

1998

## "A Good Book is a Blessing": The Life and Reading of Frances Whittle Lewis in Antebellum America

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### Recommended Citation

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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-c212-6r89>

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**“A GOOD BOOK IS A BLESSING:”**

**THE LIFE AND READING  
OF FRANCES WHITTLE LEWIS  
IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA**

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by

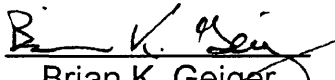
Brian K. Geiger

1998

## APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

  
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Approved, July 1998

  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my advisor, Professor Robert Gross. Without his criticisms and encouragement, this thesis would not have taken the shape it has. Professors Melvin Ely and Sara Lipton read drafts of this study, and provided invaluable suggestions for improving both its content and prose.

A special thanks to my family. Despite having his own graduate studies to worry about, my brother Jeff always lent a patient ear when I needed it. I hope I did the same. My parents, Keith and Janet Geiger, have provided me comfort and support during numerous, and sometimes difficult, years of graduate school. They, particularly my father, will be glad to know that “that paper” is finally done.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the journal of Frances Whittle Lewis. Born in Norfolk, Virginia, in the mid-1790s, Lewis was married and widowed in 1815. Almost twenty years later she moved to Philadelphia, where she lived for all but three of the next thirty-four years. Lewis started her journal briefly around the time of her marriage, and then maintained it more regularly when she lived in Mecklenburg County, Virginia from 1843 to 1846.

Raised in the South, but choosing to live most of her adult years in the North, Lewis's life was shaped by her experiences along the Atlantic. Wherever she went, though, she carried her religious beliefs and a dedication to the memory of her brief marriage. She also brought along a love of books. Lewis was continually engaged with literature, and she believed that "good books" strengthened both one's intellect and one's faith.

**“A GOOD BOOK IS A BLESSING:”**

**THE LIFE AND READING  
OF FRANCES WHITTLE LEWIS  
IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA**

## CHAPTER 1 AN ANTEBELLUM LIFE IN NORTH AND SOUTH

Sometime in late May, 1815, the newlywed Frances Whittle Lewis received tragic news. A month earlier she had married William Lewis, a sailor. After only a week together, her husband sailed out of Norfolk, Virginia on the Navy ship the "Decatur." He expected to return soon, intent on spending time with his new bride before sailing for China in the fall. Instead, the brief marriage ended when the Decatur sank in the Caribbean several weeks later. The news was doubly tragic because Mary Neale, Frances Lewis's only sister, also lost her husband when the ship went down. Neither woman ever recovered fully from her joint loss. They lived together as widows for the rest of their lives, the memory of her brief marriage never far from Lewis's thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

Frances Lewis was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia. Her father, Conway Whittle I, an Irish Protestant, had emigrated to Norfolk in 1784. A young man in his mid-twenties, Whittle set out to establish himself as a merchant. He soon married Frances Moseley Boush, the widow of John Boush. The Boush

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<sup>1</sup> Conway Whittle Papers, 1773-1932, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Box 2, Folder 26 and Box 3, Folder 10.



family was one of the most prominent families in Norfolk, and Conway's marriage to Frances would prove to be quite advantageous.

Conway and Frances Whittle raised three children. Their second child, Frances, was born in the mid-1790s. An entry in her diary on December 7, 1846, suggests the approximate date of her birth: she commented that she "had been on the earth for more than half a century," making the year about 1796. Lewis had an older sister, Mary, and a younger brother, Conway II. Her mother probably died soon after Conway II was born in 1802.<sup>2</sup>

Lewis grew up in a prosperous merchant family. Her father had gone into business with his brother, Fortesque Whittle, trading in cotton, coffee, cocoa and rum. In 1804 Conway's and Fortesque's business made local news when their ship the "Eliza" was temporarily captured by French vessels in the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup> In 1801 Conway Whittle used his connections to the Boush family to purchase from Robert Boush ten lots on Church Street--one of the oldest and most prestigious sections of Norfolk--and he eventually invested in slaves and land in Mecklenburg County, along the Virginia-North Carolina border.<sup>4</sup>

The type of education that young Lewis received is unclear. That she could read French and play the harp suggests that she did receive some sort of

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<sup>2</sup> See the family tree in the CW Papers; Lewis diary, 7 December 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas C. Parramore, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 136.

<sup>4</sup> Antoinette Gray van Zelm, "Chloe Tyler Whittle: Religion, Gender and Identity in Norfolk, Virginia, 1865-1876," MA thesis, College of William and Mary, 1992, 16.

education. Formal education for girls, however, was unusual in the South in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Not until 1849 would Norfolk have a school for young women. Like some southern girls, Lewis might have attended a "French school," where well-to-do young women learned reading, arithmetic, modern languages and appreciation of the arts from older, single women. The historian of Norfolk, Thomas Parramore, suggests that such "private sources" of female education existed in the city at this time, and Lewis may have taken advantage of them, or she may have had a private tutor.<sup>5</sup>

If Lewis's education was not unlike that of other well-to-do southern girls, her urban upbringing would have been different from the childhoods of most other southern women. Throughout the antebellum period the South remained markedly rural. Even after 1840, when urban centers began to grow, close to 90 percent of southerners continued to live outside of cities. Moreover, numerous small cities did not develop in the South as they did in much of the Northeast. As late as 1860, 97 percent of urban southerners lived in only nine cities, and only fourteen cities had populations of 10,000 or more. Virginia, with seven cities of more than 5,000 inhabitants and five others with more than 10,000, had the largest urban population of any state in the South. Yet even Virginia, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese notes, "did not begin to approach northern standards" of urban

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<sup>5</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), passim; William S. Forrest, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853), 245; Parramore, 108.

concentration.<sup>6</sup>

Lewis was fortunate to grow up in Norfolk at a time when the city was, according to a contemporary Boston newspaper, the “most considerable commercial town in Virginia.” The British had burned down almost every building in Norfolk on January 1, 1776.<sup>7</sup> The city recovered slowly until the peace of 1783 revitalized trade. By 1790 its population had grown to 2,959. The outbreak of war in Europe in 1792 stimulated further economic growth. In 1796 Francois Alexandre, duc de la Rochefoucauld, on visiting Norfolk during his tour of the United States, remarked that, “Six years ago there were not ten large vessels belonging to Norfolk; to-day there are fifty, to say nothing of fifty more smaller ones, engaged chiefly in the West Indian trade.”<sup>8</sup>

Growing up in Norfolk provided Lewis with intellectual and cultural opportunities that were otherwise more common in the North than in the South. In 1793 the city built a wooden theater and in 1795 replaced it with a more permanent brick building.<sup>9</sup> Plays and musical performances were popular attractions at the theater throughout the 1790s and early 1800s. During this time an Englishman by the name of Hunter sold and rented books, and in 1802 a

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 78 and 92.

<sup>7</sup> William H. Stewart, *History of Norfolk County, Virginia* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1902), quote 344, 332.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Parramore, 108; Stewart, 344.

<sup>9</sup> Stewart, 359.

Bostonian named Mirick opened a subscription library containing “several thousand volumes.” There were also at least two public gardens and several coffee houses, taverns, and social and fraternal clubs. The immigration in 1793 of two thousand French refugees from the revolution in Santo Domingo, many of whom remained in Norfolk, contributed further to the cosmopolitan atmosphere in the city in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup>

The world that Lewis knew changed dramatically in the years prior to 1815. Perhaps foremost in her mind would have been the financial decline of Norfolk and its effect on her family.

The trouble for her town started with the embargo on foreign trade in 1807. Like most other American seaport cities, Norfolk suffered substantial pecuniary losses when the U.S. government forbade trade with foreign ports. In 1808 a local newspaper estimated that merchants’ real estate would be worth less than half of its value from the previous year, and calculated that exports of native produce had decreased from \$48,500,000 in 1807 to just \$18,000,000. The situation did not improve before the start of the War of 1812. When the British blockaded Norfolk in 1813 and used it as a naval station, total exports from Virginia fell from over \$3,000,000 in 1812 to \$17,581 in 1814. By the end of the war in 1815, Norfolk was devastated. It lacked the energy and resources to

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<sup>10</sup> Parramore, 102-110.

compete with northern ports, which had “captured most of the foreign commerce.”<sup>11</sup>

The War of 1812 also affected the cultural and recreational institutions in the city. With fewer visitors and “foreigners and other persons connected with shipping” in Norfolk, many places could no longer afford to operate. Writing in 1853, William Forrest noted that most gardens and theaters that had been popular in 1811 no longer existed.<sup>12</sup> The cultural and intellectual decline of Norfolk was not as rapid or as pronounced as its financial decline, but would have been evident nonetheless to its residents.

Like many merchant families in Norfolk, Lewis’s family suffered during these years. A deed from 1811 records that Conway Whittle owed the Bank of the United States \$29,395 and that he sold land to Robert Taylor to pay off some of this debt.<sup>13</sup> That same year, Lewis’s future husband William Lewis wrote to his aunt that he was worried that financial ruin would force the Whittle family to leave Norfolk. “The house of [Conway] and [Fortesque] Whittle,” he noted, “has failed and become bankrupt in consequence of some misfortunes abroad...Mr. [Conway] Whittle will go immediately to England and carry his daughters with him.”<sup>14</sup> In the end, however, the Whittle family probably did not leave Norfolk, or

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<sup>11</sup> Cecil Llewellyn Blackwell, “The Rise of the Port of Norfolk and its Decline as a Result of the Embargo of 1807 and the War of 1812,” MA thesis, College of William and Mary, 1959, 40-51, quote 51.

<sup>12</sup> Forrest, 118.

<sup>13</sup> Norfolk City Deeds, Book 12, 1810-15, 32-34.

if they did, it was only for a brief while.

Frances Lewis may have found some relief from her family's financial difficulties in her courtship with William Lewis, but this relationship probably was not easy for her. Not the least of her worries was the fact that her future husband's career at sea required him to be gone often from Norfolk. They had planned to marry as early as the spring of 1811, but then William Lewis sailed for India and China in May. He spent much of the next few years sailing abroad. Frances Lewis would also have been aware of the danger inherent in her lover's profession and feared for his safety at sea. Finally, she may have questioned his ability to provide for her. William Lewis admitted to Conway Whittle in a letter that "I have none or very little fortune sir. I can offer little else than the sincerity of my feelings and the conviction that my whole life would be but an effort to make [Frances] happy."<sup>15</sup>

Despite the difficulties of their prolonged courtship, Frances and William Lewis finally married on April 20, 1815, just weeks after he had returned from sea. Their honeymoon did not last long. Less than a week later, on April 26, William Lewis sailed again from Norfolk, this time accompanied by his new brother-in-law, Benjamin Neale, who had married Frances Lewis's sister Mary less than a year earlier. One can only imagine the enormous grief that the two

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<sup>14</sup> Letter from William Lewis to Elizabeth Herndon, 8 January 1811, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from William Lewis to Conway Whittle, 29 June 1810, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10.

sisters must have suffered when they learned several weeks later that both of their husbands had been lost at sea. But they may not have suspected at the time how long their mourning would last.<sup>16</sup>

Both women no doubt turned to the church for solace from the despair of losing their husbands. In fact, it may have been the death of her husband that ignited in Lewis a profound, life-long religious faith.

Lewis had grown up Episcopalian. Her family belonged to, and were buried at, Saint Paul's Episcopal Church on Church Street.<sup>17</sup> Lewis's Episcopal beliefs were probably much different, however, from those of her parents.

The Episcopal Church, or the Anglican Church, as it was known before the Revolutionary War, had been the most important church in colonial Virginia. Jan Lewis argues that the colonial church preached a rational piety. Most Virginians before the Revolutionary War believed that God "planned things for the best," and all that was required of them was that they be faithful and good; "religion, then, lay in self-exertion more than self-examination." When confronted with the death of a loved one, the Church taught, one should praise the memory of the deceased and move on with one's life. Extended mourning in public or private was not a characteristic response to death.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from William Lewis to "aunt", 20 April 1815, and Letter from William to Frances Lewis, 26 April 1815, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10,

<sup>17</sup> Stewart, 331.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 44-5.

In the years after the Revolutionary War this world-view was shattered, as evangelical revivals spread across Virginia, spearheaded primarily by the Methodists and Baptists. Lewis terms this new piety “sentimental religion”. In this new sensibility earthly life came to be seen as essentially wicked and grief-stricken. The key to salvation was personal examination and identification of one’s own depravity and unworthiness.<sup>19</sup>

The Episcopal Church of Virginia responded slowly to the spread of evangelicalism. This sluggish response, along with disestablishment during the Revolutionary War, which diminished the advantages of belonging to the Church, resulted in declining membership. Of the 107 house of worship that had existed in 1784, only 40 survived by 1811.<sup>20</sup> Episcopal leaders could not ignore the changes around them, however, and in the early nineteenth century members debated the future of their denomination. A group known as the Anglican Evangelicals argued that Episcopalians should adopt some of the tenets of the Baptists and Methodists.<sup>21</sup> The division within the Church seems to have surfaced in Norfolk in 1800, when a group left St. Paul’s to form Christ Church.<sup>22</sup> By 1811 a new generation of ministers had emerged, and the transformation to

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<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Pursuit*, 51.

