Representations of Gender in Juvenile Literature During the Era of the American Revolution

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REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER IN JUVENILE LITERATURE
DURING THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

by

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B.A. August 1994, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER IN JUVENILE LITERATURE
DURING THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Sandra Strohhofer Pryor
Old Dominion University, 1996
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This study investigates representations of gender in fiction during the era of the American Revolution. Literature has an important role in creating and responding to cultural values, as well as in conveying ideologies. Through analysis of fictional stories for children, the simultaneous presence of themes of gender, religion, liberalism, and republicanism will be documented. Children's stories from England were reprinted in America after the Revolution. The continuity between late nineteenth century American success narratives and their early eighteenth century British precursors, as well as their gendered nature, will be demonstrated.

American fiction of the late eighteenth century foreshadowed both the mid-nineteenth century domestic novel and the gender ideology of female moral reformers. This study suggests that women might be regarded as republican friends, as well as republican wives and mothers. Young women are represented as forming semipublic communication networks that defy the dichotomy between public and private spheres. Most of the primary sources used in this study consist of fictional stories from the Early American Imprints collection.
To Anton Strohhofer, M.D.

Jane Strohhofer

and Carla Pryor
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most congenial working environment. Michalene Murawski introduced me to literary theory, provided sympathetic criticism from the viewpoint of a literary scholar, was always been willing to listen and was the best of friends.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my family, to whom this thesis is dedicated. My parents, Dr. Anton Strohhofer and Jane Strohhofer, have supported all of my academic endeavors and provided encouragement and childcare; without them this thesis would never have been written. My daughter, Carla Pryor, is my inspiration and my joy, and she has helped me to keep this project in perspective by reminding me that the real purpose of children’s stories is delight.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses fictional representations of
childhood and adolescence during the era of the American
Revolution. Much of the rhetoric of the American
Revolution, as well as normative gender roles, were imported
from England to America. Children’s stories, many of which
were originally written in England and subsequently printed
in America, provide an opportunity to analyze one aspect of
the process of cultural transmission. Moreover, fiction by
American writers may suggest divergences from English
juvenile literature. The children’s stories discussed in
this thesis demonstrate that virtue was highly gendered in
England before the American Revolution, and that the
"American" success story had clear British origins. In
early fictional success narratives, boys achieve wealth and
status through industry (and frequently through the
benevolent intervention of an aristocrat), while girls
achieve the same results by attracting a prestigious
husband. However, for both sexes filial obedience and piety
were essential for upward mobility.

The thesis will suggest that for young American women
adolescence was regarded as a distinctive stage of life, and
that fictional women were portrayed as dominant in their
families in a way more usually associated with the mid-
nineteenth century. The thesis will discuss a fictional
representation of young women forming semipublic
communication networks, neither wholly public nor completely private, among themselves. Such a mode of communication implies that the gender line between the "public" and the "private" was not rigidly defined but instead was flexible and permeable.

The study of fiction for young people must be placed in its cultural context; thus, studies of American Revolutionary ideology, the early American novel, women and gender, and the social history of the family and its relationship to the community inform this thesis. Bernard Bailyn found the "ideological origins of the American Revolution" in British political theory; and Gordon Wood argues that civic republicanism, with its emphasis on virtue and the public good, infused the political culture of the era of the American Revolution.1 Ruth Bloch suggests that millennial Protestantism informed the responses of Americans to their political situation, and Patricia Bonomi argues that the challenges to ministerial authority by evangelicals during the Great Awakening prepared evangelicals for

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According to Mary Beth Norton, women's traditional activities and the domestic realm itself became more highly valued due to women's support of the war effort. Thus, Norton disagrees with the traditional thesis that the colonial period was a kind of "golden age" for women; instead women's status improved as a consequence of the Revolution.\footnote{Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980). Women's involvement with boycotts, the homespun movement, and management of farms and businesses created a new valuation of women's traditional activities. John Demos accepts the "golden age" thesis that women demonstrated no real deference to men during the early colonial period. See John Demos, A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). Similarly, Nancy Cott argues that the increase in divorce petitions in eighteenth-century Massachusetts suggests a rise in the status of women,
Linda Kerber analyzes the development of a new semipublic role for women as "republican mothers" which recognized women's roles in raising the virtuous citizens who would be the foundation of the new republic. According to Kerber, the ideology had a salutary effect upon the education of women, for a degree of political sophistication was requisite to the fulfillment of their new role. However, republican motherhood also constrained women because it entailed an expectation of deference to men.4

While Kerber discusses intellectual and political factors, Ruth Bloch notes that the development of "moral motherhood" was influenced by structural changes such as the separation of work and home, the decline in domestic production, and the increase in literacy.5 Juvenile literature suggests that the role of mothers in educating their children to be moral as well as literate was hardly an American invention. However, patriotism as a defense of intellectual education for women is not evident in English stories from the same time period.


Other historians have focused on women's relationships with their husbands and among themselves. Jan Lewis suggests that the role of "republican wife" as a companion who sustains the virtue of her republican husband in an affectionate marriage, was even more important than the role of republican mother. Nancy Cott and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg use women's private diaries and letters to analyze both the ideology of "separate spheres" and the relationships among women from the Revolutionary era through the antebellum periods. According to their analyses, women highly valued their close, affectionate friendships and regarded them as central to their lives. This study will suggest that the ideologies of republican mother and republican wife were complementary; moreover, I propose a third concept which might be called "republican friendship."

While studies of republican motherhood discuss ideology, social historians of the family attempt to ascertain actual childrearing practices as well as the cultural attitudes toward children. The family has been investigated through community studies applying historical demography and through analysis of mentalite using primarily

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literary evidence. The most recent studies integrate the history of the family with a wider cultural history that discusses social, economic, political, religious, and gender issues. The present study of juvenile literature in the era of the American Revolution focuses on representations of gender; however these will be considered within their wider context of both the cultural ideologies of the Revolutionary era and the social history of the family in early America.

Three of the most important early paradigms of family history were developed by Edmund Morgan, Philippe Aries, and Lawrence Stone, who analyze different geographical areas and periods. Morgan discusses early American Puritan families, Aries describes French families from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century, and Stone focuses on English families from 1500 to 1800. All three rely extensively on literary sources and apply findings derived from literate aristocratic and/or middle class families to society as a whole.

Edmund Morgan's influential early book, The Puritan Family, analyzed literary evidence, such as Puritan sermons,  

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to connect Puritan religious beliefs to the Puritan family system. Puritanism entailed the acceptance of orderly hierarchical relationships of master and servant, husband and wife, parent and child. Morgan argues that the system failed because the church became exclusive.\textsuperscript{8} Other historians dispute Morgan's argument that "Puritan tribalism" indicated religious decline. Gerald Moran and Maris Vinovskis demonstrate the mutual influence between family and religion, arguing that church records indicate that the Puritan family was a force for revitalization of collective religious traditions.\textsuperscript{9} Exhortations to piety are frequently present in children's fiction, obedience is frequently presented as a religious as well as moral duty, and catechisms and religious literature for children were printed through the era of the early republic. Such continuity suggests the continuing emphasis on religious instruction for children.

