

Moral Politicians and Benevolent Reformers:  
American Women as Individual Political Thinkers From 1830-1865

Gabrielle Strasfeld

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2008

© Gabrielle Strasfeld, 2008



Library and  
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file    Votre référence*  
*ISBN: 978-0-494-45347-6*  
*Our file    Notre référence*  
*ISBN: 978-0-494-45347-6*

**NOTICE:**

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

**AVIS:**

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

■ ■ ■  
**Canada**

## ABSTRACT

Moral Politicians and Benevolent Reformers:  
American Women as Individual Political Thinkers From 1830-1865

Gabrielle Strasfeld

The writing of five American women who were published authors between 1830 and 1865 is used in a comparative approach to demonstrate that they were representative of a generation of women who became active in politics on a wide scale during the antebellum period. While most women in the nineteenth century did not actively seek self-representation in electoral politics, and while few would have defined their activities in reform and benevolent societies as “political,” many women, in increasing numbers participated in activities and associations with the express purpose of influencing and affecting public policy and engaging in social reform. Women often joined associations or signed petitions as part of a larger group. Individual authors, such as Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa McCord, and Augusta Jane Evans, also made their political positions known, and actively campaigned for the abolition of slavery, for the continuation of slavery, and for secession through the medium of their writing. The goal of this study is to present the five women as individual political thinkers who can also be viewed as part of a growing trend in the nineteenth century that saw women become increasingly engaged in American political life.

To Mom and Dad,  
for their constant inspiration, encouragement, and support,  
my gratitude is endless;  
To Sam, Renée, and Julien,  
a clan for better or worse;  
To Jess and Etienne,  
akin to kin through thick and thin.

## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction.....   | 1   |
| Chapter 1            Women, Religion, Morality, and Sectionalism.....   | 27  |
| Chapter 2            Louisa McCord and the Grimké sisters on Women’s Rights.....  | 53  |
| Chapter 3            The novel as a vehicle for political dissent in Harriet Beecher<br>Stowe’s <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> and Augusta Jane Evans’ <i>Macaria, or</i><br><i>Alters of Sacrifice</i> ..... | 76  |
| Conclusion.....   | 98  |
| Bibliography.....   | 103 |

## INTRODUCTION

Near the end of 1860, on the eve of the American Civil War, a proud secessionist and famous southern author wrote of the impending national crisis:

As a citizen of Alabama, I am proud to be able to tell you, we have irrevocably linked our destiny with Carolina's and if necessary will *drain our veins* rather than yield to the ignominious rule of Black Republicanism.<sup>1</sup>

After the inevitable war had begun, while visiting the Confederate post at Sewell's Point in Norfolk, Virginia, the author wrote of the experience of being exposed to gunfire that came from the Union stronghold Fortress Monroe. The account was infused with tones of thrilling defiance in the heat of battle against Unionist foes. Mere bullets were not enough to deter this secessionist from the conviction that the Confederate cause was worth the sacrifices endured in war. In fact, the author wrote,

When a *third* ball whizzed *over* our heads and exploded in a field just beyond us, the Officers insisted we should get out of sight, as they were evidently firing at us, and our lives were in danger. Oh! I longed for a Secession flag to shake *defiantly* in their *teeth* at every fire! and my fingers fairly itched to touch off a *red-hot-ball* in answer to their *chivalric civilities*.<sup>2</sup>

The author never had occasion to fire a single bullet during the war. As a woman, Augusta Jane Evans was barred from soldiery and the battlefield. As a wartime nurse,

---

<sup>1</sup> Augusta Jane Evans to Mrs. Virginia L. French, January 13, 1861, in *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, ed. Rebecca Grant Sexton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Augusta Jane Evans to Rachel Lyons, Norfolk, June 26 1861, in *ibid.*, 33.

however, her contributions were considerable and a hospital near her home was named in honor of these efforts.<sup>3</sup>

While this kind of revolutionary speech may have been somewhat overzealous for a woman at this time, it is indicative of social changes that occurred over the 19th century. Many women—in their pursuit of professional literary careers and by submitting anonymous essays, in playing minor or major roles in petition campaigns and reform movements, in demonstrating their increasing investment in the world of politics—participated—consciously and unconsciously—in the advancement, liberation, and eventual enfranchisement of American women. Evans—who insisted on more than one occasion that women had no business in politics<sup>4</sup>—was among a number of women who participated in the political discourse of their time. Few of them did so directly. For the most part the novel, or the pseudonymous essay, served as a conduit for venting political opinions. Flowery fictional prose and journalistic anonymity obscured political dissent and propaganda.

A series of religious, social, and cultural changes beginning in the early nineteenth century and leading up to the Civil War afforded some women new opportunities in the public realm that had not been available to them before.<sup>5</sup> By the

---

<sup>3</sup> William Perry Fidler, “Augusta Evans Wilson As Confederate Propagandist,” *The Alabama Review* 2 (January 1949): 37-38. “Camp Beulah” was named after Evans’ 1859 best-selling novel *Beulah* which had earned her fame and even fortune.

<sup>4</sup> Augusta Jane Evans to Mrs. Virginia L. French, in *A Southern Woman*, ed. Sexton, 27-29; Augusta Jane Evans’ *Macaria, Or, Altars of Sacrifice*, ed. with an introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 274-275.

<sup>5</sup> A number of scholars have dealt with the changes in women’s experiences in the nineteenth century. See for example, Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood:

1850s, despite the fact that women were directly excluded from political participation, a number of women had in various ways come to be politically vocal by way of their pens. While the women's rights movement was imbued with a radicalism that most women chose to avoid at this time, the political issue taking center stage in their nation—slavery—was of central concern to large numbers of women and in many ways implicated them.

Impelled by a moral sense of duty Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké Weld, Louisa McCord, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Augusta Jane Evans—having the means and the skills to do so—entered the political debate. This is one of the few distinguishable characteristics that can be applied to all five women; they wrote about political issues in a public forum.

The staggering popularity of the nineteenth-century novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, remains to this day a literary phenomenon. Stowe was not by any means the only female author to stage a dramatic narrative in the plantation South. She was, however, the first to use this setting to expose the injustices inherent in the institution of slavery. While she belongs to a tradition of Victorian women who used the novel as a vehicle for social criticism, hers was perhaps the first novel to tackle such an

---

1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer, 1966): 151-174; Barbara J. Berg, *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism: the Woman and the City, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1785-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); Suzanne Lebsack, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984); and Carroll, Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).



explosive, and divisive, political issue so sensationally.<sup>6</sup> Despite the impact of her novel Stowe only reluctantly asserted her right, as a republican mother, to venture into the male territory of politics—and she did so apologetically.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Augusta Jane Evans' pro-secessionist and overtly propagandistic novel *Macaria*, written over a decade later during the Civil War, is a source of apparent contradictions when her motives for writing the novel and the contents within it are considered.<sup>8</sup> Louisa McCord also shared this quality of seeming inner contradiction with the two novelists, as can be inferred by the contrast in her chosen vehicle for articulating her political views and her asserted views. For the most part writing under a pseudonym, McCord wrote “rationally”—rather than “sentimentally” as was characteristic of domestic fiction<sup>9</sup>—sometimes even assuming an explicitly male voice in essays about politics or economics.<sup>10</sup> When she did delve into

---

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Ammons, preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Ammons (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), vii-viii; Joan D. Hedrick, introduction to *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Hedrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe to Gamaliel Bailey, March 9, 1851, in *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Hedrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 66.

<sup>8</sup> Passages from *Macaria* in which the heroine voices political concerns are often followed by the heroine's protestations denying her wish for political agency.

<sup>9</sup> For sources on women's fiction or domestic fiction see Nina Baym, *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860* (New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1959); Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Louisa S. McCord, “The Right To Labor,” *Southern Quarterly Review* 16, October 1849; available from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/>

woman-centered topics she forcefully endorsed women's domesticity and denied women's rights to political involvement.<sup>11</sup> In fact, of the five women who feature in this study, only the famous sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké ever acted in open rebellion against the established gender norms of American society.<sup>12</sup> While none of these women went so far as to claim women should not express their own opinions in public, the Grimkés were the only two among them to openly campaign for their right to speak publicly about political issues. This does not lessen the role McCord, Stowe and Evans played in being among the first generation of American women to publicly voice political positions—all assurances that this was not their intention aside.

It is important to understand how these women represented their own activity and how they consequently proceeded to impinge upon the public discourse that essentially excluded them from politics. Comparisons of these two aspects of their writings betrays and emphasizes the degree to which, despite apologetic tones and protestations to the contrary, all five women represent a generation of women who were increasingly invested in the political, the world outside the domestic realm. Despite the fact that only

---

pagevieweridx?c=moajrnl;cc=moajrnl;rgn=full%20text;idno=acp1141.1-16.031;didno=acp1141.116.031;view=image;seq=0150;node=acp1141.1-16.031%3A11; Internet; accessed 23 August 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Louisa S. McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s., 5 (April 1852), reprinted in *All Clever Men Who Make Their Way: Critical Discourse in the Old South*, ed. Michael O'Brien (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Louisa S. McCord, "Woman and Her Needs," *Debow's Review* 13 (September 1852), reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers Rights and Abolition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

two of these women actually asserted their right to do so, the very existence of these public and political writings suggests they all felt entitled to their opinions and were willing to express them to wide audiences in an effort to affect public policy.

This study focuses first on writings that privilege women as religious beings with a special jurisdiction in the arena of all things moral. The goal of the first chapter is to demonstrate the way each of these women co-opted language which bequeathed them a moral imperative to speak authoritatively on those matters which were religious and moral in nature. A comparative approach highlights written commentary by all five women that asserts or privileges their gender in the realm of morality and religion. This common belief led them to write publicly about issues beyond the purview of the domestic sphere. Incorporating a number of different political arguments on slavery and secession the latter half of the chapter hones in on the political views of the five authors. Beyond situating the authors in specific political camps the excerpts demonstrate their awareness of the magnitude of the impending crisis and their recognition of its historical significance.

The five authors are separated by time as well as writing medium. Focusing first on the three essayists—McCord and the Grimkés—whose writings on women’s rights, and its connections to slavery, render their work conveniently comparable, chapter two fixes on the arguments the authors made for or against a woman’s right to public activism and political self-representation. While the Grimkés’ writings were published a good fifteen years prior to McCord’s the latter was generally responding to the sisters’ activism

or their brand of activism which influenced women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, who McCord specifically attacked, in two of her essays.<sup>13</sup>

The final chapter is reserved for the two novelists and compares Stowe's anti-slavery polemic *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) with Evans' pro-secessionist oeuvre *Macaria* (1864) as works with political agendas. There are a number of details surrounding these two works that make them an unlikely pair—most notably the decade that separates the two publication dates, and the fact that one was published prior to the outbreak of Civil War while the other was published during the conflict.<sup>14</sup> There are, however, a significant number of similarities in their approach and style that make the comparison worthwhile. Neither novelist openly supported the women's rights movement at the time of writing their novels. They both to insisted that women had little or no place in political and public life; yet as best-selling novelists they were, in fact, public figures and these two novels had expressly political purposes. The women in their novels tended to mirror the authors in a political awareness that was always accompanied by a reticence, if not outright abhorrence, of becoming public, let alone political, figures. The fact that they did write novels that had political objectives, despite all assertions to the contrary raises many questions. It is certainly possible that the two women were disguising their true desires for political agency by clothing them in the fashionable domestic novel popular and generally acceptable for women of their time. It is even possible that they knew that

---

<sup>13</sup> McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women" in *All Clever Men*; Louisa S. McCord, "Woman and Her Needs," in *Political and Social Essays*.

<sup>14</sup> The war would likely have affected sales of Evans' novel, especially in the North, thus making it difficult to determine the actual popularity of the novel and its influence.

they would be most effective by using such a popular medium. Likewise it is possible that, having witnessed the persecutions and struggles of those women who became too involved in the public realm, they exploited the venue available to them as women, only bending the rules a little, and craftily infusing their work with their political beliefs. While all of these hypotheses are tantalizing and appealing, they are nearly impossible to substantiate. It is at the very least possible to argue that, despite all their claims to the contrary, Stowe and Evans believed they had a right or at least the duty to publicly comment upon the most contentious political issues of their time.

Famous and notorious in different parts of the country during their lifetime, Sarah and Angelina Grimké—as Gerda Lerner has argued— were true pioneers. The sisters were born 13 years apart, in 1792 and 1805 respectively. Despite this age difference the sisters were closely connected in their activities, beliefs, and even personal lives. Heavily active in the public, political world of antislavery activism between 1835 and 1838,<sup>15</sup> the sisters were controversial figures even in these circles. In 1836 the two Grimké sisters began writing and lecturing in a public capacity as anti-slavery agents indicating the extent to which they were ahead of their time. On February 21, 1838, Angelina Grimké became the first American woman to speak before a legislative body.<sup>16</sup>

The Grimkés were born into the wealthy planter class of South Carolina. Sarah’s revulsion with the slavery system eventually grew intolerable to her, and in 1821 she left

---

<sup>15</sup> Larry Ceplair, introduction to *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Ceplair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), xi.

<sup>16</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters*, 3, 4.

Charleston permanently and moved north to Philadelphia.<sup>17</sup> After concluding that she was not advancing in her struggle against slavery, and that in the South she was quite alone in her crusade, Angelina finally joined her sister in self-imposed exile in the free North in 1829.<sup>18</sup>

The sisters' intrusion into the public realm began cautiously, in the summer of 1835, with Angelina's now famous anti-slavery letter to William Lloyd Garrison that the latter published in the *Liberator*. Slowly, with Angelina leading the way—sometimes dragging Sarah along with her—the sisters joined the American Antislavery society in Philadelphia and became increasingly active in the reform movement.<sup>19</sup>

As the seventh daughter of Rev. Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher was born on June 14, 1811, into the world of the Puritan Evangelical tradition.<sup>20</sup> The loss of her mother at the age of four meant that Harriet was largely influenced by her father, and also by her sister Catherine.<sup>21</sup> Harriet grew up in a world where religion informed most if not

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 83-95.

<sup>20</sup> Katherine Kish Sklar has compared the Nineteenth century Beecher family to the Adams family of the Eighteenth century and the Kennedy family of the Twentieth century in their capacity as “cultural interpreters” of their time. Katherine Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), xii-xiii.

<sup>21</sup> Joan Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 21. Hedrick discusses the active role Lyman Beecher played in his children's lives. Marie Caskey, *Chariot of Fire: Religion and the Beecher Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 169, 171. According to Caskey Catharine Beecher was the most influential female figure in Harriet Beecher Stowe's life. She also became an important figure in Angelina Grimké's life, although in a very different capacity. That she never supported and in fact rejected the movement for women's rights is pertinent to

all of her daily life. Her father, husband, all of her brothers and even her sons all served as clergymen in an era when religion and politics were not easily disentangled.<sup>22</sup> When she was thirteen Harriet began attending the Hartford Female Seminary founded and run by her sister Catherine.<sup>23</sup> Several years later, when Catherine was spearheading the first national women's petition protesting Indian removal, Harriet received what might be viewed as additional training for her future role as propagandist for the antislavery cause. Harriet took part in the organizational efforts of her sister's campaign and while Catherine's identity—and that of all the women involved—was kept secret from the public, Harriet was excited and inspired by the petition's success and proud of her older sister's actions.<sup>24</sup>

---

this study for two reasons. First, it is a likely reason behind Harriet's silence on the matter during the movement's earliest phase. Second—and perhaps most significant—it prompted a public exchange between she and Angelina Grimké on the subject of a woman's right to activist reform. The debate, initiated by Catharine, inspired some of Angelina's strongest articulations on women's rights.

<sup>22</sup> Ammons, Preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, vii; Hedrick, *A Life*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Hedrick, *A Life*, 31; Forrest Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life Of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 1941 (reprint, Westport: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972), 67, 72.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *The Journal of American History* 86 (Jun., 1999): 15, 27, 28; Alisse Theodore Portnoy, "'Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard': Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829-1831," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Winter, 2003): 573-574, 583. Catherine Beecher initiated the first national petition drive written and organized solely by women. In 1829, a circular addressed to women—written anonymously by Catharine—was widely distributed and encouraged women to collect signatures and send petitions to the federal government objecting to Andrew Jackson's plans for the removal of Southeast Indians from six southern states.

Louisa McCord was born into a prominent slaveholding family of the planter class in South Carolina, in 1811—the same year as Harriet Beecher Stowe.<sup>25</sup> As a child McCord grew accustomed to seeing her father, Langdon Cheves, who served as president of the Bank of the United States, associate with men of national prominence and she was frequently present during their discussions on politics and business.<sup>26</sup> McCord's father allowed her to be tutored with her brothers in subjects generally reserved for boys.<sup>27</sup> In 1830, when Louisa McCord was twenty years old, she was given thirty-eight slaves by her grandmother. At the age of twenty-three her father gave her 1,530 acres of plantation land to be held in trust until she married.<sup>28</sup> When she did marry David McCord in 1840, Cheves drew up legal documents that allowed Louisa to retain sole ownership of the Lang Syne plantation and its slaves while her husband ran its operation.<sup>29</sup> It is not surprising that McCord was a fierce advocate of slavery. What can be deemed as McCord's denial of femininity in much of her authorship runs parallel to the views she articulated on women's place in society. Her notion of gender was inextricably tied to slavery. She argued that women's subjugation was a key component of a hierarchical

---

<sup>25</sup> Leigh Fought, *Southern Womanhood and Slavery: A Biography of Louisa S. McCord, 1810-1879* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 38-39.

<sup>27</sup> Richard C. Lounsbury, chronology in *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 14; Fought, *Southern Womanhood*, 36-37.

<sup>28</sup> Lounsbury, chronology in *Louisa S. McCord*, 14; Fought, *Southern Womanhood*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Fought, *Southern Womanhood*, 64, 88-89.



social order that legitimized slavery and the Southern way of life.<sup>30</sup> She objected to the women's rights movement in that it threatened the intricate structural foundations on which her society was built. Her essays deploring the women's rights movements often simultaneously defended slavery.

A much younger author than the other four women, Augusta Jane Evans was born to a sometime affluent family on May 8, 1835, in the southern town of Columbus, Georgia. Her childhood was peppered with economic ups and downs, frequently as a result of her father's financial troubles.<sup>31</sup> Her mother encouraged her intellectualism and indulged her voracious appetite for reading, including modern science and philosophy.<sup>32</sup> Written in the Victorian style reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, *Beulah*, published in 1859, was a bestseller in the southern United States with 22,000 copies printed in the first nine months after its publication.<sup>33</sup> Evans was also highly praised in a northern newspapers.<sup>34</sup> An ardent southern nationalist who wholly supported the Confederacy, she joined the war effort in any way she found possible and within the appropriate boundaries of women's roles.<sup>35</sup> Sometime during 1862, she began planning

---

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 282.

<sup>31</sup> William Perry Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909, a Biography* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 38; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, introduction to *Beulah*, by Augusta Jane Evans, ed. Fox-Genovese (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), ix.

<sup>32</sup> Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Fox-Genovese introduction to *Beulah*, xii; Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 74.

<sup>34</sup> Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson*, 81.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

a wartime propaganda novel, which became *Macaria, or Altars of Sacrifice*, yet another of Evans' contributions to the Confederacy and the southern cause. She dedicated the novel to the soldiers of the Confederacy.<sup>36</sup>

Many other women of the antebellum period participated in politics in one way or another—Evans, Stowe, McCord and the Grimkés were not alone.<sup>37</sup> Lydia Maria Child, for example, was a well-known abolitionist and contemporary of the Grimké sisters. In fact, one of her best-known anti-slavery polemics was published in 1833, just before Angelina joined the antislavery society.<sup>38</sup> Despite showing a deep interest in the condition of women, Child avoided arguing for their emancipation or for their rights. In fact, until 1873 she shied away from the women's rights arguments that would come to characterize the most controversial of the Grimké sisters writings.<sup>39</sup> It was Angelina and

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 105-106

<sup>37</sup> A number of studies have established that women were political in this period. For women's presence in public spaces, which includes a chapter on women and politics, see Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); see also Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 54-56. The article, published in 1833, was titled "An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans." Yellin views Child's essay as a catalyst in starting a national discussion on the immediate abolition of slavery and argues that it was also a likely source of inspiration for some of Angelina's own *Appeals* written a few years later. Child also structured her language in a manner that might be deemed appropriate for women in order to discuss topics deemed unsuitable for them. She was the first American woman to become editor of a newspaper that focused on public issues and politics.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 55-65. Child's discussion of women's condition and her own right to rational participation in political discussion is the focus of a chapter in Yellin's book.

