“TO COLLECT, DIGEST, AND ARRANGE”:
AUTHORSHIP IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC, 1792-1801

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

“‘To Collect, Digest, and Arrange’: Authorship in the Early American Republic, 1792-1801” examines the role of the author in the postrevolutionary marketplace. Early American authors often held various occupations and wrote in multiple genres, which to many scholars have made them appear amateurish. I argue, however, that it is the very range of professional identities and genres in which they worked that informs the project of the postrevolutionary author—a project which, as Crèvecoeur terms it, was “to collect, digest, and arrange” the stories, letters, and citizens of the new nation. By adopting different identities and genres, postrevolutionary authors attempted to abandon the autocratic voice of the narrator in favor of a more democratic and collaborative model of authorship. Yet, at the same time, their texts reveal a commitment to retaining the autocratic voice as a means of instructing, monitoring, and uniting their readers. I term the balancing act between these two commitments “republican authorship,” a model of authorship indebted to the tensions of the Constitutional debates. By situating these authors and their texts within the historical context of the early Republic, I show how the postrevolutionary author sought to complete the machinery of citizenship left unfinished in the scene of the nation’s founding.
In my Introduction, I offer a brief analysis of the Constitutional debates and a definition of republican authorship. Chapter One reveals the connection between authorship and surveillance in Judith Sargent Murray’s *The Gleaner* (1792-98). While Murray performs a type of authorial espionage on her readers, I describe in my second chapter how Hannah Webster Foster in *The Boarding School* (1798) instructs her readers in a model of authorship that enables them to become monitorial authors themselves. Chapter Three traces Charles Brockden Brown’s gradual authorial effacement in his novels as evidence of his increasingly complex commitment to promote the reader’s involvement. In the last chapter, I argue that Susanna Rowson in *Reuben and Rachel* (1798) insists that the historical progress of the nation depends upon the exchange of stories. Finally, I conclude by gesturing towards the affinities between the republican and antebellum authors.
To my parents and Matt
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INTRODUCTION

REPUBLICAN AUTHORSHIP

Traditionally dismissed as overly didactic, generically sloppy, and too contrived, the literature of the early American Republic has received a significant amount of scholarly attention in the last twenty years. With the advent of feminism, critical race studies, and new historicism, literary scholars have turned to the nation’s founding as a compelling and untapped era that demands critical attention. The republication of primary texts and the emergence of an impressive body of literary criticism on the period have resulted in the reassessment of a substantial amount of literature from the early Republic. While the popularity in this literature has sparked numerous discussions on various aspects of the period, critics have neglected to situate the author in the newly independent nation. “‘To Collect, Digest, and Arrange’: Authorship in the Early American Republic, 1792-1801” amends this gap in American literary history by examining the role of the author in the postrevolutionary marketplace. Situating these authors and their works within the larger historical and political context of the early Republic, I show how the postrevolutionary author sought to complete the machinery of citizenship left unfinished in the scene of the nation’s founding.

During the ratification process of the Constitution, American politicians were involved in a heated debate concerning the distribution of power between the governor
and the governed. The Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, argued for a central government capable of exerting far-reaching powers over its citizens. Performing the role of vigilant watchdog, this government was needed to monitor and control the masses. Representative of the Federalist mistrust of the individual, Alexander Hamilton, in Federalist Number VI, writes, “Has it not...invariably been found that momentary passions, and immediate interest, have a more active and imperious control over human conduct than general or remote considerations of policy, utility or justice?” The Anti-Federalists, on the other hand, favored a weaker central government with power resting in state and local governments. They held a firmer faith in the individual and believed that power should emanate directly from “the people.” In a letter to Edward Carrington, Thomas Jefferson pens, “I am persuaded myself that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. . . . They will be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves.” Jefferson thought that “the people,” rather than a centralized government, could serve as a more effective authority—that “the people” ought to be their own vigilant watchdog. In the late eighteenth century, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, which would later transform into Thomas Jefferson’s Republican Party during the Federalist administrations of George Washington and John Adams, deliberated over the amount of power and the specific powers of the central government.

In “To Collect, Digest, and Arrange: Authorship in the Early American Republic, 1792-1801,” I assert that early American authors conceived of their work as participating in and extending the arguments surrounding the ratification process of the Constitution. Similar to their political contemporaries in Philadelphia, the early American author
debated the inalienable rights of the author and the democratic rights of the reader. These authors struggled with the fact that they could either enact tyranny over the reader with a strong, monologic voice, or incite anarchy with too little centralized authorial control. Thus, integral to the early American author’s model of authorship is the attempt to revise the traditional, inherited autocratic voice of the narrator in favor of a more democratic and collaborative model of authorship; at the same time, however, these authors reveal a commitment to retaining certain aspects of the autocratic voice as a means of teaching, monitoring, and unifying the readers of the young republic. I term the balancing act between these two commitments “republican authorship,” a model of authorship indebted to the inherent tensions of the Constitutional and political debates of the last decade of the eighteenth century.

In addition, the term, “republican authorship,” emphasizes the very important work that these authors conceptualize their authorship performing in and for the new Republic. In her seminal study on the early American novel, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986), Cathy N. Davidson argues that:

> . . . a small body of Americans used the novel as a political and cultural forum, a means to express their own vision of a developing new nation. Like many writers in any country that has achieved independence through revolution, early American novelists faced the special task of creating literature against the overwhelming impact of their nation’s residual Colonial mentality. How did they make an American fiction? What local issues were fictionalized, were considered significant enough to warrant the attention of the novelist and the reader?6

Similarly, in *Writing in the New Nation: Prose, Print, and Politics in the Early United States* (1991), Larzer Ziff observes that “print culture and American political culture were twins born from the same conditions and dependent upon one another for their well-
Like Davidson and Ziff, I argue that Murray, Hannah Webster Foster, Charles Brockden Brown, and Susanna Rowson use their texts as arenas to interrogate the relationship between the author and the reader and civic virtue and liberal ambition. Their texts illustrate the “conditions” of and the political debates in postrevolutionary society and thus offer various “visions”—some terrifying, some promising—of the “developing new nation.”

In Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1725-1810 (1986), Emory Elliott claims that the early American author contributed to the “development of the new nation” by “contain[ing]” the revolutionary impulses of the citizenry after the War of Independence:

Once aware of the truly volatile conditions of identity confusion, religious turmoil, and social misdirection that followed upon the war, we may see how easily America could have slipped into the sociological condition of massive despair, cynicism, and anger that has destroyed other postrevolutionary societies. But containment did occur, and it was furthered by a generation of word-makers—not just framers of the Constitution but the shapers of the metaphors, articulators of the visions, and the creators of the imaginative projections of America as a nation and of the nature and identity of the American people.

In opposition to Carwin in Brown’s Wieland (1797), whose irresponsible “authorship” results in chaos and mass murder, republican authors carefully and methodically use their authorship as a means of instructing, monitoring, and unifying Americans. For example, in Chapter Four, I show how Rowson in Reuben and Rachel; Or, Tales of Old Times (1798) offers her American readers a model of cultural and national cohesion; she insists that her readers exchange sentiment and language in order to overcome irreconcilable boundaries and differences. Throughout my dissertation, I demonstrate how republican
authors do not spark insurrection, but work to “contain” their wide and far-flung readers by instructing, monitoring, and unifying them through their authorship.

Interestingly, the republican author offers a model of authorship to the reader as a means of promoting discipline in their audience. In Chapter One, Mr. Vigillius models for his readers his daughter’s exemplary authorial skills. By implementing these skills, parents can train their daughters into disciplined and disciplining young authors. Foster in Chapter Two encourages her female readers to participate in epistolary authorship as a means of applying their knowledge and educating and monitoring other readers. Chapter Three depicts Brown’s gradual commitment to teaching the reader how “to write back” to the author. And, finally, in Chapter Four, Rowson illustrates for her readers the consequences of their authorship by demonstrating that the historical progress of the new nation depends upon the exchange of story. Republican authors offer careful instruction in reading and writing skills that ultimately encourage their readers to write back, albeit in a limited, attenuated form. In the texts that I discuss, the distance between author and reader, then, is effaced, as the reader becomes “present [in] the conversation” and “imaginatively part of the [author’s] company.”

Throughout my dissertation, I consistently underscore where the republican author becomes a reader (for example, when monitoring the audience’s authorial progress), and where the reader becomes an author. Thus, the republican author creates not only a republic of readers but a republic of authors.

While the republican author offers the reader specific lessons in authorship, she does not assume a monologic voice when presenting these lessons to her readers; in other
words, she does not tyrannize over her readers. Describing the careful balance that the republican author performs, Elliott writes:

Through trial and error the writers discovered that the relationship between the American writer and his readers would have to be one in which the author appeared to have no lesson to teach, indeed in which he seemed not even to be speaking for himself. Only from a position of seeming detachment and distance could the writer in a democracy reach the mass of readers. To instruct his audience without alienating them, he would, above all, have to communicate sincerity and humility, even as he gave his insights of author with conviction.10

As Elliott observes, the instruction that the republican author presents does not alienate or reduce readers to passive pupils. To avoid authorial tyranny, republican authors deploy a range of identities in their texts to hide their own authority. For example, in *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), Brown uses Dr. Stevens as an “author-figure” who teaches his readers how to question the mendacity and veracity of narrative. While Dr. Stevens records Mervyn’s story, Brown hides Stevens’ authorship by describing him as a doctor (and not an experienced author) and by positioning Stevens and the reader as both listeners to Mervyn’s tale; thus, Brown avoids implementing a power hierarchy between author and reader as Stevens and the audience learn about Mervyn together. The choice to represent his author-figure as a doctor also illuminates for us Brown’s own conceptualization of an author as one who easily moves in and out of private and public spaces. The unassuming identity of the republican author works to hide his or her authority, and the particular identity that the author chooses, from doctor in *Arthur Mervyn* to trunk-maker in *The Gleaner*, further illustrates the republican “professional” construction of authorship.

Many of these identities that republican authors adopt in their texts were practiced by them in their actual lives. And, it is these other professions, as lawyer,
shopkeeper, actress, or preceptress, that have traditionally caused critics to dismiss these authors as amateurish or less than committed to the profession of authorship. For example, in *The Profession of Authorship in America* (1968), one of the earliest and most respected studies on the profession, William Charvat recognizes the careers of Joel Barlow, Joseph Dennie, Brown, and Rowson and rejects them all for failing to achieve “professional author” status. Charvat reserves the term “professional author” for writers who provide a living for himself or herself through authorship alone, create with the hope of extended sale, produce with reference to the reader’s taste, and write for a prolonged time. He concludes that while the postrevolutionary author “showed signs of outgrowing the amateur pose,” they were ultimately “amateurs” who never succeeded to meet all four of his criteria. Many republican authors often held other professions while they wrote. For example, Rowson was an actress and teacher and Brown was a lawyer and shopkeeper. Contrary to Charvat, however, I argue that it is the various professions that these authors practiced or that the author-figures in their texts practice that inform and illuminate the republican author’s model of authorship. Rather than dismiss the author for failing to achieve “professional” status, I claim that these “other” professions—whether real or fictional—are integral to understanding republican authorship.

While republican authors distance themselves from their identities as authors, they also, as Elliott observes, detach themselves from their authorship. In other words, the republican author does not present herself or himself as a creator or originator of text. Instead, republican authors consistently present themselves as gleaning and collecting the work of other authors. In *Letters to an American Farmer* (1782), J. Hector St. John de
Crèvecoeur’s hides his authorial identity with the fictional persona of James the farmer. When asked by Mr. F.B. to observe the American political, social, and natural landscape, James displays to his wife his anxieties concerning his authorial skills and later replies to Mr. F.B.: “You say you want nothing of me but what lies within the reach of my experience and knowledge: this I understand very well; the difficulty is, how to collect, digest, and arrange, what I know.” Overcoming his authorial anxieties— anxieties that reveal him as a humble man rather than a polished author—James decides to accept Mr. F.B.’s proposition and does so by collecting, digesting, and arranging maps of Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, the history of “Andrew, the Hebridean,” an epistle from “Mr. Iw—n Al—z, a Russian,” financial accounts on property, and other stories. He includes all these items in the epistles that he presents to Mr. F.B. Crèvecoeur conceptualizes the author, then, as a modest collector, a harvester, rather than an educated creator of imaginative work.

Following Crèvecoeur’s model, the writers I focus on in the dissertation all imagine authorship in similar terms. The very title of Murray’s nom-de-plum and text define the author as a “gleaner” and authorship as gleaning. Foster’s *The Boarding School; Or Lessons of a Preceptress to Her Pupils* (1798) is a collection of the various lessons of the preceptress, Mrs. Williams, and the epistles of her pupils at her boarding school, Harmony-Grove. In *Wieland, Arthur Mervyn,* and *Clara Howard* (1801), Brown’s author-figures gather and organize epistles, stories, newspapers, cards, conversations, and even a piece of scribbled paper from a debtor’s jail and present these collections to the reader. And, Rowson in *Reuben and Rachel* portrays her characters recovering epistles from old, dusty drawers and stories from ancestors; these tales, letters,
and conversations are then included in the novel. Thus, the republican author offers a multivocal and democratic text that does not monologically inundate the reader with lectures and morals. While the reader still receives important lessons, the author does not appear as tyrannical autocrat.

In *The Transformation of Authorship in America* (1997), Grantland Rice discusses in great length the 1790 Copyright Act and the development of the concept of literary property. He observes that the 1790 Copyright Act did not offer a substantive definition of either author or authorship. Instead, he claims that the Act:

. . . merely suspended two contradictory notions of authorial activity in its strenuous attempt to accommodate the political activity of public writing to an economic framework. These two ideas were a utilitarian conception which defined authorship as the invention of useful knowledge and sought to guarantee the free circulation of the knowledge, and a Lockean conception which figured authorship as the creation of unique, possessable property and sought to guarantee the ownership of that property to its creator.

Rice proceeds to narrate a fascinating reading of two stories from Washington Irving’s *The Sketchbook* (1819-20), “The Mutability of Literature” and “The Art of Bookmaking,” within the context of the 1790 Copyright Act. Rice argues that these two stories reveal Irving’s oscillating position concerning literary property: in “The Mutability of Literature,” Irving “concludes that writers are largely assemblers of ideas. . .dipping into various books. . .taking a morsel out of one, a morsel out of another,” and in “The Art of Bookmaking,” Irving portrays the works of “the old polemical writers. . .[as] protected in perpetuity by the vergers, a kind of extreme case of protracted property rights in writing.”
The anxiety that Rice locates in Irving’s stories concerning the constrictions that the 1790 Copyright Act placed on literary property reverberates with the texts of republican authors. In *The Gleaner*, the Gleaner voices his concern about plagiarism; however, he writes, “Should an accusation of plagiarism be lodged against me, my very title will plead my apology.” Foster in *The Boarding School* urges her young readers to place their own letters in between the pages of her text, as if responding to the Harmony-Grove pupils’ letters; the reader then creates her own “common place book” from the very pages of Foster’s text. Certainly, Tabitha Tenney in *Female Quixotism* (1801) borrows tropes and plot from Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752). And, William Hill Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), Foster’s *The Coquette* (1797), and Brown’s *Wieland* are all loosely based on stories previously printed (however briefly) in newspapers. At the same time that these authors are busily collecting and harvesting from others, Mr. Vigillius in *The Gleaner* portrays the community outrage when the rake Courtland claims ownership of one of Hamilton’s published, yet anonymous poems.

Therefore, while the 1790 Copyright Act attempted to secure ownership rights for authors, republican authors in their conceptualization of authorship interrogate the advantages and disadvantages of such an Act. While Murray, Foster, Brown, and Rowson all present themselves as “collect[ing], digest[ing], and arrang[ing]” stories and texts from other authors and sources, they also question the consequences of the wrong people, such as Courtland or Carwin, practicing their model of authorship.

While republican authors hide their authorial identity and authorship, they similarly manipulate genre in an effort to conceal their autocratic intentions. Contrary to Lawrence Buell, who posits that “the ethic” of the early national period “encouraged
sublimation of literary impulses into socially acceptable forms,” I argue that the republican author experimented with genre as a means of moderating an author’s autocratic voice. For example, in The Gleaner, Murray consistently disrupts her novella, “The Story of Margaretta,” with numerous letters from her readers. At first glance, “The Story of Margaretta” appears categorically messy since the linear narrative of her story is interrupted by her readers’ questions and epistles; yet, as I argue in Chapter One, Murray manipulates genre in her novella in order to hide her autocratic voice and to position herself as answering the demands of a democratic audience. Similarly, in my presentation of Brown, I argue that he employs the epistolary genre as a means of democratizing the relationship between the author and reader. My dissertation includes a variety of genres and examines how an author’s generic choices respond to the concerns of republican authorship.

Scholars such as Michael Warner and Rice insist that the novel does not belong in a discussion on republican literature. In The Letters of the Republic: Publication and Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America (1990), Michael Warner interrogates the differences between the print culture of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the early republican period. According to Warner, in the republican period, the nation “was imagined through the public sphere” and the dissemination of print; hence, he claims that the value of republican literature was “distributive rather than proper, general rather than private.” In an extensive discussion of Brown’s Arthur Mervyn, Warner argues that the republican print tradition abruptly ended in the 1790’s with the novel:
[American writers] imagine the readers of their publican as participants in public discourse rather than as private consumers of luxury goods. At the same time, however, the novel generated extraordinary tensions for the republican paradigm. Its generic conditions required that any public identification found there to be an imaginary one. The reader of the novel might have a virtuous orientation, but his or her virtue would be experienced privately rather than in the context of civic action. So the novel, despite the most rigorous intentions of its authors, developed a nationalist imaginary of the modern type.22

Dismissing the author and any attempt to use the novel for the benefit of the nation and its citizenry, Warner posits that the novel diverges from the “public” republican tradition because of mass distribution and “private” consumption. Rice also closes his study of republican literature with a discussion of the novel, performing a reading of Foster’s The Coquette. He introduces the novel as “the last resort for a tradition of civic authorship facing the vicissitudes posed by the dawning of economic liberalism and mechanical reproduction.”23 Rice claims that the novel and its participation in a mass-market economy splinter from a republican tradition of literature. Warner and Rice conclude their studies with the novel as a genre that develops in the eighteenth century but points toward a radically different literary culture located in the nineteenth century.

In my definition of republican authorship, I agree with Warner and Rice that the literature of the Republic intended to benefit the new citizenry. Yet, unlike Warner and Rice, I argue that Brown and Rowson are engaged in precisely the same struggles and concerns that I recognize in The Gleaner and The Boarding School, and thus, I label novels and the other prose texts in my dissertation as “republican literature.” While Warner and Rice assert that the novel’s generic conditions require a private and imaginary identification (which differentiate it from the republican tradition), I insist that the author uses any private identification with the reader as an opportunity to instruct the
In turn, this careful and private instruction benefits the reader and the larger nation. For example, in Chapter Three, I depict *Arthur Mervyn*’s Dr. Stevens as a model reader for his audience. When Dr. Stevens suddenly disappears from the conclusion of the text, I argue that Brown intends that by this point in the novel, his readers have already identified privately with the doctor’s reading habits, so that in his absence, they continue to question the narrative. Therefore, Brown hides his autocratic hand behind the inquisitive Dr. Stevens, and in doing so, he uses Dr. Stevens to teach his audience to become better critical and attentive readers, and hence, better citizens.

While I have been discussing the authors’ “autocratic” intentions to instruct, monitor, and unify their readers, they also conceptualize their authorship as extending the project of democracy, which some politicians, ministers, and matrons found threatening. Davidson is perhaps best known for extending Mikhail M. Bahktin’s definition of prose fiction as “subversive” to the early American novel. She writes:

Prose fiction has been perceived as a *subversive* literary form in every Western society into which it was introduced: subversive of certain class notions of who should and should not be literate; subversive of notions of what is or it not a suitable literary subject matter and form and style; subversive of the term *literature* itself. The novel did not rhyme or scan. It required no knowledge of Latin or Greek, no intermediation or interpretation by cleric or academic. It required, in fact—from reader and writer—virtually no traditional education or classical erudition.24

Foster and Rowson in their texts present themselves as challenging the status quo of “who should and should not be literate.” In the “Preface” to *Reuben and Rachel*, Rowson laments the inadequacies of female education and presents her novel as a course in American history for young girls only. Similarly, Foster in *The Boarding School* dedicates her text to all “the YOUNG LADIES of AMERICA” and offers it in a
democratic gesture as a correspondence class to those unfortunate young girls who cannot afford an education at a real boarding school.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed, Davidson observes that many authors used their novels as vehicles to critique education in the new Republic, particularly women’s education:

Virtually every American novel written before 1820 at some point includes either a discourse on the necessity of improved education (often with the special attention to the need for better female education) or a description of then-current education (typically satirical, as in Tyler’s portrait of the schoolroom), or, at the very least, a comment on the educational levels and reading habits of the hero and even more so the heroine. It might be noted, too, that most of the known novelists also wrote, separately, essays and often books on education. These writers’ emphasis was not so much on public education as on personal, and they all encouraged individualistic striving toward self-improvement and self-education, typically on a rationalist model.\textsuperscript{26}

The complaints regarding female education were echoed by many educational reformers and prominent figures in the new Republic, such as Dr. Benjamin Rush. Many reformers and politicians believed that women needed to be better educated in order to raise children as proper and productive citizens.\textsuperscript{27} Republican literature and its dissemination among young girls, then, was received with a range of different opinions, as potentially “\textit{subversive}” to mandatory to the maintenance of the new Republic.

While educated and literate women caused anxiety among some Americans, an educated and literate lower-class further threatened the social hierarchy. Elliott quotes one Robert Bell, a Philadelphia printer, who declares that “every Son of Adam, farmer, Mechanic, or Merchant,” especially members of the “middle class,” will have access to literature of all genres.\textsuperscript{28} Samuel Miller, in his \textit{Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century} (1803), reiterates Bell’s sentiments when he states that America’s democratic government depends upon a well-informed citizenry and that literature needs to descend “from the
closets of philosophers, and the shelves of polite scholars, to the compting house of the merchant, to the shop of the artizan, to the bower of the husbandman, and, indeed, to every class of the community.” Ziff observes that “this ‘descent’ of literature was made possible by the extraordinarily rapid spread of the printing press and the consequent influence print exerted on the way reality was conceptualized.” My dissertation shows how the circulation of texts could result in a better-educated populace. For example, in Chapter Three, I demonstrate how Brown’s Edward Hartley in Clara Howard transforms from a poor “petty and obscure journeyman” who cannot claim a penny to his name to a “rich, happy” man through his careful reading and authorial skills.

The democratic impulse of republican authors to spread their literature to “the compting house of the merchant, to the shop of the artizan, to the bower of the husband” and to all “the YOUNG LADIES of AMERICA” would have been deemed “subversive” by some Americans, Federalists in particular. In Literary Federalism in the Age of Jefferson (1999), William C. Dowling quotes Hamilton to depict the threat that Federalists saw Jeffersonian democracy and the Republicans posing to the stability and security of America. Hamilton proclaims that the political struggle between Federalism and Jeffersonian democracy “is, indeed, a war of principles: it is a contest between the tyranny of Jacobinism, which confounds and levels everything, and the mild reign of rational liberty, which rests on the basis of... a well-balanced government.” Hamilton and others saw the Republicans and their desire to “level everythin[g]” as a direct challenge to the social hierarchy that many Federalists supported. Thus, the dissemination of print to the citizenry of the United States was at once threatening to the nation’s moral fabric, as we witness in the demise of The Boarding School’s Juliana due
to her voracious appetite for the novel; and at other times, the dissemination of print secures the morality of the new nation’s citizens, as we see in *The Gleaner* when Margareta discursively confesses to her parents the love she feels for the rake Courtland. It is these debates—both social and political—that occupy the republican author and his or her “vision” of the new nation.

“‘To Collect, Digest, and Arrange’: Authorship in the Early American Republic, 1792-1801” reveals the construction and function of republican authorship in individual texts. In Chapter One, “Constantia’s and Mr. Vigillius’s Constant Vigil: Monitoring the New American Subject in Judith Sargent Murray’s *The Gleaner,*** I illustrate how Murray reconciles her affiliation with the Federalist Party and the Universalist movement in her conceptualization of authorship. In *The Gleaner*, Murray imagines both a closed economy where authors exchange letters to an intended audience, and an open economy where celebrated authors pen letters to a wide and anonymous audience. The Gleaner participates in both economies, covertly monitoring letters from his family and readers and publishing particular letters as a means of teaching and redeeming his audience; the Gleaner depends upon these economies expanding so that he can extend his authorial reach and redemption. Eventually, if all Americans are taught appropriately to write (like his daughter Margareta), the Gleaner imagines a republic where the author, whether celebrated or not, becomes the spy who monitors, the teacher who disciplines, and the parent who governs.

In Chapter Two, “Becoming the ‘Directing Hand’: Modeling Authorship in Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Boarding School; Or, Lessons of A Preceptress to Her Pupils,*” I argue that Foster shows her readers that they ought not to assume that
authorship demands creativity and innovation. She instructs her readers to collect, borrow, arrange, and revise materials at hand. The purpose of these carefully edited collections is to exchange them with peers and to discipline and monitor a larger audience. By advocating a collaborative model of authorship that depends upon others’ as well as one’s own texts, Foster encourages the participation of a wide and democratic audience and hopes to create a nation of authors monitoring others as others assuredly monitor them. As such, her authorial model is also a civic project that ensures a republic of disciplined and disciplining young ladies.

“Revising Charles Brockden Brown’s Career” aptly describes my argument in Chapter Three. Rather than divide Brown’s career into two separate and disconnected parts as most biographies and critics do, I propose that Brown’s novels show a gradual and consistent dedication to an egalitarian and reader-centered model of authorship. Beginning with a discussion on Wieland, I reveal the power struggle between Clara, as narrator, and Brown, as footnoter. Both Clara and Brown engage in a contest to win control of the reader’s perception. In Arthur Mervyn, I argue that Brown’s authorial power recedes as he actively encourages readers to question and interrogate the particularities of his tale. Finally, in Clara Howard, Brown refuses to present his reader with any central voice or consciousness as he does in Wieland and Arthur Mervyn; rather he uses the metaphor of a heterosexual romance to model the desired egalitarian relationship between author and reader.

In Chapter Four, “Authoring Cultural Cohesion in Susanna Rowson’s Reuben and Rachel; Or, Tales of Old Times,” I posit that Rowson insists that the historical progress of the new nation depends upon the exchange of story and sentiment. Penning the nation’s
first historical romance, Rowson diverges from her predecessors and their use of history. In *The Conquest of Canaan* (1783), Timothy Dwight depicts the struggles and triumphs of the seventeenth-century Puritans as anticipatory of the heroics of the eighteenth-century patriots; and Joel Barlow, in *The Vision of Columbus* (1787), similarly portrays America from its discovery to the Revolution. Rowson differs from these other histories in that her account is not charged with religious sentiment and biblical allegory, but combines historical accounts with sentimental tales. In the midst of the debates regarding the Alien and Sedition Acts, Rowson offers her audience an alternative definition of citizenship in *Reuben and Rachel* as she promotes national cohesion through the exchange of stories, histories, and sentiment.

My conclusion, “Republican Authorship in the Antebellum Era,” meditates upon the republican author’s influence in the nineteenth century. Looking at Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s “A Reminiscence of Federalism” and “Cacoethes Scribendi” and briefly turning to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of Seven Gables*, I show their indebtedness to the republican model of authorship.
NOTES

1 In New England Literary Culture From Revolution through Renaissance (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Lawrence Buell examines several reasons for the critical dismissal—which was customary up to twenty years ago—of this literature. Beginning with Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), Perry Miller offered a distinguishable literary history “from Edwards to Emerson,” establishing a pattern, which would be repeated throughout several generations of criticism, that completely ignored the literature of the early Republic. Sacvan Bercovitch’s The American Jeremiad (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), the most influential response to Miller, cemented the continuity between the colonial and transcendental periods by again disregarding the literature of the new Republic. Another observation that Buell makes in New England Literary Culture is that most critics claim the Romantics as the “fathers” of American literature. Commencing with F.O. Matthiessen’s American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1941), critical studies for decades overwhelmingly dismiss the authors and texts of the colonial period in preference to the Romantics.

2 In Christopher Looby’s “Introduction” to Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1996), he offers a very helpful and rather complete list of the critical studies published within the last twenty five years on the literature of the early Republic.


Davidson, 12.

Ibid., 47.


Ibid., 3.

Ibid., 28.


Ibid., 13.


Ibid., 7.

Ibid., 71. Rice quotes Irving in some of the passages. See his footnotes for the exact Irving passages.


Buell, 58.


Ibid., 150.

Rice, 155.

Davidson, 13.

26 Ibid., 66.

27 In Chapter 2, “Becoming the ‘Directing Hand’: Modeling Authorship in Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Boarding School; Or, Lessons of A Preceptress to Her Pupils*,” I discuss the educational reform movement in length. I also include a short discussion on the fears that some held in regards to overly educated women.

28 Elliott, 45.

29 Ziff, x.

30 Ibid., x.


33 Ibid., 6.
CHAPTER 1

CONSTANTIA’S AND MR. VIGILLIUS’S CONSTANT VIGIL:
MONITORING THE NEW AMERICAN SUBJECT IN
JUDITH SARGENT MURRAY’S THE GLEANER

In 1796, Judith Sargent Murray contacted her literary acquaintances to inform them of her latest publishing endeavor. Writing to the historian Mercy Otis Warren, the poet Sarah Wentworth Morton, and the periodical polemicist Joseph Dennie, Murray announced the upcoming publication of the book form of The Gleaner, a three-volume collection of her column, “The Gleaner,” originally published in the monthly Massachusetts Magazine.¹ Including a subscription blank in each letter, Murray attempted to sell her text to her literary cohorts by revealing that The Gleaner contained two volumes of previously unpublished columns. She also used her text’s ambiguous gendering to incite her readers’ interest and curiosity. For example, in a postscript to Joseph Dennie, author of the Lay Preacher essays and The Colon and Spondee, Murray writes, “The Gleaner will contain a reason for my assumption of the masculine character. Possibly the knowledge that I have received the sanction of the Presidents—Washington and Adams—may facilitate the filling up of my subscription.”² Murray cleverly waits until the end of her letter to entice Dennie with the disclosure of the “reason for [her] assumption of the masculine character” and with the good company he will be among if indeed he chooses to subscribe.
While Murray hoped to turn Dennie, Morton, and Warren into readers of *The Gleaner*, these potential readers were best known throughout New England as authors. Sarah Wentworth Morton, perhaps the most popular poet of her day, responded to Murray’s notice both as a willing reader when she completed and returned her subscription card, and as a rival author when she scribbled a letter to Dennie to notify him of Murray’s publishing plans. To Dennie, Morton writes, “Yet you must not presume to flatter yourself with being distinguished as the only Author; for Mrs. Murray has given out Proposals for printing by Subscription 600 Pages of ‘The Gleaner’!!! This Intelligence, I conclude, cannot fail to be interesting to you—.” Acting the role of the spy—a role that Murray and her authorial personae perform throughout *The Gleaner*—Morton warned Dennie not to rest too comfortably in his fame as “the only Author.” Morton’s frantic “intelligence” attests to the emerging network of rivals and acquaintances between authors in the young but vibrant American literary marketplace.

The readers that Murray contacted extended far beyond her literary acquaintances. Her subscription campaign quite successfully resulted in seven hundred and fifty-nine subscribers buying eight-hundred and twenty-four sets of *The Gleaner*. In 1798, *The Gleaner* was published and included its lengthy subscription list within the volumes of the text. A common publishing custom, the addition of a subscription list often promoted both author and text by aligning it with distinguished and celebrated names. *The Gleaner*’s subscription list boasted the names of President John Adams, former President George and Martha Washington, Governor John Taylor Gilman of New Hampshire, Lieutenant-Governor Gill of Massachusetts, Governor Increase Sumner of Massachusetts, General Henry Knox, Major-General Simon Elliot, the Reverend Jeremy Belknap, as well
as less well-known readers who faithfully followed “The Gleaner” as a column in the *Massachusetts Magazine.*

From poets to presidents, Murray’s expansive network of subscribers resembles the wide and varied network of readers described within *The Gleaner.* These readers, ranging from distinguished dignitaries to poor sailors, are assembled by the Gleaner, an author, who pens, exchanges, and circulates letters in an effort to monitor and instruct as large of an audience as possible. For example, when one Rebecca Aimwell requests the Gleaner’s advice in raising her daughter, he refuses to reply with a private letter; instead, desiring to teach a bigger audience than Mrs. Aimwell’s daughter, he publishes the matron’s letter and a collection of epistles from his wife and daughter that model exemplary parenting skills. Mrs. Aimwell’s simple request, then, is made the business of all of the Gleaner’s readers. Throughout *The Gleaner,* the Gleaner responds to this widespread readership with a model of authorship dependent upon the tools of paternalism, pedagogy, and espionage. Assuming the roles of the parent, teacher, and spy, the Gleaner shifts his identity allowing him to monitor, reprimand, and control a nation of readers.

Murray’s articulation of authorship responds to a national crisis concerning politics and religion. In the late eighteenth century, the chaos of the French Revolution and the inexperience of American leadership fueled the particularly Federalist anxiety of mob rule. It was commonly feared that the French Revolution and its espousal of natural rights and individualism would invade American soil and spark class insurrection. In Letter XXVI, the Gleaner openly articulates this anxiety, writing, “Is there an individual who will not devoutly say—May the Parent of the universe shield our country from the
progress of the Tartarean fiend which hath so long desolated France!“ Murray, a strong Federalist herself, unabashedly displays her political leanings and fear of insubordination in her portrayal of the Gleaner. Supporting a strict social and cultural hierarchy, the Gleaner claims, “Liberty recognizes her systems, her laws, and her regular chain of subordination . . . I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society . . . there is no calculating the disorders which may result from relaxing the series of subordination” (216). The Gleaner then narrates the chaos that ensues when his wife and servants refuse to serve him breakfast at its regularly scheduled time. Much like the Gleaner’s example of familial insubordination, Federalists believed that autonomy without a strong central government would lead to revolution.

Religious pluralism augmented many of these anxieties and uncertainties surfacing in postrevolutionary America. Americans thought that the First Amendment would exacerbate the moral deterioration of the citizenry, threatening any promise of stability in the new nation. In particular, Universalism, with its doctrine of universal salvation, appeared extremely dangerous since many feared that without retribution men and women would inevitably behave irrationally and erratically. Murray’s husband, John Murray, headed the Universalist movement in Massachusetts, and in 1785, when the Supreme Judicial Court at Ipswich recognized Universalism as an established church, Universalists became champions of religious liberty. 7 In 1794, John Murray and his wife moved to Boston where he was ordained the first pastor of Universalism. 8 The institutionalization of the church and the presence of the Murrays in Boston increased concerns and fears regarding the Universalists, especially among the well-respected Congregationalist members there.
At first glance, Judith Sargent Murray’s position as both a Federalist and a Universalist appears contradictory. As a staunch Federalist, Murray feared insubordination and the breakdown of moral authority in the wake of radical interpretations of democracy; however, as a pioneering Universalist, Murray was the very source of these fears, since the Universalists were often perceived as the most radical of the new religious sects because of their belief in universal salvation. Yet, Murray’s seemingly irreconcilable political and religious positions quite clearly map on to her theory of authorship. Federalists, like Murray, supported a system of government with a strong central base that united a broad citizenship. Throughout her text, Murray and her persona, the Gleaner, use authorship as a means of unifying and governing a wide and diverse readership. The Gleaner institutes a clear hierarchy among his family members and readers, assuming the central position of power himself. For example, all epistles from the Gleaner’s readers pass under his scrutinizing eye for judgment; in fact, the Gleaner even reads the letters that his wife and daughter pen to one another in order to ensure their proper behavior and subordination to him. Through authorship, he dictates the lessons and morals demanded by a virtuous readership, and in turn, he monitors their abidance of these commands in the letters that they circulate.

As a Universalist, Murray believes everyone can be redeemed through Christ, and as a Universalist author, Murray believes that every reader can be redeemed through authorship. Unlike the many scoundrels present in the early American novel, such as Lieutenants Montraville and Belcour and Madame La Rue in Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* (1794) and Major Peter Sanford in Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette*, Murray does not cruelly punish but saves the rake, the gambler, and even, the
penniless, pregnant woman. In fact, Murray’s novella, “The Story of Margareta,” which is included in *The Gleaner*, is often recognized as the first American novel where the heroine is not seduced by the rake, and the rake is reformed into a loving husband and father. Murray uses her authorship to reprimand publicly but always to redeem those who have morally or lawfully sinned. Since the Universalists espoused a belief in democratic salvation, no reader, then, is beyond the Gleaner’s redemption, and when the cheat writes to the Gleaner to attest to his reformed behavior, the Gleaner uses the cheat’s epistle as evidence of redemption.

Thus, Murray’s model of authorship is heavily indebted to Federalism and Universalism. In an effort to create and ensure a stable and virtuous Republic, the Gleaner promotes authorship as the most effective means of fashioning the new American subject. In *The Gleaner*, Murray imagines both a closed economy where authors exchange letters to an intended audience, and an open economy where celebrated authors pen letters to a wide and anonymous audience. The Gleaner participates in both economies, monitoring letters from his family and readers and penning and publishing selective letters as a means of teaching and redeeming his audience; the Gleaner depends upon these economies expanding so that he can extend his authorial reach and command. Eventually, if all Americans are taught appropriately to write (like his daughter Margareta), the Gleaner imagines a Republic where the author, whether celebrated or not, becomes the spy who monitors, the teacher who disciplines, the parent who governs. The author, constantly penning observations and exchanging letters, will keep an unblinking eye upon the new American subject, regulating and watching his or her behavior and actions.
I. Fame, Anonymity, and Authorship

In the “Preface to the Reader,” Constantia, Murray’s pseudonym for *The Gleaner*, claims that her “first object in writing” is for “the information and improvement of my readers” (13). She hopes that her audience “with all the endearing ardour of youthful enthusiasm” will turn “to a *New Book*, to an *American Author*. . .[and] pursue the well intended pages” (13). While her authorial intention is to inform and improve her readers, she also describes an additional reason for penning *The Gleaner*:

My *ruling* passion, a fondness to stand well in the opinion of the world, having given a prevalent hue to every important action of my life, hath operated powerfully upon my ambition, stimulated my efforts, and implanted in my bosom an invincible desire to present myself before a public. . .My desires are, I am free to own, aspiring—perhaps presumptuously so. I would be distinguished and respected by my contemporaries; I would be continued in grateful remembrance when I make my exit; and I would descend with celebrity to posterity. (13)

Here, Constantia announces that her authorship is spurred by an aspiration to achieve national, perhaps international, fame, “descend[ing] with celebrity to posterity” within the annals of literature. In the “Dedication to President Adams,” Constantia reiterates her desire for authorial renown when she indulges in the “hope that [the President’s] name may not only shield [her] from the oblivion. . .but possibly confer a degree of celebrity” (12). By dedicating her text to the President of the United States, Constantia assumes a certain degree of fame already achieved from her popular *Massachusetts Magazine* column. Not content with just regional fame, however, Constantia dedicates her text to the one of the most celebrated national figures, and in so doing, she herself hopes to receive the nation’s esteem and veneration.
The Gleaner, Constantia’s persona in the individual letters within the text, immediately affirms Constantia’s intentions of fame. Letter I of *The Gleaner* begins with the epigraph, “Yes, I confess I love the paths of fame,/And ardent wish to glean a brightening name” (15). Continuing the epigraph’s sentiment, the Gleaner in the first letter writes, “Unfortunately, with my wish to commence author, originated also, a most inordinate ambition, and an insatiable thirst for applause. . .The smoothness of Addison’s page, the purity, strength of and correctness of Swift, the magic numbers of Pope—these must all veil to me” (16). Interestingly, the Gleaner, in order to emphasize both his superior skill and his competition’s inadequacy, feminizes Addison, Swift, and Pope, who must “veil” themselves before the arrogant author. While gender distinguishes between the voices of the Gleaner and Constantia, both authors are dominated by an intense “ruling passion” and “insatiable thirst” to become America’s most celebrated author.

