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# Nineteenth-century Virginia female institutes, 1850-1890 : an analysis of the effect of education on social life

Jennifer Harrison

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ABSTRACT

NINETEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA FEMALE INSTITUTES, 1850-1890:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EDUCATION ON SOCIAL LIFE

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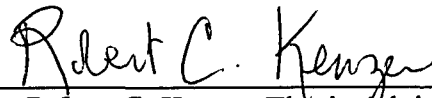
MAY 2000

PROFESSOR ROBERT C. KENZER

Until recently, serious study of women's education has been neglected, and studies of the educational systems of the South have lagged behind those of similar institutions in the North. This thesis examines female educational institutions in the South during the period 1850-1890, focusing specifically on four schools in Virginia: the Buckingham Female Institute in Buckingham County, the Southern Female Institute in Richmond, the Lynchburg Female Seminary in Lynchburg, and the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton. Using support from diaries, letters, and autograph books, mainly kept by the elite and upper middle class students who attended these schools, this study attempts to determine the effect of a woman's education on her social interactions, specifically her matrimonial prospects. This thesis concludes that many Virginia women actively sought an education, regardless of the societal restraints of marriage and family. These young women believed that an education enhanced marriage prospects, and through the formation of a female culture, were able to exert the beginnings of change in Southern society.

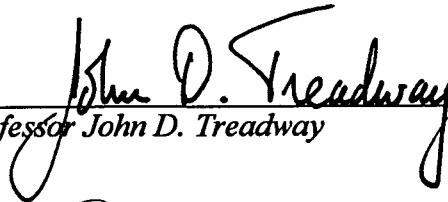
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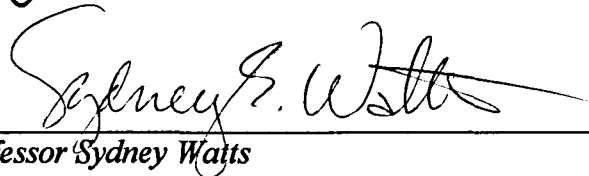
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NINETEENTH-CENTURY VIRGINIA FEMALE INSTITUTES, 1850-1890:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EDUCATION ON SOCIAL LIFE

By

JENNIFER HARRISON

B.A., Virginia Wesleyan College, 1997

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## INTRODUCTION

In the antebellum and immediate postbellum nineteenth-century South, debates raged concerning the need for women's education. As Christie Anne Farnham notes in The Education of the Southern Belle, "education is power,"<sup>1</sup> but the question ultimately centered on the matter of power for whom? Women may have been legal citizens, but they were hardly considered political beings. Consequently, gender, previously an economic and political barrier, became a distinguishing factor in the education of the sexes. Women were granted few roles in society beyond the domestic sphere. Not only is this a question of both the scope and scale of power, but also of where the power for education resides. Additionally, as Mary Kelley observes in her groundbreaking work on nineteenth-century literary domesticity, Private Woman, Public Stage, "the female person was subject to male hegemony and the female destiny was bound by the domestic sphere...."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the educational system in the South acquired its own unique character, and inculcated the ideology of separate spheres in its institutions. The inculcation of ideologies continued mainly in the South, thereby granting the South its individuality. In terms of culture, the North and the South were two separate entities. Education systems in the North forged onward into the development of the woman as

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<sup>1</sup>Christie Anne Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Mary Kelley, Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 60-65.

more than a secondary being, while their Southern counterparts continued to evoke ideals of domesticity. Comparable education systems in the North, however, were entirely different. Like their Southern counterparts, Northern educators wanted to offer their female students the best education possible, including training for the ideals of republican motherhood. However, they also wished to take women out of the world of tradition and “[turn] them into nineteenth-century individuals,” thereby allowing them to enter the public sphere. Education was a means of breaking free from the status quo, not maintaining it.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of separate spheres, with man in the public domain and woman in the privacy of the home, began to evolve by the 1820’s. The home was the perfect haven for women because it was the place where they could seek refuge from the competitive sphere reserved for men. Consequently, educational curriculums in the South included instruction in the liberal arts as well as etiquette and the domestic arts.<sup>4</sup> Secondary education in the South did not affect the status quo,<sup>5</sup> which relied on conventional gender ideology. Consequently, it did not pose a threat to the Southern way of life. Students did

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<sup>3</sup>Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women’s Colleges from their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930’s (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 11-17. See also Barbara Miller Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 12, 21.

<sup>4</sup>Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 38.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth R. Varon, We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 9.



not expect to enter professions, such as teaching, but rather, to maintain class distinctions within their communities.

Although education for Southern women did not change the status quo, and women remained subordinate, one cannot entirely blame the patriarchal system for maintaining the separation of spheres. The shifting gender ideologies in the South in the wake of the Revolutionary War and consequently, the pre-Civil War era, excluded women from the political realm. Where they once had access to certain public roles in the Revolutionary era, the development of new republican ideologies included white males at the expense of white females, as well as those of other races, both male and female. In this antebellum era, the emphasis on piety and evangelicalism exerted new pressures on domesticity as the focus of virtue and piety. Women once again became dependents, and their presence in the public realm decreased. In the trade-off between the public and private realms, women gained a new opportunity in their education, one which specifically allowed them to test the boundaries of the private sphere. Yet, despite their increased efforts to receive an education, the education systems in the South continued to preserve the status quo throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

In order to understand how education in the South preserved the status quo, this study considers the approaches to education pursued at four female seminaries in Virginia. By analyzing the diaries, autograph books, and letters of students and faculty at

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<sup>6</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-30. In this study, the South is defined as the areas of the Eastern seaboard from Virginia to, and including, Georgia. See Varon also for further information regarding gender ideology in this region of the South.

the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham County, the Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville, the Southern Female Institute in Richmond, the Lynchburg Female Academy in Lynchburg, and the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton, Virginia, this thesis provides a link between women's intellectual lives and their perceptions on family, domesticity, and marriage.<sup>7</sup> Education in the Upper South, including Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, differed dramatically from its counterpart in the North, and even in the Lower South. The Upper South, more urbanized than the Lower South, began to develop a white middle class; but, unlike the

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<sup>7</sup>The Albemarle Female Institute, founded in 1858 by the Baptist Church, quickly expanded, growing from 47 students in 1875 to 61 in 1883. The Southern Female Institute, founded by the Episcopal Church in 1852, closed in 1879 due to a declining enrollment. This should not be confused with the Richmond Female Institute, the precursor of Westhampton College, and eventually the University of Richmond. For more information regarding the latter, see Virginius Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1976), 147. For more information on the Southern Female Institute, see Margaret Meagher, History of Education in Richmond (Richmond, 1939). The Virginia Female Institute, founded in 1843, prospered until it closed in 1939. From 1870 to 1886, 70 to 200 pupils were enrolled each session, with 10 to 17 instructors on staff, and in 1880, Mrs. J. E. B. Stuart, widow of General J.E.B. Stuart, took over as principal. For more description of these and other female seminaries in Virginia, see Raymond Bowman, "Secondary Education in Virginia, 1870-1886" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1938). The Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute opened on 3 May 1837, with space for approximately 120 students, but closed in 1863 due to declining enrollment. Therefore, comments regarding this school are only used peripherally in reference to the cult of true womanhood and female friendship. Refer to William M.E. Rachal, "Virginia's First College for Women: The Female Collegiate Institute in Buckingham County," Virginia Calvacade 2 (Summer 1952): 44-47.

North, its social and economic systems were firmly based in slavery.<sup>8</sup> One

commencement speaker of the antebellum period commented,

A healthful and symmetrical development demands a culture of the heart, no less than a culture of the intellect. The affections and emotions of the one give as truly as the faculties and power of the other, [and] expanding under their own innate energies, need to be trained, disciplined, and directed, receiving requirements of personal and social duty.<sup>9</sup>

What is most crucial, as Steven M. Stowe argues, is understanding how a girl's schooling affected a female's choices in life, from the selection of a spouse to the full range of choices as a housekeeper, thereby fulfilling her domestic role.<sup>10</sup> There is a direct correlation, I argue, between the stated purposes of female seminaries, such as that of the Virginia Female Institute, to educate students in "the womanly traits for which the Southern woman has always been distinguished,"<sup>11</sup> and the suitability of the educated female for domestic life. By listening to the voices of these young women, it is possible to see education as more than schooling, and more specifically, as the combined

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<sup>8</sup>Mary Carroll Johansen, "'Female Instruction and Improvement': Education for Women in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, 1785-1835" (Ph.D. diss., The College of William and Mary, 1996), 7-8.

<sup>9</sup>Anonymous, "Commencement Address," [ca. 1856-1860], Special Collections, Duke University. It is possible that this address was delivered at Judson Female College in Marion, Alabama, since there are two references throughout the address to the Judson Female Institute and the Georgia Female College in Macon, Georgia, the first female college in the country, founded in 1839.

<sup>10</sup>Steven M. Stowe, "The Not-So-Cloistered Academy: Elite Women's Education and Family Feeling in the Old South," in The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education, eds. Walter J. Fraser Jr., R. Frank Saunders Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 90.

<sup>11</sup>Mrs. I. Blandin, History of Higher Education of Women in the South Prior to 1860 (Washington: Zenger Publishing Company, 1975), 314.

experiences of friendship, training in the domestic and liberal arts, and preparation for marriage. This study demonstrates that secondary education for women in the South, while not intended to impart instruction for the training of future teachers, was conveyed as a different type of education, namely, a provision for a sense of self-worth. Secondary education for women in the South, specifically at the four private female institutes discussed in this thesis, was their equivalent of higher education. A college education for young Southern women was almost nonexistent until the latter years of the nineteenth century, so the secondary training they received was where their education stopped and their life as domestic portals began.

The role of written expression, particularly autograph books, diaries, and letters, demonstrates a burgeoning sense of self-worth; and consequently, I contend that education in the South promoted independent thinking. Although the education system in the South did little to remove women from their place in the private sphere, it at least opened up a world of promise and unleashed a power of a different kind from that exerted by men in the public realm. As Sarah Josepha Hale asserts in Manners, “feminine power is not coercive, but persuasive,” and women’s spiritual power was much more important since “moral influence is superior to mechanical invention.... Power is most effective when moving the will through the heart...”<sup>12</sup> As a result, education in the South prepared women for the domestic sphere, while simultaneously giving women them the ability to be productive members of society, and allowing them to discover, according to

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<sup>12</sup>Sarah Josepha Hale, Manners, or, Happy Homes and Good Society All the Year Round (Boston: J. E. Tilton and Company, 1868), 358.

Stowe, “the emotions, obligations, and ideals with which to create the particulars of womanhood for herself.”<sup>13</sup> My focus is specifically on white women of the upper and emerging middle classes in the Upper South, for it was they who were the first to attend female seminaries. Their initiative in forging the path toward breaking the gap between public and private spheres created a new lifeline for Southern women, one that would later be joined by less affluent students, both black and white. The four schools presented in this thesis represent a microcosm of the typical Southern female institute, but as a group, they stood out for the innovations in teaching and teaching.

In her article “Historians Construct the Southern Woman,” Anne Firor Scott observes that human stories not only respond to important human needs, but also reveal “our unconscious selves,” including the mythic images of the Southern past. Perhaps most recognizable of these images is that of the Southern Belle.<sup>14</sup> This beautifully-

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<sup>13</sup>Stowe, 103.

<sup>14</sup> Anne Firor Scott, “Historians Construct the Southern Woman,” in Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South, ed. Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila L. Skemp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 95. For information on the Southern belle stereotype, see Farnham, 128, and Joan E. Cashin, ed., Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3. Mary Carroll Johansen’s doctoral dissertation on education for women in the Upper South describes the stereotypes of the Southern belle and lady. See Johansen, 14 and, for additional explanation, 94-95. For further information about women’s work in the South, see Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon, 1982). See also Julia Cherry Spruill, Women’s Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1938), especially pages 20-84. For a more recent commentary, see Marli F. Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), particularly pages 23-50. Although this is a study of women in South Carolina, chapter two, entitled “The Work Lives of Plantation Mistresses,” accurately captures the regional drudgery of life as domestic head of the household.

groomed young woman, surrounded by many suitors, was jealous of other women since they were possible rivals. She has nothing but leisure time, and this image fades into that of the “Southern lady,” the older, more mature, and well-mannered devoted mother and wife. Southern ladies were supposed to be deferential to men, and dependent upon male guidance and protection. These, however, are nothing but stereotypes; the belle and the lady most certainly did exist, but the more accurate image is that of the hardworking woman often responsible for running a large household and minding the children. The actual percentages of women of leisure are insignificant, since most women were occupied in unpaid labor in the home. As the nineteenth century progressed, it was more than likely that a woman was the product of a female seminary, and possibly privately uneasy about the gender inequities of the society in which she lived. It is for this reason that this thesis concentrates on the years 1850 to 1890, including the latter part of the antebellum period, and the immediate postbellum period. The years between 1790 and 1850 witnessed an upsurge in support for the female education movement, and by 1850, the fruition from these early efforts had begun to take effect.

In the introduction to the 1853 catalog of the Southern Female Institute, the principal, D. Lee Powell, attempted to explain the need for education for women in the South.

Several years ago, when the attention of Southern men was forcibly directed to the importance of training the youth of the South... [and] in view of the fact, that even then a large number of Southern young ladies were in the North to complete their education, the Southern Female Institute was organized in the town of Fredericksburg, and modelled... after the plan of the University of Virginia. It

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was designed to afford young ladies ample facilities for acquiring a thorough collegiate education. The prejudice that there exists a wide difference between the mental constitution of the two sexes, which awards to man an undue superiority, has too long been the basis of those systems of female education, which only recognize the necessity of imparting a superficial polish to the mind of woman, and demand no higher mental exercise than that which is essential to the acquisition of what is technically termed the accomplishments. The age demands that woman should be taught to think, and adequate means of education should be provided for her.

Powell's progressive thinking may not have been matched by the proprietors of all schools for women in the South during the forty-year period from 1850-90, but the *intent* to provide programs for higher learning is the same.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, much of Southern history tends to "self-divide" at the Civil War, and as Scott writes, "Whether this kind of periodization has an internal logic for women's history will depend upon what we have yet to learn about the actual experience of women in the immediate post-war years." In The Southern Lady, she further contends that the South disintegrated between 1861 and 1865, and it would take years to resolve the problems the Civil War had created.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, this accounts for my interest in the education systems in the South, particularly in Virginia, just prior to the Civil War, and

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<sup>15</sup>"Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute, Late of Fredericksburg, Now of Richmond, Virginia, 1853" (Richmond: H. K. Ellyson, 1853), 5-6, Special Collections, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

<sup>16</sup>Barbara Solomon includes information about the antebellum period in her work, and it is from her study that I determined the period that I would cover for this thesis. See Barbara Miller Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 14. For information about the Civil War as the crucial point of change in the South, see Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830 – 1930 (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1970; reprint, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), xi.

specifically in its aftermath. Education in the South had always cultivated the differences between the sexes, and educational reform movement was an attempt to close that gap. While the movement in the North has received more attention, the seminary movement in the South, specifically in Virginia, led to a proliferation of schools. For example, between 1870 and 1886, there were approximately 331 schools in operation in the region.<sup>17</sup> This may have been a miracle for the South because federal records demonstrated that in 1850 the Southern states had an illiteracy ratio among the white population of 20.3 percent, compared to 3.0 percent in the Middle States, and .42 percent in New England.<sup>18</sup> The debate over whether or not the South that emerged from the aftermath of the Civil War was different has been characterized as the “war-as-watershed” thesis. *Whether or not the Civil War opened new pathways for women is still in contention.* Margaret Ripley Wolfe claims that “events of that era did not produce a total transformation of either American or southern society.”<sup>19</sup> Regardless of one’s slant

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<sup>17</sup>Shirley Ann Hickson, “The Development of Higher Education for Women in the Antebellum South” (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1985), 4-16. For information specifically on Virginia, see Raymond Bowman, “Secondary Education in Virginia, 1870-1886” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1938), 1-5.

<sup>18</sup>Watt L. Black, “Education in the South from 1820 to 1860 with emphasis on the growth of teacher education,” *Louisiana Studies* 12 (1973): 617. Black cites a statement by J. D. DeBow, Superintendent of the federal census in 1850, and he himself states that “there seems to be little doubt that the South, when compared with other geographic areas of the United States, made little progress in the field of education before the Civil War.”

<sup>19</sup>Suzanne Lebsack, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), 239-240. For more discussion of the “war-as-watershed” concept, see Farnham, 180-181, who argues that the South remained devoted to the concept of the female seminaries, but at least until after the end of Reconstruction, remained “wedded to the old forms.” See also



on the “war-as-watershed” thesis, female seminaries flourished in Virginia during the years 1850 to 1890, and by the latter part of this forty-year period, co-education was becoming more of an accepted ideal, and no longer just a vision. Consequently, female seminaries seemed to lose their importance, therefore accounting for the concluding dates of this study.

This thesis focuses primarily on private institutions for young Southern women, and intentionally on schools in Virginia. Each of these four schools is notable in that each encouraged a brand of independent thinking in conjunction with the emphasis on the cultivation of the ideals of domesticity inherent in the Southern educational system. This central unifying factor may not have created young women entirely prepared to enter the public realm, but the system at least made them aware of the possibilities.

## CHAPTER I

### The Evolution of Southern Female Institutions

It is crucial to recognize the importance of the emphasis on female education in Virginia, and the designation of terminology is crucial for this understanding. The term “academy” was not generally used for female secondary schools; rather, the terms “seminary,” “institute,” or “school for young ladies” were more frequently used. The schools’ founders also carefully used these terms in order to distinguish them from male colleges.<sup>1</sup> Most schools preferred not to admit students under the age of fourteen, but occasionally adjusted their admissions criteria to admit students as young as twelve. In addition, all students had to be of good moral character.<sup>2</sup> Financial support came not only in the form of tuition fees, but also from supplementary private donations or subscriptions. Churches also provided funding, since state legislatures were unwilling to provide support for female institutions. The seminaries were usually run by a board of trustees, who often had to rely on fundraising drives, typically led by an agent hired by the trustees for a salary or a percentage of the money he raised. In order to gain support

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<sup>1</sup>Bowman, 15. See also Anne Firor Scott, “The Ever-Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822-1872,” in The Social History of American Education, ed. B. Edward McClellan and William J. Reese (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1988), 141. For more information on the refusal to use the terminology of “college,” see Arthur Cole, A Hundred Years of Mount Holyoke College: The Evolution of an Educational Ideal (New Haven: New York University Press, 1940), 8-10. The founders of female seminaries wished to avoid any association with male colleges and the idea that young female pupils could be qualified for roles deemed specifically masculine.

<sup>2</sup> Johansen, 222-226; Hickson, 132-134.

for a seminary, the trustees would stage public lectures, and their speeches, infused with a combination of Christian piety and the ideology of separate spheres, were often instrumental in garnering public support. Women's institutions, some of which were not initially tuition-based, were forced to rely on tuition as a source of income; women often paid four times as much as their male counterparts, whose schools received state funding.<sup>3</sup> Tuition fees ranged from \$175 to as much as \$500 per year. The typical school year usually ran from September to June. Because of the many extra costs involved, these seminaries were usually intended for the elite and upper-middle class. For example, the father of Ruth Hairston Early, a student at Lynchburg Female Seminary, paid \$481.42 for his daughter's final year of schooling. Included in this figure were the costs for room and board, which for the year of 1864 totaled \$141.25, along with incidental costs for instruction in music or the Romance languages, usually French. Textbooks ranged in price from ten cents for Davies' Arithmetic to \$2.50 for Brown's Philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Various subject areas could also range in cost. For example, G.W. Carlyle

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<sup>3</sup>Bowman, 15; Hickson, 57-66. For a more detailed discussion of fundraising efforts, see Farnham, 55-60. Farnham notes that these speakers often furthered the ideal of the "Southern Belle," and consequently, the gendered notions in the Southern system of education.

<sup>4</sup>For a brief discussion of the range of tuition costs, see Farnham, 121. See also Section 9, Early Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. The father of Ruth Hairston Early, Samuel Henry Early, also had to pay for his daughter Henrian Cabell Early at the same institution, the Lynchburg Female Seminary. It is interesting to note the increase in tuition costs from 1862, when Ruth began her studies at the seminary, to 1864, when she left. The price of ¼ tuition in English instruction had increased from \$10 in 1862 to \$40 as of 1 February 1864. The price of ¼ tuition in Latin and French had doubled from \$10 to \$20 from September 1862 to February 1864. However, this could most likely be explained by wartime inflation. For examples of the cost of textbooks, see the Elcan Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. These papers contain the correspondence of

Whiting could expect to pay \$17 for a quarter session of music instruction for his daughter at the Alexandria Female Seminary in 1855, while French lessons could cost \$5 for the same session. Other incidental costs could include rent for a pew in the local church for practicing music, which for the quarter session could cost \$1.13. Similarly, Benjamin C. Yancey could expect to pay \$30 apiece if he wished his daughter Mary Lou to take piano, organ, guitar, or vocal music. The use of the piano would cost an extra \$5, and incidental costs would include the extra charge of \$2 per month for washing of clothing. These incidental charges, including extra fuel, lights, and washing, could add as much as \$20 to \$30 to the costs of tuition and board. Needless to say, with all of the incidental expenses, sending one's daughter to school was hardly cheap, but parents viewed the education of their daughters as an investment for their child's future. If they were to be honorable and pious wives and mothers, they needed to have a sound education, and according to the above costs, one that appeared to stress the fine arts over the academic.<sup>5</sup>

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Daniel Lee Powell in regard to the education of his daughter, Mary Elcan (Grigg) at the Southern Female Institute. See also Jimmie A. Blanton, "Receipt for Board and Tuition at the Southern Female Institute," 1869, Robert Garland Civil War and Reconstruction Collection, 1861-1879, Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virginia.