Sarah Grimké's brand of antislavery feminism that so heavily influenced women such as Abbey Kelley, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton—among others.

The primary sources used in this study differ in format—some are novels, while others are polemical essays, public speeches, or letters and pamphlets intended for wide circulation and publication—but their common characteristic is that the content is political—generally in reference to slavery, secession, or women's rights—and intended for public distribution. The sources thus demonstrate a choice to participate in public debate, in an arena generally reserved for men. If necessary, a private source such as a letter is used to demonstrate intent when producing a public text. These women penetrated the political sphere to varying degrees. While the Grimkés physically entered the political sphere, it is arguable that the efforts of Stowe and Evans—more peripheral in nature and less defiant of social restrictions—were similarly motivated by a desire to influence the current political situation. Women usually acted as part of a group. Petition campaigns were often spearheaded by a few women, but the very act of gathering as many signatures as possible in order to strike a more powerful blow or to lend authority to their actions also suggests that women participating in such activity could not, or would not, act alone. These five women, however, were the sole agents of their actions. Something clearly inspired them to act alone even when, in the case of the Grimké sisters, they were speaking on behalf of a larger group. Sarah and Angelina Grimké still represented themselves as individuals rather than as members of an amalgamous group.

The nineteenth century paradox, according to Nancy Cott, lies in the coexistence of feminism—particular to the women in the anti-slavery movement—with an ideology

that essentially limited women's roles.<sup>40</sup> This is particularly intriguing when considering the five women who figure in this study who, in many ways, embodied this very paradox when they took active public positions on political issues. For feminist scholars the antebellum period has particular importance since it encompassed the first organized women's rights movement. For the first time in their history women identified themselves as political beings and campaigned for their own political agency. Several historians have demonstrated that women were involved and even influential in politics during the antebellum period. Studies focusing on different aspects of women in politics have successfully shown that these activities took place in both the North and the South and that they were occurring on many different levels. From abolitionism to outright women's rights activism or from the rejection of both of these movements while supporting secession or the institution of slavery it is clear that this era saw a tremendous growth in women's political activity. This activity was not entirely unprecedented, Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren represented politically minded women of their time. But the sheer number of participants in the Antebellum period indicates a definite

---

<sup>40</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 3-5. See also Jean Fagan Yellin, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). She argues that within the Anti-slavery movement there was a political culture particular to the women involved. See also Aileen Kraditor's *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 58-62. Kraditor discusses William Lloyd Garrison's support for women's rights as part of his ideology on human equality. According to Kraditor, Garrison supported women's rights because he viewed it as the denial of natural rights, which lay at the heart of his abolitionist ideology. Kraditor argues that Garrison objected to the denial of women's rights as part of a larger platform which held that every human being was "individually responsible to God to do his will as revealed in the New Testament." According to Garrison, laws which prevented women from voting, if they felt the need to do so, were unjust.

political change over the course of a few decades.<sup>41</sup> If the scholarship on the nineteenth century woman's experience differs sometime, even when historians contradict one another there is still an underlying commonality in this body of work that points toward a unifying conclusion: The period leading up to the Civil War witnessed the growth of a varied and multi-dimensional women's political culture. Angelina and Sarah Grimké, Louisa McCord, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Augusta Jane Evans were part of this culture.

The present study seeks to find its place in work done over the past three or four decades in women's history often itself inspired by the feminist movement. Starting around the 1970s Feminist historians sought to unearth the history of their ancestors with a sense of militant urgency. According to Linda Kerber, "In 1972 it was long past time to engage the implicit argument of virtually every historical study that women had not been intellectually consequential."<sup>42</sup> Making good use of their sources path breakers such as Gerda Lerner, Barbara Welter, Anne Firor Scott, Aileen Kraditor, Ellen Carol Dubois, Barbara Berg and Nancy Cott were among the first generation of scholars to lay a solid

---

<sup>41</sup> Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> As Kerber aptly put it: "Women's history has regularly flourished in times of progressive and feminist politics and regularly declined in periods of repression; activists are hungry for their history." Kerber argues that women's history was inspired by and has in large part been sustained by the feminist movement which resurged in 1969. Linda Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 7, 14.

foundation for a field of historical inquiry devoted to the past lives and experiences of women.<sup>43</sup>

In 1966 Barbara Welter identified the cult of “True Womanhood” a frequently used term from the Nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> She analyzed the societal reverence for the ideal female in a domestic setting—this woman was the very symbol of purity, chastity, and piety. Women’s religiosity was welcomed as it was not considered a threat, but rather a bulwark, to the sanctity of the home.<sup>45</sup> The ideal woman tended to the home and remained within its confines in constant readiness to obey a man’s orders—be it her father, husband, or guardian. Welter demonstrated that religion was increasingly associated with woman’s sphere, and morality, likewise became a woman’s domain and would eventually allow for their intrusion into the political when it fell within the purview of morality.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Gerda Lerner, whose own life is both impressive and inspiring, remains to this day an important in the field, having earned her Ph.D. in history during the late sixties at the age of 46. When championing the work of pioneers in women’s history many historians often begin with Gerda Lerner. Her Ph.D. dissertation on Angelina and Sarah Grimké remains the foremost authority on the sisters to date. Kerber, *Toward and Intellectual History*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” 151.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-155.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-152. See also Welter’s essay “The Feminization of American Religion,” in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 84-88, 90-91, 93, 102. An interesting study to be held in comparison with Welter’s work can be found in Susan Juster’s *Disorderly Women*, 3-11. Juster has argued that women actually held more power in the pre-industrial, colonial period. Where women initially held a measure of authority in church decisions during the Colonial period Susan Juster finds that their leadership and authority were increasingly restricted as their inclusion came to be viewed negatively. According to Juster women, and the feminine, came to be viewed as disorderly. Likewise women who resisted social reorganization and patriarchal subordination were viewed as

Most of the scholars who followed Welter acknowledged the inherent paradox of these social dynamics and built upon them in one way or another. Like Welter, Nancy Cott saw religious motivations as the path leading women to join reform movements and thus participate increasingly in activities that both took them outside of their sphere and thrust them into the public world.<sup>47</sup> Building on Welter's thesis Cott looked more specifically at the ideology of domesticity, as a necessary precursor to feminism. Studies focusing on similar themes, in emphasizing specific details of women's experiences and political interests—be it women's rights, or a common feeling of sisterhood, or budding feminist thought—have also demonstrated that, whatever women reacted to or campaigned for, their actions often manifested themselves in a public capacity.<sup>48</sup>

---

disorderly. Juster's work is critical to understanding the changes that took place in the nineteenth century which increasingly—in literature and language of the period—sought to restrict women's activities.

<sup>47</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 7, 8

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 9, 99, 140, 152, 153-154. This is consistent with the work of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Barbara Berg. Rosenberg argued that some nineteenth century women channeled their frustrations with their limited domestic roles into reform movements. Their participation in these movements was legitimized by the Cult of True Womanhood, the very ideology which they sought to challenge. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*. See especially the essay included here entitled "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman: A case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," especially 109, 115, 123, 125-126, and her classic essay "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," 53-76; Barbara Berg's approach viewed the development of feminist thought as women's reaction to and rejection of an ideal or an ideology that was created for them by men. Berg argued that American feminism grew out of female benevolent societies and women's rejection of what she terms the "Woman-Belle ideal" created by men in order to facilitate the patriarchal domination of women. In rejecting this ideal women also developed a "feminist ideology" defined by Berg as the assertion of "the right to independent judgment and conscience." Although Berg argued that the women's rights movement associated with abolitionism was unrelated to the development of benevolent feminism and she did not discuss the Grimké sisters or Elizabeth Cady Stanton and their roles in the women's rights conventions at length. Berg, *The Remembered Gate*, 4-5, 72.

Diverging from previous studies on the nineteenth century woman's experience Nancy Hewitt has argued that while women's domestic experience had been well-documented, too much emphasis had been placed on the concept of separate spheres. Hewitt argued that Antebellum historians tended to focus on the antagonism between the sexes rather than between women themselves.<sup>49</sup> According to Hewitt, women in Rochester did not follow a clear path from benevolent associations to women's rights. She identified three types of female activists who formed three distinct and competing groups of reform often cooperating with men.<sup>50</sup>

These studies have a significant commonality in identifying a change in women's roles that occurred over a period of time when the language of public discourse was meant to limit their activities and influence and failed to do so. There was also a significant difference between women's experiences in the South and in the North. The ideology of separate spheres for men and women did not necessarily apply to southern women, nor did a feminist culture develop in the southern states. In response to studies on the ideology of domesticity, a number of scholars have focused on the gender dynamics in the south. Here too women could be political, and they could exert influence in certain ways, but their lives were shaped far more by a slaveholding hierarchical social reality than by an ideology of distinct spheres, or a cult of domesticity.

---

Barbara Epstein's thesis—that the critical issue for Nineteenth century feminists was women's equality in the "public arena"—is also important, in that it identifies the concern which first inspired the Grimké sisters to address women's rights. Barbara Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity*, 4, 6, 77-79, 81-84, 148-149.

<sup>49</sup> Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 18, 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.



The Southern Lady, first discussed as a distinct historical type by Anne Firor Scott, was submissive to her husband and lived in a highly restrictive world dominated by men.<sup>51</sup> Contrary to an ideology of distinct spheres in the North, which might have allowed women a measure of authority in the territory of the home, Scott argued that the subordination of women, children, and slaves supported the paternalistic hierarchy of southern society which in turn enforced the legitimacy of slavery.<sup>52</sup> Scott argued that the ideal of the Southern Lady was integral to the institution of slavery. The Lady was representative of a “landowning aristocracy” and she was as integral to the patriarchal structure as the slave.<sup>53</sup> Scott also suggested that the rigid social structure was a reaction to abolitionist attacks on southern society.<sup>54</sup> In spite of all restrictions Scott argued that the southern woman, rather than being submissive and complacent, was strong, intelligent, and resourceful despite living in a society which limited her opportunities.<sup>55</sup>

Jean E. Friedman has also argued that the ideology of domesticity, which created gender boundaries in the urban industrial North was not applicable to white women in the South. According to Friedman, women’s lives were shaped by a paternalistic society in which their position was one of dependence and subordination. Unlike those in the North, where “distinct spheres” demarcated the spaces occupied by each sex, women in southern agricultural societies dwelt within a common, sexually integrated space where

---

<sup>51</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), x, 7-8, 11-12, 13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 17

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 16

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 21

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-70. The chapter is entitled “Discontent.”

men were supreme. Likewise Elizabeth Fox-Genovese argued that the South shared notions of the distinctions between the male and female spheres but they did not necessarily adopt the ideology of domesticity so prevalent in the North. Rather than being a distinctly feminine sphere the southern household—which in many cases was situated on a farm or plantation—served as the center of an enterprise. While the home contained women’s sphere its function as part of an income generating productive unit automatically gave men patriarchal dominion over all its inhabitants.<sup>56</sup> In many ways this had to do with preserving the southern social order—women’s subordination to men as dependants infused the subordination of slaves with legitimacy.<sup>57</sup> Friedman argued that where a distinct woman’s culture developed in the North, the identities of women in the South, especially of the planter class, were held in check by this rigid hierarchical community.<sup>58</sup> But one of Fox-Genovese’s most tantalizing observations is her assertion that women who benefited from the institution of slavery were likely to endorse it. In accepting their own subordination they were also given numerous privileges and despite being subordinate, women of the planter class were also part of an elite group. Within this class they were superior to white non-slaveholding women who were obliged to perform household labor without the use of slaves.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 195.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 197

<sup>58</sup> Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>59</sup> Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 203, 230, 242, 244, 245, 274. For a more recent source on southern women, see also Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. Faust focuses on women’s roles and

Suzanne Lebsock study of women in Petersburg, Virginia is also important as it suggests southern society was not as rigid or hierarchical as Scott, Friedman and Fox-Genovese proclaim.<sup>60</sup> Her thesis focuses on women's ability to exert a measure of control over their own lives in a southern city. While they were able to exercise a degree of autonomy in their daily lives they did so without adopting, and in fact rejecting, the ideas associated with women's rights. According to Lebsock women in Petersburg gained increasing autonomy over the antebellum period and became less dependent upon men. Unlike the North these changes took place in a society that rejected the women's rights movement. She argued that men's and women's spheres were not entirely divided. Many women became property holders or never married. Many women also led active public lives in social welfare organizations and religion.<sup>61</sup>

Elizabeth Varon has also focused on women in Virginia to demonstrate that women were politically active in the south without being involved with women's rights and abolition movement.<sup>62</sup> Varon's work serves as an excellent example of scholarship

---

experience in the confederacy. She is particularly interested in the planter class during the civil war and their efforts to maintain the social structure of slave society. She discusses women's reluctance to abandon traditions associated with the southern lady while simultaneously adopting new roles as authors and propagandists.

<sup>60</sup> In his article on gender dynamics in religious settings in Antebellum Georgia, Frederick A. Bode also de-emphasized the notion of a rigid hierarchical southern society. While churches and religion in the South did not become women's domain in the same capacity as it did in the North, Bode argued that southern religion may have in fact allowed for a "common sphere" where men and women acted as partners in charitable activities and in the moral upbringing of their children. Frederick A. Bode, "A Common Sphere: White Evangelicals and Gender in Antebellum Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Winter, 1995): 778-779.

<sup>61</sup> Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg*, xiv-xviii.

that focuses on women's multi-dimensional political lives prior to the Civil War. Bringing together different examples of women's political participation in politics Varon argues that Virginia, rather than being an anomaly, was in fact representative of transformations in women's roles in the antebellum period. From the use of Legislative petitions, to voluntary campaigns, to publishing reports, appeals, novels, and even essays women were able to articulate their political view in a public capacity. Women also increasingly took part in partisan and then sectional politics, A version of the Republican Mother, known as the "Spartan Mother" arose in the South after the South seceded from the North. This southern patriotic mother consented to the conscription of her sons and bore the loss with stoic resolve—this was her contribution to the southern cause.<sup>63</sup>

A key section of Lori Ginzberg's *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class In the Nineteenth Century United States* also focused on women's roles in politics during the Antebellum period. While many women participated quite extensively in the politics of the era, Ginzberg has argued that most would have rejected the notion that these activities were in fact political.<sup>64</sup> As such she identified a contradiction which characterizes the history of women in the nineteenth century—while they were quite willing to act politically, for the most part, they completely disavowed women's right to participate in politics.<sup>65</sup> According to Ginzberg, after 1840 the term

---

<sup>62</sup> Although many women joined the American Colonization Society. This is the focus of an entire chapter in Elizabeth R. Varon's *We Mean To be Counted*, 41- 70.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-4, 8, 103, 165.

<sup>64</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class In the Nineteenth Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 69, 72-73, 78-80, 82.

‘political’ increasingly referred to the electoral process, from which women were excluded, and their power through the politics of benevolence and moral suasion was curtailed.<sup>66</sup> Varon has also addressed this issue of what was viewed as political, and she noted that people in her study associated “politics” with “electoral activity,” which was mainly campaigning, voting, office holding and legislating.<sup>67</sup> Lebsack, Varon and Ginzberg’s work reinforces the notion that women’s public and political activity was wide and varied. Their work can also be added to studies, such as Welter’s, that identify women’s path to all types of political activity through their jurisdiction of morality and their participation in benevolent organizations. Most striking is the evidence that this path was quite similar in the North and the South, suggesting that, while they may have diverged in stark ways, and while southern women did not truly develop a feminist culture as a result of their activities, there was a common foundation across the United States that first saw women enter the political sphere.

A common theme in the scholarship traces the path that led women to the public sphere or at least to the exercise of influence on public policy. The diverse ways in which scholars have shown women to be political, far from creating confusion, can in fact be viewed as an indicator of a significant change that occurred during the Antebellum period. Whether women got to be political through reform and whether this led northerners to women’s rights or southerners in Petersburg to quietly assume control over certain aspects of their lives while rejecting women’s rights; whether they rejected

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 77, 80, 82

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 84, 85, 90-97.

<sup>67</sup> Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 2.

women's right to access in the public arena while covertly doing just the opposite and writing political essays under a pseudonym; whether their politics were in favor of secession, abolition or slavery; whether they came to view themselves as unified in oppression—with each other, with the slave—or perhaps in choosing to justify subordination the result is the same: Women were political—meaning they sought to affect public policy. Building upon existing scholarship the question now is whether the women who took part in this significant change were aware of what their participation meant and how this tempered or affected their contributions. There is something inherently problematic in a period where rhetoric which idealized the domestic, private woman prevailed while in actuality women were taking part in public life in increasing numbers.

While these studies have demonstrated that women in the nineteenth century were politically involved there is little scholarship that looks for a self-consciousness in their writings, especially when the topic of these writings was political in nature. Did they view themselves as political participants? Lori Ginzberg and Elizabeth Moss, among others, have demonstrated that most women would have avoided being associated with the political. Clearly women who supported the women's rights movement intended to be political but what about those women who shunned or rejected those ideals while nevertheless occupying a place in the political discussion—how did they resolve this obvious contradiction? Did their gender and the boundaries meant to restrict their gender colour what they wrote? Did it alter their political argument? Were they apologetic, or rather, did they manage to discuss politics rationally, and with confidence and clarity. Despite the fact that only two of these women openly advocated the improvement of

women's rights, all of them, when writing about the political, seemed to write with a sense of urgency—if not entitlement—even when the apologetic tone was present. Obviously a professed belief that a woman had no place commenting upon political issues did not manifest itself in the passive observance of these professions and writing under a pseudonym or framing a political treatise in a novel did not necessarily render the argument less meaningful or direct. It is likely that women in these positions never resolved the contradictions of their public and private lives, yet their work remains important as evidence of a larger trend of this period. Despite the disagreements among scholars most of the evidence they provide, when considered together suggests that the period leading up to the Civil War marks the beginning of a broad and varied women's political culture.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Women, Religion, Morality and Sectionalism

Historical language from the antebellum period indicates a cultural belief that there existed two very distinct spheres, which assured a separation between the private life of home and family and the public life, which included civil society and the greater political world. The private sphere, belonging to women, was viewed as dependant upon the sustenance and protection of the outer public sphere, which was navigated by men alone. It was generally considered inappropriate for women to voice any sort of political opinion, as doing so brought them dangerously out into the public sphere.

Religion occupied a central role in daily life, which in some instances cultivated and in other instances resisted an environment favorable to women's activism. Piety and religious fervor were viewed as valuable qualities for a woman. It was a mother's duty to instill Christian values in her children and to safeguard the religious sanctity of the home. As religion fell under the sway of the woman's sphere it came to be held as distinct from politics; it belonged increasingly to the domestic realm. Limited public activity under a religious guise, such as work in benevolent organizations, was deemed acceptable for women. During the debate over slavery this domesticated view of religion was also pivotal in granting women access to public expression on a political issue.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1785-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 128-129, 159; Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 65, 85; Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 19; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer, 1966): 151-152, 172;



Slavery was an issue that permeated the private sphere because it was a moral issue. It affected elite Southern women whose domestic reality depended upon the institution's existence, and it fell within the purview of anti-slavery women who came to view it as a sinful blight on society that threatened Christian souls if not eradicated. In the North, women's public attacks on the institution were fueled by a righteous indignation when faced with a sin of such magnitude. Their moral duties compelled them to straddle the boundary between private and public if only to safeguard the sanctity of their domain.<sup>2</sup> In the South, women such as Louisa McCord could publicly express their

---

Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion," in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 84, 93. For women and antislavery see Aileen Kraditor's *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Jean Fagan Yellin, *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers Rights and Abolition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 52; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *To Be Worthy of God's Favor: Southern Women's Defense and Critique of Slavery* (Gettysburg College: 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture, 1993), 9, 11-12; Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Suzanne Lebsack, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984); Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Frederick A. Bode, "A Common Sphere: White Evangelicals and Gender in Antebellum Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Winter, 1995); George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); and Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

defense of slavery in political essays because they were engaging in a moral crusade to prevent what they were sure was the inevitable degradation of their good Christian homes if the established hierarchy of Southern society was altered. Both northern and southern women, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Augusta Jane Evans, offered veiled criticisms of American society in the romantic narrative of novels, a genre that was usually deemed acceptable for women. Sarah and Angelina Grimké took radical steps into the public male realm because they believed a woman's moral intuition gave them every right to enter the political arena when the politics at hand became a point of national contention and the issue of slavery became permeated with questions of its morality.

