholding woman.

Antebellum southern Jewish women's deep maternal connections did not usually interfere with business, however. For example, despite the fact that Ellen Mordecai felt she had developed a bond with her servant Alice, and that several months of labor had positively influenced Alice's morality, character, devotion, productivity, and temperament, Mordecai wrote:

> She is strong and perfectly healthy, she is a mighty, good hearted girl, a patient ever ready and kind nurse to a sick person, as Mamma can testify. She sews very neatly and has been used to house and chamber work and

[80]Julia Lazarus to George Mordecai, 15 May 1850, George Mordecai family papers.

> can wash very well. Her character so far is perfectly pure. She has never slept out of my room except when sickness required her in Mamma's chamber has never been out at night in her life to any Negro doings. She reads very well and follows the service in Church every Sunday. [81]

Clearly, Mordecai's real intent was however to sell her and profit off of these hard taught talents. In her letter, Mordecai boasted that the young servant was "uncontaminated" and honest, and Mordecai assumed full responsibility for Alice's good attitude and her proficiency in the domestic arts. She justified her long description of Alice's qualifications because she thought that any prospective buyer would want to hear about her "from the person who raised her." [82] Apparent in Mordecai and Alice's case, emotional connection and dedication to her role as a female guardian did not get in the way of economic decisions.

When they sold slaves, southern Jewish women continued to act in the same was as Protestant white female slaveholders, as benevolent guardians who carefully controlling who purchased them. They worked diligently to ensure that compassionate slaveowners either hired or purchased favored slaves and that their future labor would not be too arduous. For instance, Julia Mordecai wrote on the recent sales of several of her slaves: "Hannah and her promising children sold for $6.75, her children were the smartest black ones I ever saw." Later in the letter she assured her sister that their new master was not a speculator." As with Hannah and her children, Mordecai sold and hired out several

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[81] Ellen Mordecai to George Mordecai, 3 February 1855, George Mordecai family papers.

other slaves, but demanded assurances from their new owners as to their well-being. She was especially cautious with her female slaves and interrogated their future owners as well as to what labor they would engage in. She wrote that Jack sold for $1.75, Phil the gardener and Sally hired for $150, Lucy for $35, Hufford for $20, Rosina for $15, and Adam for 13.75.[83] Similarly in 1844, Ellen Mordecai related to her brother Sol that "Rebecca is hired out for the month...she goes tomorrow to a very good man...she is to be the dining room servant so she will not have hard work to do." Mordecai indicated great concern for the welfare of Rebecca beyond achieving maximum profits on an investment but she also stipulated specific conditions suitable for Rebecca.[84] A decade later, Ellen Mordecai indicated that she wished to sell a slave named Alice "not for any fault of objection to her but because she is not required by the family...I do not feel justified in keeping her." Again, Ellen was cautious and authoritative as to how Alice should be sold and emphatically stated that: "I will not sell her to be speculated on." [85] Acting like Protestant benevolent white female slaveholders at and after the point of sale

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[82] Ellen Mordecai to George Mordecai, 3 February 1855, George Mordecai family papers.

[83] Julia Mordecai to Rachel Lazarus January 1832, Jacob Mordecai papers.

[84] Ellen Mordecai to Solomon Mordecai, 30 September 1844, Mordecai family papers.

[85] Emma Mordecai, to Samuel Mordecai, 25 April 1845, Jacob Mordecai papers. Occasionally, southern Jewish women described not only the material burden but also the emotional strain that slave ownership placed on them. Rachel Mordecai related in a letter an incident regarding a woman, Mrs. Orme, who returned to the south after a long sojourn in the North. She wrote: "She is less comfortable than before she left home...she finds a great difference between Northern and Southern servants, and says she hardly knows how to keep house with them. I knew she would feel the burden after being so long released from it." See Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to Ellen Mordecai, 17 December 1839, Jacob Mordecai family papers.

continued the racial relationship between enslaved blacks and Jewish female slaveholders, and, thus, represented another situation in which Jews acted as whites.

In addition to casting themselves as benevolent white female guardians, antebellum southern Jewish women also relied on the controlling and domineering side of white female guardianship to assert their authority over slaves and to reinforce their own superior positions as whites in the slaveholding household. There were frequent challenges to southern Jewish women's authority, though not to their whiteness, and southern Jewish women worked as best as they could to combat irreverent behavior. Insubordination on the plantation was infectious in an environment where slaves outnumbered whites and where Jewish women were frequently left to supervise plantations while their husband were away on business. For example in a letter, Emma Mordecai related an incident with one of her slaves, a perpetual runaway named John. John explained to both Mordecai and the family that he wished to be sold and threatened that he would continue to run away should they not honor his wishes. Initially, Mordecai assumed the role of a white female guardian and blamed herself for his lax discipline and work ethic and felt that she had failed in her duty as a mistress by not convincing him of his productive and important role within the plantation family. Unable to control him, Emma Mordecai pleaded in a letter to her uncle George for help. "This is the second Negro letter I have written to you, but I do not see how we can do without you in the present emergency." She described to her uncle how she hoped that her brother's visit to

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John in jail might correct John's behavior. She originally asked her brother Edmund to assist her and explained her efforts to convince John to remain on the plantation. Wishing to help his sister, Edmund unsuccessfully tried to alter the slave's decision by praising his "firmness and spirit," and enticing him to remain on the Richmond plantation. Emma Mordecai was initially reluctant to sell him because servants were scare and "impossible to replace."

Like other southern plantation female slaveholders, southern Jewish women also relied on the threat of sale as a successful method for controlling irreverent slaves' behavior and to reassert their racial authority within the plantation household. When Ellen Lazarus found herself troubled by one particular servant's refusal to labor according to her instructions, she threatened in a letter "If Ellen does not make me a good servant, I shall feel no compunction about selling her."[86] In another example, in a letter soliciting Eliza Kennon Mordecai's (her daughter) advice, Rebecca Mordecai described having tremendous trouble with her new slave Lucy. Despite constant threats of sale, Mordecai complained that Lucy excessively drank and was so quarrelsome that the servants refused to work with her. Lucy's disruptions interfered with slave labor productivity and encouraged other bad behavior from slaves.[87] Margaret Mordecai Devereux also corresponded with her sister regarding her solution to a problem slave named Phillis who

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[86]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 2 July 1850, George Mordecai family papers.

[87]Rebecca Mordecai to Ellen Mordecai, 17 January 1841, Mordecai family papers.

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was constantly and suspiciously ill. Devereux wrote to Ellen Mordecai: "I concluded ... I would take someone else (into the kitchen, a fairly prestigious job) and teach them. I took Matilda's Annie and she makes a good cook." [88] Devereux assumed that slaves would prefer to be in the household under the tutelage of the white mistress and used the threat of removal from the household to keep an insubordinate slave in line.

If slave behavior proved too much to handle and threatened the stability of the plantation social system and economic productivity, southern Jewish women did resort to selling their slaves. Letters detailed these women's frustration, anger, resolve and in some cases defeat. As a final desperate measure with her slave John, Emma Mordecai asked her uncle George to purchase him and keep him on another family plantation near Richmond. Until such arrangements could be made, Mordecai begged George to inform the authorities regarding John's repeated misbehavior so that they could keep an eye on him. Closing her letter, she firmly proclaimed that "he cannot act the master." To assuage her own anxieties regarding her own superior position in the plantation hierarchy, Emma questioned another slave about John's blatant disregard for her. Sally shrewdly commented on his insolence and evaded the question of racial superiority by replying "who is he, he is not free." [89]

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[88]Margaret Mordecai Devereux to Ellen, 16 February 1851, Margaret Mordecai Devereux papers.

[89]Emma Mordecai, to George Mordecai , 3 March 1853, George Mordecai family papers.

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In another incident, Mordecai angrily reported to her brother Samuel that she happily sold a disagreeable slave, Aggie. She related: "It is quite a relief to be rid of such a disagreeable piece of property, the possession of which was unattended by any advantages."[90] Revealing her exasperation with slave labor, Mordecai attempted to convince brother George to encourage their sister Rose to sell the farm and the servants because "the Negroes there are so free and disorderly that she says she would never have a good servant on her place while subject to their influence and example."[91] Fed up with insolence, Ellen Lazarus traded her servant for another named Missouri and stated that she was "glad to get rid of the troublesome girl."[92] Caroline Plunkett reported to her sister that she was relieved to have parted with the slave girl named Abby for "she had nearly been plagued to death by her."[93] The fact that these women occasionally hoped the slaves they sold would end up in worse conditions is evidenced by Rachel Lazarus' response following the sale of her slave William to a mill owner. She was annoyed that his new employment seemed easier because he had much more time at his disposal and many more privileges that better servants never received. Lazarus felt that William was unjustly rewarded for his poor performance and insubordination.[94] Like other southern slaveholders, slaves frequently challenged slaveholders' authority. But within southern

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[90]Emma Mordecai to Samuel Mordecai, 10 May 1845, Jacob Mordecai family papers.

[91]Emma to George Mordecai, 24 August 1850,George Mordecai family papers.

[92]Ellen Lazarus to George Mordecai, 17 August 1850, George Mordecai family papers.

[93]Caroline Plunkett, Letter, 3 February, Mordecai family papers.

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Jewish households and in direct relation to their slaves, as opposed to other white southerners, slaves never seemingly challenged Jews' whiteness. It was solely through their relationships with slaves that Jews felt white, not black, or a member of a third race.

Another method that southern Jewish women used to assert racial superiority over African-Americans was by supporting a racist mentality that viewed blacks as inferior and stupid. As did other southern white slaveholders, southern Jewish female slaveholders seemed to be most threatened by enslaved African Americans when they challenged racist assumptions about their inferiority, specifically, by independently educating themselves. Though proud and self-congratulatory when they taught their slaves to be literate, southern Jewish women were furious when slaves independently endeavored to improve their own intellect. For example, Ellen Mordecai happened by a "foolish" slave sitting on his front porch with an Old Testament in hand and a "finger poking around." Stunned and annoyed at the slave's arrogance and presumption of agency, Mordecai severely chastised him for aspiring to move beyond his assigned state. Threatened by his insolent response she later copied his response in a letter, in a racist phonetic manner. According to Mordecai, he shrewdly responded: "Well the sage Ruben says: "at my leadure (leisure) hours I gwine laran...Lizzy and Albert (his grandchildren) to read dem spell and spell dem reads and count."[95] In accordance with the cult of

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[94]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to Ellen Mordecai, 17 January 1835, Mordecai family papers.

[95]Ellen Mordecai to Dr. Mordecai, 19 February 19 1831, Jacob Mordecai family papers.

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domesticity and the white supremacist notion of female guardianship, Mordecai believed that only she or another white person could successfully and effectively teach non-whites. Mordecai's strident reaction emerged because her authority and her preconceived notions regarding white superiority and black inferiority had been challenged. Ruben, the slave, had crossed racial lines in trying to achieve literacy. As a white woman who relied on the intellectual superiority that whites supposedly possessed in order to legitimately assert authority in her household, this was supremely threatening to the household's crucial racial hierarchy.

Conversely, southern Jewish women were frequently baffled by enslaved African-Americans' incompetence and failed to recognize such behaviors as acts of resistance.[96] Such acts both confounded southern Jewish women and happily confirmed their ideas of white superiority and black inferiority. Rachel Mordecai Lazarus described a particularly annoying incident in which she repeatedly performed a slave chore to show the slave how to do it correctly. In failing to get the servant to "understand," Lazarus finished the chore single-handedly with the slave standing idly nearby. In other instances, Lazarus complained that "servants take hours where minutes would amply suffice, but it does not do to have them and still do their work."[97] Similarly, Ellen Mordecai found that keeping

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[96]African-American female slave scholars have persuasively argued that female slaves used incompetence, slowness, or feigned illness as a form of resistance. For a complete discussion on specifically female slave forms of resistance, see Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman.*

[97]Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, Letter, 17 January 1835, Mordecai family papers.

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her slaves productive was an especially difficult task. When they thought that she had exited the room, they stopped working. She reported that her servants were constantly slowing down, "sleepin and noddin over their tasks" so much that she was forced to sit them on cobs.[98] Mordecai also found that the cobs were not enough and, finally, resulted to sitting and supervising the slaves rather than attend to more pressing household matters. Aside from annoying Jewish female slaveholders because they forced them to do slave labor, such acts of resistance confirmed their ideas about black inferiority and, thus, reinforced their own racial superiority, thereby solidifying their white status in the household.

Aside from belittling slaves' efforts to intellectually improve themselves and misreading blacks' acts of resistance as confirmation of their inferiority, antebellum southern Jewish women used other strategies to demonstrate their racial superiority and distance themselves from African Americans in their minds. Imitating African-American slave dialect represented one of the most common ways that southern Jewish women assured each other that slaves were inferior and racially different from themselves. They mocked their grammar, their seemingly slurred speech, and imitated their delivery. In one especially racist letter to her sister, Ellen Mordecai assumed an African-American dialect and played the role of a fictional female black servant. Through an obnoxious imitation, she described how happy she was as a slave and stated that her owners, "Miss

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[98]Ellen Mordecai, *Fading Scenes Recalled*, 120.

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Nancy" and "Master George" treated her better off than most folk.[99] Years later, her sister Emma imitated slave dialect in the first paragraph of her letter. Exhausted and fully amused she ended her mockery and proclaimed that despite her best efforts, attempting to be like an enslaved African American was impossible. Her difference as a "white" person prevented her ability to do so.[100]

At the start of the Civil War and with enslaved African Americans refusing to accept their place of racial inferiority, like other white southerners, southern Jewish women felt their place in the racial hierarchy compromised. Additionally, the crumbling of the southern racial hierarchy angered whites and encouraged an increase in anti-Semitism and the questioning of Jews' racial status.[101] In desperate attempts to preserve their white racial status to themselves, African-Americans, and other southerners, many southern Jewish women continued to espouse Protestant white philosophies regarding slavery. They propagated the myth of the benevolence of slavery, the myth of the family, their crucial position as white female guardians, black inferiority, and simply refused to

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[99]Ellen Mordecai to George Mordecai, 10 February 1848, George Mordecai family papers.

[100]Emma Mordecai, to Ellen Mordecai, 5 January 1860, Jacob Mordecai family papers. Jewish women's mockery of slave dialect represented a manifestation of anxiety. In many ways, these women viewed the seemingly inarticulate and incomprehensible dialect as an impenetrable wall, a source of control that they could not conquer. Jewish southern women endeavored to correct African-American dialect or at least, decode it. Based on the surveyed evidence, an increase in the mockery of the black dialect occurred during the years just before and during the Civil War. Southern Jewish women must have viewed this use of language as another source of slave resistance that was beyond their control or manipulation

[101]Anti-Semitic incidents included rumors of Jewish profiteering, Grant's order prohibiting Jewish trade, the murder of two Jewish businessmen in Mississippi, and the appearance of overtly anti-Semitic cartoons in southern newspapers. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

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accept the end of racial hierarchies. In contrast to the chaotic situation of the Civil War, Emma Mordecai argued that blacks were essentially simple and content beings. While strolling along the Laurel Branch River to collect flowers, she recalled seeing two happy slave children occupying themselves and wrote:

> The Negro boys are happy, careless little beings—as free as Robin Hood's men "under the Greenwood tree." How much better off will they be in the north? Our ruthless invaders do fall as much injury to the poor Negroes, as to their owners.[102]

Ever the moral female protector, Emma Mordecai fretted about how an upheaval in the slave system caused greater hardship on "defenseless" and "ignorant" slaves by stating:

> What an uprooting of social ties, and tearing asunder of almost kindred associations and destruction of true loyalty, this strange new stage of things produced!!! The disturbance to the whites and the privations it will at first entail upon the poor, improvident Negroes, is incalculable.[103]

Because the slaveholding household had been the only place where southern Jewish women unquestionably asserted their whiteness and superiority, the breakdown of the racial hierarchy was especially devastating. For example, because southern Jewish women fully accepted their role as white female guardians, they were stunned when they learned that their slaves rejected their subordination and did not subscribe to the notion

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[102]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 26 May 1864, Mordecai family papers. In 1864, Mordecai moved to her brother Augustus Mordecai's plantation, Rosewood. In her diary, she noted that Rosewood had a number of slaves with their wives and children. She wrote that Rosina, her daughter Augusta, and herself were the only white people on the plantation. Mordecai fails to mention that massive slave abandonment is occurring at this time on Rosewood plantation.

