

An(Other) Scribbler: Grace Aguilar's Anglicized Jewish Woman

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Grace Aguilar's (1816-1847) early writing focuses on and exploits historical romance. This illustrates her keen awareness of the Victorian literary marketplace as she shares its interests and concerns despite her minority position as a Jewess (Galchinsky, 1996, p.137). As a writer, Aguilar clearly engages in the Victorian fascination with history, paying particular attention to the fifteenth century Spanish Inquisition in 'The Fugitive; A True Tale' (pub. 1852), 'The Edict; A Tale of 1492' (pub. 1852), 'The Escape; A Tale of 1755' (1844),¹ and her novel *The Vale of Cedars; Or, the Martyr* (writ. 1831-1833, pub. 1850).² Aguilar delineates the Spanish Inquisition as a pivotal moment in Jewish culture, an episode that is largely responsible for the Jewish diaspora and the Jewish presence in England. For Aguilar, the Spanish Inquisition, Jewish persecution and crypto-Judaism, creates a platform upon which she can criticize Victorian Evangelism (Ragussis, 1995, p. 199). She bridges the past and the present to expose historical echoes in modern England's conversionist and anti-emancipationist agendas. Aguilar uses the Spanish Inquisition to address the ensuing question of English national identity that took the forefront in Victorian England, forcing a consideration of the modern Anglo-Jewish community upon her nineteenth century women readers. Aguilar's vision, manifested in her literature, for the birth of an Anglo-Jewish identity supports a nation in which Judaism can coexist with Christianity. Moreover, it is Aguilar's Jewish heritage as much as her social awareness that attracts her to historicity, her religious past reborn in the English present (Sanders, 1978,

¹ All three short stories are collected in Aguilar, Grace, 1889. *Home Scenes and Heart Studies*. New York: D. Appleton and Company. For 'The Escape,' I used Galchinsky, Michael, 2003. *Grace Aguilar: Selected Writings*. Orchard Park: Broadview Press Ltd.

² Aguilar, Grace, 1874. *The Vale of Cedars; of, The Martyr*. New York: Appleton and Company.

pp. 11-12). Aguilar shares this desire to bridge the past and present with other English writers of historical fiction. Although some scholars cite this desire as a particularly Jewish one, it unites Aguilar's dual selfhood (Sanders, 1978, pp. 2-3); Aguilar exists in Victorian England equipped with varying consciousnesses that work together to appease both Jewish and Gentile readers and create in her writing subjects that blend the concerns of each (Galchinsky, 1996, p. 173). In particular, she employs her Sephardic roots and personal relationship with crypto-Judaism and the Spanish Inquisition to expose the barbarity of fifteenth century Inquisition Spain and encourage the separation of Christianity and Judaism as a way to effect successful relations between the two religions without conversion (Fay, 2002, pp. 216-217). She manipulates survival instincts in historical Judaism to speak to her Victorian reader, bringing the past into the present to engage in a debate that is still powerfully relevant. She opens Jewish history to Christian readership to move the crypto-Jewish experience into mainstream Victorian England and modernity, and holds England responsible in part for Jewish persecution in her present as much as her past (Fay, 2002, p. 216).

Aguilar's 'The Fugitive: A True Tale' (1889) appears in *Home Scenes and Heart Studies*, a compilation of her shorter fiction brought together into one volume by her mother, Sarah Aguilar, shortly after her death. Aguilar juxtaposes the Anglo-Jew against the pre-Anglicized Marrano in the late eighteenth century. Although her tale suggests a discourse with the Anglo-Jewish community, her readership was largely Christian, enabling her to engage broader nineteenth century concerns (Galchinsky, 2003, p. 13). Aguilar's tale attempts to minimize the distance between Jew and Christian. She uses this narrative as a case study in character, confined as she is to plot points comprising 'A True Tale' and she actively engages a dialogue with her reader to highlight the similarity of spirit between Judaism and Christianity, and de-emphasize the differences of practice, worship, and devotion (Ayres, 2003, p. 1). Within the Anglo-

Victorian literary marketplace and early Victorian women's readership, Aguilar continually rewrites stories of the ideal domestic woman regardless of religion, helping to minimize the distance between the nineteenth century Christian woman and the nineteenth century Jewess.