The period leading up to the Civil War offered women a window through which they might enter political debate, if cautiously and in various clever ways. Perhaps even more than men, women were directly or indirectly implicated in the slavery debate. Pro-slavery southern men frequently invoked women as examples of natural subordinates in order to support arguments claiming that all men were not created equal. Like male authors on either side of the dispute, women used religious rhetoric to defend their positions.<sup>3</sup> The religious tone of politics at the time is also critical to understanding the creation of an opportunity that saw women voice public political dissent. Among the

---

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, "The Divine Sanction of the Social Order: Religious Foundations of Southern Slaveholders' World View," *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 55 (Summer, 1987): 219, 220, 226-227; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810 – 1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992).

women who took a public stand on the issue of slavery, none was more aware of this unique opportunity and its historical significance than Sarah Grimké. She argued that the development of a national crisis over an issue so rife with sin fostered a moment—perhaps the moment—in history that forced women to take a stand and to accept their own moral responsibilities in the larger society.

Although women of the nineteenth century were excluded from politics and public debate, an increasing rate of literacy among women during the early part of the century created an audience, as well as opportunities, for female journalists and fiction writers. While a woman could not have earned a living from her writing in the very early nineteenth century, publishers began producing magazines and literature that targeted and cultivated a female audience.<sup>4</sup> This development provided women authors with opportunities to have their work both published and read, and during the Nineteenth century their work constituted one third of the nation's best-selling novels.<sup>5</sup> The novel also provided many women with an ideal vehicle of protest through which to criticize their society without resorting to an open attack. Historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese noted that the most widely read contributions by women to the political debate of the era were found in novels.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the first American novel to sell more than one million copies.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Welter, "Defenders of the Faith: Women Novelists of Religious Controversy in the Nineteenth Century" in *Dimity Convictions, Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 103.

<sup>6</sup> Fox-Genovese, *To Be Worthy*, 12.

Polemical essays by women were less common and were often published under pseudonyms unless their content was directly relevant to the domestic sphere. Unlike Stowe and Evans, Louisa McCord's best writing was arguably in her political essays, not in her fiction or poetry. These essays tend to be objective and detached from the sentimentality so prevalent in women's novels of the period. By rejecting self-representation as a woman in her writing, McCord was able to engage in political debate more directly. At the same time she was renouncing the worldly fame that a self-representative female novelist could potentially attain. The anecdote about Harriet Beecher Stowe's first meeting with Abraham Lincoln in 1864 is a familiar one. As Stowe's family told the story, when Lincoln first shook her hand, he said; "So this is the little lady who made the big war?"<sup>8</sup> Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reached a large audience and was even widely read in the South, albeit as a scandalous and inflammatory text. Augusta Jane Evans also attained wide acclaim as a best-selling novelist during her lifetime.<sup>9</sup>

The texts discussed in this chapter reflect the common belief among the authors that women had a distinct and special role to play in society. This belief was perhaps the only commonality in the politics of the women. Of the five, only the Grimké sisters favored women's rights and on issues of slavery and the South's right to secession the

---

<sup>7</sup> Joy Jordan-Lake, *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), xv.

<sup>8</sup> Wendy F. Hamand, "'No Voice from England': Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Lincoln, and the British in the Civil War," *The New England Quarterly* 61 (Mar. 1988): 3.

<sup>9</sup> Welter, "Women Novelists" in *Dimity Convictions*, 105-106; Rebecca Grant Sexton, *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, ed. Sexton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), xxi; Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 76.

authors stood on opposing sides of the Mason-Dixon line—three to the North and two to the South. Louisa McCord published an essay directly attacking Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and scholars view Augusta Jane Evans' novels *Beulah* and *Macaria* as responses to Northern transgressions upon Southern honor. The Grimké sisters' strong moral objections to the institution of slavery led them to abandon their Southern homeland for the free North, becoming permanent expatriates.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was never an outright abolitionist and was not a prominent figure in the organized antislavery movement until she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>10</sup> She had, in fact, written a few articles in favor of antislavery sentiments—some anonymously, one or two under her own name—but none of her writings bore the same emotional urgency or sense of mission so salient in *Uncle Tom*.<sup>11</sup> On March 9, 1851, in a letter to Gamaliel Bailey, editor of the anti-slavery paper the *National Era*—which serialized *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—Stowe introduced her novel and its purpose:

---

<sup>10</sup> The distinction between the agenda of abolitionists and the agenda of colonizationists—movements which both fall under the umbrella of anti-slavery—vary. There was a stark contrast between Garrisonian immediatists, who agitated for immediate and unconditional emancipation, and the American Colonization Society, which envisioned an American society free of slavery and black people. The central idea in colonization theory was that slavery would be eradicated from the United States as slaveholders willingly manumitted their slaves who would then be deported to Liberia, a colony in Africa, where the former slaves would create their own society. See Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, 1967), 4-5, 26-27; Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xiii; Ronald G. Walters discusses the debate on whether Stowe was an abolitionist or colonizationist. While the end of her novel is often viewed as a testament to her colonizationism, Walters argues that she cannot be viewed unequivocally as such and that her novel had much in common with radical abolitionism. This is in Walters' essay "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the American Reform Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Cindy Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176-177.

<sup>11</sup> Joan D. Hedrick, introduction to *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Hedrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4-5.

Up to this year I have always felt that I had no particular call to meddle with this subject, and I dreaded to expose even my own mind to the full force of its exciting power. But I feel now that the time has come when even a woman or a child who can speak a word for freedom and humanity is bound to speak. The Carthaginian women in the last peril of their state cut off their hair for bow-strings to give to the defenders of their country; and such peril and shame as now hangs over this country is worse than Roman slavery, and I hope every woman who can write will not be silent.<sup>12</sup>

The tone of this letter reflects Stowe's apprehension in dealing with a topic of such magnitude. She employed humble language to convey the idea that—although she belonged to the weaker sex and was fearful of the impact this topic could have on her sheltered mind—the issue had nevertheless permeated her sphere, and the threat to the sanctity of her home and her society compelled her to speak out. She was careful not to undercut male supremacy and the image association of a woman and child was meant to acknowledge her weaker status. She was reaffirming societal constructs in order to counter her trespassing into the realm of men. Her reference to the Carthaginian women implies that she felt the United States had reached the point of crisis. Her final sentence, which encouraged “every woman” to do the same, emphasized her belief that women were morally entitled to public outcry when so much was at stake.

In 1852, after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe responded to a letter from author Eliza Cabot Follen:

This horror, this nightmare abomination! Can it be my country? It lies like lead on my heart, it shadows my life with sorrow; the more so that I feel, as for my own brothers, for the South and am pained by every horror I am obliged to write, as one who is forced by some awful oath to disclose

---

<sup>12</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe to Gamaliel Bailey, March 9, 1851, in *The Oxford Reader*, 66.

in court some family disgrace. Many times I have thought that I must die, and yet I pray God that I may live to see something done.<sup>13</sup>

Again, her language and tone accentuated her feminine, delicate sensibilities. She was “obliged to write” despite the ugliness of the subject. It was as though she bore the weight and guilt for a terrible act. And though it was not she who sinned, as a representative of the morally conscious half of society she bore some responsibility for effecting change and repentance.

In her concluding remarks to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Stowe employed the rhetoric of sentimentality and appealed to the sensitive, nurturing nature of the softer sex. She offered “only a faint shadow, a dim picture, of the anguish and despair that are, at this very moment, riving thousands of hearts, shattering thousands of families, and driving a helpless and sensitive race to frenzy and despair.”<sup>14</sup> This was not the rational language of the man’s public domain but rather the imagery of the romantic, domestic novel of the Victorian era. This melodramatic tone was applied liberally throughout her writing, and it was certainly effective.

Louisa McCord is best known for her polemical treatises in which she defended slavery and attacked the feminism so frequently associated with the abolitionism of the North. Like many inhabitants of the South, McCord intertwined religion with slavery, and her arguments in favor of slavery frequently rested upon religious foundations, despite the fact that, unlike the Grimkés, Stowe, and Evans, she does not appear to have been very devout—the McCords did not join any church during their entire marriage, nor

---

<sup>13</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe to Eliza Cabot Follen, December 16, 1852, in *The Oxford Reader*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 384.

were any of their children ever baptized.<sup>15</sup> It is possible that McCord's references to religion were functional, serving to bolster her argument rather than inspire it. This is in stark contrast to the Grimké sisters who perpetually sought for ultimate truths founded upon religion throughout their lives. Louisa McCord nevertheless believed in a hierarchical social order established by nature and God. All persons, depending on their gender and race, had responsibilities befitting their station. When these duties were accepted and performed accordingly, the results were beneficial to all. Superiors protected and cared for their subordinates who in turn accorded the former due respect—submitting themselves to their will and judgment.<sup>16</sup> McCord often argued that woman's particular role in society was one of benevolence and the maintenance of moral purity. Woman's inner nature provided a critical counterbalance to man's:

[A true woman's] mission is one of love and charity to all. It is the very essence of her being to raise and to purify wherever she touches. Where man's harder nature crushes, hers exalts. Where he wounds, she heals. The lowest intellect, be it but combined with a sincere nature, shrinks not from her, for in her it perceives, reflected and ennobled, its own virtues; the highest worships, for it understands her.<sup>17</sup>

McCord was hardly alone in articulating these views. Theoreticians, such as Catharine Beecher, who articulated the ideology of separate spheres often ennobled woman's role within the domestic realm while simultaneously confining her to it. Woman's constant devotion to others and her daily self-sacrifice were viewed as the ultimate fulfillment of

---

<sup>15</sup> Leigh Fought, *Southern Womanhood and Slavery: A Biography of Louisa S. McCord, 1810-1879* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 97.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>17</sup> Louisa S. McCord, "Woman and Her Needs," *Debow's Review* 13 (September 1852), reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 148-149.



her life's purpose.<sup>18</sup> Couched in these terms woman's role was imbued with importance. Women and the domestic space they occupied were critical to the sustenance of a society.

McCord did not take kindly to anyone who threatened the hierarchy of her world. In her essay "The Enfranchisement of Women" she launched into a scathing attack on the women's rights movement. When speaking of the enfranchisement of women she said:

Woman throws away her strength, when she *brings herself down* to man's level. She throws away that moral strength, that shadow of divinity, which nature has given her to keep man's ferocity in curb. Grant her to be his equal, and instantly she sinks to his inferior, which, as yet, we maintain she has never been. . . . Woman will reach the greatest height of which she is capable . . . not by becoming man, but by becoming, more than ever, woman.<sup>19</sup>

In tune with the ideology of domesticity, McCord did not view women as morally inferior to men but clearly she did not view them as social equals. She believed that women were *different*. In fact, they possessed qualities that—in some respects—made them superior to men. To strive for the same privileges as men was demeaning. Rather, women had to embrace their roles as mothers and wives, as the moral foundation of society. This was no small feat, and it was certainly not a trivial duty:

Woman's duty, woman's nature, is to love, to sway by love; to govern by love, to teach by love, to civilize by love! . . . Pure and holy, self-devoted and suffering, woman's love is the breath of the God of love, who, loving and pitying, has bid *her* learn to love and to suffer, implanting in her bosom the one single comfort that she is the watching spirit, the guardian angel of those she loves.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 128-129; Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity*; Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change*; Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood," 151-152; Katherine Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Louisa S. McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 5 (April 1852), reprinted in *All Clever Men Who Make Their Way: Critical Discourse in the Old South*, ed. Michael O'Brien (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 351.

While men's strengths lay in the physical, public realm, women's lay in the inner, sanctified home. A woman's strengths were superior to men's in this way. McCord held women to be pure spiritual beings, akin to martyrs and angels. Woman was nearly divine.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese cast Augusta Jane Evans among the literary women of the South who wrote pro-southern essays and novels fueled by a desire to refute the inflammatory accusations found in the pages of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>21</sup> Evans' defense in *Beulah* had little to do with slavery and far more to do with preserving Southern honor which encompassed all its institutions. She strongly subscribed to the ideology of domesticity—in fact she also opposed women's suffrage—and while she believed in women's capacities as intellectual beings, women's true strengths lay in their moral reasoning.<sup>22</sup> According to Evans:

God, the maker, tenderly anchored womanhood in the peaceful blessed haven of home; and if man is ever insane enough to mar the divine economy by setting women afloat on the turbulent roaring sea of politics, they will speedily become pitiable wrecks. . . . Surely utter ignorance is infinitely preferable to erudite unwomanliness.<sup>23</sup>

Beulah, like Jane Eyre, is an orphan who struggles to find her place in society. The book spans a decade and follows the trials of the young and intelligent Beulah, who temporarily resists societal and religious conformity in favor of her own intellectualism,

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, introduction to Augusta Jane Evans, *Beulah* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), xii.

<sup>22</sup> Welter, "Defenders of the Faith," in *Dimity Convictions*, 105-106.

<sup>23</sup> Augusta Jane Evans quoted in Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 76.

shunning the constraints that marriage would impose upon her. But by the novel's conclusion Beulah has re-discovered her religious faith and come to appreciate her true calling and embraces her role as wife to the wealthy, yet irreligious, Guy Hartwell.

Midway through the story Beulah suffers a crisis of faith and Evans' narrative of Beulah's descent into irreligion is laden with the language of impending doom.

[Beulah] felt that atheism, grim and murderous, stood at the entrance of her soul, and threw its benumbing shadow into the inmost recesses. Unbelief hung its murky vapors about her heart, curtaining it from the sunshine of God's smile.<sup>24</sup>

For a woman as devout as Evans, to lose religion was to sink into an abyss of cold and lonely darkness. It was especially disastrous as this also hampered her ability as a woman to fulfill her appropriate role as moral center in the domestic sphere.

The turning point of the novel occurs when Beulah rejects philosophy and realizes during a religious epiphany that she loves Guy Hartwell. The book closes on her acceptance of her proper sphere, after she has regained her religious faith. After a very brief moment of hesitation, Beulah finds herself married, and embraces her true calling, every woman's true calling. Evans closes the story on a scene in which we see Beulah trying to convert her husband to her faith:

Christianity is clear, as to rules of life and duty. There is no mystery left about the directions to man; yet there is divine mystery enfolding it, which tells of its divine origin, and promises a fuller revelation when man is fitted to receive it. . . . You turn from revelation because it contains some things you cannot comprehend; yet you plunge into a deeper, darker mystery, when you embrace the theory of an eternal, self-existing universe, having no intelligent creator, yet constantly creating intelligent beings. Sir, can you understand how matter created mind?<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Evans, *Beulah*, 312.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

As Guy Hartwell “ponders” the words of his pious wife, the last line of the book offers a prayer, no doubt Evans’ own: “May God aid the wife in her holy work of love.”<sup>26</sup>

Like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Augusta Jane Evans, and Louisa McCord, the Grimké sisters wrote and spoke publicly because they felt that the major political issue of the day was one that they were morally obligated to address, even if it meant crossing accepted gender boundaries. Their belief in women’s moral sense and duties, their belief that women were obligated to speak out against injustices and un-Christian behavior and practices, and the resistance they met with upon doing so shaped their belief and their eventual advocacy of women’s rights.

On the grounds of morality, Sarah Grimké believed that women stood on the same footing as men. If a political issue was morally intolerable, it was their duty, their right, to speak publicly against it. Sarah argued:

On all moral and religious subjects, [woman] is bound to think and act for herself . . . [Man and woman] are standing on the same platform of human rights, are equally under government of God, and accountable to him, and him alone.<sup>27</sup>

Not only were women on an equal footing with men when it came to their sense of right and wrong, but the devout Sarah argued that a woman’s duty to God came before her duty to anyone, including men. As such, her moral intuition—given to her by God—compelled her, gave her the right, to speak out against sin, grave injustice and cruelty. This was no mere desire to follow her instinct. It was Christian duty that made her—in

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Grimké “Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman, addressed to Mary S. Parker, President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society,” (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), reprinted in *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 239.

her own words—accountable to God. This was a principle Sarah felt many women were ignorant of:

I have sometimes been astonished and grieved at the servitude of women, and at the little idea many of them seem to have of their own moral existence and responsibilities.<sup>28</sup>

This implied a different sense of moral duty than that which motivated McCord, Evans and Stowe. To these three thinkers a woman's sphere of moral influence was much more peripheral. They were to sway with love and gentle kindness—within the confines of the domestic sphere—careful not to step beyond its established boundaries. Even the act of writing publicly was less shocking in that they wrote in an acceptable form for women or, in McCord's case, without ever exposing their gender to the public. What Sarah proposed was something much more radical: she expected a woman to exercise her influence in an active capacity, even if it meant directly disobeying a man's wishes. If a political issue became a moral issue, she had a right, even a duty, to step out of her sphere and into man's political sphere. Sarah even argued that a man's opposition to a woman's reformist ambitions was a poor excuse for inaction. She admonished

[T]he class [of women] who are glad of any excuse to relieve themselves from difficult and arduous duties—who shelter themselves under the plea, that their male friends are opposed to their uniting in moral reform or abolition efforts. Ah, my sister, do they remember that every woman has to work out her own salvation, with fear and trembling, and the excuses will avail nothing in the judgment of HIM who saith, "All souls are mine." They may try to pacify their consciences by these unholy subterfuges, but they can no more roll their responsibilities on another than they can divest themselves of their rational being, and of their accountability to God.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 262.

She placed her religion above all earthly things, and God above man, taking women out from under man's thumb and assigning their salvation—and the world's—to their own actions.

Sarah recognized the resistance a woman would face, were she to enact her moral responsibilities in the current social and political climate of the United States during her time. Ever the crusader, she lauded the woman who found the inner strength to act upon her moral intuition.

What with the fear of insolent remarks about women, in which those of the dominant sex, whose bravery is the generous offspring of conscious impunity, are particularly apt to indulge; and with the still stronger fear of being thought unfeminine, it is indeed a proof of uncommon moral courage, or of an overpowering sense of religious duty and sympathy with the oppressed, the guilty, the outcast, that a woman is induced to embrace the unpopular, unfashionable, obnoxious principle of the moral reform, or abolition societies.<sup>30</sup>

Angelina Grimké also believed a woman's moral duties placed her above social and gender boundaries. Like Sarah, she felt that a woman who ignored her intuitions was neglecting her obligations to her God. She disapproved of the woman who did not feel bound to stand up against sin when she witnessed it. In her *Letters to Catherine Beecher*, published in 1838, Angelina publicly responded to Catherine's assertion that the Grimké sisters were transgressors of the social principle that women did not belong in the public world of reform. The majority of Angelina's text was a theoretical rebuttal to several aspects of Catharine's argument.<sup>31</sup> She did not specifically attack Catherine; however, in

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>31</sup> See Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: Perkins and Marvin, 1837, accessed 14 August 2008); available from <http://books.google.com/books?id=vRoEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Catharine+Beecher>.

her closing statements she commented upon the general tone of Catherine's work and the reflection it bore upon her character. To Angelina its pages were shamefully lacking of a Christian's sense of moral outrage regarding its central topic of slavery. With regards to Catherine's book, Angelina asked her:

Where, oh where, in its pages, are the outpouring of a soul overwhelmed with a sense of the heinous crimes of our nation, and the necessity of immediate repentance?<sup>32</sup>

It would seem that to Angelina Catherine's book exposed a moral bankruptcy, at least regarding the institution of slavery.