<sup>5</sup>G.W. Carlyle Whiting to James S. Hallowell, 1855, Section 21, DeButts Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. These papers include the correspondence of G.W. Carlyle Whiting to James S. Hallowell of the Alexandria Female Seminary regarding the education of his daughter Julia. See also Folder 46, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The catalogue of the Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville broke down the costs for a typical school year in "Catalogue of the Albemarle Female Institute Near Charlottesville, VA – Session 1865-66," (Richmond: Gary and Clemmitt, Printers, 1866), 13, Special Collections, University of Virginia. See Appendix B for a sample expense sheet for the typical Virginia female seminary.

In order to balance funding, churches, particularly the Methodists and Baptist, often established many seminaries. In the case of the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton, initial start-up costs were almost too much of a burden; the cost for the lot and the buildings exceeded the original estimates of costs, and the Institute was forced to charge tuition.<sup>6</sup> In a letter to the Reverend George Junkin Ramsey, founder of the Lynchburg Female Seminary, dated 12 June 1869, the members of his congregation approved the construction of the school.

At a meeting of the members of the church and congregation of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, on motion of Thomas J. Kirkpatrick it was Resolved unanimously that in the opinion of this church and congregation it is desirable that a female Presbyterian school should be, at once, established in Lynchburg, at the house adjoining the church, under the supervision and control of the pastor [George Junkin Ramsey]....<sup>7</sup>

The next pressing problem for the trustees was the procurement of a president and faculty “of sufficient reputation to insure success.” It is interesting to note, however, that the public did not perceive the head of female institutions as any less credible because he (or she) ran a female institute over a male college. Shirley Ann Hickson claims that

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<sup>6</sup>Black, 619. See also Blandin, 312-325.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas J. Kirkpatrick to George Junkin Ramsey, 12 June 1869, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. In a previous letter, this time written by George Ramsey to his wife Sabra on 15 June 1855, he wrote, “In regard to our proposed academy here – I have entirely failed to see my hopes realized.... I speak of the effort made to put up suitable buildings. There are several hundred dollars yet to be collected for the parsonage – which will cost about \$1400, and in our little congregation that is no small sum.... To receive pupils from abroad – in various degrees of advancement – would require far more than I could give....” This letter, written almost fifteen years before the founding of the Lynchburg Female Seminary, demonstrates the great degree of commitment to this project on the part of the Ramseys.

women's institutions were more likely to have a larger faculty, and their discipline problems were considerably smaller. She observes that "faculty members were expected to be the primary enforcers of school rules, and at most they were the primary rule makers, chaperon[sic], counselors, and planners of social activities, and disciplinarians." Such responsibilities required a female presence on campus, and even though both men and women could teach classes, women were needed as role models and supervisors for the students outside of the classroom. Women were needed to make nightly room checks, a duty men could not conduct. Female teachers could be paid as much as two-thirds less than men, so if male teachers earned a salary of \$300 a month, their female counterparts might only earn \$100 for the same amount of work. Shirley Hickson argues that this may have been further incentive for the female seminaries to hire women faculty. The resulting faculty often included a mixture of men and women, with the ratio of women to men ranging anywhere from ten to three, to as high as twelve to one.<sup>8</sup>

Men, however, occupied the positions of power, such as full professors or principals, while women were the assistant teachers. Even though female teachers were economically advantageous, there was a tendency either to relegate them to lower positions or encourage them to work in primary, rather than secondary, schools. This

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<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth Patton Hollow, "Development of the Brownsville Baptist Female College: An Example of Female Education in the South, 1850-1910," The West Tennessee Historical Society Papers 32 (1978), 50-51. See also Hickson, 107-114 and Johansen, 134, and the latter deals more specifically with the salary discrepancy. For more information on the wage discrepancy, see Dorothy Ann Gay, "The Tangled Skein of Romanticism and Violence in the Old South: The Southern Response to Abolitionism and Feminism, 1830-1861," (Ph.D. diss., Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1975), 56.

choice suggests that the predominant thought may have been that women were more adept at communicating with young children. Furthermore, as Mary Carroll Johansen writes, “it is ironic that these assertive women were to teach young girls to be southern ladies.”<sup>9</sup>

The curriculum, covering a three-or-four-year period, included courses in English, arithmetic, modern languages, mental and moral philosophy, Greek, Latin, history, natural science, and elocution, as well as instruction on life as a Southern lady. There was no standard curriculum, and schools were free to instruct as they wished. The study of history, for example, could deal with such specifics as the history of Greece, Rome, France, or Great Britain, or it could focus on a broader spectrum of ancient, modern, or “universal” history. Women’s institutions, Shirley Ann Hickson explains, were instrumental in giving the study of United States history a place in the curriculums of higher education.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, some seminaries began to offer instruction in rhetoric, traditionally a male-oriented field, and therefore, part of the public sphere. With its emphasis on

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<sup>9</sup>Lebsock, 172-77; Johansen, 18. See also Keith E. Melder, “Woman’s High Calling: The Teaching Profession in America, 1830-1860,” American Studies 13 (1972), 24. Melder goes on to mention that many of the so-called “militant” feminist reformers of the nineteenth century had once been schoolteachers; see Melder, 29. For a sample of women occupied as teachers in one county, Buckingham County, in 1860, refer to Appendix D.

<sup>10</sup>Mabel Louise Robinson, “The Curriculum of the Woman’s College,” Monthly Record of Current Educational Publications (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918). Although this article describes women’s colleges at the turn of the century, Robinson makes a clear case for the static nature of the curriculum of women’s colleges from 1850 to the turn of the century. See also Johansen, 37-40 and Hickson, 142-145.

composition, reading, grammar, and speech, the study of rhetoric arose out of a strictly masculine heritage. The girls' compositions, with titles such as "To Die and Be Forgotten," "Talent Compared to Virtue," "The Uncertainty of Earthly Things," and "The Value of early Rising," revealed a preference for religious topics, thereby espousing the pious role of women that society expected. This preference for all things pious has led historians to conceive separate spheres to delineate the differing roles played by nineteenth-century men and women. The male sphere was one based on the political realm; while the female was enveloped in a shroud of piety. In education this concept of separate spheres kept women's study of rhetoric from becoming one based on politics, or one consistent with similar virtues in the male sphere.<sup>11</sup> Since women were expected to fulfill a different role in society than men, Hickson identifies four crucial assumptions about female education: (1) Antebellum educators intended that Christian principles would govern every facet of institutional life; (2) the youthful age of these students meant that they needed careful protection and guidance; (3) a family atmosphere was needed at these institutions since women were expected to be the guiding forces in families, so they needed role models in school similar to what they would have at home; and (4) disciplinary action should be used whenever needed, but should not include violence or harsh words. These assumptions emphasized the relationship between Christian piety and education. Woman, in fact, was "God's special agent," His guardian of the home, or

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<sup>11</sup>LeeAnna Michelle Lawrence, "The Teaching of Rhetoric and Composition in Nineteenth-Century Women's Colleges," (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1990). See pages 3-5 for a discussion of rhetoric as a male-oriented field, and page 34 for a discussion of compositions written by students at female seminaries.



the earthly temple to heaven.<sup>12</sup> Hickson's four assumptions specifically apply to the focus on the four Southern female institutes discussed in this thesis. The style of teaching at these female seminaries varied, but a general focus was on requiring students to comprehend, rather than merely memorize, and many textbooks included questions at the bottom of the page designed to direct the student's attention to the main points of the passage. Textbooks in use varied from school to school, but some of the more common ones were Colburn's Arithmetic and its Applications; Lockyer's Astronomy; and Collier's English Literature.<sup>13</sup> Although these texts hardly evidenced Christian piety, classes taught in moral philosophy focused on the reinforcement of Christian principles. In the 1866-67 catalogue of the Southern Female Institute, the principal, D. Lee Powell, noted that "the Course of Instruction has been arranged with reference to the harmonious development of the mental faculties." The 1869-70 catalogue of the same institute included a provisional statement that "a portion of every Sunday is employed in the study of the Bible, its History and Literature, and the Evidences of Christianity."<sup>14</sup> Students at

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1880," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d edition, Michael Gordon, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 320-321. Welter provides further explanation of the cult of true womanhood and the importance of Christian piety in Southern education.

<sup>13</sup>For more discussion on the curriculum of female seminaries, see Hickson, 153-154. For a discussion of the style of teaching, consult Hickson, 203. For more information on the types of textbooks used, see Bowman, 847-862. For a more general listing of textbooks, see the "Thirty-Ninth Annual Catalogue of Wheaton Female Seminary – Norton, Massachusetts, for the year ending July 1874," (Norton, Massachusetts, 1874), 20-21.

<sup>14</sup>"Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute, Richmond, Virginia, Session 1866-1867," (Richmond: H. Wynne, Printer, 1867), 4, Library of Virginia. For the comments

each of these four institutes were kept on a strict schedule, which included rising at the sound of the morning bell, usually somewhere between 5 and 6 a.m., dress, and then head to chapel for morning prayers before breakfast. In order to cultivate the pious woman who would soon be responsible for instilling the moral tenets to her own household, careful observance of religion was important. A daily schedule was crucial to the functioning of any female seminary.<sup>15</sup>

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on the study of the Bible, refer to the “Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute, Richmond, Virginia, Session 1869-70,” (Richmond: Fergusson and Rady, Printers, 1870), 5, Library of Virginia.

<sup>15</sup>Hickson, 160-61. See also Johansen, 217 and Bowman, 17-18.

## CHAPTER II

### The Value of an Education for Female Students

Women's institutions excelled in achieving order, discipline, and dignity. The willingness of parents to pay tuition for their daughters indicated that they recognized the value of education for their daughters. Education in the Upper South was more than simply preparation for courtship and marriage; it prepared young women for socially acceptable roles as adults.<sup>1</sup> Upon graduating or leaving the seminary, these women were "agents of cultural diffusion." They could use their education to influence friends and relatives to attend school via discussion of ideas learned in school, thereby passing the torch. Nevertheless, the debate raged over the proper type of education for women. Were women mentally inferior to men? A 1866 report of the Education Association of Virginia centered on "whether the distinction between the masculine and feminine intellect and heart" required "diversity of educational procedure, in its aims, its subjects, and its objects." No resolution was reached in this report, but it personified the debate raging throughout Virginia and the rest of the nation. Seminaries tried to promote themselves as arbiters of education of the highest caliber. An 1853 advertisement in the Virginia Gazetteer for the Richmond Female Institute claimed "to elevate the grade of

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<sup>1</sup>Blandin, 9. For a commentary on the preparatory role of education in the Upper South, see Johansen, 18.

female education and to afford young ladies the facilities for learning which are offered to young men in our best colleges.”<sup>2</sup>

Critics of education for women, however, argued that “the habits and education of American girls are simply destructive to their future as wives and mothers.... The text-book system, which monopolizes the best years of a young girl’s life, and expends them in cramming her with words which are forgotten... is not only useless but wasteful and injurious.” The author of this tirade, amazingly enough a woman, Jennie Cunningham Croly, represented the passions of the fiercest of critics of education for women. She, and others like her, felt the prospect of sending a young woman away from her family during the most crucial of years, around the ages of twelve to fourteen, when most schools began to accept students, was a “cruel wrong.” Croly further criticized the education these girls received as not providing enough preparation for her future duties as wife and mother.<sup>3</sup> Such a critique could be compared to a striking defense of women’s education made in 1861 by the Reverend D. W. Clark: “in schools for young ladies, the

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<sup>2</sup>See Scott, “The Ever-Widening Circle,” for more information on the concept of women as “agents of cultural diffusion,” 143. For explanation of the mental inferiority of women and the Virginia Gazetteer article, see William Hall Cato, “The Development of Higher Education for Women in Virginia,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1941), 34-35, 45. See also “The Proper Subjects and Extent of the Education of Girls”, Minutes of the Higher Education Association of Virginia (Richmond: C.H. Wynne, 1866), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Jennie Cunningham Croly, For Better or Worse: A Book for Some Men and All Women (Boston: Lee and Shephard, Publishers, 1875), 15-19. It is interesting, given Croly’s virulent attacks on female education, that she wrote this book in 1875 after the turn of the tide in women’s education. This was a period in which women were making more gains than ever, and yet, she criticized the very system that most likely enabled her to write and publish her book.

pursuit of knowledge was (till lately) regarded as a misnomer; few reasons can be urged in the vindication of this mistaken system.... If, then, the object of education is to discipline the intellect, to give it power, why should that discipline be denied to woman?"<sup>4</sup>

Considering the points-of-view of both supporters and critics, just what did education mean to women? How did their education affect their self-perception and their lifestyle? Should the education of women be the same as that for men? How did the purposes and abilities of women compare to those of men? These questions, however, assume that women would eventually marry and have children. There is no question that an education allowed a woman to redefine the marital relationship; she could use her learning and intelligence as both partner and homemaker. In many ways, the public supported education for females, but only to the extent that it would prepare them to become ladies and helpmates to men.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the ultimate question concerns whether or not marriage was essential for a happy life. Through education, intellectual development could be encouraged, as well as a tendency towards independent thinking. As Kathryn Sklar observes in her biography of Catharine Beecher, "Womanhood could be designed to engage all one's creative energies, yet simultaneously to smooth the edge of one's

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<sup>4</sup>Reverend D.W. Clark, "Places of Education for Young Ladies," Godey's Lady's Book 63 (July 1861- December 1861): 172. Reverend Clark also commented, "It is already demonstrated that woman's mind is capable of grappling with the same problems of structure as the *sterner sex* [italics inserted], and that she rises from the struggle with intellectual powers invigorated and enlarged in the same way."

<sup>5</sup>Solomon, 83. For more information about the responsibilities of women, to their husbands and to society, see Solomon, 37. For an explanation of the public support for education, see Solomon, 21.

regional, lineage, or class identities and to articulate the similarities one shared with other women....” In many way, however, this dichotomy is also contradictory. In The Feminization of American Culture, Ann Douglas labels this contradiction as “sentimentalism,” which, she argues, “asserts that the values a society’s activity denies are precisely the ones it cherishes.... [It] provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated.” This, in part, corroborated a comment by Mabel Louise Robinson in “The Curriculum of the Woman’s Colleges,” which notes that “if history has one function, it is to interpret the present by the past. If the present is to become significant as a signpost to the future, such an interpretation is essential.”<sup>6</sup> While Robinson’s comment was predicated on a more general interpretation of history, it lends credence to the study of the enigma of the educated nineteenth-century female. The outcome of an education for men had always been clear: to enter the professional sphere. But the results of a liberal education for women were ambiguous, and this raised innumerable questions. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, in her study of the development of women’s colleges, traces the “hopes and fears that accompanied the bold act of offering higher learning to women.”<sup>7</sup> Higher learning was often controversial, and perhaps even

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<sup>6</sup>Katharine Kish Sklar, Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), 11. Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 11-12. The reward for this “sentimentalism,” however, is marriage and children, regardless of achievements in education. See Robinson, 7.

<sup>7</sup>Horowitz, 3. Horowitz’s focus is specifically on the seven sister colleges in the North, but she includes information about the ideals of domesticity, and their conflicts with the changing systems of education.

more so in the South. Southern women were not expected to make any notable changes in society, and their education hardly caused a ripple in the status quo. This only began to ease when societal changes in the North towards the end of the nineteenth century began to force the South to adopt a more progressive stance in terms of educating women.

Education for women resulted in a collision of two worlds, the domestic and the professional, and observers had numerous comments on this issue. W. H. Ruffner, the first state superintendent of the Virginia public school system, became one of the early advocates in the post-1870 period for higher education for women. He claimed,

Thus far it has been assumed that the normal state of the mature woman is that of marriage, maternity, and housekeeping. But in my opinion, this is a mischievous error. Marriage is honorable in man or woman, but it is necessary for neither. It should be regarded as an incidental relation, which should or should not be entered into, according to circumstances.... With some admirable exceptions, their whole training has reference to the one act of capturing a husband. They are too often brought up to think of this as the goal of woman's destiny, and to study only those arts that will minister to this end. There are indications of a favorable change in this matter.... But well developed culture will never prevail among us until a woman is regarded and regards herself as complete in herself; and not as the necessary adjunct and complement of some man.

Ruffner also became an advocate for co-education in the South, but his main emphasis, specifically that education should incorporate teachings on the moral principles in life, is important to the foundations of this thesis. Catharine Beecher made a similar argument in her contention that women needed to realize their "power over the intellect and the affections," and to cultivate their own intelligence. This was the purpose of American womanhood, and the female seminaries needed to recognize the importance of allowing each person to determine her own identity. Ruffner's contention about the development

of a strong moral character was vital to the understanding of the structure of these female seminaries, as these schools were expected to continue the work begun by the parents.<sup>8</sup>

Popular advice books and textbooks on moral philosophy extolled the virtues of the family as the basis of the social order and the focus of all education. Catharine Beecher expounded on the virtues of strengthening one's moral character, and she referred to it as the "most important and most difficult duty of parents and teachers, to form the moral character, the principles and habits of children...." Seminaries were intended as places in which groups of girls could be instructed together in a safe environment while given lessons on becoming a woman. In essence, these seminaries created a family ideal and a sisterhood in which women were trained to take their places in society. The female seminary brought the relationship between mother and daughter to the forefront. It attempted to reproduce the mother-daughter bond in the link between teacher and student, and the power of this pseudo-bond helped orient women toward the external world as mothers-to-be.<sup>9</sup>

It was exactly this training that led to the collision of the domestic and professional worlds, resulting in a disjunction between society's expectations and

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<sup>8</sup>For quote by W. H. Ruffner from the Virginia School Report, 1879-1880, see Cato, 115-117. See also Walter Javan Fraser, Jr., "William Henry Ruffner: A Liberal in the Old and New South," (Ph.D. diss, University of Tennessee, 1970), 328-378. Much of this doctoral dissertation focuses on the co-education of blacks and whites, but Fraser briefly mentions Ruffner's interest in public co-educational institutions. In addition, for a discussion of Catharine Beecher's comments on domesticity, see Sklar, 136.

<sup>9</sup>Stowe, 92-94; Horowitz, 17. For more information on Catharine Beecher's ideas, see Catharine Beecher, "The Education of Female Teachers," An Essay on the Education of Female Teachers (New York: Van Nostrand and Dwight, 1835).



women's interests. Nevertheless, many women urged others of their sex to remain vigilant in their support of domesticity. This is demonstrated in the following note read by "a lady" before the 1882 meeting of the Education Association of Virginia, in which she cautioned,

We would never forget that home is woman's proper sphere, and that her education ought to be so conducted as to make her there a very center of blessedness and sunshine...let every encouragement be given to that charming candor, which prefers admitting itself to be ignorant rather than lose an opportunity of gaining enlightenment....<sup>10</sup>

Yet, an education provided a woman with the means to make sense out of the concept of womanhood for herself. If a woman was the central pillar of the virtuous Christian home, then education provided the power to occupy that sphere. As Christie Farnham contends in her introduction, "Education is power," and the education a woman received in a female seminary provided training in self-control, as well as a "[cultivation of] the moral sensibility, so that the conscience shall be at once tender and enlightened...."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in an 1873 commentary comparing the education systems in England and America, James Orton commented that woman "is the chief educator of the human family; therefore she has need to be as intelligent as man.... A liberal culture

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<sup>10</sup>Cato, 120-121. In his dissertation, Cato adapted this quote from the May 1883 issue of the Educational Journal of Virginia, pp.129 ff. The proceedings of this 1882 meeting were not published until May 1883.