<sup>20</sup> David L. Holmes, “The Decline and Revival of the Church of Virginia,” in *Up From Independence: The Episcopal Church in Virginia* (Interdiocesan Bicentennial Committee of the Virginians, 1976), 58.

<sup>21</sup> Holmes, 78-80.

<sup>22</sup> Parramore, 110.



evangelicalism was well under way. These new ministers stressed a number of evangelical tenets, including “the depravity of human nature, the imminence of hell...and rebirth through the Holy Spirit into a life of grateful obedience.”<sup>23</sup>

Lewis adopted this new “sentimental religion.” Indeed, as a number of scholars have shown, women were especially attracted to evangelical revivals. The reasons for women’s involvement with evangelicalism were numerous and continue to be debated. Its emphasis on self-scrutiny may have permitted women “to take their own thoughts and feelings more seriously,” and a focus on individual redemption through a personal conversion validated each woman’s own personal experience. Evangelicals also stressed that the home should be a sanctuary from an amoral world where personal piety could be perpetuated; women took seriously this emphasis on the home, exerting themselves to civilize their husbands and sons, to win them away from traditional masculine behaviors such as gambling and fornication.<sup>24</sup>

For Lewis, the rise of evangelicalism in the Episcopal Church came at an opportune time. With the deaths of her husband and brother-in-law and her family’s financial difficulties, she looked for answers to her suffering. Although almost none of Lewis’s writings from this period survive, one can guess at her reasons for accepting the Church’s new teachings. She welcomed the

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<sup>23</sup> Holmes, 86.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Pursuit*, 53-58; Richard Rankin, *Ambivalent Churchmen and Evangelical Churchwomen: The Religion of the Episcopal Elite in North Carolina, 1800-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 33-36, quote 33.

opportunity to take her feelings seriously, to analyze them and place them in the context of her faith. The Church offered comfort in its emphasis on the inevitability of human sorrow, affirming that she was not alone in her suffering and that only through suffering could one reach true happiness.<sup>25</sup> And she may well have accepted the idealization of the afterlife as a place where earthly lovers would be reunited, never to part again.<sup>26</sup>

Lewis's life during the twenty years following her husband's death is shrouded by a scarcity of evidence. The few records that do exist, however, suggest that she experienced both continued difficulties and exciting new opportunities.

Lewis did not have long to recover from the loss of her husband before tragedy struck again. Sometime in 1816 her father Conway died. A young woman in her late teens or early twenties, Lewis not only had to face another death in the family; she also had to learn how to live on her own and be the executor of her own affairs.

Soon after her husband's disappearance at sea, Lewis began receiving from the United States government a widow's war pension for William Lewis's service in the Navy during the War of 1812.<sup>27</sup> For a decade or so Lewis and her

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<sup>25</sup> Holmes, 86.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, *Pursuit*, 81-95.

sister Mary probably lived in one of their father's homes, Lewis surviving, in part, on her pension. Conway Whittle's estate was settled finally in 1826. Each of his three children received one third of his properties in Norfolk. This meant that Lewis and her sister were now the owners of four lots each. The settlement of the rest of Conway Whittle's estate is unclear, although Lewis did collect and pay debts owed by and to Conway and Fortesque Whittle's business.<sup>28</sup>

In June of 1828, Lewis's life began to change significantly. Early in the month she and her sister sailed for Ireland to visit their relatives. More than a year later, in August of 1829, they returned to America, but instead of sailing into Norfolk, they landed in Philadelphia, where they spent the rest of the winter.<sup>29</sup>

Lewis and her sister must have been captivated by their experiences in the City of Brotherly Love. They returned to Norfolk in 1830, but stayed there for only two years. During those two years they probably looked for affordable living quarters in Philadelphia. In 1833 they moved to the Quaker City, and they would live in or around the vicinity for the next decade.

Neither Lewis nor her sister left any explanation of why they chose to leave Norfolk. Philadelphia may have had a sentimental appeal, because both of their husbands had spent some time there.<sup>30</sup> More likely, though, the two

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<sup>27</sup> In 1860 or 1861 Lewis applied for and received an extension of this pension, which she had been receiving since 1815. Undated letter, CW Papers, Folder 26, Box 2.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, Norfolk City Deeds, Book 17, 1822-25, 468-70 and Book 20, 1831-33, 21-22.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Mary/Frances from Margaret, 9 November 1829, CW Papers, Box 4, Folder 7.

women were attracted to the city because of its varied intellectual and cultural offerings. A card Lewis placed with her letters suggests one of the ways in which the two women occupied their time in Philadelphia: it is a list of lectures given at the Athenaeum Institute in 1839.<sup>31</sup> Life in Philadelphia offered Lewis intellectual and cultural opportunities that she could have only imagined in Norfolk, even during that city's prosperity before the War of 1812.

Lewis was apparently unusual among women in the South in her desire to move to a large northern city. There is no statistical evidence on how many southern women traveled to the North, let alone lived there as Lewis did. Fragmentary evidence suggests, however, that the number was small. After reviewing many diaries, Fox-Genovese concludes that most well-to-do southern white women preferred the tranquility of plantation life to the hustle and bustle of cities.<sup>32</sup>

The focus of Fox-Genovese's study, however, is on plantation women. Southern urban white women might have been better prepared than their rural counterparts for the conditions of northern cities, and more drawn to urban living. A number of Lewis's friends in Norfolk envied her life in Philadelphia, and some may have traveled to or lived in the North. In 1829 Lewis's friend, Mary

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<sup>30</sup> For example, William Lewis sailed into and out of Philadelphia in 1811 and 1815. See letters dated May 29, 1811, and March 8, 1815, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10.

<sup>31</sup> CW Papers, Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>32</sup> Fox-Genovese, 216.

Thompson, wrote of an unidentified acquaintance, "Poor Imogene, she has got a perfect New York mania in her. She hardly knows how she can exist in Norfolk." A year later her friend, Mary Rootes, compared her experiences in Norfolk with Lewis's experiences in the Quaker City. "There is nothing in Philadelphia that could delight me more than the green-house which you describe, and I can readily believe, that with the varieties of each genus, the gardener could soon collect the immense number of 8000 plants. Insignificant indeed will mine appear after such an exhibition as that."<sup>33</sup>

Lewis lived a comfortable but not extravagant life in and around Philadelphia. She and her sister probably did not have enough money to purchase a house. Instead, they preferred to board with families, not live in boarding houses, which may explain why they moved between Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware.<sup>34</sup> For most of their first ten years in Philadelphia, the sisters' living arrangements would have left them with enough extra money to enjoy some of the activities in the city, such as the Athenaeum. Lewis probably brought her harp with her and one can imagine her entertaining guests with music. Psychologically, if not always financially, then, Lewis lived a middling lifestyle in Philadelphia.

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from Mary Thompson, 19 October 1829, CW Papers, Box 7, Folder 31; Letter from Mary Bell Rootes, 17 March 1834, CW Papers, Box 6, Folder 20.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Mary Bell Rootes, 7 March 1834, CW Papers, Box 6, Folder 20.

Sometime during or before 1843, Lewis's life in the Quaker City began to unravel. In 1846, she recorded in her diary that three years earlier she and her sister had feared poverty.<sup>35</sup> Most likely it was this poverty, or fear of poverty, that forced the two sisters to leave Philadelphia and move to a family plantation in Mecklenburg, County, Virginia, where they lived for the next three years, from 1843 to 1846.

Lewis had returned not only to Virginia, but to a part of the state that she probably had not experienced much in her youth: rural, southern Virginia. Removed from the city life that she had grown to love, Lewis soon became bored, and probably to fill her time, began to keep a diary; as she observed, "I always write most in my journal when I have [the] least to say."<sup>36</sup> Lewis disliked her new lifestyle and complained repeatedly in her diary about living in Mecklenburg County.<sup>37</sup>

In part, Lewis's attitude toward life in rural Virginia can be explained by the fact that her home state had changed since she had last lived there ten years earlier. Virginians had begun to conceive of themselves as part of a distinct southern culture. Southern identity was just coalescing in the early 1840s, but

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<sup>35</sup> Lewis diary, 25 May 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Quote, Lewis diary, 14 May 1845, CW Papers. Lewis's diary contains a section from 1815 to 1817 of notes on books, but her daily entries do not start until 1843. This is probably the only diary that she kept; it is the only one to survive.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see letter Lewis transcribed dated 18 March 1844, Lewis diary, CW Papers.

already the outlines of this new ideology were apparent. Based on the assertion that slavery was a legal right protected by the constitution and, some argued, a “positive good” for society, southern identity would grow stronger in the coming years. During the years Lewis lived in Mecklenburg County, identification with the South was probably greater in rural areas of Virginia than it was in urban ones.<sup>38</sup>

Lewis reacted against the slavery that she saw around her. Early in 1845 she noted in her journal plans to buy a family of slaves in order to keep them together. A few months later she wrote that she felt sorry for slaves who had to work in the rain, because they could not warm up afterwards.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Lewis had been manumitting family slaves as early as 1817, before she moved to Philadelphia.<sup>40</sup> If, as Fox-Genovese argues, southern white women overwhelmingly supported slavery, Lewis’s comments suggest a shift in her regional identity. On the other hand, Suzanne Lebsock has argued that some southern white women, especially urban women, tended to identify with the plight of individual slaves. “White women’s thinking about slavery was almost always grounded in the particulars of day-to-day interactions,” she writes. One should not assume, however, that this personal attachment or sense of obligation to

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<sup>38</sup> See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. 312-16.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis diary, 29 February and June 1845, CW Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Norfolk City Deeds, Book 16, 1820-22, 270, and Book 17, 1822-25, 379-80.

individual slaves implied an opposition to the slave system, for women rarely criticized “slavery as an institution.”<sup>41</sup>

Yet there is also something in Lewis’s diary that shows that her attitudes toward slavery were based on more than just sympathy for individual slaves: in July of 1845 she wrote that she hoped slavery would be abolished in Virginia and predicted that westward expansion would allow slaves to gain their freedom.<sup>42</sup> Lewis’s thinking about slavery as an institution may have been affected by her years in Philadelphia, where anti-slavery sentiments and activities were common. She would have known of another, famous transplanted southern woman, Sarah Grimke, who moved to Philadelphia in 1821 and began to denounce slaveholding and advocate abolition.<sup>43</sup>

The diary that Lewis kept while she lived in Mecklenburg County reveals something else about her life: her continued grieving over her husband’s death. On her thirtieth wedding anniversary she wrote, “Dear, dear Mr. Lewis! When I see wives forget husbands; and husbands forget wives, I wonder how such things can be.... To this day his memory is fresh in my recollections. I weep while I write. They are not anniversary tears, but often, often repeated.” A year later she remarked, “Perhaps if all the hours in which I saw Mr. Lewis from first to

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<sup>41</sup> Fox-Genovese, 243; Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 138.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis diary, 7 July 1845, CW Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 61-3.



last were collected they would not make a month. How indelible the recollections of a month!"<sup>44</sup>

It may not have been unusual for women of Lewis's generation to spend their lives mourning the loss of their husbands. Drew Faust finds that during the Civil War "Confederate widows actively seeking romance and remarriage defied conventions about faithful grieving wives living only for their husbands' memories."<sup>45</sup> Lewis probably had several reasons for accepting this romantic vision of widowhood.

The sentimental and personal evangelical faith that Lewis had adopted when she was young had not dimmed in her middle years. She recorded in her diary that she attended church whenever she could, which may have involved a long horse ride; when she could not attend church, she spent the Sabbath in personal reflection and spiritual growth, which included reading the Bible or other religious works, praying and meditating. As Lewis grew older, the Church's teaching that earthly lovers would be reunited in heaven would become especially important to her.