Angelina's beliefs were clearly in tune with her sister's regarding women's social responsibilities. She too felt that a woman's moral sensibilities were equal to man's. This removed all tethers that bound her to make her actions coincide with his. Instead, she insisted, if he had the right to act, then so did she:

Measure [woman's] rights and duties by the unerring standard of *moral being*, not by the false weights and measures of a mere circumstance of her human existence, and then the truth will be self-evident, that what ever it is *morally* right for a man to do, it is *morally* right for a woman to do. I recognize no rights but *human* rights.<sup>33</sup>

This is precisely what Angelina did on February 21, 1838, when she spoke before a Committee of the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts.<sup>34</sup> In the following passage from her speech Angelina emphasized her role as a Southerner, a former slaveholder, and

---

<sup>32</sup> Angelina Grimké, "Letters to Catherine [*sic*] E. Beecher, in reply to An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, addressed to A. E. Grimké," (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838) reprinted in *The Public Years*, 203.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>34</sup> Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters*, 3, 4.

a moral being. When she employed language of repentance, it alluded to her role as a former slaveholder and not to her presence in a forum that was designated for men only:

I stand before you as a southerner, exiled from the land of my birth, by the sound of the lash and piteous cry of the slave. I stand before you as a repentant slaveholder. I stand before you as a moral being, endowed with precious and inalienable rights, which are correlative with solemn duties and high responsibilities; and as a moral being I feel that I owe it to the suffering slave, and to the deluded master, and to my country and the world, to do all I can to overturn a system of complicated crimes, built upon the broken hearts and prostrate bodies of my countrymen in chains and cemented by the blood and sweat and tears of my sisters in bond.<sup>35</sup>

It is significant that when she did address the issue of her gender, she did so with confidence bordering on a sense of entitlement, appealing to her audience's intellect and sense of morality, rather than affecting any sort of humility or apology for what many of her contemporaries viewed to be a significant gender transgression.

Despite the stark difference of opinions between McCord, Stowe and Sarah Grimké the tone of their statements in the following excerpts is very similar. Each passage is loaded with ominous warnings if the wrong path was taken and each author clearly understood the significance and gravity of the situation. They not only chose to campaign for the cause but they addressed this campaign to a public audience demonstrating a self-conscious and intentional foray into politics.

After attending the Agents' Convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in 1837, Sarah wrote "An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States" which was later published by the American Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>36</sup> In the "Epistle," Sarah defended her

---

<sup>35</sup> Angelina Grimké, "Speech to a Committee of the Massachusetts House of Representatives," (February 21, 1838) reprinted in *The Public Years*, 312.

<sup>36</sup> Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters*, 101-104.



right as a woman to speak publicly slavery. She also forewarned that the nation had come to a definitive moment in its history:

If ever there was a time when the church of Christ was called upon to make an *aggressive* movement on the kingdom of darkness, *this is the time*. The subject of slavery is fairly before the American public.<sup>37</sup>

Sarah's generation had to assume responsibility for the institution of slavery and she made it very clear that this task could no longer be avoided without dire consequences:

Upon the present generation, rests, I believe, an accumulated weight of guilt. They have the experience of more than two centuries to profit by—they have witnessed the evils and crimes of slavery, and they know that sin and misery are its legitimate fruits. They behold every where inscribed upon the face of nature, the withering curse of slavery, as if the land mourned over the iniquity and wretchedness of its inhabitants. . . . They know that there is not one redeeming quality, in the system of American slavery.<sup>38</sup>

On the eve of the decision regarding the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 Stowe published a plea which bears a striking resemblance in tone and gravity to that of Sarah's. She too recognized and spoke of the moment as if it were the harbinger of national crisis:

The Providence of God has brought our nation to a crisis of most solemn interest. . . . A question is now pending in our national legislature, which is most vitally to affect the temporal and eternal interests, not only of ourselves, but of our children for ages yet unborn. Through our nation it is to affect the interests of liberty and Christianity throughout the whole world.<sup>39</sup>

Stowe's appeal was addressed to the women of the free states whom she clearly believed were well-informed and influential enough to have some kind of impact on the decision

---

<sup>37</sup> Sarah Grimké, "An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States," (New York: American Antislavery Society, 1837), reprinted in *The Public Years*, 108.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>39</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *An Appeal to the Women of the Free States of America, on the Present Crisis in Our Country*, reprinted in *The Oxford Reader*, 453.

taking place in the national legislature. This was not unprecedented, as women had been making good use of the petition as a means of direct political action since the late 1820s and early 1830s. The 1829 campaign against Indian removal, led by Catharine Beecher, and the major campaign in 1836 when a barrage of petitions protesting the Gag Rule debates of 1836 were sent to Congress set a precedent for Stowe's individual appeal to a large body of women.<sup>40</sup>

When Louisa McCord wrote about the slavery question she argued that emancipation would herald the end of civilization:

Negro emancipation would be inevitably the death-blow of our civilization. By *ours*, we mean not ours of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, or Carolina—nay, nor of these Southern United States—nay, nor of this whole great empire, . . . but *ours*—our civilization of this world of the nineteenth century, *must fall* with negro emancipation.<sup>41</sup>

In her essay—in many of her essays—McCord's arguments frequently strayed far from the woman's sphere. At times she even wrote from the perspective of a male adopting a male voice and writing as though the author were the paternal head of household, rather than herself.<sup>42</sup> In this passage she did not merely allude to the threatened sanctity of the

---

<sup>40</sup> See Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *The Journal of American History* 86 (Jun., 1999); and Patrick Breen, "The Female Antislavery Petition Campaign of 1831-1832," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 110 (2002): 377, 397-398 on women's petition campaigns during the 1830s.

<sup>41</sup> Louisa McCord, "Negro and White Slavery-Wherein Do They Differ?" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 4 (July 1851), reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 198.

<sup>42</sup> Louisa S. McCord, "The Right To Labor," *Southern Quarterly Review* 16, October 1849 [Making of America]; available from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pagevieweridx?c=moajrnl;cc=moajrnl;rgn=full%20text;idno=acp1141.1->

home, a clearly feminine concern, but to the threatened stability of all civilization. Like many pro-slavery proponents she stood by the belief that white and black human beings could not co-exist peacefully as equals. She grounded this impossibility on contemporary ideas of scientific racism.<sup>43</sup>

The gender of the authors, and the deliberate intrusion into politics make for some very interesting comparisons. Sarah insisted she was a moral being—akin to insisting upon individuality—and this was what sanctioned her discussion of a national political issue. Stowe on the other hand insisted that motherhood gave her jurisdiction in this area. Any model woman and mother was naturally an expert in moral guidance, and under this guise, she was simply a national, public mother calling all mothers to their duty. She carefully remained within the parameters of the private domestic sphere despite the very public nature of her actions. Louisa McCord similarly walked a fine line between private and public, but she chose an altogether different costume. In most of her writings, McCord used a pseudonym—a common practice at the time—and dove straight into her arguments, avoiding the need to address her breach of gender boundaries.

In politics, the women could also be quite radical in their beliefs. Angelina and Augusta each, in a sense, advocated civil disobedience. Angelina argued that a sinful law

---

16.031;didno=acp1141.116.031;view=image ;seq=0150;node=acp1141.1-16.031%3A11; Internet; accessed 23 August 2008: 151.

<sup>43</sup> One of the leading thinkers in scientific or anthropological racism was southerner Josiah Nott and McCord was quite familiar with his theories. For Louisa McCord's interest in scientific racism see Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 248-249. See also Josiah Nott, "The Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro races," reprinted in *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, ed. with introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

was one that should be broken and Augusta declared herself “an uncompromising secessionist”<sup>44</sup>—arguably one of the more extreme forms of civil disobedience. Angelina wrote:

I know that this doctrine of obeying *God*, rather than man, will be considered as dangerous and heretical by many, but I am not afraid openly to avow it. . . . If a law commands me to *sin I will break it*; if it calls for me to *suffer*, I will let it take its course *unresistingly*.<sup>45</sup>

Angelina’s familiarity with biblical text may have inspired this statement. Her devotion to the anti-slavery cause was inextricably tied to her religious notion of right and wrong. Similarly when Augusta Jane Evans advocated secession she did so with a tone of defiance and insisted that the South had been forced into such a position with no other recourse. When asked to sign an anti-secession petition Evans responded, “It is because I most earnestly deprecate as suicidal any effort to delay the dissolution of the Union, that I must decline to add my own signature.”<sup>46</sup> She too relied on a biblical reference to justify her claim. Comparing the South’s continued union with the North to the enslavement of the Jews in Exodus she wrote, “prompt and separate state action, I believe to be the *only* door of escape, from the worse than Egyptian bondage of Black Republicanism.”<sup>47</sup> The similar tones make the stark differences in Evans and Grimké’s arguments all the more

---

<sup>44</sup> Angelina Grimké, “Appeal to the Christian Women of the South,” (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836) reprinted in *The Public Years*, 57-58. Augusta Jane Evans, quoted in William Perry Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909, a Biography* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 86.

<sup>45</sup> Grimké, “Appeal to Women of the South,” in *The Public Years*, 58-59.

<sup>46</sup> Augusta Jane Evans to Mrs. Virginia L. French, January 13, 1861, in *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, ed. Rebecca Grant Sexton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 29.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

compelling. They both suggested something quite radical, and both invoked biblical imagery or alluded to biblical text to substantiate their arguments, but they were on opposing sides of the Mason-Dixon line when they did so.

Appealing to women on behalf of emancipation, Stowe, acutely aware of the discord the slavery argument caused between the North and the South, using language that created distance between womanly sentiment and the manly political, emphasized the sensitive nature of the matter insisting that “feeling”—meaning political belief—had to be suppressed in order to preserve unity between the states:

[T]hough our hearts have bled over this wrong, there have been many things tending to fetter our hands, to perplex our efforts, to silence our voice. We have been told that to speak of it was an invasion of the rights of other States. We have been told of promises and compacts, and the natural expression of feeling has in many cases been restrained by an appeal to those honorable sentiments which respect the keeping of engagements.<sup>48</sup>

These women were familiar with the prevailing political discourse—enough to use it themselves. When they used this common discourse publicly through their writing they were, in a sense, taking part in it. Stowe’s reference to an invasion of state rights was a response to comments coming from the South by proslavery and secessionist supporters—including Augusta Jane Evans. Evans employed the political rhetoric of many southern secessionists when she wrote:

The South asks but her *sacred* Constitutional *rights*; these have been grossly and persistently violated; pleadings, expostulations and threats on our part, have been answered with taunts, sneers, and defiance on theirs; and promises which the present alarming crisis might *possibly* extort from them, would be kept with their accustomed *Punic* faith.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Stowe, “An Appeal to the Women,” in *The Oxford Reader*, 453.

<sup>49</sup> Evans, “Letter to Virginia L. French,” in *A Southern Woman*, 29.

The preceding passages were part of the letter Evans wrote privately to Virginia L. French asked her to add her name to an anti-secessionist petition. Evans also sent a copy of the letter to her cousin who would be attending the Georgia State Convention on secession and provided a condition under which it might be read publicly before the state convention—thereby becoming a voice in political proceedings. Evans instructed her cousin to read her letter in front of the convention if, and only if, Mrs. French presented her pro-union petition.<sup>50</sup> Her physical absence when and if the letter were to be read would still have been quite forceful. It is possible that her absence may have been even more effective in influencing the convention as she did not physically penetrate the political arena, whereas Mrs. French would be there to present her petition. Avoiding the physical political realm was in keeping with her public avowal that, as a woman, she had no place in politics. Yet given her prominence as a best-selling southern author, with many political connections, it seems a reading of a letter she had written could still potentially have a meaningful impact on political decisions—all the more so because she respected the political assumptions of her time by insisting she wanted to remain unobtrusive.<sup>51</sup>

Writing under a pseudonym allowed Louisa McCord more flexibility in expressing her political beliefs. Obscuring her gender, may have given more weight to her argument—as if it had come from a man and was therefore more rational. She did

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>51</sup> It is even possible that Evans knew French's letter would, in fact, be read before the convention and thus she actually knew that her condition for the letter's public reading would be met. This makes her entire letter and its delivery an incredibly crafty political maneuver.

not discuss her personal feelings, or her womanly sentiment. She did not address her public discussion of political matters to women—as Stowe did—nor did she cloak her essay in the shroud of the ostensibly private letter as Evans did, in order to avoid accusations of being unfeminine or interfering in the business of men. She avoided these things altogether by concealing her identity and gender. Her response to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s sensational novel was one of indignation and in her defense of the South she was sarcastic. She seemed to deride Stowe for being an overdramatic and sentimental woman who had truly overstepped the boundaries of propriety:

Truly it would seem that the labor of Sisyphus is laid upon us, the slaveholders of these southern United States. Again and again have we, with all the power and talent of our clearest heads and strongest intellects, forced aside the foul load of slander and villainous aspersion so often hurled against us, and still, again and again, the unsightly mass rolls back, and, heavily as ever, fall the old refuted libels, vamped, remodeled, and lumbering down upon us with all the force, or at least impudent assumption, of new argument.<sup>52</sup>

It is ironic that the transplanted South Carolinian Angelina Grimké had long ago addressed such denials and rebukes from proslavery advocates. Hers was a unique situation as she was armed with the experience of having been born into a slave-holding family. Thus she spoke of the institution—and attacked it—from the position of an insider. She argued forcibly:

Southerners may deny the truth of these accounts, but why do they not *prove* them to be false. Their violent expressions of horror at such accounts being believed, *may* deceive some, but they cannot deceive *me*, for I lived too long in the midst of slavery, not to know what slavery is. When *I* speak of the system, “I speak that I do know,” and I am not afraid

---

<sup>52</sup> Louisa S. McCord, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 7 (Jan. 1853): 245-280, reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Selected Writings*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London, 1997), 84.

to assert, that Anti-Slavery publications have *not* overdrawn the monstrous features of slavery at all.<sup>53</sup>

When McCord attacked Stowe she criticized the anti-slavery sentiment in her novel. It is relevant that when McCord attacked Angelina Grimké she targeted her participation in the women's rights movement which—on an organizational level—she was never as active in as she was in anti-slavery.<sup>54</sup> Despite this McCord never alluded to Angelina's role as an anti-slavery activist.

Clearly increased opportunities for women arose as a result of better education. The religious and moral tone of politics leading up to the Civil War and the public acceptance of professional female authors created opportunities which were unprecedented. Each of the women in this study either avowed religious, moral or feminine obligations of some sort. They were all aware of the turning point their country had come to. They all made public statements that were political and made no claims to impartiality or disinterest. It also shows that women were heavily invested in politics. Whether or not they believed they had a right to do so, they articulated political beliefs and with tremendous convictions. Arguably, if it was public, or addressed to a politician and its tone and content were political then it was participation in a political discourse.

---

<sup>53</sup> Angelina Grimké, "Appeal to Women of the South," in *The Public Years*, 70.

<sup>54</sup> Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters*, 239. While the sisters did participate in a few of the early women's rights conventions, their role in this particular movement was not nearly as involved or as public as when they were anti-slavery agents. Their work—especially their articulations on women's equal rights in the public arena—was influential in shaping the politics and rhetoric of the leaders of the movement. By the time the women's rights movement became an active organization, in 1848, the sisters had stepped out of the public eye and had all but ceased public lecturing.



Despite their different perspectives on gender roles, on slavery, and on the secession crisis all five women clearly viewed their roles as moral figures as paramount to their existence. Whether or not they viewed it as such, the conflict over the slavery question presented women with a unique opportunity—it allowed each of them to participate in a political debate. A striking feature in their writings is the evident awareness of the enormity of the of the situation their country was in. Addressing these political matters often went hand in hand with weighty statements that declared the moment to be one of monumental significance. Whether arguing for secession, for slavery, or for emancipation each woman clearly believed that the alternative brought with it dire consequences. Stowe and the Grimké sisters insisted that the continued practice of slavery bloodied the hands of the North. Guilt did not only lie with the South. The longer they waited to exorcise this evil the closer they came to ruin and damnation. From South Carolina Louisa McCord insisted emancipation would result in the end of all civilization. Augusta Jane Evans, by-passing the slavery debate, took the matter even further, passionately calling for immediate secession, and insisting that the only way to save the South was to sever all ties with the North.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Louisa McCord and the Grimké Sisters on Women's Rights

Ten years before the first organized women's rights movement came into being, Sarah Grimké foresaw the momentous occasion. "The present," she wrote, "is a deeply interesting and important period in the history of woman."<sup>1</sup> When Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott finally spearheaded the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls in 1848, Sarah and Angelina Grimké had long since retired from their roles as public activists and spokeswomen for the anti-slavery movement. Sarah may have underestimated the time it would take for women to consolidate their ideas, band together, and form a cohesive organization, but she clearly understood the significance of the moment in which she was an active participant. While she eagerly anticipated women's opportunities in shaping the course of political events Louisa McCord—writing in 1852 after the women's rights movement gained momentum—vehemently attacked the notion that women had any claim to political agency. With biting sarcasm she proclaimed:

Universal equality! *Fraternité* extended even to womanhood! And why not? Up for your rights, ladies! What is the worth of a civilization which condemns one half of mankind to Helot submissiveness? Call ye this civilization, with such a stained and blurred blot upon it?<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Grimké "Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman, addressed to Mary S. Parker, President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society," (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), reprinted in *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 260.

<sup>2</sup> Louisa S. McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s., 5 (April 1852), reprinted in *All Clever Men Who Make Their Way: Critical*

By the time McCord wrote this, the Grimké sisters were no longer visible activists in the anti-slavery movement, nor were they very prominent actors in the post Seneca Falls women's rights movement.<sup>3</sup> Still, their activities and their writings—now over ten years old—had earned them enough notoriety in the South for McCord to include Angelina among the 'ladies' she referred to in the previous passage.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the decade that separates their writings, there is much to be learned from a comparison of McCord and both Grimké sisters' theories on women's rights. Of the five authors of this study, these three women have the most in common. All three were born in Charleston, South Carolina. Their families were connected—through Thomas Grimké and Langdon Cheves—and belonged to the same social caste. They were publicly outspoken about slavery and secession—like Evans and Stowe—but they were

---

*Discourse in the Old South*, ed. Michael O'Brien (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992),106.

<sup>3</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers Rights and Abolition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 208-210, 225-234, 239-262. Elizabeth Cady Stanton met the Grimké sisters in 1840. She was a guest at their home for a few days and in that time came to admire and respect them a great deal. According to Lerner the sisters' influence upon Stanton at this time constitutes their contribution to the movement that developed after Seneca Falls in 1848. Throughout the book Lerner argues that the generation of women who propelled the women's rights movement, beginning with and after Seneca Falls, essentially stood on the shoulders of the Grimké sisters. For their part the sisters continued to write sporadically and to follow the activities of the reform movements close to their hearts, but after Angelina's marriage to Weld in 1838 (p. 170), the sisters all but withdrew from public life for several years, and they would never return to it at the pace and schedule of their involvement from 1835-1838.

<sup>4</sup> McCord, "Enfranchisement of Woman," in *All Clever Men*, 115-117. McCord refers to Angelina, Lucretia (Mott), and Paulina (Davis) as a group in four instances citing them as examples of women's physical weakness and positing whether they would be able to defend themselves if pitted against the prominent political figures Henry Stuart Foote, Thomas Hart Benton, and Samuel Houston—each man a governor or senator and even a war hero.

also vocal about women's rights and all three published essays proffering powerful arguments for or against the movement. There are striking similarities in their arguments. They often relied on the same themes to substantiate opposing convictions. Analogies between the woman and the slave were made to protest slavery and defend the women's rights movement or to defend slavery and disavow women's rights. Angelina Grimké argued that women ought to be entrusted with political responsibility and Sarah insisted it was something they were entitled to while McCord declared that "no true woman" ever sought political agency. Sarah Grimké deemed contemporary law oppressive but McCord maintained that it should be upheld while the Grimkés demanded its reformation. Women were deserving of an education—but where McCord insisted this could be beneficial if contained, Sarah Grimké asserted that it would also extend woman's sphere.

Both Grimké sisters came to advocate women's rights through their activities in moral reform. When they began their anti-slavery lecture tour, women's public speaking was virtually unheard of.<sup>5</sup> That the Grimké sisters increasingly addressed mixed audiences—mixed being male and female rather than interracial—throughout 1837-38 was scandalous to many, yet they firmly believed that their actions were appropriate and virtuous. They embodied the result of a contradictory discourse particular to the 1830s. According to Nancy Cott and Robert Abzug, this period presented women with a paradox in the prevailing ideologies about women's sphere.<sup>6</sup> The essence of this paradox can be

---

<sup>5</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1785-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 190.

found in two competing ideas within the ideology of separate spheres: on the one hand politics came to be viewed as dangerous territory for a woman. In the political realm one was exposed to all kinds of immorality and deceitfulness. It was a war zone where men were obliged to resort to morally dubious acts in order to attain their goals. This was a ruinous place for a woman to be as she stood to lose the very essence of her being—that which made her a true woman—her virtue and morality.<sup>7</sup> At the same time women’s domestic sphere was infused with powerful meaning as their homes became an impenetrable fortress where men—tired and sullied from the ongoing warfare of work and politics—could recuperate and regenerate in safety.<sup>8</sup> The two spheres—man’s public and women’s private—were meant to hold equal weight despite the fact that they served very different functions.<sup>9</sup> Women took their roles seriously and, charged with the moral preservation of an entire nation, some of them saw an imperative for speaking out in public when issues became moral concerns and fell within the jurisdiction of the domestic province.<sup>10</sup> Herein lay the contradiction faced by the Grimkés. Unmarried, they entered the public realm—appearing to choose politics over domesticity—and in

---

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Feminization of American Religion,” in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 85.