[103]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 5 May 1865.

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that slavery was a benevolent institution. They were equally flabbergasted when slaves acted upon their feelings through insubordination, refused to work, or abandoned the plantation or house altogether. One such example unfolded in several of Emma Mordecai's diary entries. An enslaved family refused to accept her sister-in-law Rose Mordecai's authority over them. An enslaved woman, named Georgianna, complained of being overworked, avoided labor, and became increasingly impudent. Consequently, Rose Mordecai enlisted a slave overseer named George to assist her in controlling Georgianna's irreverent behavior. After being rebuffed by Georgianna, George sought out her husband, Cyrus (another slave overseer), who also refused to intervene and force his wife to behave. [104] Cyrus was himself growing insubordinate and, according to Emma, unreliable. She wrote: "Cyrus went to work in the field, but we felt no assurance that he would continue faithful."[105] Ultimately, Cyrus and his family staged a full-scale rebellion. Emma Mordecai described the scene:

> In the afternoon Cy, took Caroline away and put her with a Negro woman in the neighborhood to whom he has hired her, without saying a word to Rosina upon the subject... Cy behaved abominably, and refuses either to leave the place or to do anything on it, unless sure of high wages and an increased allowance of meat. Sarah, his wife, does better and Georgiana does very well... He feels as if the whole place belongs to him.[106]

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[104]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 11 June 1864. Ultimately, words turned into fisticuffs.

[105]Emma Mordecai, 5 April 1865.

[106]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 13 April 1865.

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Stunned at his defiance, Emma Mordecai confronted Cyrus on his refusal to work. Cyrus retorted if the mistress could not pay, he would not work. Rejecting slavery and the racial hierarchy he proclaimed: "There was to be no more master and mistress now, all was equal (I) don hear dat read from the courthouse steps." She asked if he would have the nerve to continue to live at Mrs. (Rosina) Mordecai's without working? He responded: "Yes, until I see how things is gwine to wuck. All the land belongs to the Yankees now and they gwine to divide it 'mong the coloured people."[107]

Several weeks later, Emma and Rose Mordecai found they possessed no authority over their slaves. Again attempting to regain control, Mordecai asked Cyrus to leave. Belligerently, Cyrus refused and stated that he had a right to stay here and to bring whom he pleased and to keep his family on the land. He stated that he was entitled to a part of the farm because its success depended on his labor. Furthermore, in his opinion he believed that the kitchen belonged to him because he cut the timber to build it.[108] Grudgingly ceding authority, Mordecai wrote in her diary, "All doing as they please and no one asserting any authority over them."[109] In the slaveholding household, the only environment where Jews exercised complete racial superiority and whiteness, southern Jewish women now faced of slaves' challenges and found themselves and their positions of authority, security, and stability in jeopardy.

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[107]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 13 April 1865.

[108]Emma Mordecai, Diary, May 4, 1865.

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Alone and abandoned, southern Jewish mistresses continued to write about their shock at their slaves' lack of family loyalty and how stunned they were to find out that slaves did not share their belief in the myth of family. Emma Mordecai recounted Rose Mordecai and her daughter Augusta's distress, sadness, and betrayal when a slave, Mary, left without announcement:

> This was a great grief, as well as a great loss to Rose and Gusta. They were very much attached to the child who was both good and useful. Her mother had belonged to Rose and on her death bed, which her mistress had watched over with unwearied kindness and attention, had made her promise that she would always take care of Mary and never part with her. [110]

Rosina and Augusta Mordecai seemed emotionally attached to Mary and mistakenly believed that the slave felt the same way. Consequently, when other slaves like Cyrus (head overseer), Sara, (head domestic), and Lizzy (their daughter and one of her most trusted slaves) departed, Rosina Mordecai tearfully exclaimed "If they felt as I do, they could not possibly leave me."[111] Similarly, Fanny, a young white girl who also lived at Rosewood, was distraught when she lost her playmate, a young black servant.[112] On a Mobile plantation, Ellen Mordecai lamented that most of the slaves had vacated the plantation stating, "Aunt Judy is all that is left now."[113] In her journal, Fanny Cohen recorded with pain and surprise that one of her house servants, Henry, had informed her

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[109]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 21 April 1865.

[110]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 13 April 1865.

[111]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 5 April 1865.

[112]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 13 April 1865.

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that he was leaving to enlist with the federal troops.[114] Eleanor Cohen Seixas felt sad and felt betrayed when her slaves ran. The slaves had been in her family for years and thus Seixas had mistakenly assumed that they were truly a family. She was shocked that slaves, whom her family had raised and trained, could feel so little remorse at abandoning them, save one slave named Lavinia and she wrote in her diary:

> Our servants, born and reared in our hands, hitherto devoted to us, freed by Lincoln, left us today. It is a severe trial to mother and quite a loss to me. Among them went Lavinia, a girl given to me by my grandmother, very handy and who had promised always to remain with and, when I was married, to go with me...But she went. She behaved better than most of them; she offered to come to me in town and do anything. She gave me notice and showed regret at parting. This is one of the fruits of war.[115]

The myth of the family and the role of the white female guardianship had been crucial for white women in order to establish a racially-based social and economic organizational system in the plantation household. Slaves' rejection of these philosophies crumbled the racial hierarchy and therefore dissolved the only arena in which Jews felt superior and white.

Still some southern Jewish women persisted in positioning themselves as white female guardians. For example in the midst of abandoning the plantation, Emma Mordecai "gave [slaves] presents of old dresses and also some meat, meal and potatoes,

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[113]Ellen Mordecai to Family, 24 March 1859, Mordecai family papers.

[114]Fanny Cohen, Journal, December 22, 1864.

[115]Eleanor Cohen Seixas, Diary, February 28, 1865-September 10, 1866, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 23 June 1865.

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for all of which they seemed very grateful."[116] Similarly, Clarice Elias Auerbach claimed that slaves really were devoted to their white owners and cited another southern Jewish family's experience with their slaves as proof. She wrote "the Grausman help begged to remain with the family whom they cared so much." [117] Her own family continued to subscribe to the belief that there were reciprocal bonds between whites and blacks. Auerbach's mother continued her relationship with an ex-slave and even helped her daughter find employment. She wrote: "my mother obtained a position for Anne (the daughter of her black servant Margaret) as head nurse at Shaw University, and the second daughter, Belle, as visiting nurse for the colored people of Raleigh."[118] Desperate to maintain some measure of authority, some southern Jewish slaveholding women continued to play roles as benevolent white female guardians and thereby assured themselves that they still retained a superior position in a disintegrating racial hierarchy.

Southern Jewish women continued to rely on notions of black inferiority to reassure themselves that they indeed were racially superior, despite the fact that arena in which their whiteness was fully achieved, the plantation household, no longer existed. Upon their journeys into the ravaged cities, scenes of overcrowding, disease, drunkenness, and ribaldry confirmed southern Jewish women's ideas about black

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[116]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 5 May 1865.

[117]Clarice Elias Auerbach, "Recollections," American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[118]Auerbach, "Recollections."

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inferiority and white supremacy. On her way to visit her husband in a military camp near Culpepper Virginia, Septima Collis remarked that in Alexandria, it was a "perfect bedlam; all confusion...the muddy streets thronged with lazy Negroes...drunken recruits and conscripts singing ribald songs."[119] When Emma Mordecai returned to Richmond, she commented on the "saucy Negro women" and that the town's square was filled with "troops of little Negroes play at soldier...Everything looks unnatural and decorated and the eye is offended by all it sees and the ear by all it hears. I trust in God's mercy to preserve us from the tyrannical oppression."[120]

To further punctuate her defense of slavery, Mordecai was quite satisfied when she heard of ex-slaves' dissatisfaction with their freedom, for it confirmed her notions about the importance of previous racial hierarchies and blacks' inability to survive without white assistance. In her diary she wrote of an anecdote told to her by a friend: "A Negro man who was passing, thus soliloquizing. "Dis what you call freedom! No work to do, and got to feed, clothes yourself." [121] Her own slave Mary did not feel that her freedom had improved her state and told Mordecai "No, I just as leave be a slave as not."[122] Such comments confirmed Mordecai's white supremacist believe that enslaved African Americans could not handle the responsibilities of freedom without the

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[119]Septima Maria Levy Collis, "Civil War Reminiscences of a General's Wife," *A Woman's War Record*, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 23-4.

[120]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 21 April 1865.

[121]Mordecai, Diary 13 April 1865.

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assistance of whites. She wrote: "they will now begin to find out how easy their life as slaves has been and to feel the slavery of their freedom."[123] To further punctuate her point, Mordecai remarked that slavery assigned roles to whites as guardians and this had been a moral burden. In Mordecai's opinion, an end to slavery liberated her from her economic responsibilities with respect to her slaves. After meeting an ex-slave on the road she curtly remarked:

> His freedom will be little loss to me nor gain to him, for as his wife, who also belonged to me, is a very sickly woman and the children only an expense, it took nearly the whole of the wages he paid to me, to pay doctors and druggists bills and to close them.[124]

Finally, southern Jewish women reaffirmed their racial superiority and distanced themselves from newly manumitted African-Americans by refusing to accept black equality and the dissolution of racial hierarchies. Even though Emma Mordecai recognized the end of slavery, she refused to accept black equality or authority because it challenged her own racial superiority and altered her own elevated position in the racial hierarchy. Being deferential to African Americans was simply too much for Mordecai who sniped: "to have to submit to the Yankees is bad enough, but to submit to Negro children is a little worse."[125] When an African-American soldier approached her, an annoyed Mordecai insulted President Lincoln, causing the soldier to challenge her. She

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[122]Ibid.

[123]Mordecai, Diary, 5 May 1865.

[124]Mordecai, 15 May 1865 Diary

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replied "and I suppose I were to tell you what I said about Lincoln, would you shoot me or would you stick your bayonet in me?"[126]

Conclusion

The existence of the southern black and white racial hierarchy coupled with the ambiguous racial status of southern Jews made it exceptionally difficult for antebellum southern Jews to be concretely labeled as white. In political, social, and economic arenas, southerners debated over the Jews' whiteness, blackness, or whether they were actually part of their own independent race. It was solely in the plantation household and in relationships with enslaved African-Americans where Jews lived as whites and their racial status and superiority went unquestioned. As whites, therefore, antebellum southern Jewish female slaveholders relied upon white Protestant ideologies regarding slavery, black inferiority, and white superiority to structure their households. Supporting the myth of slavery's benevolence, the paternal myth of the family, assuming positions as white female guardians, subscribing to racist notions about black inferiority, and refusing to accept the dissolution of white superiority enabled southern Jewish women to act as whites and legitimately assert authority over their slaves. In doing so, slaves, for a time, accepted these women's authority. Slaves, unlike non-Jewish southerners, did not view that southern Jews' religion, diminished their whiteness. Thus for southern Jewish

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[125]Mordecai, 19 April 1865 Diary.

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slaveholding families, the plantation and, specifically, the plantation household, existed as the only site where Jews exercised their full authority as whites and consequently, achieved the benefits (and problems) associated with being white.

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[126]Mordecai, 13 April 1865 Diary The encounter ended when she demanded her Negro servant, George to drive on despite the soldier's protestations.

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Chapter Six
"An Ardent Attachment to my Birth:" Antebellum Southern Jewish Women As Confederate Ambassadors

When her friend, the wife of George W. Randolph the Secretary of War, offered her the superintendence of a Confederate hospital, Phoebe Yates Levy Pember did not hesitate. Despite the somewhat "startling proposition to a woman used to all the comforts of luxurious life," Pember knew that as a southern white woman, she had no other choice.[1] She understood that her responsibilities were to the Confederacy no matter how taxing her duties might be. Pember wrote:

> The women of the south had been openly and violently rebellious from the moment they thought their states' rights were touched. They incited the men to struggle in support of their views, and whether right or wrong, sustained them nobly to the end. They were the first to rebel—the last to succumb. Taking an active part in all that came within their sphere, and often compelled to go beyond this...no appeal was ever made to the women of the South, individually or collectively, that did not meet with a ready response.[2]

And so began Pember's remarkable journey as the matron of what soon became the Confederacy's largest hospital. There, she experienced the casualties of war, the putrid

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[1]Phoebe Yates Levy Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story, Memoir of Phoebe Yates Levy Pember* chapter 1, p. 2, http://www.jewish-history.com/civilwar.htm.

[2]Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story*, chapter 1, page 2. In a letter to her sister Eugenia Levy Philips, Pember recounted an incident with a Mrs. Levy who accused her of "volunteering for the position." This accusation incensed Pember because it seemed to have immoral and sinister overtones. She retorted: "I immediately contradicted this (as the choice of such a life would naturally be considered an absurdity) and said I had no means and it was a necessity. Who would suppose or believe that days passed among fever wards and dying men, in a hospital away from the city, with no comforts and every privation, was voluntary! I dare not aspire to that!" See Bertram Korn, "The Jews of the Confederacy" *American Jewish Archives* XIII No.1. April (1961): 55.

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nature of battlefield injuries and disease, and how to exist as one of a few women working in an overwhelmingly male atmosphere. Pember's nomination by the Secretary of War for a position as matron of a large military hospital was especially unusual because Pember was Jewish and anti-Semitism was on the rise. In fact the Civil War period witnessed an upsurge in hostility toward Jews, who had long been regarded as outsiders by suspicious southerners. In this context, Pember's acceptance of the position of head matron was more than just one woman acting out her regional loyalties, rather, her work helped counter pervasive and potentially dangerous rumors about Jews profiteering from the war. As a highly visible and high-ranking competent member of the Confederacy who worked side by side with white southerners, Pember demonstrated that she and other southern Jews were in fact dedicated to the Confederacy.

Phoebe Pember Yates and the contributions of individual and southern Jewish women's groups have occasionally drawn the attention of American Jewish historians but much of their analysis of these women's activities during the sectional crisis is restricted to merely listing actual monies raised, activities performed, and lists of supplies gathered.[3] In their cursory treatments, scholars have attributed these women's actions to

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[3]All of the books written on southern Jews in the Civil War do pay homage to women's efforts. Mostly, the material is repetitive with little analysis. For examples, see Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe (*Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), Stanley R. Brav, "The Jewish Woman, 1861-1865" *American Jewish Archives* (April 1965): 34-75, Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Marietta: R Bemis Publishing, 1995), Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733-1983* (Savannah: Congregation Mickve Israel, 1983), Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engelman, *The Jews of Charleston: A History of an American Jewish Community*

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their dedication to the Confederacy. They have not examined how the context of a fundamentalist Protestant atmosphere and rising anti-Semitism might have influenced Jewish women's actions and provided a different motivation and meaning to their war work.

Similarly, southern white women's Civil War scholars have also neglected to examine distinctly southern Jewish women's responses. Instead, most of these scholars have organized their analysis along racial not religious lines, and explored southern non-black women's wartime activities including white women's material activities on the plantation as well as fundraising and supplies collection in their church or urban groups.[4] Recently, Drew Gilpin Faust's work provided a long needed treatment of changing southern white women's roles during the Civil War. Surveying the lives of over five hundred women, Faust concluded that the war "created conceptual, emotional, and social dislocations" and because southern white women sought to preserve old southern

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(Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), and Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000).

[4]In her book *The Plantation Mistress*, Catherine Clinton argued that the majority of southern women assumed greater responsibilities on the plantation because of the dearth of men. Southern plantation mistresses attempted to run the house, fields, supervise their slaves, and carry on their husband's business during the sectional crisis. Additionally, southern white women fundraised and collected much needed medical supplies and surplus food items. See Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 197. Marli Weiner's recent analysis, *Mistresses and Slaves*, echoes Clinton's findings and added that southern women occupied much of their time sewing, knitting, worked as "nurses in hospitals, formed hospital associations to gather supplies organized fairs to raise money, contribute food, jewelry, handmade luxuries, and carefully hoarded funds." See Marli F. Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 159-601.