Lewis may also have had economic reasons for remaining a widow. By not remarrying, she gained the ability to control her own property and its dispensation. Under the laws of coverture, most married women did not have

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<sup>44</sup> Lewis diary, 19 April 1845, and 17 October 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>45</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slave-holding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 150.

this legal right. In fact, Lebsack has found that in Petersburg, Virginia, “the wealthier the widow, the less likely she was to remarry.”<sup>46</sup> Lewis did not inherit a large estate from her husband, but her father’s estate was large enough to support her comfortably in Philadelphia for much of her life. At least as early as 1831, if not earlier, she was selling some of her property in Norfolk, presumably to help pay some of her living expenses in Philadelphia.<sup>47</sup> That Lewis valued her financial independence is revealed in a letter from her friend Mary Sawyer in 1819. Probably responding to Lewis’s concern that her brother might receive the bulk of their father’s estate, Sawyer wrote, “I don’t exactly think...that I can give you a law which will put down your system of primogeniture, but the motto on which I act is perfectly at your service. ‘The might is the right’ and if it will in any way assist you in a gentle rebellion and help you to a moderate enjoyment of authority, I shall offer my congratulations.”<sup>48</sup>

In 1861, after the death of her sister, Lewis wrote a will in which she revealed how she valued financial independence, and yet how tenuous that independence could be. She divided her estate among her three nieces, her brother’s daughters. Part of her will reads, “I have the greatest respect for the husbands of Mary and Grace but I wish to secure my nieces in the property I

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<sup>46</sup> Lebsack, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Norfolk City Deeds, Book 20, 1831-33, 21-22.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Mary Taylor Sawyer, 16 January 1919, CW Papers, Box 7, Folder 2.

leave.... The effort I make to secure to my Nieces the little I leave is in consequence of having seen the dependence of Ladies on their Friends.”<sup>49</sup> Like many women who controlled their estates, Lewis did not want to die intestate and have her estate divided according to law. She wanted to reward those people to whom she had a close personal attachment and provide her nieces with at least some independent financial security.<sup>50</sup>

Lewis and her sister had returned to Philadelphia in 1846. Lewis would not live in Virginia again until after the Civil War, and then only for a couple of years before her death in 1867; her sister would never reside in Virginia again.

Frances Lewis had lived a remarkable, perhaps unusual, transregional and even transatlantic life. Never exactly a northerner or a southerner, her outlook on life was shaped, in part, by her experiences in different parts of the American eastern seaboard and her relationships across the Atlantic Ocean. Wherever she went, however, Lewis carried two things: the memory of a brief marriage and her religious faith. She also brought along a love of books.

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<sup>49</sup> CW Papers, Box 2, Folder 26.

<sup>50</sup> Lebsack, 130-5.

## CHAPTER 2 A WORLD OF BOOKS

In 1846, as she prepared to leave the family plantation in Mecklenburg County, Virginia and return to Philadelphia, Frances Whittle Lewis recorded a short entry in her journal. “Packed up a box of books,” she noted tersely.<sup>1</sup> It was not unusual for Lewis to write about her engagements with literature. Her interest in reading probably began at an early age. One of the first indications of Lewis’s bookishness comes in a letter from her husband. Shortly before his death at sea in May 1815, William Lewis urged his young bride to read some of the works he was sending in a trunk.<sup>2</sup> She seems to have taken that urging to heart. Her journal, which she kept briefly after her marriage and then maintained more regularly while living in Mecklenburg County from 1843 to 1846, abounds with references to reading and reveals that, for most of her adult life, Lewis inhabited a world of books.

Considering her love of reading, Lewis lived in an opportune time. During most of her youth, the business of book production and sales looked much as it

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Lewis diary, 15 October 1846, Conway Whittle Papers, 1773-1932, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from William Lewis, 13 May 1815, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10.

had for almost a hundred years of North American history. Reliant on the ancient and labor-intensive hand-press for printing, the book business in early America was remarkably small and localized.<sup>3</sup>

As Lewis matured, so too did the publishing industry. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, publishers developed and improved mechanized printing and found new methods, such as the railroad, for transporting books. By the second half of the century, large publishing houses had emerged that produced massive quantities of cheap works for a wide and widely dispersed audience.<sup>4</sup>

Like many Americans, as Lewis aged she found herself in a world of books she probably had not dreamed of as a youth. Yet Lewis was not a passive participant in the increasingly complex literary marketplace. She did read prolifically, but she also became sophisticated and particular about the works she chose and how she chose to read them.

In the decades after the Revolutionary War, when the large publishing houses of the later nineteenth century were, at best, just visions in a few

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<sup>3</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 16.

<sup>4</sup> The term publisher is used loosely here. Most historians of the book agree that, at least in the early nineteenth century, publishing, printing and marketing of books were often inseparable. Much has been written on the history of nineteenth-century publishing firms. See for example, John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1972).

entrepreneurs' heads, the American book business began to grow. Between 1790 and 1820, publishing increasingly became distinct from printing and retailing. New publishing firms produced some original works, but they relied more on reprinting English editions.<sup>5</sup>

The growth of a domestic publishing industry was fueled, in part, by the popularity of novels. The American population at this time was young: perhaps two-thirds of the white population in the first decade of the nineteenth century were under the age of twenty-four. Contemporary observers noted that the young, particularly women, were especially interested in fiction. Publishers were not slow to recognize and encourage this market for novels; and while they did produce some original fiction, more often they reissued English works.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps one of the best indications of the popularity of novels, as several scholars have noted, was the shrillness with which self-appointed guardians of morality opposed them on the grounds that they were immoral and unrealistic and would corrupt America's youth. Fiction, the Reverend Enos Hitchcock wrote in 1790, is "written in order to catch the imagination of the reader and beguile it into vice and error unawares."<sup>7</sup> As reading novels became more popular, such condemnations of them increased too. Despite the opposition, writes Robert

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<sup>5</sup> Tebbel, 92; Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), introduction.

<sup>6</sup> Davidson, 15-16 and Chap. 6, esp. 110-12; Robert B. Winans, "The Growth of a Novel-Reading Public in Late Eighteenth-Century America," *Early American Literature* 9(1975):267.

<sup>7</sup> See Davidson, Chap. 3, quote, 47.

Winans, the amount of fiction sold “far outweighed the number of essays denouncing it.”<sup>8</sup>

Lewis, like many other young women, read novels, regardless of public censure from the pulpit and the press.<sup>9</sup> Writing to her sister Mary in 1811, Lewis’s future husband strongly suggested that his young love had a special fondness for fiction. “I have sometimes....begged of [Frances],” he complained, “a portion of that esteem which I knew she so liberally bestowed on the fictitious heroes of her novels.”<sup>10</sup>

In the years between the end of the War of 1812 and the beginning of the Civil War, numerous publishing houses emerged. This meteoric growth was due in large part to the replacement of moveable type with stereotype plates, which, though more expensive to produce, allowed publishers easily to reprint works and issue them in small runs.<sup>11</sup> Some firms survived this period of growth exceedingly well and continue to the present day. Others lasted only a short while before going bankrupt. As publishers competed with one another for profits, they had to find new and creative ways to market their books. Their

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<sup>8</sup> Winans, 267.

<sup>9</sup> Davidson, 40.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Mary Whittle from William Lewis, 5 June 1811, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Winship, *American Literary Publishing in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Business of Ticknor and Fields* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103-11.

attempts to meet and create consumer demand contributed to the development of an increasingly diverse and complex literary marketplace.<sup>12</sup>

Publishers were able to produce for the market, in large part, because of the lack of copyrights on foreign works, or more specifically, because the American government did not recognize foreign copyrights. Although they were producing more works written by American authors, publishing firms continued to reproduce works that had initially appeared outside of the country. Just as earlier in the century book dealers had imported English books and the small publishing industry had reprinted them, so firms continued to rely on foreign imprints. In what John Tebbel has called the “Age of Piracy,” the American market was flooded with pirated copies of foreign, mostly English, titles.<sup>13</sup>

Lewis’s choice of books reflected the abundance of English works in the American market. Sometime around 1815, she sat down with her journal and took notes on thirteen books, well over three-quarters of which had been published initially in England.<sup>14</sup> Almost thirty years later, she resumed taking notes on her reading and recording what titles she chose. More than fifty

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<sup>12</sup> Tebbel, 203-29; For a general discussion of the literary marketplace, see Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), passim.

<sup>13</sup> Tebbel, 208; see also Winship’s study of Ticknor and Fields, especially the tables on pages 60-5.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis did not date her entries for these books. Since all of them were published before 1816, and her notes appear upside-down in the back of her journal, I have assumed that she read them around 1815. I have not included the Bible in the summary of where her books were initially published, because I have no bibliographic information for the edition she read.



percent of the works she read while living in Mecklenburg County had first appeared as English editions. By the 1840s, then, books were increasingly published initially in America and Lewis's reading reflected this fact. Yet English reprints were also still common and her English bias remained substantial.

Table 1: Place of First Publication of Titles in Lewis's Diary

	Published in England (N=23)	Published in the United States (N=17)	N
1815	85% (11)	15% (2)	13
1840	55% (17)	45% (14)	31

When Lewis settled in to read, she did not just pick up "a book," of course, regardless of whether the title had first appeared in England or America. Especially as the literary marketplace became more diverse, Lewis had to choose from among various genres. Since she left only limited evidence of what she read around the time of her husband's death, it is difficult to generalize about the books she chose in her late teens and early twenties. If the works she took notes on are any indication, the recently-widowed Lewis chose to read travel accounts, histories, biographies and religious works. Given that only four years earlier she had had at least some interest in novels, it is unlikely that she completely abandoned fiction around the time of her marriage. Rather, she

probably decided not to take notes on the novels she read. Three decades later, living in Mecklenburg County, Lewis left a more detailed record of her reading preferences.<sup>15</sup>

Table 2: Titles in Lewis's Diary by Genre

	1815 (N=14)		1840s (N=31)	
	%	#	%	#
Travel	29	4	16	5
History	29	4	23	7
Biography	36	5	3	1
Fiction	0	0	23	7
Natural History	0	0	3	1
Belles Lettres	0	0	3	1
Poetry	0	0	7	2
Religion	7	1	16	5
Other	0	0	7	2

Removed from Philadelphia, the city she had grown to love, and with little idea of when or whether she might return, Lewis settled into life in rural Virginia, where she read as many novels as she did works from any other genre. Her decision to read fiction was not unusual. Novel-publishing expanded in the

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<sup>15</sup> In Table 2, I have categorized William Munford's *Poems and Compositions in Prose on Several Occasions* as belles lettres, because this collection of essays does not contain the "fantasies intrinsic" to fiction of the period. For a further discussion of novels as a genre, see Davidson 52-55.

marketplace of the mid-nineteenth century. As publishing historians have noted, novels became some of the industry's bestsellers. Not only were publishers marketing original American fiction; pirated English works of fiction were especially profitable and publishers reprinted them in enormous quantities.<sup>16</sup>

While Lewis indulged in novels during her mature years, she was careful about what kinds of fiction she would read. Her opinions about novel-reading will be explored in detail in the next chapter. In her maturity, though, she shared with some of her friends a disdain for certain kinds of fiction. A few years before Lewis prepared to move to Mecklenburg County, her friend, Margaret Loyall, wrote to her in Philadelphia about *Henrietta Temple*. Expressing shock at Benjamin Disraeli's recent work of fiction, Loyall revealed why Lewis and her friends avoided some novels:

I did not derive half the pleasure from the perusal of it, that I should have had in writing you. The love scenes are quite too loving and familiar. Perhaps I might not have thought so at eighteen, but now my matronly dignity is somewhat startled at reading such details.<sup>17</sup>

Lewis spent her days in the Virginia countryside reading more than just fiction. At about the time she was married and widowed, she had chosen to read travel literature, histories and biographies. As she grew older, Lewis continued

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<sup>16</sup> Madeleine Stern, *Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth Century America* (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1980), xii-xiii; Ronald Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 140-41.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Margaret Loyall, 7 March 1839, CW Papers, Box 4, Folder 7; Benjamin Disraeli, *Henrietta Temple: A Love Story* (Philadelphia: E.L. Cary & A. Hart, 1837).

to like at least two of these three genres. Although the small sample sizes are not completely representative of her world of books, she almost certainly read fewer biographies than she had in 1815, perhaps preferring to pick up novels while maintaining her interest in travel books and histories (see Table 2).

Lewis's reading preferences were probably not significantly different from what other middle-class, white women of the time chose to read. In the South, women's journals and letters testified "to a broad, if not always deep, conversance with a range of historical, cultural, and political topics." In the North, meanwhile, circulation records at the New York Society Library reveal that, prior to 1850, women were most likely to check out travel books, histories, and biographies.<sup>18</sup>

Lewis was probably also not unusual in her preference for religious literature. Publishing historians sometimes overlook the extent of religious publishing in antebellum America. During the 1840s, however, Lewis read about as many religious titles as she did fiction, histories, or travel books. Moreover, she often remarked that she had read the Bible and sermons, without giving authors or titles of the latter.

She had much to choose from; religious publishing in antebellum America was big business. Almost every denomination had its own publishing society, and there were a number of interdenominational Protestant societies. Often,

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 263; see Zboray for a study of the New York library, 179.

these societies distributed their works more broadly and cheaply than trade publishers did. Organizations such as the American Tract Society developed extensive and “unusually systematic” national administrations to distribute their works. They were largely successful: during this period many of the religious publishers recorded sales figures and profits that “no trade publisher could even approach.”<sup>19</sup>

The best-selling religious work at the time was the Bible, and Lewis’s journal helps to explain why.<sup>20</sup> Although she probably did not own multiple copies of it, the most important book for her was the Bible. Scattered throughout her diary are references to the scriptures. She was especially diligent about recording those occasions when she had not spent as much time with the Good Book as she would have liked. Expressing her devotion to religious works and the Bible, she wrote in 1845, “I avail myself of the opportunity of transcribing a few lines from the best Book, except the Bible, that exists--The Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church.”<sup>21</sup>

Lewis, as she reveals in this passage, was sectarian in her choice of religious works. She read only a few books by non-Episcopalian Protestants. In

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<sup>19</sup> David Paul Nord, “Systematic Benevolence: Religious Publishing and the Marketplace in Early Nineteenth-Century America,” in Leonard I. Sweet, ed., *Communication and Change in American Religious History*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 239-69; quote from Tebbel, 508.