The presence of children's literature implies that the perception of childhood as a distinctive stage of life existed. In his study of French families, however, Philippe


Aries argues that the concept of childhood did not exist before the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The premodern family was characterized by its intermingling with nonfamily members, a lack of privacy, and the involvement of both children and adults in household economic production. Aries' connection of the discovery of childhood with the emergence of the modern sentimental, private family links the history of childhood to family structure and social, economic, and cultural change. On the other hand, Linda Pollock argues for continuity between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than dramatic change, and documents the existence of affectionate parent-child relationships in the early modern period. Children's stories written in England during the early and mid-eighteenth century and later published in America portray affectionate relationships between parents and children; however filial obedience is also deemed necessary. Thus, children's literature substantiates both Morgan's portrait of hierarchy and Pollock's argument for affectionate relationships.

__10__Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 404. Pollock's argument is based on a study of diaries supported by sociobiological and anthropological data which demonstrate cross-cultural similarities in childrearing. Moreover, according to Pollock and Hareven, there were varying childrearing practices coexisting, not a linear evolution. See Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Tamara Hareven, "Modernization and Family History: Perspectives on Social Change," *Signs* 2 (Autumn 1976), 190-206.
Lawrence Stone's analysis of English families presents an argument for the cultural modernization of the family. He thus both extends and revises earlier modernization theories that industrialization, urbanization, and patriarchal decline changed the family. Stone argues that transformations in attitudes and values preceded economic changes. He describes the evolution of the family through three chronologically overlapping types with the critical change being that from patriarchy to "affective individualism." The great strength of Stone's method is its "multicausal" character; religious, social, economic, and ideological change are considered in the context of cultural evolution. The weaknesses of Stone's argument include his generalizing from bourgeois families to all groups, an almost exclusive reliance on literary sources, the stereotyping of poor families as brutal, and an acceptance of the bourgeoisie as the vanguard of cultural modernization.\footnote{Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), and "Family History," 399-414.}

The community study approach to the history of the family is quite different from that of Morgan, Aries, and Stone, who use written sources from the literate middle and upper classes. While Morgan may have focused on family networks as a means of maintaining order, it was not until the 1970s that historians began to use community studies.
Historians such as John Demos and Philip Greven use sources such as inventories, wills, land deeds, town and colony records, and court cases, to reconstruct the life of "average" people and to discuss family structure in the context of a general social and economic analysis of a specific community. Such an approach can elucidate how stages of life, including childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, were conceptualized. Analysis of juvenile literature demonstrates that authors were aware that children of varying ages required different reading materials, and they produced a broad range of chapbooks including nursery rhymes, simple fables, picture books, juvenile novels, and catechisms directed to different age groups. Such variety indicates that at least some eighteenth-century people recognized developmental stages of children.

Yet not all historians agree that colonial people recognized childhood as a distinctive stage of life. John Demos accepts Aries' view that the concept of childhood hardly existed, and Morgan's view that children were placed in apprenticeships around age seven to avoid excessive parental affection. He integrates family history with the history of Plymouth Colony, where the family functioned as a business, a school, a vocational institute, a church, and a welfare institution. Demos accepts the modernization theory that industrialization and the end of household production caused the change from families interconnected with the
community to private nuclear families. Yet Demos revises this interpretation by arguing that there were intimations of this process as early as the seventeenth century. Demos uses demographic analysis to infer the presence of nuclear families from the earliest colonial days. The conceptual continuity with Morgan is apparent; both discuss the same binary hierarchical relationships. Although Demos's description of the life course relies rather heavily on Eriksonian developmental psychology, his interdisciplinary approach has become standard.\textsuperscript{12}

Like Demos, Philip Greven also uses the methods of historical demography and the community study. Yet his study of \textit{Four Generations}, in Andover, Massachusetts, reaches rather different conclusions than Demos. Greven's thesis is that landownership was of paramount importance to families; the practice of fathers controlling land until their deaths fostered patriarchal authority. Marriage was primarily an economic arrangement because parental consent was required to obtain the land that was a prerequisite for independence. The problem of land scarcity prompted earlier independence for later generations when sons migrated or settled in a trade. Greven argues that families were extended rather than nuclear due to the centrality of

\textsuperscript{12}Demos, \textit{A Little Commonwealth}, esp. 180-90; Hareven, whose research focuses on nineteenth-century families, also observes that some characteristics of modern family behavior appeared before industrialization in "Modernization and Family History," 190-206.
kinship networks. Thus, Greven regards analysis of economic context and kinship networks as essential to family history.¹³

The most important contribution of *Four Generations* is Greven's analysis of change over time and the interrelationship among social, economic, and demographic factors and the history of the family. Greven uses a radically different approach in his second book, *The Protestant Temperament*, written eight years later. Indeed, a comparison of these two books is a good example both of the difference between the two types of family history described by Smith and of how a historian's ideas and methods evolve. The economic and demographic factors so integral to *Four Generations* are virtually ignored in *The Protestant Temperament*, which relies heavily on quotations from the writings of prominent individuals and prescriptive literature.

Greven argues that three distinctive temperaments, "evangelical," "moderate," and "genteel," existed simultaneously in America from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. He argues that evangelical parents, who had the strongest religious convictions, practiced authoritarian will-breaking in isolated nuclear families. Moderate parents combined love, fear, and duty,

and stressed self-control rather than external discipline. Genteel parents had no deep religious convictions, were indulgent and affectionate, and delegated to servants the responsibility for the quotidian tasks of childrearing to servants. Greven's theoretical paradigm is based on a combination of psychological theory and contradictions within Puritanism noted by other historians. His emphasis on the continuity of widely diverging childrearing practices over time represents an important departure from earlier linear interpretations of changes in the family.14

Greven is one of the first historians to analyze the gendering of childhood, faith, and conversion and to describe the role of the family in social, political, and religious reproduction. Such observations are important for the study of juvenile literature, because the fiction considered in this thesis portrays parental love, filial obedience and duty, and emphasizes the Lockean philosophy of bending rather than breaking children's wills. Thus, fictional portrayals resemble Greven's moderate style of childrearing. Many of the stories contain warnings to elite parents against overindulgence, which implies that Greven's "genteel" style of childrearing was also present in England. When variations in childrearing practices and fictional representations are considered in a comparative

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transatlantic context, it appears that "moderate" and "genteel" styles of childrearing were hardly unique to America.

Children's stories frequently portray upward social mobility for diligent, obedient, industrious boys, which suggests a departure from rigid categories of class. Daniel Scott Smith uses historical demography to infer modernization in values and attitudes as well as patterns of behavior. He argues that the appearance of unique names for siblings and a decline around 1800 in naming children for kin supports the Aries thesis, and that a shift from parental control to individual choice in marriage in the late eighteenth century substantiates Stone's thesis.\(^5\)

Roger Thompson uses community study methodology to test Stone's modernization thesis. Seventeenth-century Middlesex, Massachusetts, families should be "restricted patriarchal nuclear" according to the Stone paradigm; however, Thompson found affectionate families, courtship choices based on love rather than paternal control and economics, and a distinctive youth culture characterized by

clandestine gatherings. Although the juvenile literature discussed in this study suggests the presence of a concept of adolescents, many stories place greater emphasis on rational choice than romantic attraction in marriage.

Both the history of the family in general and the history of childhood in particular have been influenced by Tamara Hareven's interpretation of the life course, which differentiates among the family cycle, the individual life course, and the relationship between these and social change. This theoretical perspective opened the possibility that the family could be an active as well as passive agent. Hareven's conception revises the interpretation that economic and demographic changes determined family structure to allow for interaction and mutual influence.