<sup>8</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 97, 99; James Brewer-Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*, revised edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 35; Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 81.

<sup>9</sup> Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 72-73; Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity*, 77; Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer, 1966), 159.

<sup>10</sup> Welter, “The Feminization of American Religion,” 102; Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity*, 84.

doing so they tampered with the boundaries that ought to have defined them as women. While many conservative anti-slavery activists resented their public role in the movement, and the resulting association drawn between women's rights and abolitionism, the sisters had numerous supporters.<sup>11</sup> Their active role as anti-slavery agents would eventually contribute to the schism in the American Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>12</sup>

Scholars who study Louisa McCord's work have argued that her impassioned criticism of the women's rights movement was tied to her defense of slavery.<sup>13</sup> She could not vindicate the institution without simultaneously rejecting the notion of equality between men and women. Yet the very existence of her published essays constituted a breach in the male realm of politics. Despite the unwavering stance she frequently took in her various arguments—ranging from topics such as economics, politics, slavery, and women's rights—the painstaking effort she consistently made to avoid a treacherous invasion into the male territory of politics permeates much of her writing. She gladly ceded any claim to celebrity—only signing her initials or publishing anonymously—as this might compromise the cause she so fervently supported and yet—beyond physical

---

<sup>11</sup> Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters*, 109, 116-119, 126-129, 133-134

<sup>12</sup> See Aileen Krador's chapter "The Woman Question" in *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and his Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 39-77. The movement would eventually split over women's right to vote and hold office within the American Anti-Slavery Society. On the Grimké's role in the split see pp. 41, 47-48.

<sup>13</sup> Among these scholars are Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 243-245, 247, 269, 274, 281; and Susan A. Eacker, "A Dangerous Inmate of the South: Louisa McCord on Gender and Slavery," in Morris, Christopher and Susan A. Eacker and Anne Goodwyn Jones and Bertram Wyatt-Brown and Charles Joyner. *Southern Writers and Their Worlds*. Introduction by Michael O'Brien. Christopher Morris and Steven Reinhardt eds. (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 28-29.

strength—she was never able to grant men true superiority over women. A comparison with Angelina Grimké’s arguments for women’s rights and Sarah Grimké’s arguments for women’s equality is revealing. It emphasizes McCord’s unique ability to argue in favor of a hierarchical system that excluded her from the political world in which she was deeply invested while she subtly rejected certain elements which did not suit her own beliefs in women’s abilities. The Grimké sisters certainly faced opposition in promoting the views they held; however, they never faced the same challenges McCord faced when trying to reconcile a position that held women to be inferior with her own belief that they were—but for physicality—superior.

As they articulated their theories on women’s proper roles, McCord and the Grimkés were constantly aware of the issue’s entanglement with the slavery question. Both Sarah and Angelina appeared to be indebted to the anti-slavery movement as it made them aware of their own predicament as women. In her *Letters to Catherine Beecher* (1837)<sup>14</sup> Angelina Grimké responded to Beecher’s denunciation of the Grimké sisters. In *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (1837) Beecher criticized the women for their active role in anti-slavery reform declaring their actions to be entirely improper and beyond their appropriate sphere as women.<sup>15</sup> Angelina’s carefully worded—and now famous—rejoinder proclaimed:

---

<sup>14</sup> Angelina Grimké, “Letters to Catherine [*sic*] E. Beecher, in reply to An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, addressed to A. E. Grimké,” (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838) reprinted in *The Public Years*.

<sup>15</sup> Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females* [book.google.com] (Philadelphia: Perkins and Marvin, 1837, accessed 14 August 2008); available from [http://books.google.com/books?id=vRoEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Catharine+Beecher, 3, 48-49, 97-108, 128-130, 136-140, 146-147](http://books.google.com/books?id=vRoEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Catharine+Beecher,3,48-49,97-108,128-130,136-140,146-147).

The investigation of the rights of the slave has led me to a better understanding of my own. I have found the Anti-slavery cause to be the high school of morals in our land—the school in which *human rights* are more fully investigated, and better understood and taught, than in any other. Here a great fundamental principle is uplifted and illuminated, and from this central light, rays innumerable stream all around. Human beings have *rights*, because they are *moral* beings; the rights of *all* men grow out of their moral nature; and as all men have the same moral nature, they have essentially the same rights.<sup>16</sup>

The ties between race and gender, and abolition and women's rights are complex. In the preceding passage, Grimké tied her fate to the slave's because she saw in their predicaments the same denial of essential human rights. There was a precedent of slaveholding women who saw themselves as captives of the institution of slavery and it was perhaps this uniquely female southern perspective that led these sisters, in a northern setting, to question their own position in society.<sup>17</sup> Yet they were the only southern white women to become anti-slavery agents in the North.<sup>18</sup>

Louisa McCord also tied the fate of woman to that of the slave—albeit in a different context—and the following passage further emphasizes the complexity of this relationship. A vital argument in the pro-slavery defense hinged upon the doctrine that not all human beings were created equal, and women, like slaves, were natural

---

<sup>16</sup> Angelina Grimké, "Letters to Catherine E. Beecher," in *The Public Years*, 146.

<sup>17</sup> A number of scholars have argued for or against the notion that southern white slaveholding women secretly opposed slavery. The most popular example of the beleaguered southern plantation mistress is Mary Chestnut, who frequently complained about her slaves and slavery in her diaries, see for example Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 46, 48, 50, 52. Arguments that contend slaveholding women viewed themselves as beneficiaries of an institution which they fully supported can be found in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household*, and Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

<sup>18</sup> Lerner, *Grimké Sisters*, 5.



subordinates.<sup>19</sup> Race and sex, rather than being incidental, were an indication of the station God had chosen for a person. McCord argued:

The distinction of colour has for many years been a point of discussion, and science has now settled that, so far from being accidental, it is an immutable fact of creation . . . and there is no more accident in a negro's not being born a white man, than there is in his not being born a baboon, a mouse, or an elephant. As to the distinction of sex being accidental, this is a remarkable discovery of the present enlightened and progressive age. Sex and colour are severally so essential to the being of a woman and a negro, that it is impossible to imagine the existence of either, without these distinctive marks.<sup>20</sup>

The pro-slavery argument often insisted that enslavement was analogous to the subordination of women and their respective positions in the southern social hierarchy benefited and protected them. Their station was determined by their birth and no woman or black person was born female or black by accident. God predetermined their fate and the treatment they received as a result was just.<sup>21</sup>

Sarah Grimké's argument for women's equality took a significantly radical approach and rested upon her conviction that there was no biblical sanction for women's subordination.<sup>22</sup> The suffering of slaves had awakened her out of her stupor and given

---

<sup>19</sup> Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," *The Journal of American History* 78 (March, 1992): 1250.

<sup>20</sup> McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women," in *All Clever Men*, 113.

<sup>21</sup> See Eugene D. Genovese, *The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992) on the pro-slavery argument. See also *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, ed. and introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) for writings by leading southern proslavery authors.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah Grimké, "Letters on the Equality of the Sexes," in *The Public Years*, 204-207. Grimké's first letter entitled "*The Original Equality of Women*" is a thorough

her cause to step beyond the boundary of the domestic sphere. She was acutely aware of the historical significance of this moment:

Women in the present day, are placed in a solemn and responsible situation. Circumstances, and the entreaties of the ministry that they would come up to the work of moral reformation, have drawn them out of obscurity, and in some degree burst their bonds. . . . Sympathy has enlarged their hearts, active benevolence has elevated their moral character, a more extended sphere of usefulness and observation has improved their intellectual faculties, and given a higher tone to their desires and their pursuits; but still woman falls far short of the high and holy station assigned her by her creator.<sup>23</sup>

Grimké was essentially arguing that women's subordination was a violation of God's decree. She viewed the present moment in which she lived as one of tremendous significance. The tone of her writing was prophetic as if she saw—with certain clarity—that she was standing at the threshold of a new era. By all accounts Sarah's prophecy bore fruit as several of the women who organized the convention at Seneca Falls came from the ranks of anti-slavery activism.

By the time Louisa McCord wrote her invectives attacking the women's movement—a decade after Grimké's prophecy—she equated it with abolitionism and criticized it just as much:

The poison is spreading; and, truly, except that the fashion of the thing is a little newer, it is but a piece with negro emancipation; a subject with which the world has been stunned for many a year, until, at last, it now seems ready, with fanatic zeal, to sacrifice all that it has gained, of good, of beautiful, and of true, at the shrine of this fearful phantom.<sup>24</sup>

---

criticism of previous interpretations and translations of Genesis. In her reinterpretation, God created man and woman as equals. Adam was as guilty as Eve in the fall. Were he superior to her, he would not have fallen, but would have seen his wife's sin and chastised her for it rather than joining her in it. Consequently, when God said "Thou wilt be subject to thy husband" he made a prophecy rather than a pronounced judgment.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 261.

The Women's Rights movement was one more *ism*, just another attempt by the zealous reformers of the North to destabilize the order of southern life. In fact, McCord was glad "to see that the advocates of this move class themselves exactly where they should be, cheek by jowl with the abolitionists. We thank them, at least, for saving us the trouble of proving this position."<sup>25</sup> Classing the women's rights campaign with abolition solidified her position against it. Where Sarah Grimké saw the expansion of women's sphere as the beginning of a better Christian society, McCord only saw its capacity for destruction.

McCord thought the women's rights movement foreshadowed disaster while the elder Grimké sister divined that it was God's will. Sarah Grimké wrote:

The Lord Jehovah, has opened before [woman] a wide field for usefulness and exertion. The cry of misery, the call for help, comes up from the fearful haunts of licentiousness; the wail of despair, the shriek of the helpless victims of cruelty and lust, is borne to our ear on every southern breeze. . . . Can woman turn from so much wretchedness, and suppose that when she has seen well to the ways of her household and prepared a well spread table for her family, all her duties are performed and the end of her existence is answered, when she is neglecting duties, equally important?<sup>26</sup>

God was not merely extending women's sphere; it seems—according to the last sentence of this passage—he also called upon her to step beyond the boundaries of the domestic realm. Furthermore, when a woman ignored the cry of those suffering beyond the sanctity of her home she neglected her duty as a Christian.

Although Sarah Grimké's motivations were benevolent and charitable the majority of society was not willing to yield women a place in politics. Despite having

---

<sup>24</sup> McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women," in *All Clever Men*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Grimké, "Letters on the Equality of Women," in *The Public Years*, 260-261.

been a pioneer in women's petitioning, when anti-slavery women employed such methods of political protest, Catherine Beecher insisted that the act of petitioning—though it might be viewed as informal participation in politics—was an entirely inappropriate activity for women. Angelina Grimké countered:

Art thou afraid to trust the women of this country with discretionary power as to petitioning? Is there not sound principle and common sense among them, to regulate the exercise of this right? I believe they will always use it wisely. I am not afraid to trust my sisters—not I.<sup>27</sup>

The tone of mockery in Grimké's response made it seem ridiculous to bar women from petitioning. Surely, they—in their capacities as discrete and private women—would manage to engage in such activities without abusing this privilege! Yet Louisa McCord insisted that a true woman did not need such privileges. Her strengths lay outside of politics:

No true woman feels that the nobler weapons of life are denied her, because she cannot tinker at constitutions and try her hand at law-making. Hers are the noble weapons of philosophy and Christianity. She may find it difficult to wield them, and, in her human weakness, sometimes murmur at the hardness of that lot by which a mysterious Providence has assigned a task so difficult to her feeble frame; but she cannot, she dare not, call degrading which, executed in its perfection, would make her the truest personification of our Christian law.<sup>28</sup>

McCord's inner conflict is subtle, but apparent, in this passage. She clearly viewed the restraints that prevented women from participating in politics with some bitterness and yet she did not attempt to remove them. If anything she ennobled the position women held. If their lot was hard to bear it was only because it was fundamentally important.

---

<sup>27</sup> Angelina Grimké, "Letters to Catherine Beecher," in *The Public Years*, 193.

<sup>28</sup> Louisa S. McCord, "Woman and Her Needs," *Debow's Review* 13 (September 1852), reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 149.

McCord seemed to suggest that the hard work of life was done by women while the men “tinkered” in their political playpen. In order to wield the weapons of philosophy and Christianity women had been given unique skills particular to their gender. A woman who sought political agency and disregarded her true calling lived in flagrant disobedience to Christian Law.

While Sarah Grimké would have agreed with certain parts of McCord’s statement—those which attributed to women a noble and moral duty—she might also have argued that McCord was deluding herself. In fact, Grimké contended that:

[I]t is impossible to lull the awakened soul into a belief that it is free when the galling fetters still clank around it. It is impossible for any woman of lofty purpose and pure morality to accept the dogma that woman was made to be subservient to man.<sup>29</sup>

McCord might have disputed that women like Sarah Grimké were weak. Certainly Grimké was not a true woman since she sought to rid herself of the restraints that valorized her and made her almost saint-like. Yet Grimké’s argument does much in revealing McCord’s apparent displeasure. Grimké could easily have argued that the true imposter of a woman was actually McCord who stifled her ambitions and denied her right to them.

While the law was definitely not an appropriate topic of discussion for a woman, the Grimké sisters and McCord nevertheless tackled the subject. Considering their backgrounds this is not altogether unprecedented. They did, after all, come from families of lawyers and were exposed to the intricacies of the law under their fathers’ roofs. If anything, these women were unusually equipped to deftly engage in debates about the law. Sarah arguably received her training during those occasions when Judge Grimké

---

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Grimké, “Letters on the Equality of Women,” in *The Public Years*, 144.

allowed her to participate in legal debates with her brothers and from a very young age Louisa spent many hours sitting quietly with her father among his influential friends listening to their debates on political and legal matters. While Angelina was more likely to discuss the law indirectly—referring to rights and regulations—Sarah and Louisa analyzed it directly.

Social custom prevented women from expressing political dissent. American law barred women from political self-representation. Angelina Grimké saw this as a gross injustice as it barred women from performing their moral obligations to society:

The regulation of duty by the mere circumstance of sex, rather than by the fundamental principle of moral being, has led to all that multifarious train of evils flowing out of the anti-Christian doctrine of masculine and feminine virtues.... It has robbed woman of essential rights, the right to think and speak and act on all great moral questions, just as men think and speak and act.<sup>30</sup>

Grimké charged that there was something un-Christian—even evil—in rules and regulations that impeded women in their moral duties. She did not view gender as God's designation of a person's station and she perceived "regulation of duty" according to gender to be a fallacy. Sarah Grimké argued this point more forcefully:

The laws respecting women are a blasphemy against God, they invade his right to decide on the equality of Human Rights and charge him with surrendering the duties and obligations, the conscience and the will of half his intelligent creation to the caprice, selfishness and physical superiority of the other.<sup>31</sup>

Written in the late 1850s, Sarah's comments on law were never published, however, the manuscript of this essay entitled "*Sisters of Charity*" was likely intended for publication as part of a larger work that would focus on the condition of women. Sometime earlier,

---

<sup>30</sup> Angelina Grimké, "Letters to Catherine Beecher," in *The Public Years*, 193.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Grimké, "Letters on the Equality of Women," in *The Public Years*, 143.

she had begun research for this section that would take a critical approach to the laws that affected women. It was also written after Grimké, at the age of 60, once again considered a career in law only to find the door remained closed to women.<sup>32</sup> Gerda Lerner suggests the likelihood that Grimké was compiling this material as a sequel to her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (1837). Her essay was inspired by British feminist Anna Jameson's book of the same title and Grimké quotes her in numerous passages using Jameson's ideas to further develop her own.<sup>33</sup> She had had time—since writing her *Letters*—to develop her ideas and she also seems to have reached a point where her frustration could no longer be contained. She saw the laws pertaining to women as the execution of power by the physically superior male over the morally and intellectually equal female.

Louisa McCord also viewed the law as such, but her conclusion was dramatically different from Sarah Grimké's. McCord stated:

The law is a concession of the strong to the weak; and because the concession is but a lame one—is but a half-accorded justice—will the weak gain by its rejection? Will he not act more wisely to nurse and cherish it, if possible, to nobler growth. Woman! thou whom Nature hath made to persuade and not to combat—to entreat but not to force—cling thou then to the written law. Ay, e'en as to thine ark of safety, amid the surging billows, the deluge of brute force—cling even to its every letter.<sup>34</sup>

McCord did not dare challenge the law because, while it oppressed her, it also offered her protection. Since God had granted men physical superiority he had clearly also given them the right to rule over those whom he had made weaker. Women should be grateful for those laws that were created to protect them from the “brute force” men might

---

<sup>32</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30-31.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.

<sup>34</sup> McCord, “Woman and her Needs,” in *Political and Social Essays*, 140.

otherwise exercise with impunity. According to McCord the “inequality of rights” that the Grimké perceived was a fair price to pay for the alternative chaos that would reign without laws. Sarah Grimké saw a dangerous antagonism between the sexes:

It is self evident that inequality of Rights creates antagonism and the assumption that we must continue in this state is productive of nothing but evil, because the privileged and the oppressed stand in opposition to each other, the latter yielding unwillingly the distinctions which the former demand and the former shutting themselves up in the self made circle of their superiority and scorning even to examine the claims of the dependent class.<sup>35</sup>

The content of McCord’s and Sarah Grimké’s passages are remarkably similar. Both women were aware of and identified the conditions that obliged women to concede certain rights to men. They each acknowledged that this placed the sexes at odds with one another. As women, they took no part in creating the laws that oppressed them, and yet they remained subject to them. Their perspectives diverge at this point. Grimké viewed this as an intolerable situation even a “blasphemous” set of circumstances. McCord saw no other alternative. To fight against this current would result in dire consequences and she scolded those women who sought to change the laws that were not theirs to alter:

Ye who are feeble, ye who are oppressed! cling to the law, even although that very law may oppress you. That it does oppress you, is proof that the strong were the makers of it. How then can you wrest it from them? How then can your feebleness better it?<sup>36</sup>

The thirst for knowledge is a trait that characterized both Louisa McCord and Sarah Grimké and neither disparaged women’s intellectual pursuits. This attitude in Grimké is not surprising considering her lifelong desire and thwarted ambition to pursue

---

<sup>35</sup> Sarah Grimké, “Letters on the Equality of Women,” in *The Public Years*, 144.

<sup>36</sup> McCord, “Woman and her Needs,” in *Political and Social Essays*, 140.



studies for a career that excluded women from participation. It was far more unusual that a woman such as McCord—who constantly deplored woman’s deviation from her gender roles—would promote activities that might lead them out of the private sphere. This exposes an inner conflict that—no matter how hard she tried—she could never neatly reconcile. Again, the following passages reveal striking similarities between the two thinkers in their concern for women’s education, but their opinions diverge once more where application of this education is concerned. Grimké’s essay “Women’s Education” exists only in manuscript form and was intended to accompany “Sisters of Charity” in her larger work on women. She justified her quest for women’s expanded education as follows:

But, it will be enquired, why we desire an extended education, since we already have what is sufficient for all the duties of a woman’s narrow sphere. . . . First, we ask education as a means to an end; that end, is greater fitness to fulfill our duties in all domestic and social relations. There can be no attainment too high, no learning too profound, not to be advantageously turned to account in the sacred circle of home. Second, we ask it, because we covet an enlarged sphere of usefulness; we feel a thirst for improvement which can only be quenched by drinking freely of the streams of knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

She made two different points in this passage: First she argued that education would enhance women’s abilities in performing their domestic duties. The second reason she gave was far more controversial: Grimké openly avowed her desire to alter the composition of the domestic sphere and women’s increased education would be the means of achieving this end. This was precisely the sort of assertion McCord tried to avoid.

---

<sup>37</sup> Sarah Grimké, *Sisters of Charity*, (1852-1857) reprinted in *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*, 88.