<sup>20</sup> Tebbel, 508.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis diary, August 1845, CW Papers.

1845 she read a book that she identified as *Lectures on the Character of God* by John Todd. This was most likely Todd's *Lectures to Children*, a collection of sermons for children that was widely popular on both sides of the Atlantic and was published by, among others, the Religious Tract Society of London. Todd was a Congregational minister who preached throughout New England.<sup>22</sup> In 1845 she also recorded that she read *The Papal and Hierarchical System Compared with the Religion of the New Testament*. "I feel persuaded that it was written by an English Quaker and perhaps that friend is J. Gurney," she wrote.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this is an anti-papist work the Quaker John Gurney wrote just a few years before Lewis read it.<sup>24</sup>

The rest of the religious works Lewis recorded in her journal were Episcopalian or Anglican. Although she often remarked on reading sermons, only once did she mention an author or title. On Sunday, September 14, 1845, she noted that a friend had read aloud one of Melvill's sermons. This was probably written by Henry Melvill, a rector in the Anglican Church. Many of the other sermons she listed were probably also written by Anglican or Episcopalian theologians. In 1845 she pored over *The Dead in Christ* by John W. McCullough, an Episcopal minister from Delaware. In 1846 she read *The Life*

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<sup>22</sup> Ainsworth Spofford, ed., *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White and Company, 1921), vol. 8, 125-26.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis diary, 25 August 1845, CW Papers.

<sup>24</sup> Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography Founded in 1882 by George Smith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), 806-07.

*and Travels of St. Paul* by Gregory Bedell, Rector of St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, and Richard Arnald's *A Critical Commentary on the Apocryphal Books*. Arnald, who died in 1756, had been a divine in the Church of England.<sup>25</sup>

Although Lewis found her way through the literary marketplace to choose books that interested her, the large and growing publishing industry of antebellum America may have seemed somewhat daunting. Striving for profits, publishers were constantly pushing new titles and new editions of old titles onto the market. Is this the way Lewis perceived the world of books? In other words, was she continually trying to keep up with what was available? Living in a rural, isolated part of Virginia, Lewis may have had difficulty acquiring books, especially in comparison with the ease with which she could have obtained them in Philadelphia. Was she limited to works she already had with her--ones that she brought with her from Philadelphia or found in the plantation house--or did she continually receive new books?

If Lewis was aware of the popularity of the titles she read while living in southern Virginia, she did not decide on a book solely because of its prevalence in the market. Almost a quarter of the works she chose during the 1840s were

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen and Lee, eds., 229-30 and 575; Spofford, vol. 11, 229.

wildly popular at the time. On the other hand, even more of her books were almost obscure. Many of the titles she picked, however, fell between these two extremes.

Table 3: Books Lewis Read in the 1840s: Number of Times Published Before 1860 (N=31)

1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	30+
40%	19%	10%	7%	3%	0%	23%

Just as Lewis chose both popular and obscure books, so she also kept up with what was new on the market, while also picking titles that had been around for a while. Thirteen of the works she mentioned in her journal were first published during or after 1840 and eighteen were first published before that date. Three of the eighteen books initially published before 1840 were issued for the first time in America after 1840: they were *Lives of the Most Eminent French Writers*, *A Critical Commentary Upon the Apocryphal Books*, and *Proverbial Philosophy* (see appendix one). That is, more than half of the titles Lewis obtained while living in Mecklenburg County, sixteen of thirty-one, had recently been printed or republished for the American market.

Judging from initial publication dates, living outside the city did not stop Lewis from obtaining current books that interested her. When Lewis read the *History of Ireland* in 1846, it had just been published the previous year in Boston. In 1846 she also read the *Recollections of Mexico*. This book was published for



the first time that year in New York City. In 1845 she acquired *The Dead in Christ*, a book issued that year in Baltimore.

On the other hand, almost half of the books Lewis read had been on the market before she left Philadelphia for Mecklenburg County. Some of the titles, such as Shakespeare's works and *Hudibras* by Samuel Butler, were classics that had been printed many times. "Continuing *Hudibras*," she commented in 1846, revealing why she sometimes indulged in older works. "Read it because it is famous, not because I relish it."<sup>26</sup>

Lewis's understanding of "famous" books is similar to what David Hall has termed "steady sellers," titles that "circulated widely and had an extremely long life among the reading public."<sup>27</sup> Such works, she believed, should be read, even if one did not "relish" them, because they were well-known and had stood the test of time.

Like many people in antebellum America, Lewis often occupied her time with such established titles. The two works of poetry she listed, *Hudibras* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, were certainly steady sellers. Two of the novels she recorded, *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*, were originally published in the mid-eighteenth century and might be considered steady sellers: the former went through eight editions before 1860, the latter

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<sup>26</sup> Lewis diary, 9 April 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>27</sup> David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 57.

more than thirty. One of her religious works, Richard Arnald's commentary on the Apocryphal books, had first appeared in 1753 but had gone through only six editions. The one belle lettre she mentioned, William Munford's work, she probably found at the plantation: it was published only twice in Richmond in 1798. Of the two older travel books she read, *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece* was first published in 1790 and went through twenty-three editions and *Travels through Egypt and Syria* first appeared in 1798 and saw ten editions. Most of the rest of the works published before 1840 had not been in circulation for a long time.

Table 4: Books in Diary by Date of Initial Publication and Genre

	1650-1759	1760-89	1790-1819	1820-29	1830-39	1840-46
Travel			2			3
History				2	1	4
Biography					1	
Fiction		2		1	1	3
Natural History						1
Belles Lettres			1			
Poetry	2					
Religion	1				2	2
Other					2	
Total	3	2	3	3	7	13

Lewis had different ways of acquiring books. She may have purchased some of them, but there are no extant records of such purchases. As will become clear in the next chapter, the Episcopal Church in Virginia had established a Tract Society, through which Lewis almost surely acquired some of her religious readings. In September of 1845 she noted in her diary that she had "[lent] Mrs. P. 'The dead in Christ.' I availed myself of the opportunity of lending her a book. We have many such favours to thank her for."<sup>28</sup> A year later, in 1846, Lewis commented again on the importance for her and her friends of lending books. "M. Thompson has lent us Stephen's Incident of Travel, Emilline and the Orphan of the Castle, and the Vicar of Wakefield," she wrote in her journal.<sup>29</sup>

Regardless of how she obtained her books, Lewis was not isolated from the distribution routes of the publishing industry. Plantation life undoubtedly contrasted with the literary abundance of Philadelphia. Yet Lewis continued to acquire works from the publishing hubs in the North. Of the titles she read that first appeared on the market during or after 1840, most came from the northeast: eight were published in New York and four in both Philadelphia and Boston. Only one was published in Baltimore.

Lewis's records of her acquisition and lending of *The Dead in Christ* serve as a reminder that the literary market was not always an impersonal force

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<sup>28</sup> Lewis diary, 18 September 1845, CW Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis diary, 25 September 1846, CW Papers.

through which she made her way. This book was written by John W. McCullough, Rector of Trinity Church, which she had probably attended while living in Wilmington. As will become clear in the next chapter, the work had a special resonance with Lewis and she eagerly awaited its publication. She was likely one of the first to learn that it had been published, and she probably received a copy from a friend in Philadelphia or Wilmington, through the Tract Society, or from McCullough himself. In any case, she made sure she got a copy right away.

Frances Lewis had to decide not only what to read, but how. To what extent would she let the market determine this? Would she read many books, or just a few books many times? Would she read every day, or just a few days of the week? And would she pick up the same kinds of works every day? These are just some of the decisions Lewis made when she sat down with her books. The comments she left in her journal provide a glimpse, though perhaps a limited one, of how she read.

It is clear that she had different ways of reading books. Two of her reading styles can be termed intensive and extensive. Some historians of the book have argued that, whereas previously Americans had read intensively, in the early nineteenth century they began to read more extensively. That is, before books became readily available people pored over the same books many times. With improvements in printing and transportation, the argument goes,

people read more books fewer times each. More recently, some historians have argued that both styles coexisted after 1800--that there was not a sudden shift to extensive reading.<sup>30</sup> Lewis obviously employed both styles.

It is possible that Lewis read more while she was on the family plantation in Virginia than she did when she lived in Norfolk or Philadelphia. Her boredom with living in the country may have induced her to pick up books more often. On the other hand, boredom may also have led her to note more diligently what works she had read, which might account for the increase in titles that she recorded in 1846. The fact that Lewis moved a box of books to Philadelphia suggests that she did not anticipate that her reading would stop or decrease significantly when she resumed living in the city.

Lewis clearly practiced extensive reading. Besides the fact that she went through at least thirty books in two years, many of her diary entries suggest that she finished some titles in a short period of time, often in one day. Many of the books she read quickly and only once were secular works. After completing *Recollections of Mexico* by Waddy Thompson, a three-hundred-page book lent to her in 1846, for example, Lewis wrote, "We only kept it 24 hours. New books should be quickly read."<sup>31</sup> One can imagine Lewis sitting down with a new book which she either bought or borrowed, and doing nothing all day but poring over it.

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<sup>30</sup> Hall, Chap. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Lewis diary, 15 August 1846, CW Papers.

Lewis was equally at home with intensive reading, and many of the works she read intensively were religious. The Bible, of course, she read continuously and repeatedly over many years. She revealed her familiarity with the Bible in a letter to a friend in 1860. "After parting from [you] last evening," she wrote, citing Job 28:28, "one of the first passages I read was 'the fear of Lord that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' The verse was so apropos to the conclusion of our conversation, that I feel constrained to 'make a note of it.'"<sup>32</sup>

Lewis probably also picked up some sermons more than once. One August day in 1845 she noted that she had read in one day Todd's religious lectures for children. This work, however, is a collection of lectures; she probably read only some of the essays that day, and returned to the work later to read others.

Her intensive style, however, was not limited to religious works. Certain secular books, Lewis believed, should also be read slowly and repeatedly. In 1846 she began Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*. "[This] work is one of deep thoughts," she opined, "but is not such an one as one should borrow. It should be taken in sips. A good center table book."<sup>33</sup>

Commenting on *Proverbial Philosophy*, Lewis suggested that her reading style was more than just extensive and intensive. By describing *Proverbial Philosophy* as a "good center table book," she acknowledged that some works

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<sup>32</sup> Letter from Frances Lewis to Mrs. H. Winsor, 1 February 1860, CW Papers, Box 2, Folder 29.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis diary, 18 August 1846, CW Papers.

could serve as props in what Katherine Grier has called the “theater of culture” in middle class homes. “Taken in sips,” such titles were read and reread in passing by friends and family and then placed back on the parlor table, serving as a constant reminder to all who encountered them of a household’s aspirations to learnedness.<sup>34</sup>

Lewis’s remark that certain books should be sipped contrasts with her opinion that new titles should be finished quickly. Not just religious literature, but also some older works, steady sellers that had withstood the test of time, deserved careful attention and slow digestion. New books, in contrast, had not aged and were potentially more ephemeral. These works, Lewis believed, could be consumed quickly.

Whether she was engrossed or quickly perusing, Lewis adhered to a certain weekly schedule as she chose from the books available to her. Sunday was a day for religious reading, especially the Bible. On Sundays she also read sermons, religious fiction, and religious history and commentary. During the rest of the week Lewis pursued her interests in secular literature. Yet she did not pick up religious works only on Sunday. Many of Lewis’s journal entries indicate that she read sermons throughout the week, especially at night and after supper. She was also constantly working through the scriptures.

Reading for Lewis was not just a private or solitary experience, however.

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<sup>34</sup> Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850-1930* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press in conjunction with the Strong Museum, 1988), 82.

As was indicated earlier, she and her friends often reflected together on sermons. In addition, Lewis and her family and friends read secular literature and other types of religious literature to one another. One July day in 1845, when Lewis suffered from an inflamed eye, her sister Mary stayed by her side and read Shakespeare to her all day. A month later Lewis reciprocated by reading aloud to Mary John Todd's *Lectures to Children*.<sup>35</sup>

Todd's work is long, over 400 pages. On several occasions, though, Lewis expressed a dislike of lengthy books. In 1844 she compared her tastes for such works with those of her sister. "I have never known any one like [Mary] for Octavo's: she has just begun a history in 11 vols. Truly 'a Great Book' with her 'is "not" a great evil.' Commend me to the condensing process."<sup>36</sup> In 1846 she wrote, "Sister in default of a great book, has begun a great work [title of the work illegible]. She [has] no predilection for light reading."<sup>37</sup> Lewis may have been self-effacing when she expressed a dislike of lengthy works for many of the books that she read were more than 400 pages long, and some were multi-volume sets. As with Todd's book, though, she may also have read selectively from lengthy works.