Aguilar brings together the past and the present in her tale through an opinionated narrator who is as significant a character as the protagonists in the story. In this way, Aguilar reveals how 'keenly aware of her English audience' she was (Zatlin, 1981, p.33). Early in the story, she writes of how 'the situation of the Jews in England, some eighty or ninety years ago, was very different to their situation now' (Aguilar, 1889, p.105). She cites here the difference in treatment Jews experienced throughout history in England. Aguilar calls upon her English readership's historical knowledge of their homeland and aligns herself with the women reading her work as a fellow Victorian English woman; in this way, she unites with her readers through their shared social consciousness. Aguilar explores the stereotypes of the figure of the Jew in English society, challenging the reader to accept his or her responsibility in creating and sustaining this character, while simultaneously building up to a story that will explode these expectations. In this way, she can later use this discourse to locate women and femininity at the core of these struggles. This is affected through her analysis of the culpability of both the Jew and the Gentile in creating these relationships.

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lingering prejudice, still predominant in the hearts of the English, and pride and nationality equally strong in the Hebrew, kept both parties aloof, so that no advance could be made on either side, and each remained profoundly ignorant of the other, not alone on the subject of opposing creeds, but of actual character. (Aguilar, 1889, p.105)

Aguilar addresses Jew and Gentile alike as members of a common humanity. She identifies each party's shortcomings to elicit common

sympathy, highlighting the Anglo's and the Hebrew's mutual unwillingness to understand otherness. Most importantly, however, is the note that this ignorance extends beyond creed to personality. Aguilar believes 'Christian bigotry and illiberalness are based on ignorance of Jews and breed a lack of imaginative sympathy for Jews, which impedes true toleration' (Galchinsky, 1996, p. 144). As Aguilar dissolves all Jews into a particular mould in the above-mentioned quote, she enacts that which she cautions readers against. Because of the Anglo's and the Hebrew's inability to accept that which makes the one human to the other, neither can connect with and accept each other. As a Jewess, Aguilar hopes to change this, at least on one side, by offering the literary marketplace her understanding and explanation of the Jews.

By providing an understanding of this difference between races, Aguilar justifies her story's place in the literary world and endows it with value. The above example suggests Aguilar's motivations for writing this story and she manipulates her ideal of a shared consciousness between Hebrew and Anglo to transition into a consideration of the Jewish community and Jewishness. She notes how the 'social evil' of the separation of peoples 'was in some respects...a national good' for the Israelites because 'it drew them more closely, more kindly together; aliens and strangers to the children of other lands, the true followers of their persecuted creed were as brothers' (Aguilar, 1889, p.105). Aguilar explains the close ties of the Jewish community as resultant of their creed and the inability of others to accept or understand them. Although Aguilar engages in a dialogue presumably foreign and uncomfortable to mainstream readership in Victorian England, she varies her narration and the ways in which she relates facts. While she opens her story with an analysis of the Jewish and English condition, her narrator attempts to mirror those reading her work. Through this literary device, Aguilar partakes of Victorian

England's social expectations for women, offering a narrator and a heroine who represents an appropriate role model for reading women.

Aguilar's narrator begins with the character of Judah Azavédo, using him to draw attention to her social consciousness. This story, along with 'Aguilar's many historical tales of the Inquisition' carries 'with [it] a narrative aside that identifies their function for the English reader' (Ragussis, 1995, p.148). In describing Judah Azavédo, the narrator suggests 'he was absolutely and disagreeably plain; we would say ugly, did we not so exceedingly dislike the word' (Aguilar, 1889, p.106). The inability to describe Azavédo in a manner that creates tension in her reading public betrays the narrator's social awareness. Aguilar's narrator points out the hypocrisy of social dictates and challenges her reader to concur with the narrator's understanding of society. Although the reader learns more of Azavédo than merely his physicality, this superficial investigation enables the reader to move beyond his Judaism and consider him as a man, one eligible to marry England's daughters. Through him, Aguilar aspires to '[assure] her readers that leaving aside the basic ritual observances, it would be difficult to distinguish a Jewish from a native household' (Ayres, 2003, p.3). Aguilar encourages this reading by revealing Azavédo's authentic Jewish identity, Aguilar writing a distinction between the image of Anglo male and the image of Jew. Azavédo represents the idealized modern Jew who practices the religion of his ancestors while living as a socially conditioned nineteenth century Englishman. Aguilar creates a Jew reconciled to his modern ambitions which helps preface Azavédo's role in establishing a platform on which to perceive womanhood without the threatening presence of Jewishness.