As the War of Independence and its aftermath enlarged the provincial stage upon which Americans acted their roles, Douglas Adair observes that Americans, particularly the “founding fathers,” became “fantastically concerned with posterity’s judgment of their behavior.” Adair argues that the pursuit of fame was a means for many Americans to transform egotism and self-aggrandizing impulses into public service for the new Republic. For example, in Federalist Number LXXII, Alexander Hamilton writes:

> . . .it is admitted that the desire of reward is one of the strongest incentives of human conduct, or that the best security for the fidelity of mankind is to make their interest coincide with duty. Even the love of fame, the ruling passion of the noblest minds . . . prompts a man to plan and undertake extensive and arduous enterprises for the public benefit.
In *The Autobiography* (1791), Benjamin Franklin’s behavior attests to Hamilton’s description between civic virtue and the promise of fame. When Franklin answers the “Cry among the People for more Paper Money,” he states that “[it] was a very profitable Job and a great Help to me.”\(^{13}\) Franklin fulfills his civic duty and responds to the “Cry among the People,” knowing full well that he would gain popularity and in turn a lucrative job from Hamilton. Constantia and the Gleaner similarly translate their hunger for authorial celebrity into a noble pursuit when they use their authorship to ensure the welfare of the American citizenry; their fame enables them to reach and teach a larger audience. Thus, authorial fame as conceptualized in *The Gleaner* is not blatant self interest, but also works to promote the good of the new nation.

While Murray’s authorial personae pine for national recognition, Murray never reveals her identity and publicly acknowledges the popularity that she achieves. Throughout the entirety of *The Gleaner*, even in the last letter, “Conclusion: The Gleaner unmasked,” Murray steadfastly refuses to disclose her identity. In the second half of the eighteenth century, it was common for American authors to write under pseudonyms. For example, Benjamin Rush’s address against slavery in 1773 was published anonymously; Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* (1776) was “Written by an Englishman”; Peter Markoe’s *The Algerine Spy* (1787) was simply signed by “S.T.P.”; William Hill Brown’s novel *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) was published anonymously; Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* (1790) was published “by a citizen of the United States”; and as late as 1806, John Howard Paine anonymously published *Julia, or the Wanderer*.\(^{14}\) Similar to their American male counterparts, many women wrote under pseudonyms or published their work anonymously. Mercy Otis Warren’s first play *The Group* (1775) as well as her
other essays, satires, and plays were published anonymously; “Philenia” signed Sarah Wentworth Morton’s popular poetry; Hannah Webster Foster’s novel *The Coquette* (1797) was published anonymously and *The Boarding School* (1798) was signed by “A Lady of Massachusetts”; “S.S.B.K. Wood” functioned as a pseudonym for the author of *Julia and the Illuminated Baron* (1800) and *Ferninand and Elmira* (1804); and Tabitha Gilman Tenney published her novel *Female Quixotism* (1803) anonymously as well.¹⁵

Thus, while her personae’s aspirations for national recognition seemingly collide with Murray’s own masked identity, it was not unusual for authors of either gender to assume a penname. Actually, her pseudonym, Constantia, complements this tradition since it properly indicates Murray’s own gender. However, in Letter I, when Constantia assumes the identity of the male Gleaner, Murray quite openly challenges custom by switching genders. Baym describes the significance of Murray’s adoption of a male voice:

The literary scene displayed and emphasized gender-bifurcation. Murray, however, subverted this demarcation. Although she frequently wrote as “Constantia” and used this name on the title page of *The Gleaner*, her essays mainly address the public in the voice of a man. . . Moreover, she diversifies her writing by adopting additional personae, until not only gender identity but identity itself becomes unstable behind the screen of the printed word. In this respect, her writing takes up the questions about women and connects them with questions about writing, authorship, and authority.¹⁶

Baym’s observation that Murray blurs “not only gender identity but identity itself” attests to the number of personalities that Murray creates and assumes throughout her text.

Franklin’s *The Autobiography* and J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* also experiment with identity, as their narrators endlessly remake themselves; yet, unlike her predecessors, Murray in *The Gleaner*, goes one step further
when she includes gender in her examination and discussion of identity. From
Constantia’s assumption of the “male” Gleaner in Letter I to her refusal to reveal her
identity in the “Conclusion,” Murray vacillates between resisting and adhering to the
cultural strictures concerning gender and authorship.

In appealing to President Adams, Constantia desires celebrity and hopes that his
good name will shield and protect her from unwarranted criticism, especially in regards
to her gender. Constantia describes the public reception of female authors in the “The
Gleaner unmasked”:

Observing, in a variety of instances, the indifference, not to say the
contempt, with which female productions are regarded, and seeking to
arrest attention, at least for a time, I was thus furnished with a very
powerful motive for an assumption which I flattered myself would prove
favourable to my wishes. (804)

By dedicating her text to Adams and by writing as a male, Constantia wishes to receive
her readers’ unprejudiced criticism. Thus, she willingly adopts the persona of a man in
order both to subvert the “effeminacy and tinsel glitter” that readers associate with a
woman author and to protect herself from the scrutiny of an impersonal readership (804).

In “The Gleaner unmasked,” Constantia also states that she successfully eluded the
suspicion of “her best friend” by writing under a pseudonym, and as a result, witnessed
his “unbiased sentiments” in regards to her productions (805). Constantia narrates her
husband’s eventual discovery of her authorship:

He read my first Essay, entitled the Gleaner, without the shadow of
suspicion of its author. Thus I went on; nor was it until my thirty-third
number, which contains the story of Eliza, that the person, to whom I am
principally accountable for my conduct, declared his conviction that I was
the real author of the Gleaner. The fact, from which the little narrative of
Eliza originated, I received from my husband; I might have predicted the
consequence—I was of course detected. (805)
Constantia emphasizes that it was “the fact” of the story of Eliza that raised her husband’s suspicions of her authorship and not the letter’s inherently gendered language that peaked his curiosity. Throughout her text, Constantia, by choosing to write as a male, battles the popular belief of her day that language was inherently gendered.17

In the “Conclusion,” Constantia continues to emphasize the importance of her readership’s reception of her. Along with the hope to be read without bias, Constantia writes that she has an ardent and earnest desire to appear “independent as a writer” (805). In other words, she deeply fears that her acquaintances will either be credited with the authorship of her text, or be accused of helping her pen The Gleaner. In order to avoid such mistakes and to render an appearance of independence, Constantia explains:

I yet had a further reason for concealment; I was ambitious of being considered independent as a writer; . . . and I imagined I could effectually accomplish my views in this particular, by suffering my connexions of every description. . . I was not seeking to wound the feelings of any human being . . . to whom my heart has ever acknowledged the most ardent and grateful attachment. (805)

The paradox inherent in Murray’s quote is that in order to appear “independent as a writer,” Murray must not appear at all. Murray narrates how she “suffered” or severed her “connexions” as a means of hiding her authorship. This vanishing act deeply troubled her as she apologizes for “wounding the feelings of any human being”—a sentiment most likely directed toward her husband.18

At the same time that she apologizes for her behavior, Murray clearly found her actions quite necessary. Throughout her career, both her husband and her competitors were believed to have authored her work. When Murray began writing for the Massachusetts Magazine, Murray claimed that her penname, “Constantia,” was “stolen”
from her by the popular poet, Sarah Wentworth Morton. In late 1789, Murray sent to the *Massachusetts Magazine* a poem, signed by “Constantia.” The poem was accepted and printed in the January edition of the ensuing year. In the interim between the poem’s acceptance and publication, the penname had been adopted by Morton, who published three poems under the name in the *Massachusetts Magazine*. As a result, Murray protested until the periodical included the following explanation in the January 1790 edition:

A second Constantia. . .has appeared this month. Her truly poetical lines merit every attention. The adoption of a signature already used by a justly admired writer, was rather delicately embarrassing to the Editors; they flatter themselves that their late, and early friend, will both feel themselves pleased at their attention to prevent mistakes.19

The editors continue to explain that the Constantia, who has written “Invocation to Hope,” “Philander, a pastoral elegy,” and “Lines to Euphelia,” will “now have her name decorated with a Star (*) at the end of it.”20 As a result of the confusion, Morton, who consequently adopted the name “Constantia-Philander,” apologized to Murray in the poem, “Lines to Constantia” by Constantia-Philander. Published in the *Massachusetts Magazine* in May 1790, the poem explains Morton’s actions with the line: “Thy name Constantia met my listening ear/Unconscious of a theft I chose the lay.”21 Soon after the ordeal, Morton dropped “Constantia” and appeared only as “Philander.”

Shortly after the confusion over her penname, Murray’s husband was credited with writing one of her plays. In 1795, the *Federal Orrery* attributed the authorship of Murray’s play, *The Medium, or Happy Tea-Party* (1795), to John Murray. Even by the time of the play’s debut, her husband was still believed to have written the play. Angered by the rumors, John Murray scribbled a letter to the *Federal Orrery*, stating, “Let
therefore, [the play’s] merits, or demerits, remain with the real author—the fact is, that neither the one, nor the other, directly or indirectly belong to—John Murray.” 22

Regardless, his wife was never properly acknowledged with authoring the play. In fact, when Murray includes the play in the third volume of *The Gleaner*, she changes the name to *Virtue Triumphant* in order to avoid any scandal and finally to claim rightful ownership of it.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Murray, utterly frustrated by her previous experiences, desires to be read and accepted as an “independent writer.” Similar to her frustration with the larger public’s reception of women’s writing, she blames her difficulty in achieving independence on her gender. In “The Gleaner unmasked,” she quotes Rousseau to explain the inherent sexism that she experiences as a woman author:

> Rousseau has said, that although a female may *ostensibly* wield the pen, yet it is certain some man of letters sits behind the curtain to guide its movements; and contemplating this assertion, I imagined that if those of the literati, to whose aid either friendship or affinity might entitle me, were not so far of my council as even to be informed of my designs, they would at least be exempted from those censures which my folly or presumption might involve. (805)

In order to battle this inherent sexism, Murray adopts a male narrator for most of the text, and in turn, she reverses Rousseau’s model since in her case, a woman sits behind the curtain guiding the pen of a man of letters. More importantly, Murray to appear independent paradoxically censors her own identity from the page. While this act seems contradictory for an author whose personae desire celebrity and fame, in the republican model of authorship within which she is operating it works to her advantage.

In *The Gleaner*, Murray demonstrates how self-censorship effectively gains the author national and international recognition. In Letter XII, the Gleaner identifies and
mediates upon “name-hunters.” He defines “name-hunters” as those readers who feverishly attempt to reveal the authentic identity of an anonymous author or of a pseudonym:

I cannot help regarding this hunting after names, as descriptive of the frivolity of the human mind: No sooner does an anonymous piece make its appearance, than curiosity invests itself in the stole of sagacity, conjecture is on the rack—Who is he? Where does he live? What is his real name and occupation? (105)

While the Gleaner expresses annoyance over this practice, Constantia, in fact, depends upon it to entice speculation and interest in her authorship. By withholding her identity, Murray encourages the “name-hunters” to work even harder. She teases them with the disclosure of her marital status, but she refuses to reveal her authentic identity to them. One of the Gleaner’s personae, Mr. Vigillius, in “The Story of Margaretta,” specifically shows us how “name-hunters” work when he narrates the community’s reaction to an anonymous poem printed in the local newspaper:

It was soon noised abroad that Margaretta had been eulogized in the newspaper, and it furnished a topic for those circles in which she moved. . .They made it the business to find out the Author; they applied themselves with much avidity to the pursuit; and the determined, if they should be so fortunate as to succeed, to hail him as the prince of poets. (83)

In “The Gleaner unmasked,” Murray desires to elicit the same reaction that the anonymous poem does in “The Story of Margaretta.” She promotes the business of the “name-hunters” as she hopes to achieve a degree of celebrity through both her merit and the ensuing conversations which will circulate in regards to her “real” identity. Thus, in order to attain her much coveted fame and independence, Murray must remain an anonymous author.
II. Author, Preceptor, Parent, Spy

As Murray hides her own identity from her husband and readers, the Gleaner suppresses his identity from his family and readers. Letter II of *The Gleaner* commences with Mr. Vigillius, whose penname is the Gleaner, concealing his identity from his curious daughter, Margareta Melworth. As Mr. Vigillius reads the *Massachusetts Magazine* in his study, Margareta enters and examines the index of the periodical along with him. She suddenly exclaims, “Bless me! . . . Bless me! As I live, here is, in this Magazine, a publication entitled the Gleaner! . . .Dear Sir, did I not lately hear you say, that if you ever appeared in the world as an author, you would certainly be known by this appellation?” (18, 24). Working quickly to cover his authorial identity, Mr. Vigillius sermonizes to Margareta on the dangers of procrastination and its ability to “annihilate” ambition, including his own desire to become an author (24). This brilliantly self-reflexive opening scene introduces the reader to a central trope present within the text: the author’s anonymity. Throughout *The Gleaner*, Mr. Vigillius carefully hides his identity as the author of the widely-read *Massachusetts Magazine* column from both his family and his acquaintances by adopting the pseudonym of “The Gleaner.” As Mr. Vigillius lectures to Margareta, the reader immediately recognizes his identity as the author, whereas his daughter remains incognizant of his other occupation. By using the pseudonym of “The Gleaner,” Mr. Vigillius successfully suppresses his authorial identity—much like Murray conceals her own authorial identity by assuming the multiple personae of “Constantia,” “Mr. Vigillius,” and “the Gleaner.”

Margareta’s surprise is in response to the columnist’s appellation in the *Massachusetts Magazine* column. She correctly remembers that her father wanted to
embellish the pages of the periodical with this same signature. In Letter I, Mr. Vigillius informs his readers of his intimate attachment to the name, explaining that his title soon will “snatch the bays. . .from the Philenia’s of present” (16).23 Devoting an entire letter to an explanation of his new-found title, Mr. Vigillius believes his name rightfully announces his “character and avocation” and delivers a “full and complete idea of [his] present curtailed views” (17). Further, his signature, he argues, protects him from any misinformed accusation of plagiarism, since “gleaning” implies collecting, rather than blatantly stealing, from others. It is in these terms that the Gleaner then offers a compelling model of authorship:

With diligence then, I shall ransack the fields, the meadows, and the groves; each secret haunt, however sequestered, with avidity I shall explore; deeming myself privileged to crop with impunity a hint from one, an idea from another, and to aim at improvement upon a sentence from a third. I shall give to my materials whatever texture my fancy directs; and, as I said, feeling myself entitled to toleration as a Gleaner, in this expressive name I shall take shelter, standing entirely regardless of every charge relative to property, originality, and every thing of this nature, which may be preferred against me. (17)

Similar to his arrogance in Letter I when he describes his ambition “to snatch the bays from the Philenia’s of the present,” the Gleaner proudly deems himself “privileged to crop” from his peers and contemporaries. He portrays himself meticulously ransacking the fields of print for hints, ideas, and sentences. Insisting that his peers will not be offended by his gleaning, he writes, “For it would be indeed pitiful if the opulent reaper, whose granaries are confessedly large, and variously supplied, should grudge the poor Gleaner what little he industriously collects” (17). The Gleaner’s model of authorship depends heavily on his surrounding resources—whether they are humorous essays that he
reads from *The Spectator* or enticing whispers that he overhears in a tavern—and his ability to churn these raw gleanings into columns proper for his growing readership.

Baym remarks upon Mr. Vigillius’s appellation, arguing that “the name *Gleaner* must have been chosen to reinforce that impression of studied, gentlemanly casualness, for to glean is to go through a field after harvest, collecting remnants of the crop.” Baym believes “gleaning” implies a casual model authorship, comparable to sauntering the harvested fields rather than earnestly farming them. In Letter I, Baym’s claim is supported when Mr. Vigillius identifies himself as a businessman who in his spare time dabbles in the literary arts. Describing his evening routine at home, Mr. Vigillius writes:

> I am *rather* a plain man, who, after spending the day in making provision for my little family, sit myself comfortably down by a clean hearth, and a good fire, enjoying, through, these long evenings, with an exquisite zest, the pleasure of the hour, whether they happen to be furnished with an amusing tale, a well written book, or a social friend. (15)

Mr. Vigillius defines his penchant for writing as a casual occupation, or perhaps preoccupation. Similar to Washington Irving’s Geoffrey Crayon who will succeed Mr. Vigillius as sauntering author, the Gleaner’s authorship depends upon gleanings from his travels and conversations which he overhears in taverns and play-houses. Like Crayon, Mr. Vigillius, a well-educated and leisured gentleman, travels to distant cities and blends into different communities, meeting local personalities and attending cultural venues. Both Crayon and Mr. Vigillius then translate their observations into either short sketches or letters, which evoke a casual and terse writing style. Baym’s recognition of the Gleaner’s leisured identity leads us to assume that Mr. Vigillius, like Crayon, comfortably sits in front of his warm hearth, reminiscing about his experiences and producing “light” or “polite” literature.25
And yet, while the signature suggests “the impression of studied, gentlemanly
casualness,” it also has distinctly lower-class connotations. In the most traditional sense,
a gleaner, impelled by need and desperation, cleans and ransacks the fields after reapers
have harvested and departed. Baym seemingly disregards the fact that a gleaner
traditionally traverses empty fields because he is driven by unfortunate pecuniary
circumstances. In Letter I, Mr. Vigillius alludes to gleaning as a type of hard, manual
labor when he writes that he will “industriously collect” what little he can find from the
fields (17). Mr. Vigillius’s authorial identity, then, stakes out ambiguous class
implications. Due to the inherent paradox apparent in his title, gleaning suggests an
author who at once pens whimsical observations as a leisure hobby, and who, at other
times, writes for hard-earned sustenance.

In Letter XVII, the Gleaner alludes to the author as a figure who transgresses
class boundaries when he offers the allegory of the trunk-maker as a stand-in for the
author. He narrates a story about a sailor who requests the help of a trunk-maker in order
to return to his native soil. Unbeknownst to the sailor, the trunk-maker is also an author:
for “a cursory glance [at his papers] was sufficient to evince the literary abilities of this
author” (137). After various meetings between the sailor and the trunk-maker, the trunk-
maker finds the sailor the necessary means to return home. The Gleaner writes that the
trunk-maker’s “literary abilities. . .and consequence to certain persons high in office
were] extremely obvious; and it was apparent that his merit, rendering him necessary to
the great, had procured him free access to their private ear” (137). In this particular story,
the Gleaner portrays the author as one of Benjamin Franklin’s “leather-apron men,” who
must attain a network of personal and professional connections across several levels of
society. The author, much like a leather-apron man or in this case, the trunk-maker, circulates and functions in the public sphere and establishes relationships that make him and his skill necessary and important to others. As a result, the author gains access to the “great...persons high in office” as well as the stranded sailor. For Murray, authorship, then, is not distinct from the business of the leather-apron man, but in fact, authorship is the business of connections, networks, and negotiation across class lines.

The Gleaner’s authorship crosses class lines as he attracts a wide and diverse readership. Throughout the text, the Gleaner communicates with and publishes letters from a socially and culturally eclectic audience. For example, in Letter XXXVII, the Gleaner devotes an entire column to his readers and randomly lists epistles written from them, regarding either “The Story of Margaretta” or their own personal concerns: Timothy Plodder, an affluent miser, inquires about possible marriage prospects for himself; Monimia Castalio, a romantic young woman, scribbles about “The Story of Margaretta,” guessing Mr. Melworth’s potential love interest; Bellamour, a poor suitor, declares his love for Serafina, a character from “The Story of Margaretta”; George Seafort, an old weathered sailor, worries about his daughter Molly; and Rebecca Aimwell, a stately matron, announces her daughter’s distinguished accomplishments. The range of classes represented by these individual letters mirrors the Gleaner’s own nebulous class identity; indeed, this identity appears to makes possible the open interaction between himself and readers from various financial backgrounds. George Seafort, whose poor grammar and colloquialisms mark him as an undereducated old man, frets about his daughter to the Gleaner as Timothy Plodder, whose analysis of the economy illustrates his worldliness, complains to the author about his greedy family. At such moments as
Letter XXXVII, the socially diverse readership transforms *The Gleaner* into a public arena peopled by an assortment of writers and their stories. By combining these voices into one single letter, the Gleaner relaxes the strict traditional eighteenth-century barriers that dictate the behaviors of the different classes and genders, creating a uniquely democratic space.

While the collection of diverse voices in Letter XXXVII might seem to anticipate Walt Whitman’s democratic catalogues in “Song of Myself,” the letters at a closer look serve a much more exacting purpose. In the letter that follows Timothy Plodder’s marriage proposal to Serafina, the Gleaner discusses the miserliness associated with old bachelors. He pontificates on the proper behavior for elderly bachelors, urging men like Plodder “to resign at this late period all pretensions of wedlock [and] . . .to cultivate those attachments that nature authorizes” (312-13). As demonstrated in his advice to Plodder, the Gleaner uses these readers and their stories to correct what he deems inappropriate behavior. Therefore, in Letter XXXVII and others like it, he creates for his readers a seemingly democratic area of access for the sole purpose of regulating it. Seduced by the sentimentalism of “The Story of Margaretta,” his readers in Letter XXXVII write to him with various requests and trivial concerns regarding the plot. The Gleaner publishes these letters in a seemingly democratic gesture to celebrate his diverse reading republic, only to use their letters for autocratic purposes as he corrects their misguided observations.

Likewise, in Letter XXIII, the Gleaner collects conversations from different people whom he overhears speaking at a playhouse and expatiates upon their comments and observations. Distracting his attention from the stage is “the chit-chat of a couple of
sprightly girls, who occupied seats at [his] right hand” (178). The Gleaner carefully transcribes their idle yet “entertaining confab” on Greek myth (178). He does not orally participate in the conversation, and in fact, he never partakes in any conversation that he describes; instead, like The Spectator, he prefers to listen, “indulg[ing] [him]self. . .in the part of the hearer” (47). After recording the young girls’ dialogue on Fortune’s and Justice’s mythical representations, the Gleaner comments upon Peggy’s and Clary’s opinions, participating in the “print form” of the conversation. The Gleaner writes, “I, found, by their conversation they, as well as myself, were strangers in the metropolis, and that the witnessing of the representation of a play, was rather an extraneous occurrence in their catalogue of enjoyments” (178). Mr. Vigillius, who himself travels to different cities and writes on American drama throughout The Gleaner, critiques the girls’ lack of familiarity of both the city and the arts. While his comment is not a direct assault on their class, for he includes himself in the critique, it does certainly reflect their lack of cultural refinement. The Gleaner then joins the girl’s conversation, which he arrogantly dismisses as “spontaneous language,” to clarify and expand upon their observations, offering a more nuanced definition of Justice and refining Clary’s initial descriptions (179). Thus, the conversation allows the Gleaner the opportunity to pontificate on and instruct his readers in Greek myth.

Letters XXXVII and XXIII illustrate Mr. Vigillius’s abilities as an author to glean letters and conversations and to produce columns that critique his readers’ and others’ judgments. In the two letters discussed, he either chooses one epistle from his network of readers or a particular conversation he overhears in order to address a selected topic. While Mr. Vigillius certainly defines this type of authorship as gleaning, Eugenio, a
reader of the *Massachusetts Magazine* column, defines it as spying—and, later, the Gleaner too will use this term. In an epistle that precedes his correspondence with Eugenio, the Gleaner pens a letter concerning infidelity. He sermonizes on the importance of honesty and truth in a marriage, citing stories from various husbands and wives who have been hurt by dishonest spouses. Narrating the woeful story of a slighted wife, the Gleaner writes, “Monimia is perturbed and agitated. . .delicacy forbids her to question, and yet tranquility will never be restored until she learns what fair hand her loved Eugenio was indebted for the *expressive device*. . .he carefully preserves” (271). In the letter following these tales of infidelity, the Gleaner publishes an epistle from Eugenio, who scathingly scolds the Gleaner for publicizing his marital problems with his wife Monimia. Eugenio writes:

*Delicacy, forsooth, forbid Monimia to question her husband;* but *delicacy,* it seems did not think proper to interfere, while she contrived to pour her pity-moving tale into the bosom of *nobody knows who*—*one who is here, and there, and every where,* and very possibly not of much importance anywhere. A perfect Proteus to the imagination, assuming a thousand fantastical forms, and becoming stationary in no one respectable character; a bird of passage, emigrating from state to state, and picking up a scanty pittance, after a whole month’s toil, which ill repays the labour of travelling through the dull pages he is so studious to multiply.

(278)

Denouncing his wife’s “indelicacy,” Eugenio furiously replies to the Gleaner’s implicit accusation of infidelity with a compelling description of the author’s identity and abilities. Frustrated by the Gleaner’s surreptitious behavior, Eugenio compares his nemesis to the Greek god, Proteus. As a “Protean” subject, the Gleaner appears both divine and omnipresent when Eugenio describes the author as “one who is here and there and every where.”27 However, the Gleaner’s heavenly presence is qualified when Eugenio writes
that even with his multitude of “fantastical forms,” the Gleaner may not be “of much importance anywhere.”

These paradoxes present in Eugenio’s comments as well as Mr. Vigillius’s appellation are vital to the Gleaner’s identity and his success as an author. The Gleaner adopts “a thousand fantastical forms” so that he can lurk and listen to, or spy on, a variety of people, from sprightly young girls to scorned wives and cuckolded husbands. And yet, while he assumes these different identities, he must appear insignificant or of “not much importance” in order to glean without notice the whispers, disagreements, and opinions circulated between people. As a protean subject, the author enters public arenas, such as playhouses and coffeehouses, and private spaces, such as the dialogue between Monimia and her friends. These conversations that he carefully and covertly obtains from spying are used in his columns and read by his wide and expanding audience. The author’s ability to appear in “a thousand fantastical forms,” from a working man to a leisured gentleman, contribute to his very success as an author; in fact, his authorship depends on these various personae because they allow him to spy and collect letters, conversations, and stories.

As a spy, the Gleaner also conceals his actual, or real, intentions. For example, in “Conclusion—The Gleaner unmasked,” Constantia informs her audience that her penname successfully hid her identity and authorship from her husband and her closest friends. She adopts the penname in order to obtain her husband’s and friends’ unbiased reactions to her authorship. Therefore, when she covertly reads the story of Eliza to her husband, she asks not for commentary on Eliza, but for his opinion on the authorship of the story. Thus, Murray becomes a spy in her own house as she adopts a different
identity and suppresses her real intentions. As we will see in “The Story of Margareta,” Mr. Vigillius uses the penname “the Gleaner” and becomes the spy within his own house as he enacts covert operations and monitors his family. Spying, then, allows the author to obtain stories and conversations and to conceal intentions and monitor behavior.

The Gleaner conceptualizes the work of the author as spy as contributing to the greater good of his readers. In his letter, Eugenio, angered by the Gleaner’s frustrating charade, threatens to expose the Gleaner’s identity—which, in turn, would reveal his authorial personae and hinder his ability to spy. Eugenio taunts the Gleaner, “Really, Mr. Morality, you make a very pretty consistent heterogeneous figure; and I should like vastly to have your motley image stuck up in a printshop, by way of relief to the studies of the chubby-faced school-boy, as he trudges along the academical way to his daily labours” (278). The revelation of the good Gleaner’s identity threatens his ability to monitor and reprimand cheaters of all kinds, from the adulterer Eugenio to the chubby-faced school-boy; without the Gleaner, Eugenio and the school-boy would continue to take advantage of the honest and virtuous citizenry. Because of the Gleaner’s “consistent heterogeneous figure,” all cheaters remain possible targets for his pen, and as a result, the Gleaner’s spying benefits his readers as he preserves the virtue of his nation of readers.

Thus, the information covertly obtained by the Gleaner is always disseminated to his readers in a gesture of civic virtue. For example, responding to Eugenio’s threat of disclosure, the Gleaner reveals to his audience his relationship with Monimia:

Thus Eugenio, if he will give his candour full play, may perceive, that without being the favourite confidante, “of all the young, handsome married women of my acquaintance,” I may, the loquacity of the sex considered, legally became possessed of secrets, which are whispered to select friends, which are gathered from mysterious words, and which
sometimes result from those expressive looks in which the female world are such proficients, and which they so well know when to assume. (286)

The Gleaner’s description of the exchange of “mysterious words” and “expressive looks” between women clearly identifies Monimia and her acquaintances as gossips.28

Interestingly, as the Gleaner covertly listens to the gossiping women, and circulates their secrets, he, however, does not become a gossip himself. Describing a gossip’s reputation, Patricia Spacks writes, “Female gossips, their specific utterances hypothesized, conceal destructive purposes, existing thus at the bottom of the moral hierarchy as well as the closely connected hierarchy of authority.”29 The Gleaner avoids earning such a damaging reputation because unlike the gossips whom he overhears, he immediately records the secrets and delivers them to the public. As Spacks argues, “Public writing on the whole [in the eighteenth century] enjoyed a higher status than did private talk. . .Women’s gossip seems dangerous not solely because it belongs to women but because it belongs to the unpredictable realm of talk.”30 The Gleaner removes the secrets from the realm of the women and “legally possess[s]” them; he then publishes the murmurs in order to expose his readers to the threat of Eugenio and the dangers of infidelity. The Gleaner does not perform the work of the gossip who hoards destructive secrets and whispers them to an eager neighbor; rather, he gains access to information and publicizes it for the benefit of his nation of readers.

While Murray carefully articulates how the Gleaner’s spying differs from Monimia’s gossiping, it was the gossip of Murray’s neighbors that led to her husband’s wrongful arrest as a Royal spy during the Revolutionary War. In 1777, the local Committee of Public Safety charged John Murray, a native-born Englishman, with
disloyalty to the colonial cause and accused him spying for the British. At the time of his accusation, Murray was visiting Gloucester, Massachusetts, Judith’s birthplace and home, as a possible site to establish the Universalist church. Judith Sargent Murray’s family housed John Murray and openly supported the Universalist movement. Rumors and gossip regarding John Murray’s radical beliefs circulated throughout Gloucester and soon reached the British authorities, resulting in his arrest. While her husband’s arrest aligns the figure of the spy with subversive politics, Murray adopts the spy as a Federalist monitor who ensures his readers’ strict abidance of morals and laws.

Murray’s familiarity and experience with espionage extended well beyond her husband’s arrest. During the Revolutionary War, Murray wrote for various newspapers and was cognizant of the games of espionage between the Americans and the British. John Bakeless claims that the American espionage system in the late 1770’s began to improve and increase in number and size. Bakeless writes, “Furtive messengers passed down isolated country lanes at night. Wakeful women by midnight windows watched groups of armed men, stealthily passing. Lonely farmhouses opened noiseless doors to silently arriving travelers.” The effect of these spy games on the nation’s early literary community can be found in The Gleaner as well as a select number of Isaiah Thomas’s publications. Thomas, Murray’s publisher for both the Massachusetts Magazine and The Gleaner, published two journals that appropriately reflected the general climate of espionage in their titles: The Spy and The Censor.

Thus, the figure of the spy possessed cultural currency during and after the War, especially since many feared that Jacobins were covertly arriving from France in order to spark insurrection and revolution. Interestingly, however, Murray uses the figure of the
spy in a wholly positive light to represent the author. As a spy, the author possesses the ability to appear in a “thousand fantastical forms,” donning and discarding identities to meet the occasion. These identities grant him access to the whispers of the gossip, letters from a poor sailor, and the grumblings of literary critics. The Gleaner’s ability to shift identities allows him not only to disguise his own authentic identity but his intentions as well. Therefore, he can monitor Eugenio’s behavior or glean the conversation of sprightly girls without notice. As the protean subject, the Gleaner performs what he believes to be the work of the author: to watch and to regulate a new nation of readers.

III. “All is not right at Margaretta’s”

In “The Story of Margaretta,” the author as a spy in the new nation becomes much more apparent when Mr. Vigillius begins his career as a spy within his own house. Mr. Vigillius must save his daughter from Sinisterus Courtland and he chooses to do so by adopting the role of the spy. The crisis begins when Margaretta, in New Haven on her first trip away from home, sends a letter to her parents and informs them of her friends, and more importantly, the new man in her life. Describing her first encounter with Courtland, Margaretta writes, “My heart instantaneously acknowledged an involuntary prepossession in his favour...I should think I stood a greater chance for happiness with this gentleman, than with any other individual of his sex” (67). Her letter continues with a confirmation of Courtland’s reciprocal feelings as she tells her parents that he declared himself “her lover” after only three days of courtship (67). Margaretta’s adornment of Courtland sparks tremendous panic in Mr. and Mrs. Vigillius, beginning the first major crisis in “The Story of Margaretta.”
The chaos that consumes the household results from Mr. Vigillius’s previous knowledge of Courtland. Mr. Vigillius knows Courtland from past business encounters, and as a result, he has reason to disapprove of Margaretta’s connection with him. Revealing his relationship with Courtland, Mr. Vigillius writes, “Full well I knew Sinisterus Courtland. I knew him much better (for my personal interviews with him had been but few) than he was apprized of; I knew him to be base, designing and however incongruous these qualities may seem, improvident also” (68). Mr. Vigillius immediately dons the role of the spy as he hints that his knowledge of Courtland extends well beyond the “few” personal interviews that he has shared with him; like the Gleaner who spies and gains stories, letters, and conversations, Mr. Vigillius discloses that he has learned from an unnamed source that Courtland has only “a slender patrimony to support his pretensions while wholly destitute of the means, disposition, or talents to add thereto” (68). As the spied, Mr. Courtland is unaware of the damaging information that Mr. Vigillius possesses, and as the spy, Mr. Vigillius is sure to use this collection of evidence against Courtland to ensure his family’s safety.

In the following letter, Letter IX, Mr. Vigillius continues his reconnaissance and delivers to his wife and readers a plan of attack that will put into action his privileged information and hopefully hinder Courtland’s malicious intentions. Throughout the letter, Mr. Vigillius makes consistent usage of militaristic metaphors and terms, writing that he, along with his wife, must “invade,” “overthrowing the specious tyranny” of Courtland, who exists as an “infidel. . .in the empire of love” (74). Continuing his declaration of war, he stresses the stealth-like behavior that he and his wife must practice in order to retain their “empire.” He writes, “Having, however, so great a stake, it became us to deliberate
much, to be very cautious in our movements; a precipitate step might ruin our measures
and it was our aim to be guarded at all points” (74). Courtland threatens the stability and
security of Mr. Vigillius’ domain, so he fittingly rallies his wife into battle and drafts his
readers into the crisis that is “The Story of Margaretta.”

Mr. Vigillius deliberates over the perfect plan to “overthrow the infidel. . .in the
empire of love.” Describing the options appropriate for their delicate circumstance, Mr.
Vigillius states, “I knew that to erase impressions, made upon the youthful bosom, violent
efforts must generally be inadequate; that they would much more frequently lacerate,
than obliterate” [emphasis added] (75). Mr. Vigillius dismisses any thought of violently
separating Margaretta from Courtland, fearing such harsh measures would spark her
resistance. Mr. Vigillius’s decision marks “The Story of Margaretta’s” departure from
the traditional seduction tale. Unlike the family in Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa (1747),
Mr. Vigillius does not exert absolute authority over his daughter in the moment of crisis.
Instead, Mr. Vigillius decides to bring Margaretta home and to continue to permit
Courtland to visit her. With Margaretta under his roof, Mr. Vigillius allows her to
distinguish between Courtland’s romantic pretensions and his actual intentions. Mr.
Vigillius writes, “We conceived, besides, that as Miss Melworth possessed a penetration
far beyond her years, frequent interviews with Sinisterus Courtland would. . .destroy that
mask under which he had continued to betray the unwary” (75). With confidence in her
abilities and education, Mr. Vigillius waits for Margaretta to discover Courtland’s sinister
side; however, should Margaretta fail to see her swain’s shortcomings, Mr. Vigillius
holds proof of his unfortunate past: “We thought best to await some fortunate crisis,
holding the unquestionable facts of which we were possessed, relative to Courtland, as
our *dernier resource*” (75). Like the Gleaner, Mr. Vigillius has gleaned important proof of Courtland’s scandalous past and he will publicize it for the benefit of his daughter and the daughters of America.

Later in *The Gleaner*, the Gleaner writes a column that refers indirectly to his surreptitious behavior within his own house. In Letter XXXV, while lecturing on proper pedagogical methods in the classroom, the Gleaner compares the relationship between the teacher and the student to the relationship between the spy and the spied. As if directly describing his relationship with Courtland, he writes:

> Would it not be more judicious to aim at acting the part of an *invisible spy*, continuing a silent observer of every action until the transgression is *evident* or *strongly suspected*. . .to address his reason; to enlist his affections; to delineate in forcible language his error, and energetically to describe the tremendous consequences of an obstinate adherence to guilty pursuits?36 (290)

While meditating on the proper pedagogy for disciplining children, the Gleaner appears to describe his own model of authorship. Adopting the role of the “invisible spy,” the Gleaner silently observes his readers and others, such as Eugenio and Clara, and then scrutinizes their behavior or judgments in his column. Mr. Vigillius understands his authorship as a pedagogical tool used to furtively “enlist [the] affections” of his readers and “to delineate in forcible language [their] error.” Mr. Vigillius does just this when he invites Courtland into his house, “enlist[ing] [his] affections,” only to wait until his “transgression is evident” to reprimand him.

Therefore, when he allows Courtland to continue visiting Margareta, Mr. Vigillius does not relinquish any control; rather, he remains in position of power as he moves Margareta back into his house to maintain a fixed and “invisible” eye upon her.
Further, his control over Margaretta extends well beyond the times he can watch her directly. Mr. Vigillius, along with his wife, have trained Margaretta to respond to her parents in a particular manner. In her letter from New Haven, Margaretta alludes to this training:

You have accustomed me, dearest lady, to unbosom myself to you, and though this is my first separation from you, yet the epistolary correspondence, with which I have for such a length of time, though continued under your roof, been indulged, hath given me the habit of expressing myself to you in this way, with the utmost freedom; and as a proof that I will never wear disguises...I will confess that I make the following communication with more reluctance that I ever yet, upon any occasion, experienced. (67)

In New Haven, Margaretta does not cease obeying her dear parents’ wishes when she properly informs them of her love for a man twice her age. Because Mrs. Vigillius has trained or “accustomed” Margaretta to share in an “epistolary correspondence” even “under [their own] roof,” Margaretta has learned to “never wear disguises” and to “unbosom” herself regularly to her mother. Margaretta’s letter from New Haven then functions as an indicator of her parents’ success in molding and forming her authorship skills.

Thus, Margaretta’s model of authorship differs dramatically from the Gleaner’s. And, it is her model of authorship that Mr. Vigillius hopes his readers will practice: they must “unbosom” themselves to him so that he can monitor and regulate their actions. In fact, Mr. Vigillius, in an epistle preceding the crisis of “The Story of Margaretta,” spends much time describing Margaretta’s education as if instructing his readers how to write.

Recalling his daughter’s early and extraordinary education, Mr. Vigillius writes:

At least once every week, to little voluntary absences, when my boy Plato, being constituted courier betwixt the apartments of my wife and daughter,
an epistolary correspondence was carried on between them, from which more that one important benefit was derived; the penmanship of our charge was improved; the beautiful and elegant art of letter writing was by degrees acquired; and Margareta was early accustomed to lay open her heart to her maternal friend. (60)

As a direct result of these weekly correspondences within the household, Margareta became “accustomed to lay open her heart to her maternal friend.” She, while presumably improving her penmanship, learns to confide almost mechanically to her mother as she “unbosoms” herself “without [even] a blush.”

Mr. Vigilius reveals the implications of Margareta’s model of authorship when he writes:

Persons when holding the pen, generally express themselves more freely than engaged in conversation; and if they have a perfect confidence in those whom they address, the probability is, that, unbosoming themselves, they will not fail to unveil the inmost recesses of their soul—thus was Margareta properly and happily habituated to disclose, without a blush, each rising thought to her, on whom the care of preparing her for the great career of life had devolved. (60)

Margareta’s and his readers’ authorship serves a very clear monitorial purpose for Mr. Vigilius. In effect, Margareta as a result of her authorship becomes “the self-disciplined subject”: for even when she fails to love the right man, Margareta willingly confesses her wrong-doing to her parents. Mr. and Mrs. Vigilius methodically trained their daughter to “unbosom” herself so they can closely monitor her activities and emotions. By implication, the letter suggests that if the Gleaner’s readers enforce this training on their own children, authorship will furnish the new nation with self-disciplined subjects.

Mrs. Vigilius tests her daughter when she narrates to Margareta a pathetic story regarding their neighbor, Mrs. Lovemore. Immediately after giving her daughter her weekly allowance, Mrs. Vigilius manipulates Margareta by telling her about Mrs.
Lovemore’s financial troubles in order to observe her daughter’s reaction. After listening to the tale of woe, Margaretta quickly dismisses her desire for extravagance and dedicates herself and her money to ensuring Mrs. Lovemore’s well-being. Margaretta’s generous response to her mother’s test elicits praise and applause from Mr. and Mrs. Vigillius. This episode poignantly represents the implications of Margaretta’s upbringing and education. Margaretta willingly surrenders her money to Mrs. Lovermore much the same way that she willingly confesses her love for Courtland. Margaretta, as the self-disciplined subject, submits herself again and again to restraint and moderation without any paternal coercion or pressure. Her behavior attests to her successful education at the hands of her parents.