The history of childhood has been approached both as a subfield within family history and as a specialty in its own right. Ross Beales's critique of the Aries thesis anticipated the "individual time" aspect of life course theory. He argues that the Puritans recognized at least four stages of life: childhood, youth, middle age, old age.

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and sometimes infancy. Beales uses as sources both Puritan sermons, theology, and descriptions of age groups as well as patterns of apprenticeship, household formation, and descriptions of youthful behavior. Thus, the idea of "miniature adulthood" must be relegated to "a minor chapter in the history of social thought." Early children's stories support Beales' argument, because they portray behavior that is clearly childlike.

David Stannard also argues that the Puritans had a concept of childhood, albeit one that differed from contemporary ideas. The Puritan child's early awareness of sin and death did not imply the lack of a concept of childhood. Puritan journals, autobiographies, histories, and parental advice literature demonstrate the social expectation of affectionate relationships between parents and children. Thus, according to Stannard, the Aries thesis may not be applicable to America.

Both Beales and Stannard relate theology to ideas about childhood and childrearing practices. Peter Gregg Slater also relies on literary sources; his observation that concepts of childhood indicate more about the adults who

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produced them than about the lives of children themselves also applies to children's fiction. According to Slater, Calvinist and Lockean authors provided similar advice on everyday matters; Calvinists' predestinarian theology did not preclude an important role for parents in their children's conversion.²⁰

Constance Schultz notes the complexity of the history of childhood. Generalization is problematic, she argues, because the experiences of children varied by geographic location, race, ethnicity, and social class. She describes the links among sources, method and theory: literary sources with literary and psychological theory; quantitative methods with theories from economics, anthropology, and sociology; material culture with art history and folklore.²¹ The use of such various sources raises questions about interpretation when evidence from literature and material culture diverge.

Different sources suggest diverging interpretations of adolescence in the era of the American Revolution. This thesis will suggest that the concept of adolescence for girls, as well as for boys, was evident in juvenile fiction. Yet through analysis of material culture, Karin Calvert discovered a more complex visual cultural vocabulary for


boys than for girls, suggesting that the idea of adolescence developed earlier for boys. According to Calvert, there were two major shifts in ideas about childhood and childrearing practices. Children were regarded as "inchoate adults" until around 1750, when the belief that parents had an important role in forming the character of their children led to a more "natural" style of childrearing. She assigns a key role in this process to the influence of John Locke and the idea of natural law. After 1830, "innocence" had become an ideal for adults as well as children.\(^{22}\)

The relationship among the family, community, and economic factors, like changes in the family and childhood over time, has been studied by historians. While James Lemon uses statistical evidence to infer an entrepreneurial individualism among eighteenth-century Pennsylvania settlers, James Henretta argues that the importance of family lineage and the welfare of the whole family constrained the development of individualism and capitalism. His interpretation of prolonged paternal control over land as prudent management of family property, rather than an end in itself, disagrees with Greven's and Daniel Scott Smith's interpretations. Thus, the history of the family relates to larger concerns, such as the emergence of capitalism.\(^{23}\)


\(^{23}\)James Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 35
Helena Wall's recent book, *Fierce Communion: Family and Community in Early America*, discusses the social functions of apprenticeship and "putting out" children in the context of her analysis of the relationship between family and community. The functions of child labor include substitution for parental care in cases of family crisis, provision for illegitimate children, and discipline in some cases. The most common reason for childhood apprenticeship, however, was poverty. Thus, Wall's analysis of child labor diverges sharply from that of Morgan's argument that children were put out to avoid spoiling them, and Demos' contention that servants and apprentices were treated like family members. Instead, in court cases Wall finds power struggles between parents and masters, complaints for failure to teach child apprentices a trade, child neglect, and cruelty. Thus, Wall devotes considerable attention to class and how its role increased over time with the rise of

the market economy.\textsuperscript{24}

Wall's general thesis is that the community context was central to colonial families. Corporatism was evident in the constant presence of neighborly oversight, lack of privacy, and overriding concern with reputation. Moreover, she argues that marital partners were bound to the community as well as to one another, and that a wide range of unrelated people, as well as members of the extended family, assumed responsibility for children. According to Wall, practical, religious, and ideological grounds for community support of household patriarchy were inextricably intertwined. She discusses the ongoing tension between individual and community, and suggests that community life declined as a result of gradual socioeconomic shifts rather than because of political or religious upheaval.\textsuperscript{25}

Wall's work demonstrates the need to examine the role of class in childhood apprenticeships and the possibility that ideas about religion and the family differed for various social classes. It points to the necessity of eventually expanding the present study to include the problem of child labor; moreover, the centrality of community implies that cultural values were taught and


\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., esp. 49-85. Wall argues that community was central in other regions of America as well; New England was merely a more extreme example of a general pattern.
learned in a broader context than that of the family alone. Children’s stories frequently depict associations among young characters and people from the community other than family members; relationships between people of different social classes are portrayed as harmonious. Such divergence between the representation of, and the reality of, class relations suggests that the ideology embedded in children’s stories may have helped to obscure unpleasant social actualities.

Mary P. Ryan, like Helena Wall, devotes considerable attention to questions of social class, and her work also suggests ways in which the reality and the representations of class and upward mobility diverged. Cradle of the Middle Class, Ryan’s study of changes in the family and concepts of gender in antebellum Oneida County, New York, during its transition from agriculture, to small-scale artisan manufacturing, to industrialization, describes the development of a middle class. She uses both literary and statistical sources to synthesize religious, family, social, and economic history to argue that class and religious issues were interwoven with the family and gender. Ryan suggests that women played a role in middle class formation, because the whole family sacrificed to ensure that their boys would obtain the necessary education for the new middle-class occupations. Thus, the "self-made man" was a
mythical ideological construction. In children's stories, the boys who become successful do so with the help of aristocrats rather than by industry alone and the role of women in the process is minimized.

According to Ryan, the increasing identification of women with their roles as mothers and their activities in maternal associations led them to other areas of reform, such as temperance, abolition, and moral reform. One of the best features of Ryan's analysis is her attention to the maternal associations and mother's magazines. As vehicles of women's empowerment, such associations led evangelical women past the church into more secular benevolent activity. Yet, she argues that women's influence was restricted to their "sphere" of home, family, church, and charity; it did not extend to business or politics. Ryan's analysis of networks of benevolent women, like Wall's discussion of community, suggests the context of the creation of a readership of young women.

While Wall and Ryan analyzes family and community in New England, other historians discuss different regions. Barry Levy analyzes the connections among Quaker domesticity, wealth, economy, power, and social conditions in a transatlantic perspective. He argues that Quaker

\footnote{Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 144-85.}

\footnote{Ibid., 105-27, 230-41.}
religious beliefs were the key to their childrearing practices; George Fox and Margaret Fell developed "female-centered domesticity" in the seventeenth century from Quaker religious experiences and "middling" values. Levy's argument revises the interpretation that domesticity was the creation of nineteenth-century social reformers.28

The study of family, community, and ethnicity began with Stephanie Grauman Wolf's ethnography of Germantown, Pennsylvania, which describes the rapid acculturation and assimilation of a heterogenous population.29 Studies of the Chesapeake also address the history of childhood in the context of family and community. According to Daniel Blake Smith and Jan Lewis, eighteenth-century Chesapeake families became closer and more affectionate.30 Darrett and Anita Rutman found that Middlesex County, Virginia, had a


structure of concentric circles; thus community was important despite the lack of New England-style nucleated villages. Allan Kulikoff addresses issues of economics, class, race, gender, family structure, ideology, and the central role of the family in the development of Chesapeake society and culture. He revises the idea that families became more affectionate, and argues instead that such sentiments were incorporated into household patriarchy.