As a man, Azavédo is susceptible to human emotion. He experiences a profusion of love for a mysterious woman and hatred for his physicality. The love Azavédo feels for Inez Benito, the object of his affections whom he observes on his travels, is purely superficial. However, she possesses an almost magical hold over him, allowing him to transcend his own self-loathing to turn outward and engage in his community. Aguilar's narrator

manipulates this power to make a larger statement about the Jewish woman in terms of Anglo perception, revealing how she ‘employs...adjectives such as “peculiar” and “mysterious”, [to] distance rather than reveal anything about the spiritual significance of Jewish practices’ (Zatlin, 1981, p.36). Inez becomes another enchanting woman rather than a sorceress Jewess. Upon viewing Inez and placing her within his gaze, Azavédo’s entire perception changes:

Before he could analyse why that bitterness against his unhappy ugliness should return, when he thought it so successfully conquered, he loved with the full passionate fervour of his race and his own peculiar disposition, and loved one of whom he could learn nothing, trace nothing, know nothing, save that she was so surpassingly lovely, that though he had seen her but three times, never near, and only once without her veil, her beauty both of face and form lingered on his memory as indelibly engraved as if it had lain there for years, and then had been called into existence by some strangely awakening flash. (Aguilar, 1889, p.107)

Azavédo is a mixture of faith and flesh, his affection for Inez uniting his Jewish and Anglo identities and blending man with Jew to provide a purely human, and subsequently identifiable, character for the reader. A discussion of Azavédo’s faith is glossed over in order to focus the reconstructive power of a woman vis-à-vis man’s love of her. In perceiving her at a distance, Azavédo experiences Inez’s full power as a woman. She helps him surmount his self-loathing and he feels she has been placed in his gaze by some supernatural agency attending to his desires. While Aguilar’s narrator offers the image of the man in love, she also conceives the ideal woman. Although the reader has yet to meet this figure, she already partakes of her social role. The power of her beauty makes Azavédo accept himself and feel alive. She awes him into existence and helps him ‘conquer’ that which nothing assuaged. As Inez supports him, she exalts in her domestic obligations as a woman. However, Azavédo’s descriptions of her defy the idea of the Victorian angel of the house, flatly denying that there was anything ‘saintlike [or] angelic’ in ‘the beauty of her face’ (p.107). Rather,

Inez's charm reveals 'an arch of witchery, a shadowless glee, infused with the nameless, descriptionless, but convincing charm of mind' (Aguilar, 1889, p.107). Aguilar's narrator offers a paradoxical picture of woman in terms of Victorian femininity. At once she has the power to instill in man his better nature, while her power to do so is resultant of 'witchery', removing her from the pedestal of heaven and threatening her with the iconography of hell. This diction is Aguilar's blatant assimilation of 'Englishmen's own terms—'peculiar', 'mysterious', 'sorcery', 'hated', and 'unknown'...to castigate Jews and Judaism. She gives these terms new meaning by showing that what is 'peculiar' can also be deserving of praise' (Zatlin, 1981, p. 36). The narrator aligns Inez's 'charm of mind' with her Jewishness, a juxtaposition suggestive of a condemnation of woman's perceptive abilities beyond her power to 'charm' a beau.

Aguilar's narrator self-consciously employs romance in transitioning to a character analysis of Inez, the real subject of her narrative. She laments 'and so we must leave [Azavédo] to waft our readers over the salt seas, and introduce them to a more southern land and a very different person' (Aguilar, 1889, p.108). Aguilar moves from one character to the next using language suggestive of fancy and illusion. She plays into the critic's perception of women's reading as escapism, supplementing her story with romance. In romances, women

escape into imagined lives more active and interesting than [their own], and into fictional spaces where 'feminine' values are granted more weight than is often the case in 'real' life. (Flint, 1993, p.32)

As with many of Aguilar's heroines, Inez's exceptionalism lies in her 'extraordinary beauty which ever fastens on the memory as by some strange spell' (Aguilar, 1889, p.108). Her physical attractions hold all in awe, as it does with Azavédo. Aguilar endows femininity with immense significance. Again, however, Aguilar expresses ambivalence to such display, aligning it