At the center of this education is the epistolary relationship between mother and daughter. Margaretta and her mother participate in a closed economy of authorship as both women pen letters specifically intended for each other. Mr. Vigillius enthusiastically promotes this type of relationship when he devotes over a hundred pages of *The Gleaner* solely to the correspondence between his wife and daughter. Their eighteen letters approach a variety of topics, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to the Court de Poland’s fraternal virtues. Mr. Vigillius publishes these letters to an open economy in order to model his wife and daughter’s correspondence to his readers. Encouraging mothers to adopt in-house correspondence, he writes that a daughter, by exchanging letters, will eventually become that “accomplished female who will exhibit an exact transcript of the model already formed in the mind of her excellent mother” [emphasis added] (327). By exchanging letters, the Gleaner proposes that mothers actually “write” their daughters into existence, as they author the transcript that their
daughters perform; in effect, the daughter becomes the text that the mother writes. Describing this process, Mr. Vigillius writes, “The mother, or the woman to whom she may delegate her office, will imprint, on the opening mind, characters, ideas and conclusions, which time, in all its variety of vicissitudes, will never be able to erase” [emphasis added] (287). For mothers, authorship is a pedagogical tool that “imprints” daughters with selective “characters,” “ideas,” and “conclusions”; Margaretta attests to this as she responds to her mother’s transcript in just the way that her mother intended. In this model of authorship, the author assumes tremendous power capable of not only monitoring the new American subject but fashioning her as well.

While this in-house epistolary correspondence between mother and daughter successfully fashions Margaretta, it also “acts out a drama,” as Julia Stern argues, between Mr. Vigillius and “the invisible Americans” that reside in his home.37 The circulation of the letters hinges upon Plato, who delivers the epistles to the women. As the Gleaner’s African-American servant, Plato and his duties are contingent on Mr. Vigillius. Several times throughout The Gleaner, Mr. Vigillius informs his audience that he reads these letters that pass through his halls. And, of course, he gains access and publishes a collection of them in The Gleaner. Therefore, the supposedly “closed economy” that exists between the women depends upon the invisible hand of Mr. Vigillius, who turns their letters into an open economy when he publishes them in the pages of The Gleaner. As the man of the house, Mr. Vigillius naturally “owns” his wife’s and daughter’s letters; however, he does not demand these letters from them. Instead, by relying on his spying and gleaning skills, Mr. Vigillius reads the letters without the women ever suspecting his presence. The tight control that the Gleaner
practices on his wife and daughter resembles the surveillance that he enforces on his readership. By gaining access to his wife’s and daughter’s correspondence and even his daughter’s epistles to her friends, Mr. Vigillius does indeed seem to be “here, there and everywhere,” as Eugenio derisively insists.

The family dynamic within the Vigillius household rests upon each member performing his or her necessary roles and duties. At the moment that Mr. Vigillius catches Courtland in his lies, however, these familial roles surprisingly (and briefly) switch. Assessing Courtland’s commitment to his daughter, Mr. Vigillius decides to inform him that Margaretta is no longer entitled to his inheritance. Before Courtland arrives to hear the dramatic adjustment in Margaretta’s finances, Mr. Vigillius instructs his daughter and wife “to seat [themselves] in the adjoining apartment where they might be ear witness of our discourse” (86). In this scene, Mr. Vigillius exchanges roles with his wife and daughter as they act as spies, pressing their ears to the wall and carefully listening to the confrontation between the spied, Courtland and Mr. Vigillius. Mr. Vigillius’s plan works as Courtland storms out of the house, agitated by the alterations in Margaretta’s inheritance, while Margaretta laments her error and inexperience in love.

After Courtland flees, Mr. Vigillius regains control of his “empire” as his family resumes their familiar roles within the house. In Letter III, Mr. Vigillius meditates on the structure of the ideal family, describing two different types of households: one well organized and the other poorly managed. His musings offer insight on his own family structure:

It would be pleasant to observe the contrast between a family, the females of which were properly methodical, and economical in their distributions and expenditures of time, and one accustomed to leave every thing to the
moment of necessity. . .The one is the habitation of tranquility; it is a well
ordered community; it is a complicated machine, the component parts of
which are so harmoniously organized, as to produce none but the most
concordant sounds, to effectuate none but the most salutary and uniform
purposes. . .While the other,—but who can delineate the other? It is a
restoration of the reign of chaos. . .perhaps, the lady paramounts of each
family, are equally well meaning, good kind women; although the want of
a little perseverance, which would aim at producing a laudable habit,
present this melancholy reverse. (28)

The metaphor of the “complicated machine” quite fittingly describes Mr. Vigillius’s own
well-ordered family. From servants to matriarchs, the various people and their roles and
duties comprise the components of the Vigillius machine. In order for the machine to
operate smoothly and create “the most concordant sounds,” Margaretta must unbosom
herself, Mrs. Vigillius must reply to her daughter’s letters, Plato must deliver the epistles,
Mr. Vigillius must glean the letters, and this routine must repeat day after day. Therefore,
while the Gleaner describes the home as “a habitation of tranquility,” it is also a
methodical and mechanical operation dependent upon the fulfillment of numerous
obligations and duties.

Interestingly, the Gleaner in his description of the “complicated machine”
meditates only upon the maternal influence within a house. Nowhere in his letter does he
address paternal power. While his description supports the ideology of separate spheres
as the mother reigns over the domestic space, it also seems to depict Mr. Vigillius’s own
house since his power remains invisible.39 From supervising her visits with Courtland to
penning letters about Mary Queen of Scots, Mrs. Vigillius consistently participates in
Margaretta’s education and daily routines; whereas, Mr. Vigillius only interferes in this
routine when he must restore the semblance of harmony to his “empire” as evidenced
with his confrontation with Courtland. For the most part, his power is invisible as he monitors the daily operations of his machine.

The household the Gleaner describes suggests that Murray remains complicit in a traditional social hierarchy organized by gender. Throughout The Gleaner, Murray does demonstrate her support for a hierarchy. In fact, at one point, the Gleaner writes, “There is no calculating the disorders which may result from relaxing the series of subordination” (216). While Murray’s position displays her Federalist sympathies, the hierarchy that she supports is clearly one that is not based on gender discrimination. By assuming a masculine character, Murray demonstrates her ability to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a man, and in doing so, she reveals the tenuousness of masculinity. As Mr. Vigillius, Murray successfully acts the role of the father, businessman, and husband, traveling to jails, paying creditors, and confronting the scoundrel Courtland. In performing these various roles, Murray exposes masculinity as a social construct rather than a biological fact or inherent characteristic. Further, by adopting the role of Mr. Vigillius, Murray also seems to suggest that women can share in paternal power. While she clearly does not want to rid society of hierarchy, her portrayal of Mr. Vigillius suggests that women too can be “good fathers,” good authors. Ultimately, authorial paternalism becomes a position of power that women and men can both practice.

The collapse between Mr. Vigillius’s authorship and paternalism is further evidenced when Mr. Vigillius adds to and expands upon his familial machine. Just as he adopts Margaretta when she was a poor orphan, Mr. Vigillius generously opens his house to people in need of necessary help and reform. For example, soon after Margaretta witnesses Courtland’s cruelty, her friend Amelia shocks her with surprising news:
Courtland has a wife, Fanny Wellwood, and three children, all of whom unexpectedly showed up at Amelia’s door begging for pity. When Margareta informs her parents of Courtland’s poor wife, Mr. Vigillius, rather than grow angrier at Courtland, extends his home to Wellwood and her sons. Further, Mr. Vigillius decides to visit Courtland in bankruptcy jail and redeem him. Unfolding his conversation with Courtland, Mr. Vigilius writes:

I proposed to him, that if I should procure his enlargement, he should retire immediately to my dwelling, where he would meet Miss Wellwood; and that the nuptial ceremony being legally performed, my house should become his castle; that I myself would undertake his affairs, thoroughly investigate every point, and endeavour to adjust matters with his creditors.

(103)

As a result of his offer, Mr. Vigillius’s family expands to include Courtland and Wellwood, along with her three sons, all living under his roof. Not long after, Margareta and her husband, Edward Hamilton, find themselves in financial trouble, and they too move in with Mr. Vigillius. While Mr. and Mrs. Vigillius never have children of their own, Mr. Vigillius “collects” different children from a variety of families, including even his neighbor’s children Serafina and Seymour, and invites them to live within his home.

Mr. Vigillius collects various people to live under his roof much like he collects whispers, conversations, and stories for The Gleaner. Once in his house, Mr. Vigillius reform Hamilton (the gambler), Courtland (the rake), and Seymour (the spendthrift), paying their creditors and teaching them sound economic principles. Mr. Vigillius practices on his family the same methods he practices on his readers. He enlists Courtland’s, Hamilton’s, and Seymour’s affections and then reforms their habits. As a result of their experiences together, Mr. Vigillius uses their stories as part of The Gleaner.
In Letter XXIII, Mr. Vigillius portrays the connection between his columns and his “adopted children.” After Hamilton interrupts Mr. Vigillius writing one of his columns at his desk, Mr. Vigillius says:

‘No, my son, I have always leisure to receive your visit. Sit down, Sir, and unfold the tale, to which your perplexed countenance is a preface.’

‘I come, Sir, to take your direction in the line of conduct which the untoward state of my affairs renders it proper for me to pursue.’

I threw down my pen which I had till then in my fingers, and grasping his hand, I eagerly exclaimed—Justice, Sir, Justice, must be your guide. (181)

Mr. Vigillius’s conversation with Hamilton illustrates the interchangeability between his “son” (-in-law) and his own pen. Mr. Vigillius immediately describes Hamilton as a text when he understands his countenance as a “preface” to his son-in-law’s emotions. Further, he throws his pen on the letter that he is writing—the very letter that we are reading—as he picks up Hamilton’s hand almost as if to begin writing with it. Letter XXIII then continues with Mr. Vigillius narrating his advice to Hamilton and his readers. In this particular letter and throughout The Gleaner, his pen and his family become interchangeable parts that the author uses to write; both fill and fuel his columns with stories and advice for his readers. Authorship and paternalism collapse as Mr. Vigillius’s familial circle expands to include members related not through blood but through the pages of The Gleaner.

The Gleaner’s family widens to include his own readers as they begin to respond to him as a father. Similar to Mr. Melworth, Margareta’s biological father, who learns of his daughter’s whereabouts while reading the Massachusetts Magazine column, two readers, Alphonso and Lavinia, are reunited after a long separation after reading each
other’s letters in the Gleaner’s column. In an epistle to the Gleaner describing his reunion with Lavinia, Alphonso writes:

    The hour which is to complete my felicity, is not far distant; and I have to entreat you, Sir, in the name of my venerable parent, in that my beloved Lavinia, and of my own, that you would act as the nuptial father of my angel friend; and that when I shall receive at the altar, the greatest blessing which Heaven can confer, it may be bestowed by the man to whom I owe more than my existence. [emphasis added] (799)

The majority of the Gleaner’s readers, with the exception, of course, of Eugenio, respond to him in much the same way as his immediate family. Similar to Hamilton patiently listening to Mr. Vigillius’s advice, Alphonso seeks Mr. Vigillius’s guidance on his wedding day. Alphonso’s letter, as well as Mr. Vigillius’s expanded family’s acceptance of his help, is a testament to the Gleaner’s abilities as a father, teacher, and spy. While his readers and his family members may change, Mr. Vigillius remains steadfast with his intentions for them: to monitor and to fashion them into self-disciplined subjects. Mr. Vigillius never reveals his intentions or his identity as “The Gleaner,” and as a result, he retains an unblinking eye on his “empire” of readers.
NOTES


2 Vena Bernadette Field, *Constantia: A Study of the Life and Works of Judith Sargent Murray* (Orono, Maine: University of Maine, 1931), 42. Murray’s and Dennie’s letters are found in the *Joseph Dennie Papers*, a collection of letters written by and to Dennie, which are housed in the Harvard University Library.


5 Field, 43.

6 Judith Sargent Murray, *The Gleaner* (Schenectady, New York: Union College Press, 1993), 210. All subsequent references to *The Gleaner* will be included within the text in parenthesis.


8 Ibid., 32.

9 Illustrating the threat that the Universalists posed to the Congregationalists, I offer the complete and lengthy title of a pamphlet written by A. Croswell, the pastor of a Church of Christ in Boston: “Mr. Murray unmask’d. In which among other Things, is shewn, That his Doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION, is inimical to Vertue, and productive of all manner of Wickedness; and that Christians of all Denominations ought to be on
their guard against it.---Those who name the name of CHRIST, are also warned not to Rebel against the Light--left by indulging themselves to wish the Unscriptural Doctrine true, hearing it preached and making themselves of a Party to promote it, they be given up to believe a lie” (Boston, Massachusetts: J. Kneeland, 1775).


11 Ibid., 10.

12 Alexander Hamilton, “‘Publius,’ The Federalist LXXII,” in The Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches, Articles, and Letters During the Struggle over Ratification, Part Two: January to August 1788, 363.


15 Ibid., 484-86.

16 Baym, iv.

17 This belief is still very popular today among French feminists. In her manifesto for l’écriture féminine, Helene Cixous, in “The Laugh of Medusa” in Feminisms: an anthology of literary theory and criticism, eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997) describes an uniquely feminine language: “It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded—which doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system” (353). Luce Irigaray in This Sex Which Is Not One, trans., Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) argues that language is inherently masculine and that women must “ja[m] the theoretical machine of language” (78).

18 Catharine Gallagher uses the term “vanishing act” in her book’s title, Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995). In her study on British women authors, Gallagher writes, “All the women in this study combine their rhetoric of authorship with one of dispossession. The combination takes different forms and answers to different exigencies in each career, but the presentation of authorship as the effect of the writer’s inability to own the text remains constant and is explicitly linked to the author’s gender”
Gallagher’s observation can be applied to Murray’s usage of her nom-de-plum. Murray describes being stuck between a rock and a hard place: if she signs her name, critics will read her prose with as the “tinsel glitter” associated with women’s writing; and if she uses a pseudonym, others will be thought to have written the text. However, Murray is willing to risk the later, and through her anonymity, she hopes to promote her own her celebrity.

19 Field, 25.

20 Ibid., 25.

21 Ibid., 25.

22 Ibid., 34.

23 The Gleaner’s desire to “snatch the bays” from America’s poets echoes Wheatley’s intentions in “to snatch a laurel from thine honour’d head” in “To Maecenas” in Complete Writings, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Classics, 2001). Contemporary critics often criticize both Wheatley and Murray for “masking” their own identity: Wheatley, a black servant, is accused of sympathizing with her white protectors and Christianity; and Murray is accused of hiding her identity as a woman and adopting the arrogant and paternalistic views of a male narrator.

This quote also seems to be a direct attack on Sarah Wentworth Morton, better known as the poet Philenia throughout New England. Most accounts depict Morton and Murray as friendly acquaintances, but Murray’s statement and Morton’s letter to Dennie suggest a deep rivalry.

24 Baym, ix.

25 Mr. Vigillius’s and Geoffrey Crayon’s similarities diverge at a clear and recognizable point. Unlike Crayon, Mr. Vigillius is married. Both he and his wife spend much time educating and caring for their daughter Margareta. Further, Mr. Vigillius has a recognizable home that he returns to after his journeys. Crayon, on the other hand, is a life-long bachelor who resides in hotels and friends’ houses but never his own home.


27 In The Coquette, ed. Carla Mulford (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), Major Sanford describes himself as “a mere Proteus, and can assume any shape that will best answer my purpose” (121). One of the main differences between the spy as described by Murray and the rake as described by Foster is that the spy works for the benefit and
welfare of the nation. The author as spy works to reprimand the rake and to publicize his misdeeds; the rake wrecks chaos and works in the private.

28 Patricia Meyer Spacks in *Gossip* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) describes the eighteenth-century literary tradition that attributed gossiping to women: “Conversing only with one another, they confine themselves to a more private sphere than that of the male story-teller who circulates in coffee houses to relate the foibles of public men, existing therefore at least on the fringes of the public life” (155). Clearly, Monimia and her friends are gossips.

29 Ibid., 155.

30 Ibid., 155-56.

31 Field and Miller both respectively disclose the history surrounding the Public Safety Committee’s accusation of John Murray.


33 Ibid., 126.

34 One of the best known espionage stories directly involving the literary community is the arrest of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. In Thomas Philbrick’s *St. John de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1959), he states that Crèvecoeur, in 1779, was charged as an American spy and imprisoned in New York for three months. Similar to the prejudice that John Murray experienced due to his British background, Crèvecoeur’s French origins raised British suspicions of him. After arresting and interrogating him, the British found Crèvecoeur guilty of corresponding with Washington, of possessing a map of New York harbor, and of persuading a neighbor to take the oath of allegiance to the revolutionary government of his state.

35 In *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), Frank Donoghue argues that “the general ambiance of war is central to mid-eighteenth-century literary culture as it was to the culture of Grub Street a generation earlier” (35). He continues that, “the idea, voiced by Stern, that ‘the life of a writer, whatever he may fancy to the contrary, was not so much the state of composition as the state of warfare’ is echoed in the work of Tobias Smollet, Oliver Goldsmith, and Richard Sheridan. . .These prefaces are typical of the age’s perception of literary society, a perception in which ‘striving’ against and “overcoming” some unspecified adversary are crucial to the man of letters” (35). It is interesting to apply Donoghue’s argument of eighteenth-century British fiction to eighteenth-century American fiction. Mr. Vigilius must engage in authorial warfare with Courtland, especially when the rake claims that he is the author of Hamilton’s poem.
The Gleaner continues to compare the benefits of privately approaching the guilty child than publicly shaming him. While the Gleaner clearly favors private admonitions for guilty children, he does not dismiss the “publication of disgrace” as a means to correcting behavior (219).

In The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1997), Julia Stern propounds that “the eighteenth-century novel acts out an intricate drama of those invisible Americans” (2). The drama in this scene of The Gleaner exists between Mr. Vigillius and “those invisible Americans residing in his house,” his wife, his daughter, and his servant Plato. Stern’s use of “invisible” refers to the American government’s treatment of women and slaves. While the wife, daughter, and to a much lesser extent Plato are visible in the novel, Stern argues that these figures are “invisible” in the eyes of the American government.

In William Hill Brown’s The Power of Sympathy, ed. Carla Mulford (New York: Penguin, 1996), Worthy uses his epistolary correspondence with Harrington in order to monitor his friend’s behavior. A novel that Murray surely read, The Power of Sympathy (1789) opens with Harrington disclosing to his good friend Worthy his sinister intentions to seduce the young Harriot. Worthy answers Harrington’s disturbing letter with a mild warning, pleading with Harrington that he must “weigh matters maturely” (11). In reply, Harrington reproaches Worthy for his sermon and then accuses his friend of spying on him. Harrington writes, “I suppose you will be ready to ask, why, if I love Harriot, I do not marry her—Your monitorial correspondence has so accustomed me to reproof, that I easily anticipate this piece of impertinence—But who shall I marry?” (11). Harrington informs Worthy that his “monitorial correspondence” has failed to control his behavior and only has resulted in his anticipation of Worthy’s questions and advice. Because of Harrington’s accusation, Worthy is rendered powerless as a spy and an author, waiting the duration of nine letters before writing to Harrington. And by then it is too late to exert any control or power.

CHAPTER 2

BECOMING THE “DIRECTING HAND”: MODELING AUTHORSHIP IN HANNAH WEBSTER FOSTER’S THE BOARDING SCHOOL; OR, LESSONS TO A PRECEPTRESS TO HER PUPILS

On July 28, 1787, Benjamin Rush delivered a commencement address to the visitors and students of the Young Ladies’ Academy at Philadelphia. In his speech, Rush dismisses the colonial education system as a British tradition unsuited for the citizens of the new Republic. With nationalistic zeal, he pleads with his audience that “it is high time to awake from this servility—to study our own character—to examine the age of our country—and to adopt manners in everything that shall be accommodated to our state of society and to the forms of our government.”¹ An original trustee of the Young Ladies’ Academy, Rush was thoroughly convinced that American women needed to be better educated in order to promote the ideals of the Republic. In closing his commencement speech, Rush encourages his young female students to make use of their education and, in doing so, to defeat “the prejudice of little minds.” He announces:

To you, therefore, YOUNG LADIES, an important problem is committed for solution; and that is, whether our present plan of education be a wise one and whether it be calculated to prepare you for the duties of social and domestic life. I know that the elevation of the female mind, by means of moral, physical, and religious truth, is considered by some men as unfriendly to the domestic character of a woman. But this is the prejudice of little minds and springs from the same spirit which opposes the general diffusion of knowledge among the citizens of the republic.²
Rush’s speech, which would later be published in Philadelphia and Boston, was celebrated by educational reformers and applauded by the parents, students, and visitors in the audience. In 1789, one such visitor to the Academy, a Dr. Sproat, echoed Rush’s sentiments when he stated, “I cannot but hope, that the plan of female education, now adopted and prosecuted in this excellent seminary, will merit the approbation and patronage of all who wish well to the learning, virtue, and piety of the rising fair of this metropolis.” In 1792, Sproat’s and Rush’s hopes were affirmed when the Academy was incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania for the education of young girls, the earliest of its kind in any part of the country.

As demonstrated by the success of the Young Ladies’ Academy, the years following the Revolution witnessed an expansion in educational opportunities for women. Reformers advocated the cultivation of young girls’ intellectual powers, and instructors and educators responded as academies and boarding schools for young girls and women dotted the Mid-Atlantic and New England landscape, in towns such as New Haven, Medford, Litchfield, and Greenfield. Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale University, observed in 1786 that “the spirit for Academy making was vigorous.” With the creation of such schools, girls from middle- to upper-class families were able to attain an education in grammar, rhetoric, history, geography, mathematics, and some natural sciences, whereas their mothers’ educations had been limited to such ornamental accomplishments as music, dance, French, and fancy needlework.

Linda Kerber suggests two major reasons for the increase in educational opportunities for young girls and women in the postrevolutionary period, which she
argues “affected women more emphatically than any other change in the New Republic.” First, many prominent social and political leaders, like Rush, believed that the Republic depended upon the virtue of its citizens and that women needed to be educated in order to govern themselves and their families effectively. Second, the country after the war became more print-centered and with the steady proliferation of pamphlets, periodicals, and papers, it became much harder to function without the ability to read and write. Mary Beth Norton also adds that the war convinced many Americans that women needed broader training in order to be better prepared for unforeseen circumstances and tragedies. The result of these social and political factors combined to usher in sweeping educational reforms throughout the years following the Revolutionary War.

In 1798, Hannah Webster Foster displayed her support for this reform movement when she published *The Boarding School; Or Lessons of a Preceptress to Her Pupils*. Echoing the sentiments of Rush, Sproat, and Stiles, Foster expresses her enthusiasm for women’s education and urges the “importance of improving those advantages.” Inscribing her text to “the YOUNG LADIES of AMERICA,” Foster extends the benefits of a formal education well beyond the walls of the nascent boarding schools surfacing throughout the country as she offers her readers a collection of didactic lessons and letters. In a democratic gesture, Foster presents those girls not sufficiently privileged to attend private academies and boarding schools a chance to attain a “virtuous” and “useful” education in the form of her book (1). Within *The Boarding School*, one of the pupils laments the unfortunate situation of those girls who cannot receive a formal education: “How many fall for want to a directing hand. . . Had you or I been subjected to the same
ignorance, and same temptations, who can say that we should have conducted better!” (230). Thus, Foster offers *The Boarding School* as a type of correspondence class that will provide a “directing hand” for all “the YOUNG LADIES OF AMERICA.”

For Foster, the projects of authorship and pedagogy are one and the same as she uses *The Boarding School* as a means of educating a nation of women. In *The Boarding School*, Foster introduces her readers to Mrs. Williams, a preceptress, and to the students who attend her boarding school, named Harmony-Grove. Foster divides her text into two separate halves: the first half is a series of lectures from Mrs. Williams during her pupils’ final week at the boarding school; and the second half is a compilation of letters written by the pupils after their departure from Harmony-Grove. Foster notably depicts herself not as the writer of these lectures and letters, but as their collector and arranger. On her Dedication page, she writes, “The author has employed a part of her leisure hours in collecting and arranging her ideas on the subject of female deportment” (1). After Foster briefly introduces the preceptress and her pedagogical approach, Mrs. Williams’ monologic voice comes to dominate the first half of the text, while the clamorous voices of eight girls govern the second half. Refusing to identify herself as the creator of an original text, Foster instead defines authorship by the ability to collect, arrange, and edit the written work of others and to disseminate these materials to the women of the new Republic.

Perhaps even more importantly, Foster does not limit this model of authorship to herself; rather, in *The Boarding School*, she imagines a whole nation of women collecting and arranging texts. In this way, Mrs. Williams is also an author who gleans popular and standard lessons and stories from an assortment of sources, such as sermons, etiquette
books, and conduct manuals. She presents her students with these lectures that are on the importance of collecting an array of material, expunging errors from the selected works, and exchanging the texts with others. The first half, then, equips readers with the necessary guidelines for practicing Foster’s model of authorship. In the second half, the students exchange epistles that implement these lessons, revealing the success of Mrs. Williams’ education. Strikingly, however, in the over forty letters from this half, there are only six occasions in which Foster provides both a letter and its reply. The result of this disjointed correspondence is that the reader is invited to respond to these letters, participating in the network of correspondence of the second half by making use of the lessons and instruction of the first. In other words, The Boarding School’s two halves deliberately turn its readers into active textual consumers and producers.

Foster’s text, therefore, shows her readers that they ought not assume that authorship demands creativity and innovation. Instead, Foster urges her readers to collect, borrow, arrange, and revise materials at hand—the very notes, letters, stories, and lectures that are a part of their daily lives. But Foster also suggests that the purpose of these carefully edited collections is to discipline and monitor a larger audience. By advocating a collaborative model of authorship that depends upon others’ as well as one’s own texts, Foster encourages the participation of a wide and democratic audience, since most young women at the time were furnished with the means of practicing such a model of authorship. Foster’s fantasy of authorship is a nation of authors monitoring others as others assuredly monitor them. As such, her authorial model is also a civic project that ensures a Republic of disciplined and disciplining young ladies.
Thus, *The Boarding School* offers an exciting and experimental model of authorship in the early American Republic. Critics have always received *The Boarding School* as the ugly stepsister of *The Coquette*, which along with Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple*, were best-sellers in the postrevolutionary and antebellum periods. From Lillie Deming Loshe’s evaluation at the turn of the twentieth century to Gillian Brown’s most recent judgment, scholars for a century have recapitulated the same assessment of *The Boarding School* as a tiresome didactic text. Far from just another prosaic “educational treatise,” however, *The Boarding School* interrogates the function and compensation of authorship on both the local and national levels. On a local level, Foster depicts young girls exchanging letters that monitor each other’s behavior and circulate their good names and virtuous deeds; on a national level, Foster shows how the publication of *The Boarding School* results in the instruction and surveillance of a larger audience and a pecuniary profit for the author. Similar to Benjamin Franklin’s lessons and precepts to the sons of America in *The Autobiography*, Foster in *The Boarding School* teaches the daughters of America how to use authorship as a means of producing both virtue and profit.

I. “You are Good Soil”

In the first chapter of *The Boarding School*, Foster introduces her readers to Mrs. Williams, her central author-figure. Mrs. Williams is “a widow of a respectable clergyman” and a mother of two young daughters, Anna and Maria (2). They all reside on the “healthful” and “fertile” banks of the Merrimack River in rural Massachusetts, a picturesque landscape (2). With her “little patrimony,” Mrs. Williams embarks on a
business venture when she chooses to open her doors and begin a boarding school, a
decision that was not uncommon for women at the time (2). Mrs. Williams partakes in
the patriotic fervor of the educational reform movement when, in one of her lectures, she
declares:

Thrice blessed are we, the happy daughters of this land of liberty, where
the female mind is unshackled by the restraints of tyrannical custom,
which in many other regions confines the exertions of genius to the
usurped powers of lordly men. Here virtue, merit, and abilities are
properly estimated under whatever form they appear. (31)

While Mrs. Williams proudly displays her appreciation of the educational opportunities
available to women in America, she boards her pupils for reasons other than to perpetuate
the ideals of republicanism and safeguard the virtue of the new nation. Rather, she opens
her boarding school to “preserve [the patrimony for her children] and . . .to promote their
advantage and enlarge their society” (2). Impelled by her husband’s death, Mrs.
Williams assumes the financial responsibility of supporting her young family.

Spurred by self interest, Mrs. Williams instructs the daughters of the Republic in
order to profit and promote her own daughters’ society. Describing Mrs. Williams’ self
interest, Foster writes, “As she had an eye, no less to the social pleasure, than to the
pecuniary profit of the undertaking, she admitted only seven at a time” [emphasis added]
(2). Here, Mrs. Williams admits seven pupils to ensure a “pecuniary profit” while still
enjoying the experience of her new business venture. Her objective to attain a “pecuniary
profit” distinguishes her from the prototypical republican mother; yet, contemporary
critics often portray Mrs. Williams as exemplary of the republican mother. For example,
Clare Pettengill argues:
Mrs. Williams is a perfect ‘republican mother,’ riding the crest of the historical circumstances which have produced her. Paternal (and not coincidentally, clerical) authority within the household has declined in the most concrete way, with the death of her minister husband. Freed from the necessity for productive labor, Mrs. Williams’s role is to educate, within the home, and to instill the appropriate virtues in those under her care.¹⁸

Contrary to Pettengill’s argument, Mrs. Williams is not “a perfect republican mother.” Motivated by the welfare of her country, the republican mother, according to Kerber, dutifully instills her sons and daughters with the appropriate morals and virtues demanded by the Republic.¹⁹ In The Boarding School, Mrs. Williams cannot afford to teach her young daughters or other citizens’ daughters without pay; therefore, she decides to labor productively in order to “preserve[e]. . .[her] little patrimony” and attain a “pecuniary profit.” Hence, Foster aligns Mrs. Williams, not with the popular figure of the republican mother, but with the businessmen and entrepreneurs who at the time saw the towns around the Merrimack River, such as Lowell and Lawrence, as a “fertile” place to establish a profitable business and industry.

In the years following Independence, American businessmen and entrepreneurs helped transform the American marketplace into a thriving market economy. Under the guidance of the Federalists, the federal government was committed to stabilizing the post-war economy by reinvigorating commerce and trade. Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury under President George Washington, passed an economic plan that actively promoted manufacturing, assumed responsibility for the war debt, and established a national bank.²⁰ Joyce Appleby argues that Hamilton’s plan motivated thousands of entrepreneurs to start their own businesses and to participate in the burgeoning market economy. She describes “hundreds of people—many of them
ingenuous youths—respond[ing] to the incentives to produce something for the market.”

Certainly, the areas around the Merrimack River witnessed such “ingenuous” men, like Charles Lowell and others, who established some of the most productive shoe factories and cotton mills in the country. Offering an invaluable power source, the Merrimack River attracted entrepreneurs as well as thousands of men and women to manage and work the newly established factories.

Foster’s choice to locate Harmony-Grove near the “healthful” and “fertile” towns of Lowell and Lawrence on the Merrimack River at the close of the eighteenth century begs critical notice. Like Charles Lowell and others, Mrs. Williams is an entrepreneur who, with a keen eye for profit, considers her undertaking an opportunity to profit financially. Harmony-Grove’s curriculum and characteristics even suggest that Mrs. Williams establishes a school that would potentially attract the largest pool of students, girls from both reformist and traditional homes. While Rush professes that an education would render young girls more productive in their homes, he recognized the discouraging fact that many people still firmly believed that advanced schooling would spoil the inherent “domestic character of women.” Fearing that an education at an academy or boarding school would “unsex” their young daughters, parents remained skeptical about enrolling their daughters in these progressive institutions. The boarding school and academy were believed to produce girls who either were unprepared for traditional domestic duties or “unflatteringly masculine,” and therefore, parents preferred to send their daughters to the traditional “adventure” or “dame school.”

Harmony-Grove shares characteristics of both the adventure school and the academy. Like the dame schools common in the colonial period, adventure schools
catered to girls and were run usually by a woman, who was the sole instructor.\textsuperscript{25} By the 1760s, adventure schools had flourished throughout most of the colonies, teaching usually music and dancing, drawing and painting, and fancy needlework. After the Revolution, academies began replacing the adventure school and steered away from teaching ornamental accomplishments. Academies hired a faculty that taught academic subjects such as composition, history, geography, arithmetic, and perhaps even the natural sciences. Following the older tradition of the adventure school, Mrs. Williams is the only instructor at Harmony-Grove. Yet, she combines the curriculum of the academy and the adventure school when she teaches arithmetic, composition, and reading, as well as, dancing and music, needlework, deportment, and manners. Harmony-Grove with its coursework and sole instructor situates itself safely between the reform movement and the more traditional education system and such a school potentially would draw girls from reformist and traditional households.\textsuperscript{26} And, Mrs. Williams’ choice in curriculum succeeds in terms of “pecuniary profit,” since by the end of \textit{The Boarding School}, another class has enrolled in Harmony-Grove.

Initially, Mrs. Williams and her motive for opening her boarding school contrasts with Foster and the altruistic concern that she shows in her Introduction for all the “YOUNG LADIES OF AMERICA.” However, issues of remuneration were important to the republican author. At the end of the “Preface” to \textit{The Gleaner}, Judith Sargent Murray writes that the support of her generous readers will “secure for [her]self, and for [her] infant daughter, (should our future exigencies require it) thy amity and thy patronage.”\textsuperscript{27} Murray quite openly implores for her reader’s assistance in attaining financial security for her family. And, Charles Brockden Brown worked shortly as a
lawyer to support himself while writing. In her formation of *The Boarding School*, Foster appears to want to attract a wide and varied audience in order to attain such a “pecuniary profit.” Religious, social, and political notaries preached that novels and novel-reading inflamed the passions and the fancy, resulting in the inevitable seduction and despair of the female reader at the hands of the rake. Novels were often thought to flatter and feed a young woman’s vanity, rendering her more vulnerable to the empty words of the unprincipled libertine. *The Boarding School* escapes the pariah status of the novel and resembles a conduct book with its presentation of numerous moral lessons in “politeness,” “etiquette,” and “dance”; at the same time, however, *The Boarding School* appears as an epistolary novel with its inclusion of a collection of letters between young girls in the second half. Regarding the generic placement of Foster’s text, Pettengill astutely notices:

*The Boarding School* can be seen as lying in the middle of a continuum, the endpoints of which are marked by the conduct manual on one hand and the novel on the other. If the conduct book is ‘hegemonic,’ inculcating constant self-regulation, and the novel can be seen as ‘subversive,’ a medium that dramatizes conflict and thereby often works against the message it is assigned to convey, books like *The Boarding School* might be described as ‘moderate,’ able to bridge cultural contradictions in an effective way.28

As Pettengill observes, *The Boarding School’s* genre conflates cultural contradictions with its amalgamation of both the conduct book and the novel. Like Mrs. Williams who positions Harmony-Grove as both a traditional and reformist school, Foster aligns her text with the novel and the conduct book, potentially drawing an audience of both novel and conduct book readers and earning a profit.
By portraying Mrs. Williams’s desire for profit, Foster emphasizes the pecuniary concerns of authors and illustrates how an author’s profit improves the advantages of oneself and the whole country. Carla Mulford posits that throughout Hamilton’s tenure in Washington’s administration a Federalist version of republicanism emerged that tied individual gain to the nation’s enhancement. Mulford states that the Federalists believed that “by improving [one’s] own economic circumstances, republican citizens were assisting the nation.” In *The Boarding School*, Foster shows how authorship benefits the author as well as her readers, but she also importantly depicts how the nation profits from authorship. Much like the factories on the Merrimack River that began to mass produce various products, Foster believed that authorship could produce a virtuous and civil American subject, and hence, a virtuous and civil American nation.

In the first chapter of *The Boarding School*, Foster introduces Mrs. Williams and shows how her pedagogical approach has effectively furnished young girls with morals and virtues. For her first class, Mrs. Williams accepts seven girls who vary in temperament and personality. While the pupils have completed their “first rudiments of learning”—an enrollment requirement for girls to enter either an adventure school or an academy—they “possessed different tempers and dispositions, which had been variously, and, in some respects, erroneously managed” (6). Most likely, the girls entering Mrs. Williams’ boarding school were “erroneously managed” by incompetent instructors or ill-suited parents. Mrs. Williams’ challenge, then, is to “domesticate” them and to “extend and purify their ideas, to elevate and refine their affections, to govern and direct their passions” (6); she must furnish them with virtues and morals so that they become respectable, obedient citizens of the new Republic. By the end of the pupils’ tenure at
Harmony-Grove, they answer to their preceptress in “one voice,” demonstrating Mrs. Williams’ ability to mold their “different tempers and dispositions” into a harmonic, unified “voice.”

The initial description of the young girls’ various temperaments and their later transformation into the resounding “one voice” attest to Mrs. Williams’ pedagogical abilities and the initial success of her school. In the beginning of The Boarding School, Foster offers a vivid description of the preceptress’ pedagogical methods: with a “watchful eye,” Mrs. Williams “enter[s], at once, with becoming dignity and condescending ease, into all [her pupils’] concerns; to participate in their pleasures; while, with candour and mildness, she reproved their errors, detected their follies, and facilitated their amendment” (6). As a preceptress, Mrs. Williams refuses to scold her girls for their faults; rather, she points to their errors with a “condescending ease.” Her mild manners gain her access to her students which allow her to watch and reprimand them when they least expect it. At the breakfast table, Mrs. Williams practices this effective approach for disciplining her students. Describing the scene—an apparently common scene at both the breakfast and dinner tables—Foster writes:

On these occasions, Mrs. Williams suspended the authority of the matron, that, by accustoming her pupils to familiarity in her preference, they might be free from restraint; and feeling perfectly easy and unawed, appear in their genuine characters. By this mean she had an opportunity of observing any indecorum of behavior, or wrong bias; which she kept in mind till a proper time to mention, and remonstrate against it; a method, the salutary effects of which were visible in the daily improvement of her pupils. (9)

Here, Mrs. Williams disguises her authority in order to see if her students, once dismissed from formal instruction, practice the precepts from her lessons. She promotes a more lax
atmosphere for the sole purpose of monitoring and correcting her students’ lapses in judgment and behavior. In the second half of *The Boarding School*, Julia Greenfield writes of the success of these tactics. Complaining about her “gay disposition” as a young student at Harmony-Grove, Julia recalls how often Mrs. Williams “with her judicious eye” would “remind me of my indecorums of which I was unconscious at the time” (123). Julia, like her peers at the breakfast table, was “unconscious” of her errors, and it was only because of Mrs. Williams’ “judicious eye” that she was able to rectify her vices. Now, as a young woman who no longer lives under the guidance of Mrs. Williams, Julia lives a much less eccentric and more proper life. Thus, Mrs. Williams’ tactics promote a sense of self-discipline that ensures that her students regulate themselves even in her absence.

The description of Mrs. Williams’ pedagogical methods complements the Gleaner’s own pedagogical methods in Murray’s *The Gleaner*. Similar to Mrs. Williams, the Gleaner spies on his readers, as he casually, yet carefully hangs on their every word while they murmur enticing whispers to one another. At one point in *The Gleaner*, the Gleaner catches a young man, Eugenio, cheating on his wife, and the author publishes a scathing account of it in his column. The Gleaner and Mrs. Williams practice the same tactics: they attempt to appear disinterested in the current conversation of either their readers or their students, while in actuality they both eagerly listen to the contents of the discussions. The Gleaner and Mrs. Williams also alter their appearances in order to mask their real intentions. For instance, at the breakfast table Mrs. Williams “suspend[s] the authority of the matron” when in actuality, she is every bit the matron, patiently waiting to reprimand her students for their “freedom.” In *The Gleaner*, the Gleaner constantly
changes his appearance and form in order to appear disinterested in his surroundings. Close and careful surveillance exists as a reoccurring theme in postrevolutionary texts and informs the role of the republican author.

Just as Mrs. Williams covertly monitors her students, Foster practices a similar type of surveillance and self-discipline on her readers. Throughout The Boarding School, Foster’s model of authorship is indebted to Federalism. In the years following Independence, the Federalists supported a system of government that promoted a talented few—men drawn from the wealthy and aristocratic strata of society—to serve as the vigilant watchdogs over the public. According to the Federalists, the public needed order and guidance, and the Federalists intended to implement such order with a closely regulated government. Mrs. Williams, as the preceptress and author-figure, is the vigilant watchdog of her pupils and the readers; she is the sole authority figure at Harmony-Grove and in the pages of The Boarding School. Throughout the first half, her monologic voice controls the actions and behaviors of the many; her commands must be followed to avoid punishment. In the second half of the text, Mrs. Williams continues to appear as the central authority as she monitors her pupils and their letters. Thus, for Foster, such a model of authorship shapes and disciplines the reader, the new citizen of the Republic.