<sup>11</sup>Ray Palmer, "Address on the Education of Woman: Delivered at the Anniversary of the Pittsfield Ladies' Institute, September 30, 1852" (Albany, NY: Gray, Sprague, and Company, 1852), 6-26. Palmer went on to elaborate that morality was the domain of women, and therefore, education for women needed to stress the formation of what he called "pure and elevated tastes" in an attempt to "realize the highest and best type of female education." For a similar argument in her introduction to The Education of the Southern Belle, see Farnham, 1.

does not lower the personal character and grace of woman.” This was a direct response to a series of fallacies regarding the education of women collected in a paper read that same year by Thomas Higginson. He remarked on the abundance of rumors in circulation regarding the conjunction between the differing sexual features of men and women and a resulting imbalance in their intellectual capacities. Using these rumors as a basis for his argument, he sarcastically postulates that, for the same reason, it should be assumed that women were both physically and intellectually inferior to men. Higginson concluded, “The question of intellectual education is not one thing for Man and another for Woman, any more than the question of healthful diet is one thing for Man and another for Woman.”<sup>12</sup>

Popular advice books and magazines, including the leading woman’s magazine, Godey’s Lady’s Book, dealt with the issue of women’s education. In fact, the chief cause in this magazine was education, and in her editor’s corner, Sarah Josepha Hale often discussed education by beginning with any subject, ranging from the mechanics of

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<sup>12</sup>James Orton, “Vassar College,” The Liberal Education of Woman: The Demand and the Method - Current Thoughts in America and England (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1873), 275-277. Orton also notes on page 24 that in “active strength”, women are inferior to men, but physical strength should not be “considered as the concomitant of great intellectual power.” See also Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Higher Education of Woman: A Paper Read by Thomas Wentworth Higginson before the Social Science Convention, Boston, May 14, 1873,” (Boston: Woman’s Journal Office, 1873), 4-12. He contended that the exclusion of women is a double-edged sword; first she is excluded from serious education, and then told she cannot use it in the public sphere.

sewing machines to an avowal of a need for higher education for girls.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in an 1861 article in the Franklin Valley Spirit, a Staunton, Virginia, newspaper, the Reverend William M. Cornell argued that women should be allowed to excel in every type of study offered to men, although that instruction should be tempered by instruction in “levelness of disposition, amiability of temper, gracefulness of motion,” etc. to mold her into the consummate young woman. He further questioned, “if in the education of females, they were properly instructed in the laws of their system, and judiciously trained to observe these laws, what a noble result would follow....”<sup>14</sup> Essentially, much of the consensus boiled down to the fact that men and women were *different*. If questions such as “What was woman’s sphere?” or “Could her mind be educated?” were raised, men, as well as women, pointed out the differences in women’s intellectual capacities. Woman was not a lower creation, they would argue, but she tended to focus on the emotional side, a characteristic lacking in men. Hale contended that the duty of her magazine was to “make females better acquainted with their duties and privileges.” For example, in magazines edited by women, even in one such as Godey’s Lady’s Book where women’s

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<sup>13</sup>Godey’s Lady’s Book, XLVII, (July 1853): 84. For more discussion on the subject of education in Godey’s Lady’s Book, see Eleanor Wolf Thompson, Education for Ladies, 1839-1860: Ideas on Education in Magazines for Women, (Morningside Heights, NY: King’s Crown Press, 1947).

<sup>14</sup>Reverend William M. Cornell, “Education of Females,” The Franklin Valley Spirit September 4, 1861, p. 2, col. 2. Much of his commentary centered on his impression that the current system of education for women makes them unprepared for either intellectual tasks, such as the possibility of teaching, or domestic tasks. He notes that without a proper education, or with one that neglects the intellectual side, the young woman is left with nothing. He argued that the current modes of education hardly enabled young women to “gain a livelihood,” no matter what type.

issues were touted with much enthusiasm, women's differences were pointed out.<sup>15</sup> Hale recognized the value of education and promoted it as the means to reach another realm, yet she continued to include articles that downplayed women's intellectual capabilities. For example, in the "Editor's Table" section of the 1860 issue of Godey's Lady's Book, Hale included a selection from a Tennyson poem: "Woman is not undeveloped man, / But diverse; could we make her as the man, / Sweet love were slain, whose dearest bond is this, / Not like to like, but like in difference..."<sup>16</sup> In that same issue, Hale included another commentary from "a lady in the West" in her "Editor's Table" entitled "Health of American Women Deteriorating." This woman commented on the "indisputable fact" that "American women... as a class, are fragile, delicate, and incapable of enduring any hardship..., and the sooner the men realize this truth... the better it will be for both them and us."<sup>17</sup> Such comments were tempered by similar advice, including the following from a Virginia teacher, Margaret Mercer, to not "be that worthless a bell [sic]....[do] not sink into the mere accomplished and elegant woman."<sup>18</sup> However, only a small percentage of those women who attended female seminaries remained long enough to

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<sup>15</sup>Thompson, 110-131. See also Nancy Woloch, Woman and the American Experience (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 98.

<sup>16</sup>Sarah Josepha Hale, "Editor's Table," Godey's Lady's Book 60 (January to June 1860), 557. The excerpt from Tennyson goes on to discuss the distinct individualities between man and woman.

<sup>17</sup>Hale, Godey's Lady's Book 60: 467.

<sup>18</sup>Margaret Mercer to Anna Mercer Harrison, October 8, 1832, Byrd Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

complete graduation requirements. Shirley Ann Hickson observes that only 15 percent of students enrolling in Southern institutes, such as the Southern Female Institute, completed coursework necessary for graduation.<sup>19</sup>

Regardless of such low completion standards, education for females by the middle-to-latter parts of the nineteenth century had become more acceptable. Newspaper advertisements promoted the accomplishments not only of the various female institutes, but also of the individual teachers.<sup>20</sup> In their literature publicizing their curricula, female institutes clearly stated that accepted pupils must be morally chaste, and the schools would continue to see that such chastity was paramount. The catalog of the Southern Female Institute for the 1875-76 session included the following passage:

No expense is spared to make those entrusted to the care of the Principal [Maria L. Carrington] comfortable and happy. Only such rules are enforced as are necessary to secure the end for which parents send their daughters to school. Among these is a rule forbidding the young ladies to receive visits from unmarried gentlemen other than brothers and uncles, without special permission.

This propaganda, intended for the “end,” education for the daughters of middle and upper-class Virginians, to justify the “means,” specifically, education for young women free from the distractions of the male, or public, world. Since most of these institutions were private, they continued the discrepancy between the public and private worlds. Even though an education would be the bridge to the public world (i.e., the male world) in the North, in the South, transcendence to the public world was only a fleeting thought.

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<sup>19</sup>Hickson, 249-250.

<sup>20</sup>Johansen, 222-226; Hickson 132-134.

An education merely “bought the rights” to the possibility of a better marriage, and only allowed a glimpse into the public realm.<sup>21</sup>

Schools used various forms of propaganda to attract students in addition to the publication of catalogs. These publications were also a crossover into the male realm, an entrance into the public arena. An advertisement prepared for various Virginia newspapers by the proprietors of the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton touted its various advantages, both geographically and in terms of the excellent education the seminary would offer.

Virginia Female Institute: Located in Staunton, Va, one of the salubrious regions of the State. Chartered in 1844 to an Association of gentlemen in Virginia and Maryland. Buildings contain sixty rooms, and Grounds four acres with ample means of exercise. Access easy by rail. The Departments of English, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Languages, Music, and etc. are in full operation, under Professors and Teachers of Long experience and established reputation.<sup>22</sup>

Other advertisements praised the teaching staff and perhaps, the addition of a particularly outstanding new member of the faculty to entice parents to send their daughters to the school. For example, in the 14 September 1876 issue of the Daily Dispatch, the Southern Female Institute advertised that “this institution, having been thoroughly repaired, will commence its twenty-fourth session on the FIRST MONDAY IN OCTOBER with an able corps of professors. Mme. TONGO has charge of the French classes. For terms,

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<sup>21</sup>“Catalogue of the Southern Female Institute at Richmond, Virginia, Session 1875-76,” (Richmond: Clemmitt and Jones, Steam Book and Job Printers, 1876), 3, Library of Virginia.

<sup>22</sup>Folder 46, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This blatantly complimentary advertisement was typical of the type published in newspapers in an attempt to attract students.

apply to Principal, 3 East Grace Street, Richmond, Va.” Other notices included information about expenses, as expressed in one placed by the Virginia Female Institute in the 8 August 1880 edition of the Daily Dispatch: “Aided by a full corps of efficient teachers. The session begins SEPTEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>, and continues nine months. The expense of board, etc., with a liberal course, including Music and Languages, need not exceed \$390. For particulars, apply to the PRINCIPAL.”<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, education was essentially for women of a certain class, until efforts were instituted near the end of the century for public education, therefore enabling large numbers of women from the lower and middle classes to receive an education. Consequently, this thesis concentrates on the upper and middle classes, often the promoters of the concept of separate spheres for women. In her 1842 commencement address, Mary Virginia Early wrote that each of the sexes “has a separate and distinct sphere,” in which woman was superior “in matters of the heart.” Consequently, her goal was “to promote peace, love, and happiness in the social circle.”<sup>24</sup> Numerous advice books, easily accessible to the public and known as domestic fiction, were addressed to female readers and concerned with the female protagonists. These magazines, and the female seminaries, assumed that domesticity would be the main occupation of their

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<sup>23</sup>Bowman, 867-869. In addition, teachers would often advertise for position, such as the following in the 16 August 1871 issue of the Daily Dispatch, “WANTED, by a graduate of the UVA, a SITUATION. Has had several years’ experience teaching in the South. For further information, address “TEACHER” Middleburg, Loudon Co., Va”. See p. 886 of Bowman for more information on this issue.

<sup>24</sup>Mary Virginia Early, “Commencement Address,” 13 June 1842, Early Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

student's lives after graduation; choosing spinsterhood was not an easily made or highly valued decision.<sup>25</sup> In the catalogue of the Albemarle Female Institute, the principal, John Hart, proclaimed that "the course of study, necessary to graduation, has been arranged to include, not indeed all that may be desirable in a woman's education, but as much as is perhaps now attainable." This statement implies that a woman's education should include a cultivation of the domestic arts, hence his phrase, "all that may be desirable in a woman's education." Essentially, Hart seemed to be making allowances for the lack of a better system of education available for Southern women. All that was "desirable," possibly an education system that prepared women for their roles as public, rather than private, servants, had not yet been realized. In actuality, although education for women in the South allowed advanced thinking, it focused on the cultivation of the domestic arts, rather than solely on subjects that would make women more accessible to the public world. Each of four schools considered in this thesis provided exceptions to this rule of thumb, and while each hardly achieved success in educating each of its pupils for participation in the public sphere (this was not their intent), each celebrated minor successes in the types of courses each taught and the free thinking each encouraged.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Nancy M. Theriot, Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America: The Biosocial Construction of Femininity (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 30-31.

<sup>26</sup>"Catalogue of the Albemarle Female Institute Near Charlottesville, VA – Session 1865-66," (Richmond: Gary and Clemmitt, Printers, 1866), 8, Special Collections, University of Virginia. Hart's notations exemplify the purposes behind many of the female seminaries, and particularly those in the South.



## CHAPTER III

### Educating Women for Matrimony

Marriage for young women in Virginia was a rite of passage, and each female institute tried to instill the values of the domestic and fine arts in the minds of their students. Legally, however, a married woman was worse off than a single woman; Elizabeth Varon has referred to marriage as a “civil death” for women, as they were subordinate to their husbands and could neither own property nor transact business on their own. For Virginia women, the rules of English common law prevailed. As long as a woman remained single, she could own and control property just as easily as men, but once married, control of property was transferred to the husband. Married women were “legally powerless,” and marriage “robbed a woman of personal power.”<sup>1</sup> Yet these secondary institutions highly prized domesticity; women were supposed to accept submission as their lot in life. Their best refuge was the home, and the true woman’s place was by the fireside. In an advice book to the newly-married bride, Lydia Sigourney declared, “Home! Blessed bride, thou art about to enter this sanctuary, and to become a priestess at its altar!”<sup>2</sup> Although this book was written by a Northerner, young women in the South eagerly consumed the material. An education, then, was the key to enhanced marriage prospects. A liberal education and the ability to speak with intelligence were

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<sup>1</sup>Varon, 12; Theriot, 34; Lebsack, 22-23.

<sup>2</sup>Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820 – 1880,” 320-321. For further reference, see Lydia Sigourney, Whisper to a Bride (Hartford Press, 1851), 44.

necessary in order to marry well; a young woman's wedding day marked her acceptance of burgeoning household duties, as well as her entrance into the adult world, one in which the wishes of her mate were usually final.

As Virginia women were considered by their male superiors to be the active moral agents, the latter group usually viewed an education as a worthwhile effort for women. An education would allow the student to fulfill her role of wife in a companionate marriage, yet, at the same time, the ideals of separate spheres for men and women excluded her from public life. Consequently, marriage was the only suitable option after receiving an education. Cogan and Stowe reason that women usually married young in the South; girls often considered themselves "past the hill" at age twenty and old maids at twenty-five. The twentieth birthday was seen as an important milestone for a young woman since she crossed the threshold into adulthood at this age. Southerners considered an "early marriage" to be one that occurred before the age of twenty, and a "timely" marriage to be one that occurred between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, since advice columnists argued that girls under twenty lacked correct judgment.<sup>3</sup> In the January issue of Godey's Lady's Book, editor Sarah Josepha Hale included a letter from a woman condemning early marriage, a practice not exclusive to the South, but still more widespread.

In the first place, most of us marry too young – pass from the schoolroom into housekeeping either a perfect or an easy duty; and the blunders and failures, combined with the anxiety to excel and please our husbands, and the pride to

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<sup>3</sup>Stowe, 59; Welter, 3; Cogan, 106. For more information about women's place in a marriage, see Woloch, 91.

equal our mothers-in-law, form not a small part of the burden of care that steals us from the freshness of youth.<sup>4</sup>

In All-American Girl, Frances B. Cogan purports that “education, then, served a double function: it made a girl able both to attract men and to make a discriminating choice among the suitors she did attract.” Yet the educated woman had to avoid the appearance of “pedantry,” and she was instructed to avoid appearing more knowledgeable than her suitor.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, domestic and academic education could co-exist. Cogan argues that advice writers were able to convince female readers that an academic education could be the basis of a sound domestic education. She notes that Catharine Beecher’s A Treatise on Domestic Economy dealt with the foundations of American institutions, as well as the laws of health for women, thus requiring some knowledge of science for women. In her Treatise, Beecher discussed every aspect of domestic life from the building of a house to setting a table, but much attention was paid to the psychology of domesticity. Her book appeared at a time when there was a great need for such a standardized text as she had created, and it helped to define a new role for

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<sup>4</sup>Hale, Godey’s Lady’s Book (January 1860): 467.

<sup>5</sup>Frances B. Cogan, All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 75-82. Cogan theorized that women should have a fully-developed education in order to realize their full potential, particularly one that stressed academic knowledge with as much zeal as the ornamental arts. See also Anya Jabour, “Albums of Affection: Female Friendship and Coming of Age in Antebellum Virginia,” The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 107 (Spring 1999), 143-144. Jabour has written several articles regarding the antebellum South, but this is her first venture on antebellum Virginia commonplace books.

women within the household.<sup>6</sup> This “cult of domesticity” was important since women could not occupy the public sphere, which was understood as a set of physical spaces, including the world outside of the home, such as courthouses, churches, and businesses. It was also a figurative space, the world of rhetoric and letters, uninhabited by women, and consisting of newspapers and books; the public was also a social space, a group of male citizens who embodied the public opinion. Women used the ideology of the cult of domesticity to assist them in their goals for education. Education was a means in which women could have a direct influence over the male sphere, and offer refinement to those around them. Both knowledge and culture formed the basis of character.<sup>7</sup> However, the degree of influence which women could exert was often slight, and men’s superior power (stemming from their role in the public sphere) tended to undermine the educated Virginia women’s attempts to seek superiority. Despite their often failed attempts, education for Virginia women gave them the knowledge to attempt such a feat.

Two ideals, the concept of Real Womanhood and the cult of True Womanhood, both of which existed between 1840 and 1880, formed the basis of the “cult of domesticity.” While not specifically named as such in the nineteenth century, these competing ideals represented the conflicting responsibilities women faced. The ideal of Real Womanhood, as discussed by Frances B. Cogan, emphasized self-reliance and self-

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<sup>6</sup>Cogan, 82-86. Sklar, 151-154. See also Catharine Beecher, Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School (Boston: T. H. Webb and Company, 1843) for more information on her treatment of the domestic economy.

<sup>7</sup>Varon, 2; Cogan, 99.

support, a complete contrast to the ideology of the cult of True Womanhood, which hypothesized that woman was too frail and illogical to defend herself. Barbara Welter and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have both argued that the latter ideal prevailed during the nineteenth century, but the concept of Real Womanhood, which has been ignored by historians until recently, argued against the powerlessness of women.<sup>8</sup> The idea of an “academic education,” with an emphasis on the study of the classics, history, literature, or math, did not exist in the model of True Womanhood. In opposition, the ideal of Real Womanhood insisted upon academic excellence, not as an end in itself or entirely for personal fulfillment, but as a means of providing necessary knowledge in preparation for the domestic sphere. Advice writers applauded education, scholarship, and intellectual achievements, in combination with the domestic talents of child rearing or housekeeping, as advocated by the ideal of True Womanhood.<sup>9</sup> The cult of True Womanhood advocated the “four cardinal virtues” of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity,” with piety as the core virtue since it did not remove a woman from her proper sphere. Applying these concepts, Frances Cogan has identified five rationales for extensive education: one, romance and marriage as the ideal of utmost importance, since an education was required to attract the “right” man; two, domestic economy and child -

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<sup>8</sup>Cogan 18-19. Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 7. See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” in The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective 2d edition, Michael Gordon, ed (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 334-358.

<sup>9</sup>Cogan, 65-68.

rearing, where an education could help the female manage a household and raise children; three, cultural atmosphere and morality, since women were encouraged to act as moral agents for future generations; four, vocational training, since women needed to be able to support themselves if absolutely necessary; and five, health and self-balance, a necessity for the maintenance of the domestic economy. Each of these rationales influenced the Virginia woman's attitude toward education. In their writings, particularly in their autograph albums, Virginia women, such as Mary Virginia Early, highly valued romance before marriage, and particularly, companionship. Nevertheless, they often had to forego any thoughts of a companionate marriage in which the husband and wife would play equal roles. The male's superior power within the confines of the relationship superceded any such claims. The education a woman received, however, would enable her to instill suitable moral values in her children.<sup>10</sup> Education for Virginia women outfitted them with the necessary tools for running a household, and consequently, for the possibility (albeit remote) that they would have to run the household without a male presence.

An article in the 1860 issue of Godey's Lady's Book touted education as a mechanism to "purify the morals of social life, as well as to refine the manners, and elevate the mental powers of the people. Consequently, those who lead in the progressive development of all forms of the good, are united in the effort of extending and perfecting the systems of female instruction." This commentary stressed the inherent goodness of the female, a concept advocated by education reformers. Nevertheless, despite Cogan's

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<sup>10</sup>Jabour, "Albums of Affection," 136-140.

five rationales for education, marriage choices remained the number one priority for Virginia women. An education presented the impetus for achieving each of the factors Frances Cogan described, but these concepts received secondary importance in the mind of the educated Virginia woman looking for love.<sup>11</sup>

Young girls were prepared from an early age for marriage and motherhood, which Barbara Welter has referred to as the “corollary” to marriage. Motherhood became the symbol of true womanhood and, in some ways, also symbolized Real Womanhood; the moral mother encompassed all characteristics of femininity. The mother’s life needed to center around her child, and education prepared young women for family life from an early age.<sup>12</sup> Advice books and textbooks on moral philosophy popular in the South extolled the virtues of the family as the basis of the social order and the focus of education for women. Seminaries were intended as places in which groups of girls could not only receive instruction together in a safe environment, but also learn lessons on becoming a woman. The all-female world, excluding the male professors and usually a male principal, was beneficial for instruction in the domestic arts. Seminaries created a family ideal and a sisterhood in which women were trained to take their places in society.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the outcry against education for women raised the concern that

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<sup>11</sup>Welter, Dimity Convictions, 21-22. See also Cogan, 74-75 for her comments on the five essential elements for a purposeful education. For information on morality in terms of education, see the following article in Godey’s Lady’s Book. “The Education of Women in America,” Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine 40 (July to December 1860): 368.

<sup>12</sup>Welter, Dimity Convictions 38; Theriot, 18.

<sup>13</sup>Stowe, 92-94.

educating females disrupted the traditional role of women in the family, and charged that since women were beginning to marry later, they produced fewer children. Since the care of children was seen as fulfillment of woman's moral role, female education was criticized for its subversive influence upon woman's desire to marry and start a family.<sup>14</sup>

Carl Degler identifies four broad characteristics to distinguish the "modern" American family from the family of the Revolutionary War era. He explains that marriage was based upon mutual affect and respect between partners. This new form of marriage, the companionate marriage, emphasized affection as the primary importance in a marriage, in itself an important stage in the evolution of woman's place within the family structure. The companionate marriage, evolving in the upper middle and elite classes, was one based on sympathy, affection, esteem, friendship, and mutual obligations, as opposed to the ideals of a traditional marriage. Regardless, this growing evolution of woman's place still ignored the legal powerlessness of women, a fact ignored by Degler.