Differences between the regional culture of the Chesapeake and that of New England, where most juvenile literature was printed, point to some limitations of the present study.

However, this thesis will address the relationship between women's history and family history, which Louise Tilly characterizes as "problematic" since their emergence in the 1970s. Tilly criticizes the "household strategies" approach to family history for neglect of conflicts and relationships of power within households. Women's history, she argues, generally focuses on formal political activity and regards the family as "contingent" to society and


politics. Carole Shammas calls for politicizing family history and developing a political history that incorporates households, because most people fell under household governance through the early national period.34

Other recent articles suggest that family history is best approached in a broad cultural context; the literature discussed in this thesis is one aspect of such a frame of reference. Tamara Hareven suggests the use of social space and the relationship of the family to religion and the state, reintegrating those on the "edges" of family life, and systematic study of kinship. She notes how cultural values, as well as economic factors determined family strategies. Katherine Lynch discusses the need to understand the family as a mediator between private life and larger communities. Lynch agrees with Tilly's criticism of the "household strategies" approach and with Hareven's emphasis on studies of relationships between ideologies of the family, social policy, and the state. She notes that politicizing family history and reintegrating the family into the history of civil society raises questions about the exclusion of women from the "public sphere."35


This thesis will suggest that the dichotomy between "public" and "private" needs to be reexamined. The representation of a semipublic network of communication among young women in a novel for adolescent girls will be investigated. Such a sphere of communication, neither wholly public nor wholly private, suggests that the categories of public and private may have been relatively flexible and fluid, or that the "public sphere" has been rhetorically--but not actually--appropriated by men. Thus, the present study engages the debate among scholars who apply Jurgen Habermas's theory of a "public sphere" of rational discourse distinct from the family, state, and civil society to women's and gender history. Joan Landes and Susan Juster argue that the democratic movements in France and America, respectively, were profoundly masculine; women were excluded from the revolutionary public sphere. On the other hand, Nancy Fraser argues that multiple public spheres were constructed by marginalized groups such as workers and women; and Mary P. Ryan suggests that women's social experiences were more complex than a dichotomy.


between public and private would indicate.  

The interdisciplinary approach is clearly evident in the study of the family. Use of methodology and theory from other disciplines enables a wide variety of topics to be addressed and synthesized; however theories from another discipline may not be directly applicable to historical investigation. Recent works indicate that family history that considers cultural values, and cultural history that discusses families, are converging. The specialized topics and approaches discussed in previous work, as well as neglected topics such as ethnic and sectarian families, should be illuminated by this approach. The analysis of juvenile literature in this thesis is one such specialized topic.

Although the study of childhood through children's literature is unavoidably biased towards the literate middle and upper classes, it sheds light both on what some children read and on the attitudes and values of the adults who wrote, bought, and read children's books. Monica Kiefer's early study describes the history of children in the family as expressed in children's books. She suggests that during the Revolutionary era, the religious orientation of

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37Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," in Habermas and the Public Sphere, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992), 109-42; Mary P. Ryan, Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), and "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in Calhoun, ed. Habermas and the Public Sphere, 259-88.
children's books was replaced with a more secular, utilitarian philosophy which emphasized learning and industry, and was accompanied by a shift from a view of children as small, ignorant adults to one of children as valued for their own sake. Yet Kiefer found continuity in adults' care and concern for children. She describes the portrayal of different activities for boys and girls in children's books.38

Mary Lystad dates the shift in children's books much later than Keifer. Lystad combines literary analysis of selected children's books with quantitative content analysis. She argues that although emphasis on proper social behavior increased, and patriotic themes appeared after the Revolution, the religious message in children's books continued. Almost three-fourths of children's books contain some religious instruction even if the primary purpose of the book was instruction or amusement.39

Gail Murray's interpretation of children's literature in the early republic is quite different from Lystad's. John Locke's idea of the child as impressionable and in need of moral instruction, and the belief that children's books should be entertaining as well as instructive, were


39 Mary Lystad, From Dr. Mather to Dr. Seuss: Two Hundred Years of American Books for Children (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980).
influential in both England and America. Murray argues that the most important influences on children's books were ideas of the American Enlightenment and civic republicanism. Murray does not explore the possibility that Calvinism, economic "liberalism," and republicanism could have been simultaneously expressed in children's literature. The present study will suggest that these three ideologies were complementary rather than contradictory in juvenile literature.  

Several studies of children's literature discuss changes in narrative form and analyze the literary quality of selected texts. Seniel Lucien combines literary criticism with social and historical analysis in her study of the popular children's story "Little Goody Two-Shoes.


The orphan heroine devises methods of teaching other children that both acknowledge levels of development and express adult piety and morality; as a result she becomes the most socially prominent citizen of her community. Lucien notes that this story was the first to express girls' feelings of body inequality but does not explore the possibility that girls who became schoolteachers may have been influenced by this narrative. She notes the appeal of the story to boys, who would recognize the greater likelihood of social mobility for males than females.42

While Lucien notes the popularity of one story on both sides of the Atlantic, Gillian Avery analyzes the cultural transmission of children's literature from England to America in the eighteenth century. Avery suggests that an American style of children's literature clearly distinguishable from its British forbearers did not emerge until after the late 1820s, and differences were not fully developed until the 1840s. American stories were characterized by the value they placed on individual initiative, and by a realistic orientation. In comparison, British stories valued knowing one's place in a hierarchical society and loyalty to the group. While family stories were popular in America, fairy tales were popular in England.

Such differences in style and subject reflected differing ideas about childhood and childrearing practices.\(^{43}\)

The children's literature Avery studies are one aspect of the history of literature in general. Some studies of early American literature inform this thesis because any discussion of juvenile literature must address the question of the role of fiction in shaping and reflecting social values and expressing cultural meanings. Jay Fliegelman analyzes both popular fiction and political literature to discuss antipatriarchal metaphors of the family in the rhetoric of the American Revolution. Literary scholar Cathy Davidson discusses the popularity of novels, especially among women, during the era of the American Revolution, and suggests that fiction had as great an influence on American culture as did politics. Mary Kelley bridges literary, social, and women's history by exploring the lives and novels of the best-selling women writers of the nineteenth century, and discusses their ambivalent position as private and domestic, yet economic providers and cultural producers.\(^{44}\) I would suggest that Kelley's nineteenth-


century "literary domesticity" had eighteenth-century precedents.

Because juvenile literature was the province of the upper and middle classes, this study will consider the context of the creation of a middle class. According to Richard Bushman's study of The Refinement of America, genteel culture is a "cultural system" which diffused from the elite to the middle classes, and from city to countryside. He explores the complex relationships among refinement and other cultural systems, such as domesticity, capitalism, republicanism, and religion. Bushman argues that beginning around 1790, the middle classes attempted to emulate aristocratic refinement and created a culture of "vernacular gentility." One result of the diffusion of refinement was a clearer division between the middle class and the working class, who had no access to genteel culture. In this context, the spread of juvenile literature from the wealthy to the middle classes can be viewed as one aspect of this process.