Throughout the first half of The Boarding School, Foster further develops a strategy to regulate and govern the pupils and readers. Beginning with “Reading” on Monday and ending with “Religion” on Saturday, Mrs. Williams dedicates individual days to two separate subjects, each day being divided into a morning subject and an afternoon subject. Individual chapters begin with a heading that announces the day, the time of day, and the topic of the lecture. At the beginning of each chapter, Foster
introduces the topic and then Mrs. Williams lectures on it, underscoring the important precepts to be learned. After each lesson, Mrs. Williams narrates a story that illustrates the themes and morals from the lecture. The story usually concerns two girls: one who wisely follows the guidelines from Mrs. Williams’ lecture and one who ignorantly ignores them.31 After the close of the tale, Foster immediately begins the next chapter with a new topic. The strict pattern of her text with its lessons and stories gives the young reader the necessary training she needs in order to become a disciplined reader and citizen; she does not listlessly and leisurely listen to the stories but for the moral of the stories.

The format of the individual chapters (with lecture always followed by story) complements the pedagogical methods that Mrs. Williams practices at the breakfast table. Take for instance the “Dress” chapter. Here, Foster lectures to her pupils on the dangers of ornamental dress and then narrates an enticing tale about the failed romance of Lucinda and Leander. This tale, like most of Mrs. Williams’ stories, focuses on the plight of a young heroine whose exuberant taste scares her swain into the arms of her rival. The youth of the heroine encourages the reader to identify with her and her circumstance. Naturally, pupils and readers alike would be enticed by such a tale and most likely desire to read more about Lucinda’s trials and tribulations. However, at the very moment that the pupil and reader fall for the seductive ploys and plots of fiction, Foster ends the story and begins a new chapter. Such an abrupt ending—which contains no commentary from Mrs. Williams—is sure to wake her audience from any reverie that might be induced by the tale. It is as if we are seated at the breakfast table, ravenously feasting on fiction and romance;32 and, like Mrs. Williams who sits with her students at
the breakfast table and waits to reprimand them for their “freedom.” Foster quickly cuts her reader off from the tale with a new chapter. With the constant and continual shifts between lesson and story, the pupil and reader cannot lose themselves in the fancy of fiction. By dividing each chapter into half lecture and half story, Foster intends to train her reader into becoming a more alert and disciplined reader—a reader who values the moral purpose of fiction. Therefore, the genre of *The Boarding School* itself causes the reader to reflect, by prohibiting the reader from feverishly consuming and by encouraging the reader to profit from the tale with instruction.

Before beginning her individual lessons, Mrs. Williams ends the first chapter with a story about the affluent Clara, whose mother insisted on teaching her the invaluable “lessons of industry and economy” (12). After marrying a man of “the brightest prospects,” Clara unfortunately finds herself in a tragic situation. Describing the scene—a scene that is repeated in most of Mrs. Williams’ stories—the preceptress states, “But a series of unavoidable disasters, such as no human wisdom could foresee or prevent, reduced her to narrow circumstances; and, to complete her misfortune, she was left a widow with four small children. Her parents were in the grave; her patrimony was gone!” (12). Clara resists succumbing to a pitiful fate and instead with the “use of her needle...support[s] herself and family with decency” (12). Mrs. Williams offers a companion piece to Clara’s story about a heroine named Belinda. Like her friend Clara, Belinda too falls on hard times and finds herself alone with a large family. Belinda, however, refuses to support herself, and as a result of her obstinacy, lives in poverty and “negligence, peevishness, and sloth” (13). Describing Belinda’s home, Mrs. Williams states:
The eye is disgusted by her slatternly appearance and ostentatious display of the tattered remnants of finery, which bespeak the pride and indolence of their owner; who will neither convert them into more comfortable garments, nor, by repairing, render them more becoming. (13)

While Clara and Belinda appear to grow up in similar circumstances, Belinda importantly did not have a mother who taught her the “lessons of industry and economy”—such an education that Mrs. Williams herself teaches to the pupils at Harmony-Grove.

Throughout *The Boarding School*, Mrs. Williams instructs her students in “the lessons of industry and economy” in regards to reading and writing. She informs her students about the proper materials to read and write and how to exchange these materials within an economy of readers. By reading, writing, and exchanging, Mrs. Williams demonstrates how the pupil and reader profit; they profit by broadening their ideas, circulating their good names, transforming into model citizens, and perhaps even, by becoming national authors.

In closing the first chapter, Mrs. Williams displays her confidence in her students when she states:

‘Your minds are good soil, and may I now flatter myself, that the seeds of instruction which I have sown, will spring up, and yield fruits abundantly!’

With one voice, they most affectionately assured Mrs. Williams, that it should be their daily study to profit by her lessons; and withdrew. (15-16)

The language of improvement, advancement, and emulation that closes the first chapter underscores the importance of profit that exists at the center of *The Boarding School*. As Mrs. Williams looks at her students, she imagines them improving and cultivating her precepts with time. The language of improvement appears as distinct and new to postrevolutionary America. Norton argues that such “words conveyed a very different
message from the common colonial injunction to be industrious and simultaneously [such language] exposed a major shift in attitude.” Norton observes that “for the first time American daughters as well as sons were being told that they could ‘improve’” Mrs. Williams’ forges a connection in her lessons and lectures between improvement, profit, and authorship. By practicing her lessons on the “industry and economy” of authorship, pupils and readers alike will profit and in turn, will profit the nation.

II. “Treasur[ing] up the ideas which the hand impresses”: Reading and Writing in The Boarding School

Given the emphasis on authorship, Mrs. Williams’ first chapter is entitled “Reading.” She announces to her students that while reading is “a common part of education. . .the value of it is not duly estimated” (17). The value of reading is emphasized throughout Mrs. Williams’ lectures as her rhetoric depicts the possible profit that can be gained by skillful and careful reading. Mrs. Williams explains, “You must enter into the spirit of the subject, and feel interested in the matter, before you can profit by the exercise” (17). What follows her introduction on reading is an exegesis on the appropriate and valuable genres to read. She declares, “The quality of the book most worthy of your perusal is the only point on which I need to enlarge” (17). From novels to essays, Mrs. Williams uses the first half of her chapter to advise her students on the proper reading materials “worthy” of their investment. For example, she states that poetry is a “sublime source. . .richly formed for the mental repast of a liberal and polished lady. . .[however] everyday poetasters are unworthy of. . .attention” and essays “you may find profitable and pleasing. . .Among the foremost of these, I mention Mrs.
Chapone’s letters to her niece, which contain a valuable treasure of information and advice” (24-25).

Not surprisingly, however, her focus is on the genre that was at the time gaining the most attention from advocates and opponents alike: the novel, “the favourite, and the most dangerous kind of reading” (18). While she sternly warns her students about the hazards of the mode, she does not “condemn all novels indiscriminately” (23). Instead, she distinguishes it as a risky, yet potentially promising investment: “Though great prudence is necessary to make a useful selection, some of them are fraught with sentiment; convey lessons for moral improvement; and exhibit a striking picture of virtue rewarded; and of vice, folly, and indiscretion punished” (23). While recognizing that novels contain “profitable. . .and valuable treasures,” she also cautions that they often “monopolize too large a portion of your time,” transforming the reader into a greedy hoarder of novels (24). Therefore, Mrs. Williams offers a model of reading that forces her students to labor with the knowledge gained from their reading:

 possessed yourselves, at least, of the leading traits: otherwise your labour will be totally lost. If convenient, always recapitulate what you have been perusing, and annex to it your own sentiments, and remarks to some friend. If you have no friend at hand, who will be disposed to hear, recollect, and run it over in your own thoughts. This will be a great assistance to memory. . .Time is very greatly misspent, which is bestowed in reading what can yield no instruction. . . Not a moment’s attention should be given to books that do not afford some degree of improvement. Always have an eye, therefore, to profit, as well as to pleasure. . .A most inestimable price is put into your hands. (27)

Mrs. Williams changes the popular eighteenth-century educational dictum from “instruct and entertain” to “profit and pleasure.” In order to profit from reading, the student herself must determine whether or not the reading material will “yield. . . instruction.”
Mrs. Williams also encourages her students to “recapitulate” or reinvest in the recently read material, by locating and actively using its instructional value in everyday republican life.

To underscore the necessity of reinvesting in reading material, Mrs. Williams narrates a tale about the young Juliana, who “indulged herself in the unlimited reading of novels and every light publication which a circulating library could furnish” (19). Anticipating Dorcasina Sheldon’s sad fate in Tabitha Tenney’s *Female Quixotism*, Juliana’s unrestricted reading adversely affects her ideas of love and marriage when she rejects all potential suitors who refuse to sacrifice their own lives for her. Unwisely, she elopes with a military officer, which results in the premature death of her father. After depleting her patrimony, her husband soon abandons her, leaving her alone with four children. When a friend calls on the poor, orphaned, and husbandless Juliana, she finds her home in complete disarray and her children in despair. Surrounded by squalor, Juliana, nonetheless, continues to read her coveted novels. Justifying her voracious reading addiction, Juliana states, “I must sympathize with the heroine of adversity. I have not lost my sensibility with my fortune. My only *luxury* is my imagination!” (23).36 Juliana’s predicament exemplifies the novel’s ability to “monopolize” the reader’s time. Even though her family lives in sloth, Juliana cannot resist reading the trials and tribulations of the “heroine of adversity.” Further, Juliana fails to reinvest in her novels’ treasures: she neither recognizes the valuable or instructional treasures of her reading nor does she actively implement or share such treasures. Her exclamation proves that she instead avariciously hoarded her reading as “luxury” goods. Juliana’s fate demonstrates that profit lies not in the reading, but in the laborious “recapitulation” of reading.
Mrs. Williams also narrates the story of Elvira who is applauded for productively using the knowledge gleaned from reading. Unlike Juliana whose reading habits lead to her failure as a mother and homemaker, Elvira efficiently uses her knowledge gained from reading, enabling her to juggle the various roles of wife, mother, teacher, and friend. Mrs. Williams tells her students that Elvira’s breadth of knowledge and familiarity with a range of texts and subjects allow her to master various duties and responsibilities: “To an enlarged understanding and a cultivated taste, to an extensive knowledge of the world and an acquaintance with polite literature, [Elvira] superadds those amiable virtues, which give society its highest relish. . .and render her esteemed, beloved, and respected by all who know her” (28). The profits of Elvira’s “enlarged understanding” and “extensive knowledge” are found in her ability to teach her children, circulate ideas with her friends on polite literature, and manage her household duties. Mrs. Williams’ emphasis, then, is that young women must read an array of different materials and reinvest in the texts by exchanging and applying the “treasures” towards a virtuous purpose.

In her chapter on “Writing and Arithmetic,” Mrs. Williams continues to remind her students of the need to render reading productive—more particularly, to render reading productive through writing. Like reading, she depicts writing as “creative of both pleasure and improvement” (30). Indeed, her representation of writing resembles her earlier depiction of reading:

[The mind] collects new stories of knowledge, and is enriched by its own labours. It imperceptibly treasures up the ideas, which the hand impresses. An opportunity is furnished of reviewing our sentiments before they are exposed; and we have the privilege of correcting or expunging such as are erroneous. For this purpose, you will find it a good method to collect and write your thoughts upon any subject that occurs; for by repeatedly
Here, Mrs. Williams explains that writing requires a collection of materials. She instructs her students not only to “treasure[] up” ideas, insights, and material from reading or daily intercourse, but to write or “impress” these ideas onto paper. More specifically, Mrs. Williams encourages her students to collect their writings in a common place book:

"It will be a great service to note down in your common place book such particulars as you may judge worth remembering, with your own observations upon them. This will be a kind of amusement which will exercise your thinking powers at the time, and by returning to it afterwards, it may afford you many useful hints." (31)

This model of authorship does not burden the student with trying to meet lofty ideals of creativity or originality. Further, it restrains the student’s imagination since the imagination is necessarily dangerous to morality. Foster constructs young authoresses who must collect and distinguish materials that can be potentially useful and instructional. It is these collections of ideas, stories, essays, and letters that we witness the girls exchanging in the second half of *The Boarding School*.

In her “Reading” and “Writing and Arithmetic” chapters, the reading and writing processes mirror one another. Both depend upon the young woman either reading or writing a collection of material, reviewing that material, and then exposing it to a larger public. In fact, *The Boarding School* demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between reading and writing. In the first half of *The Boarding School*, the reader must read carefully each lesson, and in the second half, the reader practices these lessons by writing epistles; similarly, in the first half of *The Boarding School*, Mrs. Williams composes the lessons and lectures, and in the second half, she reads the letters from her students. In
Foster’s construction of authorship, reading becomes an integral part and function of the author. Murray’s definition of the author in The Gleaner depends heavily on reading as well. While the Gleaner writes columns and essays to his readers, he is constantly reading their letters to him and reading the letters that pass within the halls of his house between his wife and daughter. Indeed, reading becomes the author’s primary means of enacting surveillance. For Foster and her contemporaries, reading and writing are mutually constitutive and productive and work to define the function of the republican author.

The model of reading and writing that Mrs. Williams presents is similar to the model of arithmetic that she portrays in the second half of the chapter. Here, Mrs. Williams explains that arithmetic, like writing, is “absolutely necessary in every department, and in every stage of life” (35). Interestingly, Mrs. Williams immediately discusses arithmetic in terms of finances and money matters, stressing the importance of budgeting and balancing one’s own money. In the tale accompanying the arithmetic lesson, the motherless Lucinda is forced to care for her sickly father as well as her siblings. Dismissing the notion of charity, Lucinda depends upon herself to support her family. Mrs. Williams writes:

Her education, by which, among other branches of learning, she had been well instructed in arithmetic (that being her father’s favourite study) qualified her for this undertaking. She therefore devoted herself to the business without delay; examined her father’s accounts, collected whatever remained that was valuable; sold the superfluous moveables, and purchased a small stock of trade. (38)

Exerting her own skills and abilities, Lucinda assumes control of her father’s business. Lucinda reopens her father’s shop by collecting, examining, and selling various accounts.
The description of Lucinda’s business practices corresponds with the reading and writing methods that Mrs. Williams teaches to her students. Lucinda “collects” papers, “examines” these materials, and then, “exchanges” them with a larger audience. These methods result in success, financial success, for the heroine: “All who knew her motives and merit frequented her shop, and encouraged her by their custom kindness. By this mean, together with her judicious management, and engaging behavior, she increased her business to such a degree, as to support the family with ease and reputation” (38).

Lucinda’s story resembles Mrs. Williams’ own experience. After her husband’s death, Mrs. Williams, motivated by her family’s need, uses her small patrimony to establish a boarding school to support her two daughters. Similar to Lucinda who takes over her father’s business after he falls ill, Mrs. Williams, in many ways, assumes the job of her husband, the minister. As a minister, Mr. Williams would have preached to his congregation on the duties and responsibilities of religious life; he would have been in constant contact with individual members of his congregation, hearing their stories and offering tales and advice in return. Mrs. Williams, as a minister’s wife, would have played an integral role in his ministering. At the turn of the century, a minister’s wife functioned either as an “assistant,” who shared many of the pastoral duties with her husband, or as a “partner,” who developed a ministry alongside her husband. If Mrs. Williams performed the role of an “assistant” or a “partner,” she certainly would have come into contact with the congregation and their individual stories, and in turn, the stories that her husband preached to the congregation. It is possible, then, that Mrs. Williams gleaned, reviewed, and presented these very tales to her pupils. Whether or not these tales are indeed inherited from her husband, they do not present anything new and
original concerning religion, dance, or etiquette; thus, Mrs. Williams may have also collected them from etiquette books and conduct manuals. Hence, Mrs. Williams “collects,” “examines,” and “exchanges” material that is profitable to her and her students. In this way, Mrs. Williams and Lucinda exemplify collection and dissemination as profitable means of sustenance; however, it is Mrs. Williams who testifies the success of Foster’s actual authorial method.

Thus, at first glance, the paring of arithmetic and writing may seem strange, especially since Foster in her novel only pairs two other subjects, “dance and music”—and these subjects seem much more complementary than writing and arithmetic. Plus, the fact that arithmetic and writing were not taught together in the early education system adds to the oddity of the combination. Yet, in her pairing of the subjects, Foster suggests that the connection between writing and arithmetic exists in collection, dissemination, and personal finance. In her story that accompanies the writing lesson, Mrs. Williams narrates a tale about Celia and Cecelia. Mrs. Williams encourages her pupils to compose letters as if she peers over their shoulders, watching and reading every word. Describing Celia’s and Cecelia’s inappropriate epistolary relationship, Mrs. Williams writes, “They imagined themselves perfectly secure from the censure of the critic. Their education had not taught them, that a virtuous mind should shrink even from ideal indelicacy” (34). The girls are soon punished for their indecorum when a collection of their letters is publicly circulated by the scorned lover, Silvander. These epistles contain “illiberal wit, frothy jests, double entendres and ridiculous love-tales” and as result, Celia and Cecelia are banished from the community and Celia dies in seclusion (34). On the other hand, the example of Mrs. Williams offers us a successful case of
collection, public dissemination, and personal finance. Assembling and presenting, an assortment of letters and lectures which are morally appropriate and pass the censure of the critic, Mrs. Williams profits by running a successful boarding school. It is Foster’s publication of these materials that illustrates a fundamental difference between education and authorship. By collecting and publishing these lessons and lectures, Foster earns a pecuniary profit (like Mrs. Williams), but she reaches a wider audience than the preceptress, enabling her to teach and instill the virtues of republicanism to a nation of girls rather than a classroom of girls. Ultimately, the author, reader, and all “the YOUNG LADIES of AMERICA” profit through the dissemination of The Boarding School.

III. “First you must learn then you must practice”: Writing Back in The Boarding School

In the second half of The Boarding School, Mrs. Williams’ pupils leave the security of Harmony-Grove and return to their respective families. Once home, the girls exchange letters, compensating for their lack of physical interaction. The experience of the boarding school was new to many of Foster’s readers. Norton observes that young white girls usually resided at home until marriage, and thus, those enrolled at boarding schools constituted the first generation of American girls to live away from home for a lengthy amount of time.41 In The Boarding School, Foster records for her readers an experience that was dramatic and new for many young girls. Likewise, New England boys were also leaving their homes, not necessarily for educational purposes, but for employment opportunities. In his study on the economy of New England, Winifred Barr Rothenberg describes eight different autobiographies by men who were all born in the
last quarter of the eighteenth century. Rothenberg writes, “All of the men had quit the farm, and each of their stories could probably begin as Chauncey Jerome’s did: ‘On the Monday morning that I took my little bundle of clothes, and with a bursting heart bid my poor mother good bye. . .and I perhaps never to see any of them again’” (90). Thus, during the years following Independence, just as many young men were leaving their familial farms to profit, many young girls were returning home eager to practice their new lessons and precepts and to profit from them.

In the second half of *The Boarding School*, Foster further models the function of authorship. The girls now removed from Harmony-Grove prolifically correspond with one another. Their letters, along with epistles from Mrs. Williams, comprise this half of the text. At first glance, the appearance of the second section is quite jarring. In contrast to the reliable and monologic voice of Mrs. Williams, the second half presents the reader with a cacophony of voices. Further, unlike the unswerving chapter pattern of the first half, the letters in the second half appear to be arranged haphazardly since Foster rarely gives the reader reciprocated correspondence. The reader, then, is moved from the closed garden of the first half of the novel to the chaos of the second half. The second half is unsettling to read since the form occasions a desire for reciprocity that the collection willfully denies. The effect of this chaos demands that the reader participates with the text by replying to the letters simply because the reader feels the need for reply. And, more importantly, Foster has instructed the reader never to leave a letter unanswered. In the “Writing and Arithmetic” chapter from the first half, Foster writes of the necessity of replying:
Never omit noticing the receipt of letters, unless you mean to affront the writers. Not to answer a letter, without being able to assign some special reason for the neglect, is equally unpardonable as to keep silence when conversation is addressed to you in person.

By habituating yourselves to writing, what may, at first, appear a task, will become extremely pleasant. (32)

Therefore, when the reader, along with the Harmony-Grove girls, enters the second half, she likewise participates in their network of letters. If Foster’s reader has become a successful graduate by reading the first half of *The Boarding School*, then in the second half, she, like the Harmony-Grove girls, must prove what she has learned. The reader, now well-equipped with Mrs. Williams’ moral lessons, is invited to reply to the letters of the recent graduates in the second half, and in so doing, she implements this newly acquired knowledge. In the “Reading” chapter, Mrs. Williams spells out this interactive program when she tells her pupils, “First you must learn, then you must practice” (27).

The second half of *The Boarding School*, therefore, transforms into a kind of practicum.

Foster is not unique in advocating interactive reading since it was likewise promoted by education reformers in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Describing the platform of this reform movement, Davidson writes, “Educational reformers insisted not on the value of passively learning. . .but on the need for the active production of meaning both in free play of the mind that comes from reading imaginative literature and in the active production from writing one’s own thoughts.” Reformers demanded significant pedagogical changes as well as greater educational opportunities for women, and Foster demonstrates her support of the movement when she manipulates the form of *The Boarding School* in such a way that encourages her readers to interact with her text.

By inviting the reader to respond to epistles that use Mrs. Williams’ guidelines, Foster
ensures that the reader reinvests in *The Boarding School*, by recollecting, writing, and exchanging the ideas from the first half. Further, by replying to a collection of letters and arranging the letters in such a way that they correspond to the appropriate letter-writers, the reader herself produces a collection of useful and productive textual material.

Harriot Henly, one of Mrs. Williams’ former pupils and an exemplary student, actually models the task that the reader confronts in the second half. Harriot pens Laura Guilford a letter informing Laura of her approaching return to Boston from Worcester. She describes the charms of country life and then closes the letter complaining about their volatile friend, Amelia Parr, who notably did not attend Harmony-Grove. Harriot writes:

> So extreme is her gaiety, that the good qualities of her mind are suffered to lie dormant; while the most restless passions are indulged without restraint. I have just received a letter from her which you will see to be characteristic of her disposition. I enclose that, and my answer to it for your perusal. Read both with candour. (155)

Following the directions of Mrs. Williams from the first half, Harriot reinvests in Amelia’s letter. In the “Reading” chapter, Mrs. Williams instructs her students always to peruse recently read material and to meditate upon its contents. After reading Amelia’s epistle, Harriot recognizes her friend’s faults and addresses these to her in a letter. To Amelia, Harriot states:

> You are, the whole time, in the midst of hurry and bustle. Eager in the chase, you fly from one scene of dissipation to another; but the fatigue of this ceaseless round, and the exertion of spirits necessary to support it, render the objects of pursuit tasteless and insipid.

> Which mode of life, yours or mine, do you think the most rational, and productive of the greatest happiness? The boarding school, which you affect to despise, has, it is true, formed my taste; and I flatter myself that I shall never wish it altered. (159)
Harriot appropriately identifies Amelia’s flightiness and reprimands her for her behavior. Throughout the second half, the reader is placed in similar situations when she must decide whether or not to congratulate or condemn her “peers” and their actions. In this particular example, Harriot, as Harmony-Grove’s model student, takes Mrs. Williams’ lessons one step further when she collects these materials, Amelia’s letter and her reply, and sends them to Laura. In both the “Reading” and the “Writing and Arithmetic” chapters, Mrs. Williams encourages her students to exchange texts with wider audiences. Therefore, Harriot not only reinvests in Amelia’s letter by correcting her friend’s behavior, but she also shares the collection of materials with a friend who earlier confided in Harriot that she is tempted to purchase expensive Parisian bows and dresses. Clearly, Laura could benefit from Harriot’s sage advice. Harriot’s example, then, serves as a model for the reader: to address the letter-writer at hand and to exchange the text with someone else who might use it.

In order to assure the reader that she is correctly responding to the girls’ letters, Foster includes epistles where the reader witnesses the pupils struggling with Mrs. Williams’ precepts. For example, in a letter to Sophia Manchester, Laura Guilford writes, “Having been with my aunt Burchel for a fortnight past, I have indulged myself in reading novels; with which her library is well supplied” (160). Laura’s indulgence defies Mrs. Williams’ standards of proper reading. The reader knows from Juliana’s tale that an unregulated appetite for novels can lead to the loosening of morals and even a tumultuous fall at the hands of a dishonest swain. Laura’s letter then should elicit grave concern. In response to Laura’s epistle, the reader must quickly intervene and reprimand the young girl for her long night in aunt Burchel’s library. And as if to convince the reader that
Laura has received her moralizing letter, in Laura’s next epistle, aunt Burchel’s niece describes her distaste for dissipation in the form of card-playing. As a result, the reader feels that it was her judgment of Laura’s first letter that has aided in Laura’s moral improvement in the second. It is as if the text positions the imaginary letter its audience is writing back to Laura within its pages, since Laura responds to the reader’s moralizing advice. Therefore, what appears to be the chaotic form of the second half in which responses are denied is, in fact, a deliberate strategy to incorporate the letters of Foster’s wider audience into the pages of *The Boarding School*.

By transforming her readers into authors, Foster displays great faith in her model of authorship. She believes that through authorship the young woman will be able to monitor a community of women just as those women monitor her. While they share many similarities, it is in this way that Foster’s model of authorship in *The Boarding School* differs from Murray’s in *The Gleaner*. Mr. Vigillius, Murray’s narrator in *The Gleaner*, refuses to allow anyone but himself to monitor the actions of his readers and family. Similarly, Murray herself refuses to separate herself from her readers; she resists any break between the reader and author as she adds superfluous essays and plays to the already desultory third volume of *The Gleaner*. She appears to do this in an attempt to continue to teach and monitor her audience. Foster, on the other hand, demonstrates faith in the capability of her readers to adopt her model of authorship. Unlike Mr. Vigillius and Murray, Foster believes that authorship can be practiced by a large and varied audience. In her “Writing and Arithmetic” chapter, Mrs. Williams proclaims: “Here the widely extended fields of literature court attention; and the American fair are invited to cull the flowers, and cultivate the expanding laurel” (31). Foster boldly urges young
women to glean the “fields of literature,” collecting, borrowing, exchanging, and editing
the letters, lectures, and notes, and she assuredly believes that authorship will promote a
virtuous citizenry. Foster’s confidence in her model of authorship is even noticeable in
the final pages of *The Boarding School*. The text’s last letter is entirely about Caroline
Littleton’s mother’s untimely death. Mrs. Williams writes to Caroline, “That assisting
hand, which formerly led you, is now cold and lifeless!” (249). By choosing this
particular epistle as her closing letter, Foster suggests that the reader by the time she
finishes *The Boarding School* no longer needs the author’s “directing hand” nor the
mother’s “assisting hand.” According to Foster, *The Boarding School* offers an infallible
model of authorship productive of independent and monitorial authoresses.

IV. Local and National Authorship

In the second half of *The Boarding School*, Foster gestures towards the ways that
the reader can extend her directing hand to a larger audience. Foster includes a collection
of letters from Julia Greenfield and Maria Williams that demonstrates authorship on both
the local and national levels. Julia pens a letter concerning the dangers of seduction to
Maria Williams, the daughter of the preceptress. In her letter, Julia rails against women
who still fall prey to the libertine despite a good education. To demonstrate her point,
Julia narrates a story about her wealthy and well-educated friend Clarinda, who is
seduced, impregnated, and then, abandoned by the unprincipled Florimel. With her
mother’s intervention, Clarinda’s father agrees to forgive his daughter as long as she goes
into hiding during the pregnancy. Her father’s conditions also demand that she must give
the child away immediately after its birth. Clarinda agrees to these strict terms and
relocates to a rural residence. One winter day after sledding, Julia surprisingly discovers her friend’s reclusive residence. With confusion and shame, Clarinda breaks down and narrates her tale of woe to Julia. She tells Julia of the approaching departure from her child, crying, “To-morrow my dear babe is to be taken from me! It is to be put to nurse, I know not where! All I am told is, that it should be well taken care of! Constantly will its moans haunt my imagination!” (191). At the end of her dramatic story, Clarinda pleads with Julia:

As soon as possible, I shall return to my father’s house; and as I am unknown here, and you are the only person, out of our family, who shares the dreadful secret, I flatter myself that my crime may still be concealed from the world.

Oh Julia! You have witnessed my disgrace! Pity and forgive me! (191)

After a tearful narration of her troubles, Clarinda begs Julia for her forgiveness and secrecy. She tells Julia that she can return to her father’s house unashamed as long as no one else discovers her crime. Julia, however, refuses to honor Clarinda’s plea for secrecy and she immediately writes Maria about the scandal.

Clarinda’s story continues to circulate as the reader soon discovers that Mrs. Williams “took the liberty to read that part of your letter, which contains the story of Clarinda, to her pupils” (194). While Mrs. Williams narrates the tale to her class, one of the young girls hastily withdraws in tears from the classroom, and the reader discovers that the distraught girl is herself the illegitimate offspring of parents who gave her away. The young girl proceeds to narrate her story to Mrs. Williams, which Maria then includes in her letter to Julia. The young girl explains that she was saved from poverty and misery only after she told her sad story to a wealthy woman who adopted her as a result of her
woeful tale. At her story’s closure, the pupil passionately implores Mrs. Williams, “Let my story, if possible, be told to Clarinda, that she may be induced to have compassion upon her defenseless offspring” (197). Taking the young girl’s request seriously, Maria ends her letter to Julia rather vaguely as she writes, “You are at liberty, therefore, my dear Julia, to make what use you please of this letter. I shall make no comments upon the subject of it” (197). Maria’s failure to define precisely what she wants Julia’s response to be suggests that the reader must decide what to do with the poor little girl’s story.

From confession to instruction, Clarinda’s story travels from the private halls of a rural residence to the private epistles of Julia and Maria, to the semi-private walls of a boarding school, to the very public pages of Foster’s text. It moves from Clarinda to Julia, from Julia to Maria Williams, from Maria to Mrs. Williams, from Mrs. Williams to her pupils, and from Foster to all the “YOUNG LADIES OF AMERICA.” While the rapid circulation of an extremely private story transgresses all codes of secrecy, the story and its distribution produce more stories. Julia and Mrs. Williams initially relay the story in order to demonstrate the detrimental effects of the libertine. But there are other benefits as well from the narrating of the story. Because of the dissemination of the Clarinda story, the young pupil narrates her tale, a tale that itself demonstrates the clear benefits of publicizing stories, since it is only because she tells her story to her wealthy benefactor that she can afford to be Mrs. Williams’ student. Notably, Foster suggests that with each retelling, the value of Clarinda’s story increases; each time it is retold, it proves to teach and promote virtue and profit.

It is here where the local and national economies of readers and authors meet. Clarinda’s story becomes more valuable precisely because it is authored by so many
hands. As the story circulates, more people profit from it, eventually becoming incredibly valuable. In this way, Foster suggests that stories which are disseminated at the national level must go through a “system of checks and balances”; in other words, in order for a story to circulate nationally, it must greatly affect a local economy or several local economies. Thus, the national author relies upon the work of local authors and readers to determine whether or not a story, letter, or lecture has instructional value. She must attain these stories and tales that are affecting women and propagating virtuous behavior and morals, and in turn, disseminate them to an even larger audience, like the “YOUNG LADIES OF AMERICA,” so that they too can benefit and profit. The national author, then, originates in these local economies of authorship. They begin as young authoresses, collecting and exchanging text within their local economy. Once the young authoress has collected enough stories that have passed this “system of checks and balances,” they take their collection of stories, letters, and lectures and graduate to national author with a national audience.

In 1801, an anonymous writer in the *American Review and Literary Journal* recognizes Foster’s model of authorship and immediately disparages her for merely compiling the lessons and lectures of others. He writes:

> Those who read, with attention, the productions of GREGORY, LAMBERT, CHAPONE, MORE, and SWIFT, will find nothing new in the volume here presented to them. Had its author been content with the modest and humble character of a *compiler*, she might have received the undiminished praise of taste and judgment in the selection of a book, which, though not absolutely necessary, might be regarded as useful.46

While the reviewer refuses Foster the title of author, his judgment of her as a “compiler” serves to emphasize the model of authorship to which she herself lays claim on her
Dedication page. For Foster, utility, and not originality, is the test of the author. The reviewer correctly identifies Foster’s authorship but he misreads her use of it when he states, “By aspiring to the reputation of an original performance, the claims of the ‘boarding-school preceptress’ will suffer from a more rigid scrutiny, and be regarded with disapprobation.” Foster never claims to deliver an “original performance” and it is her very refusal to fulfill the role of “originator” that defines the unique project of *The Boarding School*. By teaching others to collect, arrange, and edit the stories of others, she imagines local and national authors working and writing collaboratively to discipline a new nation of citizens.
NOTES


2 Ibid., 39

3 In 1787, Prichard and Hall published the speech in Philadelphia, and in the same year, Samuel Hall in Boston published it. See Rudolph, 25.


5 Ibid., 337.

6 Ibid., 339.


8 Ibid., 256-257.


10 Norton, 256. Foster certainly seems to be influenced by this fear. In the first half of The Boarding School, all of the heroines from Mrs. Williams’ tales find themselves in unforeseen tragedies when either their parents die, their husbands unexpectedly leave, or their patrimony runs out. Repeatedly, the girls in the tales find themselves alone and thus, they must support themselves on their own.

11 Hannah Webster Foster, The Boarding School; or, Lessons of a Preceptress to her Pupils (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1798), 1. All subsequent references to The Boarding School will be made in parentheses within the essay.

12 Anne Bradstreet and Phillis Wheatley make similar gestures on their dedication pages. Both state that their poems were written in “leisure hours.”

13 In her “Introduction” to The Power of Sympathy and The Coquette, ed. Carla Mulford (New York: Penguin Books Inc., 1996), Mulford states that by the end of the nineteenth century The Coquette had gone through over thirty printing and approximately thirteen editions (xli). In fact, when The Coquette in 1829 was already in its eleventh edition, The Boarding School was reprinted for a second time, according to Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen in Imaging Rhetoric: Composing Women of the Early United States (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 48.
In Lillie Deming Loshe’s *The Early American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), she actually misidentifies *The Boarding School* as two separate texts: *The Boarding School* (1796) and *Lessons of a Preceptress* (1798) (13). Since Loshe’s error, criticism correctly names and dates *The Boarding School* but largely continues to define it as an overly didactic text containing little interest for the literary scholar. In Herbert Ross Brown’s *The Sentimental Novel, 1789-1860* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1940), he refuses to look past the instructive purpose of *The Boarding School*, as well as Rowson’s *Mentoria* (1791), writing that “the thin narrative which meanders with a mazy motion through the didactic design in each book is only incidental to the all-important purpose of teaching a lesson” (64). Most contemporary critics support Brown’s treatment of *The Boarding School* as they recapitulate his assessment, labeling it as a tiresome didactic text. Gillian Brown, in “Consent, Coquetry, and Consequences” *American Literary History* 9.4 (Winter 1997): 625-652, briefly refers to *The Boarding School* as a moralistic “advice book” and then continues her discussion of *The Coquette*. In *The Plight of Feeling Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel*, Stern in a footnote to her influential chapter on *The Coquette* writes that “one year after publishing *The Coquette*, Foster makes her own foray into the [conduct book] genre. . .tak[ing] the voice of *The Coquette*’s patriarchally identified female chorus, which dominates but does not totalize the discursive landscape of the novel, and makes it even more monologic” (262).

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16 Both *The Coquette* and *The Boarding School* begin with the heroines being introduced as “widows.”

17 In *Women in the Republic*, Kerber notes that women opened boarding schools throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic (204); in *Liberty’s Daughters*, Norton posits that many women established schools as a means of support (259).


19 Kerber, 229. Most critics agree that Mrs. Richman from *The Coquette* exemplifies a republican mother. Her speech in front of a party of friends is often quoted as indicative of her identity as a republican mother: “We [women] think ourselves interested in the welfare and prosperity of our country; and, consequently claim the right of inquiring into those affairs, which may conduce to, or interfere, with the common weal” (139).


22 Barr Rothenberg, 82, 95-96.

23 Kerber, 279. For further discussion on the anti-intellectualism rampant in the early Republic, consult Kerber’s *Women of the Republic*.

24 Ibid., 279.

25 For a more detailed description of the dame school and the academy, see Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*.

26 Reformers generally supported broader educational opportunities for women. However, the reformers ranged from Judith Sargent Murray, who demanded equal educational opportunities for women, to Benjamin Rush, who demanded an increase in education, “enough to be useful for domestic and culinary purposes.” For a more intricate discussion on Rush’s philosophy on women’s education, see Woody, 156.

27 Murray, 14.

28 Pettengill, 189.

29 Mulford, xv. Mulford posits that Hamilton was influenced by Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* which “allowed for the rational pursuit of individual interest under the assumption that when an individual assisted himself, he assisted the commonwealth” (xv). In *The Age of Federalism: The Early Republic, 1788-1800* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick believe that David Hume is a bigger influence on Hamilton than Smith (278).

30 Mulford, xv.

31 In “Wise and Foolish Virgins: ‘Usable Fiction’ and the Early American Conduct Tradition” *Early American Literature* 25 (1990), Sarah E. Newton classifies *The Boarding School* as “conduct fiction.” She argues that *The Boarding School* is a type of “literary hybrid”; it is influenced by the conduct book with its instruction in various subjects and the seduction novel with its use of “female characters” who are “tested, judged, rewarded or punished” in order to demonstrate the consequences of right and wrong behavior (140). In her book, *Learning to Behave: A Guide to American Conduct*

32 In the “Reading” chapter, Foster describes reading as a type of nourishment. She writes, “Novels are a kind of light reading, on which the imagination feasts, while the more substantial food which is requisite to the nourishment of the understanding, is either untasted or undigested” (24).

33 Norton, 276.

34 Ibid., 276.

35 In Revolution and the Word, Davidson shows how reformers and novelists challenged the severe Puritan pedagogical praxis by transforming the educational process into an “intellectually stimulating and ‘fun’” experience for the student (66).


37 Elizabeth Dexter, in Colonial Women of Affairs: a study of women in business and the professions in America before 1776 (Boston, Massachusetts and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), concludes that nine percent of the merchants were women. The businesses that they were engaged in were various: selling dishes, hardware, cutlery, dry goods, books, tobacco, and groceries. See Woody, 162.

38 In The Minister’s Wife, Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1983), Leonard Sweet observes that the minister’s wife was given unprecedented power in ministry in the late eighteenth century (7).

39 Ibid., 7.

40 In A History of Women’s Education, Woody finds that Boston in 1789 did open two different types of schools, that “there should be one writing school at the south part of town,. . .the center. . .the north part, that in these schools the children of both sexes shall be taught writing, and also arithmetic in the various branches of it. . .that there be one reading school in the south part. . .and the north part of two. . .[where] the children of both sexes be taught to spell, accent, and read both prose and verse” (146).
41 Norton, 275.

42 One of the men that Rothenberg describes is Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa May Alcott, who after leaving his father’s New Hampshire farm traveled in the South, peddling books until he could afford to open his own school.

43 Rothenberg, 90.

44 Davidson, 65.

45 Foster’s decision supports Kerber’s argument regarding the growth and power of print culture in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Kerber argues that young girls required a better education because they needed to know how to participate in the ever-increasing and ever-demanding print world. Foster responds to this need by designing a text that required her readers to participate in this very world.


47 Ibid., 85.
CHAPTER 3

REVISING CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN’S CAREER

The traditional narrative account of Charles Brockden Brown divides his twenty-year literary career into two separate halves. Most critics present Brown between the years 1788 and 1800 as a youthful republican romantic who after rejecting a career as a lawyer devoted his life to his literary ambitions. Circulating in intellectual circles, such as New York’s Friendly Club and Philadelphia’s Belles Lettres, Brown formed lasting relationships with such notables as William Dunlap and Elihu Hubbard Smith, both of whom influenced and defined his early work. Brown first tried his pen at the sketch, publishing two periodical series, “The Man at Home” and “The Rhapsodist,” in 1788 and 1789; after some time, he then touted his radicalism in a published dialogue, entitled Alcuin, on the rights of women in 1798. Between 1797 and 1799, Brown became increasingly more prolific, writing and publishing a number of novels, letters, and sketches. In fact, by April 1799, after the publication of Wieland and Ormond (1799), the British novelist John Davis visited America and desired to meet the author whom critics were lauding a “man of genius.” Recalling the encounter in Brown’s apartment at 45 Pine Street in New York City, Davis writes:

I found Mr. Brown quite in the costume of an author, embodying virtue in a new novel, and making his pen fly before him. . .Mr. Brown occupied a dismal room in a dismal street. I asked whether a view of nature would not be more propitious to composition, or whether he should not write
with more facility were his window to command the prospect of the Lake of Geneva. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘good pens, thick paper, and ink well diluted would facilitate my composition more than the prospect of the broadest expanse of water or mountains rising from the clouds.’