As Anya Jabour points out in Marriage in the Early Republic, the inequality of marriage partners was a major obstacle to the success of companionate marriages. Both parties shared a desire for mutual affection, but differing gender roles both in and outside of marriage meant that love had different meanings for both husbands and wives. Degler, however, observes that the woman had achieved some form of superiority in the

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<sup>14</sup>Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 314. Despite the outcry against education for women, the 1880 census found that literacy rates were actually higher for white women than for white men of the same age bracket. See Degler, 309, for more information on the 1880 census.



marriage, if only in terms of morality. Women were perceived as moral superiors to men, and the attention of parents increasingly focused on child rearing. An additional advantage to the perceived moral superiority of women was their resulting ability to influence men; the woman's sphere, in global terms, became a power base from which to influence the male sex. In addition, the families of the nineteenth century were smaller than their eighteenth-century counterparts, meaning that women could spend more time on an individual basis with their children.<sup>15</sup> In many ways, the family could be viewed as a metaphor for all of Southern society; the wife was the dependent of her husband, and the children were dependents of both parents, just as all Southern women were dependents upon Southern men in the public and private realms.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Degler, 1-18. For a rebuttal to two of Degler's points, see Anya Jabour, Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 22. Jabour had earlier noted in this book that "the ideal of companionship in marriage, which promised a loving partnership of equals, both concealed and exacerbated men's and women's inequality in the new American nation." This inequality continued during my focal period of 1859-1890. See Jabour, 6-7, for this commentary. For a discussion of the new ideal of marriage, see also Theriot, 35. Theriot notes that the companionate marriage began to replace the patriarchal style of marriage, thus allowing women to clamor for more equality in marriage. For more information on equality within marriage, see Solomon, 37. The Southern white woman was both wife and mother, and the idea of woman as moral agent was popularized by Southern periodicals, such as the Southern Quarterly Review, DeBow's Review, and Southern Lady's Companion. Since the family functioned as a social institution, Southern women were central to the social structure. See Gay, 33-37, for more information. Nancy Woloch provides further details on the companionate marriage in Women and the American Experience; see Woloch, 85.

<sup>16</sup>Carol Bleser, ed, In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xxi. This is part of the introduction in which C. Vann Woodward explains the terminology of the family not as a subject "peripheral to main historical concerns but as one that belongs in the mainstream." See also Woloch, 112-115.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Female World and the Quest for Self-Improvement

During the period 1850-1890, young women were constantly on the quest for self-improvement, and their diaries and journals often contained long paragraphs in which they regretted not living up to their own expectations.<sup>1</sup> The best examples of this quest include diaries and letters, and the latter became a method for parents to express either “satisfaction or disapproval of their daughter’s *refinement* of the mind and the *improvement* of the person.” These letters from parents, as well as letters exchanged between lovers, share a common theme, an acceptance by both males and females of the moral superiority of women.

Books and sources on courtship included moral advice, novels, and guides to letter writing, and as Stephen Stowe has discovered, all three genres “acknowledged the significance of outward appearance or form in meetings between the sexes.... Letter writing guides were premised on the power of lover’s correspondence....”<sup>2</sup> Numerous guides included articles on appropriate reading matter for both boys and girls, but the focus was on what was considered suitable for young women. Literature for girls had to shield them from the outside world, and keep them pure by deflecting inappropriate

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<sup>1</sup>Welter, 16. Women were viewed as “passionless,” a tenet central to Victorian ideology, which conveyed the point-of-view that women lacked sexual aggressiveness, and therefore, this replaced the sexual characterization of women with a moral connotation. See Nancy Cott, “Passionless: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850,” *Signs* 4 (1978): 221.

<sup>2</sup>Stowe, 95-103.

reading matter. Suitable fiction for girls was more concerned with instructing its readers in acceptable social and moral behavior rather than encouraging subversive behavior.<sup>3</sup> In a section entitled “Books for Young Ladies” in an 1860 issue of Godey’s Lady’s Book, the editors included a list of appropriate reading material for young women. The editors suggested Jane Austen, “a name that may stand in worthy companionship... Miss Sedgewick’s Hope Leslie and tales for the people recall the admirable good sense and sprightliness of Mary Howitt... Mrs. Manners comes home to every aspiring young life with the valuable lessons of her Autobiography of Girlhood.” Advice writers stressed the vulnerability of the young and inexperienced young woman, and assumed that novel-reading was inappropriate for young women. They preferred stories, such as the latter, which suggested morality, and virtuous role models for which girls could strive. In his 1851 book, Advice to Young Ladies on their Duties and Conduct in Life, T. S. Arthur noted that “A young lady who indulges much in novel-reading never becomes a woman of true intelligence. She may be able to converse fluently, and to make herself at times a very agreeable companion, even to those who are greatly her superiors; but she has not strength of intellect, nor has she right views of life.” This somewhat harsh assessment of women’s intellectual capabilities infers that novel reading contributed to a woman’s lack of intelligence, and such indulgence should only have been for those who had no wish to

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<sup>3</sup>Kimberley Reynolds, Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children’s Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 92-100. Fiction for boys conveyed images of masculinity, while fiction for girls was only supposed to protect their innocence, and inculcate moral superiority.

acquire an education.<sup>4</sup> But, despite the cautions placed upon reading material, a woman's education allowed her to gain the emotions, intelligence, and ideals that would enable her to carry on a courtship with the "right" gentleman and eventually to marry and settle down in the domestic economy. The intent of this "moral" education was twofold: first, to educate young Virginia women in the art of maintaining a household, and second, to protect them from unwanted pregnancy, or more specifically, to attempt to avoid the scorn of the label of "fallen woman" for these young women. Virginia women used their own reading, diary keeping, and letter writing as a way to shape their lives; however, these young women were painfully aware of the penalties associated with the coming of age in a society that valued male superiority. These young women knew that when they left the loving circle of family and friends, they would be entering uncharted territory, a world which offered them few alternatives to marriage, motherhood, and domesticity.<sup>5</sup>

Women's autobiographical and letter writing allowed them to create their own images of "self" as a means of finding a voice of expression. In her compilation of essays on autobiographical writing, Shari Benstock questions, "What is it about autobiographical writing that raises issues of the 'private' in terms of the 'self'? How is the 'self' opened to question in the self-positioning act of writing? How does 'private'

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<sup>4</sup>T. S. Arthur, Advice to Young Ladies on their Duties and Conduct in Life (Boston: G.W. Cottrell and Company, 1851), 60-61.

<sup>5</sup>Kate Flint, The Woman Reader, 1837-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 75-76. Flint's book concerns the type of reading available to females, and suggested that the prevailing mode of thought encouraged "appropriate" material, not reading that stressed immorality. This would guard women against immoral thoughts. For more information on the types of reading see Linda K. Kerber, Toward an Intellectual History of Women (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 241-245.

situate itself in terms of the ‘public’? Are private and public selves forever opposed to each other?”<sup>6</sup> The perfect example of writing that reveals the self can not only be found in diaries and letters, but also in commonplace books, manuscript collections of prose and poetry usually transcribed by one person, and also from printed sources. These books also functioned as autograph books in which school chums would sign their names and often include passages of relevance to the young women involved. They often focused on the value of friendship and education, as well as the importance of the woman’s sphere.<sup>7</sup> The terminology “commonplace book” originated with the terms “classical notion” and “common places,” or common topics discussed by students of oratory. The notion of the commonplace book began in the age of the classics, and then was revived in the sixteenth century as an educational tool, and again for the same purpose in the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> These autograph and commonplace books demonstrate the existence of a distinct female culture among the upper and middle class Southern whites. In order to properly understand the framework behind these books, both class and gender

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<sup>6</sup>Shari Benstock, ed, The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writings (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1-3. Diaries and letters can act as a mirror; they allow for a realization of wholeness and completeness. For a brief discussion of diaries as avenues of self-expression, see Woloch, 146.

<sup>7</sup>Catherine La Courreye Blecki and Karin A. Wulf, ed, Milcah Martha Moore’s Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), xii.

<sup>8</sup>Catherine La Courreye Blecki, “Reading Moore’s Book: Manuscripts vs. Print Culture, and the Development of Early American Literature,” Introduction #2, Milcah Martha Moore’s Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), 61.

need to be taken into account. Entries in the autograph albums of young Virginia women may have dealt with the author's fears about their loss of self after marriage, but also defined an entire "female culture", validated by the existence of strong female bonds. The words may have urged women to accept not only their place as the subservient sex in life, but also their roles as both wives and mothers. At the same time, these autograph albums reveal the close bond between young women. Joan E. Cashin has argued that gender should be the dominant determinant, since a woman's class could change over time. Southern white women led distinctly different lives from Southern white men, with their inability to enter the public sphere, and this factor alone suggests the need for a female culture. This variable, detected in the commonplace books, journals, and letters of the nineteenth-century female schoolgirl, also determined the entire social order of Virginia society.<sup>9</sup>

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has also found evidence of the existence of a strong female world, and while her research covers both the North and the South, Southern women's writing verified the existence of a female culture. Since these commonplace books reveal the interior culture of Virginia women, they also reveal the distinct female culture in the South. Politically, and often emotionally, distant from men, the words in the diaries, letters, and commonplace albums of Virginia women display an

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<sup>9</sup>Cashin, 6-11. Cashin discusses the deference white women were expected to give to white males, and this was seen as a "small price to pay" for the protection males could grant to women. This admonition was practically indoctrinated to young women at an early age, and then passed down from mother to daughter as part of the social order. See also Jabout, "Albums of Affection," 156-157.

understanding of the culture of sentimentality. Their writings gave them a “culturally acceptable” method in which to raise questions about Southern society’s treatment of women. So, while these women may have been born into a world composed of men and women, the worlds of the two sexes were quite distinct, and consequently, the methods of education taught to both sexes reflected the same variations. Research on women’s diaries and letters has shown that they reveal a world of deep emotional strength, a world of intimacy, love, and passion. Women confided their deepest feelings in their diaries, thus revealing the long-hidden world of women and providing an opportunity to hear women’s words directly, unfiltered by men.<sup>10</sup> It is even more remarkable to consider the forthright tone these women adopted in divulging their innermost thoughts in their diaries, albums, and letters. In her autograph album, Sarah E. R. Ballowe of Fluvanna County, expounded on the subject of “mental superiority”:

Much has been said of the comparative mental powers of man and woman, and it is pretty generally assumed that superiority rests with the former. Those however who pursue the investigation fairly will scarcely fail to arrive at the conclusion, that in most of those powers to which man owes his happiness the female mind is the more excellent, and that while we must yield the palm to man as possessing the power and the propensity to scatter misery and ruin, they may prefer the claim to the more noble powers of healing the wounds which man has made, and soothing the misery which he has occasioned.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 28-29.

<sup>11</sup>Sarah E. R. Ballowe, “Autograph Album, 1848-1854,” Fluvanna County, Virginia, Special Collections, Duke University. Sarah Ballowe was educated at Oak Forest Academy, and she was quite opinionated on the subject of female education, but her words were intended only for private consumption.

Her words convey some early strains of feminism, but Sarah has correctly captured the male-female dynamics in the social order, and her words were almost a backlash against those who argued that physical differences between men and women alone were enough to preclude women from receiving an education comparable to that offered to men.

Ballowe has made use of rhetoric, typically perceived of as the male sphere, to voice her opinion. Yet, like many of her sex who cried out against the differences in the education quality for men and women, she voiced her opinion in private, thereby fulfilling her role as one relegated to the private realm. This was just one of many contradictions inherent in Southern culture; those very women who lashed out against the injustice were the same ones who preserved the sanctity of the public and private realms. Similarly, in her own autograph album, Sallie Ann Acree of Bedford County, Virginia, included a newspaper clipping on the power of reading, which contained the statement: "A full mind is a great safeguard to virtue and happiness in every situation of life. Multitudes of people do wrong from mere emptiness of mind and want of occupations." The mere inclusion of this clipping pointed to Sallie's views on the power of education for women.<sup>12</sup> Margaret J. Palmer adopted a similar vein of thought in her commonplace book, kept while a student at the Wesleyan Female Institute in Staunton. In a section entitled, "Education,"

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<sup>12</sup>Sallie Ann Acree, "Autograph Album, 1863-1865," 75, Virginia Historical Society. This article is signed by a "Mrs. Child," who may be Lydia Maria Child, since it is likely that she could have made such a comment in an attempt to dissuade women from idleness.



she wrote, "Education is the gaining of knowledge. With out [sic] it we can do nothing."<sup>13</sup>

Linked to these private revelations by women is the concept of socialization, integral to the development of young women. Socialization, not just that between men and women, but also female friendships, introduced women to the world of domesticity, piety, and self-improvement.<sup>14</sup> This was their world. This was a world in which female friendships were accepted without question, and emotional ties between females ranged from the supportive love of sisters to avowals of love by mature women. This was an interpretation quite different from our twentieth-century perspective. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg writes, "why and when did normative – that is, male-definitions of such critical terms as 'love' and 'sex' change?" She notes that women commonly expressed their love for one another, as is demonstrated not only in letters but also in their autograph books. However, to the twentieth-century reader, this frankness seemed a little misplaced. Women of the nineteenth-century, however, lacked the self-consciousness of the post-Freudian twentieth century world, and nineteenth-century society did not necessarily define all relationships between women as sexual in nature.<sup>15</sup> In many ways,

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<sup>13</sup>Margaret J. Palmer, *Commonplace Book, 1859-1869*, Virginia Historical Society. Although mostly commentaries on female friendships, Maggie's commonplace book also included comments from friends on education that corroborated the private thoughts of women on the subject of women's education similar to those shared by other women.

<sup>14</sup>Anya Jabour, "'Grown Girls, Highly Cultivated': Female Education in an Antebellum Southern Family," *The Journal of Southern History* 64 (1998): 55-56.

<sup>15</sup>Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 35-36. See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in

Southern women were distinctive from their Northern counterparts. Due to the influence of years of a slaveholding society, Joan Cashin contends, they felt a certain distance from their Northern sisters, and felt that only other Southern women could be interested in their “common affairs.”

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has asserted that common knowledge implies a shared understanding, and consequently, Southern women formed intense bonds of friendship with other women. Although Geertz’s arguments regarding common knowledge do not maintain the separation of cultures, the concept of a shared understanding does, in fact, purport to relate to the bonds of female friendship. Therefore, young Virginia women formed close bonds with one another, since their attendance at a female seminary was often the first time they were “thrown” together away from their parents’ watchful eyes.<sup>16</sup> The disruption caused by leaving home may have encouraged these young women to seek comfort in their newly-made friendships with their schoolmates. Since students also spent most of their free time outside of classes socializing with one another, this too encouraged the intensity of female

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Nineteenth-Century America,” in The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d. edition, Michael Gordon, ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 334. Smith-Rosenberg’s article was originally published in the inaugural issue of Signs in 1975, but editor Michael Gordon also included it in his book.

<sup>16</sup>Cashin, 15. See also Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 73-93 for more information on the issue of common knowledge. Joan Cashin originally included this citation in her work, and upon further research of Geertz’s work, I agreed with her interpretation of his original comment. The concept of common knowledge works very well with the subject of female friendships in Southern female seminaries.

friendships, and sparked comments such as the following written by “Agnes” to Harriet

E. Caperton in her autograph book:

How soon we will be at the homes we love so much, where the days will be as bright – the faces as dear as in childhood. But oh! It is hard even for *home* to leave *forever* place where I have been so happy! Yet my thoughts, at least, will often wander to this embosomed town and the memory of the happy months I have passed here will be a mingling of joy and sadness. I will often wish again to listen to the instructions of my kind teachers, the companionship of my schoolmates. And be sure Harriette you will occupy no small portion of these thoughts. It would be vain to say how I will miss you.... We are daughters of the same state, may its length and breadth be not so great as to keep us ever parted.<sup>17</sup>

Separation from friends was often the most difficult transition for these young women since they had been through so much together as schoolmates. The autograph books became their mementos of cherished times, and included comments from teachers as well. Their autograph books were the nineteenth-century form of the twentieth-century yearbook in which students seek signatures and comments from fellow classmates in order to preserve the present for future generations. In a section entitled “Parting,” Father Ryan, an instructor at the Wesleyan Female Institute in Staunton, wrote in Maggie Palmer’s commonplace book, “Farewell! That word has broken hearts/ And blinded eyes with tears/ Farewell!/ One stays and one departs,/ But between them roll the years.” In the album of Penelope Abbott Chancellor, known as “Abbie,” “Nannie” wrote, “To my friend Abbie/ Tho’ fate my friend may bid us part,/ The soul it cannot sever;/ The heart will seek its kindred heart,/ And cling to it as close as ever.” Abbie’s album, entitled “The Souvenir Album,” had been a gift from her brother, Dr. Charles William

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<sup>17</sup>Farnham, 147. Harriet E. Caperton, Autograph Book, 25 May 1857, Special Collections, Duke University.

Chancellor, in 1857, and, like most of the autograph albums of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, contained hand-drawn calling cards with the signatures of her friends, as well as drawings, poems, and other inscriptions from friends. In an entry addressed “Dear Abbie” and signed “Your true friend, Nannie Dobyms,” Nannie wrote of their “passion” for one another and her fear of “absence” from Abbie. “What tender strains of passion can impart/ The pangs of absence to an amorous heart;/ Far, far too faint the powers of language prove/ Language, that slow interpreter of love!/ Souls paired like ours, like ours to union wrought,/ Converse by silent sympathy of thought.”<sup>18</sup>

Most of these entries were replicas of one another; their authors spoke of a wrenching of souls away from one another, and of how they would one day be re-united. One entry in the “Floral Album” owned by Nannie Cottrell, a student at the Southern Female Institute, described the passages of life: “Passing through life’s field of action/ Lest no part before its end,/ Lake within your modest volume/ This memento from a friend...Passing through it – may we ever,/ Friends continue as begun/ And till death shall part us never/ May our friendship cease to burn.” Another entry, dated 17 September 1869 from D. E. Mermin, expressed their friendship in terms of a love affair. “True Happiness is not to be found in the gay dance of pleasure, nor at the shrine of beauty, fashion, or riches, but ‘Two souls with but a single thought/ Two hearts that beat

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<sup>18</sup>Margaret J. Palmer, *Commonplace Book*, Margaret J. Palmer Papers, Virginia Historical Society. See also Penelope Abbot Chancellor, *Autograph Book*, Chancellor Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Included in the Chancellor family Papers is the autograph book of Penelope Abbott “Abbie” Chancellor, kept from 31 December 1841 to 14 August 1864, but mostly during the late 1850’s while she was a student at the Virginia Female Academy in Staunton.

as one.”<sup>19</sup> Similar entries in the autograph album of Harriet L. Scollay, a student at the Southern Female Institute, grieved over the loss of friendship as the school year ended in 1861. In one entry, signed “Your friend, Jeanie Dean(e),” Jeanie compared their friendship to a love knot, itself a romantic emblem. She wrote, “Let our friendship be as a Gordian knot tied by the angel’s hands, that the absence of long years may not loosen its binds. It is very painful to me to part with you, but it is consolation to know that we have met and loved....”

Such words, including the religious implications and heavily erotic tone, were, however, considered inappropriate in the pre-Freudian nineteenth-century communications between women. The middle-class ideal of sentimental womanhood defined women as spiritual, emotional, and dependent, essentially a result of the changing economic balance which separated men into the public sphere and women into the private sphere. In the emphasis on the socially active role for women (yet within the private sphere), religion of the heart was extremely important, as opposed to the rational behavior assigned to men. Equated with self-interest and economic accomplishments, rationality was an important part of the male sphere. The cult of domesticity alleviated some of the tensions that had existed between Christian morality (i.e., love and charity) and capitalism (the spirit of competition). Christian values were relegated to the home, which became a shelter for religious ideals, and also a refuge from the “harsh” public

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<sup>19</sup>Nannie Cottrell, Autograph Album, Virginia Historical Society. Like other comparable albums, Nannie Cottrell’s album contains outlines of calling cards with the signatures of her friends, as well as numerous blank pages with hand-drawn or cut-out flowers at the top of each page.

world of men. These inscriptions in autograph albums expressed so eloquently the private female world of love and emotion. In an inscription to Harriet Scollay, Sallie Richardson pointed out that, "Providence has ordained dear Hattie that we must part; it may be for a short time, and it may be forever, but time and eternity can never blot your sweet name from my memory for I have not loved lightly..." Another entry, signed "Nannie Alsop," read, "Although the hour for parting from you, my dearest Hattie, is so near at hand, I can scarcely realize it, and I hope we may have the pleasure of meeting again in this world, but should we be deprived of this pleasure, may meet in Heaven." Both of these comments were imbued with spirituality and a sense of a desire to stop time to spend more time with one another, just as two lovers would write.<sup>20</sup>

Female friendship was of immense support for these young Virginia women as they attempted to negotiate the "coming of age" process. The autograph albums conveyed the notion that while these young women were moving from the comfort of their educated environs, they would always have the support of their friends. This desire for remembrance was echoed in the autograph album of other young women. The

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<sup>20</sup>Harriet L. Scollay, *Autograph Album*, Virginia Historical Society. Harriet "Hattie" Scollay began her album on 31 August 1857, the date of the first inscription on the inside front cover. However, most of the entries were dated throughout the year 1861, when Hattie was a student at the Southern Female Institute. For commentary on the subject of sentimental womanhood, see Phillida Bunkle, "Sentimental Womanhood and Domestic Education, 1830-1870," *History of Education Quarterly* 14 (Spring 1974), 13-19. See also Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," for further explanation of the cult of true womanhood and her description of the four characteristics of womanhood. For more explanation of the tension between Christian morality and capitalism, see Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 4.

autograph album of Lucy Waller (Boyd) Hundley, entitled, "Philopocena Album," was kept from 1872 to 1875 while she was a student at the Virginia Female Institute. In an entry signed "Yours truly, Carrie E. Shad," and addressed "To Dear Lucy," Carrie wrote, "Think of me Lucy/ When thou art alone, / When midnight is reigning/ On her dim starry throne,/ Oh think of thy friend;/ Though afar she may be,/ And know that she's thinking still fondly of thee; / O think of me then." While this may not have been the work of budding young poetesses, these young women conveyed genuine feelings for one another, and the imagery of links and chains binding them to their friends filled their thoughts. Lelia Beers wrote to Lucy, "May friendship bind us with a soldier chain, and angels bear the clasp to Heaven." Sallie W. Martin declared, "Let one link in the golden chain of memory bear the name of your friend."<sup>21</sup> Other entries spoke of their education and friendship in one thought, but at the same time communicated the type of education that preponderated at the seminaries. In an entry to Harriet Scollay, one student lamented, "Dear Hattie, you will soon be a *turned out young lady*, while I am only a poor little school girl and expect to remain for some time, but you will not think the distance *between us too great* to think of me sometime will you?"<sup>22</sup>

Expressions such as these captured the interest in courtship and marriage shared by these young women, and perhaps implied the focus that many seminaries put on the

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<sup>21</sup>Autograph Album of Lucy Waller (Boyd) Hundley, 1872-1875, Hundley Papers, Virginia Historical Society. The opening page was dated 2 June 1871 at the Virginia Female Institute, and like other autograph albums, also contains outlines of calling cards with friends' signatures drawn on the pages.