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economic and social systems, they became "mothers of invention." Thus, southern white women created new roles for themselves as nurses, teachers, plantation supervisors, and religious leaders.[5] Similarly, historians Mary Louise Weaks and Carolyn Perry also found in their research that changes in southern women's activities and a perceived increase in their fortitude created a new "Confederate model" of southern womanhood. Accordingly, these women "took more responsibility for their own and their children's welfare, with husbands, lovers, brothers, and sons away at war."[6] Though scholars and others have done a remarkable job chronicling the changing roles of southern white women during the Civil War, they have not ascertained whether these or other religious differences affected how southern women responded to the changes that war brought and how they responded to their new roles.

In many ways, Jewish women experienced the Civil War in much the same way as their Gentile sisters. They were faced with the difficulties of plantation supervision, slaves' abandonment, familial loss, and simply surviving. Like their Christian female counterparts, they also solicited supplies, fundraised, nursed, managed plantations, and openly voiced their public opinions regarding the supremacy of states' rights and the Confederacy. Yet, their religion distanced them from other southerners and, therefore,

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[5]See Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4.

[6] See Mary Louise Weaks and Carolyn Perry eds., *Southern Women's Writing: Colonial to Contemporary* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 93.

their experiences in the south and especially during the Civil War were somewhat different.

As discussed in the previous chapter, southern Jewish women used the slavery issue during the antebellum period and their relationships with slaves to prove their whiteness and present themselves as legitimate and respectable white southerners. Similarly, the sectional crisis not only forced southern Jews to defend their businesses, homes, and plantations, but also represented another opportunity for them to proclaim their loyalty to the Confederacy, southern white society philosophies, and to prove their worthiness as virtuous and productive southern white citizens. Yet, there was an additional component to southern Jews' motivations and actions. The sectional crisis and its federal and union assaults on southern plantations, cities, and businesses and the anxieties this produced in southern society fed southern anti-Semitism. Rumors of southern Jewish wartime profiteering, in particular, hall-marked rising anti-Semitism causing southerners to become even more suspicious of Jews and their loyalty to the Confederate cause. Events like Grant's Order, Sherman's anti-Jewish stereotypes, the lynching of two southern Jewish cotton traders in Mississippi, the expulsion of Jews from Paducah, Kentucky and, finally, a multitude of anti-Semitic editorials and cartoons placed southern Jews in a decidedly different position than other southern whites.[7] Logically,

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[7]In their study of anti-Semitism during the war, Gary Bunker and John Appel discovered that, after war supply prices skyrocketed, illustrators for *Vanity Fair*, the *New York Illustrated News*, *Frank*

their Jewish opinions, responses, actions, and activities were influenced by the rise in southern anti-Semitism. Accordingly, it is this chapter's argument that southern Jewish women fought for the Confederate cause to both preserve their own southern lives and ways of life and to counter growing anti-Semitism. Women's activities became particularly important in this respect for, during the sectional crisis, the anti-Semitism directed at southern Jewish men in legislation, military orders, violence, editorials, and cartoons hampered their ability to defend themselves and the southern Jewish population.[8] With their husbands unable to adequately defend themselves, southern Jewish women launched an assault to prove their Confederate loyalty and to fight anti-Semitism with respect to southern Jewish men's business practices. Through fundraising activities, collecting of supplies, occupying elite position in dangerous military hospitals, fierce poetry, defiance of federal and northern troops, and spy activities, southern Jewish women proved their loyalty to the Confederacy, southern philosophies, and performed damage control with respect to spreading anti-Semitism.

Leslie's Budget of Fun, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, Harper's Weekly, and the *Phunny Phellow* began impugning Jews motives. See Gary L. Bunker and John Appel, ""Shoddy," Anti-Semitism and the Civil War," *American Jewish History* 82, nos. 1-4: 46-67.

[8]Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 147-8. Despite the absence of black men, African-Americans used the political culture that they had helped to construct over thirty years of emancipation as "an ideological basis and an organizational structure" to continue the African-American political agenda. North Carolina's African-American women also added a specifically female network that included various women's groups all dedicated to the project of African-American equality. This chapter relies upon Glenda Gilmore's paradigm used in her book, *Gender and Jim Crow*

In general, American Jewish historians have argued that southern Jews responded to the sectional crisis regionally and not as a religious bloc. In reality, the situation among Jews was much more complex. Despite the conflict, northern and southern Jews were never fully able to ignore the fact that they belonged to a minority population in need of solidarity.[9] Consequently, there was a lot of trans-regional contact between southern and northern Jews. During the war, diaries and letters frequently mentioned Jews sending other Jews supplies across enemy lines and, especially, ritual food, such as the *matzoth* needed to carry out Passover directives. For example nearing the end of the War in 1865, Savannah Jews had difficulty locating unleavened bread and did not have the money or ingredients to make their own. Isaac Leeser, editor of the *Occident*, issued an editorial stating that Savannah Jews were in need. New York Jews sent 3,000 pounds of unleavened bread and Philadelphia's Jewry sent 2000 pounds. [10]

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where she states that, in the presence of the forced removal of African-American men from politics, African-American women instead acted as ambassadors to the white community.

[9]There was, to be sure, evidence of regional conflict between during the Civil War. Sermons in northern synagogues, for instance, routinely blamed southern Jewry for its support of the Confederacy. For a more detailed explanation, see Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, (Marietta: R Bemis Publishing, 1995), Chapter III "The Rabbis Take Sides."

[10] For examples, see Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976*, Bunker and Appel, ""Shoddy" Anti-Semitism and the Civil War," Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973, Herbert T. Ezekiel, *The Jews of Richmond During the Civil War* (Richmond: Richmond Press, 1915) and *The History of the Jews of Richmond from 1769 to 1917.* Richmond: (Herbert T. Ezekiel, 1917), Barbara Forman, Exhibit Curator "Keneseth Israel Families and the Civil War, Temple Judea Museum of Keneseth Israel. March 19- June 15, 1987, Harry Golden, *Our Southern Landsmen* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1974), Stephen Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America,

Apparently cognizant of the potential anti-Semitism and divisiveness among Jews, both northern and southern rabbis initially advocated a doctrine of neutrality and objectivity. For example in his sermons, northern Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise frequently supported a neutral position, but also defended states' rights to determine their own economic systems of production.[11] Similarly, the editor of the leading Jewish newspaper the *Occident*, Isaac Leeser, could not take sides as he felt sympathetic to both the north and south.[12] Also, southern Rabbi Reverend James K. Gutheim purposely avoided supporting the south and stated: "that it was not the province of the pulpit, to discuss political questions of the day and to point out the course in which it should be pursued...Religion was not intended to be mixed with specific political considerations."[13] Bertram Korn suggested that southern Jews often were noticeably silent and, at the very least, hesitant in proclaiming a southern Jewish opinion because they were afraid of creating suspicion among southern whites and were fearful that making an incorrect decision could potentially place them in danger nationally and regionally.[14]

1978), Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, and Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jew: 1585-1990, A History* (New York: Carlson, 1995).

Openly contradicting prevailing historiographical doctrine, Hasia Diner, in *A Time for Gathering*, suggested that in spite of the growing regional differences, transregional Jewish "unity" prevailed. See Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering The Second Migration 1820-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 156-7).

[11]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 40.

[12]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 44-7.

[13]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 47-8.

[14]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 13.

Southern Jews' nervousness may have been prescient. The bombardment of southern cities and lands, the dearth of wartime medical supplies, food, and ammunition contributed to the demoralization of southerners. Consequently, southern Jews and, specifically, southern Jewish businessmen became the targets of anti-Semitism. [15] As scholars have recognized, the Civil War brought an upsurge in anti-Semitism throughout the south but have not investigated whether it affected the activities. For example, in his study, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, Bertram Korn argued that "anti-Jewish prejudice was actually a characteristic expression of the age, part and parcel of the economic and social upheaval effectuated by the war."[16] Additionally, Korn stated that certain psychological, social, economic, and political factors encouraged anti-Semitism to resurface during the sectional crisis. These included the south's general dislike for all aliens and foreigners, a widespread suspicion of merchant shopkeepers, a deep commitment to fundamentalist Christianity, and an intensified emotional depression as the war dragged on from year to year and Confederate defeat seemed inevitable.[17]

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[15]During this time, rumors of profiteering and discrimination in the army caused an intense dislike of Jews.

[16] Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 156. Korn is careful to note that the anti-Jewish prejudice was not large enough to arouse the kind of violence directed at Catholic immigrants, but that public Jews were routinely criticized for their religion.

[17]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 176. Korn provided several anti-Semitic instances. One Jewish colonel assigned to a Texas regiment arrived in Virginia and was met with contempt by the enlisted men. Aside from lobbing anti-Semitic diatribes, they also cut off his horse's tail. The colonel transferred out. Confederate cabinet member Judah P. Benjamin also was a popular anti-Semitic target during the war. During his tenure as Confederate Secretary of Treasury, southerners blamed him for all

Similarly, during the war years anti-Semitism was especially blatant in the Confederacy. For example, the *Southern Punch*, a humorous weekly periodical, routinely made prejudicial remarks against Jews and especially merchant Jews. In one editorial denouncing the arrival of the Yankees in Richmond, the editor castigated Jewish traders describing them as "the dirty greasy Jew pedlar, who might be seen, with a pack on his back, a year or two since, bowing and cringing even to negro servants, now struts by with the air of a millionaire."[18]

According to Bunker and Appel, anti-Semitism surfaced most often in economic issues.[19] Age-old anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews as thieves, greedy, and unscrupulous reemerged with "renewed vigor."[20] Unfounded rumors that southern Jewish businessmen were profiteering, hoarding, extorting monies, and charging exceedingly high prices caused southerners to blame Jews as the source of the Confederacy's economic troubles. Consequently, several attacks on southern Jewish businesses occurred.[21] Southern anti-

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the problems of the Confederacy. Anti-Semites were enraged that a Jew could hold such a high position of rank in the Confederacy and expressed their opinions in southern newspapers.

[18]Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976*, 185. Also found in the same editorial "some at the commencement of our national struggle, had a little capital, which they at once invested in the necessities of life and ran up the prices to the extent which took the last hard earnings of the poor to keep off starvation...others, particularly the Jews, monopolized the auction sales and bought up everything that was to be sold...there were associated with these Shylocks, many native American speculators, not better, if so good in character, as the Jews themselves..."

[19]Bunker and Appel. ""Shoddy," Anti-Semitism and the Civil War," 44. In 1861, Jewish chaplains were excluded from the armed forces.

[20]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 177.

[21]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 177. Korn reported that in the Confederate House of Representatives on January 14, 1863, Congressman Henry S. Foote of Tennessee charged that Jews had

Semitism formally reared its ugly head in April1862 when the residents of Thomasville, Georgia, charged Jews with "unpatriotic behavior" and resolved to ban any Jews from migrating into the town.[22] Southern anti-Semitism was also fueled in a series of communiqués and orders made by General Ulysses S. Grant. On November 9, 1862, Grant prohibited all "Israelites" to come south of Jackson, Tennessee.[23] A day later, he forwarded another order to General Webster in Jackson, stating: "Give order to all the conductors on the road that no Jews are to be permitted to travel on the railroad...they are such an intolerable nuisance that the department must be purged of them."[24] From Holly Springs, Mississippi, on December 8, 1862, Grant issued another order which expelled Jews from the area because, he stated: "on account of the scarcity of provisions all cotton speculators, Jews and other vagrants having no honest means of support, except trading

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"flooded the country and controlled at least nine-tenths of the business of the land. " Though he did not present specific evidence he assumed a leadership role in investigating these charges. Other southern legislators including, William P. Chilton of Alabama, William P. Miles of South Carolina, and Robert B. Hilton of Florida, charged that "Jews swarmed all over the country like locusts, eating up its resources and monopolizing its trade." See Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*,178). Myron Berman also uncovered Foote's testimony: "Rumour had given some explanation of this mystery and it was by official permission that this swarm of Jews from all parts of the world had come to this country invited to trade with us, and permitted in many cases to conduct illicit traffic with the enemy without much official examination into this part of their transaction." See Berman, *Richmond's Jewry*, 187). Southerners routinely charged Jews with illicit trading and labeled them "unpatriotic." In one instance, the wives of soldiers robbed a Jewish store at gunpoint and took whatever they wished because they believed Jews were speculating during the war. See Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 178-9.

Additionally when "the army arrested a Jewish trader or smuggler, they specifically noted his religion. This did not occur with any other religion. See Bunker and Appel. ""Shoddy," Anti-Semitism and the Civil War," 44.

[22]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 179.

[23]Arnold A. Rogow, *The Jew in the Gentile World* (New York: McMillan Company, 1961), 258.

[24]Rogow, *The Jew in the Gentile World*, 258.

upon the misery of the country."[25] Grant's most virulent display of anti-Semitism came on December 17, 1862, when General Grant issued his infamous Order #11. Grant ordered the expulsion of all Jews present under his military control in Mississippi, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Defending his order, Grant stated: "Jews, as a class violat[ed] every regulation of trade established by the treasury department."[26] In the wake of Grant's order, residents of Paducah, Kentucky passed legislation giving the thirty resident

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[25]Rogow, *The Jew in the Gentile World*, 258.

[26]Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 158-159. The other half of the order described how the Jews should leave. "Post commanders will see that all of this class of people be furnished passes and required to leave, and any one returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permit from headquarters." According to Korn, the order was carried out in Paducah, Kentucky, Holly Springs, and Oxford, Mississippi. See Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 122-3.

While investigating the Order, historian Steven Ash found that Grant was under enormous public pressure to control the corrupt nature of wartime trade. Initially, trade was carried on quite congenially between the union and the confederacy. Unfortunately, the trade, largely involving cotton, was poorly managed. Private individuals were allowed to follow army troops. In 1862, prices skyrocketed to three to four times their prewar value. Official regulations governing the trade were extremely ambiguous, sometimes contradictory, and lacked ultimate decision making authority. Sensing the enormous amount of profits to be gained through wartime cotton trade, many unsavory and unscrupulous characters joined in. Grant found it difficult to control the ensuing mess. Out of the chaos grew bigotry because many of the purported speculators were Jewish. Despite the fact that historical evidence revealed that Jews were neither the most "numerous nor the most iniquitous" of the unscrupulous traders, they were the most visible and, therefore, were targeted as a group. Ash concluded that Grant's order was directed at the Jews because it was the "logical culmination of the history of anti-Semitism in Grant's army and his own intensifying bigotry, a culmination shaped by the penchant of the soldier for quick and decisive remedies based on military considerations alone." See Steven V. Ash, "Civil War Exodus: The Jews and Grant's General Orders No. 11" *The Historian: A Journal of History* XLIV no.4 August (1982): 505-23.

Diner has demonstrated that northern and southern Jews "assiduously protested" these actions. In Thomasville, Jewish soldiers collectively wrote a letter to the *Savannah Republican* in which they proclaimed their patriotism. Jews also met in Savannah and protested the "wholesale slander, persecution, and denunciation of a people." See Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 158. Southern and Northern Jews immediately responded to Grant's order and organized protests around the country. Jews went to Congress and requested meetings with President Lincoln and demanded that the order be repealed. After being swamped with angry letters and editorials, Lincoln insisted that Grant rescind his order.

Jewish families in Paducah twenty-four hours to vacate the city.[27] In 1863, in another particularly violent anti-Semitic display, two Memphis Jewish businessmen, who were on a cotton buying expedition in Mississippi, were attacked by a "guerilla band." One, Mr. Peres, was fatally shot, while the other, Mr. Wolf, feigned death and survived.[28] Scholars like Bertram Korn reasoned that southern anti-Semitism, during the sectional crisis, occurred because Jews made ready scapegoats and enabled southern society to project its "pent-up passions, frustration, anger, disappointment, fear, insecurity, anxiety, shame, and jealousy onto Jews."[29]

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[27]Diner, *A Time for Gathering*.

[28]Bertram Korn, "The Jews of the Confederacy" in *American Jewish Archives* XIII, no. 1 April, (1961): 59-61. The incident according to Korn, distilled from various reports in the *Memphis Argus*, was as follows. Mr. H.L. Peres and his brother-in-law, Mr. Wolf set out for Mississippi and bought nine bales of cotton. While staying at the home of a Mr. Anderson a band of guerillas appeared at the door and demanded to see the two Jewish businessmen. They took the two out into the woods, burned the cotton, made the two men get down on their knees and pray, and then shot. Mr. Peres' wound was fatal. Unsure that Mr. Wolf was dead they shot him again. He feigned death and survived.