Dismissing the Romantic inspiration of nature as the impetus necessary to writing, Brown claims that he needs only the most basic utensils—“good pens, thick paper, and ink well diluted”—to “mak[e] his pen fly.” While Davis describes Brown of wearing merely the “costume of the author,” Brown was fully engaged in his career at this particular moment, seeing *Arthur Mervyn* through the press, writing *Edgar Huntly* (1799), and completing the first issue of the *Monthly Magazine*, of which he was the editor. According to most critics, Brown by the end of the eighteenth century was at “the height of [his] astonishing creativity.”

While Brown published two novels and edited three periodicals between the years 1801 and 1810, the second half of his career is overwhelmingly considered a dismal failure. To many critics, the publication of his last two novels, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* in 1801, signals his departure from a serious commitment to American literature, letters, and authorship. Unlike his previous novels that depict dark-hued villains, savage Indians, and the gaunt victims of the yellow fever, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* portray young lovers encountering and struggling with the trivialities and ethical considerations of courtship and marriage. Critics claim that by turning to the formulaic sentimental novel Brown abandoned his experimentation and pioneering voice that characterized his previous four novels. Not only did Brown relinquish his signature style and theme in the second half of his career, but, after the publication of *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*, he rejected the novel as well. From 1799 until 1810, Brown
edited and contributed to three different periodicals: the *Monthly Magazine, and American Review*, which was first published in April 1799 and ran through three volumes of six issues each until December 1800; *The Literary Magazine, and American Register*, which was published from 1803 to 1807; and *The American Register, or General Repository of History, Politics, and Science*, which Brown edited from 1807 to his death.

From essayist to novelist to editor, Brown continually remade his authorial identity, but it has been his four years as a novelist that has dominated critical interest. Accounting for the shifts in his novelistic career, biographers conclude that Brown’s failure to achieve financial success with his gothic novels led him to concede to the popular dictates of the sentimental and domestic novel. When *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* did not secure him fame and reputation, Brown sullenly retreated to and disappeared in the anonymous pages of the periodical. Indeed, this narrative of Brown remains largely intact. Most biographers posit that his later writings illustrate a renunciation of his career and contain very little aesthetic and cultural value and worth: Harry Warfel, in 1949, stated that with *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* Brown “became another purveyor of romantic narrative”; David Lee Clark writes that after 1800 “the springs of [Brown’s] creative writing had apparently dried up”; Norman S. Garbo argues that *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* “have a primitive quality about them. . . .*Clara Howard* stands at the very bottom [of Brown’s workmanship], with *Jane Talbot* a mere half step higher”; Alan Axelrod in the last few pages of his biography states that Brown’s late writings deserve “barely [a] glance”; Bill Christophersen suggests that “his final two full-length fictions, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*, are parlor novels, compared to his earlier romances”; and most recently, in 1994, Stephen Watts claims that Brown’s later
novels and writings serve as a “withdrawal from the literary scene.” The fact that the second half of Brown’s literary career coincides with his marriage and rejection of his youthful radical republicanism has helped to maintain this narrative of Brown transforming into a conservative moralist who published nothing but didactic and formulaic novels and essays.

Certainly, Brown’s letters to his friends and family appear to support such a description of his career. In an epistle to his brother James, dated April 1800—the year that is considered the turning point of the author’s career—Brown writes:

> Your remarks upon the gloominess and out-of-nature incidents of *Huntly*, if they be not just in their full extent, are doubtless such as most readers will make, which alone, is a sufficient reason for dropping the doleful tones and assuming a cheerful one, or, at least substituting moral causes and daily incidence in place of the prodigious or the singular. I shall not fall hereafter into that strain.  

Brown presents to his brother his revised formula for novel-writing, promising to abstain from depicting the terrors of the plague or the machinations of a God-fearing murderer. He substitutes these horrors and passions with “moral causes and daily incidents” in an effort to interest his readers. Brown’s attempt to placate his readers often functions as proof of the author’s disavowal of his career as a visionary author for the new Republic. Along with his letter to his brother, critics also consistently point to the “Editor[’s] Address to the Public” in the *Literary Magazine* as potent evidence of Brown’s withdrawal from the literary scene. In the inaugural issue of the periodical in October 1803, Brown writes, “I should enjoy a larger share of my own respect, at the present moment, if nothing had ever flowed from my pen, the production of which could be
traced to me.” Such a pronouncement seemingly suggests Brown’s bitter regret and disappointment concerning his novelistic works.

Yet, I argue that when Brown’s editorial address and his letter to James are placed alongside other essays from his later writings, they signal a steady commitment to authorship rather than a bitter retreat from literary production. In his later work, Brown becomes increasingly concerned with the role of the reader. For example, in his “Remarks on Reading” (1806), Brown writes, “A reader is too often a prisoner chained to the triumphant car of an author of great celebrity, and when he ventures not to judge for himself, conceives, while he is reading the bad works of great authors, that the languor which he experiences arises from his own defective taste.” Unlike his contemporaries Judith Sargent Murray and Hannah Webster Foster, Brown agonizes over the power that authors hold over their readers. Whereas Murray and Foster use their fame and name to collect and discipline a large readership, Brown in his later years questions the effects of such a model of authorship. In “Remarks on Reading,” Brown frets that readers are too commonly swayed by an author’s illustrious fame, causing them to second-guess their own assumptions and judgments before taking to task the author’s inadequacies. Further addressing these concerns, Brown, in his “Address to the Public,” portrays his readerly fears as he mimics a reader’s thought-process when considering an author:

‘It is of great importance to know, whether his sentiments on certain subjects be agreeable or not to my own. . .He may be an ardent advocate for all that I abhor, or he may be a celebrated champion of my favorite opinions. It is evident that these particulars must dictate the treatment you receive from me, and make me either your friend or enemy: your patron or your persecutor. Besides, I am anxious for some personal knowledge of you, that I may judge your literary merits.’
Brown illustrates his anxiety over a reader’s preoccupation with an author’s personal biography. He fears that the reader will demand “personal knowledge” of the author before judging a text’s “literary merits.” It should come as no surprise then that Brown edits the *Literary Magazine* anonymously and wishes that “nothing had ever flowed from my pen, the production of which could be traced to me.” By hiding the authorship of his previous and present works and by attempting to satisfy his readers’ tastes, Brown addresses his concern over his own authorial power and forces the reader to bring “himself to the book” rather than rely upon the author’s fame and reputation for making substantive meaning and assigning value.\(^\text{12}\)

Thus, I would like to suggest that Brown’s career dramatically differs from the one that is customarily privileged. Contrary to traditional accounts that depict Brown turning from radical republican to bourgeois moralist, I argue that Brown’s authorial career as a whole moves in the opposite direction. From *Wieland* to *Jane Talbot*, Brown increasingly works to realign the power dynamic between reader and author, attempting to democratize the relationship. Jared Gardner suggests a similar reevaluation of Brown’s career and claims that “implicit in [Brown’s] late work is an extensive critique of the novel he himself had helped bring to life: the novel of the autonomous individual, the story told through one voice, one psychology.”\(^\text{13}\) Gardner proposes that in his later years Brown critiques his earlier univocal work that chained the reader to a single consciousness. Unlike *Wieland, Ormond, Edgar Huntly*, and *Arthur Mervyn*, which present the reader with one unifying voice, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot* offer the reader a mélange of voices, opinions, and perspectives. In these last two novels, the
reader, rather than the narrator, must work through fragments and letters in an attempt to make sense of the motley collection of voices.

However, instead of dividing Brown’s career into two separate and disconnected parts as even Gardner’s revisionist account does, I propose that Brown’s novels show a gradual and consistent dedication to an egalitarian and reader-centered model of authorship. By looking at *Wieland, Arthur Mervyn*, and *Clara Howard*, I show that Brown revises his model of authorship, altering and adjusting the power dynamic between author and reader. In *Wieland*, his most authoritarian performance, Brown assumes the position of the vigilant watchdog over his reader as he authorizes his tale’s events and characters by footnoting the research of European doctors and lawyers. While most critics claim that *Wieland* anticipates the postmodern novel with its “diverse readings and multiple meanings,” I argue that Brown works hard to deliver a coherent and clear narrative that opens but quickly shuts down any narrative uncertainty. In *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown’s authorial presence and power recede as he no longer closes narrative gaps, but actively encourages readers to question and interrogate the particularities of his story. Delivering various counternarratives, Brown’s narrator, Dr. Stevens, underscores the possible culpability and mendacity of Mervyn and his tale. By the time he writes *Clara Howard*, Brown realizes that even by prompting his reader to question narrative, he still ties the reader to his imperial hand. Therefore, in *Clara Howard*, Brown refuses to offer any central voice or consciousness like he does in *Wieland* and *Arthur Mervyn*; rather, he introduces two central letter writers, each with their own private interests and concerns. Lacking the guidance of Clara Wieland and Dr. Stevens, the readers of *Clara Howard* must form their own conclusions regarding the
I trace Brown’s gradual authorial effacement as evidence of his increasingly complex commitment to promote the reader’s involvement.

I. Conflicting Claims of Authority and Liberty in Wieland

Clara Wieland, the narrator and central author figure of Wieland, opens the novel with a direct address to her readers, who consist of an intimate group of friends. In penning her epistle, she acknowledges their “right to be informed of the events that have lately happened in [her] family”; however, she rather dismissively tells them to “make what use of the tale [they] feel proper” (5). Continuing her display of apathy, she claims, “Futurity has no power over my thoughts. To all that is to come I am perfectly indifferent” (5). Exuding little enthusiasm over her story, friends, and future, Clara surprisingly concludes her short introduction to the reader with a sudden burst of authorial enthusiasm:

How will your wonder, and that of your companions, be excited by my story! Every sentiment will yield to your amazement. If my testimony were without corroborations, you would reject it as incredible. The experience of no human being can furnish a parallel: That I, beyond the rest of mankind, should be reserved for a destiny without alleviation, without example! Listen to my narrative, and then say what it is that has made me deserve to be placed on this dreadful eminence. (5-6)

Contrary to her initial claim of indifference, Clara delivers a passionate announcement concerning her story and her authorship. She advertises herself as the only author capable of telling such a truly original story, one that places her “beyond the rest of mankind.” Because her tale depicts events and persons that may excite our “wonder,” Clara tells us that she has included careful testimony throughout her narrative that
legitimizes her voice. In fact, Brown to a certain extent in the “Advertisement” has already corroborated his heroine’s narrative. Like Clara, he expresses anxiety in regards to his novel’s reception: “The incidents related are extraordinary and rare. Some of them, perhaps, approach as nearly to the nature of miracles as can be done by that which is not truly miraculous” (3). As evidence of Wieland’s veracity, Brown informs his readers that the particularities of Clara’s tale are based not only in science but in history as well: “Most readers will probably recollect an authentic case, remarkably similar to that of Wieland” (3).16 Clara and Brown, then, work together to ground their story in fact and history, and in so doing, they demonstrate their commitment to their collective authorship.

Thus, Wieland begins with a strongly defined narrative and authorial presence, as both author and narrator share concerns that extend beyond narrative validity. In his “Advertisement,” Brown informs us of the purpose of his novel, which “is neither selfish nor temporary, but aims at the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man” (5). As such, he has constructed his novel in the “most instructive and memorable form.” While vague in regards to the exact moral that he offers, Brown clearly desires his reader to learn and benefit from his authorship. And, although Clara writes quite dismissively regarding her audience’s use of her narrative, she too hopes to teach a moral lesson: “If [my tale] be communicated to the world, it will inculcate the duty of avoiding deceit. It will exemplify the force of early impressions, and show the immeasurable evils that flow from an erroneous or imperfect discipline” (5). Once her narrative proceeds, Clara explicitly portrays the dangers and horrors of “an erroneous and imperfect discipline” when she depicts her family’s tragic end; in doing so, she presents her story as a cautionary tale. After only the title page and the introductory paragraphs
do Clara and Brown present themselves as mutually engaged together to instruct their readers and to validate their tale and voice.

Following her short introduction to the reader, Clara begins her narrative, delivering the necessary biographical background concerning her father’s mysterious death. Her father, Theodore Wieland, was a devout follower of the Camissard apostle and believed that “his security lay in ceaseless watchfulness and prayer” (8). As a testament of his faith, he attempted to convert the Indians in Pennsylvania to Christianity. While failing to proselytize the Indians, Wieland remained a fervent believer, and after establishing and tending a farm on Schuylkill, he constructed a temple where he worshiped regularly. Clara explains that one night while praying at the temple her father was violently and suddenly struck down by a vicious blow and bright light, which immediately reduced his clothes to ashes. Returning to his house, Wieland suffered from fever and delirium before finally expiring. After narrating these events, Clara asks her readers:

What are the conclusions that we must form? The prelusive gleam, the blow upon his arm, the fatal spark, the explosion heard from so far. . .— What is the inference to be drawn from these facts? Their truth cannot be doubted. My uncle’s testimony is peculiarly worthy of credit, because no man’s temper is more sceptical, and his belief is unalterably attached to natural causes. (17)

After listing the extraordinary occurrences surrounding her father’s death as if presenting evidence to a jury, Clara finally concludes that her uncle’s testimony reasonably explains the event. Her uncle, Mr. Cambridge, is a physician and former doctor of the German army whose rational explanations and medical understanding characterize his behavior and opinions. Undoubtedly, Brown names Mr. Cambridge after both the American and
British universities in order to underscore his authorized and privileged presence. His education and worldly experience naturally earn Mr. Cambridge respect from both Clara and her readers, and therefore, his explanations of the events leading to Wieland’s death are not to be doubted. However, Clara, after supporting her uncle and promoting his testimony, unexpectedly questions her father’s death:

> Was this the penalty of disobedience? This the stroke of a vindictive and invisible hand? Is it a fresh proof that the Divine ruler interferes in human affairs, mediates an end, selects and commissions his agents, and enforces, by unequivocal sanctions, submission to his will? Or, was it merely the irregular expansion of the fluid that imparts warmth to our heart and our blood, caused by the fatigue of the preceding day, or flowing by established laws, from the condition of his thoughts? (18)

Clara ends the chapter with various interpretations of her father’s death, positioning us as readers to negotiate these questions and occurrences. At first, she appears to counter her uncle’s testimony by formulating a list of possible conclusions; however, her questions only work to redirect our attention and interpretation. The last question in her long list offers her uncle’s infallible explanation since he attributes Wieland’s death to “natural causes,” such as the “irregular expansion of the fluid that imparts warmth to our heart and blood.” In an attempt to hide her authorial hand as if recognizing the reader’s agency and freedom, Clara prompts her audience to question the events of Wieland’s death. Yet, she only momentarily suspends her authority as she directs our readerly attention back to her uncle’s testimony—the explanation that she so fervently favors.

Mr. Cambridge’s explanation, then, is directly followed by a footnote that reads:

> “A case, in its symptoms exactly parallel to this, is published in one of the Journals of Florence. See, likewise, similar cases reported by Messrs. Merille and Muraire, in the ‘Journal de Medicine,’ for February and May, 1783” (8). Brown footnotes the medical
and rational explanation of Wieland’s death, and in doing so, he works together with
Clara to forestall and guide the readers’ interpretations. By citing the medical research of
European physicians who studied cases of spontaneous combustion, Brown privileges Mr.
Cambridge’s claim and Clara’s reasoning. While readers are seemingly encouraged to
interrogate Wieland’s death, both narrator and author conspire so that the reader accepts
the medical explanation as a valid conclusion. Supported by persons of substantial and
credible knowledge, such as Cambridge, Merille, and Muraire, Brown’s and Clara’s
authority affects the impressionable reader who listens to and accepts the testimony and
evidence offered.

Brown’s and Clara’s narrative control over their readers appears to originate from
the novel’s deep interest in the difficulty in controlling readers and listeners. For
example, after Wieland hears the ominous voice for the first time, he tells Clara,
Catharine, and Pleyel about his experience at the temple. In response to his story,
Wieland receives three varying reactions:

Pleyel did not scruple to regard the whole as a deception of the senses. . .
Wieland’s imagination had misled him in supposing a resemblance to that
of his wife, and giving such a signification to the sounds. . .Catharine was
endowed with an uncommon portion of good sense; but her mind was
accessible, on this quarter, to wonder and panic. . .As to myself. . .my
wonder was excited by the inscrutableness of the cause, but my wonder
was unmixed with sorrow or fear. (32-33)

Clara immediately acknowledges the initial dissension among her small family as she
pauses to describe each member’s reaction thoroughly. As her narrative continues, she
shows us how this dissension gradually and regrettably divides her family. When Pleyel
and Wieland return together from hearing the voice a second time, they tell their story to
Catharine and Clara, and again, everyone, including themselves, reacts differently: “What
did [the voices] mean [Catharine] asked in her silence. . .? Pleyel, assuming an air of indifference, framed some trifling excuse. . .My brother said nothing, but delivered himself up to meditation. I likewise was silent, but burned with impatience to fathom this mystery” (38-39). These initial moments of dissension lead to the horror that divides and terrorizes the small family. Pleyel’s and Wieland’s misreadings of the origin and purpose of the disembodied voice result eventually in mass murder and suicide. Clara, who has recently survived these events, dedicates herself in her novel to countering dissension by enacting strong authorial control and command over her narrative. Therefore, for Clara, misreading is not an unfortunate and regrettable event, but a potentially fatal one.

Clara’s attempt to expose the dangers of dissension and deceit originates in her belief that she herself contributed to the destruction of her family. She particularly blames her silence as a direct cause of the havoc. Clara, in her story’s initial pages, is a silent participant in the scenes that she portrays. Describing an afternoon at her father’s temple, she writes, “We females were busy at the needle, while my brother and Pleyel were bandying quotations and syllogisms” (29). In the salon scene, the family obeys eighteenth-century gender codes as the men intently discuss philosophy and the women silently knit. As the narrative continues, we learn that Clara could have easily conversed on Cicero or Clentius; yet, she remains discretely silent respectful of decorum. It is only when wandering the lands alone around the Hut or privately jotting in her diary that we see Clara engage in such philosophical dialogue: “I asked why the plough and the hoe might not become the trade of every human being, and how this trade might be conducive to, or, at least, consistent with the acquisition of wisdom and eloquence” (48). Clara’s silence abruptly ends when she suddenly realizes that it contributed to the confusion that
erupts. Later in the novel, when Pleyel confronts Clara regarding her supposed indiscretion, Clara, as Larzer Ziff observes, “castigates herself and all heroines” who abide by similar rules of silence and submissiveness:

My scruples were preposterous and criminal. They are bred in all hearts, by a perverse and vicious education, and they would still have maintained their place in my heart, had not my portion been set in misery. My errors have taught me thus much wisdom: that those sentiments which we out not to disclose, it is criminal to harbour.\(^\text{17}\)

Clara renounces her “perverse and vicious education” that taught her to remain silent. She realizes that she must disregard gender expectations, for if she truthfully unburdened her heart to Pleyel, he would have never accused her of indiscretion and the events succeeding his accusation might have been avoided. Her authorship, then, testifies to her new-found conviction. Clara decides that she must now disclose any information she would initially harbor—such as the gruesome suicide of her brother or Pleyel’s painful accusations against her reputation. In fact, she now claims that to hide such sentiments would be “criminal.” Clara’s authorship attests to her policy of disclosure as she narrates her own tragic errors and example in order to warn her readers of the dangers of dissension and deceit.

Clara’s authorship and its overall aim and purpose stand in stark contrast to Carwin’s authorship. Many critics depict Carwin as Clara’s rival author-figure. For example, Walter Hesford describes Carwin as “a prototypical author. . .[whose] authorship is a matter of compiling, imitating, and translating sources.”\(^\text{18}\) Hesford’s analysis of Carwin’s authorship as “compiling, imitating, and translating” describes what Jay Fleigelman deems an antiquated definition of authorship: “The overlapping of [the author and editor] roles has long provided a protective context for authorial agency and
articulate[s] an older understanding of the role of the author, not as the creator of original thoughts but as a disseminator of information.”19 Fleigelman in many ways describes the republican author of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century. And, although Carwin compiles, imitates, and translates sources, his authorship is not republican; rather, Carwin represents a threat to the republican author: whereas Clara narrates her tale in order “to inculcate the duty of avoiding deceit,” Carwin authors voices for spectacle and personal profit. For example, when explaining his biloquiuism, Carwin states:

My passion for mystery, and a species of imposture, which I deemed harmless, was thus awakened afresh. . .I cannot convey to you an adequate idea of the kind of gratification which I derived from these exploits; yet I mediated nothing. My views were bounded to the passing moment, and commonly suggested by the momentary exigence. (186)

Carwin neither plans out his scenes of authorship nor is he “prescribed by duty” (189); instead he “mediate[s] nothing” and acts on impulse, not the least bit concerned about the effects of his authorship. Even though he realizes that Pleyel “was a devoted lover” to Clara, Carwin confesses, “To deceive him would be the sweetest triumph I ever enjoyed” (194). Carwin does not represent an antiquated or prototypical model of authorship but an emerging, liberal model that threatens the republican author, who pens for the good of the nation.

It is no surprise, then, that the entrance of Carwin in her narrative notably affects Clara. In an emotional appeal to her audience, she proclaims her regret for having to introduce the reader to Carwin, “a person with whose name the most turbulent sensations are connected” (46). Indeed, Clara suffers from an extreme psychological and physical reaction when discussing her rival: “I now come to the mention of a person with whose name the most turbulent sensations are connected. . .My blood is congealed; and my
fingers are palsied when I call up this image. Shame upon my cowardly and infirm heart!” (46). Clara reveals her physical self to us as she describes her trembling hands, weak heart, and congealing blood. Interestingly, at the point in the narrative when we expect to read a description of Carwin, Clara shows herself to us, reinforcing her presence and power. While she remains shaken from the experience of introducing Carwin, she nonetheless regains her composure and command over her narrative:

Let me recover if possible, a sober strain. Let me keep down the flood of passion that would render me precipitate or powerless. Let me stifle the agonies that are awakened by thy name. Let me, for a time, regard thee as a being of no terrible attributes. Let me tear myself from contemplation of the evils of which it is but too certain that thou wast the author, and limit my view to those harmless appearance which I attended thy entrance. [emphasis added] (46)

In a sudden burst of anger over her behavior and Carwin’s entrance, Clara recovers firm control of herself. She dramatically announces that she, and not Carwin, holds the power over her text. By revealing her physical body and by excessively repeating “me” throughout her short interjection, Clara not only emphasizes her physical presence but her authorial presence as well. While at first appearing horrified by her rival’s entrance, Clara triumphs over her fear by asserting her power and presence.

As always with Carwin, Clara remains determined to avoid dissension and to steer her readers toward a correct interpretation of events. After meeting Carwin briefly for the first time, Clara sulks for hours, experiencing intense feelings of melancholy and gloom. Clara explains her behavior to her readers:

You will, perhaps, deem this conduct somewhat singular. . .Perhaps you will suspect that such were the first inroads of a passion incident to every female heart, and which frequently gains a footing by means even more slight, and more probably than these. I shall not controvert the
reasonableness of the suspicion, but leave you at liberty to draw from my narrative, what conclusions you please. (51)

While Clara grants us the space to interrogate her conduct—similar to the way she seemingly encourages us to question her father’s death—she has already significantly limited our interpretations with her initial outrage against Carwin. Clara has delivered ample reason for us to doubt that she holds any passion for this man. Later, when Carwin tests Clara’s courage by mimicking a dialogue between two murderers in her closet, she again works carefully to direct her readers’ interpretation. After hearing the voices in her closet, Clara anticipates her readers’ reaction:

What I have related will, no doubt, appear to you a fable. You will believe that calamity has subverted my reason, and that I am amusing you with the chimeras of my brain, instead of the facts that have really happened. I shall not be surprised or offended, if these be your suspicions. I know not, indeed, how you can deny them admission. For, if to me, the immediate witness, they were fertile of perplexity and doubt, how must they affect another to whom they are recommended only by my testimony. It was only by subsequent events that I was fully and incontestably assured of the veracity of my senses. (60-61)

While casting doubt on her senses and reason, Clara informs us that she holds incontestable proof that supports her experience and conclusions. Once again, Clara appears to give the reader room to negotiate the facts of the tale only to revoke this freedom. Clara clearly recognizes her readers’ free will to interpret the events, but she knows from experience that the risks of misreading are too dangerous. She must quickly shut down any narrative space that prompts interrogation of the facts. Therefore, she uses her imperial hand to redirect her readers’ interpretation, telling us of her incontestable evidence that proves “the veracity of [her] senses.”
One of Clara’s most important readers, however, falls from her steady control with Carwin’s entrance. We see the cost of such misreading when Pleyel accuses Clara of indiscretion and clandestine meetings with Carwin. In his testimony against Clara, we learn that Pleyel has long been one of Clara’s most careful readers: “You know not the accuracy of my observation . . . I therefore, noted down, in writing, every particular of your conduct . . . I laboured not to omit the slightest shade, or the most petty line in your portrait” (114). Defending herself from Pleyel’s erroneous claims, Clara reminds Pleyel of their history together, which so much of his portrait of her is based on: “Suspicions are fostered by you as certainties; the tenor of my life, of all my conversations and letters, affords me no security; every sentiment that my tongue and my pen have uttered bear testimony to the rectitude of my mind; but this testimony is rejected” (109). Clara deserves Pleyel’s faith here as she demands her most devoted reader to recognize their past together. While Pleyel refuses, we nonetheless accept the proof of her virtue as we continue to read and witness her struggle to prove her good name. Meditating upon “the powers of her enemy,” she attempts to devise a plan to defeat Carwin: “I could easily divine the substance of the conversation that was overheard. Carwin had constructed his plot in a manner suited to the characters of those whom he selected as his victims” [emphasis added] (125). Retreating from Pleyel’s apartment, Clara realizes that she must find sufficient proof that exposes Carwin of his authorship. However, until she finds this evidence, Carwin holds the upper hand: “[He] only shewed me, with new evidence, the difficulty of the task which I had assigned myself . . . I had less power” (107). The power dynamic between the two authors shifts as Clara spends the remainder of the novel
resting and recovering from the misreadings generated by Carwin’s triumphant authorship.

When waking from her illness after discovering the murders of Catharine and the children, Clara is determined to prove Carwin guilty of not only ruining her reputation but of brutally murdering her family as well. Addressing her uncle, Clara immediately points her finger to Carwin as the perpetrator of the recently passed events: “Was not Carwin the assassin? Could any hand but his have carried into act this dreadful purpose?” (150). Unexpectedly, Mr. Cambridge, to Clara’s disappointment, informs his niece that Carwin is not “the author. . .of this unheard-of devastation” (149); rather, he offers her a newspaper of her brother’s confession of the crimes. Throughout the newspaper testimony, Wieland presents himself as fully conscious and even proud of his deeds: “Such was the elation of my thoughts, that I even broke into laughter. I clapped my hands and exclaimed, ‘It is done! My sacred duty is fulfilled!’” (159). In utter disbelief that her brother, and not Carwin, is responsible, Clara faints again, remaining lifeless for days. On waking, Clara hears her uncle’s analysis of her brother’s behavior: “There could be no doubt as to the cause of these excesses. They originated in sudden madness” (104). Clara refuses her uncle’s diagnosis of her brother’s madness; Carwin’s innocence in this case not only strengthens Pleyel’s accusation but it calls into question her own sanity as well since she too heard the disembodied voice. Due to Clara’s steadfast denial of her brother’s madness, Mr. Cambridge expatiates upon his diagnosis by relaying an account of her mad grandfather as well as similar cases of madness that occurred in the German army: “In the course of my practice in the German army, many cases, equally remarkable, have occurred. Unquestionably the illusions were
maniacal. . .They are all reducible to one class, and are not more difficult of explication and cure than most affections of our frame” (165). Mr. Cambridge presents his medical knowledge and their family history as inscrutable evidence of Wieland’s madness.

Just as Brown had earlier in the novel, he includes a footnote that supports the doctor’s testimony. Directly after Mr. Cambridge’s diagnosis, he inserts a footnote: “Mania Mutabilis. See Darwin’s Zoonomia, vol. ii. Class III. 1.2 where similar cases are stated” (165). However, unlike the previous footnotes in Wieland which worked to close ranks between Clara and Brown, this footnote marks an important divergence between the author and his representative narrator. By presenting readers with evidence that supports Mr. Cambridge’s opinion, Brown privileges the uncle’s diagnosis, and in doing so, Clara’s authority and sanity are questioned. Such dissension between author and narrator naturally affects the reader, and as a result, the reader must choose one of the two testimonies of the events. Similar to Clara’s desire to grant her readers space to interpret, Brown too recognizes his readers’ free will and creates such a space. It is his recognition of the reader’s free will that becomes increasingly important to Brown in his career. At this point, however, Brown, like Clara, fears the effects of misreading and grants his readers only the taste of interpretive freedom.

Like Clara who closes any narrative openings, Brown too must close the space for active readerly involvement. When Clara prepares to leave for Europe, she returns to her house to gather her belongings, particularly her journal. Carwin suddenly appears and approaches Clara pleading his innocence. He admits to his authorship and claims that he prompted many of the events by mimicking the voices of Catharine, Clara, and the murderous villains in her closet: “You are not apprized of the existence of a power which
I possess. I know not by what name to call it. It enables me to mimic exactly the voice of another, and to modify the sound so that it shall appear to come from what quarter, and be uttered at what distance I please” (184). Finally, Clara hears the testimony that she has been desperate to find. With Carwin’s confession, she can prove her brother’s as well as her own innocence in the chain of events which has led up to this moment:

“[Carwin] owns that his were the voice and face which I heard and saw. He attempts to give an human explanation of these phantasms; . . . As he deceived me, he likewise deceived my brother, and now do I behold the author of our calamities!” [emphasis added] (200).

Brown immediately footnotes Carwin’s admittance. Unlike his previous footnote that challenges Clara’s authority over her narrative, Brown supports Carwin’s story, and in so doing, he saves Clara from doubt. In the lengthy footnote—the longest in the text—Brown defines Carwin’s strange power as “biloquium or vetrilocution.” He then explains it in medical terms, offering cases similar to Carwin’s: “The power is difficult to explain, but the fact is undeniable. Experience shews that the human voice can imitate the voice of all men and of all inferior animals” (184). Brown claims the evidence as “undeniable” and even goes on to reference the work of two Europeans who have extensively written on biloquium: “See the work of the Abbe de la Chappelle, in which are accurately reported the performances of one of these artists,. . .Dr. Burney mentions one who imitated a flute and a violin” (184). As with the beginning of the novel, at the end the author and the narrator strongly support each other’s testimony. With his final footnote, Brown closes ranks with Clara and gives the reader both undeniable and inscrutable evidence that points the finger at Carwin.
Mark R. Patterson poses the question, “If traditional patriarchal authority is absent, and the institutions of society are impotent, where does authority lie in Brown’s novels?” Patterson, like most critics, notices in *Wieland* the lack of any traditional authority figures, such as parents and ministers. In the absence of familial, political, and religious authority, Patterson concludes that the authority of the novel rests largely with the readers:

> We [as readers] assume the conditions of authority defined by the novel—that is, authority as an original action unfolding a coherent design—and thus may extend our authority by completing the design of the novel in warranting the publication of Carwin’s memoirs. In other words, we are asked to legitimize Brown’s voice, grant him authority, even after being placed in a situation like that of Clara, Theodore Wieland, and Pleyel in which authority of such a voice is shown to be dangerous.  

Patterson argues that Brown relinquishes power to his reader in his “Advertisement” by “making the reader the final judge” of his novel. While Brown does grant the reader limited authority at the beginning, it is not exactly right that “Brown himself minimizes his own authority by...making the reader the final judge.” Throughout *Wieland*, Brown certainly has the impulse to give his readers’ authority: we see him doing such when Clara poses questions in regards to the events of the narrative, when he supports Mr. Cambridge’s testimony in regards to Wieland’s madness, and when he asks the reader to approve the publication of *The Memoirs of Carwin*. However, it is far from the case that Brown relinquishes his power in the “Advertisement” and never regains it. Authority is carefully maintained in his editorial footnotes. These steady and consistent interjections work time and time again at crucial moments to redirect our attention and interpretation. It is no coincidence that each time Brown interrupts our reading he offers us the privileged testimony of European doctors and lawyers, severely limiting our
interpretation. While he will eventually concede much power and authority to the reader in *Clara Howard*, Brown, at this early point in his career, desires to guide and direct our attention with his imperial hand, fearing, like Clara, dissension and catastrophic misreadings.

II. Loosening the Reader’s Fetters in *Arthur Mervyn*

Similar to *Wieland’s* “Advertisement,” Brown in the “Preface” to *Arthur Mervyn* reveals his authorial identity and intent. He opens the “Preface” by describing the diseased atmosphere of Philadelphia and the changes that the yellow fever forced upon the city’s citizens and institutions. Like his previous novel, *Ormond*, *Arthur Mervyn* occurs during the yellow fever epidemic of Philadelphia. For Brown, the yellow fever was more than an unrelenting and pervasive illness; indeed, Brown himself suffered from yellow fever in 1798, and, in September of the same year, his closest friend and advisor, Elihu Hubbard Smith, died of the disease. In his “Preface” to *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown claims that these experiences surrounding the epidemic supplied him with “new and copious materials . . . fertile of instruction.” Hoping to “inculcat[e] on mankind the lessons of justice and humanity,” Brown uses the incidents that “appeared to him most instructive and remarkable” and “weav[ed] them into [his] humble narrative” (1). Like *Wieland’s* “Advertisement,” Brown grounds *Arthur Mervyn* in historical fact in an effort to legitimize his novel and its instructional intent.

While Brown presents his novel as a pedagogical tool, scholars have debated the success of his purpose. On the one hand, some critics claim that Brown achieves his goal with his depiction of Arthur Mervyn, who functions as an effective model of virtuous
behavior. For example, Jane Tompkins believes that “the main character. . .sets forth the ground rules which everyone in society must obey.” 27 Similarly, Michael Warner labels Arthur Mervyn an “exemplary citizen.” 28 On the other hand, scholars such as Michael Davitt Bell distinguish Mervyn as American literature’s first “confidence-man,” duping both readers and characters alike. 29 While critics contest the veracity of Mervyn’s virtue, I propose that Brown uses Dr. Stevens, rather than Mervyn, as his central instructional tool. Throughout the novel, Dr. Stevens serves as a model of reading as he, along with Brown’s readers, attentively listens to and appropriately questions the narrative of Mervyn. 30 Unlike Clara in Wieland who steadfastly controls our interpretation of her tale, Dr. Stevens instructs his readers to interrogate rigorously the earnestness of Mervyn’s story. In doing so, Brown attempts to deliver a much more reader-centered performance than Wieland as he prompts his readers to challenge and question narrative.

With the hope of training his audience into careful and critical readers, Brown divides his novel into two halves, each with its own pedagogical intent. Contrary to Bell who repeatedly insists upon the striking differences between Brown and his contemporaries, I suggest that Brown creates a novel that in structure resembles Foster’s The Boarding School. 31 As we saw in Chapter Two, the first half of The Boarding School introduces Mrs. Williams, as a preceptress who furnishes her pupils—and also the text’s readers—with appropriate morals, while the second half highlights the students’ and readers’ epistles to one another, epistles that enact their new knowledge. Similar to The Boarding School, in the first half of Arthur Mervyn, Brown introduces his readers to Dr. Stevens who guides our reading of Mervyn, by interjecting important questions and interrogating the sincerity of the youth’s narrative; in the second half, Stevens, like Mrs.
Williams, withdraws from the novel. As a result of his absence, readers must imitate Stevens’ behavior from the first half and examine Mervyn’s narrative on their own.

Therefore, like the second part of The Boarding School, the second half of Arthur Mervyn functions as a practicum that forces readers to enact the lessons offered in the first half, by drawing their own conclusions at the end of the novel.

While Brown and Foster structure similar texts, the power dynamic between the reader and narrator is quite different in Arthur Mervyn and The Boarding School. Whereas a clear power hierarchy exists between the wise Mrs. Williams and the naïve and youthful reader in The Boarding School, Dr. Stevens in Arthur Mervyn appears as the reader’s equal since both narrator and reader share the task of listening to Mervyn’s tale. Brown ensures a sense of equality between reader and narrator by withholding any personal information on Stevens. In Chapter I of the first half, Dr. Stevens refuses to indulges us with his personal biography, writing very little about himself and his family:

I was a resident in this city during the year 1793. Many motives contributed to detain me, though departure was easy and commodious, and my friends were generally solicitous for me to go. It is not my purpose to enumerate these motives, or to dwell on my present concerns, but merely to compose a narrative of some incidents with which my situation made me acquainted. (233)

Stevens begins the novel by dismissing his biography as unnecessary information for the narrative. Directing readerly attention away from his own concerns and motives, he focuses instead on the events occurring around him. By evacuating his agency and identity from the initial scene, Brown presents Stevens as a faceless narrator. In fact, it is not until the second half of Arthur Mervyn that we learn our narrator’s name and profession. Only when Mervyn scratches a note from the debtor’s prison does Brown
reveal his narrator’s identity: “Dr. Stevens is requested to come immediately to the
Debtors’ Apartments in Prune Street” (457). Therefore, we identify with Stevens not
because of his background or occupation but because of our shared relationship to
Mervyn.

Brown positions the doctor and reader not only as careful listeners but as able
judges of Mervyn’s fate. After seeing his “dearest friend” Wortely interact angrily with
Mervyn, Dr. Stevens demands an interview with Wortley to discuss the bitter exchange
(239). Stevens listens to Wortely’s testimony concerning his contact with Mervyn, and
as a result of his friend’s indictment, Stevens asks Mervyn to answer the charges levied
against him. After Mervyn refuses to disclose his relationship with Wortely, Dr. Stevens
kindly advises the youth: “I am not acquainted with your motives of concealment or what
it is you conceal, but take the word of one who possesses that experience which you
complain of wanting, that sincerity is always safest” (240). Stevens gently pushes
Mervyn to confess his story as he positions himself as more sensible and knowledgeable
than the youth. As a result, Mervyn decides to reveal his “simple tale”: “I perceive in
what circumstances I am placed, and that I can keep my hold of your good opinion only
by a candid deportment. . .You have a right to know whom it is that you have protected”
(242-43). Mervyn’s narration of his story, then, originates in his task to prove his virtue
and morality to Stevens; our task, then, mirrors Stevens as we both are placed in the
position to listen to, and more importantly, to judge Mervyn’s story. While the reader
and narrator share an equal knowledge of Mervyn, a clear hierarchy exists between the
youth and the wiser and wider audience.
We are reminded of our role as unbiased listeners directly before Mervyn begins narrating his tale. Recounting the scene of narration, Stevens writes:

The eyes of my Eliza sparkled with delight at this proposal. She regarded the youth with a sisterly affection and considered his candour, in this respect, as an unerring test of his rectitude. She was prepared to hear and to forgive the errors of inexperience and precipitation. I did not fully participate in her satisfaction, but was nevertheless most zealously disposed to listen to his narrative. (243)

Before Mervyn commences his story, Stevens describes his wife’s sympathetic ear. Patiently anticipating the tale, Eliza already appears significantly swayed by Mervyn’s charm and youth. Readers like Eliza, who judge a text based on everything but its actual merit, infuriate Brown in his “Address to the Reader.” On the other hand, Stevens distances himself from Eliza when he describes himself as a “zealous” yet neutral auditor. By creating this obvious dichotomy between Dr. and Mrs. Stevens, Brown reminds readers of their position not as sympathetic readers, like Eliza, but as impartial judges, like Stevens, who will assess Mervyn’s tale on its merit and value alone.

Mervyn’s extended account of his encounters with Welbeck spans the length of twelve chapters. In chapter thirteen, Dr. Stevens suddenly appears for the first time since the opening frame. His unexpected reappearance reinforces the fact that Mervyn’s tale occurs within a very specific narrative context. With Dr. Stevens’ reemergence, we as readers are again reminded of our position as not passive readers but as disinterested and impartial judges. Expatiating upon this role, Dr. Stevens, after Mervyn’s long narration, writes, “Mervyn’s pause allowed his auditors to reflect on the particulars of his narration, and to compare them with the facts, with a knowledge of which, their own observation had supplied them” (339). Dr. Stevens commands us to use Mervyn’s pause productively
by checking the particularities of his tale with the facts as they have been made known to us. Here, Brown proposes a model of reading that he would later fully articulate in “Remarks on Reading.” In the 1806 essay, Brown lectures upon the “art of reading” and distinguishes between perception and ideas:

> Perception is that faculty which notices the simple impression of objects: but it is only when these objects exist in the mind, and are there treasured and arranged for reflection that they become ideas . . . Ideas not only require the same power of taste, but an art of combination, and an exertion of the reasoning powers, which form no mean operation of the mind. Ideas are therefore labours.  