<sup>22</sup>Harriet L. Scollay, Autograph Album, Virginia Historical Society.

achievement of domestic perfection over academic and intellectual pursuits. Was too much emphasis placed on the cultivation of the domestic arts? Marriage seemed to be very much on the minds of these young women. In one entry dated 13 April 1879, and signed “Your affectionate Tortoise,” the author observed, “You’re very nice [sic] you have no vice/ But only too much mettle/ So in a trice take my advice/ And marry and get settled.”

So in conversations and writing amongst themselves, the girls encouraged the continuity of domesticity and the separation of spheres.<sup>23</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued that the female world was one in which women and young girls could develop a sense of security and self-esteem. Friends were an integral part of the female world, a world bounded by home, church, and social visitations. These networks were similar to the kinship networks of extended families and sisterly bonds, but these bonds were central to women’s lives and fulfilled emotional vacuums created by great distances between relatives and neighbors. Friends made while away at school helped each other to overcome homesickness and endure crises, and created what Smith-Rosenberg refers to as a “pseudo-mother” relationship.<sup>24</sup> This female world was personified by the

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<sup>23</sup>Lucy Waller Hundley, *Autograph Album*, Hundley Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This view on marriage and a girl’s character was corroborated by research from other autograph books, diaries, and letters. Although the cult of domesticity stifled Southern women’s creativity in the public realm, most were content to let the separation of spheres remain.

<sup>24</sup>Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 61-67. See also Farnham, 148-149, for the sociability aspect of female seminaries. Farnham expands her discussion into the organization of female clubs and sororities, but her central consensus is the same as that



relationship between mothers and daughters; friends formed at school could act as stand-ins for mothers while at school, but at home, the bond between mother and daughter was irrevocable. During the nineteenth-century, letters were filled with parental concerns about their daughter's education. Mothers had a duty to impart a lasting impression on their daughters, and daughters strove to follow their mothers' lead. As Henry E. Woodbury commented in the October 1852 issue of Godey's Lady's Book, "truly weighty then are the obligations devolving on woman in the discharge of her duties in this relation." Parents, but especially mothers, desired a correct match for their daughters, and an education was the venue to improve their daughter's prospects. Sallie Ann Acree included a poem entitled "A Mother's Soliloquy" in her scrapbook. The following lines demonstrate the importance of the mother-daughter bond, and also of the lifelong preparation for marriage. The nineteenth century was a world in which mothers were crucial to their daughter's lives.

Think how your eye encountered mine,/ As in my breast you lay, / All pale upon  
that hallowed shrine,/ Then tore yourself away....Away? Ah yes, away with one/  
Who looked a being kind, / with whom your young heart had won, / You left all  
else behind.

Fulfilling the tenets of domesticity was an "obligation" of extreme importance to women in the South, and perhaps this was why the mother of Mamie Lou Yancey, a student at the Virginia Female Institute, wrote to her daughter on 8 February 1869, "I know that your time is fully occupied, and I think, my dear child, you are spending it more profitably than some of your young friends! And I hope you will acquire such *good*

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of Smith-Rosenberg, namely, that the female world was one of nurture among common types.

*habits* now you will *never* be willing to spend your hours in the listless idleness that some do.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps she was writing with a bit of a “tongue in cheek” attitude regarding the “good habits” her daughter had acquired, but no doubt Mrs. Yancey felt the Virginia Female Institute was correct in instructing its pupils in the virtues of domesticity, as well as in the subjects more commonly found in the male world of politics and rhetoric. Mrs. Yancey expressed the sentiments of many of her generation, primarily in support of education for their daughters, but only on the condition that it provided generous instruction in the domestic arts.

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<sup>25</sup>Henry E. Woodbury, “Woman in Her Social Relations,” Godey’s Lady’s Book (October 1852). He considers woman in another sphere, motherhood, and he refers to the word “mother” as a “dear” word. For more commentary on the “female world of love and ritual,” see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct, 64-65. Smith-Rosenberg makes an interesting aside note in this commentary; she contends that mothers seemed so interested in their daughter’s affairs and activities that it tends to make one wonder what has happened in the twentieth century to eradicate that close mother-daughter bond once almost a given in the nineteenth century. For the importance of the mother-daughter bond, see Jabour, “Grown Girls, Highly Cultivated,” 55-56. See “A Mother’s Soliloquy,” Scrapbook, Sallie Ann Acree Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This poem was originally written by a Mrs. M. L. Gardiner sometime between 1863 and 1865. See also Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection. The Yanceys exchanged numerous letters with their daughter, but the evidence of the mother-daughter bond was particularly strong. See also Bunkle, 20, who noted that the key to social stability was the maternal bond.

## CHAPTER V

### The New Ideal: The Companionate Marriage

The support group provided by mother and close friends played a key role in the transition from single to married woman. Married life was itself “structured about a host of female rituals,” such as childbirth, thereby allowing women to live in emotional proximity, if not physical, with one another, through their letters.<sup>1</sup> But before marriage, relationships between men and women were explored in the very elaborate ritual of courtship, another example of a female ritual. It was important for a female never to appear as if she were “hunting” for a mate, even though her “business,” as a student and upon finishing her schooling (as accorded by society), was supposed to be a preparation of herself for marriage. As Deborah Gorham maintains, this was yet again another of the ambivalent attitudes expressed in the nineteenth century. Female friendships were in some ways preparation for the development of a capacity for friendship with a man later in life. And courtship, the period after an engagement, was another testing pattern; it functioned as a way for women to test man’s romantic attachment to them.<sup>2</sup> Ellen K. Rothman defines courtship as

Not a linear progression but an amalgam of expectation, experience, and convention.... The nature of courtship defies precise explanations. The

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<sup>1</sup>Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct, 70-71.

<sup>2</sup>Gorham, 113-115. See also Karen Lystra, Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 158. Lystra’s work discusses courtship in terms of letters between courting couples.

vicissitudes of love, the selection of a mate, the decisions people make as they approach marriage are always somewhat mysterious to an outsider.

Furthering Rothman's analysis, Carolyn Cosgrove distinguishes between "courting" and "courtship." She observes that courting included social activities such as sleigh rides and visiting, while courtship began after the marriage proposal. Diaries and journals, therefore, illuminate this subject and provide a record of the experiences surrounding the transition to marriage. As this study is concerned only with educated females, the focus is on the process of courtship after a girl had finished her schooling. Cosgrove includes an observation made by Alexis de Tocqueville on his visit to America: "But no American woman falls into the toils of matrimony as into a snare held out to her simplicity and ignorance. She has been taught beforehand what is expected of her and voluntarily and freely enters upon this engagement. She supports her new condition because she has chosen it."<sup>3</sup>

Parental control also changed from the once-autonomous role into one offering a great deal more latitude. With the changing ideal of a companionate marriage, parents could influence their daughters in terms of encouraging them in their "duty" to marry, but they had less success in interfering in the personal satisfaction of the partners for one

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<sup>3</sup>Ellen K. Rothman, Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 5-9. See also comments made by Carolyn Cosgrove in her 1987 master's thesis on Victorian families. Carolyn A. Cosgrove, "Crossing the Thresholds: Courtship, Marriage, and Family in Victorian America," (Master's thesis, University of Vermont, May 1987), no page number. Cosgrove draws on Rothman's 1984 work in her discussion of historiographic trends, and contends that her own study breaks new ground in the field of family history by focusing on several couples, each of whom underwent a distinct courting period before beginning their courtship after the marriage proposal. Cosgrove's inclusion of the Alexis de Tocqueville commentary comes from his *Democracy in America*.

another. Nevertheless, they may have controlled the timing of the marriage. This newly-discovered autonomy, however, also imposed its own limitations, as Rothman explains. Disapproval and rejection were more common since love was now the motivating factor in the choice of a mate.<sup>4</sup> One's education could play an important part in choosing a mate; however, it often had little affect on emotions. An article by Anna Wilmot in the December 1849 issue of Godey's Lady's Book observed, "it is neither intellectual attachments nor personal attractions, that make happiness in marriage. Far, very far from it. All depends upon the quality of affections."<sup>5</sup> Virginia parents felt that a quality education would be sufficient to enable their daughter to choose between a rogue and a respectable gentleman. In a commentary included in Elise Cabell Pirkey's scrapbook, the author warned, "Never marry a man who has only his love for you to recommend him. It is very fascinating; but it does not make the man.... Marriage is a solemn thing – a choice for life; be careful in the choosing."<sup>6</sup> However, as Cosgrove points out, stories included in women's magazines, whether the Godey's Lady's Book or The Lady's Repository,

<sup>4</sup>Lystra, 158; Cosgrove, 15; Rothman, 27-33. All three authors agree that the courting process involved less parental influence, thus eliminating one problem area, but created new problems by giving the couple more autonomy and consequently, freedom.

<sup>5</sup>Anna Wilmot, "The Gentle Warning," Godey's Lady's Book (December 1849), 376. In her story, Wilmot used the example of notes and letters as tools for proposals, but she also included warnings about the dangers of choosing the wrong mate.

<sup>6</sup>"Belgravia," Scrapbook, Elise Cabell (Chevallie) Pirkey Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Pirkey's ninety-page scrapbook, begun 19 May 1878, includes many newspaper clippings on the subject of love and marriage. This article, signed "Belgravia," warned against an inappropriate marriage match, and again reinforced the power of a good education in choosing a husband, emphasizing that the choice was one that would result in consequences for a lifetime.

emphasized the role of women as mothers within the family. The authors of articles in these magazines wished to convey the message that all women should marry and bear children. For example, in an article in The Ladies Repository, the Reverend I. W. Wiley wrote that the woman's place was "at the fireside, to make man better, to sustain him, to care for him, to procure him the joys of paternity and to fill the place of a good housewife."<sup>7</sup> This idyllic scenario could only be enhanced if the "good housewife" also had a good education to allow her to fulfill her role as "angel of the house." Furthermore, morality played an important role in complementing woman's angelic role; "the moral affections constitute the great moral forces of true womanhood her sphere of being the sources of power and influence the domain of her rightful supremacy...."<sup>8</sup> Society assumed that marriage was an inevitable event; the right man would materialize and the young woman would marry. As so expressively stated in an article Sarah Ballowe included in her autograph album, in a section entitled "Thoughts on 'Right Marriage,'" marriage was imbued with some sort of romanticized notions about the relationship between husband and wife, but the value of an education was not disqualified:

Never marry, but for love; but see that thou lovest what is lovely. Do thou be wise; prefer the *person* (italics mine) before money, virtue before beauty, the mind before the body; then thou hast a wife, a friend, a companion, a second self, one that bears an equal share with thee in all thy toils and troubles... Between a

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<sup>7</sup>Cosgrove 14-17. Cosgrove includes the Reverend Wiley's comments in her thesis to demonstrate the prevailing point-of-view, one shared by men and women.

<sup>8</sup>"Commencement Address," 10, Anonymous, Special Collections, Duke University. The unknown speaker made several observations about the role of women, but did not discount the importance of education for women.

man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love; - as love ought to bring them together, so it is the best way to keep them well together.<sup>9</sup>

In accord with this passage, marriage, therefore, was essential for a woman, but it had to be a marriage for the right reason – love, thus based on the new companionate marriage. In the phrase, “the mind before the body,” the speaker valued intellect over physical appearance, and this was exactly what motivated Southern parents to desire an education for their daughters. Southerners sought an education for their daughters that would suit their purposes in life; parents could send their daughters to female seminaries without contradicting their purpose of finding good matches for them because a classical, liberal arts education would just add a certain finesse to their daughter’s chances in marriage.<sup>10</sup> Education for many Virginia women, among them Nannie Cotrell and Mary Virginia Early, was the means to securing a better match in marriage. Having an education would allow a Southern woman to express some knowledge of history and literature, for example, during the courtship phase, and also to instill the correct moral vision to her children. Southern parents recognized the importance of fostering an educated daughter and often encouraged an interest in attending female seminaries.

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<sup>9</sup>Gorham, 53. The image of the virtuous, feminine young woman prevailed during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and essential to this was the cult of domesticity. The ideal young woman was not only supposed to be educated, but also dutiful, co-operative, and submissive. See also the Autograph Album of Sarah E. Ballowe, Special Collections, Duke University.

<sup>10</sup>Jabour, 40-64. See also Christie Anne Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle. Jabour and Farnham offer commentary on the subject of Southerner’s expectations for their daughter’s marriages, just as the quote from Sarah Ballowe’s autograph album explicitly states.

In letters to their daughters, parents often commented on the importance of education in making future choices. In a letter to his daughter, Ann Eliza, Richard T. Brumby commented, "The great object of female education should be, the development of the girl into a lady, healthy in person, refined in feeling, pure in morals, and humble in religion. Keep this constantly in mind. Guided by this principle in your studies, your recitations, your intercourse with teachers and associates... you will, I trust, become a lady – happy, prosperous, useful in life, and fitted by God's grace, for a blessed immortality." He further commented, "I am much concerned for your improvement in all the essentials of a lady's education; and more knowledge of books on literature and science is not, by any means, one of the most important, yet any kind of knowledge is valuable if sought for honorable and useful purposes." Although Brumby does not mention marriage in his letter to Ann Eliza, the indirect implications of "any kind of knowledge" and the emphasis on becoming a lady are crucial to the comprehension of a moral education. This type of education would heavily emphasize the domestic arts, or the time spent on the development of home-making skills as well as the refinement necessary to eventually raise children who would be morally adept. Brumby's words echo the sentiments of many Virginia parents.

Classes were taught in how to be the humble home-maker, and even the by-laws of the institutes required strict deportment. In the by-laws of the Female Collegiate Institute, Article Four read, "Young Ladies are earnestly advised to take care of their own rooms, and, in that case, the duties must be so divided between the several inmates of each room, and so exchanged among them, that their rooms may be in order before study



hours commence, and that each may perform her own share of the duties.” This is only one example of the types of rules applied to the preparation of young ladies for suitable wives and home-makers.<sup>11</sup> In some ways, his statements contradicted each other; on one hand, he sought the best education for his daughter, including a full liberal arts slate, with mathematics and the sciences, as well as literature and the ornamental arts; but, on the other hand, he seemed to be encouraging Ann Eliza to expend less effort on the sciences and more time on the important domestic arts that would refine her skills as a lady.<sup>12</sup>

The genre of the letter, according to Diane Cousineau, represents the intersection of the public and private realms. Where women were marginal in terms of the definitions of a culture, which kept them secluded in the private, rather than the public, sphere, they could express a full range of emotions in the writing of a letter. If a couple separated by a great distance wanted to have any contact with one another, a letter served their purpose until they could be re-united in person. However, as George Junkin Ramsey, a Virginia minister who founded the Lynchburg Female Academy in 1870, noted while courting his wife Sabra S. Tracy, “This letter writing is a very tedious business where there is so much we want to say, and yet on some accounts it may be best [not to say anything] for a little

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<sup>11</sup>“By-Laws of the Female Collegiate Institute,” 28 March 1843, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>12</sup>Richard T. Brumby to Ann Eliza Brumby, 1858, Ann Eliza Brumby Papers, Southern Historical Collection. This letter from Richard T. Brumby, dated 1858, to his daughter, Ann Eliza, demonstrated the type of parental advice and control parents still exerted over their children, but it also conveyed the contradictory messages young women continued to receive regarding marriage and education. Although Ann Eliza was a student in Tuskegee, Alabama, his thoughts were representative of those shared by parents throughout the South.

while.”<sup>13</sup> The courting process usually involved an extensive letter exchange. In a letter dated 17 January 1860, addressed to a “Miss Emily,” a student at the Southern Female Institute, John Wulf wrote, “You will ensure the liberty I take of writing to you a few lines for the double purpose of assuring you of my continued esteem, both for your self, and the family, and to ask the favour of a correspondence with you with the desire that our acquaintance may become more intimate if agreeable to you.” In the beginning of a relationship, opening addresses in letters often began, “Dear so and so,” but then progressed over time to “my darling,” or “my precious,” or other endearments such as “my dear silliness”. The same sentiments were also evident in closing salutations which evolved from the more formal “very truly yours” to “a thousand kisses from yours forever.”<sup>14</sup>

Courtship was a trial period for most couples, and women in the nineteenth century often had a tendency to deny their capacity for love. They “lacked confidence in their worthiness to be loved early in the century, but later on, women were likely to question their ability to love.” Sallie Ann Acree included a newspaper clipping in her

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<sup>13</sup>Diane Cousineau, Letters and Labyrinths: Women Writing/ Cultural Codes (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 14-26. Cousineau’s discussion centers on the notion of subjection in the public realm for women, and argues that letter writing gave them a sense of autonomy. See also George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. This is a large collection of papers, but these letters dating from 1875-1871 detail his courtship with Sabra S. Tracy, a schoolteacher from the North, who married George Junkin Ramsey, and the two of them founded the Lynchburg Female Academy in 1870, which would be continued by Sabra Ramsey from 1871 to 1885.

<sup>14</sup>John Wulf to Emily Miller, 17 January 1860, Miller Family Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. This letter addressed to Emily Miller is just one example of a letter written by a courting couple. See also Lystra, 19, for more information on the greetings and salutations in letters.

autograph album that makes it possible to speculate that she felt the same way. The clipping, addressed, “Messrs. Editors, By the inserting of the following lamentation, you will oblige a female friend,” and bluntly questioned, “Was ever a girl in such a rage, / I’m for a husband fit; / I’m five and twenty years of age, / And I’m not married yet.”

Considering the overwhelming fear of being labeled a spinster, the fear of spinsterhood may have been quite real on Sallie’s part, and this could explain why she identified with the article of this clipping. Similarly, Elizabeth Wynne, a student at the Southern Female Institute, expressed her own desires in her diary,

I wish I had someone to love; to feel that he loved me better than anyone in the whole world....it must be so very nice to be dearer than life itself to one somebody, to give oneself, heart and soul, to him, for better, for worse, and to be able to tell him your thoughts and feelings, to help him bear the burden of life, to work, and to live, for him.<sup>15</sup>

These lines express the cultivation of the cult of domesticity, apparent in the inculcation of separate spheres. Elizabeth personified every inch of the Southern lady in her desire to be helpmate to her lover and “to help him bear the burden of life,” but at the same time, she revealed the changing ideals of romantic love in the nineteenth century and the heightened emphasis on companionate marriages. Perhaps too much emphasis was put on the search for a mate, for it often produced such laments as the following by Elizabeth Maxwell Wynne:

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<sup>15</sup>Sallie Ann Acree, Scrapbook, Sallie Ann Acree Papers, Virginia Historical Society, 51. See also Diary of Elizabeth Wynne, 28 June 1864, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This entry reveals her desire to be loved and her fear of never finding a suitable mate. The emphasis here is on “suitable” since the education she received at the Southern Female Institute was supposed to prepare her to discern between suitable mates and ones not worth her time.

If ever I do marry, God forbid I should darken my husband's life, with a heart unresponsive to his warmth – for as to this life I desire no greater happiness than some one to love me just what I am. How my heart yearns for its home! Nobody knows the feeling of desperation which so often chills me, as I look forward to a life without this love. I have dear relations and friends, but they cannot satisfy this longing....