with the ‘witchcraft’ of a former passage and attributing its power to ‘some strange spell’. Again, though, Aguilar uses Anglo diction to minimize the distance between her Jewess and the Christian reading masses. Interestingly, this idea of enchantment fits Inez particularly well because of her liminal existence. She is on the cusp of adolescence and adulthood, preparing to employ the expectations for womanhood she has learned and apply them appropriately in the social world. At this point in the narrative, Inez equivocates between childhood and womanhood, held together by some supernatural agency: ‘all the freshness of girlhood was so united to the more mature graces of woman, that it was often difficult to say which of the two periods of life she belonged’ (Aguilar, 1889, p.108). Even the narrator has difficulty identifying her, revealing the incomprehensible nature of woman. However, this moment offers another chance for Aguilar to unite with her reader. By noting the female composition, and not the composition of the Jewess, Aguilar unites her women readers with her heroine through sympathetic identification. Like other Anglo-Jewish women writers, Aguilar ‘distances the Jew’ and Jewess from her Gentile reader in an attempt to ‘arouse sympathy by...stressing...preternatural goodness, not [her] evil; [her] historicity, not [her] Gothic eeriness’ (Zatlin, 1981, p.30). She ‘approach[es] [her] English audience thus to ease English fears and gain for Jews acceptance or at least tolerance,’ concerned less ‘about the reception of [her writing] as literature and more...for the sociopolitical position the [texts] might help [her] people attain’ (p.30). Aguilar appeals to the literary marketplace by offering an image of woman, filtered through an anglicized narrator, before she offers an image of Jewess, easing the transition into her sensitive subject.

Because of her peculiar subject, Aguilar’s narrator breaks from the plot before entering into a discussion of Inez’s tale. She continues to nurture her reader, holding her hand as a gesture of protection throughout the text. In the midst of her description of Inez, the narrator ‘must pause, for the pen

can never do beauty justice, and even if it did, would be accused of exaggeration, although there yet remain those who, from personal acquaintance, can still bear witness to its truth' (Aguilar, 1889, p.108). Aguilar's narrator responds to a code of readership, accepting the varying reasons why readers read at all. She enables her reader to use this text as a form of fantasy and escapism, leaving to the imagination a more complete picture of her heroine. In doing so, the narrator both answers her readers' questions and refutes their criticism, enabling them to partake in the creation of her romance alongside herself. She refuses to create a space for criticism and turns to the reader to finish this part of the story. Further, her assurance that there exists accountability for her tale reinforces the story's subtitle, 'A True Tale'. This singular connection between reader and writer enables Aguilar to trespass upon their imaginations subjects of transgression and indulge in that which is hidden. Besides exploring the hidden secrets of Judaism, she can also attend to the hidden secrets of humanity and, in particular, woman's nature.

Upon really getting to know Inez through her dialogue, the reader meets a strong woman wholly possessed of her own mind. Struggling with a friend, Inez defends her relationship with her husband, one that appears particularly tumultuous. With her companion's assertions that he, and others, assume her husband's death will encourage her union with her brother-in-law, Inez vigorously defies such a notion, locating herself within the parameters of female expectation. Inez claims 'If I did not love my husband, I respected, honored him—yes, loved him too as a father' (Aguilar, 1889, p.109). Inez is committed to her place. She admits she may not have loved her partner but still adheres to her obligations to him as his wife. Her respect of his paternal role celebrates the infinite power of familial unity and the preservation of the domestic sphere despite conflicting desires in the self. Inez's true womanhood, then, cannot be reconciled to mere desire. Aguilar posits her heroine within the boundaries of traditional Victorian

domesticity and Inez, therefore, understands it is ‘woman’s mission to perform duties cheerfully for husband, children, home, and community’ (Golden, 2003, p.30). Aguilar offers the image of a woman who puts all above herself; however, she also puts in tension both the American ‘self-sacrificing woman-mother’, as much as she is the English ‘angel of the house’, by suggesting that an ideal wife may not actually love her husband (p.23). In this light, the Victorian reader accepts Inez as a representative of woman more generally, rather than merely a Jewess, and views her as a role model to young ladies.

Inez’s strength of character is further exemplified when she is exposed as a Marrano and forced to flee Spain. She refuses to let her relation, Julian Alvarez, sacrifice his life and family to save her own. It is precisely her respect for family that suggests Aguilar deliberately writes a model woman to her readers. Inez ‘will not risk [his] life, so precious to [his] wife and children’ simply because she fears where life will take her (Aguilar, 1889, p.112). Inez celebrates the home and prepares to sacrifice herself for its preservation. She is strong in this, and demands: ‘Do not attempt to argue with me; it will be useless, as you ought to know. Look to my poor boy; he needs you more than I do’ (p.112). Inez’s power of articulation and her ability to honor nineteenth century domestic obligations reveal a woman of strength in body and mind, a woman England’s reading mothers and daughters will readily receive as a model. While Aguilar avoids the stereotypical image of the Jewess, she commits to Victorian womanhood, invoking instead the stereotypical, and subsequently patriarchal, image of Victorian womanliness. Aguilar uses the power of literature in this sense to show that her characters are worthy models for ‘readers [to] emulate’ because they ‘make socially acceptable choices’ (Golden, 2003, p.24). Inez’s physical beauty wins her acclaim, while her mind has clearly been cultivated to accept her role as a woman, wife, mother, and Jewess.