Throughout the essay, Brown reiterates his concern that readers mistakenly “imagine that all the pleasures of composition depend on the author.” He pleads that readers must not perceive, or passively take in, the “impressions of objects,” but “labour” and apply their reason by comparing and arranging their perceptions. In *Arthur Mervyn*, Brown anticipates such a model of reading when Dr. Stevens prompts them to verify the youth’s story by “compare[ing]” the narrative to the actual “facts” of the novel. Thus, Stevens’ sudden reappearance and “time out” works to endorse an interactive and rigorous model of reading.

Brown portrays the questioning of Mervyn’s narrative as the correct and only way to read his novel. Shortly after pausing to reflect on Mervyn’s tale, Dr. Stevens informs us at length of a conversation he had with Mrs. Wentworth. She acquaints Dr. Stevens with the details of a meeting she held with Mervyn. Apparently, when visiting her house, Mervyn, who was then employed by Welbeck, refused to disclose any useful information regarding her nephew, Clavering. Shortly after the awkward exchange, Mrs. Wentworth states that Welbeck suddenly deserted his house. Reacting to the series of events, Dr.
Stevens writes, “These appearances naturally gave birth both to curiosity and suspicion” [emphasis added] (339). Dr. Stevens chooses to phrase his reaction as the “natural response” to the story. Similarly, he claims, “Though our curiosity with regard to Welbeck was appeased, it was obvious to inquire by what series of inducements and events Mervyn was reconducted to the city” [emphasis added] (340). Such language is typical of Dr. Stevens as he paints his reactions, and more specifically, his curiosity in regards to Mervyn, as “natural” and “obvious.” In using such language, Brown casts Stevens as the model reader as the doctor’s actions direct the reader’s response.

Even though Brown allows us such freedom, our role as readers is severely attenuated. While granting us the necessary space and time to interrogate Mervyn’s tale, Dr. Stevens is the only one who can finally verify the factual particularities of the narrative. Because of his close acquaintance with the people and places in Mervyn’s tale, Stevens can use pauses productively by meeting those involved with the youth. For example, Stevens has extended knowledge of Mrs. Wentworth: “My profession introduced me to the friendship of Mrs. Wentworth, by whom, after the disappearance of Welbeck, many circumstances respecting him had been mentioned” (339). After meeting with her, Dr. Stevens confirms that Mervyn’s story is supported by Mrs. Wentworth’s claims, and as a result, he informs us that “our curiosity with regard to Welbeck was appeased” (340). Although Stevens allows us to question the veracity of Mervyn’s story, we as readers are always bound to him to deliver the “facts” of the tale. Brown returns to this readerly paradox later in the novel when Stevens stops writing and Mervyn completes the authorship of the novel.
While Brown at this point in the novel has yet to come to terms with this paradox, Brown offers us a model of reading that corresponds with Dr. Stevens’ instructions. After the doctor confirms Mervyn’s communication with Mrs. Wentworth, Mervyn describes his acquaintance with a Quaker family, the Hadwins. He unexpectedly falls in love with the youngest daughter, Eliza, and in an attempt to contain his feelings and passion for her, he begins to read the Lodi manuscript: “It was indispensable to fix my thoughts upon a different object, and to debar myself even from her intercourse. . .Now my new motives made me eager to discover some means of controlling and beguiling my thoughts. In this state, the manuscript of Lodi occurred to me” (342-43). Contrary to the advice of most postrevolutionary moralizers who preached against private reading because of its ability to inflame the passions, Mervyn chooses to read the Lodi manuscript in an attempt to “control” and “beguile” his thoughts of Eliza. Mervyn uses his knowledge of Latin to read and translate the Italian text:

I was to ponder on each sentence and phrase; to select among different conjectures the most plausible, and to ascertain the true, by patient and repeated scrutiny. . .The detail of my progress would be curious and instructive. . .How much may be done by strenuous and solitary efforts; how the mind, unassisted, may draw forth the principles of inflection and arrangement; may profit by remote, analogous, and latent similitudes. (343)

Most critics look to this scene as an important moment in the development of Mervyn’s authorial skills. For example, Warner argues that as Mervyn reads the Lodi manuscript he epitomizes the disinterested author at work whose “standard value of letters is primarily civic,” since after finding the twenty thousand dollars in the manuscript, Mervyn chooses to restore the money to Clemenza.35 Contrary to Warner, Bryce Traister claims that Mervyn presents authorship as a “self-interested endeavour structured by
interests independent of both the text and its circulation within society.”36 While critics concentrate on this scene in terms of Mervyn’s authorship, I believe Brown more importantly reveals a model of reading here. As he reads the transcript, Mervyn follows Stevens’ instructions in his interjection and Brown’s recommendations in “Remarks on Reading”: Mervyn “ponder[s] on each sentence,” “selecting different conjectures,” using “patient and repeated scrutiny,” and “draw[ing] forth the principles of inflection and arrangement.” Clearly, this is not an example of passive reading as Warner describes it: “In this fantasy of language, letters wait only to unfold themselves.”37 Rather, it is an example of active and scrupulous reading where Mervyn must labor and exert himself, reinforcing the need of the reader to question, ponder, and challenge narrative.

While Warner and Traister disagree over their analysis of the translation scene, both identify Mervyn as the novel’s primary author figure, and critics overwhelmingly agree with their assessment.38 Though we witness Arthur’s “transformation” from copyist to translator to author, it is Stevens’s authorship that begs notice since he is both the narrator and the primary author for more than three-fourths of the novel. While Stevens repeatedly identifies himself as a doctor, I suggest that he is also an author whose authorship relies upon his profession as a doctor. In the first chapter of Arthur Mervyn, Stevens’ medical knowledge aids him in diagnosing Mervyn: “The posture in which he sat, the hour, and the place immediately suggested the idea of one disabled by sickness. It was obvious to conclude that his disease was pestilence” (233). Stevens “approaches” and “examines him more closely” and then takes him into his house where he spends the “night at his bed-side” (235). As a result, Stevens meets Mervyn and hears his patient’s narrative. Stevens similarly becomes acquainted with the various narratives that
correspond to Mervyn’s story. We learn that it is because of “his profession” that he becomes acquainted with Mrs. Wentworth. Stevens goes on to narrate his relationship and conversations with Wentworth which verify Mervyn’s narrative. The first half of *Arthur Mervyn*, then, is a direct result of Stevens’ knowledge and circulation as a doctor.

Brown’s depiction of Stevens’ authorship corresponds with Murray’s representation of Mr. Vigillius in *The Gleaner*. Like Stevens who is a doctor and author, as well as, husband and father, Mr. Vigillius is a traveling businessman, author, husband, and father. In *The Gleaner*, Mr. Vigillius learns about Courtland’s checkered past and Eugenio’s indiscretions because of his contacts as a circulating businessman; he travels to coffeehouses and attends parties that introduce him to the events and people that he writes about in his monthly column. Similar to Mr. Vigillius, Stevens’ profession as a doctor allows him to meet a wide assortment of people as he invites patients into his house, like the penniless Mervyn, and visits patients at their own homes, like the affluent Mrs. Wentworth. From a biographical perspective, it is noteworthy that Brown does not depict his author-figure as a lawyer, especially since many critics distinguish *Arthur Mervyn* as his most autobiographical novel. It is a physician’s ability to move in and out of private and public spaces with relative ease that appears to appeal to Brown and correspond to his model of authorship. Stevens’ relationships with his wide network of patients enable him to construct and circulate his stories and verify Mervyn’s tales. Contrary to the popular depiction by scholars of Brown as a brooding and private author, Brown himself depicts the author as a public, professional, and disinterested figure who must circulate among the populace. Like Benjamin Franklin’s description of the leather-
apron man and Murray’s description of the trunk-maker in *The Gleaner*, Brown depicts authorship as the business of connections, networks, and negotiations across class lines.

Throughout the second half of *Arthur Mervyn*, Stevens’ profession as a doctor further aids in his authorship of Mervyn’s narrative. Stevens commences the second part of the novel with questions and concerns pertaining to Mervyn’s tale. He learns that Clemenza Lodi resides with Mrs. Villars and her daughters, all of whom are suspected of prostitution. A kinsman of Stevens, whom the doctor treats for yellow fever, relays this intelligence to him. Again his profession as a doctor gains him access to important information as he rushes to Mrs. Villars’ house after receiving a note notifying him of his ailing kinsman:

> I was conducted to the house of Mrs. Villars, in which I found no one but my kinsman. . .Before he died, he informed me fully of the character of his betrayers. The late arrival, name and personal condition of Clemenza Lodi were related. Welbeck was not named, but was described in terms, which, combined with the narrative of Mervyn, enabled me to recognize the paramour of Lucy Villars in the man whose crimes had been the principal theme of our discourse. (430)

Because of his profession as physician, Stevens learns of Clemenza’s condition from his dying kinsman. He then combines the facts from his kinsman with those of Mervyn’s story in order to confirm the peculiarities of the narrative. Before Stevens discovers his kinsman dying in Villars’ house, he, however, suspects that his kinsman might have been visiting the house frequently: “[Mrs. Villars’] habitation was clandestinely frequented by men who were unfaithful to their secret; one of these was allied to me by ties, which authorized me in watching his steps and detecting his errors, with a view to his reformation. From him I obtained a knowledge of these women” (429). Not only does Stevens learn of Clemenza through his kinsman’s story but through his careful
monitoring of the actions of this particular relative. Similar to Murray, Brown depicts the author as one who maintains and negotiates contacts across class lines as well as one who closely monitors these networks. Stevens gains the contacts necessary for his authorship by not only practicing medicine but by spying on others.

While his kinsman’s story confirms Mervyn’s narrative in regards to Clemenza and Welbeck, Stevens and his wife still doubt other parts of the tale. After Mervyn leaves for the Hadwins, the doctor writes:

During his absence, conversation naturally turned upon those topics which were suggested by the narrative and deportment of this youth. Different conclusions were formed by his two auditors. They had both contracted a deep interest in his welfare, and an ardent curiosity as to those particulars which his unfinished story had left in obscurity. [emphasis added] (432)

Stevens characterizes his interrogations and questions in regards to Mervyn’s narrative as well as the dissension among Mervyn’s listeners as “natural” responses to the youth’s tale. Here, Brown no longer appears to fear the catastrophic effects of dissension; rather, he prompts us again to question and contemplate the sincerity of the tale. Stevens reminds the reader of such a response when he describes his reaction to Mervyn: “Had I heard Mervyn’s story from another, or read it in a book, I might, perhaps, have found it possible to suspect the truth; but, as long as the impression, made by his tones, gestures and looks, remained in my memory, this suspicion was impossible” (436). Even though Stevens has all along been encouraging us to interrogate narrative, he makes it even more “obvious” that the “natural” response to Mervyn’s tale should be one of skepticism.

And this becomes much clearer when Stevens hears the counternarratives of Mrs. Althorpe, Watson, and Mrs. Wentworth. After listening to his kinsman’s testimony, Stevens continues to seek further confirmation of Mervyn’s tale. He travels to Mervyn’s
native Chester County and meets Mrs. Althorpe who challenges the young man’s story. She accuses Mervyn of a clandestine relationship with Betty, his father’s wife, and of theft from his father. While Althorpe’s testimony appears damaging, it does not completely convince Stevens of Mervyn’s corruptibility. Unlike Pleyel, Stevens is not easily swayed by every new story he hears and he works hard to avoid any damaging misreading of one’s character and virtue. After Mrs. Althorpe, the doctor hears Wortely’s story concerning Mervyn’s involvement in Watson’s murder; however, even after Althorpe’s and Wortely’s scathing accusations, Steven’s faith in Mervyn’s innocence remains relatively strong. It is not until he receives word from Mrs. Wentworth that her nephew, Clavering, is still alive that Stevens begins seriously to doubt Mervyn. To Wortely, the doctor confides:

Now, for the first time, I begin to feel that my confidence is shaken. I feel my mind bewildered and distracted by the multitude of new discoveries which have just taken place. I want to revolve them slowly, to weigh them accurately, and to estimate their consequences fully. I am afraid to speak; fearing, that, in the present trouble of my thoughts, I may say something which I may afterwards regret. I want a counselor. (454)

Just as Stevens deliberates with his reader, he turns to another reader, his wife, to contemplate the necessary actions to be taken. She too is greatly troubled by Mervyn’s possible duplicity. It is the symbiotic relationship between author and reader that Brown portrays that becomes much more apparent and nuanced in Clara Howard. More than the first half of Arthur Mervyn, the second half of the novel implicates the readers and their judgment even further by forcing them to weigh the various rival narratives. Describing the second half, Emory Elliott states, “The second part [of Arthur Mervyn] casts a shadow of doubt over all of Mervyn’s professed motives. He appears to be a
calculating opportunist who masks his real motives and self-interest by fashioning his rhetoric to strike the most responsive chords in his listeners.”39 Elliott’s claim appears to hold true as the first part of the novel introduces us to Mervyn while the second part introduces us to the doubts surrounding him.

As a result of his skepticism, Stevens approaches Mervyn and pleads with him to explain the various contradictions. Mervyn clarifies the contradictions and after narrating his defense, Stevens writes, “What other enquiries were to be resolved by our young friend, we were now, at this late hour, obliged to postpone until the morrow. I shall pass over the reflections which a story like this would naturally suggest, and hasten to our next interview” [emphasis added] (545). The next interview concerns Mrs. Wentworth’s troubling accusations in regards to Clavering and Mervyn. In response, Mervyn seeks a meeting with her. However, after the interview with Dr. Stevens, Mervyn unexpectedly takes over the narration of the tale as he finishes the remainder of the novel. Most startling about this occurrence is that Stevens never narrates his “natural” reaction to Mervyn’s rebuttal of Mrs. Althorpe’s accusations. While he informs us that Mervyn’s testimony “naturally” recommends a certain reaction, Stevens does not have a chance to deliver his thoughts since Mervyn assumes control of the pen. Hence, the reader is suddenly left without Dr. Stevens’ patient and prudent guidance.

When discussing *Arthur Mervyn*, critics have wrestled with this sudden shift in narrative perception. For example, George Spangler writes, “After he convinces his new friends that he is a reliable narrator, [Mervyn] goes on to serve others with his stories, viz., many of the embedded narrators which characterize the novel.”40 While Spangler recognizes that Mervyn’s assumption of Stevens’ role is a “change of great significance
for understanding the text,” I disagree that Mervyn at this particular point has proven himself a “reliable narrator.” Rather, his authorship appears extremely suspicious since Mervyn’s assumption, or usurpation, of the narrative occurs after the various rival narratives and at the very point when Stevens is preparing to deliver his verdict.

Thus, I argue that Brown interrupts the narrative at this particular moment to further his pedagogical project. Throughout the novel, Brown consistently draws our attention to Stevens’ inquiries and reactions to Mervyn’s narrative. Brown usually portrays Stevens meditating upon a point, and later, he delivers Stevens’ conclusion regarding that very point. For example, in the first half of *Arthur Mervyn*, Stevens questions the veracity of Mervyn’s relationship with Mrs. Wentworth and Welbeck, and, soon after, Stevens verifies the relationship with Mrs. Wentworth and informs us that Mervyn’s tale checks out. Brown appears purposely to interrupt this established pattern when Stevens draws a “natural” conclusion regarding Mervyn’s testimony but is prevented from relaying the verdict to us. By disrupting the pattern at the point in the narrative when Mervyn’s reputation is clearly under attack, Brown, much like Foster in *The Boarding School*, forces the reader to draw his or her own independent conclusions. Hence, Stevens guides us through the various rival narratives only to leave us to formulate our own opinions.

It is at this point in the novel that Brown returns and solves his paradox in regards to the reader. Throughout *Arthur Mervyn*, we witness Brown teaching his readers to question narrative. Our identification with Stevens prompts us to interrogate and doubt Mervyn’s tale; however, our questions and answers regarding Mervyn’s narrative are tied to Stevens’ single consciousness and perspective. Warner argues that our “imaginary
identifications. . .[are] the source of Brown’s deepest republican anxieties.” Warner suggests that Brown fears such private “narrative identification,” and therefore, portrays Mervyn constantly disclosing information in the public. I argue, however, that our identification with Stevens is not sufficiently private for Brown. In other words, Brown fears that our identification with Stevens will be so strong that we will naively listen and agree with his formulations considering Mervyn’s behavior instead of graduating to the role of independent reader. Therefore, Stevens must leave the text in order for the reader to think independently and privately. While *Arthur Mervyn* attempts to shake the fetters that chain the reader to the author, Brown by the end of the novel realizes that in order to accomplish such a feat he must remove the author from the narrative. Stevens’ vanishing act, then, works to derail the triumphal car of the author.

III. Playing Shuttlecock in *Clara Howard*

In the inaugural issue of the *Literary Magazine* in October 1803, Brown publishes his “Address to the Public,” in which he expatiates upon his new role as an anonymous editor:

> I trust. . .those who possess [knowledge, wit, and talent] and shall think myself entitled to no small praise, if I am able to collect into one focal spot the rays of a great number of luminaries. They also may be very unequal to each other in luster, and some of them may be little better than twinkling and feeble stars, of the hundredth magnitude; but what is wanting in the individual splendor, will be made up by the union of all their beams into one. My province shall be to *hold the mirror up* so as to assemble all their influence within its verge, and reflect them on the public in such a manner as to warm and enlighten.45

When describing his function as an editor, Brown dramatically minimizes the power and presence that he once enjoyed in his previous work. Earlier, as we saw in *Wieland*,
Brown exercised his authorial power by including editorial footnotes in order to manipulate and control his readers’ interpretations and judgments. He also proudly displayed his authorial identity in *Wieland’s* “Advertisement,” signing the address with his illustrious initials, “C.B.B.” In his “Address to the Public,” however, he neither exposes his identity nor offers a specific goal for his periodical. Rather, he presents himself as an inconspicuous gleaner, collecting the productions of a new nation. As editor, he does not write these texts but creates a space for them, “hold[ing] the mirror up” so that a public can read and digest them. From *Wieland* to the “Address to the Public,” we, then, witness a gradual, yet significant, reduction in the central authority of authorial power and presence.

In *Clara Howard*, one of Brown’s final experiments with the novel, he performs a similar act of authorial self-effacement. While critics unanimously focus on the radical shift in theme in his last two novels—from murder and somnambulism in *Edgar Huntly* to love and marriage in *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*—one of the most startling differences between *Clara Howard* and Brown’s earlier novels is that it does not contain a title page announcing his authorship and intent. In *Clara Howard*, the reader is greeted with an “Introduction” that includes a letter written by an anonymous writer to an anonymous reader. Similar to Clara Wieland and Arthur Mervyn, the anonymous writer of the epistle announces a transformation that has recently occurred in his life: “You once knew me a simple lad, plying the file and tweezers at the bench of a watchmaker, with no prospect before me but labouring,. . .Such was I three years ago! Now I am rich, happy, crowned with every terrestrial felicity” (3). After the writer describes his dramatic transformation, the epistle abruptly concludes, leaving the reader with no sense of the
author’s or his correspondent’s identity. Unlike Wieland’s “Advertisement,” Arthur Mervyn’s “Preface,” and Edgar Huntly’s “To The Public”—and, for that matter, unlike most novels written in the early Republic—Brown in Clara Howard refuses to address the reader directly and to display his authorial identity. Instead, Clara Howard opens without any indication of the novel’s or the introductory letter’s authorship, and as a result, the reader begins Clara Howard with no clear sense of the novel’s moral obligation or intent.

This confusion is augmented by the fact that we do not know the anonymous correspondent addressed in the “Introduction’s” epistle. As the novel proceeds, we soon discover that the letter-writer is Edward Hartley; yet, we never learn the identity of Edward’s reader. In the introductory letter, Edward presents this reader with very specific instructions:

You ask me how all these surprising things came about? The inclosed letters, which I have put into a regular series, contain all the information you wish. The pacquet is a precious one; you will find in it, a more lively and exact picture of my life, than it is possible, by any other means to communicate it. Preserve it, therefore, with care, and return it safely and entire, as soon as you have read it. (3)

From these instructions, we learn that the epistle introduces the reader to a packet of letters that detail Edward’s transformation. Interestingly, he directs the reader to return the arranged letters “safely and entire” as soon as they have been read. These instructions are compelling because they are clearly directed to and intended for a particular reader. Because of the specificity of the command, it would be odd for Edward to include such a letter in a publication to a general audience. Thus, we are led to suspect that Edward transferred the text to his anonymous reader who never in fact returned the packet of
letters “safely and entire” to him. Instead, it appears that the unknown reader decided to publish them on his own accord. Such a scenario inevitably causes us to wonder whether or not we have the “entire” packet of letters as edited by Edward, or if they have been subsequently edited by Edward’s anonymous correspondent. Hence, the preferatory instructions add another layer to the uncertainty surrounding the authorial and editorial authority of the “Introduction.”

Consequently, the intent and motivation for publication are unknown as well. By delivering a text that begs so many questions in regards to its authorship and publication, Brown makes it virtually impossible for the reader to approach his novel with any type of bias in favor of the author. In his “Address to the Reader,” Brown complains that the reader is often distracted by an author’s biography when contemplating the literary merit of a particular work; similarly, in “Remarks on Reading,” he posits that the reader is chained too tightly to the author’s stated purpose when perusing a text. The “Introduction” of Clara Howard, then, disables the reader’s ability to form any concrete conclusions regarding either the author’s biography or his intent. With no authorial introduction or instructions, the reader begins the text without any preconceived conceptions or notions on how to read and approach Clara Howard. Unlike his previous novels, Clara Howard forces us as readers to piece together the events and letters without the direction of a unifying author and with only our own skills and abilities to guide us.

Further complicating the beginning of Clara Howard is the presence of various, competing letter-writers and the lack of a unifying narrator. In fact, Clara Howard marks an important divergence from Brown’s earlier works, since it is his first novel without a first-person narrator. Remarking on this significant change, Gardner claims:
What is most striking [about *Clara Howard*] is the shift from consistent first-person narration to a pure epistolary narrative, in which the story is told entirely in the multi-vocal present-tense of correspondence, with no narrative voice holding the fragments together. Where the earlier novels focused on a single consciousness (Clara, Arthur, Edward), in these last novels Brown refuses to privilege even his title characters.\(^{47}\)

While *Wieland*, *Ormond*, and *Edgar Huntly* all begin as letters, they are not epistolary novels since we are always constricted to one primary letter writer, one dominant consciousness. *Clara Howard*, however, is a “pure” epistolary novel, containing numerous letter-writers and letters. Yet, *Clara Howard* and its pure epistolary form do not signal the radical shift in Brown’s authorship that Gardner and others have claimed it represents. As early as *Wieland* and certainly by *Arthur Mervyn*, we witness Brown’s attempts to create a space, however limited, for a reader’s autonomous agency. He opens obvious places in his earlier novels that encourage readers to question his narrators and narrative. *Clara Howard* and its polyvocality, then, do not signal so much a departure from these earlier works, as a culmination of a series of experiments first articulated in *Wieland* and *Arthur Mervyn* regarding authorial control. By abandoning first-person narration, Brown finally frees the reader from the “triumphal car” of the author and narrator, as he offers the reader a variety of different perspectives and voices.

In *Clara Howard*, Brown portrays his concerns regarding the tyranny of authorial power with his depiction of the heterosexual romance of Edward and Clara. Throughout the first half of *Clara Howard*, Brown portrays Edward as an obedient reader who willingly submits to the tasks that Clara Howard authors for him. In his first letter, Edward acquiesces to Clara’s instructions to seek out the penniless Mary Wilmot, whom he agreed to marry before meeting Clara, and to fulfill his original offer of his hand in
marriage. While Edward loves Clara and not Mary, he nonetheless obeys her demands: “I must go, [Clara] tells me; and duty tells me that I must go in search of the fugitive. I will not rest until I have ascertained her destiny” (7). Before departing for his task, Edward agrees to correspond with Clara and inform her of his progress. After arriving in Hatfield, he writes, “I promised to write to you, and inform you of my welfare. I gave the promise with coldness and reluctance, because I predicted that no benefit would flow to either from our correspondence” (9). Edward momentarily reveals his anger in regards to his promise to write Clara, since he fears that their correspondence might enhance his passion for her. However, he immediately restrains his hesitation and pens:

I repented of the coldness with which I had consented to your scheme of correspondence, and tormented myself with imagining those pangs which my injustice must have given you. I determined to repair my fault as quickly as possible; to write to you often, and in the strain worthy of one who can enter into your feelings, and estimate, at its true value, the motive which governs your actions. (9)

Profusely apologizing for his “coldness,” Edward consents to Clara’s “scheme of correspondence” and later informs her of his recent discovery of two of Mary’s letters. Edward not only agrees to continue to report his findings, but he hopes his epistles will be acceptable to his mistress. He later concludes his letter, writing, “My future destiny it will be your province to prescribe” (19). The first four letters of Clara Howard consist, then, of Edward’s dutiful acceptance of Clara’s instructions and his apologies for any signs of irreverence.

The power dynamic between Clara and Edward is further developed in the next letters exchanged between the former lovers. In her first letter of the novel, Clara lambastes Edward for his momentary resistance to her dictates:

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Fie upon you! Even to have entertained such thoughts fixes a stain upon your character not easily effaced. Nothing but the hope that the illusion is transitory, and that sober reflection will, in a short time, relieve you from the yoke of such cowardly and ignoble designs, prevents this from being the lost token of friendship you will receive from C.H. (21)

Reprimanding Edward as if he were a child, Clara scolds him for his behavior and threatens him with the dismissal of their correspondence. She demands Edward’s obedience to her instructions and commands him to dispense with all affection that he might still hold for her: “Edward! are you, indeed, so sordid as to reason in this manner? . . .Are you not ashamed of your infatuation and absurdity?” (25). Even though Edward has greatly disappointed her with his disobedience, Clara grants him another chance and demands his strict adherence to her instructions: “Let me constantly hear from you, respecting your movements” (25). Responding to Clara’s invectives, Edward dramatically throws himself at her feet for forgiveness:

Clara, thou, hast conquered me. I see the folly of my last letter, and deplore it. It, indeed, merited the indignation and the scorn which it has received. Never shall you again be grieved and provoked by the like folly. I am now master of my actions and my thoughts, and will steadily direct them to a single purpose, the pursuit of the poor Mary, and the promotion of her happiness. (22)

In a scene repeated throughout the novel, Edward apologizes to Clara for his foolish behavior. He declares that he has been “conquered” by her and submits to her commands to promote and fulfill her own and Mary’s happiness. He concludes in agreement of her assessment of his behavior and promises careful compliance: “Better thoughts, resolutions worthy of your pupil and your friend have succeeded” (22).

In the novel’s first exchange of letters between Edward and Clara, Brown draws a clear power hierarchy between the former lovers. Edward defines himself as the penitent
pupil and Clara reveals herself as the dictatorial preceptress; Edward as the receptive reader and Clara as the imperial author. Beguiled by such charms, he willingly submits to her tyrannical commands, which actually conflict with his own interests. As Clara’s passive and obedient reader, he seeks to offer his hand to Mary, a woman whom he does not love in order to fulfill his sense of duty to Clara. Edward’s actions and letters, then, are always a direct reaction to Clara’s imperial authorship. In fact, after Edward is “conquered” by Clara, he can no longer pen letters to her because of an accident that disables him: “I write to you by the hand of another. Be not greatly surprised or alarmed. . .my good friend and affectionate nurse, Mrs. Aston, insists upon guiding the pen for me” (28). After submitting to Clara, Edward loses the power to write, as well as to think, independently. Clara, then, is the primary author, or Edward’s author, as she pens the commands that he so faithfully follows.

Throughout the novel, however, Brown portrays Mary Wilmot as a rival author figure. Unlike Clara whose aggressive authorial presence controls Edward’s movements and thoughts, Mary asserts her power over the youth through her absence. It is not until the very conclusion of Clara Howard that Mary regularly begins to write epistles. At the beginning of the novel, Edward discovers two letters from Mary at his uncle’s house. In the epistles, Mary informs Edward that she is leaving him so that he can marry the young and beautiful Clara. While she loves Edward deeply, Mary ends their relationship, knowing that her old age and poverty could never compete with Clara’s youth and riches:

I sought your happiness. To be the author of it was the object of inexpressible longings. To be happy without you was impossible, but the misery of loneliness, however great, was less than that of being the spectator of your misery, or even that of defrauding you of the felicity,
attending marriage with a woman whom you could truly love. [emphasis added] (14)

In what appears a selfless act, Mary flees Edward, knowing that she cannot “author” his happiness. Mary informs him that her retreat “will never be discovered,” and as a result, she bids her final farewell to her lover: “And now... Edward... best and most beloved of me!... and is it come to this? Must I bid thee farewell forever?... Nothing but a sense of duty, nothing but a supreme regard to thy happiness, could suggest my design” (17).

While Mary disappears from Abingdon, her absence continues to affect, and indeed “author,” Edward’s decisions. As a result of her pathetic letter, Edward initially feels compelled to find her, and Clara strongly reinforces this sense of duty. Thus, both Clara and Mary “author” Edward’s actions: Clara exercises her command through her aggressive authorial presence and Mary asserts her control through an authorial vanishing act as she disappears from the majority of the novel. In both cases, Edward is captive, buffeted by the competition between his rival authors.

In the second half of *Clara Howard*, Clara’s authorial power becomes even more centralized and aggressive. At one point, when Edward believes the gossip of an old woman and declares Mary a fallen woman, Clara upbraids him, “AH! my friend! art thou so easily misled? Does slander find in thee a dupe of her most silly and extravagant contrivances? An old nurse’s envious and incoherent tale! At second hand, too!” (83). Similar to their previous exchanges, Edward apologizes and promises better and improved behavior. While Edward works tirelessly to find Mary, Clara grows increasingly impatient with his lack of success. As a result, she implores him to work even harder: “Seek her out this moment. Never rest till you have found her. Restore to
her, her own property; tender her your counsel; your aid. . .Do this, Edward, instantly, I
exhort, I intreat, I command you; and let me know the result” (83-84).

In Letter XXIV, Edward suddenly refuses Clara’s commands and liberates himself from her unrelenting narrative control. Unlike his previous epistles, Edward challenges Clara’s instructions. He repeatedly tells Clara that she misjudges the situation:

I do not mean to reason with you. When I tell you that you are wrong, I am far from expecting your assent to my assertion. . .I believe you in the wrong, and I tell you so. It is proper that the truth should be known. It is proper that my opinion, and the grounds of it should be known to you. . .You are wrong, Clara. . .It cannot be done. Marry her I may, but I shall not love her. (110-111)

Edward diverges from his previous pattern of submission and rebels against Clara’s tyranny. He no longer fulfills the role of the passive reader as he criticizes Clara and more importantly, as he begins to author his own western adventure. In his next letter to Clara, he informs her that he will not follow her commands and that he will depart for the frontier shortly. After this surprising declaration, he describes in length one of his childhood reveries of the West:

In my uncle’s parlour there hangs a rude outline of the continent of North-America. Many an hour have I gazed upon it. . .My eye used to leap from the shore of Ontario, to obscure rivulets which form, by their conflux, the Alleghany. This have I pursued through all its windings, till its stream was lost in that of the Ohio. Along this river have I steered and paddled my canoe of bark, many hundreds of leagues, till the Mississippi was attained. (116)

Indeed, half of Edward’s epistle consists of his fantasies of the West, China, and Spain. His newfound authorship signals his break from the grasp of Clara’s imperious hold as he becomes an independent author, no longer dependent on the whims and dictates of Clara.
Edward’s authorial skills do not stop at writing back to Clara. After delivering his complaints against Clara and before writing his description of the West, Edward finally discovers Mary’s residence and pens a letter to her. Rather than offer Mary his hand in marriage as Clara so fervently wishes, he edits his correspondences with Clara, collecting and arranging their many letters for Mary to read. He soon delivers the packet of letters to Mary, directing her: “Read them, and reflect deeply and impartially on their contents. They require no preface or commentary. Make up your mind by the evening, when I will attend you with a heart overflowing with the affection of a friend” (115). While he informs Mary that she must decide whether or not she wants a future with him, he knows that she will never marry him. In Letter XXIV, he tells Clara, “And think you that this girl will wed a man who loves her not? She never will. Our union is impracticable” (111). Once Mary confirms Edward’s suspicions, he declares his decision to leave for the West. Edward, then, liberates himself from Clara’s and Mary’s firm grasp by finally writing back as he threatens Clara with his own authorial tale and manipulates Mary with his editorialship of the letters.

Edward’s authorship immediately affects Clara. In her first letter following his western reveries, Clara appears at an utter lost on how to address the youth. In fact, she devotes the first half of her letter to debating and questioning the rhetoric she should adopt towards Edward:

Once she decides to invite Edward back to her house as her husband, she turns to meditating upon her future with Edward. At first, she appears to want to maintain her power over the youth: “While I love thee and cherish thee as a wife, I shall assume some of the prerogatives of an elder sister, and put my circumspection and forethought in the balance against thy headlong confidence.” (147)
Clara momentarily desires to retain her hierarchical position over Edward; however, she finishes her thought by writing that she desires only to “balance” Edward’s “confidence” with her “circumspection.” It is Clara’s desire to “balance” their relationship that becomes increasingly important to her:

I revere thy genius and thy knowledge. With the improvements of time, very far wilt thou surpass the humble Clara; but in moral discernment, much art thou still deficient. Here I am to claim to be more than equal, but the difference shall not subsist long. Our modes of judging and our maxims, shall be the same; and this resemblance shall be purchased at the cost of all my patience, my skill and my love. (147)

Like Eliza Wharton when admiring the Richman’s marriage in *The Coquette*, Clara here desires an equal and egalitarian relationship based on respect and love. In her last letter to Edward, Clara assiduously recognizes both her own and Edward’s weaknesses: her unrelenting authorship and Edward’s readerly passivity. Like Brown’s sudden realization of Stevens’ influence over the reader at the end of *Arthur Mervyn*, Clara knows that she must change and check her authorship in order to retain her audience. She finally learns that an “equal” and well-“balanced” correspondence, as well as relationship, will suit both their needs. No longer the imperial tyrant, Clara recognizes her own dependence on the will and authority of the reader, and with the articulation of this new model of authorship, she becomes the love partner of Edward.

In *Clara Howard*, Brown allegorizes the author and reader relationship as a heterosexual romance. Through the heroic efforts of Edward and the increasing flexibility of Clara, the pair learns to communicate before becoming equal partners at the conclusion of the novel. In “Remarks on Reading,” Brown comments upon the importance of an egalitarian relationship between author and reader:
There is something in composition like the game of shuttlecock, where, if
the reader does not quickly rebound the feathered cork to the author, the
game is destroyed, and the whole spirit of the work becomes extinct. . . . On
applying ourselves, with gentle violence, to the perusal of an interesting
work, the mind soon congealizes with the subject; the disinclination is no
more, and like Homer’s chariot wheels, we kindle as we roll. 48

In many ways, Clara Howard is the evidence or proving ground of the claims that Brown
puts forward here in “Remarks on Reading.” Brown suggests that models of authorship
such as Clara Howard’s, or Murray’s in The Gleaner, ultimately oppress the reader,
resulting in either the reader’s thoughtless submission, as demonstrated with Edward in
the first half of the novel, or anarchy, as illustrated with Edward’s attempt to “go native”
out West. Similarly, in his portrayal of Mary, Brown demonstrates that the author’s
effacement from the page—the opposite model of Clara’s authorship—causes the very
same unsatisfactory results. By the end of the novel, Brown, with his portrayal of the
happy lovers’ reunion, proposes a model of authorship that demands constant negotiation
between author and reader.

Like Clara at the conclusion, Brown in Clara Howard loosens his grasp upon the
reader. He neither signs his initials to a title page, nor offers a clear moral or pedagogical
purpose; he also dispenses of first-person narration and instead allows multiple letter-
writers to negotiate for control of the story. His authorial decisions significantly reduce
the power that he once exercised upon the reader in Wieland and Arthur Mervyn.

Brown’s authorial effacement in the Clara Howard, however, should not be confused
with Mary’s authorial model. To Mrs. Valentine, Mary admits that her authorship was
insincere since she hoped to increase Edward’s sympathy through her disappearance and
her letter’s “distressful picture” (128). Brown’s attempt to encourage readerly
participation is not here in the secret service of self interest. His novels, from *Wieland* to *Clara Howard*, show his steady attempts to work out a proper relationship between author and the reader. And, while Brown certainly minimizes his presence in *Clara Howard*, he offers his readers a method of reading in the “Introduction.” Here, Brown gives us two possible scenarios where either the author waits for his reader to return the packet of letters; or the reader publishes the letters and becomes the author of the text. In each circumstance, a “transformation” occurs where the author becomes the reader, or the reader becomes the author. This fluidity and flexibility between the author and the reader must occur in order to create meaning, morals, and lessons. Without this exchange or transformation between author and reader, “the game is destroyed, and the whole spirit of the work becomes extinct.”

2 “The Man At Home” was published in The Weekly Magazine, in Philadelphia from February 3 to April 28, 1788. “The Rhapsodist” was published in The Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine, in Philadelphia from August to November 1789. The first half of Alcuin was published in 1798; the second half if published posthumously in 1815.

3 In Charles Brockden Brown: American Gothic Novelist (Gainesville, Florida: University Florida Press, 1949), Henry R. Warfel states that in the New York Spectator on November 10, 1798, a book reviewer wrote in regards to Wieland: “The style is correct and energetic, and we may venture to assert the writer has established his reputation as a man of genius” (110). On January 2, 1799, another reviewer for the same magazine repeated the praise, again calling Brown a “man of genius” (111).

4 Ibid., 149-50.


6 Whereas his previous novels manipulated the epistolary form—Wieland, Ormond, Arthur Mervyn, and Edgar Huntly are all written as long letters to a particular audience—Clara Howard and Jane Talbot are formulaic epistolary novels with numerous letters and various letter writers.


8 Clark, 181.


10 Ibid., 168.
11 Ibid., 127.

12 Ibid., 127. In his essay, “Remarks on Reading,” Brown urges his audience to rigorously read: “Readers must not imagine that all the pleasure of composition depend on the author; for there is something which a reader himself must bring to the book” (127).


14 Among others, Walter Hesford, in “‘Do You Know the Author?’: The Question of Authorship in Wieland” Early American Literature 12 (1982-83): 239-47, claims that Wieland “deconstruct[s] the idea of single authorship, and, with it, belief in a single, authoritative source of meaning and action. It reveals a disconcertingly modern, decentered world, one not centered on answers and supplied by any authority, but rent by, and rendered through questions” (239). Similarly, Cynthia S. Jordan, in “On Rereading Wieland: ‘The Folly of Precipitate Conclusions’” Early American Literature 16 (1981): 154-74,” states that “the novel presents a world in which all mental processes are shown to be fiction-making, first, because external realities are inscrutable, and thus any interpretations of such realities must remain inconclusive ‘stories’; and second, because the human mind itself, in trying to interpret experience, is ever subject to unconscious impulses—passions—that can transform even the most well-intentioned testimony into sheer fiction” (169).

15 Charles Brockden Brown, Three Gothic Novels: Wieland, or The Transformation, Arthur Mervyn or, Memoirs of the Year 1793, Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker, ed. Sydney J. Krause (New York: Library of America, 1998), 5. All subsequent references to Wieland will be included within the chapter in parenthesis.

16 Christophersen claims that Wieland is mostly likely based on “an account of a religiously inspired mass homicide that took place near Tomhanick, New York, in 1781” (26). In “Wieland: Alien and Infidel” Early American Literature 25 (1990): 44-66, Shirley Samuels proposes that Wieland may be based on the Narrative of William Beadle, a murder-suicide episode of the late Revolutionary War period. Brown may be referring to one of these historical accounts in his “Advertisement.”


18 Hesford, 239-47.


20 Patterson, 67.
21 Ibid., 73.

22 Ibid., 74.

23 Ibid., 74.

24 Brown published *Arthur Mervyn* in two parts with two different publishers. The first part was issued by Maxwell in Philadelphia before May 21, 1799; the second part was printed by George F. Hopkins in New York before July 4, 1800 (Warfel 145). In fact, before finding a publisher, Brown published the first few chapters in the Philadelphia *Weekly Magazine*. The two parts were published together in London in 1803 as *Arthur Mervyn. A Tale. In Three Volumes*.

25 Watts, 102.


28 Warner, 155.


30 In *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, Davidson shows how the Gothic reader and Gothic protagonist share the same perspective. Her characterization of the Gothic novel describes the relationship that the reader and narrator share rather than the relationship between the reader and Mervyn: “The Gothic reader and the Gothic protagonist all along occupy much the same position. Both are mostly in the dark, and the reader, as much as the protagonist, can fear those things that go bump in the night. No overview perspective is provided” (223).