Stuart Blumin also discusses the formation of the middle class in the nineteenth century, challenging arguments that middle-class culture represents a broad consensus, that ethnocultural differences were more

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important than class, and that only two social classes existed. Blumin argues that members of the middle class had similar experiences concerning work, family, housing, consumption, and voluntary associations.46

According to Blumin, the middle class did not emerge in American cities until the antebellum era; but values associated with the new middle class such as temperance, honesty, industry, and aspiration for upward mobility may be discerned in English children's stories of the mid-eighteenth century. Moreover, clear social class differences are portrayed in the stories, as are concepts of gender. Although the study of juvenile literature reveals little about the actual lives of children, it can illuminate the transmission from England of social values usually associated with nineteenth-century America. Moreover, some stories evince the simultaneous presence of ideologies including Protestantism, economic "liberalism," and civic republicanism. While one must be careful to avoid confounding representation with reality, juvenile literature can reveal much about how its authors and readers interpreted their society and culture. Chapter Two of this thesis analyzes representations of gender, social class, and political and economic ideologies in British children's

stories which were reprinted in America, and how such stories both shaped and reflected social values. Chapter Three focuses on one American novel, addressing its portrayal of female republicanism, women's dominance within their domestic sphere, and the presence of a semipublic communication sphere among young women.
CHAPTER II
GENDERED VIRTUE, GENDERED MISBEHAVIOR, GENDERED SUCCESS:
IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS IN CHILDREN’S STORIES

Scholars have interpreted children’s literature in the era of the American Revolution and the early republic in a variety of ways. Samuel Pickering discovered that the educational theories of John Locke permeated English children’s literature in the eighteenth century. Pickering argues informing fictional stories were Locke’s theories of the child as an impressionable tabula rasa whose character can be formed by parental influence, the importance of example over precept, and the belief that children’s books should be entertaining as well as educational.1 Because most children’s stories were imported from England during the era of the American Revolution, Pickering’s study is relevant to the study of American children’s fiction. In contrast, Gail Murray argues that the American Enlightenment and a republican ideology influenced American juvenile literature during the early republic; stories expressed the

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1Samuel F. Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981). For the influence of Locke’s theories on the development of a more "natural" style of childrearing and how this was reflected by changing material culture, see Karin Calvert, *Children in the House*. For Locke’s influence on the development of antipatriarchal ideology, and its role in the cultural context of the American Revolution, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, esp. 1-35. Fliegelman discusses the role of popular novels in transmitting the idea that marriages should be based on affection rather than wealth, and how familial metaphors were utilized in Revolutionary ideology.
civic virtue that was considered essential for the survival of the new republic. This chapter will argue that children's stories were highly gendered and, moreover, that representations of gender, social class, religion, republicanism, and free-market "liberalism" coexisted. Although children's fiction reveals little about the actual lives of children, it played a role in both reflecting and shaping cultural values.

Literacy was highly valued in New England because the Puritans regarded the ability to read the Bible as an absolute necessity. "Old deluder Satan" laws which required public education, and statutes which required masters to provide for the education of their apprentices, were passed for this purpose. However, most children learned to read at home or at "dame schools," which were private ventures. Kenneth Lockridge estimated literacy rates in New England by examining signatures on wills, and argued that literacy increased by the 1790s to nearly universal levels among men. In contrast, more than half of the women signed their wills with a mark. Other scholars have noted the difference between learning to read and to write, arguing that women

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2Murray, "Rational Thought and Republican Virtue," 159-76. For discussions of the transmission of republican ideology from England to America, and its role in the American Revolution and development of the Constitution see Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution; Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution and The Creation of the American Republic. For a contrasting view that emphasizes free-market "liberalism" see Appleby, Capitalism and a New Social Order.
who were not taught writing were taught reading. The pedagogical sequence in New England was clearly defined; children learned reading first, writing second, and arithmetic third. While writing was considered essential for men, sewing was necessary for women; indeed, some women who never learned penmanship sewed letters on their samplers.  

Most stories for children appeared in chapbooks, which Victor Neuburg defines as "cheap, ephemeral booklets," which were imported from England during the colonial period and printed in America after the Revolution. Judging by the distribution of advertisements, chapbooks were disseminated widely and were so popular that many were read until they physically disintegrated. Because many of these little books have disappeared, scholars have used bookseller's advertisements to document their presence.  

The earliest children's books to appear in America were religious works such as catechisms, sermons, hymns, and hagiographies of pious children. During the colonial era,  

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5The most famous examples of such works are British clergyman James Janeway's *A Token for Children, Being an*
such works, along with entertaining stories, were imported from England; colonists were listed on some subscription lists for British publications. The first American printer to publish large numbers of British children's fiction was Isaiah Thomas (1749-1831), who had served as a minute man at Lexington and Concord, and after the war became one of the largest printers in America, with shops in Boston, Baltimore, and Albany as well as Worcester. Thomas printed a wide range of material, including works on religion, law, medicine, agriculture, politics, almanacs, and the first sheet music in America. Gillian Avery suggests that Thomas printed children's books because he desired to profit from all markets.6

The chapbooks for children which Isaiah Thomas published were mostly taken directly from stories first

Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children (1671) to which Cotton Mather added A Token for the Children of New England, Or, Some Examples of Children, in whom the Fear of God was Remarkably Budding Before They Died; in Several Parts of New England, Preserved and Published for the Encouragement of Piety in Other Children in 1700; Isaac Watts' Divine Songs, Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children (1715); and The History of the Holy Jesus, Containing a brief and plain Account of His Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven; and his Coming Again at the Great and Last Day of Judgment. By a Lover of their Precious Soule (1745), which was written in the colonies. All of these were published regularly throughout the 1790s. Early American Imprints [CD-ROM] (Worchester: American Antiquarian Society, 1993), ed. Clifford K. Shipton. Works in this series will hereafter be cited by author or title, page, and American Antiquarian Society [AAS] microfiche number.

6Avery, Behold the Child, 41, 48.
printed in England by John Newberry. Perhaps surprisingly in light of his activities during the Revolution, Thomas made little or no effort to change the British references in the stories, and even when he Americanized some phrases, others remained British. In Tommy Thumb's Song Book, a collection of nursery rhymes, Thomas changed London Bridge to Charleston Bridge, but retained the London Bells. Similarly, The History of Master Jacky and Miss Harriott is "Dedicated to the good children of the United States of America" but retains references to an English "earl," while The Juvenile Biographer refers to both the General Court in New England and a "bishop." The subtitle in Nurse Truelove's Gift promises a good little girl a ride in a "governor's gilt coach," however in the story itself Miss Polly becomes a "Lady Mayoress." 