Perhaps the longest work that Lewis read, and read repeatedly, was the

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<sup>35</sup> Lewis diary, 9 July and 6 August 1845, CW Papers. See Hall, 55-57, who considers reading aloud to be a part of "traditional literacy."

<sup>36</sup> Lewis diary, 18 March 1844, CW Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis diary, 4 June 1846, CW Papers.



Bible. The Good Book was Lewis's most prized title. Yet it was more than just an object or a personal possession, and more than a guide for pious living or spiritual growth. Recalling a tradition at least as old as the Puritans, Lewis believed that the Bible was the vessel of the living word, and that nothing should distract the reader from her spiritual communication with her scriptures. In 1846 Lewis poignantly recorded her love for her personal Bible and her reasons for acquiring a new one:

Carried the little red Bible to church to remain there. It has been my companion for at least twenty years. I parted from it with regret. I got a larger one. The old had too many associations. I wish my Bible and prayer book to be fresh, nothing to call off my mind or attention from the Holy of Holies.... I have prayed over the new Bible that it may be dearer and dearer to me, that I may more and more love to read it.<sup>38</sup>

Lewis's reflections on her Bible are reminiscent of an earlier time, before the growth of the publishing industry, when most Americans had limited access to print and the Bible was one of only a small number of works widely available.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Lewis's choice of what and how to read belies interpretations that argue for a revolution in reading habits, based either on a change from intensive to extensive reading or the expansion of publishing, in the first half of the nineteenth century. As Lewis cultivated her world of books, she combined a little bit of the old with something of the new. Just as she had when she was young,

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<sup>38</sup> Lewis diary, 25 February 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>39</sup> Hall, 57.

she continued to read many books that were first published in England. Like earlier readers, she believed that some books, especially though not exclusively religious works, got better with age and deserved to be read often; other books, particularly new titles, she read only once and then put aside. If Lewis sometimes read quickly, she could also be slow and deliberate. And despite the growth of the literary marketplace, the books she found and chose were a mix of old and new works, and popular and obscure titles.

### CHAPTER 3 READING FOR LIFE

One Sunday in January of 1845, Francis Whittle Lewis and her sister Mary Neale went for a meditative walk in the woods around their home in Mecklenburg, Virginia. Later that day, perhaps under the dim light of a candle, Lewis reflected in her journal on their stroll. She turned to literature to express her sentiments about the day. Quoting Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, she mused: "I was never so sensible to the beauty and truth of the quotation, 'Books in the running brooks, tongues in trees, sermons in stones, and good in everything.'"<sup>1</sup>

Lewis, of course, lived a life full of books. Her invocation of Shakespeare suggests not only the abundance of books in her life, but also their importance to her. Reading was more than just a pastime. Lewis read, and reread, many works every year in order to make sense of the world and her place in it.

More than thirty years earlier, while living in Norfolk, the young Lewis had read fiction. Whether or not she abandoned novels at the time of her marriage,

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis diary, 19 January 1845, Conway Whittle Papers, 1773-1932, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary; *As You Like It*, 2.01.16.

as her limited entries from around 1815 suggest, Lewis most likely indulged in fiction during much of her teen-age years before she was married and then widowed. She was probably not unlike many other young women for whom “novel reading offered...a context for their private fantasies. In the midst of bustling households, they retreated to novels as a way of shutting out the world and letting their own imaginations play with the forbidden delights of romance and adventure.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet Lewis did not read fiction merely as a means of escape. In her study of novel-reading in the early nineteenth century, Cathy Davidson has argued that women had specific reasons for indulging in fiction. “The sentimental novel was generically suited to addressing, in detail,” she posits, “the range of ideological assessments of the family and the implications for *women* of different visions of what the family should be.”<sup>3</sup> Reading fiction, then, allowed women to judge their potential marriage partners, or their marriages, against representations of good and bad marriages or relationships, or to imagine what an ideal marriage or relationship might be. Young Lewis, caught in a protracted engagement to a man who was often at sea, most likely read novels, in part, to gauge their relationship.

The one clue that Lewis read them this way comes in a letter of 1811 from

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 261.

<sup>3</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 125.

her future husband William Lewis to her sister Mary Neale, part of which was quoted in the previous chapter. Worried about his young lover's opinion of him and his chosen career, he promised Mary, in what proved to be an ironic metaphor, that his "struggles" to make a living as a sailor would not cause him to "sink."

It is only in proportion as a man shows himself capable of sustaining such struggles with patience and perseverance, that he either knows how, or is worthy to become happy. And it is on no other ground that I desire your esteem and friendship. I have sometimes expressed this sentiment to [Frances] and begged of her a portion of that esteem which I knew she so liberally bestowed on the fictitious heroes of her novels, whom she has seen contending with misfortune; sometimes sinking under its weight, but at last rising superior to it.<sup>4</sup>

If Lewis read novels in order to assess her protracted relationship with her fiancé, did she also have other ways of reading them? Davidson argues that for many women in early America novel-reading was empowering or was a means of resisting patriarchy.<sup>5</sup> Lewis's own struggles with primogeniture after her father's death, and her attempts later in life to remain financially independent and to provide her nieces with financial security independent of any husband's control, suggest that she may have interpreted fiction this way. Unfortunately, though, she left no records of how she read novels when she was young. Only three decades later, when she had settled into life in southern Virginia, would Lewis make it clear in her journal why she chose to read what she did.

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<sup>4</sup> Letter to Mary Whittle from William Lewis, 5 June 1811, CW Papers, Box 3, Folder 10.

<sup>5</sup> Davidson, Chap. 3.

In the beginning of her diary, before her daily entries, Lewis transcribed letters she had written. In a letter to an unidentified person, she established what she looked for in all the books she read. "A good book is a blessing," she opined. "How are we to determine the excellence of a production? By its effect on the reader. If we are made better, and stronger--strengthened in the resolution to try and do our duty to God and man, it is a good book."<sup>6</sup> Guided by this philosophical spirit, Lewis elaborated throughout her journal, in the works she chose and in her comments on her reading, her criteria for a "good book" and her reasons for regarding such works as important.

Before her letters or daily entries, at the very front of her journal, Lewis took more than twenty pages of notes on four books. The first two works were travel literature. Summarizing John Lloyd Stephen's *Incidents of Travel in Central America* and Jean-Jacques Barthelemy's *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece*, Lewis devoted eighteen pages to short depictions of the geography and architecture of Central America and ancient Greece. Her notes on Mary Shelley's collective biography, *Lives of the Most Eminent French Writers*, outline in a mere five pages the careers of over a dozen famous writers. In her last entry, Lewis extracted from Justus Leibig's *Organic Chemistry and Its Applications to Agriculture and Physiology* several pages of descriptions of plants and their physiology.

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis diary, CW Papers, undated letter at the beginning of her journal.

Once she began to keep sporadic, dated entries, Lewis continued to mention reading numerous biographies, travel accounts and histories, although she rarely took notes on them. Lewis probably thought of travel literature and biographies as what William Charvat has termed “allied forms” of history, kinds of contemporary history. These three genres, he argues, were valued in antebellum America because they were considered to be useful and educational.<sup>7</sup> History and its allied forms, Lewis attested in the notes she took and in her decision to read these three genres, “made [one] better” because they provided knowledge about different times, places and people.

She expressed the importance of learning from these three genres in a letter of 1844 to her cousin James Whittle. Worried about James’s daughter’s education, Lewis wrote earnestly, “Mary’s improvement has not been equal to my hopes. I urge every motive to industry[:] her age-size and your expectations. I think she requires the stimulant of emulation.” Lewis then offered that she herself could be an example for Mary to imitate: “She petitioned me yesterday to let her read out of a little book that her Aunt Jane gave her. I could not consent to give up ‘Rome’ for ‘Arthur and Lucy.’”<sup>8</sup> “Aunt Jane,” Fortesque Whittle’s daughter-in-law, Jane Patterson Whittle, did not realize that it was time for her

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<sup>7</sup> William Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America 1790-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 74; for a similar argument about the relationship between these three genres see Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), Chap. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis diary, CW Papers.

niece to give up works for children like *Lucy and Arthur*.<sup>9</sup> Young Mary should read serious literature, such as a history of Rome, Lewis believed, and strive to become a “learned woman,” just as Lewis continually worked to better her own mind.<sup>10</sup>

Reading for edification need not be as uninteresting or abstract, though, as perhaps a study of plant chemistry and physiology might be. Lewis’s decision to read certain works of history and its allied forms reflected her own ties to and interest in the British Isles. Just after she left Virginia for Philadelphia in 1846, Lewis studied George Craik’s *The Pictorial History of England*. Moreover, Lewis was a first-generation American with relatives across the Atlantic and a lifelong attachment to her family’s homeland, and in 1846 she read Thomas Mooney’s *History of Ireland*, which was first published the previous year in Boston.

By the time she settled in Mecklenburg County, Lewis had also developed an interest in American society and history. In 1845 she read Charles Dickens’ account of his travels through America, *American Notes*, and George Bancroft’s *History of the United States*, two works that were widely popular in antebellum America. She also read histories, biographies and travel accounts, in part to

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<sup>9</sup> See the Whittle family tree in CW Papers; *Lucy and Arthur: A Book for Children* (Philadelphia: George S. Appleton, 1844).

<sup>10</sup> Mary Kelley has used the term “learned women” to suggest that through reading women in antebellum America developed a proto-feminist consciousness; but she does not consider why, or the various ways in which, women read. See her “Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History* 83 (September 1996): 142.



keep up with current events. Thus, in 1846, one year after the annexation of Texas, she sat down with both *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, initially published three years earlier, and *Recollections of Mexico*, which first appeared that year.

Poring over serious works, such as Bancroft's multi volume history, was not just interesting and educational. It could be fun. Lewis thought of history and its allied forms as what Charles Batten has termed "pleasurable instruction." Combining enjoyment with education, he argues, eighteenth-century travel literature was as entertaining, as pleasurable to read, as it was edifying.<sup>11</sup>

Lewis's comments in her journal and letters attest to the fact that she appreciated history, biography and travel literature for their entertainment value, for their ability to provide a sense of adventure. "Sister has finished Alison's great History," Lewis wrote approvingly of Sir Archibald Alison's *History of Europe*, revealing the pleasure she and her sister derived from reading histories. "She says that no novel ever interested her more....In six months she hopes to repeat the pleasure."<sup>12</sup> Years later, in 1853, Lewis let her own historical imagination run free. Describing a certain clock to her friend Heprie Sullivan, she wrote, "Miss Sims said that clock had been the property of Louis 16th. To think

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<sup>11</sup> Charles L. Batten, Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Letter recorded in the beginning of her diary, CW Papers. Lewis does not identify the recipient of the letter. Sir Archibald Alison, *History of Europe from the Commencement of the French Revolution in 1789, to the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1815* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1845).

that that very sound had struck on his ear! Away went my mind--or rather my musing, over a wide space of time and country. I was filled with historical sentimentalities.”<sup>13</sup>

By the time financial troubles forced her to leave Philadelphia for Virginia, Lewis was again reading novels. Yet she chose to read only certain kinds of fiction. Her reasons for eschewing some fiction later in life have been hinted at in the previous chapter. Like her friend Margaret Loyall, Lewis’s “matronly dignity” was probably startled when she discovered in certain novels details that she considered to be too “loving and familiar.”<sup>14</sup> In 1846 she finished *The Quiet Husband* by Ellen Pickering, an English author who published eighteen novels before her death in 1843.<sup>15</sup> “It was a story, and I could not leave it,” she commented. “So I finished it, reprovingly. Reproved myself for reading it, and Miss Pickering for writing it.”<sup>16</sup> Recognizing the seductiveness of some novels, she chastised herself for temporarily losing sight of her own moral sensibilities.

One type of fiction of which Lewis did approve was historical. She probably read such works for many of the same reasons she read histories,

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<sup>13</sup> Written on the back of a letter from Heprie Sullivan, 24 July 1853, CW Papers, Box 7, Folder 19. The emphasis is her’s.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Margaret Loyall, 7 March 1839, CW Papers, Box 4, Folder 7.

<sup>15</sup> Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography Founded in 1882 by George Smith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), vol. 15, 1127.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis diary, 9 June 1846, CW Papers.

biographies and travel books. Indeed, Nina Baym argues that historical fiction “rescued the novel genre from its outcast status,” making gothicism and seduction conventions “look quite obsolete.” Lewis, like other American women, enjoyed these novels because they make “a historical point, and give the imagined story a shape that is significantly determined by the time and place of its setting.”<sup>17</sup> While such works were probably more thrilling than history and its allied forms, they were nonetheless also seen as instructive. As one contemporary reviewer wrote, the historical novel “not only affords intellectual pleasure to the reader, but gives us, as in a mirror, the very spirit of the past.” For Lewis, such literature was both exciting and enlightening, and did not startle her sense of morality.<sup>18</sup>

This was certainly how Lewis read Sir Walter Scott’s *Tales of the Crusaders*, also published as *The Waverly Novels*. Scott, of course, was enormously popular in antebellum America. Baym posits that his *Waverly Novels*, which were first published in 1814, “established a model for historical fiction.”<sup>19</sup> Abandoning a “rhetoric of sensibility,” Scott crafted works that were often praised for their “moral tendencies” as well as their historical depictions. One reviewer noted of *Tales of the Crusaders*, with praise that resembled

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<sup>17</sup> Baym, *American Women Writers*, quotes on 152 and 153.