31 In Bell’s *The Development of American Romance*, he repeatedly claims that Brown has more in common with the mid-nineteenth century American writers, such as Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, than he did with his female postrevolutionary contemporaries: “The real affinities of the *Sky Walk* Advertisement are thus with a writer like Poe rather than with Susanna Rowson or Hannah Foster” (42). He also makes various references regarding Brown’s contemporaries’ less “ironic,” hence lesser, work. For example, Bell writes, “Such writers as Susanna Rowson, William Hill Brown, and Hannah Foster were baffled (like Clara Wieland) by the tension between sympathy and judgment, by the need
to present imaginative truth in the *form* of moral judgment. Their narratives are, as it were, unconsciously ironic or duplicitous” (61).

32 Weber and Schäfer, 166.

33 Ibid., 168.

34 For example, in Chapter I, on viewing Mervyn, the doctor writes, “It was obvious to conclude that his disease was pestilence” (233). In Chapter I, Part II, Stevens writes, “Wortely, as might be naturally expected, was by no means satisfied with this statement” (433).


37 Warner, 156.

38 George M. Spangler, in “C. B. Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn*: A Portrait of the Young American Artist” *American Literature* 52 (1981) 4: 578-92, argues that Mervyn’s literary ambitions are evident from his eccentric behavior as a youth to his “happy alliance of leisure and letters through the marriage to Mrs. Fielding” (584).

39 Elliott, 238.

40 Spangler, 585.

41 Ibid., 580.

42 Whereas Spangler claims that Mervyn’s narration is welcomed by the reader, William C. Spengemann, in *The Adventurous Muse, The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789-1900* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977), states, “In effect, the reader is left in the midst of an ongoing, uncompleted action. . .[with] no explicit moral explanation” (100). Spengemann more accurately describes the shift in narrative authority than Spangler since the reader ends the novel without any account for the change. While Spengemann posits that no moral explanation for the narrative shift exists, I suggest that Brown does offer a pedagogical explanation.

43 Warner, 173.

44 Ibid., 173.

45 Weber and Schäfer, 126.

Gardner, 757-58.

In 1793, while working in Philadelphia as an actress in the Chestnut Street Theater, Susanna Rowson penned her first play, *Slaves in Algiers* (1794). Unlike most plays written in the early Republic, *Slaves in Algiers*, which opened in Philadelphia on June 30, 1794, received enough applause and approbation to merit publication and additional performances in Philadelphia and Baltimore. As a sign of its success, William Cobbett, whom David Wilson lauds as “the most popular pamphleteer and journalist in the United States,” reviewed Rowson’s play. Unlike those who were commending Rowson for her production, Cobbett viciously attacked and ridiculed both author and play. Indeed, Cobbett was well known for his arrogant and obnoxious rants on literature and politics alike; Abigail Adams once described him as “low, and vulgar as a fish woman,” and Nathaniel Hawthorne later wrote of “the ferocity of the true bloodhound of literature—such as Swift, Churchill, or Cobbett—which fastens upon the throat of the victim, and would fain drink his life-blood.” In *A Kick for a Bite*, the first pamphlet that he signed with his notorious nom-de-plume, Peter Porcupine, Cobbett displays his signature style when, in the second half of his pamphlet, he lambastes Rowson for writing on a salient political issue, the imprisonment of American soldiers by
Barbary pirates. If such political matters are not left for men alone to discuss, Cobbett sarcastically prophesizes:

. . .the whole moral as well as political world is going to experience a revolution. Who knows but our present house of Representatives, for instance, may be succeeded by members of the other sex? What information might not the Democrats and grog-shop politicians expect from their communicative loquacity? I’ll engage there will be no secrets then.\(^5\)

For Cobbett, the idea of women engaging with and participating in politics produces catastrophic images of “revolution” and mass chaos.\(^6\) He allays the threat of “the other sex” mixing with Congress by ridiculing and dismissing them as overzealous gossips. Cobbett then shifts from a general assault on women to a much more personal and vicious exhortation against Rowson, arguing that the patriotism and nationalism that she portrays for her adopted country in *Slaves in Algiers* are insincere: “There are (and I am sorry to say it), some people, who doubt of her sincerity, and who pretend that her sudden conversion to republicanism, ought to make us look upon all her praises as ironical.”\(^7\) Labeling her displays of patriotism and nationalism as “ironical,” Cobbett attacks Rowson’s loyalty to America and disputes the genuineness of her “conversion to republicanism.” He concludes his pamphlet recommending that if Rowson must address national affairs, she should at the very least be sincere in her political and national affiliations.

Cobbett’s accusations were not received without incident. Publishing his pamphlet, *A Rub from Snub: A Cursory Epistle: Addressed to Peter Porcupine Containing Glad Tidings for Democrats and A Word of Comfort to Mrs. Rowson* (1795), Congressman John Swanwick of Pennsylvania replies to Cobbett’s political charges from
A Kick for a Bite and unequivocally vouches for Rowson’s American identity. In the first public defense of an American author, Swanwick declares, “You have denied the existence of charity, friendship and philanthropy, as attributes of the American character, for which libel upon our national dignity, you merit a little salutary correction with a good tough hickory.” Swanwick rejects the pamphleteer as “a wasp that blunts its puny sting against rocks of adamant,” and lists *Charlotte Temple*, *Mentoria*, and *Slaves in Algiers* as evidence of the Rowson’s virtue and morality.9

More important than Swanwick’s rebuttal to Cobbett’s condemnations is Rowson’s response to her critic. Rowson addresses Cobbett’s charges in an eight-page preface to her novel, *Trials of the Human Heart* (1795). While dismissing Cobbett as a “loathsome reptile” that “spits out its malignant poison,” she carefully and methodically addresses his charges regarding her affection for her adopted country: “As to my opinion of the political concerns of America, or my wishes in regard to her welfare, I cannot better explain them, than by giving a slight sketch of my private history, with which, I rather imagine, the creature alluded to, is entirely unacquainted.” As evidence of her nationalism and patriotism, Rowson offers her readers her autobiography. She narrates the sad imprisonment of her family in America during the Revolutionary War and describes her conflicted emotions: “The unhappy dissentions affected me in the same manner as a person may be imagined to feel, who having a tender lover, and an affectionate brother who are equally dear to her heart, and by whom she is equally beloved, sees them engaged in a quarrel with, and fighting against each other.” By claiming familial feelings for both America and England, Rowson depicts herself as sincerely suffering from and mourning the quarrel between the nations.12 Concluding
her “Preface,” however, she focuses only on the affection that she holds for America and its citizens: “[I] think of America and its inhabitants with affection, linked to them by many near connections, and sincerely attached to them, from principles of gratitude. . .[and] I beg leave to . . .offer this novel to the public.”¹³

Rowson’s response to Cobbett in Trials of the Human Heart is important for several reasons. First, in choosing to respond to Cobbett’s charges in her novel’s preface rather than a pamphlet like Swanwick, which would be disseminated to a wide and impersonal audience, Rowson demonstrates particular concern for her readers, many of whom have been faithfully following her authorial career since the publication of Charlotte Temple. By using her novel’s preface, she delivers her reply directly to her loyal readership. Second, in order to assuage her readers’ skepticism concerning her authorial motivation and affection for America, Rowson offers a summary of her familial history. Through the careful narration of her past, Rowson suggests that she can prove her sincerity and affinity for both America and its citizens. Indeed, in the conclusion of her “Preface,” Rowson goes so far as to align her personal history with the nation’s; just as America was divorced from its mother country, Rowson was disinherited from her British paternal grandfather. This dramatic turn in her finances forces Rowson to return to America and become an author. Thus, it is her authorship—first of Charlotte Temple and then of the “Preface” to Trials of the Human Heart—that allows her to participate in the early Republic as one of the most notable and celebrated American citizens.

While the controversy surrounding her national identity concluded with the “Preface,” Rowson’s interest in authoring a recognizable American identity takes center stage in her next novel, Reuben and Rachel; Or, Tales of Old Times (1798). Reuben and

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Rachel depicts the long and intricate history of ten generations of a single family, beginning with the marriage of Columbus and Beatina in the Old World and concluding with the marriages of Reuben and Rachel Dudley in the New World. Rowson narrates a transglobal and multicultural history of American discovery and settlement as the Italian Columbian family intermarries with Peruvians, British dissenters, and Native Americans, and emigrates to Spain, Peru, England, and America. Rowson radically revises the traditional historical narrative of America’s founding and settlement by including marginalized peoples and by illustrating cultural coherence, rather than cultural dissonance, between different races, religions, and nationalities. And yet, while Rowson pens her novel at a time when most late eighteenth-century writers practiced and perpetuated a racial and cultural myopia, contemporary critics fault Rowson for Reuben and Rachel’s xenophobia and racism. Critics obsessively focus on Rowson’s portrayal of her text’s final marriage when her titled characters wed British colonials. Carol Smith-Rosenberg posits that this last marriage ends an old genealogy of Native American, South American, and European ancestors and begins a new genealogy of Anglo-American descendents: “In the new bourgeois Philadelphia, the American hero’s American Indian ancestry must remain safely in the past. His future must be pure, white, and (agri)cultured.” Nina Baym similarly claims that the novel, especially Reuben’s and Rachel’s respective marriages, reinscribes America’s Anglo-European ancestry. Baym propounds “that national identity as it congeals, is firmly Anglo, its affective engagements is solely with the mother country. . .she ends her story before the American Revolution begins, which means that her characters, though colonials, are still fully English.” And lastly, Judith Amberg points to the novel’s last marriage to argue that
“the differences between the native American and the Euro-American cultures are too
great to overcome. Unlike the racially mixed marriages of Reuben’s forebears in the 16th
and 17th centuries, marriage between natives and Europeans can no longer be tolerated in
America by Reuben and Rachel’s generation.”¹⁶ In their critiques of Reuben and Rachel,
Smith-Rosenberg, Baym, and Amberg assume that since Reuben and Rachel do not wed
across raced lines, they do not cross any other cultural barriers either. However, race is
just one of the many cultural differences that characters confront in Reuben and Rachel.
And, while Rowson certainly raises the stakes of American authorship by portraying
successful and happy interracial marriages, she depicts couples reconciling class, creed,
and racial differences throughout the entirety of the novel.

Similar to the way Rowson in the “Preface” to Trials of the Human Heart uses
authorship to alleviate cultural anxieties, she depends on textual exchange in Reuben and
Rachel as a means of producing social harmony. In Volume One, Rowson models for her
readers a process of cultural cohesion. She insists that before two characters of a
different race, creed, or nationality wed, they must disclose their affection and teach each
other their language or reveal their familial history; in other words, when a couple
marries, they must exchange with each other the language of sentiment and their
respective languages or familial histories. To Rowson, cultural exchange demands
textual exchange, and, given her dispute with Cobbett and her subsequent desire for
cultural harmony, it is not surprising that her model of cultural cohesion is also her model
of authorship. Just as her characters exchange affection and history, Rowson combines
stories of sentiment with historical accounts, penning the first American historical
romance. Throughout her novel, she blends historical narratives, such as Cora’s recital of
the persecution of the native West Indians under Spanish rule and Columbus’ epistles to Queen Isabelle of Spain, with sentimental stories. Rowson indicates that it is the exchange of these stories and histories that perpetuates the Columbian family line and ensures the historical progress of America itself.

In Volume Two, Rowson’s attention switches from authoring social harmony to republican virtue. After repeatedly destabilizing the notion of a fixed American identity with numerous multicultural marriages, Rowson in Volume Two offers her readers a lesson in civic virtue, which the author defines as the one mandatory and unchanging American attribute. Dorothy Weil propounds that in the second half of the novel Rowson “emphatically champions the American ideal of each man earning his own way and proving his own worth.”

Rowson illustrates Reuben and Rachel’s triumphal rejection of the temptations and trappings of aristocratic titles and money and their acceptance and recognition of the importance of equality and civic virtue. Throughout the Volume Two, Rowson adopts the persona of the preceptress in order to teach her readers republican virtue and in turn democratize the nation. Similar to her notorious and theatrical narrative interjections in Charlotte Temple, Rowson in the second half of Reuben and Rachel interrupts her narrative in order to guide her readers. Thus, Rowson conceptualizes the author as one who contributes to the historical progress of America, creating and exchanging stories in order to educate and democratize a nation of readers.

I. Reading and Writing History in Late Eighteenth-Century America

In her “Preface” to Reuben and Rachel, Rowson announces that her authorial intention is to incite her readers’ interest in history, particularly American history.
Addressing her audience, she states, “When I first started the idea of writing ‘Tales of Old Times’ it was with a fervent wish to awaken in the minds of young readers, a curiosity that might lead them to the attentive perusal to history in general, but more especially the history of their native country” (i). She anticipates that these “young readers” will consist mainly of young girls and women. Indeed, she dedicates her novel to the rising American fair: “For my own sex I presume to write; and if hereafter one woman should think herself happier or wiser from the fruits of my endeavors, I shall be overpaid for the time and pains bestowed in writing and arranging them” (ii). Rowson directs her novel to a female audience due to the deficiency of appropriate and suitable texts for women. When examining the literary marketplace, she observes “that the generality of books intended for children are written for boys. . .and as for the generality of little books which children are permitted to read, they are such a jumble of inconsistencies” (ii). She laments the tragic fact that those books intended for women “excite the young mind to the pursuit of learning by tales wonderful and indeed impossible” rather than “display to their view the real wonders and beauties in nature” [emphasis added] (ii). From her pronouncements, Rowson aligns Reuben and Rachel and its historical accounts with those texts that present the “real wonders. . .of nature” rather than the “wonderful and indeed impossible.”

While Cobbett in A Kick for a Bite admonishes Rowson for interfering in the male domain of contemporary politics with Slaves in Algiers, many educators in the new nation promoted history as an appropriate subject that taught girls and young women the “real wonders” of the world. Mary Beth Norton notes that in the Republican classroom, “such academic subjects as composition, history, and geography” replaced lessons in
“needlework, music, and dancing.” We witness this change in curriculum in Benjamin Rush’s speech to the Young Ladies’ Academy in Philadelphia, in 1787, when he announces that “an acquaintance with geography and some instruction in chronology will enable a young lady to read history, biography, and travels, with advantage, and thereby qualify her not only for general intercourse with the world, but to be an agreeable companion for a sensible man.” Rush believes that a knowledge of history will perform both a public and private function for women: it will not only allow them to circulate publicly in social circles and “the world,” but it will also serve as a topic for them to discuss with their husbands and families. Baym defines history as a type of hinge that permitted women to participate in the private and public spheres: “According to republican theory, this sort of polity could survive only if all citizens understood what a republic was and what it demanded of them. In the home, then, were formed the beings whose virtue or vice, civic patriotism or self-interest, would preserve or destroy the republic.” History, then, enabled women to fulfill their roles as both republican citizens, like The Coquette’s Mrs. Richman who discusses the welfare and prosperity of the nation at a party, and as republican mothers, like The Gleaner’s Mrs. Vigillius who exchanges letters on Queen Elizabeth and other historical figures with her daughter Margareta in their home.

Thus, while the early republican woman learned to disseminate her knowledge of history in the private and public spheres, she also learned how to read and write history. In The Gleaner, Mr. Vigillius describes his daughter’s daily history lessons, which include a routine of reading, discussing, and writing history:
The study of history was pursued, if I may so express myself, systematically: To the page of the historian one hour every day was regularly devoted; a second hour, Mary conversed with her adopted daughter upon the subject which a uniform course of reading had furnished; and a third hour Margareta was directed to employ, in committing to paper such particular facts, remarks and consequences deduced therefrom, as had, during the hours, appropriated to reading, and conversing, most strikingly impressed her mind; and by these means the leading features of history were indelibly imprinted thereon.23

Mr. Vigillius implements a “systematic” study of history that forces his daughter to read, discuss, and write history daily. We witness the extent of Margareta’s knowledge of history when she exchanges with her mother over twenty epistles exclusively on historical figures. Mrs. Vigillius and Margareta pen long debates and discussions on “Queen Elizabeth, Mary Stuart, Henry IV of France, Charles I of England, and Peter the Great, Czar of Russia.”24 These letters are obtained by Mr. Vigillius and published in The Gleaner as an example of the intellectual rigor and competence of women.

Analogous to The Gleaner, Foster’s The Boarding School illustrates the symbiotic relationship between reading, writing, and history. In first half of The Boarding School, Mrs. Williams instills in her students history’s importance: “Among your hours devoted to read, history must not be without a place...Hence you gain a competent acquaintance with human nature in all its modifications, from the most rude and barbarous, to the most civilized and polished stages of society.”25 After Mrs. Williams lectures on the value of history in the first half of her novel, the pupils exchange letters on historical texts in the second half of The Boarding School. Matilda Fielding writes to Harriot Henly, “I have been reviewing Millot’s Element of Ancient and Modern History; and recommend it at your perusal.”26 Sophia Manchester similarly describes her enthusiasm for history:
[I] soon fixed my eyes upon Doctor Belknap's *History of New-Hampshire*, and *American Biography*; both of which I have since read with the greatest satisfaction. By this judicious and impartial historian, we are led, from its first settlement, to trace the progress of the infant colony. We accompany its inhabitants in their enterprizes, their dangers, their toils, and their successes. . .We behold the wilderness blooming as the rose, and the haunts of savage beasts, and more savage men, converted into fruitful fields and pleasant habitations.27

Sophia reads history because it presents to the reader the “successes” as well as the “dangers, and . . .toils” of civilization, including descriptions of “savage beasts, and more savage men”; while novels are condemned for portraying “the wonderful” and “impossible,” history can safely depict “the most rude, and barbarous.” In concluding her account, Sophia writes, “In reviewing this letter, I am astonished at my own presumption, in undertaking to play critic. My imagination has outstripped my judgment; but I will arrest its career.”28 Like Margarettta and her mother, history authorizes Sophia to read and to play the role of the critic.

Thus, women are history’s central readers and writers in the early American Republic. As we see in *The Gleaner* and *The Boarding School*, young girls and women repeatedly pick up the pen and record their opinions of historical events and persons. These accounts by Margarettta, Mrs. Vigillius, Matilda Fielding, and Sophia Manchester are initially presented as private letters which are then publicized as exemplary models of proper and appropriate behavior and discussions. Importantly, this historical writing is not banished to the private sphere, but, in fact, circulates in the public and impacts a larger audience. While Foster and Murray depict the textual exchange of history between girls and women in their novels and texts, they interestingly never pen a history or a historical account themselves.
Rowson is the first author to pen the nation’s first historical romance. In her authorship of *Reuben and Rachel*, Rowson capitalizes on the textual exchange perpetuated by history and its female readers. The historical romance becomes in many ways the author’s ideal genre since readers (rather than just distributors or publishers) faithfully disseminate and circulate the histories and stories presented. Rowson’s historical romance offers a four-hundred year history of America’s founding and settlement that affirms a political unity and national identity for its readers; in turn, readers retell or rewrite these histories and stories to their female peers and families privately as well as to larger, public audiences consisting of men and women. To Rowson, it is the exchange of these histories and stories that creates national unity across seemingly irreconcilable boundaries. Hence, Rowson’s authorship of her historical romance creates a nation of female and male readers, critiquing, recommending, disseminating, rewriting, and exchanging the histories and stories of America.

II. Love, Language, and Marriage in Volume I of *Reuben and Rachel*

*Reuben and Rachel* commences in sixteenth-century England under the reign of Queen Mary I. Rowson introduces her readers to Columbia, her friend Mina, and her mother Isabelle, who are all Protestant and in hiding from the vengeful Catholic throne. In the novel’s opening chapters, Rowson aligns her reader’s perspective with Columbia’s. After repeatedly watching her mother endlessly weep without reason, Columbia asks Isabelle the cause of her despair and distress. Isabelle responds that she cries over the tragedies and misfortunes of her family, but she does not possess the strength to recount
for her daughter these countless miseries. She requests that her Peruvian servant, Cora, narrate the familial history to Columbia and Mina, and by extension, the reader:

‘Do so, my good Cora; and let it be a warning to my child how she quits the quiet paths of retirement to enter on the gay or busy scenes of life. Here take this key, what your memory cannot furnish toward the recital, the papers you will find in that drawer will assist. Listen with attention, my dear, child, and learn that comfort builds her dwelling in solitude, and peace spreads her pinions over the cottage of the humble.’ (22)

Rowson reiterates her pedagogical intent from the “Preface” when Isabelle instructs Columbia (and her readers) to listen carefully to and learn from the stories. While relinquishing her storytelling duties to her servant, Isabelle introduces us to other storytellers and provides Cora with a key to a drawer that holds several letters and documents. Typical of the republican model of authorship, Rowson uses a mélange of letters and voices to narrate the first half of her novel. Rowson gathers, organizes, and presents a collection of epistles and documents from Columbus, his wife Beatina, their son Ferdinando, and Queen Isabelle of Spain. Interspersed between these letters, she also includes the servant Cora’s first-hand account of contact and settlement. Thus, Rowson creates and offers her readers a democratic and multivocal cast to tell the story of Columbia’s history, or the discovery and settlement of America.

Chapter III begins with Rowson positioning Cora in conventional storytelling fashion, placing the old woman in “an easy chair, her right hand spread out, as commanding attention, and every feature of her aged countenance beaming” (12). With eager anticipation to share stories of her childhood, Cora begins, “It is a great many years ago, I was then scarcely eight years old, when your great-grandfather Columbus arrived in our country. . . . Time steals away our memory, but those things which either frightened,
or surprised us when we were young, are the last which we forget. So I was saying—” (12). After hearing only a few sentences from Cora, Columbia unexpectedly interrupts the old woman. Columbia informs Cora that she anticipated hearing events that happened antecedent to the old woman’s memories. Cora impatiently answers her and confidently declares that no letters or documents exist before Columbus’ arrival and that this history remains unknown. Columbia, however, uses her mother’s key to the drawer and discovers an epistle, announcing:

‘Here is a letter signed Columbus; there are several in the same hand writing; they must contain facts necessary for me to know, or they would not be thus carefully preserved. Be silent, and I will read them to you.’

Cora sat herself back in the easy chair, and shutting her eyes in token of attention, remained silent. Columbia opened the letter. (13)

In the first of three subsequent scenes where Columbia interrupts Cora, a significant power shift occurs between the two women. Cora “shut[s] her eyes” and is silenced, while Columbia “open[s] the letter” and vocalizes history.

At first glance, Rowson appears to usurp the narrative authority of the poor Peruvian servant woman with the combined, privileged voices of Columbia and Columbus. Yet, after listening to Columbus’ letter regarding his failure to garner the support of the Portuguese throne to sponsor his journey across the Atlantic, Cora admits her ignorance of Columbus’ trials before settling in the New World. To Columbia, the old woman confesses, “The letter was written before my remembrance” (14). Columbia then reads another letter and Cora eagerly asks her mistress to search for more epistles regarding Columbus’ experiences in the Old World. By “shut[ting] down” Cora and replacing her with Columbus’ first-hand accounts, Rowson suggests that the old servant woman is not the proper source for her novel’s initial stories. In fact, before reading the
first letter from Columbus, Columbia reveals that she must hear “the facts necessary for [her] to know” her family history. These facts regarding her grandfather’s life prior to the discovery of the New World can only come from Columbus himself. Cora’s subsequent interruptions serve then only to remind Rowson’s readers that we are receiving an authentic recital of history rather than the flawed memories of an old woman. In this first scene, Rowson presents herself as a careful and apt historian with the organization and presentation of reliable and authentic sources in the form of Columbus’ letters.

Columbia’s next interruption of Cora results in a tense exchange between the two women. On finishing Columbus’ letters on his Old World experiences, Columbia requests that Cora inform her about her grandfather’s second trip to South America. Cora acquiesces and commences narrating the details of the arrival of Columbus and Ferdinando in Peru: “Looking toward the sea, we saw a monstrous fish or bird. . .its body was black, its wings white; it was coming quick toward the shore. . .the huge monster, drawing quite near, stopped on a sudden, and dropping all its wings, a burst of fire and smoke issued from its side, with tremendous noise” (22). Again, Columbia suddenly interjects and complains about Cora’s metaphorical language: “The monster, as you describe it, I suppose was the ship that bore the great Columbus” (23). While criticizing her storytelling technique, Columbia nonetheless regains her composure and listens to Cora’s narration. Interestingly, however, once Cora restarts her story, Rowson rebuffs the old woman and refuses to record her story: “Cora again began, but so often interrupted herself telling the same incidents several times over, and dwelling on each with tiresome minuteness, that Columbia, though anxious, could scarcely command her
attention to the end of the story. From it she gathered the following circumstances” (23). Here, Rowson takes command of Cora’s story and edits it, omitting the figurative language and repetitions for her readers.

Rowson’s interruption of Cora appears potentially imperialist. Each time the Peruvian woman attempts to narrate a story, either the European Columbus or the Anglo-American Rowson silences her. Indeed, Smith-Rosenberg argues that Rowson throughout her novel “assume[s] male discourse of imperialism and social order.” And yet, the ensuing story that Rowson offers in place of Cora’s narration is neither xenophobic nor racist in its content. Rowson’s narrator actually closes the chapter with a scathing critique of Spanish colonialism: “Alas! Avarice had discovered this new world was an inexhaustible mine of wealth; and, not content to share its blessings, in common with the natives, came with rapine, war, and devastation in her train: And as she tore open the bowels of the earth to gratify her insatiate thirst for gold, her steps were marked with blood” (25). Though she edits Cora’s metaphoric language, Rowson does not omit Cora’s brutal account of European imperialism. In retaining Cora’s analysis and using her own narrative voice to deliver the account, Rowson co-authors the chapter which in turn strengthens Cora’s critique: the description of European colonial savagery does not come from an old woman, but from the most popular American author of the new Republic. Authorship, then, is not an imperial act but an act of revelation and revision—the later act becomes much clearer in her description of British colonialism. In Reuben and Rachel, the responsibility of the author is to glean stories, especially those stories and histories that have been ignored or, in Columbia’s case, left in a drawer unread for years; the author then circulates these letters and stories to a wider audience.
After listening to Cora’s story, Columbia resumes reading the remaining letters that detail her family’s past. The epistles abruptly stop at the point that her mother meets her father, Sir Thomas Arundel. Desiring to know the history of her parent’s courtship and marriage, Columbia again requests Cora’s assistance since the servant is mentioned in the letters as a key witness to her parents’ relationship: “But Cora, Cora had been particularly mentioned, as strongly attached to lady Isabelle. No doubt she could inform her of all she wished to know” (61). At first, Cora resists revealing her knowledge of Columbia’s parents, stating sarcastically, “I tell a story so badly and make so many repetitions, and are so tedious and minute, you would have no patience to listen; so you and Mina may go and walk, and I’ll go to bed” (62). After pleading with Cora, Columbia finally convinces the faithful servant to disclose her tale and the servant proceeds to inform her mistress of the courtship and marriage of her parents. Because of her close affiliation to Columbia’s parents, Cora is presented as not only a reliable but as the best source of the story, and hence, Rowson includes the entire narration in her chapter.

The three scenes between Cora and Columbia help determine Rowson’s model of authorship. In the first exchange between the women, Rowson illustrates her commitment to historical sources as she privileges the more accurate and “factual” account of Columbus’ journey over Cora’s flawed memories. Rowson also offers a diverse selection of letters and documents to describe the initial scenes in the Old World. In the second exchange between Columbia and Cora, Rowson reiterates her commitment to history, but this time, to revisionist history as she reveals to her readers particular stories that have been ignored and forgotten. In the final exchange between Columbia and Cora, Rowson uses the servant to narrate the love story of Isabelle and Thomas
Arundel. It is this story of Isabelle and Thomas’ marriage and courtship that remains closest to the Cora’s memory. From these three encounters, we observe Rowson’s blending of historical narratives with sentimental narratives, letters with dialogue. Rowson’s inclusion of historical and sentimental narratives as well as the voices of the colonized and the colonizer creates a multivocal history of America.

Throughout the first half of *Reuben and Rachel*, this model of authorship becomes her model of cultural cohesion. In order for friendships and marriages to occur between people of different races, creeds, and nationalities, Rowson insists that they exchange sentiment as well as their familial history or language. The first courtship and marriage that she depicts is between Columbus and Beatina’s son, Ferdinando, who is a Catholic Spaniard of Italian decent, and the Peruvian pagan Orrabella, the eldest daughter of King Orrozombo of Peru. At their first meeting, Ferdinando and Orrabella are immediately attracted to one another. On disembarking their ship, Columbus and Ferdinando walk ashore to greet Orrabella and her family:

> Orrabella, struck... with the personal beauty and elegant deportment of Ferdinando... pressed forward to meet them; and with a countenance once expressive of wonder, admiration, and timidity, her right arm extended seemed a barrier to prevent their approaching her parents and sisters, whilst laying her left hand on her breast she knelt to the ground, raising her fine eyes in token of supplication. Ferdinando raised her, laid his sword at her feet, and throwing a string of beads about her neck, told her in the language of nature, which is alike understood in all nations, that she had nothing to fear. (24)

While the Peruvian princess is initially struck with “awe” and “timidity” by Ferdinando’s presence, both Ferdinando and Orrabella, after seeing each other, respect and revere one another equally. They willingly perform “tokens of supplication” as Orrabella kneels to the ground and Ferdinando lays his sword at her feet. Before departing, they
communicate to one another in “the language of nature,” which is the language of sentiment and affection. Shortly after their first meeting, Ferdinando and Orrabella speak not only the language of nature but each other’s languages as well. Describing the exchange of each other’s national languages, Rowson writes:

Ferdinando had numberless opportunities of improving the favorable impression his first appearance made on the lovely Orrabella. He soon instructed her in the Spanish tongue; and with equal facility, became himself a proficient in her native language. . .The mutual passion that subsisted between them was early discovered. (24)

After sharing affectionate glances and each other’s native language, Ferdinando and Orrabella marry, forever altering the relationship between the New and Old Worlds.

Languages play a formative role in the relationship of Ferdinando and Orrabella. Rowson depicts her lovers speaking multiple languages: the language of nature, Spanish, and Incan. Mikhail Bakhtin observes that the late eighteenth century—the time in which Rowson pens *Reuben and Rachel*—was an “active polyglot world” in which “the period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, came to an end.”31 Rowson portrays the “polyglot world” of the eighteenth century in her depiction of the sixteenth-century—the century that Rowson marks as the end of “national languages” and the beginning of aggressive imperialism. Bakhtin posits that in the polyglot world, languages were not static or fixed but in a constant state of “interillumination”:

All this set into motion a process of active, mutual cause-and-effect and interillumination. Words and language began to have a different feel to them; objectively they ceased to be what they had once been. Under these conditions of external and internal interillumination, each language—even if its linguistic composition were to remain absolutely unchanged—is, as it were, reborn, becoming qualitatively a different thing for the consciousness that creates in it.32
While Bakhtin focuses upon the effects of interillumination—the process that occurs when different languages come in contact with one another—on individual languages, Rowson shows us the effects of interillumination on couples, peoples, and nations. The exchange of languages between Ferdinando and Orrabella results in “a qualitatively different thing:” the marriage of a Catholic Italian Spaniard and a pagan Peruvian princess. And, it is this marriage that creates and marks the first peaceful union between the Old and New Worlds, between Catholic Spain and pagan Peru.

The consequences of this union are noted in Columbus’ and Orrozombo’s respective reactions. Describing the patriarchs’ enthusiasm regarding their children’s marriage, Rowson writes, “Columbus looked forward to the union as a means of insuring wealth and power to his posterity, and Orrozombo imagined, by resigning his daughter to this young stranger, he secured to himself a powerful friend and ally in Columbus” (24). Both men believe that the marriage establishes and solidifies strong relations between their respective nations and kingdoms. Initially, they are correct since their children’s marriage appears mutually beneficial: “For the Spaniards had taught his subjects many of the useful arts; and Science, by their means, began to unfold her beauties to the delighted monarch. Upon their marriage, Orrozombo gave up part of his territories to Columbus, as a portion for his daughter; and a colony was begun” (24). The exchange has positive results as the patriarchs are sufficiently satisfied and as the Spaniards and Peruvians peacefully coexist with one another.

Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of Rowson’s depiction of the marriage of Ferdinando and Orrabella is its remarkable ease. In the nineteenth-century American historical romance, race and religion are represented as unyielding differences that hinder
any type of meaningful relationship. For example, in Lydia Maria Child’s *Hobomok* (1824), the Puritan patriarch Mr. Conant refuses to allow his daughter Mary to wed, or even socialize with, the Episcopalian Charles Brown, and, in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* (1827), Digby earnestly alerts Mrs. Fletcher to her son’s fondness of and friendship with the Indian Magawisca. Such anxiety about racial and religious differences is not articulated in Rowson’s portrayal of Ferdinando and Orrabella. Language appears as the only visible cultural barrier, and once the lovers share their affection for one another and their respective languages, Ferdinando and Orrabella can happily marry. Thus, Rowson offers a model of cultural cohesion in her depiction of her novel’s first and most exemplary marriage: by exchanging language and sentiment, new nations and new people are founded, creating transglobal relationships and altering the course of history. Thus, such a model of social harmony raises the stakes of American authorship: if the author exchanges history and sentiment with her readers, then she too can create nations of readers and bridge seemingly irreconcilable boundaries.

While sharing language and affection results in positive global consequences, the effects of not exchanging language and affection are always catastrophic. In her posthumous letter to Isabelle, Beatina narrates the tragic death of Alzira, Orrabella’s youngest sister. Alzira meets Garcias Du Ponty, a “gay, lively and gallant” Spaniard, whose “fair outside” instantly attracts her notice: “By nature soft, gentle and complying, when the subtle Castilian, who read her passion in her admiring eyes, sued for some token of her favour, she hesitated not to own her love” (47). Here, Garcias “reads” Alzira’s passion, but does not reciprocate her sentiment for “he had not an idea of an honourable union” (47). In their meetings with one another, Garcias and Alzira do not
speak each other’s languages either; rather, Alzira sits passively as Du Ponty attempts to seduce her and ransack her father’s palace: “Alzira, who was listening to the adulating voice of her lover, did not at first attend to the confused murmur that ran through the palace on the entrance of the Spaniards” (47). Alzira and Garcias function as foils to Ferdinando and Orrabella as their failure to exchange language and sentiment results in calamity, both personal and historical. Alzira gives birth to their illegitimate child, and soon after, Alzira, Garcias, and child all tragically die in a natural disaster. Beatina, in her letter, describes the catastrophic earthquake that results in their deaths: “Two hours of such tremendous threatening from gleaming meteors, bursts of thunder, and contortions of the earth,. . .Garcias and his whole party were in this dreadful night hurried out of time into eternity. . .Poor Alzira, with the virtuous Peruvian maid who saved us from the vile schemes of the Castilians, were buried in the ruins of the palace” (54-56).

Likewise, Rowson reiterates the importance of her model of cultural cohesion with her depiction of Bruna and Columbus. Unlike Ferdinando and Orrabella and Garcias and Alzira, Bruna and Columbus are friends, not lovers. In a letter to Ferdinando, Columbus describes his visit to Hispanola and his relationship with the young girl: “Bruna at this time was a lovely child of about twelve years old; she was wild and untutored; but there was something so engaging in her manner,. . .I was charmed by her artless thirst for knowledge, and employed my leisure moments in instructing her” (29-30). Fascinated and enamored by the young girl, Columbus attempts to teach her Spanish but fails: “All my attention could do, was to give her a trifling knowledge of the Spanish language. For when I spoke to her of the customs and manners of the European world, she would laugh, and declare her own country manners were best” (31). Bruna’s pride in
her native culture functions as an obstacle that impedes her education. At the end of Columbus’ description of Bruna, he interestingly adds, “I give you this slight sketch of her character, that you might not be surprised at what I have to relate concerning this Indian heroine” (30). Columbus then informs his son of Bruna’s rape at the hands of the Spanish governor, Roldan, and her subsequent suicide. To Columbus and Rowson, Bruna’s obstinacy in refusing to learn Spanish and her tragic end are logically connected. In Reuben and Rachel, Rowson, unlike her contemporaries, articulates a multicultural vision of American history; however, if and when the exchange of language and sentiment fails, the promise of social harmony and peace are replaced with chaos and murder.

The succeeding marriages follow this pattern. When Ferdinando and Orrabella return to Spain, their Catholic daughter unites with the Protestant Thomas Arundel. Their marriage happens after the lovers reveal their affection and pass various letters regarding their familial history; when Rowson’s lovers speak the same language, she alternatively demands that they exchange familial history. Hence, Isabelle Arundel’s daughter, Columbia, marries Sir Egbert Gorges after they pen sentimental letters and disclose each other’s familial history. In fact, when Columbia hears her lover recite knowledge of her Columbian family, she realizes that Gorges has already read her grandfather Ferdinando’s manuscript: “For my mother told me to-day, that her father, Ferdinando Columbus, wrote a full account of her grandfather’s voyages, during the two years they lived retired at Valladolid. And that at the time my father’s papers were seized by his enemies, the manuscript was found, and it has since been printed” (80). Once Gorges reads Ferdinando’s manuscript, they marry and perpetuate the family line with five children.
To Rowson, authorship and the exchange of language bring together lovers who in turn produce families and nations—families and nations that are not divided but affectionately bound together.

The next marriage that bridges cultural difference occurs on American soil. After marrying Arabella Ruthven, Columbia’s great-grandchild, Edward Dudley, a dissenter, leaves England and settles in New Hampshire. With seven children, Edward tends a successful farm and Arabella sews linens and clothes for the entire family. The happiness enjoyed by the large family abruptly ends when Indians unexpectedly attack their home. In a scene reminiscent of Mary Rowlandson’s *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1683), Arabella alone with her children is attacked by Indians who kill the female servants, ransack the home, and kidnap the eldest son, William, and the youngest daughter, Rachel. Unlike Mary Rowlandson’s *Narrative* and other early American captivity accounts, however, Rowson inverts the traditional depiction of Indians as ruthless and barbaric savages. She offers speeches from Otooganoo, the chief of the Indian tribe, which depict him as a merciful leader: “Otooganoo was a man naturally gentle, fond of peace, and eager in his endeavors to promote the welfare of his people. He had ever recommended to them to treat the strangers who were come to settle amongst them with hospitality” (146). And, similar to her exhortation of the Spaniards, she castigates the colonials for their greed and brutality to the Indians: “The new settlers made daily encroachments on the native inhabitants, drove them from their lands, robbed them of their wives, and made their children prisoners. Was it in human nature to bear these injuries tamely? No; they resented them”
Rowson uses her authorship to present a multivocal history that revises and reveals the story of America.

Rowson then narrates William and Rachel’s “captivity.” The sachem Otooganoo quickly decides that the boy will teach him English, and William “though young, had by attention to the documents of his father and the milder instructions of his mother, obtained a very decent knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history” (155). William’s duties soon include his sister, whose lessons in English are crucial since she forgets how to speak English, and Oberea, Otooganoo’s daughter. Describing William’s rudimentary classroom, Rowson writes:

The book he had with him, on the morning of his capture, was of infinite assistance to him, as by looking at that, he was enabled to form a very tolerable alphabet upon bark, using some of their strong dye instead of ink; and this alphabet served alike, Otooganoo, Rachel, and Oberea, who delighted in partaking their lessons, and profited daily by his instructions. (156)

Through their lessons, the small group grows affectionately attached to one another. Otooganoo’s “heart was so attached to [William], his society had affected him so many days, months, years of real felicity” that he did not want his relationship with the young boy to end. William reciprocates Otooganoo’s affection as the Indian sachem replaces the young boy’s father. Rowson writes, “William, himself, though he frequently spoke of them, and expressed a wish to see his parents, no longer felt that ardent desire to return to them, which he experienced in the early days of his captivity. . .William felt [his] attachment [to Otooganoo] daily increase” (156). And, Oberea “early formed a wish of being thought charming in the eyes of William” (156). While there is not a scene of instruction regarding William and Rachel’s education in an Indian language, we know

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William and Rachel have received similar instruction since they deliver speeches to the entire tribe. The exchange of language creates strong affectionate bonds between the Dudley’s and the Indians as they become, as Otooganoo states, a family “by choice,” rather than by blood (159). Similar to Columbia and Sir Gorges and the other marriages, the exchange of language is the means to bonding together families and nations.