Problematically, however, Inez chooses in this moment to be a Jewess and to preserve her freedom to worship her God. While she cares for her son and enlists Alvarez to ‘look to [her] poor boy,’ she determines to seek freedom first on her own. To the gentile woman reader and the member of mainstream Victorian culture conditioned to accept the role of motherhood as sacrosanct to her gender, this move is jarring. However, Aguilar’s narrator does not abandon her reader in her time of need. She reveals her own heritage to explain Inez’s desperation. Galchinsky (1996, p.32) suggests ‘Sephardic women drew on the crypto-Jewish heritage of women passing down the oral history of the Inquisition’ and ‘used the crypto-Jewish experience of passing as Christians as a metaphor for the Anglicization they themselves were undergoing’. The narrator, and Aguilar, teases out this metaphor as an Anglicized Sephardic Jewess to converse with the reader, responding to unspoken questions:

To us, looking back on the extraordinary fact of the most Catholic kingdoms being literally peopled with secret Jews, and still more difficult to understand what secret feeling it was which thus bound them to a country where, acknowledged or discovered, Judaism was death...Yet so it was; and there are still families in England to trace their descent from those who, like the Senora Benito, were compelled to fly at an hour’s warning, saving little else than life. (Aguilar, 1889, p.113)

Aguilar justifies the experience of her heroine to her readership. She speaks to the empathetic and sympathetic identification of the Jew and Jewess who experienced a similar situation, while also making her Christian readers look beyond themselves and into a well-documented time in their own history. Aguilar offers a living history to attest to the truth of this tale by stopping her narrative completely and speaking directly to them. Further, her identification with the reader serves to solidify this bond. Aguilar’s narrator includes herself in those revisiting a period in a common history and its

particular connection to two countries. She sympathizes with her reader and sees that Inez's attachment to her faith and to a home under threat is challenging. Aguilar's narrator never owns the ability to explain such an idea; she merely presents herself as a recorder of truth who remains true to those who can attest to the veracity of her tale. Through her fiction, Aguilar brings history to life, taking it from the pages of a text to force the modern woman reader outside herself and to a larger truth. Because 'crypto-Judaism was a secret, domestic Judaism, hidden from the outside world as if by a veil,' Aguilar's Marrano stories employ this veil as a 'distancing method so as to focus less on differences of form between Judaism and Christianity and more on similarities in spirit' (Galchinsky, 1996, p.137). Not only does Aguilar extend the vantage point from which readers perceive her work, she creates a unifying effect, even if illusionary, between reader and those little understood communities in England, linking all together through a shared homeland where Judaism and Christianity coexist comfortably.

The narrator uses Inez to connect the reader, Jew and Gentile, through the image of Inez as an ideal woman. Throughout her voyage to England from Spain, Inez

retained not only firmness but liveliness...and when received in England with the most hospitable kindness by Julian's friends, gaily consulted them on the best means of subsistence—whether to take in plain work or enter upon the business of fancy confectionary, for both of which her convent education had well fitted her. (Aguilar, 1889, p.114)

Inez represents the power of women to persevere. She does not have to sacrifice any aspect of her sex to survive because she accepts the obligations she has to society and her role. Aguilar clearly believes in 'the capacity of literature to inculcate correct conduct' (Flint, 1993, p.205). Through sympathetic identification with fictional heroines in stories who elicit emotional responses in the reader, Aguilar's narrator appeals to women

readers who share her hope that literature can help prepare them to act appropriately in the domestic sphere, despite her awareness that these same readers are also searching for models of women who successfully defy domestic expectations (pp.204-209). Inez does not waste time upon reaching a safe haven mourning over her losses. Rather, she accepts her expectations and a plethora of opportunities open to her. The image of Inez is that of the ideal woman. Although her Judaism forces her to leave her homeland and separate from her son, Aguilar does not depict her as awkward in adjusting to life in a free land. Inez looks to the best interests of her family, setting up a domestic circle in a foreign land. Consistent with this, everything she does is the picture of propriety. She declines to attend a social function because she fears her dress will 'bring shame on [the] fashionable reputation' of her friends (Aguilar, 1889, p.115); she indulges the fashion and desires of others by lying 'aside her veil' upon their request (Aguilar, 1889, p.116). Moreover, Inez does not offer the image of a transgressive woman. While complying with Anglo decorum and fashion, she too complies with the expectations for women in regards to love. This, and not her creed, attracts Azavédo. For the Victorian woman,

reading becomes necessary to a woman's education and the cultivation of social graces because it is indelibly tied to the prevailing nineteenth-century notions of gentility' and 'reading can be seen as one means of giving a woman admittance to the highly demarcated access rituals of high society that the young lady will eventually enter. (Golden, 2003, p.23)