[29]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 184. For an example of how southern white women also carried anti-Semitic notions, see C. Vann Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University, 1981). Perhaps the most famous southern diarist, Mary Boykin Chesnut made several guarded references to Jews in her diary. On Judah Benjamin, advisor to Southern States' president Jefferson Davis she wrote "(he) who is thought by Mr. Chesnut the very cleverest man we had in the senate...the mob only calls him "Mr. Davis" pet Jew, a King Street Jew, cheap, very cheap." See Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 288-289. Attempting to assume the position of a distant and objective observer, Chesnut echoed prevailing stereotypes of Jews as crafty and miserly. Though Chesnut occasionally socialized with elite southern Jewish women, she noted their religious difference and therefore the trouble that their Jewishness caused them. Recounting a story concerning her acquaintance Miriam De Leon Cohen she wrote: "Mem Cohen dreads the overwhelmingly pious Mrs. Young...I am a Jewess and she will want to convert me. That kind always do. Now you despise a Jew in your heart. Don't answer, I know you do. You like me, but that is in spite of my being one. We are a stiff-necked race. Let us stick to the father of Abraham and Isaac for shabby as a Jew in your eyes, he is a miracle of respectability." See Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 317. Cohen confronted Chesnut's own blatant anti-Semitism and suggested that other factors (probably economic) encouraged Chesnut to continue to socialize with her. Despite their socialization, each woman was cognizant of the fact that neither entirely trusted the other. Later in her diary, Chesnut

According to Korn, southern Jews responded to the public outcry against them with "bewilderment, hurt, pride, anger, and rebellion."[30] Because charges against Jews were frequent and bitter, southern Jewish clergy felt compelled to respond. Reverend Maximilian J. Michelbacher, the head rabbi of Beth Ahabah Congregation of Richmond, delivered a public statement to these charges during a Confederate fast day service in Fredericksburg in 1863. He personally had investigated the conduct of Jewish merchants and concluded that they were neither speculators nor extortionists. Instead, he charged that the real extortionists concocted these charges to deflect attention and escape punishment.[31] Also according to Korn, "Savannah Jews held a meeting and passed resolutions against the people of Thomasville who had banished Jews from their town, and urged their non-Jewish neighbors to repudiate the citizens of that place as "enemies of human liberty and freedom of conscience."[32] Similary, in both of Richmond's Jewish congregations, Beth Ahabah and Beth Shalome, Jews held discussions on possible

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acknowledged her rather unsavory opinion of Jews. She recommended that for the most part decent white southerners should avoid Jews. However, she believed they were necessary accessories to any respectable cosmopolitan salon. In social circles, Jews were " haute volee. Everybody here has their own Jew exceptions. I have two—Mem Cohen, Agnes De Leon, Mary Preston has her Rachel Lyons." See Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 547. Despite the fact that Cohen and DeLeon came from two of the most prominent southern families, their Jewishness forever negatively distinguished them and prevented them from fully acculturating into southern social society.

[30]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 184. Also see Diner, *A Time for Gathering*. According to Hasia Diner, despite the rise in anti-Semitism in the south, Jews attempted to "assert their rights as Americans and their self-worth as Jews." According to Hasia Diner, "they protested, petitioned, and issued strident declarations that they deserved the same rights as other Americans." See Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 160.

[31]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 184- 187.

courses of action. Beth Ahabah suggested that Jews fundraise for the city's non-Jewish poor. Beth Shalome publicly denounced the accusations and suggested that enlightened citizens could never fall prey to believing such ridiculous charges.[33] Additionally, several Jews responded by writing to the editors of southern city's newspapers. Editors of the *Augusta Sentinel*, the *Richmond Dispatch*, and the *Charleston Courier* encouraged its readers to be fair-minded.[34]

Southern Jewish Women's Strategies to Counter Anti-Semitism During the Civil War

While southern Jewish communities did their best to counter anti-Semitic attacks on southern Jewish businesses, southern Jewish women endeavored, through their individual and collective wartime activities, to also temper anti-Semitic stereotypes. The most effective way to accomplish this goal and to continue their goals of tolerance and acculturation was to prove their Confederate loyalty. They did so, according to Bertram Korn, through "a highly accelerated pace of Americanization which resulted from (southern) Jewish participation in the war on both individual and communal levels." With respect to southern women, the Americanization process meant that Jewish women performed specific southern women's activities and employed certain acceptable forms of mainstream activities such as collecting and manufacturing supplies, fundraising,

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[32]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 184.

[33]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 185.

[34]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 186.

volunteering, nursing, caring for soldiers, spying, smuggling, and criticizing northern activities. Through such efforts, southern Jewish women hoped that their public dedication to the Confederacy would prove southern Jews' loyalty and temper anti-Semitism.

When southern Jewish women addressed the impending crisis, they frequently expressed a fear of a divided union and anxiety over the potential personal, communal, and regional effects the conflict might have on them. Given these concerns, they hoped the conflict would end peacefully or quickly. Emma Mordecai wrote to her Uncle George that she "hoped the southern and northern states (could) come to an agreement and avoid massacres of violence." Initially, she expressed the hope that the union would prevail "if possible without ruin."[35] Acting her sentiments out publicly, Mordecai reported that "in my humble sphere [I] do the best to discourage the mad proceedings of fanatics, North and South." As war became inevitable, however, Mordecai's sympathy for the union cause gave way to southern loyalty as Mordecai proclaimed: "If the worst should happen. It will be difficult enough for us to act, you may be sure that I shall not be found in opposition to my own people."[36] With the war in full swing, Emma Mordecai' poetically proclaimed her loyalty when she wrote: "One spirit seems to

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[35]Emma Mordecai to George Mordecai, 17 December 1860 George Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[36]Emma Mordecai to George Mordecai, 17 December, 1860, George Mordecai family papers.

animate the southern heart from every point we receive the same tidings. We are proposing and offering ourselves willingly."[37]

Mordecai was not alone in joining the Southern cause, once war became inevitable as other Jewish women proclaimed their loyalty to the confederacy. Young Clara Solomon also quickly fell into line and wrote in her diary on July 6, 1861,: "Tis' true, the Northerners are raging an unholy and unrighteous war against us, but do they not think that they have Justice on their side. We know they haven't."[38] After receiving the particularly bad news that family friend and Confederate Major Wheat was mortally wounded, Solomon lamented: "Oh what a barbarous war; it has no parallel in the history of unenlightened ages. Will the Northern Vandals ever awake from their lethargy?"[39] Similarly, young southerner Isabel Mordecai privately exclaimed her support of the Confederacy and her hatred of federal intervention when she wrote in her diary on December 20, 1860, "How dare federal tyranny place its yoke upon the southern states?" Assuming the voice of a southern white woman and invoking revolutionary rhetoric, Mordecai gravely intoned "Who imagined that we will allow ourselves to be trampled upon as slaves, that our courage is but a byword and that we will not dare to secede and

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[37]Emma Mordecai, to Niece Nell, 26 April 1861, Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[38]Quoted in Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon*, 58. Diary entry dated Saturday, July 6, 1861.

[39]Quoted in Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon*, 89.

now to find that they have mistaken our nature?"[40] Further demonstrating her interest in the war and especially Confederate efforts, she recorded in her diary on December 27, 1860, city evacuations, individual states' secession dates, wartime preparations, the movement of federal, Confederate, and local troops, federal and Confederate cabinet appointments, resignations, and replacements.[41] In another instance, fierce Confederate loyalist Eugenia Phillips summed up the southern women's response to federal attacks with fiery rhetoric: "southern women...spoke of their hatred and determination to sustain their rights by encouraging in their husbands, sons, and fathers every resistance to tyranny exhibited by the republicans."[42] Similarly, her sister and Confederate matron of Chimborazo hospital, Phoebe Yates Levy Pember repeatedly referred to the sectional crisis as a "cruel, cruel, war," and the northerners as "federal tyrants."[43]

Superficially read, such violent expressions of Confederate loyalty seem quite commonplace for southern white women. These southern women were, however, Jewish and were, frequently, the wives of Jewish businessmen who were increasingly targets of

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[40]Isabel Mordecai, Journal, 20 December 1860, Duke Special Collections, Duke University, Raleigh-Durham. Mordecai's analogy of the south's relationship to the north as akin to slavery is especially interesting given Jews' ambiguous racial status in the south. In using the slave metaphor, Mordecai, like other Jews, continues to distance herself from African Americans and move herself squarely into the category of southern whites. For a further explanation on southern Jews' attempts to define themselves as whites, see chapter five, "Relationships in Bondage."

[41]Isabel Mordecai, Journal #2, 27 December 1860 and 9 January 1861, Duke University Special Collections.

[42]Eugenia Levy Phillips, Diary, 1. Phillips family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[43]Phoebe Yates Levy Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story.*

anti-Semitic attacks. As such, their expressions of southern loyalty had a special meaning and were a way for these women to prove their loyalty to the confederacy. Their words were matched by deeds.

Southern anti-Semitism encouraged southern Jewish women to find creative ways to actively display their loyalty to the Confederacy for all to see. Generally, Civil War scholars and women's scholars have likened Jewish women's efforts to those of southern white non-Jews. In general, scholars have found the cult of true womanhood paradigm to be the most useful in covering southern Jewish women's activities.[44] For example, southern Jewish historian Herbert T. Ezekiel briefly concluded that: "Jews fed the hungry, clothed the poor, nursed the sick and wounded and buried the dead."[45] Ezekiel described Richmond Jewish women's efforts as "valiant." [46] Similarly, Bertram Korn described women's activities as "devoted."[47] Echoing Ezekiel and Korn's sentiments but restricting their analysis to the wartime activities of northern Jewish women, Paula

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[44]Whereas southern white women's scholars have detailed how the Civil War forced white women to perform duties that were traditionally outside of gendered expectations (i.e. plantation management), Jewish scholars have restricted their analysis to reiterating the activities first outlined by the founding father of American Jewish history, Jacob Rader Marcus.

[45]Herbert T. Ezekiel, *The Jews of Richmond During the Civil War.*

[46] In his study on the Jews of Richmond during the Civil War, Ezekiel's own work suggested that something other than simple demonstrations of loyalty or patriotism were at work. In several instances, he claimed that many a Jewish woman became the bride of a Southern soldier. If read through a lens of anti-Semitism, it is possible that southern Jewish women were marrying Gentile soldiers not only out of love but also as a strategy of acculturation and protection. Marrying gentile soldiers lent legitimacy to the Jewish brides and their families and allowed them to pronounce their southern and Confederate loyalty without other southerners suspecting them of Jewish duplicity.

[47]Korn, "On the Home Front," *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 99.

Hyman, Charlotte Baum, and Sonya Michel, concluded: "during the Civil War, American Jewish women... were scarcely distinguishable from their non-Jewish middle class counterparts."[48] Though such a paradigm is useful in uncovering white women's wartime activities, the cult of true womanhood blurs distinctions that religious differences might pose. A closer analysis of southern Jewish women's wartime efforts reveals that their Jewishness and their southernness potentially contributed to differing motivations. Acting like their southern white Christian female counterparts, southern Jewish women's material efforts of fundraising, wartime supplies collection, nursing, and sewing were especially successful in countering profiteering rumors, proving southern Jewish respectability and loyalty, and potentially staving off future or even harsher anti-Semitic attacks. Furthermore, there were many times during the war where Jews and non-Jewish white women worked side by side to tend to the sick and collect desperately needed materials. These Civil War moments provided southern Jewish women the opportunity to act as ambassadors from the southern Jewish community to prove their regional devotion through their material efforts, dispel widespread anti-Semitic assumptions, and, ultimately, advance southern Jewish women's goals of southern society's tolerance of Judaism and equality for southern Jews.

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[48]Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel eds., *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York: Plume Book, 1977), 30, 32.

Like southern Christian white women, southern Jewish women assumed their husbands' responsibilities and attempted to keep plantations running, and trading businesses and stores productive and efficient. All of the Mordecai women in Richmond and in Warrenton, North Carolina, helped run their families' individual estates.[49] Clara, her older sister Alice, and her mother continued to run a successful New Orleans household and her mother carried on her father's trading business.[50] Rosena Hutzler, a Richmond native, took over her husband's merchant business when he left for the first Regiment Virginia Cavalry headed by General J.E.B. Stuart.[51]

Running plantations, homes, and businesses was difficult because of the depressed war economy, looting, and the rumors of southern Jewish profiteering which left many southern Jewish businesses and homes vulnerable. Soldiers from both sides as well as southern citizens frequently broke into southern homes and businesses, to raid food supplies, clothing, and livestock. Rebecca Alexander felt terrorized when several soldiers barged into her Savannah home and demanded living spaces for U.S. officers. Consequently, several officers and a war corespondent occupied two top floor rooms. Several troops raided her basement food storage taking what they wanted and spilling the rest. Southern Jewish women did their best to defend their homes and assets with limited

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[49]For examples see Mordecai family collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[50]Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon.*

success. When Alexander's mother discovered soldiers raiding her home, she harshly ordered them out and bravely placed herself between the soldiers and the food.[52] The presence of northern African-American soldiers and their storming of houses further outraged southern Jewish women. Emma Mordecai remembered going to the fence house and seeing a "negro dragoon, fully armed galloping around the house."[53] She exhibited her Confederate loyalty despite the immeasurable costs to her home and its contents when she scoffed at the African-American soldiers and their officers for giving them this title. [54] Southern Jewish women did their best to protect their homes, assets, and supplies but they often found their attempts were in vain.

Northern troop invasions into southern cities and southern Jewish homes only invigorated southern Jewish women's Confederate loyalty. Rebecca Ella Solomon Alexander remembered having first to flee Savannah, and later, Columbia, when Fort Pulaski fell. Most fled the city and Alexander's family first removed to Columbia, to her aunt, Miss Minnie Dessam's farm, for six months. Despite the harsh circumstances of this experience, Alexander found that this re-energized her loyalty to the south. She and the other members of her family created a "Tableaux" representing the Secession of the

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[51]Saul Viener, "Rosena Hutzler Levy Recalls the Civil War," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* LXII , nos. 1-4. Sept. (1972) to June (1973): 307.

[52]Rebecca Emma Solomons Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life in Charleston South Carolina,1854-1935, June 24, 1929. " American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, 11.

[53] Emma Mordecai, Letter 5 April 1865, Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 329.

[54] Emma Mordecai, Letter 5 April 1865, Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 330.

States and Alexander proudly worked creating part of the state of Alabama.[55] She recalled having the "best time" because the work was so "novel." Alexander seemed to enjoy the change from an urban to a rural setting. Accustomed to the urban life, Alexander delighted in digging peanuts and potatoes, gathering vegetables, hayrides, pressing sugar, corn shucking and hunting for maypops.[56] Activities such as resisting union aggressors, refusing to respect northern soldiers, and maintaining plantations, both materially aided Confederate survival and represented demonstrations of southern loyalty, thereby, countering anti-Semitic assumptions.

Like other southern women, southern Jewish women recognized the desperate need for wartime supplies and food. While their southern Jewish husbands, brothers, and sons tried to prove southern devotion through service, protests, and petitions, women's wartime collection activities reinforced Jewish Confederate loyalty.[57] Southern Jewish women of all ages fully dedicated themselves to the effort. Formally and informally, southern Jewish women organized or joined soldiers' benevolent societies and regularly met to amass or manufacture supplies. These institutions collected and packaged

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[55]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life."

[56]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life," 8-9.