The affection between William and Oberea daily increases, and Otooganoo, like Columbus and Orrozombo before him, encourages their attachment, believing that a marriage between William and his daughter will bring peace between the colonialists and the Indians. William too recognizes the political and social potential of his union with Oberea: “William, weaned from his natural friends, tenderly attached to Oberea. . .harbour[ed] a fond hope that by his union with the family of a sachem, he might promote the interests of his countrymen in general, and be the cement to bind them in bonds of lasting amity” (158). In a heartfelt speech to William, Otooganoo offers his daughter and the leadership of his tribe to William:

‘You have almost become one of us; take her, then,. . .and when age, infirmity or death shall occasion me to cease from the cares of life, supply my place, govern my people, direct them by your wisdom. . .yet lead them, by your example and forbearance, to cultivate a social and commercial intercourse, and to preserve peace with your countrymen, who are become their neighbors, as long as they can preserve it with honour.’ (158)

Similar to Ferdinando and Orrabella, Williams and Oberea successfully marry without any discussion of their racial and religious differences. Their marriage represents hope for peaceful “social and commercial intercourse” between the colonialists and the Indians, and while William becomes beloved by his tribe, the colonialists fail to keep their promises and William leads his tribe into war.
As William marries, his sister Rachel falls in love with Yankoo, an “intrepid, bold, and daring” Indian (160). While Rachel speaks the Indian language, Yankoo on the other hand does not speak English and harbors a deep resentment for the colonialists: “He hates the Europeans, yet in spite of that hate which seemed inherent in his nature, his heart was susceptible of tenderness for one of the race. The beauty of Rachel had penetrated his soul. He loved, revealed his love, and found it was returned” (150). Rachel and Yankoo exchange the tokens of affection that Rowson requires between her couples; however, Yankoo never learns English and therefore never loses his hatred for the colonialists. In fact, before Yankoo departs for the battlefield, Rachel asks Yankoo if he will spare her father in war. Yankoo quickly retorts, “No! not even my own father in such a cause,’ answered the warrior, and broke from her embrace” (161). Unlike William who loves Oberea’s father dearly (as if Otooganoo was his own father), Yankoo threatens to murder Rachel’s father. The bonds of affection that Oberea, Otooganoo, and William share are a direct result of the exchange of sentiment and language, and because language has not been exchanged between Yankoo and Rachel, their relationship is doomed. In war, Yankoo accidentally kills his tribe’s sachem, William, and soon, he dies at the hands of his enemies, the colonialists. While Rachel does not suffer a cruel death, she never marries and remains a barren reminder of the failed attempt to achieve peace between the colonialists and Indians.

The first half of Reuben and Rachel and its narration of nine different marriages promotes Rowson’s model of national cohesion. The courtship and marriage of Ferdinando and Orrabella establishes a pattern that their descendents, including their American descendents, must follow in order to regenerate. Northrop Fyre observes that
the “romantic” marriage plot is “the device... that brings hero and heroine together and causes a new society to crystallize around the hero. In overcoming the obstacles to their marriage, then, the hero and heroine become the primary agents of the new society, of historical progress.” If the hero and heroine are agents of progress, as Fyre suggests, the Columbian family line (and Rowson’s novel) appropriately conclude in America, at the height of “historical progress” and at the moment “a new society” begins. David Levin posits that the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century regarded such “romantic conventions not as meaningless stereotypes, but as effective ways of communicating a message that all literate contemporaries would understand.”

Volume One of Reuben and Rachel and its marriages, then, insist that the exchange of affection and language is necessary for the historical progress of American society.

Thus, the authorship of stories, familial history, and even the alphabet becomes an integral part of the historical progress of America. When history or stories are hidden from family members, the preservation of the Columbian family line (or Rowson’s representation of America’s genealogy) is severely jeopardized. For example, Henry Dudley dies at the hands of Howard Fitz-Howard, the descendent of Sir James Howard, the scoundrel who seduced Columbia’s companion, Mina. Henry Dudley’s mother, Elizabeth Dudley, refused to reveal the sordid family history between the Dudleys and the Howards; as a result of her silence, Henry Dudley is duped into trusting a bitter family enemy who methodically takes advantage of his trust and betrays him. Fortunately, Henry Dudley’s wife is pregnant with their child who will immigrate to New Hampshire, and the family line does not end with Henry’s murder. Castiglia similarly observes the threat of Howard Fitz-Howard, positing:
In the narratives of both Mina and Mary Holmes, Rowson shows that the seduction and ruin of women damages not only the particular women, but America itself. The illegitimate children of both women—Howard Fitz-Howard and Jacob Holmes—become primary villains in *Reuben and Rachel*; each threaten to disturb the generational flow (and hence the narrative continuation) of the Columbian family.36

While Castiglia recognizes the hazard of Howard Fitz-Howard, he mistakenly assumes that it is his libertine ways that threatens “not only particular women but America itself.” Howard Fitz-Howard’s power and danger to America lie not in his ability to seduce women but in Henry Dudley’s ignorance of his own family’s past. Because of his mother’s failure to provide him with the history of his family, Henry Dudley plays into the scheming hands of Howard Fitz-Howard and tragically dies. Likewise, William Hill Brown in *The Power of Sympathy* demonstrates similar catastrophic results when familial history and story are withheld. When Harrington and Harriot learn of their blood ties after falling deeply in love with each other, Harriot wastes away until she tragically dies and Harrington commits suicide. If Mrs. Holmes had immediately relayed their familial history, the deaths of Harrington and Harriot would have been avoided. Circulation of familial history, then, is necessary to the preservation of family lines. Throughout *Reuben and Rachel*, Rowson increases the stakes of American authorship by linking the authorship and dissemination of history to the historical progress of the new nation.

Rowson’s depiction of “the historical progress of a new society” concludes in mid-eighteenth century America. By ending the genealogy at this particular point, Rowson creates for her late-eighteenth century American readers a sense of immediacy in regards to their country and its citizens. By the time Reuben and Rachel Dudley settle in present-day America, their ancestors are Native Americans, Spaniards, Peruvians, and
Britons, as well as, pagans, Catholics, dissenters, and Anglicans. When describing his sons, Reuben Dudley by the conclusion of the novel proclaims them “true-born Americans” (364). At the end of the eighteenth century, Congressman and citizens alike were in a passionate and heated debate regarding the differences between “true-born” Americans and immigrants. In 1798, with the ever-increasing threat of foreign aggression, especially from France, Congress passed a series of laws that placed severe restrictions on immigration, immigrants, and free speech.

Ever since learning of the violent atrocities and chaos of the French Revolution, Americans feared the threat of “Jacobinism” invading and spreading to the United States. In 1796, political relations with France began to decline when America entered the Jay Treaty with Great Britain. In 1798, a month after Adams took office, the Directory refused to receive Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, the American envoy sent to Paris by President Washington. During the same year, France also violated the Franco-American commercial treaty of 1778, claiming that all neutral vessels carrying British goods were liable for seizure. After these numerous, damaging scandals, war nearly broke out when the Directory refused again to meet the American envoys. Designated by Adams as X, Y, and Z, the envoys would only be received by the French government if the Americans were willing to pay a large sum of money; when the envoys refused to pay the bribes, they returned home.

In April 1798, Adams publicized the correspondence between the envoys and the Directory, and, as a result, an outraged American citizenry lambasted the French and flaunted their fierce patriotism and pride. For example, after attending the first performance of the new national anthem, “Hail Columbia,” in a Philadelphia theater,
Abigail Adams wrote that a packed audience sang the anthem over six times “and the last time, the whole Audience broke forth in the chorus whilst the thunder of their Hands was incessant, and at the close they rose, gave 3 Huzzas, that you might have heard for a mile.”40 The public hysteria and anger was quelled by the Federalist promise to rid America of all its “internal enemies.”41 These “internal enemies” included immigrants, such as the Irish and the French, who as Catholics and bitter enemies of the British, were sympathetic to the Directory. In fact, fears of these immigrant enemies were so aroused that one Federalist newspaper reported that “the United Irishmen commanded an army of forty thousand men” on American soil, “a force sufficient to form an imperium in imperio.”42

In June and July 1798, with the threat of war with France looming, the Federalists passed three anti-alien acts. The Naturalization Act of June 18, 1798, attempted to “shut off or reduce the flow of aliens being admitted to the United States” by “extending the period of residence required for naturalization to fourteen years from the previous five.”43 On July 6, 1798, the Alien Enemies Act was passed, which gave the President the “authority to designate as Alien Enemies any citizens or subjects of the hostile nation residing in the United States whose presence he regarded as dangerous, and to make regulations for their apprehension, restraint, or removal.”44 While these acts appear incredibly repressive, Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick observe that it was the Alien Act of June 25, 1798, which was the “most far fetched and misbegotten” of the anti-immigrant laws.45 The Alien Act allowed the President to expel any non-naturalized person of foreign birth who appeared “dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States” during both peace time and wartime, without a hearing or without specifying a
Elkins and McKitrick argue that the Act attempted to “get rid of many aliens as possible through isolation and wholesale deportations, . . . because the presence of large numbers of aliens of any sort tended on general principles to threaten the purity of the national character.” Jefferson labeled these acts as “worthy of the 8th or 9th century,” and had “so alarmed the French who were among us . . . that they are going off . . . and a ship, chartered by themselves for this purpose, will sail within about a fortnight for France, with as many as she can carry.”

Rowson’s definition of American identity confronts the regulations implemented and the xenophobic sentiments promulgated by the Alien Acts of 1798. At the moment that the Federalists were passing laws that severely restricted immigration and immigrants within the United States, Rowson delivers a novel that celebrates America’s immigrant history. In *Reuben and Rachel*, she narrates five generations of the Columbian family that immigrate to America and its extended borders: Christopher and Ferdinando Columbus in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Edward Dudley and Arabella Ruthven in the sixteenth century; Reuben Dudley in the beginning of the eighteenth century; and Reuben and Rachel Dudley in the mid-eighteenth century. In fact, one of the last immigrants whom Rowson portrays is an Irish immigrant, O’Neil. Importantly, O’Neil is not wild and drunk, the stereotype of the Irish that Federalist newspapers and William Cobbett fed their readers, but is a trusted and reliable friend and farmer. Rowson, then, troubles the idea of American citizenship, by portraying Americans not of Anglo-descent, who have resided in the country for two-hundred years, but of Irish, Native American, British, and Peruvian descent who have always just arrived on the new nation’s shores.
More importantly, Rowson challenges these Alien Acts in her conceptualization of the author. Responding to the current political climate, Rowson in *Reuben and Rachel* proposes a solution to America’s bitter division between “alien” and “citizen.” Rowson demonstrates that the author can effectively and peacefully bring together a nation by circulating stories of history and affection. Rather than expel these internal “enemies,” Rowson suggests that the author can bind them together with stories of history and affection. It is the historical romance, and not the Alien Acts, that can reconcile supposedly insurmountable differences between bitter enemies. The role of the author is integral to the historical process and progress of America, a nation that Rowson poignantly and importantly portrays as one of immigrants. Thus, stories of history and affection must bind together the new nation.

III. The (Re)Education of Columbia in Volume Two of *Reuben and Rachel*

In the “Preface” to *Reuben and Rachel*, Rowson informs us that while penning her novel, she received a job as a preceptress of a school for girls. After gaining this new employment, she observed that her duties as an author became more charged:

> The first volume of the present work was written before I had entered on the arduous (though inexpressibly delightful) task of cultivating the minds and expanding the ideas of the female part of the rising generation. If I was before careful to avoid every expression or sentiment that might mislead the judgment or corrupt the heart, what was then an inclination became now an indispensable duty. (iii)

Once accepting her position as a preceptress, Rowson claims that she was especially careful and meticulous in her authorship of Volume Two. She reveals that when writing the second half, it suddenly became her “indispensable duty” to “cultivat[e] the minds
and expand the ideas of the female part of the rising generation.” Like her contemporaries, Foster, Murray, Charles Brockden Brown, and others, Rowson conceptualizes the function of the author in didactic terms. The author’s role is to instruct the new American reader, and Rowson locates Volume Two as the site where her duties and responsibilities as author and preceptress especially conflate.

The change that Rowson notes in her “Preface” is noticeable in Volume Two. In Volume One, she interrupts her text with a narrative aside only once; in Volume Two, she interrupts her narrative numerous times. Similar to the narrator in Charlotte Temple, Rowson’s narrator in Reuben and Rachel disrupts the narrative throughout the second half to guide and offer various lessons directly to her readers; thus, Rowson’s authorship becomes much more instructional, as if she becomes a preceptress not only in the classroom but on the page as well. Her authorial intention also shifts from modeling cultural cohesion in Volume One to instructing her readers in republican virtue in Volume Two.

Scholars consistently express their extreme disappointment in the change that occurs in the second half of Reuben and Rachel. They accuse Rowson of “corrupt[ing]” the humanist vision of America that she puts forward in Volume One. For example, Smith-Rosenberg observes:

For one brief volume, writing in the authorizing voice of the Enlightenment, as a liberal humanist, Rowson presented to her readers politically powerful female subjects and a world in which racism did not govern and distort. Adopting the discourse of the bourgeoisie in order to present bourgeois America to her bourgeois American readers, Rowson then repudiated her vision. But not before it had danced before the imagination of her readers.49

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Smith-Rosenberg argues that Rowson in the first half of the novel subverts traditional racial and gender hierarchies only to reinscribe them in Volume Two. Likewise, Amberg points to the second half of the novel as the place where Rowson “employs much of the racists’ reasoning of her detractors in her own definitions of American citizenship.”

While Rowson does not include multicultural marriages in Volume Two, she also does not repudiate her authorship of a multicultural American identity. Rather, this multicultural American subject that Rowson authors in Volume One must now obtain a republican education.

Rowson’s project in Volume Two of educating a new nation of readers in virtue recalls a scene from Volume One. As a young girl, Columbia must receive a proper chastisement from her mother before hearing the history of her family. Rowson describes Columbia as a lovely little girl with a fondness for dressing up in ribbons and placing flowers in her hair. On one particular day, Isabelle disapprovingly watches her little girl frivolously play:

Fatigued with the exercise of dancing, Columbia pauses upon the margin of the stream; its surface was smooth and even as the polished mirror,—her elegant form, becoming dress, and angel countenance were reflected in the water. She stopped and gazed. A beam of exultation shot from her eyes. It was the moment Isabelle had longed for.

‘And what does my child so intently gaze at?’ said Isabelle, ‘it is the lovely form with this nature has bountifully endowed her; and which the unruflled surface of the water so beautifully reflects to her admiring eyes? Alas, my child, if that is the object of your admiration, how fragile is the pleasure you receive! . . .Behold my child’ continued she, throwing something into the water, ‘see that beauteous figure, how deformed, how disgusting; every trait of loveliness is gone.’ Columbia turned from the stream with an involuntary shudder. (5-6)
Isabelle discovers young Columbia indulging in the trappings of wealth and admiring her own beauty, and she responds by educating her daughter with a lesson in virtue. She immediately displays for Columbia how quickly her loveliness can fade, and as a result, Columbia learns the transparency of material possessions and the importance of virtue. It is only after this lesson that Columbia then hears her family history. Rowson begins Volume Two with the arduous task of having to educate Columbia, or the new American nation. Obsessed with the likeliness of themselves—white, wealthy, and male—Federalists through legislation and others in power were ridding the nation of alien immigrants and encouraging the continued settlement of the West. In the second half, Rowson, as a preceptress and novelist, understands that her authorial intention must be to educate Columbia in the fundamental lessons of republican virtue—lessons that Rowson deems mandatory in her definition of America and lessons that need to be learned by the new nation.

Rowson’s emphasis on republican virtue first becomes evident when Reuben and Rachel eagerly ask their aunt questions concerning their American ancestors. Exceedingly enthusiastic over his grandfather’s war stories as an Indian sachem, Reuben declares that he wants to travel to America and claim the “familial lands and titles:”

‘When I am a man we will go together; we will find out our grandfather’s government, and discover ourselves to his people; I dare say they will be glad to see us, since they loved him so well. . .when I have settled myself in my government, I will send for you all. Oh! what a fine house I will have, and then what a number of servants, and horses, and coaches.’ (178)

Reuben equates William’s successes with riches and wealth as he wishes to inherit his grandfather’s “servants, and horses, and coaches.” Aunt Rachel responds to her nephew with a poignant question: “What would you say. . .if I were to tell you that your
grandfather had no attendants except a few warriors, who from voluntary attachment to his person, followed to protect him from danger; that he had neither horse nor carriage; that his palace was chiefly composed of the bark of the trees?” (178). Aunt Rachel then lectures to the children that “outward circumstances” and ornamentation do not determine “internal peace” and goodness (179). Her lesson to her niece and nephew is simple but it marks the beginning of Rowson’s lesson to her readers in Volume Two: in America, wealth and ornamentation do not segregate the citizenry between the rulers and the ruled. Rowson distinguishes America from the Old World as a site of deliverance from (and not the continuation of) the ostentatious display of power, prestige, and wealth. This lesson becomes much more evident when Reuben, Rachel, Jessy, and Hamden must learn the value of republicanism before assimilating into American society.

In one of her long narrative interjections, Rowson extends her critique of societal stratification. When Major Hamden Auberry comes to Rachel’s aid after she suddenly faints in the theater, Rachel’s date, Mr. Spriggins, is offended by the Major’s gentleness and attentiveness to the young woman. Once left alone with Rachel, Spriggins complains to his date that Major Auberry is “not overburthened with good manners” (250). After this dialogue between Spriggins and Rachel, Rowson writes:

Rachel found that it would be in vain to attempt defending Hamden against the complaints and prejudices of Spriggins, whose contracted mind and very small portion of understanding, would not suffer him to comprehend those nice distinctions which, allowing for the natural equality of man, still preserves that respect, that necessary subordination, due from inferiors to persons of shining abilities, liberal education, and superior understanding; and the ignorant, self-opinionated being who prates of equality, never once conceives the cause of the distinction, which education (more than any other cause) makes between man and man. (251)
Here, Rowson describes a social hierarchy based not on race, class, and gender, but on “shining abilities, liberal education, and superior understanding.” Rowson posits that “education (more than any other cause)” separates “the society of the vulgar ignorant” from the society of “tastes and manners.” Rowson implicates herself in this rigid hierarchy when she defines the role of the author as an educator. In her “Preface,” she professes to educate young girls and women, and thus, the authorship and circulation of her novel to a wide and far flung audience works to democratize, rather than segregate, the new nation. For Rowson, authorship is a means of not only creating but also democratizing a nation.

Rowson educates her readers by modeling for them appropriate “American” republican behavior. Reuben and Jessy and Rachel and Hamden must gain an education in virtue before immigrating to America. Hamden’s biggest fault is his pride and dependence on the Lady Anne’s money and title. Embarrassed by Rachel’s poverty, Hamden hides his marriage from his aunt, the Lady Anne. It is no coincidence that after he learns the value of Rachel’s virtue that he immigrates to America. In a letter to Rachel, Hamden writes, “Our marriage is no longer a secret; my aunt has discarded me. I have sold my commission, and . . . have taken passage on a vessel bound for Philadelphia” (339). After Hamden recognizes and corrects his pride, Rowson, then, allows the Major to reside in America. His wife, Rachel, must also learn the importance of virtue. In fact, at one point in the narrative, Rowson’s narrator interjects, informing her readers that Rachel’s lightheartedness is not the fault that needs readerly attention: “Forbear, ye rigid, ye experienced matrons, to blame our heroine. . . . censure not those who eagerly gather the roses” (242). Rather, Rachel must learn the importance of not only behaving but
appearing virtuous. When she marries Hamden, Rachel agrees to hide her marriage and assumes a false name. Rowson writes, “Her ideas were erroneous, and she found, when too late, it is not only necessary to be virtuous, but to appear so. Alas! pity it is but the semblance is often more respected than the reality” (263). Rachel keeps this secret from her friends for years until she finally confesses to Jessy Oliver. After confiding in Jessy, Rachel travels to America in search of her brother and Hamden. Lastly, Jessy, who loves Reuben dearly, must withstand her father’s request to marry a wealthy and aristocratic suitor. After refusing her father and valuing Reuben’s virtue over wealth, Jessy accompanies Rachel to America in search of Reuben. Hence, Rachel, Hamden, and Jessy immigrate to America only after receiving their republican education.

Yet, it is Reuben’s test of republican virtue that is most important to Rowson’s novel. After his father’s tragic death at sea, Reuben travels to America to organize his father’s finances. On arriving, he learns that his father’s nephew and partner in America, Jacob Holmes, has dealt dishonestly with his father. Jacob refuses to recognize Reuben’s ownership of Mount Pleasant, and consequently, the cousins angrily depart from one another. As a result of his misfortune, Reuben joins the army, where he meets his companion, O’Neil. Like his grandfather before him, William, Reuben is captured by the Indians and the chief of the tribe requests that his daughter, Eumea, learn English. In much the same manner as his grandfather, Reuben teaches Eumea “by boiling the shumak berries, to make a liquid with which he could write on white birch bark. In this manner, he made an alphabet, which she presently learnt” (295). Rowson repeats the scene from Volume One with Ferdinando and Orrabella and William and Oberea as Reuben instructs the Indian maiden in English.
In this scene of education, however, striking differences exist. While Reuben and Eumea exchange each other’s languages, Reuben does not reciprocate Eumea’s affection. Rowson writes:

Here our hero indulged himself in reflection; and often would his thoughts revert to his grandfather, William Dudley, who was for many years in a situation somewhat similar. But Reuben had seen too much of savage men and manners to have a wish to remain among them, even though he might have been elevated to the highest seat of dignity. (295)

While Rowson labels the youth’s captors as “savages,” the more important aspect of her description of Reuben is his temptation to stay with the Indians. Reuben contemplates remaining with Eumea, especially since “he might have been elevated to the highest seat of dignity.” As Rowson shows throughout Reuben and Rachel, Reuben descends from a long line of royalty, from the princess Orrabella to the sachem chief William. When Reuben refuses the “highest seat of dignity” among the Indians, he also rejects Eumea; however, his decision does not denote racist but republican behavior as he denounces titles and power. Ever since childhood, Reuben desired his grandfather’s power and prestige, and in a moment very similar to the republican trials of Hamden, Rachel, and Jessy, as soon as he rejects “the highest seat of dignity,” Reuben escapes from captivity and returns to Philadelphia. Hence, all of Rowson’s characters must demonstrate republican virtue before returning or immigrating to America.

When Reuben travels to Philadelphia, Eumea unexpectedly arrives and declares her love for her instructor. She exclaims, “I tried to obey your injunctions; but, alas! The silent night was witness to my anguish, and the rising sun could not dry the dew from my eyelids. If I slept, I saw you, listened to you and was happy. . .I will follow you my dear instructor; I will be your handmaid, and love and serve you the last hour of my life” (349).
After failing to convince Eumea to return to her parents, Reuben finds a home for the young Indian girl but “if more than two days elapsed without her seeing him, she would give way to the most violent affliction” (354). Her affliction only worsens when on the day of Reuben’s marriage to Jessy, Eumea tragically commits suicide.

Eumea’s suicide is less a display of Rowson’s racism and more a portrayal of her concern regarding current relations between Indians and the colonials. While Eumea and William’s relationship ends, affectionate relationships and marriages between colonials and Native Americas do occur in Volume Two. Eumea’s mother, Victoire, a French protestant, marries the Mohawk sachem, Wampooghoon. And, O’Neil deeply loves Eumea: “Reuben was struck with the fervency and humility that was at once expressed by O’Neil; for it spoke as plain as words could speak, ‘I loved her, but I never dared to tell my love, lest it should offend her’” (361). Thus, placed in the context of these other marriages and the volume’s emphasis on republicanism, Eumea’s suicide does not reinscribe the discourses of imperialism and racism but makes the messages of Volume One and Two more pressing. The author must circulate accounts of history and affection to preserve the multicultural lineage of America as well as to educate the American subject in civic virtue. Castiglia argues that “the tragedy of the novel is the realistic mirroring” of eighteenth-century America. Eumea does not die because of the author’s racism, but because of the contemporary American political climate, and thus, Rowson’s novel becomes even more charged.

Rowson in *Reuben and Rachel* delivers her novel to her American readers in a moment of urgency. As tensions flair with immigrants and as western expansion continues, Rowson understands that her message of cultural cohesion is desperately
needed. *Reuben and Rachel* begins and ends with the suicide of first Bruna and then Eumea. Between these deaths, Rowson authors a model of social harmony knowing full well that atrocities and tragedies have existed and continue to wreck havoc in the New World. In fact, her authorship exposes many of these historical calamities, as Rowson refuses to hide but reveal past as well as current tragedies to her audience. These misfortunes do not stop her authorship but only strengthen her authorial intention. Through authorship, Rowson attempts to bind a nation by offering stories of history and affection. The stories in turn are exchanged among readers in the private and public perpetuating her model of cultural cohesion. Further, her authorship educates her readership, continuing the process of democratization. It is the authorship of social harmony and republicanism that is necessary to Rowson’s vision of America’s historical progress. Like John Winthrop, Rowson envisions America as a city on a hill; unlike Winthrop, however, Rowson’s city consists of immigrants of different races, creeds, and nationalities who are led not by ministers but by authors committed to binding a nation together in story.
NOTES


2 Parker, 69.


5 Wilson, 131.

6 Wilson tells us that Cobbett supported traditional roles for both men and women: “[he] scornfully dismissed the feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft, ridiculed the writings of Susanna Rowson, and sneered at the idea of women in politics” (27).

7 Ibid., 133.

8 John Swanwick, *A Rub from Snub* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Purchaser, 1795), 76. In his pamphlet, Swanwick admits that he does not personally know Rowson.

9 Ibid., 78. Swanwick writes that Cobbett’s “niggardly reprobation of *Mentoria* and *Charlotte*, without assigning any reason, is like hanging a man without a trial” (78).


11 Ibid., 9.

13 Rowson, 10-11.


16 Judith S. Amberg, “Political and Sentimental Discourse in 1790s America: Judith Sargent Murray’s *The Gleaner*, Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette*, and Susanna Haswell Rowson’s *Reuben and Rachel; or Tales of Old Times*” (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1995), 188-89.


18 Susanna Rowson, *Reuben and Rachel; Or, Tales of Old Times. A Novel* (Boston, Massachusetts: Matting and Loring, 1798), i. All subsequent references to *Reuben and Rachel* will be included within the text in parenthesis.

19 Norton, 273.

20 Rush, 29.

21 Baym, 13.

22 In Foster’s *The Coquette*, Mrs. Richman in the well-known salon scene declares her patriotism and interest in the “common weal” (139). In an epistle to the Rev. J. Boyer, Selby pens Mrs. Richman speech and the reaction from the small crowd of friends: “We shall not be called to the senate or the field to assert its privileges, and defend its rights, but we shall feel for the honor and safety of our friends and connections. . . Why should government, which involves the peace and order of society, of which we are a part, be wholly excluded from our observations?” . . . The gentleman applauded Mrs. Richman’s sentiments as truly Roman; and what was more, the said, truly republican” (139). In Murray’s *The Gleaner*, Mrs. Vigilius and her daughter, Margareta exchange dozens of letters on various political and historical persons.

23 Murray, 60.

24 Ibid., 364.


26 Ibid., 101-02.
27 Ibid., 205.

28 Ibid., 207.

29 Smith-Rosenberg, 486.


32 Ibid., 12.

33 For an discussion on the similarities and differences between Rowlandson’s *Narrative* and Rowson’s *Reuben and Rachel*, consult Smith-Rosenberg’s “Subject Female: Authorizing American Identity” and Christopher Castiglia’s “Susanna Rowson’s *Reuben and Rachel*: Captivity, Colonization, and the Domestication of Columbus” in *Redefining the Political Novel: American Women Writers, 1797-1901*, ed. Sharon M. Harris (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 23-42.


36 Castiglia, 24.

37 In her dissertation, Amberg offers a helpful timeline of the escalating Franco-American crisis of the late eighteenth century.


39 Ibid., 164.

40 Ibid., 175.
Contrary to the prevalent critical opinion of *Reuben and Rachel*, Rowson in Volume Two does not support a racial hierarchy, but does illustrate one based on education. While the Irish immigrant O’Neil acts subserviently to Reuben, his deference is not a result of Reuben’s racial superiority. Rowson describes O’Neil:

> Amongst the party of which Reuben was second in command, was an Irish youth, who particularly attached himself to our hero. O’Neil was ignorant, but honest. Like an unpolished diamond, his outward appearance was uncouth and rough; but with was a jewel of an inestimable price. Simplicity, integrity and humanity were the characteristics of his soul. This young man was so pointed to our hero, that it could not pass unnoticed. (287)

O’Neil’s ignorance, and not his nationality, is the important difference between the two men. His habit to “watch till he saw our hero slumber” comes from his affectionate (and voluntary) “attachment” to Reuben (287). In one of her previous interjections, Rowson describes O’Neil’s deference as a “necessary subordination due from inferiors to persons of shining abilities, liberal education, and superior understanding.” Rowson illustrates a social hierarchy based on education, and her authorship works not to further segregate her readers, but to educate and create a democratic and equal nation of readers.

52 Castiglia, 39.
CONCLUSION

REPUBLICAN AUTHORSHIP IN THE ANTEBELLUM ERA

In her Autobiography, which she inscribes to her grandniece, Alice Minot, Catharine Maria Sedgwick describes the last decade of the eighteenth century:1

It was a period of the most bitter hostility between the Federalists and Democrats. The whole nation, from Maine to Georgia, was then divided into these two great parties. . .The Federalist believed that all sound principles, truth, justice, and patriotism, were identified with the upper classes. . .There were honest and noble men. The Democrats had among them much native sagacity; they believed in themselves, some from conceit, some from just conviction. They had less education, intellectual and moral, than their opponents, little refinement, intense desire to grasp the power and place that had been denied to them, and a determination to work out the theories of the government. All this, my dear Alice, as you may suppose, is an afterthought with me. Then I entered fully, and with the faith and ignorance of childhood, into the prejudices of the time. I thought every Democrat was grasping, dishonest, and vulgar, and who have in good faith adopted the creed of a staunch old parson, who, in a Fast-day sermon said, “I don’t say that every horse-thief is a Democrat, but I do say that ever Democrat is a horse-thief!”2

The strong political prejudices that Sedgwick felt as a child were certainly influenced by her father, Theodore Sedgwick, one of the early Republic’s most powerful Federalists. Theodore Sedgwick was elected to the United States House of Representatives, in which he served as speaker, and to the Senate, and he sat as a judge on the Massachusetts Supreme Court until his death in 1813.3 As a child, Sedgwick recalls her father regularly and furiously dismissing the Federalists’ opposition as “Jacobins,” “sans culottes,” and “miscreants.”4 As her father in his various political positions worked to maintain the
hierarchal society that the Federalists supported, her mother, Pamela Dwight Sedgwick, practiced her own household hierarchy, insisting that the servants and family always be segregated. In her *Autobiography*, Sedgwick remembers for her grandniece the bitter partisanship that divided the nation and her home, but in her wise age, she rejects her past intolerance as the mere “ignorance of childhood.”

While Sedgwick dismisses her childhood prejudices, her short story, “A Reminiscence of Federalism” (1835), a loosely autobiographical piece about a summer she enjoyed in the last decade of the eighteenth century in Bennington, Vermont, suggests that she retains some of her family’s biases. The central Democrat in “A Reminiscence of Federalism” is Squire Hayford, who “was the wealthiest man in Carrington. . .Himself first, then his household, his town, his county, his state &c.” While the Federalists were generally defined as wealthy and well-educated and were often accused of being aristocratic, Sedgwick describes Hayford’s prized possession as a family tree “that in a huge black frame stretched its frightful branches over the parlor fireplace. On these branches hung a regiment of militia captains, majors, colonels, sundry justices of the peace; precious fruit all, supported by an illustrious trunk, a certain Sir Silas Hayford, who flourished in the reign of Charles the First.” A tyrannical father, Hayford forbids his daughter’s marriage and refuses her any sustenance once widowed; after her death, he agrees to raise her only son, Randolph, if he relinquishes his biological father’s last name, Gordon. On the other hand, Dr. Atwood, the story’s central Federalist, is a reasonable, moral, and modest man. Unlike Hayford, Atwood promotes the affection between his daughter, Fanny, and Randolph, and he even sacrifices for their happiness. Throughout her story, Sedgwick redirects many of the familiar criticisms regarding the
Federalists—that they were too aristocratic, too oppressive, and too wealthy—against the Democrat. Thus, “A Reminiscence of Federalism” and its heroes and villains suggest that Sedgwick did not completely overcome some of her old prejudices.

While Sedgwick in her antebellum tale maintains the partisanship of the postrevolutionary era, she also retains the authorial practices from that age. In “A Reminiscence of Federalism,” Randolph Hayford, the grandson of Squire Hayford, is an anonymous author, who writes a column—one that has received county and state acclaim—for a Democratic newspaper. Describing the conversation between the grandson and grandfather when Randolph offers his grandfather the reasoning for his adoption of a pseudonym, Sedgwick states:

‘The articles have far more reputation and influence, (if I may believe they have influence) than if they were known to proceed from a young man whose name has no authority.’

‘Hoity-toity! Who’s got a better name than yours? A’nt willing the Hayfords should have the credit, hey!’ Randolph did not vouchsafe any reply to the squire’s absurd mistake, and after a few moments his gratified vanity regained its ascendancy.9

In writing under a pseudonym, Randolph balances autocratic and democratic impulses: he does not use the Hayford name so to distance himself from its “hoity-toity” associations and to appear more democratic; yet, he chooses anonymity to conceal his inexperience and garner support from his audience. Randolph’s authorial balancing act continues when his grandfather urges his authorship to be “more about men, less of principles. They want fire too; egad. I’d send them red hot bullets.”10 While Randolph identifies himself as a Democrat, party loyalty does not dictate his values:

My grandfather says to me, in his vulgar slang, between two stools you will fall to the ground. Be it so. It will be ground on which I can firmly
plant my foot, and look up to heaven with a consciousness that I have not offended against the goodness that made me a citizen of a country destined to be the greatest and happiest the world ever saw, provided we are true to our political duties.  

Randolph continues “to stand between two stools” and balance Federalist and Democratic impulses when he, as a Democrat, signs his voting ballot with the name of the Federalist candidate, “an honest man” and not a “demagogue.” After his grandfather dies, Randolph changes his last name to Gordon, his biological father’s last name. Like so many republican authors, Randolph deploys multiple identities—Randolph Hayford, Hampden, and Randolph Gordon—and defines his authorship as a balancing act between “two stools.”

Thus, Sedgwick’s tale is not just “a reminiscence” of the politics of the age but it also expresses nostalgia for the model of republican authorship that emerged from the partisan early years of the new nation. In “Cacoethes Scribendi” (1830), perhaps her most anthologized short story, Sedgwick similarly gestures to the model of republican authorship in her portrayal of Mrs. Courland and her nephew, Ralph Hepburn. After reading the “North American review from beginning to end,” Mrs. Courland “felt some obscure intimations, within her secret soul, that she might herself become an author.” Mrs. Courland soon encourages her three sisters to write, and soon, they all suffer from a “literary fever,” penning for and publishing in a wide assortment of journals; however, Mrs. Courland fails to convince her mother or her daughter, Alice, to write. Determined to see her daughter’s name in print, Mrs. Courland sends one of Alice’s compositions from school to a journal. When Mrs. Courland hands the journal with the published composition to her daughter, Sedgwick describes Alice’s violent reaction to her
name in print: “The moment her eye glanced on the fatal page, all her apathy vanished—
depth crimson overspread her cheeks, brow, and neck. She burst into tears of irrepressible
vexation, and threw the book into the blazing fire. The gentle Alice!” To her fault, we
learn, Mrs. Courland “divided the world into two classes, or rather parts—authors and
subjects for authors; the one active, the other passive.” Alice becomes one of her
mother’s “subjects” as the tyrannical author publishes a composition of her daughter’s
without her permission.

Ralph Hepburn is Alice’s love interest and is also an author-figure. Like so many
republican authors or author-figures, Ralph holds various jobs as a farmer, bee-keeper,
“woodcrafter,” manufacturer of “farming utensils,” inventor who “improved upon old
inventions, and struck out some new ones,” partridge tamer, squirrel domesticator, and
rival of the “Scheherazade herself in telling stories.” Mrs. Courland encourages Ralph
to write for “fame and fortune” and to send his stories to journals; after repeatedly
refusing her pleas, however, he finally writes a story, telling his aunt, “If it moves you,
my dear aunt, if it meets your approbation, my destiny is decided.” Unlike Mrs.
Courland who treats the reader, Alice in particular, as a “passive subject,” Ralph writes a
story that recognizes Alice’s needs: “Ralph had dutifully and prettily asked in that short
and true story of his love for his sweet cousin Alice.” Similar to Brown in Clara Howard
who depicts the author-reader relationship as a heterosexual romance, Sedgwick
privileges Ralph and Alice as a model of the author-reader relationship. In “Cacoethes
Scribendi,” Sedgwick insists that authors cannot write for “fame and fortune” and
tyrannize over their readers, treating them like mere “passive subjects”; rather, the
antebellum author, like the republican author, must engage readers and write for their benefit.

As I claim in the Introduction, postrevolutionary authors were traditionally rejected because they appeared as mere “men and women of letters” who wrote as avocation rather than vocation. Critics have also dismissed them because of the lack of a linear and recognizable trajectory between the postrevolutionary and the antebellum traditions. Yet, as evidenced by Sedgwick, republican authors did influence the next generation of authors. In closing his study, Grantland Rice offers comparisons between late seventeenth-century writers and Holgrave from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of Seven Gables* (1851):

I conclude my argument by demonstrating the connection between Hawthorne’s authorial figure of Holgrave with the early dissenting Salem writer Thomas Maule, not to introduce a new reading of *The House of Seven Gables*, but to call attention to perhaps the most famous antebellum author’s invocation of an embattled Puritan tradition of civic authorship in what was probably his most popular book.19

While Rice presents fascinating connections between the fictional Holgrave and the historical Thomas Maule, I suggest that Hawthorne invokes the republican tradition of authorship—and not just the Puritan tradition as Rice claims—in his portrayal of Holgrave. Like Sedgwick’s Ralph or Murray’s Mr. Vigillius, Holgrave has various professional identities from “country-schoolmaster, [and]. . .dentist” to “a supernumerary official [and]” and author.20 Similar to *The Gleaner’s* Mr. Vigillius, Holgrave appears to reside in the Pyncheon mansion as a monitor whose his gaze and authorship are importantly interconnected, especially when he narrates a story to Phoebe and decides whether or not to be a tyrannical author (like his ancestor Matthew Maule). The
continuities between antebellum and postrevolutionary authors demonstrate that these eras are not diametrically opposed as once thought but share important and compelling affinities.

Yet, while I argue these similarities need to be recognized in order to amend the narrative of American literary history, I do understand that differences do exist as well. Hawthorne in “The Custom-House” of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) admits that “only a few will understand him” and directs his novel to his “ideal reader,” “to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy.” Unlike Brown, Murray, and Foster, he does not attempt to train the general reader into a more careful and meticulous reader. Indeed, Melville, in “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850), comments how Hawthorne has successfully “hoodwinked the world,” by writing to the “superficial skimmer of pages” and the “eagle-eyed reader.” Postrevolutionary authors recognize that the “superficial skimmer of pages” does exist in the nation; however, unlike Hawthorne, I argue that republican authors are deeply committed to training, monitoring, and disciplining this skimmer into an ideal reader and ultimately (ideally), an ideal author.

In closing “The Custom-House,” Hawthorne pens:

> It many be, however,— O, transporting and triumphant thought!—that the great grandchildren of the present race may sometimes think kindly of the scribbler of bygone days, when the antiquary of days to come, among the sites memorable in the town’s history, shall point out the locality of THE TOWN-PUMP!

Always interested in family lineages, Hawthorne meditates upon “the great grandchildren of the present race” and how as an author he and “his literary efforts” will be remembered. While I conclude my dissertation meditating on the differences and similarities of the antebellum and postrevolutionary authors, I quote Hawthorne in order to address the
“scribbler” of his “bygone days.” Removing the shadow of the Puritans and the Romantics from our conceptualization of the postrevolutionary period, “‘To Collect, Digest, and Arrange’: Authorship in the Early American Republic, 1792-1801” offers the reader a paradigm that reveals the republican author’s unique role and function in the new nation.
NOTES

1 In her “Editorial Note” in The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick, ed. Mary Kelley (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), Mary Kelley writes, “Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s autobiography and journals are deposited at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Divided into two sections and dated 5 May 1853 and 10 March 1860, the two volumes of the autobiography were composed as a series of recollections for Alice Minot, the young daughter of Sedgwick’s niece, Kate Sedgwick Minot. . .Mary E. Dewey included portions of the autobiography in The Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick, a selection of Sedgwick’s letters and journals published by Harper and Brothers in 1872” (ix-x).


5 Ibid., 12.

6 Ibid., 9.


8 Ibid., 1032.

9 Ibid., 1032.

10 Ibid., 1032.

11 Ibid., 1034-35.

12 Ibid., 1034.

14 Ibid., 56.

15 Ibid., 58-59.

16 Ibid., 55.

17 Ibid., 51.

18 Ibid., 57.

19 Rice, 176.


23 Hawthorne, Scarlet Letter, 45.
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