McCord's discussion on intellectual women is perhaps one of the most contradictory passages in all of her writings. She first advocates women's intellectual pursuits:

There is nothing unwomanish in the fullest exercise by woman of the thought and mind, which, if God has given, he has given for use. There is nothing unwomanish even, we, think, in the publishing of them. Society has accordingly permitted, and does permit, unblamed and unchecked, woman's fullest liberty in the exercise of her literary powers in every line; and she has, equally with the man, as far as she is able to use it, this theatre of effort open to her.<sup>38</sup>

She asserted women's right to an intellectual life. She even insisted that it was perfectly acceptable for women to write professionally. The exercise of the mind did not rob a woman of her femininity. It was even permissible for her to publish the product of her thought. God had given women sophisticated minds and there was certainly no harm in using them. However, this was not an activity suited to all women. She implied that it was a natural calling:

If [a woman] has not distinguished herself in [literary endeavors], it is because her talents and disposition do not indicate this as the career best suited to the fullest exercise of her faculties and virtues. It is *not her highest destiny*. It is *not her noblest life*. Nevertheless many women, with great and true woman-minds, have written, and have done good, by so expanding the brighter developments of woman-thought.<sup>39</sup>

For a thinker who repeatedly and brazenly lambasted the women's movement, this part of her argument seems to have a different tone. At the same time this was one of the few essays in which McCord had acknowledged her gender: "We—even we, the reviewer—must acknowledge ourselves of the feminine gender, of the female sex."<sup>40</sup> She did so

---

<sup>38</sup> McCord, "Woman and her Needs," in *Political and Social Essays*, 132.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

because “only as woman can we take the defensive in this question.”<sup>41</sup> It is possible that the humility she exhibited in this passage was merely another angle in her argument. Having openly avowed herself to be a woman, she had to defend her public outcry and possibly even soften her tone. This was not one of her essays on economics in which she completely concealed her identity and gender. In those essays she used the male voice—her argument entirely devoid of the sentimentality so characteristic in the literary writing of women.<sup>42</sup>

In 1852 Sarah Grimké wrote a letter to the editor of the women’s rights magazine *The Lily*. She was in every respect issuing a call to arms:

[O]n woman rests the responsibility of elevating woman. . . . The time has passed by when her most effective weapons were tears, and sighs on bended knees. . . . As long as woman used such means to gain her end, she proclaimed her inability to help herself, her need of the strong arm and brave heart of man to shelter and protect her. . . . Although she always has been, and probably always will be inferior to man in physical endowments, yet she has moral and intellectual gifts now sufficiently developed to qualify her for a loftier position in society.<sup>43</sup>

In all probability Grimké was addressing an audience that would fully approve of such sentiments. Sometime during 1850 *The Lily*—originally a temperance journal—became

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Louisa S. McCord, “The Right To Labor,” *Southern Quarterly Review* 16, October 1849 [Making of America]; available from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pagevieweridx?c=moajrnl;cc=moajrnl;rgn=full%20text;idno=acp1141.1-16.031;didno=acp1141.116.031;view=image;seq=0150;node=acp1141.1-16.031%3A11>; Internet; accessed 23 August 2008: 151.

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Grimké, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Lily*, 1852 reprinted in *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*, 63.

the conduit for articles favoring the women's rights movement.<sup>44</sup> The title of Grimké's essay "If You Would Have Freedom, Strike For It" is much more assertive than her earlier writings. Gerda Lerner posits that Grimké's confidence might have resulted from her awareness of the success of the four women's rights conventions since Seneca Falls in 1848.<sup>45</sup> The success of the conventions and the growth of the movement are certainly what inspired a very different battle cry from Louisa McCord around the same time:

Woman! woman! Respect thyself and man will respect thee. Oh! cast not off thy spear and thy shield, thine Aegis, thine anchor, thy stay! Wrapped thou art, in a magic cloud. Cast it not off to destroy thine own divinity. Man worships thee and himself; he knows not why . . . The benevolent, the true, the holy, the just, the God of Love speaks to him through *thee*. Woman, *cherish thy mission*. Fling thyself not from the high pedestal whereon God has placed thee. Cast not from thee thy moral strength—for, lo! What then art thou! Wretchedly crawling to thy shame, thy physical meekness trampled underfoot by a brutal master, behold thee, thou proud mother of earth, to what art thou sunk!<sup>46</sup>

In both of the preceding passages the authors instructed women to engage in battle—even if this was a metaphorical battle—they each asked women to fight for themselves. In this respect their writing had the same goal. However, Sarah Grimké asked her audience to begin offensive maneuvers and start a revolution for freedom as their forefathers had done—a theme that is a central component of her essay—whereas McCord's plea was a direct response to this kind of propaganda and her position was unmistakably a defensive one.

---

<sup>44</sup> Bernhard and Fox-Genovese, *The Birth of American Feminism: The Seneca Falls Women's Convention of 1848*, 102.

<sup>45</sup> Lerner, *Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*, 61.

<sup>46</sup> McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women," in *All Clever Men*, 111.

In all of their writings on women—be it in support of women’s rights or against them—the purpose was ultimately the same: all three women wrote on behalf of women’s interests. While they diverged on what the best outcome for women would be, their mutual concern for women explains the frequency with which their arguments paralleled one another even while heading in opposite directions. Endeavoring to demonstrate that morality was beyond—or above—gender, Angelina Grimké famously wrote:

When human beings are regarded as *moral* beings, *sex*, instead of being enthroned upon the summit, administering upon rights and responsibilities sinks into insignificance and nothingness. My doctrine then is, that whatever it is morally right for man to do, it is morally right for woman to do. Our duties originate, not from difference of sex, but from the diversity of our relations in life, the various gifts and talents committed to our care, and the different eras in which we live.<sup>47</sup>

Grimké’s argument was radical in that she declared the essential equality between men and women. Behind her seemingly outrageous claim were assumptions that most women shared: women were moral beings. Moral issues were within the jurisdiction of the woman’s sphere. She was motivated by a desire to ensure women’s right to exercise moral judgment in a public space. Her concern was for women. But, she was also suggesting that women now possessed a moral character that was theirs as human beings. A careful look at the preceding passage shows that Grimké had diverged from an argument where rights were attributed to women based on the association of moral character and their gender. She was actually arguing that as moral beings—not moral women—women shared the same natural rights in performing moral duties as men and this had little to do with their respective spheres.

---

<sup>47</sup> Angelina Grimké, “Letters to Catherine Beecher,” in *The Public Years*, 195.

Writing about women's education, Sarah Grimké wrote:

Think not because I thus speak, that I would withdraw woman from the duties of domestic life, far from it; let her fulfill in the circle of home all the obligations that rest upon her, but let her not waste her powers on inferior objects when higher and holier responsibilities demand her attention.<sup>48</sup>

Like her younger sister, Sarah also insisted upon women's sacred responsibilities.

Her goal was not to remove women from their proper sphere but to remove the limitations the domestic sphere imposed in order to allow women to fulfill their potentially higher roles. While McCord would have spurned any association between the thrust of the Grimké sister's writings and her own, she also wrote of her high regard for women and their abilities. She too professed a belief that they had a higher calling—though she felt it was best fulfilled within the private space of the home:

We are no undervaluer of woman; rather we profess ourselves her advocate. Her mission is, to our seeming, even nobler than man's, and she is, in the true fulfillment of that mission, certainly the higher being.<sup>49</sup>

While McCord's argument differed from that of the Grimké sisters and she argued that women's confinement to the home was just, she certainly valued women and believed theirs was a crucial, nobler role in society. It was clearly important to McCord that her audience know she wrote for women's benefit.

In their writings on women Louisa McCord and the Grimké sisters stood in opposition to one another in significant ways. Their fundamental discord was in their positions on women's rights and women's appropriate place in society. Despite this fundamental difference of opinion they relied on many similar assumptions in arguing

---

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Grimké, "The Education of Women," (1852-1857) reprinted in *Feminist Thought*, 86.

<sup>49</sup> McCord, "Enfranchisement of Women," in *All Clever Men*, 109.

their case. The fates of women and the fates of slaves were unequivocally tied together and the position each woman took on women's rights was directly related to their anti-slavery or pro-slavery stance. The laws and customs of their country oppressed women—on this point the three women were in agreement—but where McCord saw this as the necessary condition—the lesser of two evils—that had to be accepted, the Grimké sisters saw an intolerable situation that demanded attention and reform. The logic that impelled the Grimkés to press for women's rights is fairly straightforward: women were moral beings equal to men in their supreme morality, and since there was no biblical sanction for their subordination, they deserved equal rights. Louisa McCord's theory is more elaborate; the result of her being a highly talented and intelligent woman defending an environment in which her actions could not entirely be reconciled. She benefited from and directly participated in the institution of slavery and there was little question that she supported the system and would defend it. Her derision of the women's rights movement followed out of her pro-slavery position. For the most part, her argument was also straightforward. Yet in many ways she, herself, was not a very conventional southern woman. She engaged in activities that were usually earmarked for men alone; most notably, she engaged in political debate. In order to engage in political debate, without weakening the very position she defended, she chose to renounce her claim to authorship. She also had to subscribe to a doctrine that insisted she was man's inferior and here lies the conflict in her argument: But for women's physicality, Louisa McCord did not believe women were inferior to men at all. There was a noble task, nobler than man's and she declared as much in her publications. She delicately manipulated the prevailing logic of her day to suit this belief and promote it, without creating any fissures in the

larger pro-slavery argument, if anything this supported it—women’s subordination served a higher purpose.

There is a degree of irony in the fact that the Grimké sisters—arguing for equality—were viewed and treated as dangerous renegades in the South, while McCord—stating that women were superior to men—was viewed as a loyal southerner through and through.<sup>50</sup> Clearly the greater issue was whether the position the women argued was one that threatened the status quo or preserved it. The similarities between the Grimkés and McCord are certainly tantalizing and tempt the historian into the precarious territory of speculations as to what might have been. Nevertheless the comparative approach to their writings yields some significant observations providing concrete groundwork for further study.

---

<sup>50</sup> Fought, p. 122;



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Novel as a Vehicle for Political Dissent

In Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and  
Augusta Jane Evans' *Macaria, or, Altars of Sacrifice*

Sometime during the nineteenth century the fictional novel came to dominate American culture as a popular pastime.<sup>1</sup> Novelists were essentially bolstered by a new reading public. Literacy rates increased tremendously, and the popular novel—far more accessible than philosophical, religious and other intellectual reading material often prized by an educated elite—was among a host of literature, including newspapers, pamphlets, and magazines, that catered to the tastes of these new readers.<sup>2</sup> By the mid to late 1850s novels and books had become an industrialized and lucrative business enterprise. By 1850 printing presses were producing ten times what they had produced in 1820.<sup>3</sup> It follows that writing a successful novel could grant an author a good deal of

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Nina Baym this took place during the early national period. Although the pecuniary incentive for would-be authors and professional authors did not really develop until the mid-Nineteenth century. Nina Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 26-27; See also Herbert Ross Brown *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*. (New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1959), 8-12, 13, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers*, 28-29; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1785-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 7; Carolyn Perry, and Mary Louise Weaks, *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 14-15; Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel*, 8-12, 101. For American literacy rates of the period see Mary Ryan, *Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830-1860*, The Women and History Series, no 2/3. (New York: Hawthorne Press. 1982), 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel*, 19-26; Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, 13-14; Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers*, 26-27.

influence over a great number of people.<sup>4</sup> A significant increase in literacy rates among women and technological advances in printing broadened an author's readership to include a vast body of women. These circumstances also allowed women themselves to become writers and while a woman could not have earned a living with her writing in the early nineteenth century, by the 1850s a majority of the country's best-selling novelists were indeed a "damned mob of scribbling women" as Nathaniel Hawthorne so famously ranted.<sup>5</sup> According to Barbara Epstein, story-telling was part of the religious culture of the antebellum period. The audience for these stories was generally female and the content generally reflected their attitudes and carried a moral purpose.<sup>6</sup> This coincides with Mary Ryan's assertion that during the early to mid Nineteenth century women replaced men as the primary subject matter of novels. They also constituted the largest

---

<sup>4</sup> In 1854 a reviewer in *Putnam's Monthly* actually wrote: "Do you wish to instruct, to convince, to please? Write a novel! Have you a system of religion or politics or manners or social life to inculcate? Write a novel!" quoted in Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers*, 31; See also Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, Avon, 1978) for women's influence on American culture through their novels.

<sup>5</sup> Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 7; Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 3; Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel*, 104-105; Barbara Welter, "Defenders of the Faith: Women Novelists of Religious Controversy in the Nineteenth Century" in *Dimity Convictions, Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 103; Perry and Weaks, *Southern Women's Literature*, 14-15, Perry and Weaks state that writing was one of the few acceptable ways for a woman to earn a living in the early nineteenth century and they view the period from 1830-1869 as the first significant period of literary production by southern women; See also Ryan *Empire of the Mother*, 16, on female novelists' apologies in their novels for abandoning their proper sphere; and Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 123-125, 139, 166-167.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 60.

reading audience and best-selling authors. As a result domesticity became central in most novels as topic and subject. Domestic fiction was written by women, for women and took place within women's sphere.<sup>7</sup> In these novels heroines tended to experience the same conditions: They had to marry, they then became subordinate to their husbands, and they would somehow find a way to exert moral power and a positive influence from their inferior position.<sup>8</sup>

Female novelists in this period occupied a tenuous and contradictory place in society in many ways. They straddled the boundary between private and public, partaking in an activity and form of expression newly acceptable for women, yet restricted to topics deemed appropriate for their sex.<sup>9</sup> While much of the domestic fiction published during this period was formulaic and perhaps even lacking in depth, a number of female novelists, including Harriet Beecher Stowe and Augusta Jane Evans, subverted the genre to air their views on the contentious political issues which led the country to Civil War.

Through their novels, female authors could dwell in a grey political area. Remaining within the private sphere they commandeered a vessel which went beyond the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, 16, 118.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 120-121, 122. This was emblematic of the "feminine principle of power through passivity."

<sup>9</sup> See Mary Kelley's *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) for women's responses to being essentially private figures who were thrust into the public realm. Among the twelve popular novelists who are subjects of her study are Augusta Jane Evans and Harriet Beecher Stowe. See also Nina Baym's *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

boundaries of the home.<sup>10</sup> Through domestic fiction they could attempt to influence politics at a remote distance, from the safety and confines of their domestic province, avoiding the harsh social criticism which often fell upon many public female reformers like the Grimké sisters. They entered into the political and public debate under the guise of the private.<sup>11</sup> Mary Ryan argues that domesticity entered politics when Stowe and southern authors began writing about slavery and secession.<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Moss also contends that when Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she shaped the future of antebellum southern novels, as popular response to her novel forced southern authors to defend their society and slavery.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> A number of scholars have identified the nineteenth century novel as a woman's means for public expression on public issues. Perry and Weaks discuss the novel as an outlet for women to discuss public issues in *Southern Women's Literature*, 15; See also Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, 18, 130; Welter, in "Defenders of the Faith," in *Dimity Convictions*, 103, notes that the novel served as a "vehicle of protest" used by women, allowing them to escape accusations of interfering with the public sphere; See also Elizabeth Fox-Genovese *To Be Worthy of God's Favor: Southern Women's Defense and Critique of Slavery* (Gettysburg College: 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture, 1993), 9, 12. Fox-Genovese identified women's fiction as the "most widely read contributions to political debate." She also argued that the secession crisis and the politics of the 1850s drew women's interest, and the turbulence of the times allowed for the public expression of their views; In *Domestic Novelists*, 9, 11, 21, Elizabeth Moss has identified five female novelists—including Evans—who wrote propagandistic novels during the 1850s despite the fact that domestic novelists continuously insisted on their political ambivalence.

<sup>12</sup> Ryan *Empire of the Mother*, 130.

<sup>13</sup> Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 103-106; Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 103-104, 107, 108-119; See also Fox-Genovese *To Be Worthy*, 11-12, who argued that in their responses to Stowe and other abolitionists women took part in a national debate; and Mary Ryan *Empire of the Mother*, 134, who argues that when women used the domestic setting to attribute "domestic

Most frequently, Stowe and Evans voiced their ideas by attributing them to characters who were crafted as being above all moral reproach and were situated in private settings. The two authors also relied heavily upon the voice of the omniscient narrator to guide their readers towards the support of a cause. Evans, an ardent secessionist, sought to imbue her readers, especially her female audience, with stoic support for the southern Confederacy. Stowe, at times imploring and at other times scolding her audience, joined the crusade to dismantle the institution of American slavery. Where Stowe tended to preach more liberally to her audience Evans tended to make more ample use of the prologue to set a stage and occasionally deliver a political rant. In both instances the potentially inflammatory contents of a text were softened and veiled in the guise of the fictional narrative, despite the clearly public nature of the popular novel. While Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* inspired the angry tirades of many literary critics, she was never attacked on the same scale as female anti-slavery reformers who actively stepped beyond the boundaries of women's sphere into a political forum.<sup>14</sup> Stowe's novel also became the most popular book of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Augusta Evans' *Macaria*—published in 1864 in the midst of the Civil War—was the most popular novel published in the South during the war and it sold very well in the North after being

---

infractions and failure to either the North or the South” they altered the passive moral agency in novels to an active exacerbation of sectional conflict.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Ryan argues that when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1851 the American public was ready for it. Having absorbed the ideology of domesticity over the last two decades they could accept a woman's authoritative voice when her subject was moral, *Empire of the Mother*, 132; See also Baym *Novels, Readers and Reviewers*, 192, where she discusses the moral criticisms of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

<sup>15</sup> Ryan, *Empire of the Mother*, 133.

smuggled through the North-South blockade despite its clearly secessionist tone.<sup>16</sup>

Despite never attaining best-seller status *Macaria*'s wide circulation clearly caused a stir. A widely-circulated rumor held that a confederate soldier had been saved from a bullet to the heart by a copy of *Macaria* which he kept in his breast pocket.<sup>17</sup> The popularity of Evan's novel was not limited to confederate troops as union general G.H. Thomas is known to have banned, confiscated, and burned all copies of *Macaria* that he found among his troops suggesting its controversy and popularity there must have been relatively significant.<sup>18</sup>

There are two ways to approach these texts. The first method is to look for scenes in which the authors gave political voice to their female characters. This always took place in a private setting to keep the characters above reproach. The characters were often reticent to discuss politics. When they did so, they could be apologetic, or dismissive of politics in general—despite their apparent interest. It was often made clear

---

<sup>16</sup> Welter, "Defenders of the Faith," in *Dimity Convictions*, 108; Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 11, 183; Baym, *Novels, Readers and Reviewers*, 286; William Perry Fidler, *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909, A Biography* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 107; and William Perry Fidler, "Augusta Evans Wilson As Confederate Propagandist," *The Alabama Review* 2 (January 1949): 43. Given the unusual constraints posed by war *Macaria*, though very popular, never attained best-seller status, Fidler, "Confederate Propagandist," 43; It is significant though that Evans' next novel, *St. Elmo*, published in 1867, became the most successful work of women's fiction of the Nineteenth century—outsold only by Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which Nina Baym argues is not a work of women's fiction, *Women's Fiction*, 12, 15-16, 276, 286. For Baym's criterion for her category of "Women's Fiction" see her introduction to *Women's Fiction*, as well as her chapter entitled "The Form and Ideology of Woman's Fiction."

<sup>17</sup> Fidler, "Confederate Propagandist," 39, 40; and Fidler *Augusta Jane Evans*, 109.

<sup>18</sup> Welter, "Defenders of the Faith," in *Dimity Convictions*, 109; Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 183; Fidler, "Confederate Propagandist," 35.

that the characters only ventured into such a topic of conversation because something—usually some moral and righteous impulse—compelled them to. It is arguable that when Stowe and Evans wrote such scenes they were quite plausible, and likely they were intended to be plausible. It was not inappropriate for a woman to speak about these issues if they were moral and she was not breaching any boundaries by addressing the matter in an intimate and private setting. Yet the novel itself was not private. Despite the fictional settings, when their characters uttered political opinions the authors were actually sharing them with a large public audience. It is possible that the private setting and the characters reluctance to discuss politics were meant to mask the very public nature of their statements. At the very least it imbued the dialogue with some legitimacy—the scenario was fictional and the setting was private—and the situation could be viewed as representative of reality. At times Evans and Stowe’s political commentary is veiled in the appropriate disguise of the private scene. A female character discusses politics with much fervor stating quite explicitly that she does not have any desire to occupy any role in politics and insists that women have no business in this realm and the whole scene will be cloaked in the appropriate garb of the fictional private setting.