Inez stands out not as a Jewess, but as an appropriate and acceptable woman.

Azavédo's recognition of Inez as the mysterious Spanish woman he loves sees him subject her to his desires. He sees her 'not only yet more radiant in finished loveliness than when he first beheld her, but free, and of his own race and creed' (Aguilar, 1889, p.116). Azavédo becomes wholly

attached to Inez the moment he sees her in Spain. This time, in England, he sees her as an object to possess because she is physically attractive and shares his race. Painted as a woman wholly faithful to her duty, it is not surprising that Inez eventually bends to Azavédo's desire and agrees to marry him. However, Aguilar's narrator does not allow for the romance of her tale to end so simply:

Reader, we will not blazon the simplicity of truth with the false colouring of romance. *She did not* love him...Some biographers stop here, bidding the curious reader probe not too deeply into the history of wedded life. As regards our heroine, however, we shrink not from the probe. The *romance* of love *before* marriage she might not have known, but its *reality afterwards* she made so manifest, even when disease, joined to other infirmities, so tried her husbands as to render him fretful and irritable, that there are still living some who assert that never was a wife more tenderly affectionate, more devotedly faithful than was Inez Azavédo. (p.117)

Again, Aguilar's narrator moves beyond her text to reassure the reader. She refuses to succumb to romance in her story and threaten its potential as a serious consideration of Anglo-Jewry. Therefore, Aguilar paints her interpretation of the realities surrounding married Victorian woman. Her narrator pours forth Aguilar's belief that 'reading should play' a didactic part 'in relation to a young woman's presumed future role at home' (Flint, 1993, p.10). Her married readers can identify with Inez because Inez's affections towards her husband are developed after their initial union. Such may be the case in her readers' own lives and the narrator, therefore, builds identification into the relationship between reader and character. She offers Inez as a model woman worthy of emulation by England's daughters, one not taken in by fantasies and fiction. Rather than try to live the mimetic idealization of a novel, Aguilar's narrator paints a picture of reality for her readers.

Inez Benito Azavédo is Aguilar's picture of the model woman. She blends Jewishness with womanhood, creating a space where the reader interacts with the narrator/author to question 'A True Tale' glossed with fiction. Aguilar clearly understands that because Victorian women tended to 'read mimetically...[s]ome Victorian women...projected themselves into works of fiction without identifying with a particular character' while '[o]thers related to heroines' lives and incorporated the fictive worlds into their own' (Golden, 2003, p. 29). Aguilar is careful to create a universal woman who defies religious difference and stands as a model of femininity. Moreover, Aguilar exposes mainstream Victorian readership to otherness made familiar. By sketching the characters of Judah Azavédo and Inez Benito in ways that her readers may sketch themselves, Aguilar humanizes the figure of the Jew and Jewess, enabling her readership to associate with those they perceive with apprehension. In this short story, and her other fiction, 'Aguilar deftly exploits the historical novel to bring Protestants into sympathy with Jews' (Zatlin, 1981, p.33). She 'revise[s] the kind of Jewish history that has been written from a Christian perspective' (Ragussis, 1995, p.148). Because Aguilar was able to incorporate herself, and not her otherness, in Anglo-Victorian social expectations for women, she achieved a great deal in terms of promoting tolerance for the Jews in Victorian Christian England. Victorian scholars are finally turning to Grace Aguilar and other Anglo-Jewish women writers because it has become increasingly clear that if readers are to '[understand] the whole spectrum of women's literary production' and 'the literary landscape of Victorian Britain,' it is time 'to investigate [all of] the female literary tradition, [in order to] to comprehend women's history' (Thompson, 1999, p.13). From Aguilar's writing, the Victorian scholar can observe how she 'seeks to explain' Jews and Judaism to Christians, 'in the hope that some vulgar errors concerning Jewish feelings, faith, and character may, in some measure, be corrected' (Zatlin, 1981, p.33).

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