Thomas adopted not only Newberry's line of juvenile

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7Nurse Lovechild, Tommy Thumb's Song Book, for all Little Masters and Misses, to be Sung to Them by Their Nurses, Until They Can Sing For Themselves. To Which is Added, a Letter from a Lady on Nursing (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), AAS 47241; The History of Master Jacky and Miss Harriot. To which is Added, a few Maxims for the Improvement of the Mind (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1786), AAS 21114; "Master Sammy Careful" in The Juvenile Biographer; Containing the Lives of Little Masters and Misses; Including a Variety of Good and Bad Characters (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787), 24-28, AAS 20440; "Master Jemmy Studious," ibid., 63-67; Nurse Truelove, "The History of Miss Polly Friendly," in Nurse Truelove's New Year's Gift, or the Book of Books for Children. Adorned with Cuts. And Designed for a Present to Every Little Boy who would Become a Great Man, and Ride Upon a Fine Horse; and to Every Little Girl, who would Become a Fine Woman and ride in a Governour's Gilt Coach. But let us turn over the leaf and see more of the matter. (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1786), 1-9, AAS 20003.
literature, but the British printer's advertising techniques as well. Nearly all of Thomas' children's books include advertisements for "books for the amusement and instruction of children." Thomas, like Newberry, frequently combined tales of virtue rewarded with exhortations to consumption by inserting commercials into the narratives. One of the more egregious examples is in Tom Thumb's Exhibition. Children who come to see the treasures which Tom Thumb brought back from his travels are presented with a magical suitcase which converts everything into what it should be. The narrator informs the reader that "The first thing I put under it was one of Mr. Thomas's little books," which was transformed into a magnificently gilded folio because it contains "more useful instruction, and more real good sense" than the folio. Thomas' advertisement in Nurse Truelove's Christmas Box, which promised more "pretty little books" to children who memorized Scriptures, was adapted directly from Newberry's; Thomas changed only the name of the shop, printer, and location.8

Those who visited Thomas's bookshop would find fiction for children ranging from preschool age to adolescence,

8The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: Being an Account of many Valuable and Surprising Curiosities which he has collected in the Course of his Travels, for the Instruction and Entertainment of the American Youth (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1794), 47, AAS 29632; "The History of Mrs. Williams and her Plumb-Cake," in Nurse Truelove's Christmas Box: or The Golden Plaything for Little Children, by which they may Learn the Letters as soon as They can Speak, and Know How to Behave so as to Make Every Body Love Them (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1789), AAS 22188.
indicating that authors and publishers of children's books on both sides of the Atlantic were aware that children of different ages required different reading material. Yet regardless of the age of the child, most children's books were of the "improving" variety. Collections of stories frequently included religious messages, portrayed children receiving material rewards for good behavior, and represented good and bad behavior in highly gendered ways. It was also not uncommon for children's books to include an introduction with advice for parents about how to inculcate virtue in their children; such exhortations frequently reflected Locke's educational theories.

Instructions to parents appear in the American publication of *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, which was originally published by John Newberry in London twenty years earlier. Lockeian pedagogy is evident in the inscription "Instruction with Delight." Moreover, the instructions to "parents, guardians, and nurses" explicitly cite "the great Mr. Locke." Such references correlate with the shift to a "natural" style of childrearing Karin Calvert found reflected in the material culture of the time period.

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*A Little Pretty Pocket-Book, intended for the Instruction and Amusement of little Master Tommy, and pretty Miss Polly. With two letters from Jack the Giant-Killer; as also a ball and pincushion; the use of which will infallibly make Tommy a good boy, and Polly a good girl. To which is added, a little song-book, being a new attempt to teach children the use of the English alphabet, by way of diversion. (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1781)*, AAS 20459. See Pickering, *Locke and Children's Books*, 45 for the English publication information.
Parents are admonished that to have a "Hardy Child...give him common diet only;" to have a "Healthy Son...keep him, as much as possible, from Physik;" to have a "Virtuous Son" requires the parents to be a good example as well as to inculcate morality. "Reason and mild Discipline," not whipping or overindulgence, is essential to produce children who are "Strong, Hardy, Healthy, Virtuous, Wise, and Happy." 10

Locke’s ideas about education are also evident in The Juvenile Biographer, which presents didactic portraits of children whose names reflect their character. Miss Betsy Allgood, a paragon who excels at sewing, reading, and writing, and is always kind and obedient, is blessed with parents who recognize that "the Perversity of Children is oftentimes more owing to the Mismanagement of Parents, than to the Children themselves." 11 The implication here is that parental care had much to do with Betsy’s exemplary character. Thus, instructions to parents are incorporated into stories for children; presumably the authors of juvenile fiction assumed that parents who read the stories to young children would absorb some of the lessons themselves.

A striking feature of such instructions to parents is

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10 *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, 7-12, AAS 20459, emphasis in original; Calvert, *Children in the House*, 55-77.

how they represent gendered childrearing. The advice in *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* is to be applied to children of both sexes, and the letters from Jack the Giant-Killer to Tommy and Polly are nearly identical; both are praised for being "obedient," "obliging," and never quarreling. Yet Jack gives a ball to Tommy and a pincushion to Polly, reflecting the practice of training girls in their domestic duties early. The purpose of the objects, however, is identical: when a child is good a pin is stuck in the red side, when he or she misbehaves, in the black side. Tommy and Polly will earn a penny for ten pins on the red side and receive a whipping for ten pins on the black side.\(^\text{12}\) The book concludes with a list of 163 rules for behavior, many of which stress deference based on age and social class position: children must use a "title of respect" when addressing their parents, and doff their hats and bow to "Persons of Descent, Quality, or Office."\(^\text{13}\) England and early America were both deferential societies, and these instructions to children reflect their position in the larger gendered discourse of authority: children were to submit to parents, wives to husbands, men to those higher on the social hierarchy, and the governed to the governor.

Education was highly valued; one should know one's

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\(^{12}\) According to Pickering, Jack in this story is a "moral giant," where in earlier stories he was strictly a fairy-tale character. Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books*, 44-45.

\(^{13}\) *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, 67-71, 94-118, AAS 20459.
place in the social order, but try to improve it. Gendered representations of learning are present in Tom Thumb's book of fables, *A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked*. Although the dedication is "to all good little Masters and Misses who love reading before playing," the frontispiece has a caption directed toward boys: "Oft have I heard Tom Thumb declare/Good boys with him his nuts should share.../To naughty boys he gives the shells." What about the girls? The omission of girls is complemented by disparaging references to the role of women as both cooks and teachers. Informed of all the good "little gentry" in America, Mr. Thumb decides to perform the useful service of writing books instead of providing plumb-cake (a favorite treat in several stories); he expects literacy "for it is not my design to write hornbooks for the vexation of blockheads, neither am I willing to degrade myself to the character and occupation of an old woman;" a disparaging reference to dame schools.

However, "The History of Mrs. Williams and her Plumb-Cake, with a Word or Two Concerning Precedency and Trade" represents a woman teacher, who presents an ideal republican civic virtue combined with individualistic upward mobility. Mrs. Williams serves the "young Ladies" first, then offers first choice to Master Hawes, the son of a tradesman. When

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14 Thomas Thumb, *A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked: or, Instructive Fables, Ingenious Riddles, and Merry Conundrums. By the celebrated and facetious Thomas Thumb, Esq. Published for the Benefit of all little Masters and Misses who love Reading before Playing* (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1798), 10, AAS 34622.
Master Long, "only son to the Lord of the Manor" objects to being second, Mrs. Williams responds by expressing her concern with removing the vice of pride. She reminds the young aristocrat that "it has always been my Custom...to give due Countenance to Merit," if other children "become better scholars and behave better" they deserve first place. Then she discourses on the interdependence of various occupations: "Pray is not the Tradesman and the Farmer as useful to the Publick as the Gentleman? I think that they are." In a clear statement of the republican concept of civic virtue, this teacher tells Master Long that he will not receive his father's honors "unless with his Estate you inherit his Virtues. Your Riches will be of no Consequence to the Publick, unless you...promote the happiness of mankind." When she compares an idle gentleman to a "Drone in the Bee-Hive" the children exclaim "trade and plumb-cake forever!" Because America imported much of its Revolutionary ideology from England, it is not surprising that rhetoric associated with the American Revolution appears in a children's story published in England nearly two decades earlier. Although they took precedence by virtue of gender, girls were excluded from the meritocracy