In a scene which takes place after the slave Eliza has run away from her master Mr. Shelby, Stowe introduces her readers to the family of Senator Bird. The scene opens on a setting of domestic bliss: a “cheerful fire” is burning in a cozy parlor and empty tea cups sit invitingly next to a fresh pot of tea. As Senator Bird comes home to be greeted and waited on by his wife, and this might have developed into the perfect scene of domestic bliss had something very unusual not happened next. Mrs. Bird asked Senator

Bird about politics—specifically the Fugitive Slave Law—and asked if such a law had been passed:

Now it was a very unusual thing for the gentle Mrs. Bird ever to trouble her head with what was going on in the house of the state, very wisely considering that she had enough to do to mind her own.

“Why, Mary, you are getting to be a politician, all at once.”

“No, nonsense! I wouldn’t give a fig for all your politics, generally, but I think this is something downright cruel and unchristian.”

The Senator responded that this very law has been passed and Mrs. Bird;

[A] timid, blushing little woman, of about four feet in height . . . rose quickly, with very red cheeks . . . and walked up to her husband, with quite a resolute air, and said, in a determined tone:

“Now, John, I want to know if you think such a law as that is right and Christian?”

“You won’t shoot me, now, Mary, if I say I do!”

“I never could have thought it of you John; you didn’t vote for it?”

“Even so, my fair politician.”<sup>19</sup>

During the scene Stowe’s narration continuously emphasized the unusual nature of this conversation. She described Mrs. Bird as the ideal domestic woman who cared for the home and saw to all her husbands needs and comforts, waiting for his arrival and then waiting on him as the idealized wife was expected to do. As soon as Mrs. Bird raised the issue of politics Stowe made it abundantly clear that this was not in her character’s nature and that Mrs. Bird “wisely” avoided thinking too much about the subject in general. On this occasion she was compelled to address the issue because something “downright

---

<sup>19</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), 67-70.



cruel and unchristian” was afoot, and as a morally responsible wife and mother, as a republican mother—guardian of the nation’s virtue—she had to intercede in a situation which fell within her purview. According to Nina Baym, readers would have noticed and taken exception to dialogue that they felt had been inappropriately attributed to a character.<sup>20</sup> Stowe created a scenario that would seem believable. She then took her character to an uncommon place for a women next when Mrs. Bird threatened to act criminally:

“[I]t’s a shameful, wicked, abominable law, and I’ll break it, for one, the first time I get a chance; and I hope I *shall* have a chance, I do! . . . I don’t know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the desolate; and the Bible I mean to follow.”

“But in cases where your doing so would involve a great public evil—”

“Obeying God never brings on public evils. I know it can’t. It’s always safest, all round, to *do as He* bids us. . . . I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There’s a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing; and you don’t believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice. I know *you* well enough, John. You don’t believe it’s right any more than I do; and you wouldn’t do it any sooner than I.”<sup>21</sup>

In this instance not only was Stowe—through her character—advocating civil disobedience, she publicly demonstrated, via a fictitious private scenario, that when it came to religion, morality and ethics, women had the upper hand. In the family’s eventual dealings with the runaway Eliza even Senator Bird had a hand in breaking the very law he had voted for.<sup>22</sup> There are a number of other things occurring in this passage

---

<sup>20</sup> Baym *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers*, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 67-70.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-80.

that point to gender dynamics around this time. Stowe's Mrs. Bird insisted that she did not know much about politics but she could read her Bible. Her prioritizing of the Bible as authority over legislation and also her appropriation of the Bible as her weapon of choice in trumping the political was derived from popular ideas regarding separate spheres. Women were invested with moral authority—which they derived from the religiosity widely attributed to their sex.<sup>23</sup> At the same time she criticized the impracticability of political legislation because it was at odds with Christian values much like Angelina Grimké had done in her response to Catharine Beecher. In a sense Mrs. Bird was manifesting the qualities of the ultra republican mother responding to a perceived moral calamity—as if an inner mechanism had been set off so that she might act in that critical moment. God had anchored woman to the home and left her there to safeguard the moral well-being of her civilization.

In a similar scene in Evans' *Macaria*, which takes place prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, the heroine Irene appears to be more politically astute than her old friend and protector Doctor Arnold. While drinking tea together the Doctor and Irene begin to discuss politics.<sup>24</sup> Irene surprises the Doctor by arguing for secession. When he teases

---

<sup>23</sup> This is especially more prevalent in the North. While historians of the South such as Jean E. Friedman have shown that women did play a critical role in religion and that religious activities—be it teaching Sunday school or participating in benevolent associations—were deemed acceptable pursuits for women, religiosity itself was not absorbed into women's domestic sphere as it was in the North.

<sup>24</sup> It was not considered inappropriate in southern culture for women to discuss politics. Most women of the planter class would have had the leisure to read on the subject and many of them—being part of the elite class of their society—were connected to politicians and political figures. See Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 3-4, 103.

Irene by implying that perhaps she and other women would like to take charge of the political direction of their state Irene dismisses the suggestion:

It is not our calling, Doctor . . . We have no desire to thrust ourselves into the forum . . . Practically, women should have as little to do with politics as men with darning stockings or making puff-paste; but we should be unworthy of the high social *status* which your chivalry accords us were we indifferent to the conduct of public affairs. . . . Such is the judicious arrangement of nature—a wise and happy one, indubitably. We bow before it, and have no wish to trench on your prerogatives; but we protest against your sleeping on your posts, or lulling yourselves with dreams of selfish ambition when Scylla and Charybdis grin destruction on either side.<sup>25</sup>

As Doctor Arnold continued to mock Irene she too—like Mrs. Bird—criticized politicians for their “latter-day political carpentering.” Irene argued that they politicians were simply “political gamesters” whose interests were self-serving and as such they ought to be replaced by more nobly minded men.<sup>26</sup> She also made it very clear that she herself had no political aspirations. Politics, Irene declared, were by nature man’s business. In keeping with ideas on men’s and women’s proper roles she associated the conduct of public affairs with men while assigning the domestic chores of baking and mending to women. When the good doctor asks Irene if she will be sneaking into parliament next to take part in the political proceedings she puts the issue to rest replying: “I am simply a true lover of my country—anxious in view of its stormy, troubled future.”<sup>27</sup> Irene essentially embodied the true civic woman that Evans hoped women would aspire to become in the midst of a difficult war. Irene’s discussion of politics was,

---

<sup>25</sup> Augusta Jane Evans, *Macaria, or, Altars of Sacrifice* (Richmond, Va., 1864), edited and with an introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 274-275.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

like Mrs. Bird's intrusion, something she felt compelled to do. These two passages are at variance with one another in the different approach to the private discussions on politics. While Mrs. Bird's emotional outburst was fueled by religious indignation over morally reprehensible political actions, Evans painted Irene as a patriot. Her objections and her interests were civic and secular in nature. This is consistent with what Elizabeth Moss views as a particular characteristic of the southern domestic novel which, she argues, was distinct from northern domestic literature. According to Moss the southern domestic novel was rooted in the plantation novel and both of these particularly southern genres were increasingly suffused with southern pride and patriotism in an effort to deflect northern accusations of societal corruption.<sup>28</sup> In both instances the female character in question shocked the man she conversed with in her discussion of politics but the justifications came from different places—one moral and religious, the other patriotic.<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting that both authors chose female characters to deliver these statements. They might easily have created scenarios where a discussion on politics took place between men. But the underlying context here is similar: women were invested with a moral imperative, as republican mothers, and as patriotic southerners, which allowed them to express political dissent in certain situations. The private setting, and the fact that it was shielded from the public did not alter the fact that women's concerns were to be heeded. The fact that the domestic novel—by nature a public text—was propagated on a wide scale as popular culture to large audiences, however, exposes the authors' very

---

<sup>28</sup> Moss, *Domestic Novelists*, 3, 7, 9, 14

<sup>29</sup> For southern women's increasing interest in and discussion of politics during the 1850s see Fox-Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household*, 45, 244-245, 281-282, 337, 340, 342-343; and Fox-Genovese, *To Be Worthy*, 9-12.

subversion of the genre to take those womanly concerns from private to public. The authors were suggesting that women's moral intuition would keep the entire nation from going astray.

More striking and perhaps a more accurate indicator of an author's intent to disseminate political opinions or even propaganda are the instances when the politics came from the narrator. In these situations attributing the delivery of the text to anyone other than the author seems impossible, but the tradition of narration in 19th century literature fostered assumptions that the story would be told by a "single conventional voice from a conventional stance."<sup>30</sup> While authors and readers of the mid-nineteenth century novel did not possess the same conceptions of the narrator, narration, or the narrative voice as modern century readers, it was assumed that the narrator spoke from a position of authority.<sup>31</sup> Some of the most critical passages in Evans and Stowe's work were delivered by the narrator. In these instances the author was in many senses invisible, acting as the expert guide, and invested with authority. These passages are essentially the most explicit evidence of political content and political intent in the novels—they are certainly the most obvious example of propaganda. As the all-knowing omniscient narrator Stowe and Evans could sway their readers, even direct them towards—or against—a certain political ideology. Motivated by their individual biases they presented scenarios, preached, and reasoned with their readers without ever really identifying themselves as women.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Baym *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers*, 119.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 108, 129, 145.

Stowe and Evans did not conceal their intentions to influence their readers. In fact both women—in the only instances when they identified themselves as women—made it quite clear in their preface and dedication respectively that they had a particular motive for writing, and there is little which conceals the political nature of these motives. Evans, in her dedication for *Macaria*, declared her position as a secessionist, and Stowe, in her preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, stated that she wrote to evoke anti-slavery feeling among her readers. While neither of these statements were clear assertions of authority in the political arena and while neither author even referred to their motives or novels as political, the intent to influence public policy or rally public support is evident.

In the preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Stowe wrote that:

The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust as to defeat and do away the good effects of all that can be attempted for them, by their best friends, under it. In doing this, the author can sincerely disclaim any invidious feeling towards those individuals who, often without any fault of their own, are involved in the trials and embarrassments of the legal relations of slavery.<sup>33</sup>

In this passage Stowe explicitly told her readers that she meant to show the inherent corruption in the institution of slavery. Her disclaimer, in which she insisted she bore no “invidious” feelings towards those who upheld and participated in the institution, hardly obscured what she meant to do. Through her novel Stowe was about to promote or at the very least encourage the dissolution of slavery, ultimately implying that the current organization of southern society was flawed and had to be altered dramatically. The way

---

<sup>32</sup> Although clearly their gender was evident—they certainly did not assume a feminine voice when they wrote these passages.

<sup>33</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, xiii.

she spoke of them the cruelty and injustices she referred to were irremediable as long as the system persisted. While the fictional nature of novel writing might have given the initial impression that her work would be harmless, Stowe's mastery of sentimental prose did not auger well for southern apologists.

In letters to friends Evans often said that she wrote *Macaria* to inspire the women of the South to their civic duties—to encourage them to be patient.<sup>34</sup> The novel's dedication was quite literally a tribute to the southern confederacy and its soldiers:

To the Army of the Confederacy, who have delivered the South from despotism, and who have won for generations yet unborn the precious guerdon of constitutional republican liberty: To this vast legion of honor . . . these pages are gratefully and reverently dedicated by one who, although debarred from the dangers and deathless glory of the "tented field," would fain offer a woman's inadequate tribute to the noble patriotism and sublime self-abnegation of her dear and devoted countrymen.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the fact that Evans had stated in letters that her book was written for the women of the Confederacy, she clearly knew how to reach her male audience as well.

Dedicating her work to the soldiers of the Confederacy potentially had a dual effect on the women as well as the men in her audience. Glorifying and venerating the soldiers of the Confederacy would appeal to mothers, wives, and sisters of soldiers as much as to the soldiers themselves—if anything the dedication carried the potential to inspire unity in the sacrifices practically everyone in the south was obliged to make.

---

<sup>34</sup> Augusta Jane Evans, Selected Letters, in *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*, ed. Rebecca Grant Sexton (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Evans, *Macaria*, Dedication.

Given that the men in Stowe's life—including her father, brother, and husband—tended to be religious leaders, it is not surprising that Stowe often adopted the scolding tone of the preacher when speaking as the omniscient narrator. She told her northern audience they were equally responsible for the institution of slavery. Discussing the slave trader Mr. Haley she wrote:

[The trader's] heart was exactly where yours, sir, and mine could be brought, with proper effort and cultivation. . . . You can get used to such things, too, my friend; and it is the great object of recent efforts to make our whole northern community used to them, for the glory of the Union.<sup>36</sup>

But who, sir, makes the trader? Who is most to blame? The enlightened, cultivated, intelligent man, who supports the system of which the trader is the inevitable result, or the poor trader himself? You make the public sentiment that calls for his trade, that debauches and depraves him, till he feels no shame in it; and in what are you better than he? Are you educated and he ignorant, you high and he low, you refined and he coarse, you talented and he simple? In the day of a future judgment, these very considerations may make it more tolerable for him than for you.<sup>37</sup>

One can easily imagine Stowe preaching this very sermon from a pulpit to her congregation, had she been accorded such a privilege. In these passages she specifically addressed a male audience which suggests she assigned the guilt—as Mrs. Bird did—to legislators of the public world—legislators who without exception were men. While she targeted women's emotions with the sentimental narrative—including Tom's departure from his family in Kentucky and his eventual martyrdom, little Eva's death, and Eliza's desperate yet fierce protection of her child—she also meant to influence male readers directly by appealing to them on a rational level. Their culpability lay in their inaction, perhaps even in their business dealings with southern planters. By addressing both a

---

<sup>36</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 112.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.



male and female audience in distinct ways she also encouraged discussion between the sexes, perhaps hoping women would be able to influence their husbands in the same way that the fictional Mrs. Bird influenced her own husband.

For her part Augusta Evans was more likely to open a chapter with a heroic and defiant prologue. The reader can almost hear the drumbeat of war in the background.

Setting the stage for a battle scene she began a chapter as follows:

To those who reside at the convulsed throbbing heart of a great revolution, a lifetime seems compressed into the compass of days and weeks, and men and women are conscious of growing prematurely old while watching the rushing, thundering tramp of events, portentous with the fate of nations.<sup>38</sup>

Like many secessionists in the south Evans referred to the Civil War as a war of revolution. The revolution itself was described in her novel as a coming of age for the South in which the fate of a nation would be determined. She continued with a description of the Union and the actions which caused the Confederacy to rebel:

The government at Washington had swept aside all constitutional forms, in order to free its hands for the work of blood—had ultimated in complete despotism. The press was thoroughly muzzled—freedom of speech was erased from the list of American privileges; the crowded cells of the Bastille Lafayette, McHenry, and Warren wailed out to the civilized world that *habeus corpus* was no more; and, terror-stricken at the hideous figure of Absolutism carved by the cunning fingers of Lincoln and Seward, and set up for worship at Washington, Liberty fled from the polluted fane, and sought shelter and shrine on the banner of the Confederacy, in the dauntless, devoted hearts of its unconquerable patriots.<sup>39</sup>

Evans' dramatic narrative declared unequivocally that the South had been driven to rebellion by the heinous crimes of the North. Union prisons became bastilles—a clear reference to the French revolution. Though in Evans' reality the war was well in

---

<sup>38</sup> Evans, *Macaria*, 308.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

progress, in her narrative Lincoln was newly elected and South Carolina had yet to secede. Her comparison of northern prisons to the famous French Bastille was yet another implication that the situation was ripe for rebellion. The newly elected Lincoln was the harbinger of death and destruction, his presidency one of absolute despotism. The time had come to storm the Bastille. In this passage Evans not only addressed politics directly she also held a position. But where Mrs. Bird proposed to break an unchristian law, Evans encouraged what had already occurred—total revolution and complete secession from the Union.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Macaria* were published more than a decade apart and yet the language and message is often similar. Freedom was paramount—for the slave from his master, for the South from the North. In both instances it was women who were advocating civil disobedience in order to attain liberty. In an impassioned passage, again speaking as the omniscient narrator, Stowe asked her audience:

Liberty!—electric word! What is it? Is there anything more in it than a name—a rhetorical flourish? Why, men and women of America, does your heart's blood thrill at that word, for which your fathers bled, and your braver mothers were willing that their noblest and best should die? Is there anything in it glorious and dear for a nation, that is not also glorious and dear for a man?<sup>40</sup>

Here Stowe addressed men and women together as belonging to a nation. Like Evans, she invoked patriotism, and the Revolution, and arguing from an entirely different platform she insisted that the slave's plight was akin to that of their revolutionary forefathers. She seemed to suggest the sacrifices made during the Revolution were wasted if the gains were not universally applied. She then asked:

---

<sup>40</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 332.

What is freedom to a nation, but freedom to the individuals in it? What is freedom to that young man, who sits there, with his arms folded over his broad chest, the tint of African blood in his cheek, its dark fires in his eyes . . . To your fathers, freedom was the right of a nation to be a nation. To him, it is the right of a man to be a man, and not a brute; the right to call the wife of his bosom his wife, and to protect her from lawless violence; the right to protect and educate his child; the right to have a home of his own, a religion of his own, a character of his own, unsubject to the will of another.<sup>41</sup>

Stowe humanized the slave by comparing him to her readers. He had a family, he had a wife, he was a father and a man who, in his current position, could not protect his children from slavery, could not even live with his wife as a Christian. Most significantly the slave, according to Stowe, was an individual and individuals had natural rights. Her comparison is all the more interesting in view of who it was applied to. The individual she spoke on behalf of was male. Individuality itself tended more often to be applied to men and it implied inherent natural rights, but this passage is suggestive of how far Stowe was willing to push the envelope. She intended to take up the anti-slavery cause but she was not among those participants in the anti-slavery movements who fought for women's emancipation in tandem with the slave's. Criticism of her novel and the controversy it caused were quite likely due to its success. She was charged with embellishing, with lying, and numerous other things, including behaving in an unbecoming fashion for a woman.<sup>42</sup> But even the latter accusation had more to do with how sensational her novel had become than the extent to which it thrust her into the public realm. She had broached, even domesticated, a political topic yet she was not by any means campaigning

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See especially Louisa McCord's review "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 7 (Jan. 1853): 245-280, reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Selected Writings*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury (Charlottesville and London, 1997).

for women's rights. Female slaves in her novel were under constant threat of sexual violation and moral defilement—their children were torn from their arms. Male slaves, on the other hand, had been robbed of their natural rights as individuals, as is most aptly demonstrated by the character of George.

In passages where Evans spoke of trampled freedoms and liberties revolution is constantly implied. She also spoke for herself, or rather southerners, not on behalf of a beleaguered race—as Stowe would have put it. She did not refer to men's rights or women's rights but state rights and this was consistent with her intention of unifying the South in the confederate cause. This was also more in keeping with southern attitudes towards gender—where women were absorbed into a complex hierarchy rather than occupying their own gendered space. In another propagandistic passage Evans again attacked the North and abolitionism:

The 6<sup>th</sup> of November dawned upon a vast populous empire, rich in every resource, capable of the acme of human greatness and prosperity, claiming to be the guardian of peaceful liberty. It set upon a nation rent in twain, between whose sections yawned a bottomless, bridgeless gulf, where the shining pillars of the temple of Concord had stood for eighty years; and a grating sound of horror shuddered through land as brazen, blood clotted doors of Janus flung themselves suddenly wide apart. . . . Abolitionism, so long adroitly cloaked, was triumphantly clad in robes of state—shameless now, and hideous; and while the North looked upon the loathsome face of its political Mokanna, the South prepared for resistance.<sup>43</sup>

Again Evans referred to the Union as if it had broken a compact and the situation had been inevitable. The tone of this passage and the language are quite different from Stowe's general tone. Evans' novels fell into the category of domestic fiction—or as Baym refers to it women's fiction—but these passages do not really evoke domesticity. This may be because the country was already at war, and in her bitterness towards the

---

<sup>43</sup> Evans, *Macaria*, 298-299.

North she wrote as a southerner, and not as a woman. In these passages she emphasized the political—she pointed to the wrongs perpetrated by the North, or promoted the secessionist cause—and these passages could extend to three or four pages.