Lines such as “my heart yearns for its home!” demonstrate the extent of what Mary Kelley has argued concerning the concept of separate spheres. She contends that “the female person was subject to male hegemony and the female destiny was bound by the domestic sphere,” so gender was the main determining factor of status. Nevertheless, thoughts such as the earlier passage by Elizabeth Wynne expressed the desires of many young schoolwomen her age.<sup>16</sup>

More extensive proof of the continuation of the cult of domesticity and its use in female seminaries can also be found in the letter of Hallie Harris, a student at Lynchburg Female Seminary, who wrote a poem in this regard to her lover: “Do you know you asked for/ the costliest thing/ Ever made by the hand above/ A woman's heart, and a woman's life/ And a woman's wonderful love?” She further questioned, “I know I am young but the rose/ will fade/ From my soft young cheek one day/ Will you love me ‘mid

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<sup>16</sup>Diary of Elizabeth Wynne, 4 October 1870, Section 5, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This diary entry is typical of thoughts expressed by young women on the quest for suitors. See also Kelley, 65. There were few options available to young women, and their education, as well as upbringing, had pre-determined that they would eventually marry.

the falling leaves/ As you did ‘mid the bloom of May?’<sup>17</sup> In another example, the lover of Mary Elcan Grigg, a student at the Southern Female Institute, recorded his sentiments:

I am alone actuated by the purest of motives (sincere and genuine attachment)... I am so constituted by nature whenever I am deeply interested on any subject, particularly one... so delicate as this. I cannot verbally express myself as I would desire, this then is the apology I offer for adopting this method of communicating to you.... Language would fail me in the effort to portray to you the sincere affection which I might entertain and in the heart fondly cherish for you.

This love letter, like so many others, reveals the testing phase most couples went through. Just as Hallie Harris expressed her thoughts in the genre of poetry, Mary’s lover communicated his interest in an apology for his forthrightness. He could just as easily have written the following excerpt from a letter from Hallie Harris to George Ramsey: “I require all things that are grand/ and true,/ All things that a man should be;/ If you give this all I would/ stake my life/ To be all you demand of me.” Hallie adopted an openly frank tone in her love letter; however, what she may not have been able to voice in person, she could write in a letter.<sup>18</sup>

Considering the volume of letters exchanged between these couples, including Hallie Harris and George Ramsey, it is plain that the students at female seminaries hardly

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<sup>17</sup>Rothman, 200. See also Hallie Harris to George Junkin Ramsey, 25 January 1878, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. These letters appear after Sabra S. Tracy Ramsey had taken over control of the Lynchburg Female Academy and document the love affair between Hallie Harris and George J. Ramsey Jr.

<sup>18</sup>Edward L. Scrugs to Mary Elcan Grigg, no date, Folders 437-439, Elcan Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. These folders include the correspondence between Mary Elcan Grigg and Edward L. Scrugs, as well as that between Daniel Lee Powell, head of the Southern Female Institute, and the parents of Mary Elcan Grigg. See also Hallie Harris to George Junkin Ramsey, 25 January 1878, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University.

spent most of their time on schoolwork. Considering the depth of their daily schedules, it would seem impossible for them to have any free time left for correspondence. However, it is highly likely that letter and diary writing consumed much of their study periods, such as the ones between 2-4 p.m. or 7-9 p.m. Socialization was highly valued by Southerners, whether in the form of letter writing or daily contact, and courting was an integral part of that process. In her scrapbook written while at the Lynchburg Female Seminary, Elise Cabell Pirkey included a clipping entitled “My love,” with the line, “My love is just as beautiful as can be,/ Her smile is like the sunny soul of some sweet melody...” Although considered almost syrupy by twentieth-century standards, such poetry with descriptions of lovers was typical during the mid-nineteenth century. Another clipping, this one in Sallie Ann Acree’s autograph album, was entitled “A virgin,” and observed, “A virgin is the beauty of nature... she is the love of virtue... her study is holiness,... her love is charity... her life is a pilgrimage.” This homage to youthfulness defies the typical Victorian images of austerity with its amazing frankness.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in her diary, Mary Washington Cabell Early described the comments of one young suitor: “He told Russell that I had one of the most striking and interesting faces he ever saw.... I do not think it right to flirt but want to keep him on a... [smudged in entry] without committing myself in any way.” The courting ritual was played out in countless letters and diaries. The diary of Elizabeth Maxwell Wynne commented a letter from a

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<sup>19</sup>“My Love,” Scrapbook, Elise Cabell Pirkey Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This poem was written by George W. Sites, and originally published in a leading Southern journal, the Magnolia Weekly. See also the Papers of Sallie Ann Acree, Virginia Historical Society. Sallie compiled this scrapbook while being educated at Forest Home in Bedford County.

prospective suitor: “He wrote me thanking me for a little flag and used very affectionate language, so much so indeed that George to whom I showed the letter says I must answer it and tell him the language was too familiar for any gentleman to use towards any lady.” The emphasis on “any lady” refers to the reasons many Southern parents sent their daughters to school – the cultivation and refinement of their skills as ladies.<sup>20</sup>

The evolution of a courtship, as well as the reasons why Southern parents sent their daughters to female seminaries, can be traced in both generations of the Ramsey letters. By viewing courtship as a testing phase, the words of Hallie Harris to George J. Ramsey effectively communicate this idea of parental prerogative. She began with a formal greeting, according to Karen Lystra’s formula for the letter written by courting couples:

Mr. Ramsey, I have for some time past been thinking of our engagement, and cannot help but deem it a mockery of that most sacred of things – the plighted affection of two hearts. Human nature is liable to err; and two people may be mistaken as to the nature of the feeling that they entertain for each other. Such I feel has been our mistake. Believing it not too late to correct this error, I return your letter and picture; asking you to do the same. Hoping we will still be friends, I still remain, Your friend always, Hallie Harris.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Diary of Mary Washington Cabell Early, 8 December 1860, Section 15, Early Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. See also Diary of Elizabeth Wynne, 11 February 1863, Section 5, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This entry describes Elizabeth’s reaction to a letter received from Ben Rawlings while she was a student at the Southern Female Institute. For a commentary on socialization and the cultivation of the skills of a “lady,” see Stevenson, 116. Stevenson notes that parents “carefully constructed their adolescent daughters’ socialization and deliberately drew them into women’s familial, social, and religious networks.”

<sup>21</sup>Lystra, 19. See also Hallie Harris to George Junkin Ramsey, 5 August 1878, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. This letter correctly follows Lystra’s outline for the proper courting procedure, but it inverts her

A generation earlier, George Junkin Ramsey had just as much difficulty trying to court his future wife, Sabra S. Tracy. He desired to

Express the spontaneous feelings of my heart – and if these be sentimental or unmanly – I glory in such unmanliness; and feel thankful that God has given me a nature susceptible of deep and tender emotions; and no less thankful to find how naturally and spontaneously the gushing affections of your heart are welling up from its deep exhaustless fountains... I cannot love a little, and I cannot bear that coldness and reserve which I have too often witnessed in others; I have thought if I should ever through some dreadful error be united to a woman of such a temper – to one who would not spontaneously and warmly respond to my affection, and without reserve tell me the fullness of her heart – I would be miserable. How happy I am ever now, in the overwhelming evidence that you are my dearest friend, just such in this respect as I wanted you should be, I cannot express to you. I fully understand and can reciprocate I think, what you say about enjoying this blessing rather than anticipating.

Sabra, however, was a little more cautious in her approach; in a letter dated 27 April 1856, almost a year following the previously noted one from George, she remarked,

But perhaps true delicacy forbids this hearty response and I may with propriety regard you as soliciting a more intimate acquaintance rather than a pledge of enduring friendship. We are personally little known to each other, but your reputation has come this way also and confirmed the opinions of my own private judgments.

Sabra's tone was a little more cautious, and again indicative of the proper role of a lady in nineteenth-century society. Whereas George freely expressed his emotions, Sabra spoke of "true delicacy" and "propriety" in her response to him deferred to the ideology of the private realm for women and the public realm for men. If men were assigned to the public realm, that included rhetoric, and where George openly described their future,

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guidelines just slightly because this letter was written after their engagement, and well into the courtship phase of their relationship.



Sabra's response was more controlled.<sup>22</sup> She had perfected the image of modesty, one of a lady's leading virtues. Parents were quick to be sure to instill such a virtue in their daughters; Richard T. Brumby wrote his daughter in 1858, "Be calm and composed in manner. Take time to think when any emergency may seem to demand quick... action. Be kind... to your own associates." Perhaps such advice was given to Sabra Tracy as well, and this may have accounted for her deliberate tone and careful choice of words in her letter to George Ramsey. As a further example, in a clipping in Maggie J. Palmer's commonplace book, the author referred to modesty as "one of the many virtues which characterize ladies. What is more beautiful than to see a modest girl, what a contrast to the bold and vain girl who cares for nothing."<sup>23</sup>

The cultivation of young ladies into women who would be well-suited as wives and mothers was the essential goal of Southern female institutes. "The figure of the lady

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<sup>22</sup>George Junkin Ramsey to Sabra S. Tracy, 15 June 1855, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. Also consult letter, Sabra S. Tracy to George Junkin Ramsey, 27 April 1865, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. The first letter was written when George was forty years old, and the second example was written ten years later by Sabra. Many letters had flowed between the couple in the year since the first letter, but Sabra was testing George's commitment in accord with Karen Lystra's thesis that courtship was a way for women to test men's romantic attachment to them. See Lystra, 158, for more information.

<sup>23</sup>Richard T. Brumby to Ann Eliza Brumby, 1858, Ann Eliza Brumby Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This letter from father to daughter was filled with similar advice on how to remain virtuous, and is in keeping with Barbara Welters' four components of virtue: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. See Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, 21-22. Margaret J. Palmer, *Commonplace Book*, Virginia Historical Society. Maggie Palmer kept this commonplace book during the years 1859-1869 while a student at the Wesleyan Female Seminary in Staunton (and, as well, after completing her schooling).

dominated Southern ideals of womanhood,” Elizabeth Fox-Genovese observed in Within the Plantation Household. Education in the South lagged behind Northern systems, and the small, private female institutes discussed in this thesis were typical. Their autograph albums, letters, and diaries document their preparation for their futures as wives, mothers, and mistresses of households, and more specifically, their thoughts about the moment when their lives would pass from schoolgirl to one consumed by household duties. The key to understanding young Virginia women, and upper-middle class Southern women in general, can be found in the excerpts from their own writing, particularly as the culture of sentimentality progressed in the South and decreased in the North. Consequently, education for Southern women was an attempt to avoid the moniker of the “bold and vain girl who cares for nothing.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1988), 46-53. See also Jabour, “Albums of Affection,” 156-157.

## CHAPTER VI

### Achieving the “Culture of the Intellect”

Parents did not want their daughters to model themselves on the “bold and vain girl who cares for nothing”. They presumed an education would turn their daughters into models of virtue, which, they assumed, would provide their daughters with a suitable match for marriage, and in the process, provide them with a decent education. One student at Harmony Hall Seminary asked the following question in her commonplace book in September 1831, “Who knows not that a Woman’s heart finds its fullest occupation within itself? There lies the real Study – and within that narrow orbit the mirror of enchanted thought reflects the whole range of Earth and its bright beings.” Parents hoped their daughters would learn to think for themselves, but more importantly, to recognize the value of deference toward men.<sup>1</sup> The concept of self-definition was important in the formation of female friendships and in the courting process, and parents hoped that their daughter’s education would enhance their self-image and perhaps even their marketability for marriage. In her journal, Agnes Lee, a student in Abingdon, Virginia, asserted, “I conquered a good deal of my diffidence and learned to conduct myself in society with tolerable self-possession.” Furthermore, students actually wrote

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<sup>1</sup>Commonplace Book entry, September 1831, Elizabeth M. P. Nelson Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Although not written during the time period of this thesis, the articles in this commonplace book further my contention that education for women in the South was about a cultivation of the heart as well as the mind. The title page of Elizabeth’s commonplace book read, “Commenced by E. M. P. Nelson at Harmony Hall Seminary, Richmond, 1829,” and therefore provides another example of the co-existence of intellect and emotion.

compositions concerning their increasing self-knowledge. In a composition by Mary H. McVeigh, a student at the Alexandria Female Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, entitled, "The Advantages of a Good Education," it is argued, "Education consists not only in literary knowledge, but in the acquirement of such habits as form the character. There is nothing so desirable to human nature as a good education, for if a person has been well educated, he can place himself in any society whatever..."<sup>2</sup> Further proof of this desire for a well-educated female can be found in the earlier mentioned commencement address given somewhere between 1856 and 1860, in which the speaker observed, "A healthful and symmetrical development demands a culture of the heart, no less than culture of the intellect." The speaker went on to add that educating women "assumes woman capable of attaining high excellence but assigns to her a congenial department in which to seek it successfully. It puts no fetters upon her unfolding powers, circumscribes with no impossible limits, her upward and onward progress." Although an anonymous speaker, the message was clear; education for women was important; intellect and emotion could and should co-exist to help woman in her quest for "upward and onward progress."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Diary entry, 18 July 1854, Agnes Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This diary of Eleanor Agnes Lee was kept during her years as a student in Abingdon and during the Civil War as well. Begun in 1854, she described life as a student, and her observation concerning her growing sense of "self-possession" came from her education, or so she claimed. See also Papers of the Alexandria Female Seminary, Virginia Historical Society. This collection of papers includes compositions by several students, including Julia Barnes, Gertrude Wade Ashby, Isabella Atkinson, and Mary H. McVeigh. Mary's composition was the only one in this collection specifically on the value of an education.

<sup>3</sup>"Commencement Address," Anonymous, Special Collections, Duke University, 5-10. The author of this address is unknown, and even the location is questionable.

One way to further this quest for “upward and onward progress” was the continued cultivation of writing skills. As it has already been shown, the young women who attended female institutes were prolific letter writers, and often diligent keepers of autograph albums. The girls were encouraged to keep journals, and were often required to write compositions, which was often not highly anticipated. The students viewed the writing of compositions, generally a weekly requirement, with distaste. Christie Anne Farnham suggests that “compositions afforded educators an obvious opportunity to inculcate the ideology of separate spheres.” Students would often write home of their displeasure in writing compositions. For example, Mary Virginia Early Brown informed her mother, Mrs. Mary Cole Wilbur, “I have only written my composition for the first time. I have about five pages written such as it is, they are to be read by us before the Committee of Examination, and the best are to be selected from them to be read at the Exhibition.... I know that mine is but an excuse for a composition....so you had better have compassion on me and come or send someone to assist me....” Mary’s comments were also in reference to other work she had to do, but composition writing was an inescapable task as the nineteenth century progressed and more schools began to educate women.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Farnham, 76-77. Farnham argues that “students generally disliked composition,” and this contention is quite evident in the diaries and papers left behind by these women. See also Mary Virginia Early Brown to Mrs. Mary Cole Wilbur, 11 August 1840, Early Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This letter from Mary to her mother is typical. Occasionally, as Farnham observes, and as is suggested in Mary’s letter, the girls would ask family members to assist them in writing their compositions, often going so far as to ask these members to write their compositions for them.

Students were usually allowed to choose their own subjects for their compositions, and they ranged from the earlier example of “The Advantages of a Good Education” to titles such as “The Soliloquy of a Canary Bird,” a typical sentimental poem on the subject’s title, which was written 24 February 1853 by Jane Fairfax, a student at the Alexandria Female Seminary. Others touched on subjects such as religion, with titles such as “The Consolation of Religion,” or on government, with a title as simple as “Government.” The essay on religion conformed to the rules of the proper sphere for women’s writing, and began, “There is nothing so consoling as religion; it is a balm to the troubled spirit; and a cordial to the weary.” However, the essay on government crossed from the private sphere occupied by women to the public realm occupied by men with its topic of discussion, beginning with the line, “The greatest support of a nation is a good government. If we had no laws nothing could be carried on properly.” While this observation may not exactly be the mark of genius, it is remarkable that a young woman chose to express her thoughts on the world of men.<sup>5</sup>

A disinterest in the rules of grammar accompanied the distaste for writing compositions held by many students. For example, in 1850, Virginia Elizabeth Tomlinson, a student in Wheeling, Virginia, wrote, “My dearest mother, I am well and enjoying myself very well. I like the teachers and pupils all very much. I am enjoying myself much better than I expected.... Mother I think of giving up Arithmetic and

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<sup>5</sup>Alexandria Female Seminary Papers, 3-24, Virginia Historical Society. These compositions were written by students at the Alexandria Female Seminary in 1853 and bound in a book, “Specimens of the Compositions of the Pupils of the Alexandria Female Seminary selected and written by themselves, 1853.”

Grammar. I intend to study the rules of Punctuation in Brown but I do not like Kirkham's Grammar."<sup>6</sup> The grades students received on their report cards demonstrated their dislike of grammar and related subjects. Similarly, Sarah Brockenbrough (Aylett) Goodwyn, a student at the Virginia Female Institute, earned a high score in subjects such as "Abstracts of Literature," but in "English Grammar and Parsing," she received a score of "indifferent," thus indicating her lack of enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers encouraged the use of limericks and rhymes to assist their students in learning the rules of grammar. Elise Cabell Pirkey included a clipping entitled, "Grammar in a Nutshell" in her scrapbook. It included simplistic phrases such as "Three little words you often see/  
Are articles a, an, and the/  
How things are done the adverbs tell;/  
As slowly, quickly, ill  
or well/... The whole are called nine parts of speech;/  
Which reading, writing, speaking  
teach."<sup>7</sup>

In the teaching regimen of female seminaries, not only did teachers expect good writing habits, but also sufficient progress to warrant positive results on examinations. Modeled after those given in boys' academies, the style varied from school to school. Some were public, and others were open only to immediate family. All students were

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<sup>6</sup>Virginia Elizabeth Tomlinson to her mother, 19 December 1850, Section 6, Theron Hervey Bakewell Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup>Aylett Family Papers, Section 78, Virginia Historical Society. This report card was issued to Sarah in April 1879 at the Virginia Female Institute. Her scores were fine on all other subjects; her grade in grammar was the lowest grade she received. For an example of a report card, see Appendix A. For further information on the teaching of grammar, see "Grammar in a Nutshell," Scrapbook, Elise Cabell Pirkey Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This rhyme was typical of those included in grammar textbooks and used by instructors in composition and rhetoric courses.

given entrance examinations at the opening of classes in the autumn, and this contributed to the student's first impressions of the university. These preliminary examinations were intended to eliminate those students who had "inadequate training," and were usually administered orally on an individual basis. The school year usually closed with a week of examinations, which occasionally were public affairs, including family members, distinguished educators, young men from nearby schools, and anyone else who wished to attend. It was argued that these examinations were good for the academic program since preparation for their intensity forced students and teachers alike to carefully review the session's work. These sessions could last anywhere from one-to-four days, depending upon the school.<sup>8</sup> Students greeted the examinations with almost as much distaste as they did the act of writing compositions. Their distaste for examinations even led one student at the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton to refer to the school as the "Intellectual Swamp." In a letter written by a friend to fellow student Jennie E. Steane at the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute on 27 June 1857, the author commented, "We all have to be examined before the committee and I dread that so much for I will be so much frightened that I cannot recite as well as I do daily." Some schools, particularly the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute, allowed any member of the audience to question a particular student or to challenge an answer. Others were examined just by a

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<sup>8</sup>Cole, 68. Perhaps these examinations, often grueling, contributed to the high turnover rate mentioned earlier in the study. Statistics prove that only one-third of those who enrolled returned the following school year, and only one-tenth of those enrolled received diplomas. For additional information in Cole's work, see Cole, 98, for more information on retention; yet it is quite likely that there was a correlation between examinations and the retention rate. In addition, refer to Hickson, 172-173, for more information on public examinations.



committee panel of teachers and school officials, which contributed to the stress felt by students at the end of the school year. The examinations began with a roll call, with each student rising and curtsying as her name was called, followed by dialogues, music, and questioning exercises designed to demonstrate the student's knowledge of various subjects.<sup>9</sup> These public performances were in stark contrast to the private nature of the female world, and they were run with a military-style precision. Nevertheless, the examinations maintained the concept of the woman's sphere and elegance with the formality of each student curtsying in place, and the ceremonial atmosphere surrounding these examinations. The 1857 edition of the Annals of Southern Methodism for 1857 described the examination process at several Virginia female seminaries. The commentator for the commencement exercises, including the examinations, for the Danville Female College, observed that they

Consisted chiefly in stern, close, testing examination.... By the unanimous testimony of an immense crowd, the examinations were unusually close, thorough, and satisfactory; not simply a few general questions, and a few hard things got up for the occasion, but full, complete exhaustion of the subject. The young ladies had evidently been accustomed to think for themselves, there had certainly been no memorizing of answers, but instruction and discipline that enabled each to answer from an intelligent, comprehensive knowledge of the

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<sup>9</sup>Sue Roberson West, Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute: First Chartered College for Women in Virginia – A Documentary History (Charlotte, NC: Delmar Printing, 1990), 34. West collected several catalogues of the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute from 1837 to the late 1860's, as well as numerous letters from students and their families and friends. See also Farnham, 89. For the comments on the Virginia Female Institute, see the Hundley Papers, Section 3, Virginia Historical Society. This comment from Sallie Barnett can be found in the autograph album of Lucy Waller Hundley, kept while a student at the Institute from 1872-1875.

subject.... There is no longer a question as to the ability of Danville Female College; the public will regard that as a settled unquestionable fact.