[57]Curator Barbara Forman estimated that twelve hundred Jewish men fought for the Confederacy. See Forman, "Keneseth Israel Families and the Civil War." According to Simon Wolf's statistical analysis of Jewish soldiers in the Confederacy the breakdown is as follows: staff officers in the Confederate Army-24, in the Confederate Navy-11, soldiers classified according to states: Alabama-135, Arkansas-53, Georgia-144, Kentucky-22, Louisiana-224, Mississippi-158, North Carolina-58, South Carolina-182, Tennessee-38, Virginia-119, West Viginia-7. See Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen* (Philadelphia: The Levy Type Company, 1895).

foodstuffs, clothing, and medical supplies for soldiers and tended to sick and injured men. In some instances, southern Jewish women joined organizations aligned with the southern schools that they either attended or taught at. For example, Clara Solomon regularly went to "Webster School" to give a "helping hand." Once there, she busied herself labeling, collecting, and packing boxes with bandages, clothes, lint, crockery, medicines, treats, preserves, and biscuits.[58] Solomon understood the importance of her work and proclaimed her dedication when she wrote in her diary on Saturday, April 19, 1862: "May every wound, to which the lint, picked by the fingers of old & young, with warm Southern hearts devoted to their country, be applied, heal."[59] Occasionally the victim of anti-Semitic slurs and conscious of her exclusion by the popular southern white Christian girls her age, Solomon and her sister Alice's efforts accomplished more than the material act of collecting supplies for soldiers. Performing alongside non-Jewish white women, Solomon and other southern Jewish women acted as ambassadors to the southern white Christian community and potentially tempered southern anti-Semitism and promoted southern Jewish acceptance.

When southern anti-Semitism, custom, or proximity interfered with their efforts to work alongside non-Jewish women, southern Jewish women created and maintained a distinctly southern female Jewish web of benevolence to both provide necessary

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[58]Quoted in Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon*, 334-337.

[59]Quoted in Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon*, 336.

materials for Confederate soldiers and to demonstrate southern Jews' Confederate loyalty. Often linked to synagogues, welfare societies, and educational associations, southern Jewish women formed their own soldiers' benevolent associations. Demonstrating great tenacity, southern Jewish women met in rooms as small as synagogue vestries or acted as hostesses at their private homes.

Southern Jewish women were extremely successful in their efforts. For example, in June1861, the Jewish women of Charlotte, North Carolina, collected one hundred and fifty dollars earmarked for the poor families of soldiers.[60] To amass this hefty sum, these women devoted large portions of their days to the preparation of food and medical supplies as well as fundraising. Additionally, they set up booths and tables at Sanitary Fairs to raise funds and awareness regarding the Civil War.[61]

Aside from fundraising and collecting supplies for the general southern military, individual congregations also understood that they represented one of the few means of support for southern Jewish soldiers and they established societies specifically for southern Jewish soldiers. For example, the Ladies Hebrew Association of Richmond completely reoriented its mission of providing welfare for the larger Richmond Jewish

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[60]Korn, "The Jews of the Confederacy," 34-37. The women of Charlotte enclosed a note stating: "Gentlemen: Enclosed find the sum off one hundred and fifty dollars from the Jewish ladies, residents of this town, to be appropriated for the benefit of the families of our brave volunteers now fighting in defence (sic) of our home and liberty. With our prayer to Almighty God for their safety, and that he will bless our glorious cause with victory and success, We remain, Yours respectfully, the Jewish Ladies of Charlotte."

[61]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 100.

community and instead dedicated themselves to providing relief for southern Jewish soldiers. In order to provide more support for southern Jewish soldiers, the women amended their bylaws to no longer restrict association benefits to dues-paying members. Additionally, all of the dues raised were earmarked to help support soldiers and their families during the sectional crisis.[62]

Aside from joining formal southern or Jewish wartime benevolent organizations, southern Jewish women also worked individually and in their homes to collect, package, and manufacture supplies. For example, Clara Solomon's family worked nightly sewing, manufacturing shirts, knitting socks for soldiers and packing boxes.[63] Mrs. Eugenia Phillips recounted:

> We passed our days in doing what we considered to be our duty...giving our all to the poor soldier...making their garments...and looking to the well being of their poor families...making lint, bandages and as far as in our limited power doing everything to encourage the cause we thought ourselves right in espousing...We at last found a home, devoting our lives and fortunes to the support and clothing of the poor soldiers... nursing the wounded and dying...alleviating in every way the desolation and misery which Civil War surely brings.[64]

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[62]Peter K. Opper, *"Like a Giant Oak" A History of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Association and Jewish Family Services of Richmond, Virginia, 1849-1999* (Copyright 1999 Peter K. Opper. All Rights reserved), 19. My research confirms Opper's research that very little documentation exists on Richmond's Ladies Hebrew Association. I could not locate any minute books and like Opper formed my conclusions through a survey of Rabbi Michelbacher's family papers.

[63]Ashkenazi, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon*, 334-337.

[64]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 100.

All the women in a southern Jewish household labored to prevent Confederate defeat due to a lack of supplies. Young girls to aged women worked to package supplies, sew and repair uniforms, and collect food.[65] Southern Jewish women also collected and sent luxury items to soldiers. For example, Virginia Minis amassed "fine combs, cakes of soap, handkerchiefs, flannel, tobacco, shoes, hats, and drawer."[66] Whereas their husbands demonstrated loyalty by enlisting in record numbers, southern Jewish women, on their own initiative, worked in their homes to manufacture and collect desperately needed war supplies. Performing such duties both solidified the southern Jewish community in their efforts to provide food and supplies for southern Jewish soldiers and its also strengthened the links between southern Jews and non-Jews, because these women proved their southern loyalty through their daily efforts at fundraising, collecting, and manufacturing supplies.

Southern Jewish women also demonstrated their intense devotion to the southern cause by volunteering as nurses under unpleasant conditions on the battlefields, in overcrowded and unsanitary makeshift military hospitals, and in their homes. Everyda, southern Jewish women traveled to local and distant hospitals, took soldiers into their homes, and found beds for them in other homes. In hospitals and homes, these women provided health care for and entertained sick and injured Confederate soldiers. For

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[65]Emma Mordecai, to Nell, 26 April 1871, Mordecai family papers.

example, fourteen-year-old Isabel Adeline Moses became the youngest member of the Soldier's Aid Society in Columbus, Georgia, and spent hours nursing the wounded.[67] Similarly, Rebecca Emma Solomons Alexander remembered daily trips through the war torn streets to deliver "delicacies" to the sick soldiers at an old academy that had been switched over to a makeshift hospital.[68] Emma Mordecai frequently went to General Winder, St. Frances de Sales, and Seabrook hospitals where she occasionally found herself as a doctor's aid. On May 18th, she wrote:

> ...The urgent need there was of help at the Hospital determined me to go in and lend all my mite towards alleviating their sufferings. I went to the cars taking a supply of buttermilk, sweet milk, and some other things...Well may ladies devote themselves to attending their couches, and administering to their poor comfort. Pure high-minded, noble men! You deserve all we could do for you if our means were fourfold what they are. I am thankful to be strong enough to help to nurse you, and I pray I may continue so (illegible) while I can serve you. I nearly fainted while assisting a surgeon to dress a wound today.[69]

Despite the existence of anti-Semitism, her fiery rhetoric underscored Mordecai's Confederate loyalty. As further proof of her dedication to the south, Mordecai regularly broke the Jewish law prohibiting traveling and working on the Sabbath and visited

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[66]Virginia to Lavinia Florance Minis, October 1863, Minis family papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, box 4 folder 39.

[67]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 99.

[68]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life," 9.

[69]Emma Mordecai, Diary 18 May 1864, George Mordecai family papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Seabrook hospital after synagogue services on May 31, 1864.[70] For several months, Mordecai daily arrived at the hospital early in the morning, and spent much of her day attending to the sick and injured soldiers, passing out refreshments, bathing wounds, cleaning the hospital, and assisting nurses.[71] Mordecai's and other southern Jewish women's exhaustive hospital activities demonstrated to non-Jewish volunteers, doctors, nurses, and patients that southern Jews were loyal to the Confederacy. As ambassadors of their "race," southern Jewish women's nursing activities countered anti-Semitic rumors that speculated about southern Jews' loyalty.

Because Richmond was the capital of the Confederacy in1861, it housed the largest Confederate hospital where over 76,000 patients were treated. While several southern Jewish women informally volunteered their services to care for the injured and sick Confederate soldiers, one southern Jewish woman was tapped by the Secretary of War of the Confederacy to be a matron of one section of the Confederacy's largest military hospital, Chimborazo, Phoebe Yates Levy Pember was born in Charleston in 1823.[72] Her father, Jacob Clavius Levy, was a prosperous businessman and an early

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[70]Mordecai, Diary, 31 May 1864.

[71]For the duration of the Civil War, Mordecai attended to sick soldiers at the various Richmond hospitals almost daily. She either walked, caught carriage rides from friends or relatives, or stayed in Richmond overnight to tend to the injured.

[72]Several American Jewish historians have examined Pember's diary, "A Southern Woman's Story" to harvest her stories of women's nursing duties during the Civil War. As recently as the year 2000, Richard N. Rosen devoted a part of a chapter to her life and activities. While he analyzed several unique passages in her diary, he follows previous scholars studying southern Jews in failing to speculate whether

advocate of Reformed Judaism. She married Dr. Thomas Noyes Pember of Boston, a Swiss Gentile.[73] Well-connected to the Confederate Secretary of War's wife, Mrs. George Randolph, who later recommended her for the post, Pember realized the importance of the request and immediately accepted. In Pember's mind, no respectable southern white woman could have rejected this offer. Her actions bespoke a twofold purpose. Not only did her service as a hospital matron represent the actions of a loyal Confederate, but by assuming the role of an intensely dedicated southern white woman, Pember also effectively countered pervasive anti-Semitic assumptions regarding southern Jewish loyalty during the war. As a high ranking Jewish woman in the hospital arm of the Confederacy, she demonstrated southern Jews' loyalty and perhaps assuaged southerners' growing anxiety about southern Jews' contributions to the war. Her high visibility in newspapers and before the Confederate congress petitioning for funds, on behalf of the hospital's patients, allowed southerners to view an alternative and more positive representation of a loyal, confederate Jew.

Pember's wartime experiences were particularly harrowing because she served in a military hospital. Mid-nineteenth century and especially Civil War hospitals were

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being Jewish influenced Pember's actions. See Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000).

[73]Rubin, *Third to None*, 133.

extremely disorganized and care was extremely primitive.[74] She described the hospital's enormous bureaucracy of surgeons, assistant surgeons, contract doctors, nurses, stewards, commissaries, quartermasters, apothecaries, all the clerks, baggage masters, forage masters, wagon masters, cooks, bakers, carpenters, shoemakers, ward inspectors, and ambulance drivers, and expressed her frustration with each group, thereby testifying to the disorder of the hospital.[75] Her diary entries and letters frequently described the harsh conditions of war, and its effects on the soldiers, and the medical and hospital staff. The conditions also shaped her ability to supervise and treat patients and hospital staff under

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[74]See Susan Reverby, *Ordered to Care The Dilemma of American Nursing, 1850-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). In her study *Ordered to Care*, Susan Reverby described the disorganized conditions and the inexperience of doctors and nurses and their inability to handle the tremendous amount of patients. Northern and southern women eagerly volunteered their time and energies to help with the war effort. Reverby concluded that the disorder and terrible mortality of the Crimean War found its American equivalent in the Civil War and the poor medical care endangered military success on either side. While their men went off to war, thousands of women rushed to establish makeshift and permanent military hospitals and worked as paid and volunteer nurses. According to Reverby, this was the first major U.S. war where female nurses played a significant role. Nursing in the war environment was not like nursing a sick loved one in the comfort of one's home. Women were "confronted with the overwhelming filth and stench of the barracks' hospital, the disorder of the military procurement system, cries of wounded and dying strangers and the intransigence and hostility of physicians unwilling to accept the aid of "meddling" women. In despair, many women were forced to give up their romantic images of themselves as ministering angels in the horror, extreme temperatures, and disorder of wartime medical care." See Reverby, *Ordered to Care*, 43-4.

James McPherson has pointed out that disease proved to be an extreme problem during the war. Though in the 1860s Europe had begun to understand germs through Louis Pasteur and Joseph Lister's research. Within a decade of the discovery of germ theory, the science of bacteriology had revolutionized medicine. Civil War doctors knew nothing about links between these microscopic infectious organisms. Additionally, asepsis and antisepsis in surgery was unknown. The Civil War had ended long before the time European medical knowledge was put into practice in the United States. Instead, doctors relied on amputation to stop gangrene, osteomyelitis, or pyemia. Stomach wounds were fatal. They used chloroform and ether for anesthetics and in times of shortage, they used whiskey and biting the bullet. Considered the heroic age of medicine, doctors were simply ill equipped to treat serious wounds, infections, or illnesses. Most soldiers knew that a trip to the physician was generally not good news. See James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 486-7.

her command. Pember oversaw five divisions that included thirty-one wards and supervised the housekeeping, patient diet, and care for 15,200 soldiers.[76] She also had the impossible task of making rations last, finding enough wood for heat, stretching other supplies, and keeping rats and vermin away from food and wounded soldiers. In her journal, she discussed the ravages of famine, disease, and warfare. She also detailed the violence and bloody experience of war, the futile herbal and food cures, poor amputations and a lack of supplies.[77] In one of her frequent letters to her friend Mrs. Gilmer, she wrote that she was in charge of over six hundred soldiers and that her duties prevented her from resting, "not even on a Sabbath day."[78] Throughout her commission, she endeavored to make the soldiers' lives comfortable and as homelike as possible.[79] When matron's work took her outside the hospital and onto the battlefields of the streets of Virginia she traveled door-to-door and asked for basins of soap, water, and rags. Pember also ministered to suffering soldiers on the curbs to "alleviate...the pain of fresh wounds, change the uneasy posture, and allay their thirst."[80] Pember also recounted the intense sexism she encountered as a female administrator in an overwhelmingly male-dominated and patriarchal environment and wrote:

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[75]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story," chapter II., 1.

[76]Radcliffe College, *Notable American Women, 1607-1950 A Biographical Dictionary Volume II* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 45.

[77]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story."

[78]Phoebe Yates Levy Pember to Mrs. Gilmer, June 22, 1864, Phoebe Pember papers.

[79]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story" Chapter II, 2.

> Living a great part of time away from all intercourse with my own sex, in a solitude unbroken after dark, it was better that no intimacies should be formed and no preferences shown! And in an exposed position where eyes were always watching, a woman could not be too careful.[81]

Despite her intense dedication to the cause, Pember complained that few appreciated her work and noted that doctors, surgeons, and other staff expressed concern over the "petticoat government."[82] The majority of soldiers also failed to feel grateful towards her and her nurses. She complained:

> Besides, there was little gratitude felt in a hospital and certainly none expressed. The mass of patients were uneducated men, who had lived by the sweat of their brow and gratitude is an exotic plant, reared in a refined atmosphere, kept free from coarse contact and nourished by unselfishness.[83]

Ultimately, Pember's benevolent work did not go unnoticed. Eventually, she became a household name and legendary Confederate hero--a remarkable feat for a southern Jewish woman. Financially hospital administrators compensated Pember handsomely for her labor. In a letter to Mrs. Gilmer, she announced that she earned for herself a stipend of $3000 a year. She added "Are you not happy to hear that my country thus recognizes my important services?"[84] Unfortunately, she often reported that her high position annoyed

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[80]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story," Chapter XIII, 1.

[81]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story," Chapter IX, 2.

[82]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story," Chapter I, 2.

[83]Pember, "A Southern Woman's Story," Chapter IV, 2.

[84]Pember to Mrs. Gilmer, February 19, 1864, Phoebe Pember Papers.

surgeons, orderlies, and patients alike.[85] Despite being upset at not being formally recognized for her contributions until much later in the war, Pember believed that the experience had personally benefited her. The transition from living the life of an aristocratic southern woman to a hospital matron completely transformed her. She described her experience:

> If the ordeal does not chasten and purify her nature, if the contemplation of suffering and endurance does not make her wiser and better and if the daily fire through which she passes does not draw from her nature the sweet fragrance of benevolence, charity, and love... then indeed a hospital has been no fit place for her."[86]

Pember's verbiage is especially interesting for it draws from popular southern Christian and white traditional notions of motherhood. The hospital experience, for Pember, had transformed her into an "authentic" Southern white woman because it had *chastened* and *purified* her, made her *benevolent*, full of *charity*, and finally, she had *suffered* and *endured.* Her success within the hospital had proven to herself and others that her

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[85]Pember was not clear about what exactly it was about her that so annoyed hospital patients and staff. She never recounted any sexist or anti-Semitic incidents. However, the increasingly widespread anti-Semitism (coupled with the presence of women in a formerly all-male atmosphere) in the city (See Berman's chapter six in *Richmond's Jewry*) suggests that it could in fact have been her Jewishness that annoyed the staff and patients. Perhaps they were indignant that a Jew was given so much power, perhaps her miserly style of rationing food, supplies, and whiskeys encouraged anti-Semitism to emerge. Pember published her story and it was doubtful that in an effort to proclaim her southern loyalty she would draw her reader to any semiotic that might cast doubts on her dedication. Mentioning her Jewishness in the context of hospital inmates' and the staff's lack of respect would surely have done that.