<sup>18</sup> Nina Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 235-41, quotes 240.

<sup>19</sup> Baym, *American Women*, 152.

Lewis's own criteria for a good book, "The heart warms with the narrative as it progresses, and at its close we feel our admiration of virtue increased, and our faith in human nature strengthened."<sup>20</sup> Lewis offered similar admiration for the work's virtuousness after finishing it in 1845. "Scott has shown that novels can interest and yet very few love scenes in them," she commented. "These two tales prove this. The love is intense, but no mawkish approximations. Extract the love and only a few pages would be parted with."<sup>21</sup>

Almost a year later, in 1846, she read Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Guardsmen*, also published as *The Three Musketeers*. Baym writes that reviewers in periodicals often associated Dumas with "those pesky 'French novelists'" whose works they criticized for immoral tendencies. At the same time, many reviewers acknowledged, if not praised, Dumas's compelling creation of characters, especially women, whose questionable actions in fact led to their downfall. Indeed, one reviewer in *Godey's Lady Book* wrote that "Dumas is one of the few French novelists we can recommend."<sup>22</sup> Although one of the novel's main characters, the Lady de Winter, is publicly executed in the end for her unscrupulous behavior, Lewis was unimpressed. "Mrs. Boyle has lent us 'The Three Gardsmen [sic]," she wrote disparagingly, without indicating that she ever

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<sup>20</sup> Baym, *Novels*, 254, quote from *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 176 in Baym.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis diary, 3 September 1845, CW Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Baym, *Novels*, quote 185 and 254, and from *Godey's Lady's Book* 250-51 in Baym.

read the book. "A novel by Dumas, translated by B. Pack. Trash, trash."<sup>23</sup>

If Lewis looked for historical edification from novels, she also sought religious instruction or example. She did not have to look hard. In antebellum America, a "growing number of American writers and clergymen...adopted fictional modes and devices." If at first some critics denounced these works of fiction, gradually more and more members of various denominations used novels to inspire the evangelical faith of the American reading public.<sup>24</sup>

In 1846 Lewis finished *The Adventures of Barney Mahoney* by Theresa Crofton Croker. Religious instruction is less obvious in this work than in other books she read, but it is there nonetheless. Barney is an Irish boy raised in a poor but pious family--Croker does not indicate whether they are Catholic or Protestant--who is taken into the service of an Englishman, travels to London, suffers many misadventures, and finally returns to the English family, after revealing the plot of some thieves to rob the family's house. Lewis could quickly and easily conclude that Barney's pious and moral upbringing saved him from a life of crime and redeemed him in the eyes of his family in London. Furthermore, given her interest in and ties to Ireland, she was probably also attracted to this book because of its Irish characters and their righteousness.

In some of the other novels Lewis chose, religious themes were much

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<sup>23</sup> Lewis diary, 8 July 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>24</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), Introduction.

more obvious. In 1846, for example, she read Charlotte Elizabeth's *Judah's Lion*, which was initially published in 1843 by John S. Taylor, a New Yorker publisher who specialized in religious and theological works.<sup>25</sup> A simple story, *Judah's Lion* is a fictitious account of a young Jewish man who travels by ship from England to the Holy Land, is proselytized by English seamen on the ship, and eventually converts to Christianity. Lewis left few comments on this book. Stories like this, though, obviously appealed to her hope, probably also her belief, that evangelical Protestantism, and perhaps more specifically Anglicanism, would spread.

If Lewis looked for religious themes in fictional works, she did the same with other genres as well. In 1845 she read Henry Milman's *The History of the Jews*. Milman, a scholar and clergyman in the Church of England, begins this history by writing in the preface, "the Jews appear in a far more interesting and important light when considered as a standing monument of the truth of the christian religion" (sic).<sup>26</sup> Probably that same year she also read *Memoirs of a Huguenot Family*, a kind of historical autobiography. Although written by James Fontaine in the early eighteenth century for his family, this work did not appear in

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<sup>25</sup> For information on Taylor see John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1972), 313 and 316.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis did not mention the author of this book and two different books with this same title appeared before 1845, one published three times before the Civil War and the other fourteen times. I have assumed Lewis read the latter, by Henry Hart Milman. Quotes from *The History of the Jews* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1909), iv. For information on Milman, see *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 13, 448-451.

print until 1838, when it was first published in New York. *Memoirs* recounts the history of a Protestant family, persecuted in France for their beliefs, who flee to England and end up dispersed throughout Great Britain and its American colonies. Part of the preface to the 1853 edition reads, “We believe that the work will address itself to the hearts of a numerous body of Christians, who...may realize...the trials of their own ancestors in leaving the homes of their fathers for the sake of the Gospel, and be thereby incited to more steadfast faith.”<sup>27</sup>

Some of the travel books Lewis read probably also appealed to the evangelical faith she practiced in her adult years. Around the time of her husband’s death, Lewis read three books on the Muslim world and the Middle East, and in 1846 she read both Constantin-Francois Volney’s *Travels Through Egypt and Syria* and Stephen Olin’s *Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*. Lewis’s interest in accounts of travels through the Holy Land was not unusual; such works were increasingly popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. Evangelical Protestants like Lewis, in particular, were drawn to depictions of travels through the Near East, in part, out of a desire to become acquainted with the birthplace of their religion and the region of “the incarnation of [their] religion’s deity.” This religiously-based interest in the Holy Land, moreover, fed into a developing, secular “myth of the new beginning;” Americans were drawn to the Middle East as a place where one could “escape from the

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<sup>27</sup> *Memoirs of a Huguenot Family, Translated and Compiled from the Original Autobiography of the Reverend James Fontaine, Ann Maury, trans.* (New York: P. Putnam and Company, 1853), 5.

mistakes and shortcomings of past societies” and create a New Eden.<sup>28</sup>

When Lewis read *Paradise Lost* in 1846, she revealed that in fact she did look for religious themes in many different genres. “I am continuing *Paradise Lost*, a grand conception,” she commented on this classic work of poetry. “I do not know why, indeed I wonder why, I should think of *Paradise Lost*, and the *Pilgrims Progress* together, unless one is great Piety in the clouds, the other great piety on earth.”<sup>29</sup>

Considering the criteria Lewis had for the novels she read, how can one account for the appearance in her diary of Charlotte Smith’s *Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle*? This book is certainly an example of the kind of fiction Lewis had probably read when she was young, but tried to avoid later in life. It could be that she never read it: she only recorded in September of 1846 that “M. Thompson has lent us...Emilline and the Orphan of the Castle.”<sup>30</sup> Perhaps she only skimmed the book. In any case, her lack of comments on Smith’s work suggests that it did not leave much of impression with her.

Novels, along with history and its allied forms, Lewis believed, were “good books” because they “made [one] better” through edification and moral

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<sup>28</sup> Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 1-10 and 214-221, quotes from 10 and 221.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis diary, 15 February 1846, CW Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis diary, 25 September 1846, CW Papers.



instruction. She reserved her highest praise, moreover, for works that “strengthened [one’s] resolution to try and do [one’s] duty to God.” Lewis spent her life strengthening her own faith, and in her search for spiritual guidance and inspiration, there was no better source than religious literature.

Lewis was, of course, a devout Episcopalian. More to the point, she was a low-church Episcopalian, or what David Holmes has termed an Evangelical Anglican. As was seen in chapter one, in the years after the 1810s, the Church in Virginia began a slow resurgence, following years of declining membership. Under the direction of young leadership, it began attracting new members and strengthening the participation of established members, by adopting some of the doctrines and outward appearances of other evangelical denominations.<sup>31</sup> Many of the new leaders came from the North, and they may have been inspired by what they knew about Philadelphia, where, Gary Nash writes, the Episcopal Church “had been theologically flexible and tinged with evangelicalism since before the Revolution.”<sup>32</sup> Undoubtably, Lewis would have found the houses of worship in and around Philadelphia to be quite similar to what she was accustomed to in Virginia.

One way Church leaders in Virginia sought to revive the diocese was

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<sup>31</sup> David L. Holmes, “The Decline and Revival of the Church of Virginia,” *Up From Independence: The Episcopal Church in Virginia* (Interdiocesan Bicentennial Committee of the Virginians, 1976), passim.

<sup>32</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 126.

through the use of the press. Accordingly, in 1816 the annual convention established “The Common Prayer-Book and Tract Society,” which was responsible for publishing and distributing Bibles, Prayer Books, sermons and tracts. Many of the sermons that Lewis mentioned in her journal, few of which she named, were probably distributed by the Society. Her Prayer Book most certainly was, and her comment that *The Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church* was “the best book except the Bible that exists” attests to the success the Society had in reaching at least one Church member.<sup>33</sup>

Holmes does not suggest whether the Tract Society distributed works written by ministers of other denominations. He does argue, though, that Church leaders took a conciliatory approach towards other evangelical faiths. Partly out of ecumenical spirit and partly because of necessity, Virginia’s Evangelical Anglicans “emphasized neither the historical claims of the Episcopal Church nor the special attractions of its liturgy.” Episcopalians had become a minority in Virginia and cooperating with other denominations allowed them to share resources.<sup>34</sup>

Lewis’s reading in 1845 of Joseph Gurney’s *The Papal and Hierarchical System Compared with the Religion of the New Testament* can be understood within the context of this ecumenical spirit. Gurney was a prominent nineteenth-century English Quaker who in this work--beginning with its tendentious title--

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<sup>33</sup> Holmes, 102; Lewis diary, August 1845, CW Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Holmes, 89-91, quote 90.

criticized the doctrines and hierarchies of the Catholic Church. His book was first published in 1843 in London by Gilpin and in New York by Collins, and the Tract Society may have distributed it in Virginia. In any case, the theme of this work would probably have appealed to the evangelical sensibilities of Episcopalians like Lewis who had distanced themselves from some of the traditions of high-church Anglicanism.

The Episcopal Church in Virginia did not rely solely on publications to spread its message and help ensure its growth. One of the many ways in which it tried to revive the religious life of its parishioners was through the family. Beginning in the 1810s churches regularly encouraged their members to provide religious instruction to their children, and the Tract Society published *Family Prayers* for home worship. They undoubtedly also followed the example of their northern counterparts and established Sunday schools as another means of teaching the young.<sup>35</sup>

The Episcopal Church was not unusual in encouraging instruction on the Sabbath: Sunday schools and other church-related organizations were increasingly common in many denominations. Women, in particular, were drawn to these organizations, and historians have done much to account for their appeal. In Sunday schools and other church functions women “found a sense of order and larger purpose in life,” as well as a community of serious Christians.

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<sup>35</sup> Holmes, 88-89; Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988), 161-63.

They could also experience new forms of self-assertion and earn respect in the community for their activities.<sup>36</sup>

Lewis probably used two of the works she read to help prepare her lesson plans for Sunday school, which she taught at her local church in Mecklenburg County. In 1845 she read John Todd's *Lectures to Children*, and in 1846, Gregory Bedell's *The Life and Travels of St. Paul*, published by the American Sunday School Union in Philadelphia. Both of these works are religious literature for children. Neither of them was produced by the Episcopal Church, although Bedell was an Episcopal minister. Considering the ecumenical leanings of the Church in Virginia, however, it was probably not unusual to use works from other denominations, especially those produced by inter-denominational societies such as the American Sunday School Union, for teaching on the Sabbath.

Lewis almost certainly used the Bible when she taught, and like many women raised in the South, she was very familiar with the Good Book.<sup>37</sup> She left few indications, however, of which scriptures she read most often. She usually mentioned simply that she had spent the day reading the Bible. Of the two

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<sup>36</sup> The literature on women in churches is extensive. For example, see Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 215-21, quote 215; and Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, 75.1 (June 1988): 15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Religion in the Lives of Slaveholding Women of the Antebellum South," in *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity*, Lynda L. Coon, Katherine J. Haldane, and Elisabeth W. Sommer, eds. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 207-229.

quotations from the Bible Lewis recorded in her journal, one, cited earlier, comes from Job, and the other, cited below, from Matthew. If Lewis followed the example of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was amended and ratified in 1789, she studied both the Old and New Testaments. Part of the preface to the Prayer Book reads, “The Old Testament is appointed for the first lessons at morning and evening prayer. The New Testament is appointed for the second lessons.”<sup>38</sup>

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the evangelicalism of Episcopalians like Lewis was “the Christianity of the New Testament.” Church leaders, through the pulpit and press, preached that in order to be saved one had to know Christ’s life and teachings.<sup>39</sup> Most of the sermons Lewis read probably focused on the New Testament. Although she never mentioned Frederick Robertson’s works, Lewis almost certainly was familiar with them: Robertson was the well-known pastor of Trinity Chapel in Brighton, England, whose works went through numerous editions in America. Twenty-one of the sermons he had preached at Trinity were collected and published shortly after Lewis left Mecklenburg; fourteen of them come from the

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<sup>38</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Published by King and Baird, for the Bishop White Prayer Book Society, 1843), 7.