Female seminaries did not advocate rote memorization, and the examinations at Danville Female College were just an example of the type of examination found in most Virginia female seminaries.<sup>10</sup> Originally reported in the 17 July 1856 issue of the Richmond Christian Advocate, more commentators discussed the examinations at the Richmond Female Institute. The author observed, “The examinations preceding the commencement were highly credible to the faculty and students, showing the thoroughness in teaching and industry and diligence in learning.”<sup>11</sup> High praise seemed to be the trend in the Annals of Southern Methodism; the 1855 edition extolled the merits of the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute, and the efforts of the girls in their examinations: “It is but simply justice, however, to remark that the essays were characterized by clearness of thought, precision of language, and propriety of sentiment; and they developed considerable acquaintance with general literature.”<sup>12</sup> This comment

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<sup>10</sup>Charles F. Deems, ed., Annals of Southern Methodism for 1857 (Nashville, Tennessee: J. B. M’Ferrin Publishers, 1858), 185. The exams at Danville Female College were typical; see Farnham, 88-89, for more information. Perhaps the routine of the examinations, with the requirement of “intelligent, comprehensive knowledge” was the precursor of the twentieth-century system.

<sup>11</sup>Charles F. Deems, ed., Annals of Southern Methodism for 1856 (Nashville, Tennessee: Stevenson and Owen, 1856), 138. This article began, “We are happy to state that the Institute is in circumstance of great prosperity, with the promise of a brilliant career in the future years of its history.”

<sup>12</sup>Charles F. Deems, ed., Annals of Southern Methodism for 1855 (New York: J. A. Gray’s Fire-Proof Printing Office, 1856), 170-171. Originally published in the 19 July 1855 edition of the Richmond Christian Advocate, the author of the article had nothing but high praise for the efforts made at Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute.

regarding “propriety of sentiment” relates to the mold of the model of virtue and piety that these female seminaries were encouraged to produce. However, as high the praise by observers may have been in regard to examinations, the participants did not share the sentiment. Winnie Faison, a student at Augusta Female Seminary in Staunton, Virginia, lamented in a letter to her mother on 2 May 1891 that she would be spending much of her time reading Butler’s Analogy, which “Mr. Murray said [it] was very hard but interesting.” She further commented, “One more week of regular school. It will be kind of holiday after the examinations begin but – I had so much rather go to school than have those awful examinations.”<sup>13</sup>

Much preparation was required for these examinations, and as the period in which the examinations would take place neared, the girls’ anxieties would increase. Sabra Ramsey, principal of the Lynchburg Female Seminary, commented in a letter to her husband that “Our girls are beginning to face the fact that examination is not far away and Mr. Edmunds says they are no longer uneasy after the bell rings. They are very willing to have the recitation prolonged.” In a letter to the parents of Mary Virginia Early, a friend warned, “Mary Virginia seems to be very low-spirited – probably the thoughts of the approaching examination and of parting with the girls has some affect on her....” It is likely that the thought of parting with friends may have had some affect on Mary, but the anxiety over her impending examinations most likely far exceeded her grief

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<sup>13</sup>Winnie Faison to Mrs. M. H. Faison, Henry William Faison Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This letter was generally on the subject of Winnie’s upcoming vacation from school, but in discussing this, she also mentioned her extreme dislike of examinations.

over parting company with friends.<sup>14</sup> Once the examinations were over, however, the girls were usually relieved; Winnie Faison put it best with her relieved observation, “I feel as though a heavy load has been lifted off my shoulders.”<sup>15</sup> The catalog of the Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia, described the examinations held at the Institute.

The object of these is to afford a fair test of the knowledge of the student, and to make it impossible to obtain a Certificate or Diploma without adequate acquaintance with the subject. The questions are written on the black-board, and the students write the answers, having no assistance from books or each other. Sufficient time is allowed them to collect their resources, and bring out their whole stock of knowledge, free from the embarrassment incident to a publick [sic] examination. The examinations take place in February and June. The first, or intermediate, embrace the subjects studied during the first half of the session. The final examinations cover the whole ground, and in the Senior Class are, together with the Intermediate, the test of graduation. An oral examination, when thought necessary, is required in addition to the written, from candidates for certificates of proficiency.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Sabra Ramsey to George Junkin Ramsey, no date given, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. This commentary, written some time in the 1870's, is included with the Ramsey Papers commenting on the effectiveness of the Lynchburg Female Seminary. Mary Elizabeth Bailey Rives to Mrs. Early, 24 May 1842, Section 6, Early Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>15</sup>Winnie Faison to parents, 22 January 1890, Henry William Faison Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Winnie, a student at the Augusta Female Seminary in Staunton, Virginia, also remarked about the failure rate on several examinations in the letter to her parents. She noted that “quite a number got excused from home from their examinations and a great many that stood failed. I don't know what I would have done if I had failed.”

<sup>16</sup>Catalogue of the Albemarle Female Institute Near Charlottesville, VA – Session 1865-66 (Richmond: Gary and Clemmitt, Printers, 1866), #5633a, Special Collections, University of Virginia. This original catalogue described the rules and regulations of the Albemarle Female Institute, and included opening words from the principal, John Hart, who also taught Moral Philosophy and Mathematicks [sic]. There were six faculty members, of which Hart was one, and only one female member, who taught in the Preparatory program along with another male teacher.

Recitations were an integral part of the examination process, as were compositions. A friend of Mary E. Davis, a student at the Petersburg Female Seminary, recorded the details of her own examination process. “I have at last completed my first examination composition and you may be sure it’s filled with beauty and intelligence; my language calculated to inspire every listener with adoration toward the composer....”<sup>17</sup>

Anxiety over examinations spilled over into anxiety over grades. Unfortunately, only random grade reports have survived, since families often kept only their student’s best reports. Report cards were just as important in the nineteenth century, and were an opportunity for female students to demonstrate that they had the capabilities to execute a formal education. Report cards were issued twice a year, at mid-year and after final examinations, but monthly reports were issued at most schools. For example, monthly reports were issued every third, sixth, and eleventh months at the Alexandria Female Seminary, where Julia B. Whiting was a student in 1855. Most schools did not issue letter grades, but rather, assigned numerical evaluations for the categories they devised. At the Alexandria Female Seminary, the categories included the number of perfect recitations; the number of nearly perfect recitations; the number of pretty good recitations; the number of recitations considered failures; and the number of missed recitations. These evaluations were applied to the various subject areas, such as Reading, in which Julia made 7 perfect and 4 nearly perfect recitations; or Geography, in which

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<sup>17</sup>“Jennie” to Mary E. Davis, 23 June 1853, Davis Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia. See specifically the Mary E. Davis Papers, 1850-1863, especially this letter, written in Petersburg, Virginia, Special Collections, University of Virginia.

she had 39 perfect recitations, or Chemistry, in which she had 10 perfect recitations. The student's progress was also usually noted on the report card, as in the comment on Julia's of an improvement from "good" to "very good," or the comment on a report card of Winnie Faison at the Augusta Female Seminary of "Winnie continues to study well," or "Winnie studies well, and is well." Since female seminaries proposed to educate the whole person, including the cultivation of a healthy person, and not just the intellect, comments such as "Winnie... is well" were nothing out of the ordinary.<sup>18</sup>

Report cards received at the end of the year usually referenced the final examinations. For example, Georgia B. Grinnan, a student at the Southern Female Institute in Richmond received the following report card for the session 1853-54, "Miss Georgia S. Bryan having been distinguished by attaining to the first Division in the Senior Class in the School of Natural and Moral Philosophy at the final Examination for the Session of 1853-54; the Instructors, in Testimony thereof, have conferred on her this certificate...." In this case, Georgia Bryan not only received the typical year-end report card, but her diploma, which occurred in slightly over ten percent of the cases of female attendants. It is worth noting that Georgia "majored" in natural and moral philosophy, the driving force at Virginia female institutes, while Mary Lou Yancey, studying at the Virginia Female Institute, desired to graduate and pursue senior level courses. However,

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<sup>18</sup>DeButts Family Papers, Section 21, Virginia Historical Society. These papers concern the education of Julia B. Whiting at the Alexandria Female Seminary for the year 1855. See also Henry William Faison Papers, Folder 39, Southern Historical Collection. In addition, see Hickson, 214, for more explanation of the grade reports. See Appendix C for a sample grade report.

in order to elect this option, she would have to spend more time on academic, rather than ornamental studies. In a letter to her mother, she commented, “If I study all of the studies of the Senior Class, it will be impossible for me to take drawing and painting. I believe I prefer the Senior, although it will require hard application.” She received permission from the principal, R. H. Phillips, later in October, and on her monthly report, he wrote, “Miss Mary Lou studies with ease and recites beautifully. She can accomplish the course of the class she is in and the more important studies of the Intermediate.”<sup>19</sup> Completion of a course or a full load of studies at the seminary was very important to parents, and certificates such as the above and the following for Sarah Ramsey of the Lynchburg Female Seminary demonstrate that students interested in the academic areas strove for excellence. On 15 June 1877, Sarah Ramsey received her diploma with the words, “Miss Sarah E. Ramsey having completed by a satisfactory examination the course of German History and Natural Science here taught is declared a GRADUATE in the same, and is entitled to this CERTIFICATE....” Attempts to attain perfection, however, often met with roadblocks, as Mary Lou Yancey cautioned her parents in an 1869 letter:

We have completed three of our studies, and will soon finish another. The daily recitation I can prepare with ease, but it requires considerable study to make good examinations. I would like so much to receive a perfect report; it is provoking that Mr. Therry [her French teacher] won't give higher marks; he says no American deserves perfect....

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<sup>19</sup>Grinnan Family Papers, Section 10, Virginia Historical Society. Included in this folder are the papers of Mrs. Delia Bryan Page, sister of Georgia Screven (Bryan) Grinnan, as well as the report cards of Georgia S. Bryan while she was a student at the Southern Female Institute. Mary Lou Yancey to her mother, 10 October 1868, Folder 46, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection. This letter is from Mary Lou Yancey, who is also referred to as Mamie Lou or Marnie Lou in letters from her family.

Nevertheless, her grades were enough to warrant praise from her parents: “We are much pleased...at your continuous good reports...so you are improving yourself in every branch or department....you are still winning golden opinions....continue thus, my dear child, and after years, will show the wisdom of your courses.”<sup>20</sup>

Praise for both the student and the school was a highly desirable commodity. The Ramsey letters were full of commendations for excellent work. After all, seminaries thrived on the recommendations of others. One parent praised Sabra Ramsey in 1877 that she was convinced “that parents may safely confide their daughters to you, expecting them to receive that thorough mental and moral training, which will fit them to adorn the home.” The comment on the preparation of the girls for a “thorough mental and moral training” is significant for the “training” they received could only better outfit them to “adorn the home,” thus making them true emblems of the cult of true womanhood. An education would serve the purpose of allowing women to cultivate their minds, but only to a certain extent since a “thorough mental and moral training” was much more important.<sup>21</sup> Further praise for the Lynchburg Female Seminary noted its “course of study” was “eminently thorough,” and the teachers had “few equals and no superiors in

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<sup>20</sup>Report Card, 15 June 1877, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. In this certificate issued at the end of the year, the principal Sabra Tracy Ramsey graduated Sarah Ramsey in the subjects of German History and Natural Science. Mary Lou Yancey to her parents, 16 January 1869, Folder 48, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Mrs. Yancey to Mary Lou, 8 January 1869, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection. This letter was written upon receipt of Mary Lou’s latest monthly report.

<sup>21</sup>R. S. Dabney to Sabra Ramsey, 29 June 1877, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University.



qualification, by knowledge and experience, for the stations they so highly adorn.”

Others, including T. D. Witherspoon from Petersburg, Virginia, praised the quality of instruction and atmosphere as conducive to educating the minds of females: “those who desire to find for their daughters a location in a healthful climate, where thorough education and kindly home influence will be afforded, will not go amiss in entrusting them to Mrs. Ramsey and her valuable corps of assistants.” This “kindly home influence” reflects the importance of the “cult of true womanhood” incorporated into the daily routine at Virginia female institutes. Other notable persons, such as the Reverend D. W. Shanks from Buffalo Forge, Virginia, praised Sabra Ramsey’s efforts in running the school: “in my judgment a parent could not entrust a daughter to safer and better hands,” or the following from a Mr. Sewaine from Baltimore, Massachusetts, whose daughter attended the school. “No one, in my opinion, can be better qualified for the position she holds as principal than is Mrs. Ramsey, and I am sure she is ably seconded by Professor Edmunds.”<sup>22</sup>

The quality of instruction offered by the Lynchburg Female Seminary was apparently matched by other schools in Virginia, most notably the others mentioned in

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<sup>22</sup>Testimonials from Parents, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, 1877-1879, Special Collections, Duke University. These testimonials went on for pages regarding the excellent teaching procedures at the Lynchburg Female Seminary. Mr. Sewaine further commented that “this institution has already attained an honorable place assuming its sister seminaries and will surely become more widely and favorably [known], as the genial and thorough culture of its graduates increasingly testify to the superior advantages it offers.” Just what these “superior advantages” were is not delineated, but the overwhelming tone of confidence these parents had in the efforts made by Sabra Ramsey, her husband, and fellow professors indicate the success of the school.

this study. In June 1869, just before the founding of the Lynchburg Female Seminary, George Junkin Ramsey commented in a letter to his wife, “I introduce it will be the general remark that all real teaching consists in two things, the means used by the teacher to impart and impress and the means, which he makes the people use, to acquire and understand and practice it – if it be practical knowledge.” This statement was interesting on two accounts. First, George uses the pronoun “he” to describe the members of the teaching profession, which, by 1869, had already begun to turn the tide into becoming a more predominant female vocation than earlier in the nineteenth century, when the profession had been dominated by males. Second, his observation expressed a genuine interest in the goals of teaching: “to impart and impress” knowledge upon unsuspecting minds. Apparently, the enthusiasm for teaching which George Ramsey looked for in his teaching staff could be found in other institutions, and communicated itself to the students. Students wrote letters to parents and friends expressing their delight at a new discovery just as often as they complained about a certain task, such as the previously mentioned examination process. On 24 March 1885, Evelyn Russell Early, a student at a nearby Lynchburg seminary, informed her mother: “Miss Jean is teaching us a piece of poetry called Robert of Lincoln. It is right long. There is a brother and sister going to school in our room, and one morning in arithmetic the sister put on her slate rong, the brother put on his slate wright. The sister’s was right and the brother was wrong.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>George Junkin Ramsey to Sabra Ramsey, 27 June 1869, George Junkin Ramsey Papers, Special Collections, Duke University. This letter, addressed “My precious wife,” describes the process of assembling a quality teaching staff, and the requirements for a good teacher. Evelyn Russell Early to her mother, 24 March 1885, Section 17, Early

Other students wrote home with a desire to remain at school. For example, Hortensia H.

Harris, a student at the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute, told her father,

When I am at home, I feel as dull, and stupid, I imagine, as it is possible for me to feel...if you will let me continue at school, I'll take exercise daily, and study as I have been doing, as you think that is so hard, and leave off Latin, if you insist upon it – though I think there is no use, as it will not be long before I stop French, and I have ample time for...study, and always lay my books aside before the study bell rings at night. If I could fall down on my knees before you, I would think there was more probability of having all the wishes gratified..., and all I can say in my defense is on this little piece of paper, which is no sooner read than thrown aside, and perfectly deaf to all that is said, is contradicted, and has no capabilities to defend itself.<sup>24</sup>

This rather unusual plea to remain at school was somewhat atypical, although some parents (i.e., fathers) allowed their daughters to attend female seminaries only for a limited time, and often at the advice of their wives and female relatives. In the case of Hortensia Harris, her father only wished her to remain at the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute for one year, and then to return home to assume her domestic obligations. Other students, however, would probably have gladly wished for the opportunity to return home and leave behind the labor of an education. Fanny Swan, a student at Edgeworth Female Seminary, wrote her friend Virginia Elizabeth Tomlinson of Wheeling, Virginia, that “I expect to stay here two years and then I will be done! Done!

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Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This letter from Evelyn Russell Early to her mother was written from Lynchburg.

<sup>24</sup>Hortensia H. Harris to James Harris, 13 February 1857, Allen Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

Done! Or at least as done as I want to be. [F]or I will not graduate any way they can fix it.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Fanny Swan to Virginia “Ginny” Elizabeth Tomlinson, 8 November 1857, Section 7, Theron Hervey Bakewell Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Fanny may have represented many of the female students with her apathy towards receiving an education. See also the catalogue of the Tappahannock Female Seminary for information on the demerit system. “Tappahannock Seminary on the Rappahannock River or Tappahannock Female Seminary: The School and Register of Students of Mrs. Lucy Yates Wellford Gray, 1818-1860,” Miscellaneous Papers #517, Unit 40, Southern Historical Collection.

## CHAPTER VII

### Daily Life in a Female Seminary

The daily routine of the female seminary was quite involved, and its intensity may have left some students feeling overwhelmed. It is inconsequential whether or not seminaries kept written rules; some of the rules were passed via word-of-mouth and students knew better than to bypass them or receive demerits. As the catalogue for the Tappahannock Female Seminary noted, “Concise and conscientious observance of the above indispensable regulations will secure for the pupil commendation upon the monthly record, and at the close of the term the badge of Honorable – all omission will be entered as positive demerit.” A demerit and punishment system was usually enforced; for example, Elizabeth Maxwell Wynne described the extra assignments some students were given as punishment for less than meritorious behavior: “The girls are now reciting their poetry. Rosalie has 300 lines and Georgie fifteen for leaving her keys out. She has never had any before. The girls were so dreadfully bad this week, that Mr. Powell gave us a long lecture after confession, and made those who had violated the rules, keep regular study hours until they knew their tasks.”<sup>1</sup> The morning prayer meetings, usually held around 6 a.m., preceded breakfast, and immediately following breakfast, students either attended classes or studied until the noon dinner hour, the largest meal of the day.

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<sup>1</sup>Diary entry, 10 January 1863, Section 5, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. This entry expressed relief on Elizabeth’s part that she had not been included in this punishment since she returned to the Southern Female Institute following the Christmas break of 1862-63 a little later than the other students.

Afterwards, students again either went to classes or studied until four p.m., when there was usually a period of supervised exercise, usually daily walks, which were then followed by supper, study hour, and evening prayers. Most schools observed this routine, concluding with lights out around 10 p.m. This “lights out” time is explained in the catalogue of the Tappahannock Female Seminary: “All unnecessary noise is strictly forbidden in the parlors, through the hall, and in the chambers, -- the hour of retiring nine o’clock, -- the candle or lamp to be delivered to the attending servant by 10 o’clock P.M.” The inclusion of exercise was not only for health matters, but as Johansen pointed out, also served the practical purpose of promoting the school. Other forms of exercise included calisthenics and tennis.<sup>2</sup> In her journal, Elizabeth Maxwell Wynne described a typical daily routine:

This morning I wasted my time by reading Robert Graham, I now here, in the presence of my journal say, that I will not read another novel till the first of next October unless it be either one of Sir Walter Scott’s, Bulwar’s, or Dickens’ or try some other very celebrated writer.... On Monday next or at farthest the first day of June 1863, I intend to reise [sic] at four or half past, the first  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour to be devoted to dressing, the next half to reading my bible, and from then until breakfast to studying. After breakfast as soon as possible to go to studying and keep regular study hours as far as possible for four whole hours. Then sewing comes in from one till dinner. If my hour is not practiced before dinner, it must be sometime during the evening, and the evening can be devoted to any amusement I wish.... Saturday is to be a holiday from all studying except reading history unless some lesson has been neglected during the week, in which case it must be prepared on Saturday morning. No lesson is to be merely read over or imperfectly forgotten, for then it must also be rectified on Saturday. Clothes to be

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<sup>2</sup>Hickson, 160-161. See also Johansen, 217 and Bowman, 17-18. This letter explained Mary Virginia’s condition. For an explanation of the “lights out” policy, see the catalogue of the Tappahannock Female Seminary, Miscellaneous Papers #517, Unit 40, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. See Appendix A for a mock daily schedule of activities for students at Virginia female seminaries.

looked over and mended, drawers and c [sic] cleaned out, and other little domestic duties on Saturday also. Draw when I have time (everyday).

Elizabeth's schedule most certainly indicated a disconnect between rules and actuality; she seemed to have created her own rules regarding when she studied and when she worked on domestic tasks. It is even more intriguing to focus on the areas that she appeared to value more, including reading and domestic duties. She had high ambitions, including "regular study hours" for "four whole hours," but gave no indication in her journal as to whether or not she followed her goals.<sup>3</sup> The catalogue for the Tappahannock Female Seminary included various regulations required of the students. For example, students were expected to rise early, although the hour was unspecified. "Regulation 1<sup>st</sup>: Each pupil is to rise sufficiently early to be in the School Room for the required hour of study in the morning." Furthermore, in accordance with the rules of domesticity, students were not allowed to go out on excursions without supervision, hence the following provision: "Regulation 3<sup>rd</sup>: No pupil to go abroad on errands or otherwise without permission – pay no visits except on Friday or Saturday evenings; -- returning in all cases by 9 o'clock P.M."<sup>4</sup> The regulations at all Southern female

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<sup>3</sup>Diary entry, 25 June 1862, Section 5, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Elizabeth was a student at the Southern Female Institute, and this entry was written at the age of sixteen.