[86]Pember "A Southern Woman's Story," Chapter XIII, 5.

Jewishness had not impeded her attempt to fulfill her duties as a faithful Confederate white woman.[87]

Aside from volunteer and paid nursing in local Confederate hospitals, southern Jewish women also demonstrated their Confederate patriotism by taking soldiers into their own homes or by finding empty beds and caregivers for them in other homes. On November 4, 1861, Emma Mordecai wrote to her sister Ellen and reported she was currently nursing several soldiers in her home.[88] Miriam Mickelbacher and her husband, the Rabbi of Beth Ahabah in Richmond, kept ten to twelve soldiers in their home.[89] Jewish women also opened their homes for lodging and entertainment for soldiers. Rebecca Alexander Solomons remembered amusing two soldiers in her home.[90] When their homes were full, women frequently traveled short and long distances to find lodging

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[87]After Richmond surrendered to federal troops in 1865, Pember remained with her patients until her services were no longer needed. Like an old western shoot out at noon, Pember confronted Federal authorities. The first federal troops to arrive demanded that she turn over her whiskey supply. She refused knowing that she "had a little friend in her pocket" (a pistol). Much to the amusement of the soldiers she threatened to fire the weapon. She responded "You had better leave...for if one bullet is lost, there are five more ready, and the room is too small for even a woman to miss six times." The soldiers relented and left. After that incident, she barricaded herself in. Federal authorities came in to take over the hospital. All the hospital staff had left and she performed her toilette to meet at the Federal headquarters and demand an ambulance to get much needed supplies. She described how she dressed impeccably to meet her defeat. A sympathetic federal officer state,d by the look of Confederate women's faces, they had surely suffered because of the war. She knew he meant to be polite but "he was unlucky to be shown my answer." Pember retorted "If my features were pinched, and my face pale, it was not caused by privations under the Confederacy, but the anguish consequent upon our failure." Nevertheless, the officer gave her an ambulance so she might fetch supplies. After completing her final task, she left the hospital. See Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story,* April 1865.

[88]Emma Mordecai to Ellen Mordecai, November 4, 1861, George Mordecai family papers

[89]Miscellaneous papers Reverend Mickelbacher papers in the Beth Ahabah Archives in Richmond, Virginia

and care givers. Emma Mordecai remembered traveling door-to-door with wounded soldiers to find them beds.[91]

Because anti-Semitism existed in Richmond, Pember's formal and other southern Jewish women's informal nursing activities cannot be discounted as simply another valiant demonstration of Confederate women's dedication. Widespread suspicion of southern Jews as being disloyal or profiteers prevented all but a few southern Jews from achieving high level positions within the Confederacy. In this context, Pember, Mordecai, Mickelbacher, and Solomon's caregiving was immeasurably valuable. These women's visibility enabled them to act as ambassadors to southern whites. In the presence of patients, doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and neighbors, these volunteer nurses presented themselves as respectable, loyal, motivated, and dedicated Confederates. Their actions represented a potent strategy for counteracting rumors of Jewish disloyalty and might have tempered southern anti-Semitism.

While nursing and entertaining were solidly within the sphere of appropriate womanly activities, some southern Jewish women desired to move beyond traditional women's wartime assistance to prove their loyalty. For them, acting as fundraisers, collectors, and nurses did not fully convey their Confederate loyalties. Private writings and reminiscences detail the dangerous and potentially life-threatening activities that

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[90]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life," 10.

[91]Emma Mordecai to George Mordecai, October 29, 1861, George Mordecai family papers.

these southern Jewish women engaged in to benefit the Confederacy and prove their regional loyalties. Some women, risking their lives, the lives of their family, and their livelihoods, acted as smugglers, belligerents, and spies for the Confederacy. For example, Rebecca Emma Solomons Alexander's remembered that her mother and her husband, who were in the merchant business, regularly spirited scarce and contraband items across Confederate lines.[92] Among other things, she carried in clothes, loaf sugar, and gelatine. Alexander emphasized that her mother reserved all the smuggled items for sick soldiers and refused to give any of the luxury or necessary goods to her family. She reserved silk for the soldiers while she and her family continued to wear calico and homespun dresses.[93] In another instance, federal investigators indicted southern Jew Eliza Feldner for knowingly receiving stolen goods. Federal police remanded her to jail to be examined by the mayor and be charged with a felony.[94]

In addition to smuggling material goods across Confederate lines, some southern Jewish women proclaimed their devotion to the Confederacy by acting as belligerents. Refusing requests from their male relatives and friends to hostess northern dignitaries and relatives, these women instead often hosted anti-Yankee salons, ignored troop orders, or

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[92]Her mother and her husband operated a merchant business that actively traded from New York. As a union port city, they had access to goods that, because of blockades, southerners did not.

[93]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life," 9.

[94]Richmond City Records, Saturday 19 May 1866, reel 97, 628, Virginia Historical Society, Virginia.

just routinely abused union troops.[95] For instance, Margaret Mordecai Devereux strongly resisted her uncle's suggestion that she entertain and provide lodging for a northern friend. Devereux explained to her uncle that she found it hard to "meet as a friend---one who has tacitly encouraged the devastation of my country and the murder of my friends."[96] Ultimately out of deference to her uncle, Devereux consented.

Other Jewish women reinforced their Confederate loyalty by hosting anti-Yankee salons. On December 25, 1864, Fanny Cohen recalled in her journal that she hosted a "real rebel meeting. D. R., Fanny Levy, Dr. B and our family formed the party. We abused the Yankees to our hearts' content and congratulated ourselves upon being once more together."[97] At the meeting, Cohen vowed that she would never receive northerners even if they succeeded in conquering them. Cohen wrote: "If we are Conquered I see no reason why we should receive our enemies as friends and I never shall do it so long as I

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[95]Drew Gilpin Faust argued "the behavior of southern ladies toward northern troops represented simultaneous affirmations and transgressions of gender and class boundaries; women's actions reveal both the persistence and subversion of traditional assumptions about their place and power...women's own reflections about their unprecedented rage and aggression...demonstrated the displacement of other deeply felt resentments even more threatening to their long cherished identities and attachments." See Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 197.

[96]Margaret Mordecai Devereux to George Mordecai, 1865, George Mordecai family papers.

[97]Fanny Cohen, Journal, 25 December 1864, Phillips-Myers papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Similarly, Joan Landes' research in early modern France had demonstrated that women played a leadership role in the hosting and leading of salons. Because of their distinct and powerful roles, they could determine who would be allowed to attend such meetings. Though salons in the nineteenth-century southern context were not as formal as in eighteenth century Europe, these women still exercised a certain amount of power with respect to who they would host. For further details see Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1988), 17-38.

live."[98] Confederate matron, Phoebe Pember also attended an anti-Yankee meeting. Like Cohen, she described the fervor of southern hatred for northerners, even among "good Christians:"

> I spent an evening among a particularly pious sett (sic). One lady said she had a pile of Yankee bones lying around her pump so that the first glance on opening her eyes would rest upon them. Another begged me to get her a Yankee skull to keep her toilette trinkets in. All had something of the kind to say. At last I lifted my voice and congratulated myself at being born of a nation and religion that did not enjoin forgiveness on its enemies and enjoyed the blessed privilege of praying an eye for an eye, and a life for a life...I proposed that till the war was over they should all join the Jewish church, let forgiveness and peace and good alone and put their trust in the sword of the Lord and Gideon."[99]

Perhaps the most extreme demonstrations of Confederate loyalty were committed by those southern Jewish women who risked their lives and those of their families by acting as belligerents for the Confederacy. Apprised of which southern Jewish women were the most threatening, the federal government wasted no time segregating those women considered dangerous and either placed them under house arrest or imprisoned them. The most famous example of such an event was the rounding up and placing under

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[98]Cohen, Journal, 26 December 1864. Cohen's father chastised her for being too vocal about her anti-Yankee stance. Cohen recounted in her journal that her father feared her "too open hatred" might compromise his own economic and social standing. She prayed for personal restraint but worried that her father might be correct

[99]Korn, "The Jews of the Confederacy," 54.

house arrest for three weeks of Rose Greenhow, Caroline Myers, and Eugenia Phillips in Washington D.C.[100]

Perhaps the most outspoken of the three women and the woman who achieved the greatest infamy during this event was Eugenia Phillips. The daughter of Jacob C. Levy and Fanny Yates Levy, Eugenia was born in Charleston in 1820, raised in the vein of liberal traditional Judaism, and she received an excellent education.[101] At age sixteen, she married Philip Phillips, a Jewish lawyer in the South Carolina legislature. They moved to Mobile, Alabama, and then to Washington and had nine children. Both famous and infamous for her Confederate loyalties, Eugenia Levy Phillips distinguished herself by openly showing disdain and disrespect to Union soldiers and officers alike, actions for which she was repeatedly imprisoned by federal troops. Jacob Rader Marcus suggested that her "romantic, almost obsessive defense of the South and of the justice of its cause became so manifest during the early months of the Civil War that she was suspected of being a Confederate agent."[102] Her several imprisonments caused her to become a cause celebre among southern whites and Jews. During her two arrests, newspapers often

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[100]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 161.

[101]Her father was a well-educated man, a Charleston native, and a successful merchant. He directed the Union Insurance Company from 1830-1840, a delegate to the Knoxville Railroad Convention in 1836, and a member of the Charleston Chamber of commerce from 1841-1847. After Eugenia was married to Philip Phillips, they moved from Charleston, South Carolina, to Mobile, Alabama. See David T. Morgan, "Eugenia Levy Phillips: The Civil War Experiences of a Southern Jewish Woman" in Proctor and Schmiers' *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Historical Society*, 95-106.

[102]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 161.

portrayed Phillips as the quintessential example of a true Confederate woman. Jewish and Gentile newspapers followed and admired her southern loyalty and reported with much interest and shock, the consequences of that devotion. Her elite status as a member of a politically prominent and financially successful merchant family and potentially her Jewishness played a large role in the heavy price she paid for her outspoken loyalty. Additionally, her high visibility as a Jew also provided yet another overt demonstration of a southern Jews' Confederate loyalty.

In one particularly heavily reported incident, on August 24, 1861, federal agents burst into the Phillips home and declared all people in the house under arrest.[103] The women were held by the troops for three weeks. They ransacked the house looking for any evidence that might incriminate the women as confederate spies.[104] Phillips gleefully reported on the soldiers' actions: "Approaching my secretary they carefully locked it for future investigation, in full confidence that in this sanctum they had enclosed treason

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[103]Morgan, David T. "Eugenia Levy Phillips," 97. Caroline Myers was also held in this house for three weeks.

[104]Eugenia Phillips, "Journal of Mrs. Eugenia Phillips-Washington, D. C. Aug.-Sept. 1861," Phillips-Myers papers volume 5, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2. She continued: "Here they had no doubt, they would find innumerable documents from Beauregard; -the most important dispatches from Davis, and thus enable the Government to repeat once more, they had the ready means "to break the neck of this vile Rebellion." (Phillips, 2). They were searching for any derogatory remarks made by Phillips, her family, or relatives about Lincoln or the federal government. (Morgan, "Eugenia Levy Phillips.") During her imprisonment, Phillips recopied this diary several times. Dates coincide but there are approximately three diaries that the Southern Historical collection does not differentiate.)

enough, to sink a nation."[105] Much amused at the soldiers' false happiness over their eventual empty discovery she let out a whistle. This angered the soldiers and in her words: "made me pay dearly for my whistle."[106] Other soldiers in the house continued to search other rooms and the women for any evidence of disloyalty to the union.

While occupying the house, federal soldiers forcibly removed Phillips and her daughters Fanny and Lina, Myers, and Greenhow and their female relatives to the back of the house purposely to prevent them from communicating the incident with other neighbors who might try to obstruct the operation. Federal troops occupied the house and detained the family and all of the servants for over a week. Soldiers assumed control of the house and converted it for their own use into smoking and sleeping rooms.[107] After that week, soldiers removed Eugenia, her daughters, and her sister Martha Levy to Greenhow's house, whom federal investigators also suspected of being a Confederate spy.[108] Aware that their neighbors and the press watched their reactions, the arrested

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[105]Phillips, Journal, 2.

[106] Phillips, Journal, 2-3. As the soldiers would later find out, the secretary was empty. When Phillips heard soldiers storm the house she instructed her Irish maid Phoebe to liberate the incriminating letters and hide them. She did in the bosom of her dress. When the soldiers discovered their loss, Phillips smartly retorted "if in their line, they did not call this "a poor haul."" She continued to goad and annoy them as they discovered that the secretary was filled with blank sheets of paper, some ribbon, and some bills.

[107]Phillips, Journal, 4.

[108]Not much is known about this incident. It is mentioned once in the Myers family papers and described in Eugenia Phillips diary. Several things are clear about the incident. The women held in the house along with some of their daughters were Jewish. They were considered potential spies. It is unclear what actions these women committed to be labeled as such. It is also unclear why there were only Jewish women in this house. It is possible that federal troops were sensitive to the Jewish women and hoped to

southern Jewish women "prepared with courageous hearts to meet [their] fate as became glorious southern women for a noble cause."[109] Additionally, Phillips' Confederate loyalty encouraged her to do dangerous things. For example during the transfer, Phillips stole an officer's gun and threatened to shoot everyone and liberate all the women. Though the gun was not loaded, this incident demonstrated her menacing nature and her loyalty to the south.[110] While at the Greenhow's house, Phillips found the conditions deplorable and castigated her captors for thrusting herself, her two daughters, her sister Caroline Myers, and Rose Greenhow into "two dirty small attic rooms...with no comforts of any kind."[111] Despite their miserable conditions that first night, the captives managed to remain in good spirits and loyal to the Confederate cause. On August 28, 1861,

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honor their religious preferences. It is also possible that with increasing anti-Semitism, these Jewish women were especially singled out because of some act they committed or because of their relationship to Jewish men who were either involved in trade or politics. There was at least one woman in the house, a Miss M. who was a Catholic. She begged Phillips to inform the guard that "she never wrote any letters South, and but seldom visited my house." The War Department released her a few hours later. See Phillips, "Journal," 4.

[109]Phillips, Journal, 23 August 1861. Phillips reported that they were confined to two small rooms of the upper story of a house with an armed guard at the chamber's door. She found the conditions of her imprisonment extremely primitive. The beds were without sheets or pillowcases, the women were not given a pitcher and basin so they could wash, they had one broken candlestick and a meager candle. Despite their loneliness and their fear of what had become of their loved ones, they often laughed and joked about their situation and the "incompetents" guarding them. In one instance, the mosquitoes were so bad that they made makeshift-netted tents out of broomsticks and chairs.

[110]Phillips, Journal, 23 August 1861.

[111]Morgan, "Eugenia Levy Phillips," 98. Later on during her imprisonment and in addition to recording her patriotic loyalties she reported the pain of imprisonment. On Saturday, September 14, 1861, she wrote: "Perfect inactivity of the body must affect the mind. My limbs are fast losing their strength as I try to walk in the little space between bed and window. It seems cruel to deprive us of what the worst criminals enjoy; air and exercise, but it is not heroic to complain." Phillips marked her twenty-fifth wedding anniversary while in prison, a fact which indicates that Phillips was forty-one at the time of her imprisonment.

Phillips displayed her tenacity and the devotion of the other southern female captives when she wrote: "through thick and thin we managed to worry out the night, crying and laughing by turns."[112]

Throughout her imprisonment, Phillips refused to confirm federal troops' assertions that she and the other southern Jewish female captives posed a threat to the union army. She saw nothing wrong with her belligerency and, in a long soliloquy in her diary, assumed the voice of a dedicated white southern matron who was merely fulfilling her responsibilities of that position. On August 30, 1861, she patriotically recorded:

> If an ardent attachment to the land of my birth and the expression of deepest sympathy with my relatives and friends in the South, constitute treason then I am indeed a traitor'. If hostility to Black Republicanism, its sentiments and policy is a crime—I am self condemned! If detestation of this unholy war, inaugurated by party lust—is deserving punishment, then I am worthy of its severest penalties! and thus suffering I would shout Hosanns for the glorious cause of southern independence.[113]

Phillips continued to employ such fiery rhetoric throughout her diary and her actions provided southerners following her story with an alternative Civil War image of the southern Jew.