<sup>39</sup> Diana Hochstedt Butler, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33-34, quote on 34.

New Testament, fully seven from John alone.<sup>40</sup>

Lewis accepted the Church's emphasis on the New Testament; she also adopted the evangelical understanding that personal salvation depended primarily on the affections, not on reason. In the decades before the Civil War, Episcopal leaders stressed "the absolute necessity of feeling the power and influence of the spirit of God upon our hearts." While evangelical Episcopalians did not abandon church doctrine, they did believe that faith resided in "a realm of truth that only the 'deepest emotions of the soul' could contemplate," and that only God would reveal, often outside of the church.<sup>41</sup> Lewis expressed this romantic understanding of divine inspiration one Sunday in 1845 when she wrote, "I feel holier--nearer to God in the woods--under the roofs of his own making."<sup>42</sup>

This focus on affection over reason was widespread in the antebellum South. In fact, Michael O'Brien posits that "evangelicalism was a crucial precondition not so much for the initial articulation of Romanticism as for its general acceptance." As Romanticism permeated the South, southerners picked up Romantic works while continuing to read the classics, though now with a

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<sup>40</sup> Frederick W. Robertson, *Sermons, Preached at Trinity Chapel, Brighton, by the Late Rev. Frederick W. Robertson* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1858).

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Butler, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis diary, 9 February 1845, CW Papers.

romantic bent.<sup>43</sup> Lewis, typical of her time, read both Scott and Shakespeare, using the latter, in the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, to express her romantic sentiments.

The Church's adoption of "affectionate religion," which contributed to the spread of Romanticism as well as to the Church's own growth in the years after the War of 1812, along with its accompanying emphasis on individual religious experience and knowledge of the Bible and the faith, could sometimes lead parishioners in directions Church leaders may not have anticipated. In 1845, Lewis wrote, in a romantic vein, of "the elevating effects of the study of the Bible. It expands the mind, as well as elevates it."<sup>44</sup> The Bible's "elevating" effects provided moral and spiritual guidance and inspiration. Yet the Bible also "expanded" the mind, Lewis believed, and the knowledge she gathered from it did not always accord with Episcopal teachings.

Lewis evinced a complex and even critical understanding of the role of the Church. Near the end of the Civil War she recorded in Philadelphia one of the last entries in her journal, and one of the few entries after 1845. "It is said that a preacher said in his sermon yesterday morning that if God would give him the power to make peace, he would not take the responsibility." Citing Matthew 5:9, she dissented from the minister's message. "I think that he might under the

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<sup>43</sup> Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), Chap. 2 and 74-78, quote 45.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis diary, 14 September 1845, CW Papers.

promise, 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'"<sup>45</sup> Lewis did not deny the authority of the Church. Yet she did not hesitate to examine some teachings of her church and its ministers, if only in private, when those beliefs conflicted with her own interpretation of the scriptures.

In 1845, Lewis turned to reading to help make sense of her husband's death--an event that had been central to her faith for almost three decades. "Began and finished 'The Dead in Christ,'" she wrote of the book by John McCullough, the minister from Wilmington whom she probably knew. "My interest did not flag. It is both a work of research and imagination. The whole has surprised me. I did not think that Mr. McCulough [sic] was capable of it." A few days later she lent the book to a friend, hoping "she will give me her opinion of it."<sup>46</sup> Lewis was amazed by McCullough's knowledge of and ability to interpret the scriptures; she read his work in a day and was inspired by it, commenting that "I have not read as many chapters in the Bible as I usually do."

It is easy to understand why she was engrossed in McCullough's work. "[We] are surrounded with invisible beings," he states in the first chapter. "And while we cannot be sure that the departed spirits of the dead ever return to earth, or approach us, either visible or invisible to mortal eye, we cannot know to a certainty that they do not." Those in mourning, of course, wonder where their departed loved ones have gone. People who were faithful in life, he promises,

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<sup>45</sup> Lewis diary, 21 May 1864, CW Papers.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis diary, 14 and 18 September 1845, CW Papers.



upon death “do not become severed from the Church; they only leave her visible mansion on earth, and enter into her invisible mansion in Paradise. The tie is not severed, the bond is not broken, which binds the living member to the living Body.” Those who grieve over a lover’s absence must strengthen their own faith, knowing that our bodies, “our prisons, these ‘houses of clay,’ will soon be crumbled into dust,” and that earthly lovers will be reunited, “[sailing] away for the realms of Paradise.”<sup>47</sup>

Published thirty years after the death of her husband, McCullough’s work came at an opportune time for Lewis, as she reflected on her life and the ever-present memory of a marriage that had ended almost as soon as it began. As an adult, Lewis developed reading habits particularly suited to her understanding of herself. “A good book is a blessing,” she believed, expressing the importance she placed on learning. Books could be entertaining, but more importantly, they also had to be edifying. Given the strength of her faith, it is not surprising that Lewis especially valued religious works, and that she chose titles that reinforced both the style and substance of her beliefs.

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<sup>47</sup> J.W. McCullough, *The Dead in Christ: An Inquiry Concerning the Intermediate State, The Future Blessedness, and The Mutual Recognition of “The Dead that die in the Lord”* (Baltimore, Maryland: Joseph Robinson, 1845), quotes from 39, 115, and 202.

## CONCLUSION

In 1846, one year after she finished *The Dead in Christ*, Frances Lewis returned to Philadelphia and a way of life she treasured. It was the last time she would make the move from Virginia to Pennsylvania. Her life in the Quaker City over the next two decades was probably marked by continued religious devotion, dedication to the memory of her brief marriage, and a love of reading.

Both the intensity and nature of Lewis's religious beliefs were common among women of her generation who were raised in the South. Indeed, southern women's diaries and letters attest to the fact that religion "lay at the core" of their identities. Even Lewis's criticisms of her church were probably not unheard of; women were more concerned with their own spiritual states, and with the "wish to see a greater realization of the Christian spirit" in society, than with the doctrines of the particular churches to which they belonged.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, the romantic or "affectionate" style of her faith, and of her reading more generally, was widespread in the antebellum South, and may have been apparent in

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Religion in the Lives of Slaveholding Women of the Antebellum South," in *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity*, Lydia L. Coon, Katherine J. Haldane, and Elisabeth W. Sommer, eds. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 207-210; quotations from 208 and 209.

Philadelphia, at least among fellow evangelical Episcopalians.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was Lewis's decision not to remarry surprising. Women in the upper South, at least, valued the financial independence that came with widowhood, and those who could afford to remain single after their husbands died, often did so. Yet Lewis did not stay widowed solely for financial reasons, even though she certainly liked managing her own estate. As with many other women, she understood marriage to be a sacrament; she took seriously the beliefs that widows should live "for their husband's memories," and that the spiritual union between husband and wife did not end when the earthly union did.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis's antislavery sentiments, however, were uncommon among women in the South, and so was her urban upbringing. Most women in the predominantly rural South lived outside of cities; Lewis was probably better prepared than most of her contemporaries to live in Philadelphia. In their journals and letters, furthermore, southern women did not object to the system of enslaved labor, even though they might express sympathy for the plight of individual slaves.<sup>4</sup> Lewis may have read and been influenced by abolitionist

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<sup>2</sup> Diana Hochstedt Butler, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33; Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), 45; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 126.

<sup>3</sup> See Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 26, on widows in Virginia; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 150; Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 35

literature, although she left no record that she same across any such works while she lived in Mecklenburg. Almost certainly, though, her views on slavery were affected by her years in the Quaker City.

The extent of Lewis's reading may also have differentiated her from other women of the time, both in the North and South. Women, particularly in the South, who kept diaries revealed that they were often engaged with books. Judging from historians' surveys of their journals, though, few women read as much or as often as Lewis did, or at least they did not record as many titles.<sup>5</sup> Without the responsibilities of a family, Lewis may have had more time than most married women to spend with books.

Lewis lived in an age when, some historians of the book have argued, there were significant changes in Americans' reading habits. Lewis's notes on her interactions with books suggest, though, some limitations on the extent and nature of these changes.

Perhaps the simplest argument for change is that the growth of the publishing industry led to a "diffusion of information" in the decades prior to the

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<sup>4</sup> See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 214-216 for women's comments on city living; and 243 for views on slavery; Lebsack, 138.

<sup>5</sup> For discussions of women's diaries, see Fox-Genovese, *Within*, 262-9, and Michael O'Brien, ed., *An Evening When Alone: Four Journals of Single Women in the South, 1827-67* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Published for the Southern Texts Society, 1993), 2-7. See also Richard D. Brown's discussion of women's journals, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Chap. 7. Brown provides no specific figures for the number of works women read, but in at least three of the four journals he researched, the numbers seem to be small, or at least fewer than in Lewis's journal.

Civil War. Americans now had access to more printed materials than they had previously, and they struggled to keep up with the latest products of the press.<sup>6</sup> Lewis was aware of the whims of the expanded literary marketplace, and she acquired both new and popular titles. She was just as likely, however, to look for old and obscure works.

As the world of print expanded, some historians posit, readers went from engaging in a few works many times to choosing numerous books and reading each one less often than they had previously. Lewis, in fact, did not go from reading intensively in the early nineteenth century to reading extensively in the 1840s; in her adult years she did go through many titles only once, but she also continued to pore over repeatedly other works.<sup>7</sup>

Lewis also did not completely abandon what David Hall has termed “traditional literacy.” This style of reading, he argues, which was common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was marked by four characteristics, including that most “people came in contact with a limited number of books,” and that steady sellers circulated widely.<sup>8</sup> Although Lewis acquired many books, she treasured a few of them, particularly the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer*, and was continually engrossed in them. And while steady sellers were not the

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, 268-296.

<sup>7</sup> See David D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), Chap. 6, for an argument against a shift from intensive to extensive reading.

<sup>8</sup> Hall, 57.

only works she read, they did constitute a substantial part of her literary diet.

A reading “revolution” may have been especially important to women in the first half of the nineteenth century. Lewis, like other young women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, read fiction. Considering her later efforts to maintain financial independence, for both herself and her married nieces, Lewis’s study of novels when she was young may have influenced her to resist patriarchal authority.<sup>9</sup> In her mature years, though, she expressed a dislike of the fiction she had read when she was young; instead, she showed a more staid preference for works, including novels, that were edifying. These books could also be entertaining, she believed, but they had to be virtuous.

Lewis was a “learned woman.” She practiced self-education, choosing “good books,” and sometimes taking notes on them, that would “expand” her mind. She did not, however, simply immerse herself in secular literature as it became increasingly available in the antebellum decades.<sup>10</sup> Lewis continued to devote much of her time to religious reading. Moreover, she reserved her highest praise for books that were “blessing[s],” believing that such works provided necessary moral and spiritual inspiration and guidance.

In the life she chose to live, and in the world of books she cultivated,

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<sup>9</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chap. 3; Brown, 194-196.

<sup>10</sup> See Mary Kelley, “Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History* 83 (September 1996): 142, and Brown, 193-196.

Lewis was both typical and unusual, progressive and traditional; indeed, her career as a reader stands as a warning against applying such labels in a manner too facile or categorical. Unfortunately, the brief glimpse she provided in her journal of her life and reading ended when she left Mecklenburg County, and she all but disappeared from the historical record. She spent most of the next twenty-one years in Philadelphia, before she and her husband were, as Lewis surely believed, finally reunited.

## APPENDIX 1 BOOKS IN LEWIS'S DIARY

The following is a list of the books Lewis mentioned in her journal, in the order in which they appear in the journal. Section one represents the works she probably read around the time of her husband's death. Section two lists the books that are at the front of her diary, which she most likely took notes on soon after moving to Mecklenburg County. Section three lists the titles that appear in her daily entries and provides the dates she gave for reading or acquiring them. Information is included on when and where the work was first published and how many times it was issued before 1860. When no English publication is given, the book first appeared in America.

In determining the edition Lewis probably read, I have followed Robert Gross's example in "Reconstructing Early American Libraries: Concord, Massachusetts, 1795-1850," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 97.2 (1987): 331-451. Most of her titles were issued in the United States shortly before she mentioned them in her diary, and I have assumed she read the most recent American edition. A few works, however, had not been published recently in America, and I concluded that she acquired the more current, English edition.



## I.

John Moore. *A view of society and manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany with anecdotes relating to some eminent characters.* London: Printed for A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1803.

1st published in London in 1779. 1st published in U.S. in Philadelphia (Phila.) in 1783.  
Published about 20 times before the Civil War (CW).