<sup>4</sup>Catalogue of the Tappahannock Female Seminary, Miscellaneous Papers #517, Unit 40, Southern Historical Collection. This catalogue was compiled and published in book format in Williamsburg in 1981 by James Mason Grove, who dedicated this work "to the memory of all the students and scholars, now long dead, and their virtuous mentor, Lucy Yates Wellford Gray; and to their descendants, living and dead, who make up, altogether, a very large 'family,' spiritual and physical." It is possible that the survival of this record of Tappahannock is unique in all of Virginia for a school established prior to 1860.

seminaries were not meant to restrict, as the following words from principal John Hart of the Albemarle Female Institute demonstrate,

In managing the... affairs of the school, I try to be governed by the principle, that the girls who board with me, are as members of my family for the time, entitled to everything needed for genuine comfort, as well in respect of ordinary fare, as in respect of the furniture and arrangement of their rooms, and attendance of servants.... As to discipline, and the regulation of the general conduct of students, my experience shows that much more depends on the sort of training and example that girls have had at home, than on 'rules of school.'<sup>5</sup>

The stipulations surrounding the permissible activities of students at Virginia female seminaries spilled over into their personal lives as well. Schools kept careful tabs on the girl's interest in the opposite sex, and frowned on unchaperoned interaction between the sexes. Rules stipulated that young women attending the various seminaries would not be allowed to have contact with young men. Nevertheless, by restricting the amount of contact their students could have with the opposite sex, the educators at female seminaries may have unwittingly encouraged more outrageous behavior. As Shirley Ann Hickson observes, educators realized they could not control their student's interest in the opposite sex.<sup>6</sup> Falling in love, however, could not be controlled, and with the new ideas of companionate marriages, romantic love was regarded as compulsory in a relationship.

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<sup>5</sup>"Catalogue of the Albemarle Female Institute near Charlottesville, VA – Session 1865-66," (Richmond: Gary and Clemmitt, Printers, 1866), 7, Special Collections, University of Virginia. Founded by the Baptist Church, the Albemarle Female Institute highly valued moral progress, and John Hart's statement clearly demonstrates his interest in respecting the moral fortitude of the woman's sphere, and cultivating that in his students.

<sup>6</sup>Hickson, 168. Hickson provides an example from Hollins Institute (later College), and then on page 235, describes how schools often turned their students into "incurable romantics" by forbidding contact with the opposite sex.



Romantic love was a means to an end – marriage. As noted earlier, courtship was an integral part of a young woman’s life, and her education was meant to be preparation for this event. However, just what was the impact of an education on the marriage decision? The important question concerns how attendants of female seminaries felt after completing their tenure at a female seminary. As Shirley Ann Hickson explains, in order to determine the accurate impact of education on the girl’s future decisions, it was important to measure the accomplishments of the education received against the goals of educators, particularly as advertised in newspapers by the schools themselves or as advertised by education reformers.<sup>7</sup> After receiving their education, women still received mixed signals; were they supposed to use their education to their advantage or let it go to waste? Since education for women in the South was primarily for purposes of perfecting oneself in the domestic sphere, the following excerpt from Julia Door’s Bride and Bridegroom: A Series of Letters to a Young Married Couple was apropos. Door noted that women should make a point of trying to read something everyday in order to maintain an active mind, at least “a half a dozen stanzas of some fine poem, [or] a single chapter of vital, stimulating prose.” However, they should restrict themselves to these subjects, rather than “profound works of science or philosophy”. By advocating literary subjects, i.e., less scientific subjects, Door appeared to suggest that perhaps women would be unable to master the sciences. In the 1860 edition of Godey’s Lady’s Book and

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<sup>7</sup>For further explanation of falling in love as a basis for the companionate marriage, see Rothman, 107. For more discussion of the impact of education in terms of goals versus accomplishments, see Hickson, 263.

Magazine, in a section on the Troy Female Seminary, the author commented that “No young lady expects to become an engineer, nor to devote her precious time and the fine powers of her intellect to the elucidation of those sciences that pertain to man’s department of industrial pursuits.” The implication here is one of separate spheres; the man’s world was the more rational, or scientific, world, while the woman’s “precious” time would be better spent in cultivating the finer arts. The author does not deny a woman’s intellect, but rather denigrates it to certain areas only.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Julia Door, Bride and Bridegroom: A Series of Letters to a Young Married Couple (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1873), 663-665. She did not encourage women to venture out of their proper sphere regardless of the level of education they had achieved. Similarly, the author of the section entitled “Troy Female Seminary” in Godey’s Lady’s Book argued that women needed to remain in their proper sphere, and not waste their “precious” time in the man’s world. See “Troy Female Seminary,” Godey’s Lady’s Book 61: 369.

## CONCLUSION

The ideology of separate spheres, strong in the North, was fundamental in the preservation of the Southern lifestyle. T. S. Arthur, the author of an advice book for all young American women, Advice to Young Ladies on their Duties and Conduct in Life, argued that sexual differences between men and women were too strong even for an educated woman to overcome. He contended,

Man has a will and an understanding; and so has a woman; - that both are thinking and loving beings, but that in one the understanding or intellect preponderates, and in the other the will or affections; and therefore to claim mental equality is absurd. *A man is not equal to a woman, nor a woman equal to a man* (italics mine). As to the question of superiority, we leave that for others to decide; merely stating, however, that the will has reference to good, and the understanding to truth; the affections regarding quality or good, and the understanding being merely the discriminating power by which truth is perceived.

Arthur's commentary bowed to the predominant mores of the concept of separate spheres; the image of the pious woman included her piety, benevolence, education, and accomplishments, attributes for women, not men. Hence, Arthur's statement that "*a man is not equal to a woman, nor a woman equal to a man*" can be understood in light of this prevailing viewpoint. His observation, "the will has reference to the good," is a direct image of woman's goodness.<sup>1</sup> Considering Arthur's comments, and the notation that his point-of-view represented much of Southern society, particularly Virginia parents, it was not surprising that Southern parents who encouraged their daughters to pursue an education did so because it would enhance their matrimonial prospects. Parents fully

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur, 129. See also Farnham, 102.

expected the female institutions to act as a home-like environment and nurture behavior necessary for domesticity. As Margaret Ripley Wolfe comments, female educational institutions “tended to eschew independent thinking for indoctrination. Indeed, female seminaries and academies fostered the established values that kept women subordinate to men.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, this thesis has tried to demonstrate that although the ideology of domesticity was the prevailing trend, attendants at these educational institutions did cultivate minds of their own. Their letters, diaries, and autograph albums reveal women with strong minds, and while there were certainly many who fit the stereotype of the “Southern Belle,” just as many were serious about receiving a proper education. Nevertheless, despite their interest in education, marriage was of enormous importance in their lives. I would argue that the level of education consequently had little influence over marriage; it may have postponed the women’s desire for an immediate marriage in the South, but the South, particularly Virginia, still inculcated the ideology of the Southern Belle. As Anne Firor Scott figures, “The persistence of the complementary images of the soft, submissive, perfect woman, and of the strong, commanding, intelligent, and dominant man in the face of an exigent reality that often called for quite different qualities suggests that these images had deep significance for the men and women who believed in them.”<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the indisputable fact remains that

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<sup>2</sup>Wolfe, 97. As the editor of this volume, Charles P. Roland, noted in his “Editor’s Preface,” “No tenet in the southern mythology has been more pervasive or persistent than that of the existence of the distinctive southern woman.” See page ix for more of Roland’s comments.

<sup>3</sup>Scott, 21. Despite the mythical qualities of the Southern Belle, girls could be easily discouraged by their real-life experiences, and an education, although usually a

education in the South was primarily for purposes of matrimony. An anonymous author in the July 1860 edition of Godey's Lady's Book argued that "the true object of female education is to fit woman for properly and gracefully performing those duties, moral, social, and physical, that God and society make incumbent upon her...."<sup>4</sup>

The "true object" of a Southern education, on most accounts, was in fact, to enhance a young woman's matrimonial chances by perfecting the four "cardinal virtues" discussed by Barbara Welter in Dimity Convictions, namely, piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. Even more important was the opportunity to cultivate a sense of self-worth that an education afforded to young women. In their diaries and letters, they expressed their own thoughts, or essentially, their self-worth,<sup>5</sup> and this newfound self-worth, along with the importance of female friendships and the familial atmosphere of the female institutions, promoted a new sense of identity. By looking at letters and diaries, the importance of this trend, including the ability to think for oneself and the increased role of autonomy, is undeniable. All three trends were certainly the result of higher education for Virginia women, and it was not until the turn of the century that there were

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preparation for matrimony, was essential to defining their sense of self-worth. The Victorian concept of love was based on the ideal self, and a Southern woman's education furthered that concept along with the myth of the Southern belle.

<sup>4</sup>Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine 61(July 1860): 557. This article emphasized the purposes of female education, and corroborates the arguments in this thesis.

<sup>5</sup>Welter, Dimity Convictions, 21-22. For an explanation of the relationship between diaries and self-worth, see Margo Culley, ed., A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to Present (New York: The Feminist Press, City University of New York, 1985), 3-8. Diaries allowed nineteenth-century women to define themselves and create a sense of self-worth, independent of masculine influence.

any real indication that their education made them think twice about marriage. The papers of students who attended the Virginia Female Institute, the Buckingham Female Collegiate Institute, the Albemarle Female Institute, and the Lynchburg Female Seminary, among others, indicated that their education did not necessarily delay their marriages for more than one-to-three years. Other than benevolent volunteer work, or perhaps teaching, Virginia women had few options until near the turn of the century. Their education, however, cultivated a sense of self-worth, as well as increased literacy in the South.

Since matrimonial pursuits were all-important, Christie Anne Farnham even goes so far as to contend that “the desire for marriage as the only socially approved state for young women forced them to develop strategies to gain masculine attention.” Since boarding schools prohibited contact with young men, the lifestyle of the elite and upper middle class young woman included numerous opportunities to interact with young men, specifically balls and parties. In fact, the years between education and marriage were actually given a name; the behavior of young women was not just flirting, but it was known as “flying around,” and this testing period could lead to courting and perhaps courtship. In some ways, perhaps the parents of young Southern women allowed their daughters this period of freedom, because marriage meant a whole new set of responsibilities. Marriage ultimately meant a loss of control for the young woman, and it was her ultimate decision in life. Whatever decision she made would set the course of her entire future. The duties and demands of a society inhibited by the ideology of

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separate spheres would mean that, once married, the young woman gave up her autonomy and independence.<sup>6</sup> During the period 1850-1890, marriage, next to motherhood, was the most important step a young woman could make; an ideal woman defined herself in terms of familial relationships, as wife, mother, daughter, sister.

To test the relationship between education and marriage, in 1902, the journal Education investigated the contribution women had made in society by the turn of the century, and more importantly, how their education had prepared them for society. The survey included women who attended school during the 1850-1890 period. Although specifically geared to Northern women, the questions asked were most interesting. They ranged from an attempt to determine the student's academic interest areas, whether or not "household economics" was a part of the curriculum; whether or not education had an affect on view of marriage, and more importantly, whether an education increased or diminished a young woman's chances for marriage. Of the young women whose observations were included in this thesis fall into the former category, corroborating the points-of-view of Julia Door. But this also reflects the variety and range of subject matter offered in Northern schools in comparison to the subjects taught in Southern female seminaries. The South emphasized the cultivation of the "true" woman, emphasizing the domestic arts, whereas the Northern systems by the second half of the nineteenth century had begun to treat domestic and intellectual subjects with almost equal emphasis.

Most of the young women, not surprisingly, expressed an interest in literature and language, but the next highest percentage included the sciences, which would contradict

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<sup>6</sup>Farnham, 172-175; Laas, 37.

the point-of-view of those, such as Julia Door, who discouraged the pursuit of the sciences. Most of those interviewed believed that their education had led them to see a greater value in domesticity and related duties. Answers to the effect of education on matrimony ranged from “I always felt that a wife and mother needed as good an education as a single woman,” thus expressing an avocation of the ideals of domesticity, while others observed that education “raised one’s ideals of what it [marriage] should be, and made a poor choice impossible.” Both of these comments supported the goals of Southern educators in encouraging women to attend school, although the following critique, that education “showed that matrimony was not the only thing to be desired and should not be one’s sole ambition” would most certainly have been discouraged by Southern educators. The general consensus, however, was that education brought women into contact with members of both sexes and made them better wives, better homemakers, and better companions. Ultimately, this survey concluded that an education increased a woman’s sense of self-worth,<sup>7</sup> thereby corroborating my thesis that education for the young Virginia schoolgirl promoted a sense of self-worth, but did not drastically delay marriage considerations. Further increasing a sense of self-worth was the feeling of accomplishment when a young woman entered uncharted territory. Although the stereotype of the “Southern Belle” may be just that – a stereotype – the young Virginia woman often tended to focus on the ornamental arts and literature. Preparing to receive a diploma often took more time than a young woman was willing to commit. Nevertheless,

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<sup>7</sup>Annie T. Allen, “The Economic Relation of the College Woman to Society,” Education (February 1902): 1-8.



there were exceptions, as in the case of Winnie Faison, a student at Augusta Female Seminary, whose observation, “if I do desire to obtain a diploma, I shall have to devote quantities of time to study. All of the girls think it will require a very great exertion to gain our diplomas” separated her from most of her Southern counterparts. Yet she, and others like her, defied the cult of domesticity and intertwined upper level courses dealing with subjects as varied as conic sections, astronomy, physical geography, Bible history, or dictation, with the more common emphases on grammar, penmanship, history, and mental or moral science.<sup>8</sup> Completion of coursework, or graduation for some females, meant passing into a new stage of life, leaving behind the carefree days of a schoolgirl and embarking on womanhood. This new era was perhaps best expressed by Elizabeth Maxwell Wynne, upon graduating from the Southern Female Institute in Richmond:

School has closed, friends have gone, and I am about to enter into the world as a grown lady. The reflection is by no means pleasant, for my school life has been too happy to suppose for a moment that it will last much longer; but everybody has been so kind that I ought to feel in some manner repaid for my trouble. I can never forget the last few days of my school life, so long as I live....<sup>9</sup>

The memories of the past form an important part of social history. With its task of providing illumination of the ordinary lives of women. Suzanne Lebsack has argued that we cannot “develop a comprehensive vision of the past unless we study the lives of

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<sup>8</sup>Mary Lou Yancey to her parents, 6 October 1868, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection. This letter originally concerned her music lessons, but it soon evolved into a discussion of graduation requirements. The numbers of females graduating with diplomas increased as the century waned.

<sup>9</sup>Diary entry, 1 July 1863, Section 5, Wynne Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Elizabeth began her tenure at the Southern Female Institute at the age of 14 in the fall of 1860, and graduated at the age of “17 years and 3 ½ months old” in July of 1863.

ordinary people.” The study of diaries, letters, and autograph books reveals the existence of an entirely different story. The female institutions in Virginia were essentially extensions of the family setting, and the willingness of parents to send their daughters to school indicated a new trend in the period of 1850 to 1890. Despite the development of the ideology of separate spheres, an education allowed a young woman to cultivate a sense of self worth, which she communicated in the diaries, letters, and autograph books she created. Education for women promoted intellectual development, but there was no mistaking the fact that the education for a young Virginia woman meant only one thing, the opportunity to further her matrimonial prospects. Contrary to female education in the North, education in the South continued to further ideological foundations, such as the cult of true womanhood or separate spheres, thus representing the ambivalent attitudes towards education for women in the South. A distinctive woman’s culture, however, emerged, and it was this culture that made the young women of the Southern Female Institute, the Albemarle Female Institute, the Virginia Female Institute, the Lynchburg Female Seminary, and the Buckingham Female Institute so memorable. Their willingness to pursue an education laid the foundations for future generations, and while their options after completing their schooling were narrowed only to one (marriage), their education inspired a legacy of self-respect and allowed them to shape their lives. The interconnectedness of the Southern female social networks, families, and education allowed the South to hold onto its celebrated ideologies and symbols as an expression of a distinct Southern culture, including the realm of education for women.

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**APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE OF DAILY ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS AT VIRGINIA FEMALE SEMINARIES**

6 a.m.	Rising Bell
7 a.m.	Breakfast
7:45 a.m.	Study Bell
8:45 a.m.	Scripture Reading and Morning Prayers
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Study and Recitation
1 – 2 p.m.	Dinner
2 – 4 p.m.	Study and/ or Recitation
4 – 5 p.m.	Recreation
5 – 6 p.m.	Supper/ Tea
6 – 7 p.m.	Evening Prayer
7 – 9 p.m.	Study Period
9:45 p.m.	Lights Bell
10 p.m.	Lights out

This schedule was based on papers from students at the Buckingham Female Seminary, Alexandria Female Institute, Lynchburg Female Seminary, and the Southern Female Institute, as well as the assistance of a 1938 doctoral dissertation by Raymond Bowman.

**APPENDIX B: TUITION AND EXPENSES FOR A TYPICAL SCHOOL YEAR, LASTING 9 ½ MONTHS**

Tuition:	\$155
Music lessons and use of piano for practice:	\$ 66
Board, excluding costs for fuel, lights, and washing:	\$220
Cost for fuel, lights, and washing (always extra):	\$ 30
<b>Total Expenses Incurred:</b>	<b>\$471</b>

These figures represent an average composite of expenses incurred for tuition, room and board, and miscellaneous items for one year as a student at Virginia female seminary. Prices could range from \$300 to as much as \$600 per year depending on the school and services offered.

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF A REPORT CARD ISSUED TO A STUDENT AT A VIRGINIA FEMALE INSTITUTION

The grading criteria is as follows:

10	Highest mark possible
9	Very good
8	Good
7	Medium
5	Indifferent
0	Failure

Students were also graded in the areas of deportment, including conduct, diligence, neatness, and attendance.

Conduct:	10
Diligence:	10
Neatness:	10
Attendance:	10

School of Literature and History:

Mythology:	7 10/11
Abstracts of Literature:	9
English Grammar and Parsing:	5 1/3
Graham's Synonyms:	9

School of Mathematics:

Algebra:	7 5/7
Arithmetic:	8

School of Languages:

Elocution:	8.5
Calisthenics:	8

General:

Biblical Literature:	8 1/3
Writing:	9 1/4

Signed, "Very Respectfully, R.H. Phillips, Principal"

For more information on this report card, issued to Sallie B. Aylett in April 1879, see the Aylett Family Papers at the Virginia Historical Society.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OF WOMEN OCCUPIED AS TEACHERS IN  
BUCKINGHAM COUNTY ACCORDING TO THE 1860 CENSUS

NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	BIRTHPLACE (if stated)
Florance Ford	20	F	Teacher	England
Mary Steele	22	F	Teacher	New York
Martha J. Bryant	16	F	Teacher	
Tracy F. Mathews	18	F	Teacher	
Ellen (smudged name)	35	F	Teacher	New York
Louisa Garrett	25	F	Teacher	
Mary Ellen Fitz	18	F	Teacher	
Marcia K. (smudged)	20	F	Teacher	VA
Bettie Blair	17	F	Teacher	
C.L. (smudged)	21	F	Teacher	
L.A. Spashaank	21	F	Teacher	MA
Bonnie Bolt	25	F	Teacher	MD
Martha W. Cobbs	22	F	Teacher	VA
Sarah Halley (?)	21	F	Teacher	VA
Mary (smudged)	21	F	Teacher	VA
Ann (smudged)	17	F	Teacher	VA
Leanah Ferguson	35	F	School Teacher	VA
Lane Roberts	40	F	Teacher	VA
Frances Garrett (?)	23	F	Teacher	VA
Mildred (smudged)	25	F	Teacher	VA
Emma Morton	20	F	Teacher	PA
Lauren Hicock (?)	25	F	Teacher	
William J. Banken	16	M	Teacher	
Augusta Cobbs	60	M	Teacher	
L.H. Tofel	19	M	Teacher	
Walter Garden	21	M	Teacher	
L.G. Cullingworth	20	M	Teacher	
Robert L. Hubbard	21	M	Schoolteacher	VA
F. Reynolds	22	M	S. Teacher	DE
George M. (smudged)	43	M	S. Teacher	VA
Albert Cobbs	42	M	S. Teacher	VA
Garland Hanes	28	M	Teacher	VA
Garland Hilbrook (?)	21	M	Teacher	VA
George Baker	30	M	Teacher	VA

This portion of the 1860 census from Buckingham County, arranged by sex, provides a sample of the occupations of many of the females in Buckingham County. See the University of Virginia, Alderman Library, for microfilm of the 1860 census for Virginia.

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 DeButts Family Papers  
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 Elcan Family Papers  
 Grinnan Family Papers  
 Lucy Waller Hundley Autograph Album  
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