15 "The History of Mrs. Williams and her Plumb-Cake, with a Word or Two concerning Precedency and Trade," in Nurse Truelove's Gift, 52-59, AAS 20003.

in this fictional school, just as women were excluded from formal political participation in England and America after the Revolution. However, women did have indirect political influence through their role as republican mothers.\footnote{Kerber, Women of the Republic, 189-231, 269-88; Bloch, "Moral Mother," 101-26.}

Although republican motherhood is usually regarded as a distinctively American innovation, the importance of female literacy and the role of mothers in educating and giving advice to children is represented in early British juvenile literature. In The Juvenile Biographer, Miss Amelia Lovebook’s elegant, affectionate letters are admired, as was Miss Polly Honeycomb’s even temper and piety.\footnote{"Miss Amelia Lovebook" and "Miss Polly Honeycomb" in The Juvenile Biographer, 68-75, 101-04, AAS 20440.} Themes of religion, social class, republican virtue, and Lockean pedagogy infuse the The Mother’s Gift, a British collection of stories dedicated to nine children "from your affectionate Mother." It is "written for the private amendment of your faults, and your advancement in virtue," and begins with a simple catechism for a three year old. The stories emphasize the greater importance of virtue over wealth, kindness to others including animals, and contentment with one’s station in life. The mother of a genteel boy who played with "vulgar, ignorant boys" praises the salutary influence of a well-behaved companion from a
lower social class." Similarly, when Mr. Allworthy, "a gentleman of large fortune and excellent character," invited all boys in his neighborhood to his house to give a prize to the one with "the best character," he explains that "the poorest child, if he be good and humble, is far superior to the richest who is naughty." At a girls' boarding school, the teacher holds up as an example to the other children a girl from a relatively poor family because the others could learn from her kindness and piety. When the "son of a Gentleman of moderate fortune" becomes jealous of a young nobleman's opulent home, the lesson is to accept one's class position because "where less is given, less is required." Such lessons are also conveyed in fables for young children; for example, the moral of a fable of a hen who resisted a fox's plea to leave her henhouse is to accept one's station in life.

The theme of class contentment is also evident in "The Merry Haymakers, or the Innocent Pleasures of a Country

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19."The Preference of Goodness to Riches," in The Mother's Gift: Or a Present for all little Children, who wish to be Good (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787), vol. 1, 7-11, AAS 20536.


22."Happiness not to be found in the Possession of Grandeur but in the Discharge of Duty," in ibid., vol. 2, 68-85.

Life," which idealizes the pastoral life: "If in the country there's such sport/ Pray who would dangle round the court/ And for a place, or power, or wealth/ Barter sweet innocence and health." Virtue is its own reward here; the haymakers are "cheerful...because they are innocent." The Jeffersonian ideal of the independent yeoman farmer who lived apart from the noise, filth, and corruption of growing cities, was hardly an American innovation. Thus, themes of contentment with one's station in life and aspirations for upward mobility coexist in children's stories.

Although "A Little Tale: The Benefit of Being Good," promises direct material rewards for proper behavior, it does not explicitly guarantee social advancement. The narrator encounters a series of people who inquire into the behavior of two children; the questions reveal both desirable behavior and some patterns of misbehavior. Mrs. Likelihood asks "have your little Master and Miss said their prayers this morning?" and the children are rewarded with a cherry tree. When the little old Woman Cut Shorter asks if they "asked a blessing of their Papa and Mama this morning," the children are rewarded for their filial deference and piety with a "magpye" who sings an alphabet song.

The next two questions reveal misbehavior. Mrs. To-and-again "had been informed that some naughty boys and girls had told you stories about ghosts and such nonsense;

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and that you would not lie in bed without having a candle burning by you." Such a statement combines the practical concern about candles that could set a house on fire with the problem of unregulated speech and a preference for realistic stories. The Clerk heard that the children "did not spend Sunday at church, or in reading, as all good boys and girls do, but at play." When the narrator informs the Clerk that "they always go when and where their Papa and Mama bid them," the children are rewarded with a plumb-cake and "had many other presents made to them." Children who hear this story are told "perhaps you may have them bye and bye, if you are good."^25

Early piety, filial obedience, honesty, and industry were matters of concern on both sides of the Atlantic, and many stories imported from England to America hold forth the possibility of material rewards for the virtuous. Although such principles of virtue were mandatory for both sexes, chastity was especially important for women. A fable of a fox who lured a crow to her demise is explicitly gendered as an allegory of seduction: "Thus by false Vows the artless Virgin's won,/ And by fond Credulity undone."^26

Many children's stories present misdemeanors to avoid as well as virtues to emulate; in some cases the miscreants mends their ways. In The Exhibition of Tom Thumb an


^26Entertaining Fables, 12, AAS 26947.
"intellectual perspective glass" purchased from Mr. Longthought, reveals the reality behind the alluring temptations of gluttony and intoxication. Unripe apples and wine, when viewed through the glass, become transformed: the apples are "a swarm of worms and other devouring reptiles," and the bottle of wine is "full of snakes and adders." Tom Thumb lent the glass to Mr. Sober-man to cure Jack "of a most bewitching, and indeed a dangerous relish, for sweet tarts and fulsome custards," which would "lay a foundation for some violent destructive disorder." The sight of "ugly toads, newts, and scorpions" cured Jack of his propensity for overindulgence.27 Here, the association of sweets with wine implies that the foundation for temperance in adulthood is created by curbing juvenile appetites; virtuous republican citizens were expected to restrain their passions.

The salutary influence that good little girls might have upon their naughty brothers is the focus of The Sister's Gift. Here Kitty and Billy, the children of an aristocratic Sir William Courtly, are sent to different boarding schools. Kitty "became the admiration and delight of everyone," while Billy enjoyed "setting his school-fellows together by the ears," throwing ink bottles at them, and even pulling up 200 cabbage plants and blaming another

27The Exhibition of Tom Thumb, 13-15, AAS 29632, emphasis in original. It is interesting to note the transatlantic context of the later temperance movement.
boy. Billy also engaged in egregious acts of cruelty to animals such as sticking pins into flies and tying a kettle to a dog's tail. Miss Kitty used reasoning to dissuade her brother from such misbehavior, explaining to him that sticking pins in flies causes them as much pain as a sword would to a person, and more importantly, that mistreating animals will lead to cruelty to human beings. Kitty appeals to "the principles of Christianity and virtue" and defines gentility in terms of proper character and conduct: "noble generosity of mind, and a tender feeling for the distress of our fellow-creatures."28

While The Sister's Gift represents the misbehavior of boys in terms of cruelty, in The Brother's Gift, or the Naughty Girl Reformed, a different, good Billy is instrumental in transforming another Kitty. The story is introduced with a rather unflattering portrait of education for elite girls who are "taught to read, to write, to work a little catgut, and to dance...perhaps a tune or two on the spinnet or the lisping of a little French." Kitty returned home from boarding school after receiving such an education "thoroughly spoilt," talking too loudly, and "perpetually Prattling." Thus, Kitty's flaws concerned unregulated speech, sloth, and overeducation. Billy lectures Kitty on

matters such as how to behave in company and the importance of useful accomplishments such as needlework, writing, and arithmetic. Above all, her "very indolent disposition" must be corrected because "idleness is the parent, or at least the nurse of most of the follies and vice incident to human nature." Then "the Naughty Girl became Good, which makes her esteemed and beloved by everybody." In this pair of stories, while both sexes can influence one another, misbehavior is highly gendered: cruelty is conceptualized as a male defect while vanity, excessive speech, and ignorance are gendered female. While Billy in this story uses the same rhetorical strategy as the good Kitty did for the naughty Billy, readers are assured that although the bad Kitty reformed, the fate of nasty Billy remains ambiguous. Perhaps this combination reflects the greater strength, power, and influence of males compared to females.