Leger Marie Philippe Laverne. *The life of Field Marshall Souvarof with reflections upon the principal events, political and military, connected with the history of Russia, during part of the eighteenth century.* Baltimore, Maryland: E.J. Coale, P. Mauro, 1814.

1st English-language pub. in NY and Baltimore in 1814. Only time this was printed in English.

William Roscoe. *The life and pontificate of Leo the Tenth: in four volumes.* Philadelphia: Printed at the Lorenzo Press of E. Bronson, 1806.

1st pub. in Liverpool and Phila. in 1805. Published 11 times before the CW.

James Justinian Morier. *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808-1809 in which is included, some account of the proceedings of His Majesty's mission, under Sir Harford Jones.* Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1816.

1st pub. in London in 1812. Pub. twice in U.S., in Boston and Phila. in 1816.

John Mawe. *Travels in the interior of Brazil, particularly in the gold and diamond districts of that country, by authority of the prince regent of Portugal: including a voyage to the Rio de le Plata and an historical sketch of the revolution of Buenos Ayres.* Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1816.

1st pub. in London in 1812. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1816. Pub. about 10 times before the CW.

George Power. *The history of the empire of the Musulmans in Spain and Portugal; from the first invasion of the Moors, to their ultimate expulsion from the peninsula.* London: J.J. Stockdale, 1815.

Only edition pub. in London in 1815.

John Chetwoode Eustace. *A classical tour through Italy.* Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1816.

1st pub. in London in 1813. 1st U.S. pub. in Philadelphia in 1816. Pub. 11 times before the CW.

Ali Bey. *The Travels of Ali Bey, in Morocco, Tripoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, and Turkey, between the years 1803 and 1807.* Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1816.

1st pub. in London in 1807. 1st pub. in U.S. in Phila. in 1816. Pub. 4 times before CW.

William Robertson. *The history of the reign of the Emperor Charles V.*

Philadelphia: Johnson and Warner, 1812.

1st published in Dublin in 1762. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1770. Printed about 70 times before the CW.

*The Bible.*

Lewis took notes on Genesis.

William Roscoe. *The life of Lorenzo de Medici, called the Magnificent.*

Philadelphia: Bronson and Chauncey, 1803.

1st pub. in Liverpool in 1795. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1803. Pub. about 30 times before the CW.

Voltaire. *The history of Charles XII. King of Sweden.* Otsego, New York:

Printed and sold by H. & E. Phinney, 1811.

1st pub. in Dublin in 1732. 1st U.S. pub. in NY in 1803. Pub. more than 20 time before the CW.

Benjamin Franklin. *The life of Benjamin Franklin.* Philadelphia: A. Griggs & K.

Dickinson, 1815.

1st identifiable pub. date NY in 1793. Pub. countless times thereafter.

David Hume. *The history of England, from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the revolution in 1688.* Albany, New York: B.D. Packard, 1816.

1st pub. in London in 1759. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1810. Pub. more than 30 times before the CW.

## II.

John Lloyd Stephens. *Incidents of travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843.

1st pub. in London in 1841. 1st U.S. pub. in NY in 1841. Pub. about 19 times before the CW.

Jean-Jacques Barthelemy. *Travels of Anacharsis the younger in Greece, during the middle of the fourth century before the Christian era.* Philadelphia: Published by Jacob Johnson and Co., 1804.

1st pub. in London in 1790-91. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1804 [Note: this edition fits Lewis's description of 4 vols.]. Pub. 23 times before the CW.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. *Lives of the most eminent French writers*. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840.

1st and only pub. under this title in Phila. in 1840. Also pub. as *Eminent literary and scientific men of France*, first in London in 1838. Pub. 4 times before the CW.

Justus Freiherr von Liebig. *Organic chemistry and its applications to agriculture and physiology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: J. Owen, 1841.

1st English-language pub. in London in 1840. 1st U.S. pub. in Mass. in 1841. Pub. 9 times before the CW.

### III.

James Fontaine. *A tale of the Huguenots, or, Memoirs of a French refugee family*. New York: J.S. Taylor, 1838.

1st pub. in NY in 1838. Pub. 5 times before the CW. Read it sometime in 1845.

Henry Hart Milman. *The history of the Jews*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843.

1st pub. in London in 1829 and in NY in 1830. Pub. 14 times before the CW. Finished vol. 1 Monday, 4 August, and the entire series, Wednesday, 20 August 1845.

John Todd. *Lectures to children: familiarly illustrating important truths*. Northampton, Massachusetts: Published by J.H. Butler, 1841.

1st pub. in Northampton, Mass. in 1834. Pub. 12 times before the CW. Read it Wednesday, 6 August 1845.

Charles Dickens. *American Notes*. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1842.

1st pub. in 1842. Pub. 18 times before the CW. Began it 20 August 1845.

Joseph John Gurney. *The papal and hierarchical system compared with the religion of the New Testament*. New York: Collins, 1843.

1st pub. in London and NY in 1843. Pub. 5 times before the CW. Finished it Monday, 25 August 1845.

Sir Walter Scott. *Tales of the crusaders*. Philadelphia: Desilver, Thomas and Co., 1836.

1st pub in NY in 1825. Pub. 14 times before the CW. Finished it Wednesday, 3 September 1845.

John W. McCullough. *The dead in Christ: an inquiry concerning the intermediate state, the future blessedness, and the mutual recognition, of "The dead that die in the Lord."* Baltimore, Maryland: Joseph Robinson, 1845.

Pub. only once in Baltimore in 1845. Read and finished it Sunday, 14 September 1845.

John Milton. *Paradise Lost*. New York: E. Kearny, 1843.

1st pub. in London in 1667. Countless U.S. and Eng. eds. Continuing it Sunday, 15 February 1846.

William Munford. *Poems and compositions in prose on several occasions*.

Richmond, Virginia: Pleasants, 1789.

Pub. twice in Richmond in 1798. Read it Tuesday, 16 February 1846.

William Hickling Prescott. *History of the conquest of Mexico with a preliminary view of the ancient Mexican civilization, and the life of the conqueror Hernando Cortez*. Philadelphia: D. McKay, 1843.

1st pub. in U.S. in 1843. Pub. at least 30 times before the CW. Read it in 1846.

Constantin-Francois Volney. *Travels through Egypt and Syria, in the years 1783, 1784, and 1785: containing the natural and political state of those countries, their productions, arts, manufactures, and commerce, with observations on the manners, customs and government of the Turks and Arabs*. New York: Printed for J. Tiebout, 1801.

1st pub. in NY in 1798. Pub. 4 times before the CW. Read it in 1846.

Richard Arnald. *A critical commentary upon the Apocryphal books: namely, the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, Baruch, the Prophet, the History of Susanna, and the History of Bel and the Dragon, also a dissertation upon the Books of the Maccabees and of Esdras*. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1845.

1st pub. in London in 1753. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1845. Pub. 6 times before CW. Read it Sunday, 1 March 1846.

Thomas Mooney. *A history of Ireland, from its first settlement to the present time: including a particular account of its literature, music, architecture, and natural resources; with upwards...* Boston, Massachusetts: Patrick Donahoe, 1845.

1st pub. in Boston in 1845. Pub. 4 times before the CW. Began reading it Friday, 23 April 1846.

Samuel Butler. *Hudibras, a poem*. Hartford, Connecticut.: W. Andrus, 1843.

1st pub. in London in 1663. 1st U.S. pub. in NY in 1806. Pub. countless times before CW. Continuing it Saturday, 9 April 1846.

Ellen Pickering. *The quiet husband*. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1840.

1st pub. in Phila. in 1840. Pub. 5 times before CW. Finished it Tuesday, 9 June 1846.

Alexandre Dumas. *The three guardsmen*. Baltimore, Maryland: Taylor, Wilde, and Co., 1846.

[Also titled *The three musketeers*] 1st pub. as *Three guardsmen* in NY and Baltimore in 1846.

1st pub. as *Three Musketeers* in Chicago in 1844. Pub. numerous times before CW.

Reading it Wednesday, 8 July 1846.

George Bancroft. *History of the U.S. from the discovery of the American continent*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1841.

1st pub. in Boston in 1823. Printed 30+ times before the CW. Began it Friday, 10 July 1846.

Gregory Townsend Bedell. *The life and travels of St. Paul*. Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1830.

1st and only pub. in Phila. in 1830. Read it Sunday, 12 July 1846.

Marianne Nicholson Croker. *The adventures of Barney Mahoney*. London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1832.

1st pub. in London in 1832. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in serialized form in 1833. Pub. 4 times before the CW. Read it Monday, 26 July 1846.

Waddy Thompson. *Recollections of Mexico*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846.

1st pub. in NY in 1846. Pub. 3 times before the CW. Finished it Saturday, 15 August 1846.

Martin Farquhar Tupper. *Proverbial philosophy: a book of thoughts and arguments*. Philadelphia: Herman Hooker, 1846.

1st pub. in London in 1838. 1st U.S. pub. in Boston in 1840. Pub. 30+ times before the CW. Finished it Tuesday, 18 August 1846.

Stephen Olin. *Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846.

1st pub. in NY in 1843. Pub. 10 times before the CW. [Note: this most closely matches her entry of "Stephen's Incident of Travel"]. Borrowed it Friday, 25 September 1846.

Charlotte Turner Smith. *Emmeline, the orphan of the castle*. Philadelphia: J. Conrad and Co., 1802.

1st pub. in London in 1788. 1st pub. in U.S. in 1802. Pub. 8 times before the CW. Borrowed it Friday, 25 September 1846.

Oliver Goldsmith. *The vicar of Wakefield*. Philadelphia: George S. Appleton, 1846.

1st pub. in London in 1766. 1st U.S. pub. in Phila. in 1772. Pub. 30+ times before the CW. Borrowed it Friday, 25 September 1846.

John Heneage Jesse. *Memoirs of the Pretenders and their adherents*. Philadelphia: J.W. Moore, 1846.

1st pub. in London in 1845. 1st pub. in U.S. in Phila. in 1846. Pub. 6 times before the CW. [Note: this is probably "The Pretenders" Lewis refers to.] Reading it Friday, 25 September 1846.

Charlotte Elizabeth. *Judah's lion*. New York: Baker and Scribner, 1846.

1st pub. in NY in 1843. Pub. more than 10 times before CW. Began it Sunday, 30 November 1846 in Philadelphia.

George Lillie Craik. *The pictorial history of England: being a history of the people, as well as a history of the kingdom.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1846.

1st pub. in London in 1838. 1st U.S. pub. in NY in 1846. Pub. about 10 times before the CW.  
Reading it Saturday, 5 December 1846 in Philadelphia.

## APPENDIX 2 BOOKS BY GENRE

### I : 1815

#### Biography

1. Moore, *A view of society and manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany with anecdotes relating to some eminent characters.*
2. Laverne, *The life of Field Marshall Souvarof...*
3. Roscoe, *The life and pontificate of Leo the Tenth.*
4. Roscoe, *The life of Lorenzo de Medici.*
5. Franklin, *The life of Benjamin Franklin.*

#### History

1. Power, *The history of the empire of the Musulmans...*
2. Robertson, *The history of the reign of the Emperor Charles V.*
3. Voltaire, *The history of Charles XII.*
4. Hume, *The history of England, from the invasion of Julius Caesar...*

#### Travel

1. Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia...*
2. Mawe, *Travels in the interior of Brazil.*
3. Eustace, *A classical tour through Italy.*
4. Bey, *The travels of Ali Bey, in Morocco...*

#### Religion

1. The Bible

### II: 1840s

#### Biography

1. Shelley, *Lives of the most eminent French writers.*

#### History

1. Prescott, *History of the conquest of Mexico.*
2. Mooney, *A history of Ireland...*

3. Bancroft, *History of the U.S.*
4. Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico.*
5. Jesse, *Memoirs of the Pretenders and their adherents.*
6. Craik, *The pictorial history of England.*
7. Milman, *The history of the Jews.*

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1. Stephens, *Incidents of travel in Central America...*
2. Barthelemy, *Travels of Anacharsis the younger in Greece...*
3. Volney, *Travels through Egypt and Syria.*
4. Olin, *Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land.*
5. Dickens, *American Notes.*

#### Natural History

1. Liebig, *Organic chemistry and its applications to agriculture and physiology.*

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1. Todd, *Lectures to children.*
2. Gurney, *The papal and hierarchical system compared....*
3. McCullough, *The dead in Christ.*
4. Arnald, *A critical commentary upon the Apocryphal books.*
5. Bedell, *The life and travels of St. Paul.*

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1. Scott, *Tales of the Crusaders.*
2. Pickering, *The quiet husband.*
3. Dumas, *The three guardsmen.*
4. Croker, *The adventures of Barney Mahoney.*
5. Smith, *Emmeline, the orphan of the castle.*
6. Goldsmith, *The vicar of wakefield.*
7. Elizabeth, *Judah's Lion.*

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1. Milton, *Paradise Lost.*
2. Butler, *Hudibras.*

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