While there are many similarities between Stowe and Evans it is apparent that their writing styles were quite different. With all its inherent flaws *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is in many ways a superior novel and its phenomenal success owes much to its author's gift for storytelling. Readers were—and arguably still are—hard-pressed to remain impassive throughout the countless wrenching scenes so purposefully designed to tug at their heartstrings. Evans on the other hand, despite writing a tragic tale of love in impossible circumstances, did not make use of sentimental narrative devices as expertly as Stowe. Tragic scenes of death on the battlefield are at times preceded by overtly political chapter prologues, clearly intended to sway the reader towards stoicism in the face of hardships and patriotic southern nationalism. While these passages perhaps served their purpose, the tragic elements in her tale—elements which might have appealed more to her female audience—are somewhat lost in her determination to communicate her message. This does not in any way lessen the skill and creativity with which both Evans and Stowe subverted the formulaic genre of domestic fiction.

There is much more to be gleaned from a study which compares these novels as political texts. Beyond indicating a shared passion for political expression and certainly a shared concern for the fate of their country, there is in the very writing of these novels an assumed importance attributed to the female perspective. It is perhaps partially a result of the very moral nature of the politics in question. Yet there are other questions to address. *Macaria* was a novel that spoke directly to a political position and national

crisis. Her intent to influence, be it to inspire patriotism or instigate anti-union sentiment, was clear. Measuring the impact of this effort is nearly impracticable. Published during a war, looking to the sales of the novel would be an inaccurate way to measure its success, given lack of resources, and impracticalities of war. As such it would be difficult to compare these two books based on sales. That *Macaria* did as well as it did in the midst of a war certainly attests to its resonating affect. Comparing these two works as part of a tradition is more feasible.

## CONCLUSION

The past few years have witnessed political events of international importance that revolved around strong, well-known, female politicians—Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, Benazir Bhutto’s assassination, and Ingrid Betancourt’s dramatic rescue after years of captivity come to mind. Women’s involvement in politics is hardly considered radical by the standards of most societies today, and yet Clinton, Bhutto and Betancourt have all been path-breakers in their political careers. Precedents for their activities lie in the history of political women. The distinction between women’s politics and political women lies in the subject: women’s politics refers to politics that center on women’s issues, whereas the subject of political women focuses on women who have been political, and who acted in some political capacity, in an effort to affect public life and public policy.

The Antebellum Period was one of significant changes in American society, and it can be viewed as an important one in the history of political women. Industrialization, access to education, changing discourses about men’s and women’s proper roles, and contentious politics established a cultural setting that allowed women to occupy prominent places in society as public figures. Sometimes this was viewed as scandalous and inappropriate, as Catharine Beecher’s reaction to Angelina and Sarah’s Grimké’s public lectures to “promiscuous audiences” demonstrates. In other instances the talents of authors such as Augusta Jane Evans were celebrated, even when these talents were put to use in political matters. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in her capacity as a morally concerned mother was able to address the major political issue of her time on a scale that was

arguably unrivaled in proportions. Louisa McCord for her part participated in the intellectual discourse on politics that took place in the South during the decade that preceded the Civil War. In her writings on women's rights and slavery she often attacked women who sought to meddle in politics. While her essays on political economics constitute a peripheral foray into politics—in the sense that she can certainly be viewed as a participant in the public discourse on politics—she never addressed this contradictory position. Her open confession about her gender in articles attacking the women's rights movement, when juxtaposed with her choice of pseudonymous authorship in her essays on subjects deemed less suitable for women suggests, at the very least, that she sought to avoid controversy and criticism for engaging in an activity that on some level could have been deemed inappropriate for a woman.

The goal and purpose of women's history has been, from its inception, to uncover the past of forgotten women, to situate them in the past and, in a sense, rectify the wrong of having neglected the history of half of humanity for such a long time. When women are the central subjects of an entire study it tends to be slotted in—some might say relegated to—the field of women's history rather than political, social, religious, or intellectual history—to name a few possible fields—even if the subject of the work is more heavily invested in the activities of its actors. A valid argument would be that any study which focuses on women as the principle actors must inevitably account for the underlying ways in which gender has affected their lives or restricted their activities. It is sometimes assumed that women, having for so much of history been forced into a subordinate and dependent status cannot possibly have acted without feeling the constant weight of domestic shackles. While there is some truth to this observation, women such



as the Grimké sisters, Evans, McCord, and Stowe appear to have led significantly productive lives, and it would be a mistake to view their accomplishments as if they all took place under a cloud of oppression and forced subordination. They do not appear to have lived their lives in a constant state of depression over the societal limitations they faced as women. They were all blessed with inspiration and lived in an age that allowed them, at least, the public expression of their ideas.

The inherent paradox remains that, the very act of isolating women by making them the sole subject of a study suggests their status is marginal and detracts from the effort to present their contributions as integral to a larger historical framework. In the history of politics, the challenge is two-fold: first there is the task of confronting the rather daunting tradition of political history, which has long had a standard of what may be defined as political activity. If political history refers to an electoral process, then women can only be deemed political from the moment of their enfranchisement. The task of re-imagining and redefining what constitutes political history requires the historian to become—as Gerda Lerner put it—an intellectual historian as well. New historical actors need to be found, or re-discovered or re-positioned in their capacities as different historical figures. A popular novelist such as Stowe or Evans becomes more than a cultural icon, she now also holds the title of propagandist. The anonymous essayist and southern matron like Louisa McCord becomes a political thinker. Controversial reformers such as Sarah and Angelina Grimké are also viewed as political revolutionaries.

It is possible to look back on the antebellum period as one of mass political awakening for women. While electoral politics were still viewed as a sphere of activity

beyond women's reach women, in large numbers, became involved in a multi-dimensional capacity in public life and in influencing public policy. While women involved in the early women's rights and suffrage movements were deemed the most radical, many other women were participating in this trend as well. Arguments such as Barbara Welter's, Nancy Cott's, and Barbara Berg's that contend that women came to feminism or women's rights by way of rejecting the established norms which restricted them shed an interesting light on the five women of this study. Sarah and Angelina Grimké did not intend to become radical thinkers on women's rights when they first began to speak out against slavery. It was the opposition they faced when they did so that inspired their arguments on women's rights. Harriet Beecher Stowe could not possibly have perceived how phenomenally successful her novel would be or how much it would come to reflect and represent a major political position that eventually brought the country into a full-scale war. It is possible that without Stowe's novel and the sensational attention it received, authors like Augusta Jane Evans might not have written such an overtly propagandistic novel as *Macaria*. Despite stating she did not feel women had a place in politics, *Macaria*, is evidence of Evans's very clear political interest. Her intentions were to convince her readers of the validity of her political opinion and to encourage them to support it. Louisa McCord's proslavery essays also promoted a very clear political position. What is interesting is that most of these women, even the Grimkés, would not have defined their literary activities as political. It is possible now to define them as such. Given the long process it took for women to become enfranchised, and the even longer process it took for them to win equal rights, this period which saw a widespread increase in what may be deemed women's political activities—their efforts to

influence, affect, and participate in the shaping of public life—is clearly important in its capacity as a harbinger of things to come.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- Beecher, Catharine. *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females*. Philadelphia: Perkins and Marvin, 1837. Accessed 14 August 2008. Available from <http://books.google.com/books?id=vRoEAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Catharine+Beecher>. Internet.
- Evans, Augusta Jane. *Beulah* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859). Edited and with an introduction by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Macaria, or, Altars of Sacrifice* (Richmond, Va., 1864). Edited and with an introduction by Drew Gilpin Faust. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Selected Letters in *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*. ed. Rebecca Grant Sexton. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002.
- Grimké, Sarah Moore. "An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States." (New York: American Antislavery Society, 1837). In *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*. (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838). In *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sisters of Charity* (c. 1852-1857). In *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*, by Gerda Lerner. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Education of Women* (c. 1852-1857). In *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*, by Gerda Lerner. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Grimké, Angelina Emily. "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South" (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836). In *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Letters to Catherine E. Beecher, in Reply to an Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, Addressed to A.E. Grimké Revised by the Author* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838). In *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected*

*Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Speech to the Legislative Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature" (21 February 1838). In *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*, ed. Larry Ceplair. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

McCord, Louisa S. "The Right To Labor," *Southern Quarterly Review* 16, October 1849; available from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pagevieweridx?c=moajrnl;cc=moajrnl;rgn=full%20text;idno=acp1141.1-16.031;didno=acp1141.116.031;view=image;seq=0150;node=acp1141.1-16.031%3A11>. Internet. Accessed 23 August 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Diversity of the Races" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 3 (April 1850). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 159-186.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Negro and White Slavery-Wherein Do They Differ?" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 4 (July 1851). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 187-202.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Enfranchisement of Women" *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 5 (April 1852). In *All Clever Men Who Make Their Way: Critical Discourse in the Old South*, ed. Michael O'Brien. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992: 337-356.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Negro-mania," *DeBow's Review* 12 (May 1852). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 222-244.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Woman and Her Needs," *DeBow's Review* 13 (September 1852). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 125-155.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Southern Quarterly Review*, n.s. 7 (Jan. 1853). Reprinted in *Louisa S. McCord: Selected Writings*. ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London, 1997: 83-118.

\_\_\_\_\_. "British Philanthropy and American Slavery" *De Bow* 14 (March 1853). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 281-320.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Letter to the Duchess of Sutherland from a Lady of South Carolina" *Charleston Mercury* (Aug.10, 1853). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social*

*Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 350-360.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Slavery and Political Economy" *De Bow* 21 (Oct. and Nov. 1856). In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 422-469.

Nott, Josiah. "Two Lecture on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro races." Reprinted in *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*. ed. Drew Gilpin Faust. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981: 208-238.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher to Gamaliel Bailey, Brunswick, Maine, March 9 1851. In *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Joan D. Hedrick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Norton Critical Edition, ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_ to Eliza Cabot Follen, Andover, December 16, 1852. In *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Joan D. Hedrick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Key To Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Boston: John P. Jewett & Co. 1853. Reprint, St. Clair Shores: Scholarly Press, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. "An Appeal to the Women of the Free States of America, on the Present Crisis in Our Country." *The Independent*, Feb. 24, 1854. In *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*, ed. Joan D. Hedrick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Reply To The Englishwomen's Address" (1862). In *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Vol. 2. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967.

## Secondary Sources

- Abzug, Robert H. *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Ahlstrom, Sydney. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.
- Ammons, Elizabeth. ed. *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1980.
- Ammons, Elizabeth. Preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Norton Critical Edition, ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994.
- Arendale, Marirose. "Tennessee and Women's Rights." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 39 (1980): 62-78.
- Baker, Paula. "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920." *The American Historical Review* 89 (Jun., 1984): 620-647.
- Bakker, Jan. *Pastoral in the Antebellum Southern Romance*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.
- Baym, Nina. *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Bender, Thomas. *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginning of Our Own Time*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Berg, Barbara J. *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism: the Woman and the City, 1800-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Bernhard, Virginia, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Theda Perdue, eds. *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1992.

- Bernhard, Virginia and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, eds. *The Birth of American Feminism: The Seneca Falls Women's Convention of 1848*. New York: Brandywine Press, 1995.
- Biester, Charlotte. "Catharine Beecher's Views of Home Economics." *History of Education Journal* 3 (Spring, 1952): 88-91.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Review* 11 (Autumn, 1992): 50-58.
- Bode, Frederick A. "The Formation of Evangelical Communities in Middle Georgia: Twiggs County, 1820-1861." *The Journal of Southern History* 60 (November, 1994): 711-748.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Common Sphere: White Evangelicals and Gender in Antebellum Georgia". *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Winter 1995): 775-809.
- Boydston, Jean. *The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Women's Sphere*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Boylan, Anne M. "Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls." *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (Autumn, 1990): 363-382.
- Breen, Patrick. "The Female Antislavery Petition Campaign of 1831-1832." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 110 (2002): 377-398.
- Brown, Gillian. "Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in Uncle Tom's Cabin." *American Quarterly* 36 (Autumn, 1984): 503-523.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Brown, Herbert Ross. *The Sentimental Novel in America 1789-1860*. New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1959.
- Carroll, Berenice A., ed. *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.
- Carwadine, Richard. *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Caskey, Marie. *Chariot of Fire: Religion and the Beecher Family*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.
- Ceplair, Larry, ed. *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.



- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to *The Public Years of Sarah and Angelina Grimké: Selected Writings, 1835-1839*. Larry Ceplair, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Clinton, Catherine. *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "In Search of Southern Women's History: The Current State of Academic Publishing." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 1992): 420-427.
- Conrad, Susan Phinney. *Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1785-1835*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Day, Karen. "From Dependency to Self-Reliance: The Phenomenology of Feminism in Augusta Evans Wilson's *Beulah*." *Mount Olive Review: A Sociological/Historical Perspective* 8 (Winter/Spring 1995/96): 56-62.
- Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. New York: Avon, 1978.
- DuBois, Ellen Carol. *Feminism and Suffrage: the Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
- Dubois, Ellen Carol, Mari Jo Buhle, Temma Kaplan, Gerda Lerner, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg. "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium" *Feminist Studies* 6 (Spring, 1980): 26-64.
- Duvall, Severn. "Uncle Tom's Cabin: The Sinister Side of Patriarchy." *The New England Quarterly* 36 (March, 1963): 3-22.
- Eacker, Susan A. "A Dangerous Inmate of the South: Louisa McCord on Gender and Slavery." In *Southern Writers and Their Worlds*. Introduction by Michael O'Brien. eds. Christopher Morris and Steven Reinhardt. Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1996: 27-40.
- Epstein, Barbara Leslie. *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981.

- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. ed. and introduction to *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Creation of Confederate Nationalism in the Civil War South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Note on Augusta Jane Evans" in *Macaria or, Altars of Sacrifice*, by Augusta Jane Evans. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992: ix-xi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to *Macaria or, Altars of Sacrifice*, by Augusta Jane Evans. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992: xiii-xxix.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Fetterley, Judith, ed. *Provisions: A Reader From 19th-Century American Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Fidler, William Perry. "Augusta Evans Wilson As Confederate Propagandist." *The Alabama Review* 2 (January, 1949): 32-44.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Augusta Evans Wilson, 1835-1909, A Biography*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1951.
- Fought, Leigh. *Southern Womanhood and Slavery: A Biography of Louisa S. McCord, 1810-1879*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003.
- Fox Genovese, Elizabeth and Eugene D. Genovese. "The Divine Sanction of the Social Order: Religious Foundations of Southern Slaveholders' World View." *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 55 (Summer, 1987): 211-233.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Between Individualism and Fragmentation: American Culture and the New Literary Studies of Race and Gender." *American Quarterly* 42 (March, 1990): 7-34.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Note on Augusta Jane Evans" in *Beulah*, by Augusta Jane Evans. New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992: ix-x.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to *Beulah*, by Augusta Jane Evans. New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992: xi-xxxvi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *To Be Worthy of God's Favor: Southern Women's Defense and Critique of Slavery*. Gettysburg College: 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Southern Mothers: Fact and Fiction in Southern Women's Writing*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth, and Susan Mosher Stuard, eds. *Restoring Women to history: Materials for Western Civilization I*. Bloomington: Organization of American Historians, 1983.
- Friedman, Jean E. *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Friedman, Jean E., William Shade, and Mary Jane Capozzoli, eds. *Our American Sisters: Women in American Life and Thought*. Fourth edition. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1987.
- Friedman, Lawrence J. *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Genovese, Eugene D. *The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.
- Ginzberg, Lori D. *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class In the Nineteenth Century United States*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Hamand, Wendy F. "'No Voice from England': Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Lincoln, and the British in the Civil War." *The New England Quarterly* 61 (Mar. 1988): 3-24.
- Harris, Susan K. "But Is It Any Good?: Evaluating Nineteenth-Century American Women's Fiction." In *The (Other) American Tradition: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*. ed. Joyce W. Warren. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Hedrick, Joan. *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Hedrick, Joan D., ed. and introduction to *The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Henry, Katherine. "Angelina Grimké's Rhetoric of Exposure." *American Quarterly* 49 (1997): 328-355.
- Hershberger, Mary. "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s." *The Journal of American History* 86 (Jun., 1999): 15-40.
- Hewitt, Nancy A. *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Homans, Margaret. *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Jeffrey, Julie Roy. *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Jordan-Lake, Joy. *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005.
- Jones, Anne Goodwyn. *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- Juster, Susan. *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Kelley, Mary. *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Kerber, Linda. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*. Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Kerber, Linda, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. *U.S. History as Women's History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
- Kraditor, Aileen S., ed. and introduction to *Up From the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

- Lauter, Paul. "Teaching Nineteenth-Century Women Writers." In *The (Other) American Tradition: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*. ed. Joyce W. Warren. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Lebsock, Suzanne. *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984.
- Lebsock, Suzanne. "Review Essay: Complicity and Contention: Women in the Plantation South." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75 (Spring 1990): 59-83.
- Lerner, Gerda. "The Grimké Sisters and the Struggle Against Race Prejudice." *The Journal of Negro History* 48 (October, 1963): 277-291.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*. London: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women and History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Grimké Sisters From South Carolina: Pioneers Rights and Abolition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Lounsbury, Richard C. Preface to *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: xi-xiii.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Chronology." In *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 12-35.
- Lumpkin, Katharine DuPre. *The Emancipation of Angelina Grimké*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974.
- Massey, Mary Elizabeth. "The Making of a Feminist." *The Journal of Southern History* 39 (February, 1973): 3-22.
- Matthews, Barbara. "Women, Education and History." *Theory and Practice* 15, Democracy in Education (Feb., 1976): 47-53.
- McCurry, Stephanie. "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina." *The Journal of American History* 78 (March, 1992): 1245-1264.

- McFadden, Margaret. *Golden Cables of Sympathy: the Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth Century Feminism*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999.
- McMillan, Marvin Cook. *The Alabama Confederate Reader*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992.
- Morris, Christopher, Susan A. Eacker, Anne Goodwyn Jones, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, and Charles Joyner. *Southern Writers and Their Worlds*. Introduction by Michael O'Brien. eds. Christopher Morris and Steven Reinhardt. Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1996.
- Moss, Elizabeth. *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
- Newbury, Michael. *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- O'Brien, Michael. *All Clever Men Who Make Their Way: Critical Discourse in the Old South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to *Louisa S. McCord: Political and Social Essays*, ed. Richard C. Lounsbury. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995: 1-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810 – 1860*. 2 vols. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. "Of Lily, Linda Brent, and Freud: A Non-Exceptionalist Approach to Race, Class, and Gender in the Slave South." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 1992): 241-259.
- Perry, Carolyn, and Mary Louise Weaks. *The History of Southern Women's Literature*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.
- Portnoy, Alisse Theodore. "Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard": Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829-1831." *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Winter, 2003): 573-610.
- Rable, George C. *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Romero, Lora. *Home Fronts: Domesticity and its Critics in the Antebellum United States*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

- Ryan, Mary P. *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing about Domesticity 1830-1860*. The Women and History Series, no 2/3. New York: Hawthorne Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Scott, Anne Firor. *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy in the 1850s." *The Journal of American History* 61 (Jun., 1974): 52-64.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction in *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 1992): 237-240.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Gender and the Politics of History*. Revised edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Sexton, Rebecca Grant, ed. *A Southern Woman of Letters: The Correspondence of Augusta Jane Evans Wilson*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Selected Bibliography in *Women's Rights Emerges Within the Antislavery Movement 1830-1870: A Brief History*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000: 207-209.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Caroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.
- Stewart, James Brewer. *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*. (1976) Revised Edition, New York: Hill and Wang, 1997.
- Thorp, Margaret Farrand. *Female Persuasion: Six Strong Minded Women*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1971.
- Tindall, George Brown and David E. Shi. *America: A Narrative History*. Fifth Edition, vol. 1. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.
- Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

- Varon, Elizabeth R. *We mean to be counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Walters, Ronald G. *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Walters, Ronald G. "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the American Reform Tradition." In *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*. ed. Cindy Weinstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 171-189.
- Warren, Joyce W. ed. *The (Other) American Tradition: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction: Canons and Canon Fodder" in *The (Other) American Tradition: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*. ed. Joyce W. Warren. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Weinstein, Cindy ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Welter, Barbara. *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860*. *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer, 1966): 151-174.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dimity Convictions: the American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976.
- Wilson, Forrest. *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life Of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (1941). Westport: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972.
- Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Yellin, Jean Fagan. *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Young, Louise M. "Women's Place in American Politics: The Historical Perspective." *The Journal of Politics* 38, 200 Years of the Republic in Retrospect: A Special Bicentennial Issue (Aug., 1976): 295-335.