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[112]Phillips, Journal, 28 August 1861.

[113] Phillips, Journal, 30 August 1861. On Thursday September 12 Phillips re-addressed the issued of her crime. The prolonged imprisonment dulled her defiance and increased her anger. "the causeless reason for this outrage of our arrest, is we all feel that in not one instance did we possess the power to communicate any intelligence, which the daily papers did not make known, and never did I or any one with me write to any southern leader or any one else, but the whole cause of our arrest is a feeling of spite an danger against all those blessed with good southern blood."

Despite being housed under brutal conditions and being in fear for their safety, Phillips and the other women continued to display their support for the southern cause by daily plotting to frustrate their captors. In one instance, Phillips and her fellow captives resorted to pagan ritual to cast out the "evil" northerners. They created a makeshift sacrifice and "pray(ed) the Gods for good omens do the land of Dixie!"[114] In another instance, frustrated, driven by conviction, and fueled by the support of friends and relatives, Phillips and the Jewish ladies effected a "mutiny." Tired of being restricted to their rooms they seated themselves at the top of the stairs and amused themselves by "playing on the comb and other innocent amusements."[115] Guards called for them to be silent. The women responded by shouting, yelling, and roaring with laughter "to teach the discourteous officer that rudeness is not the equivalent of courtesy even in attaining obedience."[116] The ladies also defied their captors by carrying on their conversations in French.[117] Through their actions, Phillips, Myers, Greenhow and their respective female family members proved, in Phillips' words,: "Our love and devotion to the south has ever been uppermost in our thoughts, and our opinions we have never concealed."[118] Even

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[114]Phillips, Journal, 29 August 1861. She recorded the whole ritual. "At last a bright idea seizes us. Let us offer up a sacrifice for the C.S.A. Our stove top is brought...a libation of spirits of camphor is poured out by the hand of the Priestess Wind, the flames ascend on high throwing bright light upon our faces while we join hands and sing and dance."

[115]Phillips, Journal, 12 September 1861.

[116]Phillips, Journal, 12 September 1861.

[117]Phillips, Journal, 16 September 1861.

[118]Phillips, Journal, 7 September 1861.

prolonged imprisonment and limited contact with friends, family, and supporters never weakened Phillips' resolve. Two weeks later, on September 7, 1861, Phillips dramatically proclaimed "the Goths and Vandals have possession of us."[119]

Phillips and the fierce Confederate patriotic displays by the other southern Jewish female captives effectively countered prevailing notions of southern Jewish disloyalty, tempered raging anti-Semitism, and decreased southern anxiety about Jews' unscrupulous behavior. Sympathetic journalists and friends endeavored to get the southern Jewish female prisoners released by deploring the violence that northern ruffian men perpetrated against the pristine, noble, and loyal southern women.[120] An editorial writer for the *Baltimore Exchange* launched into a tirade against the police system and hypothetically mused on what the Hungarian leader Haymam at Pesth would have said:

> What would he have said if he had been further told that women, virtuous refined, pure-minded would be arrested, searched, shut up as prisoners in the custody of men, attended by armed men, precisely as if they were men themselves. Would we have credited that forbidden colors were torn from the bosoms of women and girls and war made on the mothers for daring to clothe them in garments of unlawful stripes...would he have believed it possible that influential and honorable citizens would connive at and applaud these acts that the sense of shame and manhood among our people would die so sudden and disgraceful a death?...The outrages committed

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[119]Phillips, Journal, Diary 7 September 1861.

[120]Allies and sympathetic enemies routinely smuggled in papers for the women to read. Phillips followed media treatment of her imprisonment and was much amused. She recorded: "Looking over the newspapers, read a detailed account of my swallowing a treasonable letter I was in the act of writing when arrested. This provoked a merry laugh from the "Rebels." These Reporters who draw so largely on their imagination for their facts, and on their memory for their wit have been very solicitous for information as to the "female prisoners." See Phillips, "Journal,"30 August 1861.

> are enough to frenzy the blood of every man who venerates the sanctity that is around mother, sister, wife, daughter.[121]

Such exaggerated rhetoric propelled the other captives and especially Phillips to continue her defiance. After reading the account in the *Baltimore Exchange*, Phillips analogized the women's current situation to the experience of the Jews. Likening her and the south's situation to Jews' experience during the Spanish Inquisition, Phillips wrote: "I only hope God will continue this blessing, for with good spirits and health and my books and work, I defy the whole of Lincoln's court the Inquisition included."[122]

Despite the ways in which some southerners read the actions of Phillips through the lens of pure southern womanhood, others were less generous in their interpretations of their behavior. Not surprisingly, in these negative portrayals, anti-Semitism was never far from the surface. One letter writer suggested that the lady prisoners should have their mirrors taken from them. Phillips angrily responded: "that the lady prisoners came for no more reflections now, than those they make on the infamy of the government and its minions."[123] Again on Saturday September 14, 1861, Phillips felt angered by the public recording of events. One account questioned Phillips loyalty and accused her of abandoning the other female prisoners "under a flag of truce." In another editorial speculation, a Memphis newspaper stated that "the cause of our imprisonment is a refusal

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[121] Phillips, Journal, 10 September 1861.

[122] Phillips, Journal, 10 September,1861. Phillips referred several times to God in her diary but only once directly alluded to her Jewish identity.

on our part to associate with rude people who are trying to take the position of the elegant and refined Southerners who took the land here before the war."[124] Incensed that her and the other women's loyalty was being questioned, Phillips angrily responded: "The idea is too puerile to be thought of, however, true. It may be the total want of sympathy of these people felt by the Southerners forced to remain in Washington by circumstances they could not control."[125]

During a few brief moments, Phillips questioned the ability of others to secure her and the other women's freedom. Disheartened by the fact that the Confederacy did not work hard enough to secure her release, she criticized a government that allowed respectable white women to be unlawfully imprisoned. On September 8, 1861, Phillips bitterly journaled: "I fear that those in power have not the time to give to women shut up in garret rooms."[126] On Wednesday September 18, 1861, astounded that the Confederate elite had not devoted more energy to her patriotic cause, Phillips bitterly wondered what contributed to Confederate officials' lackadaisical attitudes toward imprisonment of southern Jewish women. She wrote:

> Three weeks to day that we were imprisoned in this garret. Not one individual has been near us in an official capacity to see whether or not we were treated properly...My indignation almost forces me to tell of many things which would challenge in this enlightened American Republic the

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[123]Phillips, Journal, 9 September 1861.

[124]Phillips, Journal.

[125]Phillips, Journal.

[126]Phillips, Journal, 8 September 1861.

> actions of men who are possessed of thorough American citizenship. Gen. Porter, the Provost Marshall, may say one of these days that he knew nothing of all this, but we did think that it was his business to be satisfied that women who had been under the severest of arrest should be treated as women and not as criminals.[127]

Phillips employed key words like *enlightened*, *republic*, and *citizenship* to denote her dissatisfaction with Confederate inattention, federal mistreatment and to encourage action. Claiming the rights and privileges of a southern white matron, Phillips demanded equal treatment under the law as an American and Confederate female citizen. Phillips believed that her blatant and often risky displays of Confederate loyalty warranted more attention and respect by the Confederate elite.

Ultimately, the secretary of war Edwin Stanton and Phillips husband's political influences encouraged President Lincoln to conditionally release the southern Jewish female prisoners. On September 14, 1861, after three weeks of being held captive and considered an individual who "would endanger the government," Phillips was released on the condition that she refrain from any illegal Confederate activities and did not try to speak or consult with anyone while in Washington. [128] Ultimately, federal troops both ordered and escorted the Phillips family south. Before she arrived at her final destination in New Orleans, Jefferson Davis' wife, impressed by Phillips' brave display of loyalty, invited her for a meal. They traveled through Washington, Richmond, Charleston,

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[127]Phillips, Journal, 18 September 1861.

[128]Phillips, Journal, 12 October 1861.

Savannah, and finally settled in New Orleans. As for Caroline Myers, the president required her to take an oath of the city. She pledged not to cause trouble and to leave the city boundaries within three days.[129]

Troubles with the federal government did not cease when Phillips arrived in New Orleans. When on April 29, 1862, federal troops arrived in the city, Phillips found it impossible to contain her Confederate pride and her hatred of northerners. On September 29, while watching the cortege of a federal officer, from her window, Phillips laughed, cheered, and mocked the procession. The next day a federal officer appeared on the Phillips' doorstep and demanded that she accompany him to a meeting with General Benjamin Butler who was expecting an explanation and an apology from her. Defending her actions, Phillips sarcastically retorted: " I was in good spirits the day of the funeral." This infuriated Butler and, by Special Order 150, he banished her to Ship Island, a narrow sand bar off the shore of Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico.[130] The order was explicit. It

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[129] In another instance of an imprisonment of a southern Jewish woman, federal troops arrested twenty-two year old Flora Hutzler upon her arrival in Washington. Her jailers interrogated her as to her disloyal activities. They detained her for a few days in the Old Capitol prison trying to ascertain the extent of her and her husband's treasonous activities. Miscellaneous papers Isaac Hutzler family papers Beth Ahabah Archives.

[130] The order was as follows: Special Orders, HDQRS. Department of the Gulf. No. 150 dated New Orleans June 30, 1862, Mrs. Philips, wife of Philip Philips, having been once imprisoned for her traitorous proclivities and acts at Washington and released by the clemency of the Government, and having been found training her children to spit upon officers of the United States, for which act of one of those children both her husband and herself apologized and were again forgiven, is now found on the balcony of her house during the passage of the funeral procession of Lieutenant De Kay laughing and mocking at his remains, and upon being inquired of by the commanding general if this fact were so contemptuously replied, "I was in good spirits that day." It is therefore ordered that she be not "regarded and treated as a common woman," of whom no officer or soldier is bound to take notice but as an uncommon, bad and

accused Phillips of "traitorous proclivities and act." Hoping that Phillips would apologize for her rude behavior, the General moved slowly to give Phillips a chance to change her ways. Phillips, however, stood "holy indignant" and full of "silent contempt."[131] Butler considered her a dangerous woman and demanded that she remain there until she apologized. Phillips was allowed to take one servant with her (the Irish maid, Phoebe) to Ship Island where she was to live in a makeshift hospital/house, would be given soldier's rations (to be cooked by herself), and all verbal and written communications to and from Phillips were to be made through General Butler's office. [132]

After a long and queasy boat ride, Phillips recognized that imprisonment on Ship's Island was going to be even worse than her imprisonment in Washington D.C. As she stated, the "whiskey drinking, ribald talk, unfit for a female ear, cursing etc. made me realize most painfully my sad condition."[133] Mosquitoes and flies swarmed the Island and the heat was unbearable. Phillips and Phoebe also feared starvation as officers only sporadically brought food and water and they found themselves subjected to insect

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dangerous woman stirring up strife and inciting to riot; and that therefore she be confined at Ship Island, in the State of Mississippi, within proper limits there until further orders, and that she be allowed one female servant, and no more, if she so choose; that one of the houses for hospital purposes be assigned her as quarters and a soldier's ration each day served out to her with the means of cooking the same, and that no verbal or written communication be allowed with her except through this office, and that she be kept in close confinement until removed to Ship Island. By order of Major-General [Benjamin F.] Butler. R. S. Davis, Captain and Acting Assistant Adjutant-General." See Korn, "The Jews of the Confederacy," 43-45.

[131]Phillips, Journal, 29 June 18 1862 and Morgan, "Eugenia Phillips," 100-01.

[132]Her house turned out to be an old railroad passenger car with a flat roof especially susceptible to the rays of the sun. See Phillips, Journal, 3 July 1862 and Morgan, "Eugenia Levy Phillips," 101.

attacks, heatstroke, potential attacks by rowdy soldiers, and loneliness. The two women primarily lived in isolation but were subjected to frequent taunts by union soldiers. This imprisonment proved quite difficult for Phillips and Phoebe. The officer in charge, General Dow, was a Black Republican and refused to ease Phillips' situation. During her imprisonment, Phillips' southern patriotism did not dissipate but did become a secondary concern as she fought for her physical and mental survival. Early on during her stay at Ship's Island, Phillips suffered a mental breakdown. She wrote: "I was put in bed; then such a storm of agony, tears, prayers, loud outspoken sobs, I would have died had I not wept. My dear household, my loving children, ...passed through my brain with an intensity of grief I had never known."[134]

Once she "adjusted" to her conditions, Phillips' intense Confederate loyalty resurfaced, especially through racism, as Ship's Island became a waiting place for enslaved African-Americans. Soldiers and runaways slept, were fed, and worked together on the island. Phillips was most unhappy to see African-Americans and whites effectively cooperating and socializing with each other. Phillips was indignant when she saw a corporal carrying an African-American woman's laundry bundle and, in another instance, witnessed "Negro men walk with their arms familiarly embracing their white

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[133]Phillips, Journal, 3 July 1862. After spending that first night on Ship's Island, she wrote "I recall our first night in our Washington prison, which was a paradise to this."

[134]Phillips, "Journal, 3 July 1862. On July 7, Phillips reported feeling better. It should be noted that Phillips was not allowed to keep a diary. Pencil and paper were strictly forbidden.

friends."[135] Disgusted even under the most brutal conditions, Phillips continued to demonstrate her support of the southern cause by upholding racist philosophies and adhering to racial hierarchies.

Southerners regularly learned of Phillips' condition through word of mouth, letters, or newspaper briefs. Such fierce defenses of the south under the most brutal of conditions confirmed southern Jews' loyalty to the Confederacy and countered questions of southern Jewish dedication. Phillips felt invigorated by letters of support from friends, family, and fellow southerners. [136] For example, her siste, Amanda Levy wrote: "Your enemies have thrust upon you the horrors of martyrdom...future historians will vie with each other for the honor of writing your biography."[137] General Butler checked on her once a week and demanded a formal apology. Phillips refused each time. After three

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[135]Phillips, Journal, 25 July 1862. She continued "Every day loads of negroes arrive here from the plantations. Nobody troubles them nobody questions them. They receive food with the soldiers. While these people say they do not come her to interfere with our institutions all this passing before my eyes causes me to have a good argument to prove the contrary." Phillips spent much of her diary recalling with amazement the excellent treatment received by African Americans. They were fed, respected, and housed. Phillips assuming a racially superior position frequently argued that eventually federal troops would understand the necessity of slavery.

[136]She often noted her difficulty remembering the day of the week. For an example, see the diary entry 11 Friday 1862. Phillips sometimes occupied her time "reading, translating, and embroidering." See Phillips, Journal, 25 July 1862.

[137]Amanda Levy to Eugenia Phillips, 26 July 1862 New Orleans, Phillips-Myers family papers Folder #2. Also, see Phillips, Journal, 25 July 1862. She received several letters and papers from her family,

months, Butler recognized that Phillips' stubbornness was creating a public relations nightmare, and he released her under the manufactured notion that she was pregnant.[138]

Phillips' risky actions represented more than the pugnacious activities of a defiant Confederate woman. Phillips openly admitted that she was a Jew, was raised in an observant home, and was married to a religious man. Furthermore, journalists, editors and subscribers routinely mentioned her religious affiliation. Like her sister, Phoebe Pember, her high visibility as both a fierce Confederate supporter and a Jew provided non-Jewish southerners with an alternative image of a southern Jew. Unlike the rumored unscrupulous and profiteering southern Jewish businessmen, Phillips was a fierce patriot willing to subject herself to imprisonment, degradation, and potentially death in support of the Confederacy. For three weeks in Washington D.C. and for three months on Ship's Island, Phillips openly displayed her convictions. She proved to southerners that her Jewishness did not obstruct her Confederate loyalty. Simply, Phillips proved herself a "credit to her race," meaning the Jewish race.[139]

Southern Defeat

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[138]Phillips and Phoebe were released in early October. She returned briefly to her family in New Orleans. Because she and her husband refused to take an oath of loyalty, they removed themselves to La Grange Georgia. There, Phillips cared for the household while her husband farmed. After the war, they moved backed to Washington where her husband argued cases in front of the United States Supreme Court. Phillips died in 1902, at the age of 88.

[139]In several secular newspaper obituaries of Jewish women, they often used that phrase.

Heavy losses of life, destruction of property, and blockades ultimately contributed to southern defeat. During the final days of the Civil War, southern Jewish women returned to cities and plantations to survey the devastation, recoup lost items, and wait for their families to return. Amidst massive damage to life and property, Confederate southern Jewish women found southern defeat very hard. Even with defeat imminent, these women refused to acknowledge northern or federal superiority and continued to demonstrate their loyalties by assuring themselves that a terrible injustice had occurred, more fervently espousing their support of Confederate philosophies, and working to rebuild the south. Emma Mordecai aptly summed up southern Jewish women's initial response when met with southern defeat:

> I felt utterly miserable...that the Earth might open and swallow us all up...gradually we felt that all was in the hand of God and that he had willed this in His unerring wisdom, and that we must submit ourselves to him that in thus doing we were not humbled before our foes but before God.[140]

Southern Jewish women continued, in their personal journals, to rail against wrongheaded "northern aggression," and to allege that Northerners' ignorance about the south encouraged Union troops to unnecessarily destroy cities and plantations. In the eyes of these Jewish women, these actions overturned successful social and economic systems and replaced them with chaos. While walking through Richmond, for example, Emma Mordecai noted "everything looked full of rubbish and disorder bespeaking ruin.

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[140]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 13 April 1865.

The once beautiful grounds of the capitol looked filthy and was thronged with a motley crowd of native and foreign Negroes."[141] Similarly, in Savannah, on December 27, 1864, Fanny Cohen recalled that the Yankees had overtaken the city's beloved squares:

> In the afternoon I went out again and was surprised to see what these wretches had done in the way of making themselves comfortable. All of our Squares were built up with wooden houses so that I scarcely recognized the streets.[142]

On New Year's day 1865, she lamented: How sad is this beginning of the year to us surrounded by our enemies without any prospect of seeing our friends."[143]

Rebecca Emma Solomons Alexander remembered how, after invading her family's home, northern troops placed strychnine in sugar thereby making it inedible and ran their arms behind the jars and bottles on the shelves, wasting precious foods and drugs.[144] Emma Mordecai recorded in her diary on April 21, 1865, that she returned to her family's plantation to find that much of their livestock had been raided. Mordecai bitterly recounted the economic loss of pigs, hens, cows, and mules, crops that had been burned, and fruit trees mutilated. In vain, she walked the streets leading to town in hopes of recovering some of the lost livestock.[145] Rosena Hutzler recalled that upon her

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[141]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 332.

[142]Cohen, Journal, 27 December 1864.

[143]Cohen, Journal, 1 January 1865.

[144]Alexander, "Memoirs of a Life," 11.

[145]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 21 April 1865.

husband's return to their old merchant business he found his supplies raided by Confederate and Northern soldiers and his entire fortune wiped out.[146]

Jewish southern women also worried about what the pending Union victory meant for the cities of their birth. Following the shelling of Charleston, South Carolina native Eleanor Cohen Seixas, while residing in Columbia, South Carolina, worried about the fate of her childhood city, and recorded her fear in a diary entry. Seixas wrote on February 28, 1865:

> how determined the enemy were to possess dear old Charleston, how they shelled the city and we were hurried away, how my brave city, and its forts held out, but this precious record is lost. But, thank God, it lives in my heart and in the heart of every true Southern man, woman, and child...Land of my birth, home of my childhood, dear to me as life, my heart bleeds for and with you, and every any sacrifice on my part which could be made, I would gladly freely give it, for your precious sake.[147]

Ultimately the federal troops also captured the city of Columbia. Distressed, Seixas wrote:

> Can time with Lethean draughts ever efface from my memory the deep sorrow, the humiliation, the agony of knowing we were to be under the Yankees, that our beloved flag was to be pulled down, and the U.S. A. flag wave over the city; that flag that carried loathing to every Southern heart; that flag whose sway is characterized by villainy, by outrage, and violence of every kind.[148]

When Yankee troops raided the city, Seixas bitterly recorded "black and white children and all were helping, themselves freely, stealing, ransacking, and pillaging." After

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[146]Viener, "Rosena Hutzler Levy," 313.

[147]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 360.

soldiers began burning the city, the fire forced Seixas and her family to flee their home and she lamented, "I left all my comforts, all the accumulated treasures of a lifetime, the letters of loved, as bent ones, pictures of our precious relations, tokens and souvenirs of childhood."[149] There was no question as to who was to blame for Seixas' losses. As she stated: "The vile Yankees took from us clothing, food, jewels, all our cows, horses, carriages, etc., and left us in a deplorable condition after stealing from us."[150] It was with particular sadness that Seixas recorded the fall of the Confederacy on April 21, 1865. She wrote:

> A sad record today of crushed hopes, wasted life, and fruitless exertion. Our noble General Lee with 30,000 men, and were compelled to surrender. ...And although I am glad, aye, very glad, to have the fearful loss of life stopped, and to feel once again the security that peace alone can give, yet it is fearful to know that we are conquered! By superior numbers all the gallantry of our soldiers, all their suffering, avail nothing. We struggled for freedom but found it not. Oh, god, fill us with fortitude to bear the reverse.[151]

Despite the loss, Seixas did not accept defeat graciously or easily. On June 2, 1865, she wrote:

> Slavery is done way with. Our noble Jeff Davis, as well as all of our great men, are prisoner; even the governors of the several states have been arrested. Confederate money is worthless and greenbacks rule the day. Columbia and all the principal [cities] are garrisoned by Yankees.

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[148]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 361.

[149]Eleanor Cohen Seixas, Diary 28 February 1865, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

[150]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 363.

[151]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 366.

> How it makes my Southern blood boil to see them in our streets!
> Yes, we are again in the hated Union, and over us again floats the banner
> that is now a sign of tyranny and oppression.[152]

Southern defeat wrought intense poverty on the region and provided the context in which southern Jewish women returned to their cities, plantations, homes, and businesses. Dedicated to rebuilding the south, these southern Jewish women responded to the economic devastation by abandoning their bourgeois lives and contemplating new roles in order to survive. For instance, Emma Mordecai thought she might go into the cake business.[153] Rebecca Alexander remembered her mother started a home business selling ginger cakes to earn money because their confederate money was worthless. Eleanor Cohen Seixas wrote: "I am determined to recommence the labors, to rebuild, from the ashes of despair, a new record, and enthrone blue-eyed hope of the city."[154]

Aside from surveying the damage, rebuilding businesses and homes, and mourning their dead, certain southern Jewish women, because of their public devotion to the Confederacy, were still considered dangerous by the federal government. Though scholars have widely discussed the loyalty oath as it related to Confederate officers and

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[152]Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 367. Cohen was so upset over southern defeat that she balked when her new husband wanted to move north to begin a trading business. She wrote: "My feelings are yet too bitter to go among them...I fear some remark may call forth my Southern blood, and it would be truly disagreeable." See Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 366. Again, despite the existence of anti-Semitism in Charleston and blatant questioning whether Jews were in fact part of the white race (see chapter on anti-Semitism section on Josiah Nott), Cohen assumed the authoritative position of a Confederate white woman.

[153]Emma Mordecai, Diary, 4 May 1865.

[154]Seixas, Diary, 28 February 1865.

politicians, they have not analyzed the fact that certain Southern citizens were also required to sign the oath. After the Civil War, Confederate military, political leaders, spies, and belligerents were required to sign loyalty oaths in order to re-enter the southern economy and political life. Briefly, the signed oath stated that an individual never voluntarily aided the Confederacy and thereafter, pledged devotion to the union.[155] As the Federal government also considered several southern Jewish women dangerous Confederate agitators, smugglers, and belligerents it, therefore, required them to sign the loyalty oath. For example, secretary of State William Henry Seward demanded that eighty-year-old Dinah Minis Cohen sign an oath which pledged to:

> honor forth faithfully support and defend the constitution of the United States and the Union of the States thereunder, and that I will in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing Rebellion with reference to the Emancipation of the slaves.[156]

Similarly, the federal government allowed Henrietta Y. Cohen to resume her place in southern society and business based on several conditions after she signed the oath. Dated May 2, 1867 the United States government:

> hereby grant(ed)...a full pardon and amnesty for all offences by her committed arising from participating, direct, or implied in the said rebellion...it is revoked at any time (she should) acquire any property slaves, or make use of slave labor.[157]

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[155]Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 185.

[156]Dinah Cohen Minis, Pardon, 28 March, 1867, Minis family papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Box 1 Folder 13.

Evidence that southern Jewish women were required to sign a union loyalty oath demonstrated to their southern white neighbors that because they were considered threats by the federal government, their Judaism did not hinder their devotion to the Confederacy. Southern Jewish women who risked their lives and reputations for the Confederacy and were seen by northerners as threats to the union, offered southern whites an alternative image of southern Jews as loyal southerners and, therefore, these women helped combat the image of Jews as profiteers.

Conclusion

On June 5, 1888 in Richmond, Virginia, the corresponding secretary of the Hebrew Ladies' Memorial Association, Mrs. Abraham Levy, issued a formal advertisement in a southern newspaper. Directed "To the Israelites of the South," Levy solicited funds that would be used to beautify Confederate Jewish soldiers' marked and unmarked graves. Still embodying the language of Confederate patriotism, she began her plea by stating:

> While the world yet rings with the narrative of a brave people's struggle for independence, and while the story of the hardships so nobly endured for Liberty's sake is yet a theme but half exhausted, the countless graves of the myriads of heroes who spilled their noble blood in defense of this glorious cause, lie neglected, not alone unmarked by tablet or sculptured urn, but literally vanishing before the relentless finder of the "Hollywood" and the "Oakwood" (trees) having for their object the care and renovation of the

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[157]Henrietta Y. Cohen, Pardon, 2 May 1867, Cohen Phillip papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, folder 2.

> soldiers' graves in those cemeteries...the Hebrew Ladies formed a similar Association, with the view of caring for the graves of Jewish soldiers... It is our intention to mound and turf each grave, and to place at the head of each grave, a simple stone, inscribed with the name, State, and time and place of death.[158]

Levy wanted to be sure to not only honor the slain soldiers but also to remind southerners about Jewish southerners' contributions and loyalty to the Confederacy. This final recorded public act of Jewish Confederate loyalty demonstrated southern Jewish women's continued efforts at assuaging southern white gentiles' anxiety regarding Jews loyalty. The negative economic consequences of wartime had encouraged anti-Semitism to rage in the south. Editorials, articles, cartoons, military orders, and sermons all questioned southern Jewish loyalty. Despite southern Jewish men's attempts at proving loyalty through enlistment, investigations of purported southern Jewish profiteering, public outcries, and formal petitions, their activities were simply not enough to counter waves of anti-Jewish sentiment. Consequently, southern Jewish women stepped in to provide alternative images of southern Jewish loyalty. Through their activities as fundraisers, war supply collectors, smugglers, nurses, volunteers, and belligerents, southern Jewish women acted as Jewish ambassadors to the southern white community. Their activities and public visibility created a different portrait of southern Jews which contested prevailing assumptions about southern Jewish loyalty, and, therefore, tempered Civil War era anti-Semitism.

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[158]Levy, Mrs. Abraham. "To the Israelites of the South."

Conclusion

Antebellum and Civil War era southern Jewish women were faced with several obstacles. First, in the face of rapid economic, political, and social change, American southern Jews needed to accommodate their Judaism to suit their secular needs and achieve certain economic and social goals. Concurrently, with anti-Semitism both institutionalized and entrenched in daily life, southern Jewish women endeavored to counter anti-Jewish hatred and encourage tolerance. These women's efforts were crucial in accomplishing their goals of developing and maintaining southern Jewish identities and infrastructures and the preservation of a distinct southern Judaism. At the same time, these women also worked to prove to other southerners that southern Jews were loyal and productive Americans and southerners, despite their religious difference.

Southern Jewish women chose specific ways to accomplish these goals. From a very young age, young southern Jewish girls were given an education that prepared them for their roles as both Jewish and southern women. Attending Jewish academies, Jewish "friendly" schools, and Sunday schools, traveling to European Jewish historical and current sites, sibling tutoring, and correspondence enabled young girls to understand their responsibilities as both Jews and middle and elite class southern women. As adults, southern Jewish women recognized that the Second Great Awakening Protestant setting often hampered their ability to freely practice their Judaism. These women developed innovative and non-threatening ways to preserve their own Jewish identities and

encourage the development of Jewish identities in their friends and relatives. In addition to modifying existing religious practices to suit the southern evangelical setting, we see evidence that many southern Jewish women were committed to their Jewish identities by exploring the private ways they observed their faith. These including promoting Judaism in their private writings, altering their schedules on holidays, insisting on having Jewish marital contracts alongside their secular ones, using Hebrew names and employing Hebrew signature lines in their correspondence to preserve Judaism in a proselytizing environment. Southern Jewish women also used newly forged writing skills to contest anti-Semitism and promote Judaism among southern Jews who were tempted or pressured to abandon their religion. Through their paid and unpaid labor activities, southern Jewish women not only promoted Judaism but also developed counterpublics where southern Jews conferred, developed empowered religious identities, fought anti-Semitism, developed powerful southern Jewish infrastructures, and created distinctly southern Jewish political agendas. Additionally, southern Jewish women realized that southern Jews were not only marginalized because of their religion but also because of their ambiguous racial status. Working desperately to prove themselves white and, therefore, escape the non-white experience, southern Jewish women fully supported the institution of slavery, African-American inferiority, and white superiority. In their daily lives and their public and private writings, these women supported the myth of slavery as a benevolent and necessary institution, and by utilizing the mutually constitutive

discourses of domesticity, femininity, and whiteness, southern Jewish women asserted themselves as white female guardians. Finally during the Civil War, when their Jewish husbands' Confederate loyalty came under assault due to rumors of profiteering, southern Jewish women stepped in and acted as ambassadors for southern Jews. As fundraisers, war supply amassers, smugglers, nurses, volunteers, and belligerents, these women helped counter prevailing southern assumptions of Jews as disloyal and unscrupulous.

Instead of recognizing the individual efforts of these women as exertions of agency and deliberate acts to preserve southern Judaism and fight anti-Semitism, American Jewish and American southern historians have preferred to subsume these women's experiences under those of American Jewish men or southern white women. Their religion and their gender distinguished these women's historical experiences from Jewish men and Protestant white southern women. It is also incorrect to preserve these women's historical experiences as *Eshet Chayals* or superwomen, perfectly righteous or completely and selflessly devoted to their family and their southern Jewish community. These women aspired to individual social and economic goals. Furthermore, these women lived in a racist and anti-Semitic environment and, as such, often supported racist ideologies and were unnerved when Jews refused to be enlightened and accommodate their religion to modern circumstance. Far from abandoning their religion in the face of intense social pressure, though, antebellum and Civil War era southern Jewish women always strived to balance their religious and secular identities.

The struggle to negotiate religious and secular selves continues to be a problem for American Jewish women. Still faced with anti-Semitism and social and economic pressures, contemporary American Jewish women still encounter antagonism from fellow Jews and secular society. In addition to various anti-Semitic events, the stereotype of the "Jewish American Princess" still haunts today's American Jewish women in film, television, articles, and even religious sermons. Despite this annoying anti-Semitic phenomenon, American Jewish women continue their efforts to fight anti-Semitism. In synagogues, at political events, on television, in books, and editorials, individual Jewish women and local and national Jewish women's groups challenge anti-Semitism. Simultaneously, American Jewish women still work in education and in paid and unpaid labor activities to promote Judaism and develop Jewish infrastructures. Though the context that contemporary women live in and the southern environment that antebellum and Civil War era women lived in was completely different, and perhaps beyond comparison, these women faced similar challenges with respect to preserving Judaism in a Christian environment and endeavoring to promote tolerance of Jews. It is these similar experiences that suggest the need to further develop a distinct American Jewish women's history, one that accepts that their gender coupled with their religion made for a distinctive historical experiences and ones that cannot be totally subsumed under American Jewish or American women's history.

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