The History of Miss Kitty Pride, and The Virtue of a Rod; or the History of a Naughty Boy also portray gendered misbehavior; however in these two stories the parents are clearly at fault for their children's conduct. Miss Kitty's parents were "the proudest people" and overindulged Kitty; when the girl refused to attend school, her mother permitted her to remain at home, because with her fortune, work was not necessary. Not surprisingly, without benefit of an education Kitty "could hardly tell her letters, or thread

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29 The Brother's Gift; or, The Naughty Girl Reformed (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1795), AAS 28353.
her needle." When her parents were faced with the workhouse because of their "huge manner of living," Kitty was forced to humble herself and seek a servant's position. The author stresses the value of industry and practical skills over wealth in this context, and implies that all girls should achieve basic literacy. In The Virtue of a Rod, overindulgence is also the source of Dickey's misbehavior. Reared by an aunt who gave him everything he wanted when he cried, Dickey threw temper tantrums and refused to study or go to church. His aunt sent him to the narrator, who whipped him and sent him to bed without supper. Because of this discipline, Dickey learned the lesson of obedience and "became the admiration of everybody."30 This pair of stories combines the Lockean idea that children learn by example with an older philosophy of childrearing which stressed the necessity to break the wills of young children through corporal punishment.

In The Juvenile Biographer, portraits of the misbehaving misses are stereotypical but those of the boys are sometimes a bit more nuanced. Miss Fanny Squeamish is the stereotypical female hypochondriac; "her weakly constitution...in great measure owing to her being too much indulged in her Infancy." Miss Fanny Dawdle "was suffered to do just as she liked," did not know the alphabet and

30The History of Miss Kitty Pride. Together with The Virtue of a Rod; or The History of a Naughty Boy (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1799), AAS 35622.
could not sew; thus overindulgence led to her "idleness and obstinacy." Vanity prevents little Miss Fiddle Faddle from doing anything useful; she spends all her time "eating, drinking, gossiping, dressing" or admiring herself in the mirror. Similar defects, compounded by unreasonable pride, are evident in the case of Miss Betsy Pert, whose parents "brought her up as a Lady, without having any Fortune to give her." Here, Betsy's pretensions are deemed inappropriate for her class position and therefore condemned; such a refined upbringing might be appropriate for a wealthy young lady, but the story implies that practical accomplishments would have been more appropriate for Betsy.

Boys are portrayed engaging in a wider range of misdeeds than girls in The Juvenile Biographer. Billy Easy's character is described in terms of one of Locke's classic metaphors: a "Disposition, which, like Wax, might be moulded into any Form." Initially "dutiful and obedient," Billy was led by a naughty acquaintance into a series of misdeeds, which prompted his parents to send him to sea. Master Simon Lovepenny is "neither remarkably good nor remarkably bad," his major flaw is avarice. Perhaps the most interesting of these characters is Isaac Curious, a gossip, who is also "a Dunce, for those who trouble

themselves so much about other People's Business, seldom mind their own." Since slander and gossip were usually considered particularly female vices, a male gossip constituted something of an anomaly. And indeed, an illustration of Isaac shows his transgression of gender norms: he is dressed "like any pretty little Miss, with one Hand in a Muff and the other holding an Umbrella." Each of the fictitious biographies in this collection have the didactic purpose of inspiring children to emulate those characters whose virtues are rewarded with success.

While The Juvenile Biographer depicts realistic characters, both good and bad, who receive the just rewards or punishments that their character and actions merit, another collection of stories presents only one side of the material calculus of morality. Vice in its Proper Form presents tales of "naughty boys and girls, who after their death (which was generally owing to their own folly) were degraded into those animals they most resembled when alive." Such fantastic stories conveyed an admonition concerning the potentially fatal consequences of misbehavior, and uses animals as metaphors for human flaws. The introduction describes the encounter of an officer of the East India Company with a Brahmin, Mr. Wiseman, who kept the unfortunate ex-humans in cages. Wiseman bids the narrator, who is accompanied by seven children, to "walk in, behold

and learn," stating the Lockean principle that "example is better than precept." The oddly pagan tone to the reincarnation suggests a reworking of a Hindu folk tale, indicating the "contrapuntal" development, to use Edward Said's term, and mutual influence of colonizers and colonized.

The examples of misbehavior in these stories are highly gendered; the girls commit sins of the tongue while the boys engage in a much greater variety of misdeeds. "Miss Dorothy Chatter," a "most notorious little gossip" who tattled on her schoolmates, was transformed into a magpie upon her unfortunate demise. Yet Wiseman portrays her relatively sympathetically: the "mischief of her tongue" was largely due to "that talkative humor in which she had always been encouraged from her infancy." Such a statement is as much an admonition to overindulgent parents as a warning to talkative little girls; Dorothy's "vanity and want of thought" had been "too much encouraged by the simple fondness of parents." If Dorothy Chatter was more thoughtless than vicious, "Miss Abigail Eviltongue" was a

33Vice in its proper Shape; or, The wonderful and melancholy Transformations of several naughty Masters and Misses into those Contemptible Animals which they most resemble in Disposition. Printed for the Benefit of all Good Boys and Girls (Worcester: Thomas, 1789), 9, 16, AAS 22221.


35"The Transmigration of Miss Dorothy Chatterfast into the Body of a Magpie," in Vice in its Proper Form, 44-56, AAS 22221.
"wretched complication of malice, low cunning, and ingratitude." Once more, much of the blame rested on the parents; when Abigail told fibs as an infant, "she was too much encouraged in this hateful practice by her parents, instead of being severely flogged for it." Her most odious fault was a propensity to slander her benefactors and set acquaintances against one another "without any sort of advantage to herself but the mere pleasure of making mischief."36 Thus, the female flaw of excessive speech has varying degrees of odiousness, and the stories emphasize the responsibility of parents to curb this tendency.

While the misdeeds of the girls in Vice in its Proper Form concern the misuse of speech, the boys engage in a greater variety of improper activities. The sloth and illiteracy, common in stories about girls, are also evident in Jack Idle, whose soul transmigrates into an ass. However, Jack's idleness was hardly passive; he skipped school, stole fruit, and died when he fell from a tree;37 none of the stories depict slothful girls engaging in such activities. Laziness and ignorance were also evident in "Anthony Greedyguts," a selfish "blockhead" who barely knew the alphabet and "disdained every form of labor but that of lifting his hand to his mouth." After a death caused by

36 "Of the Astonishing Transformation of Miss Abigail Eviltongue into the Body of a Serpent," in ibid., 115-26.

37 "Of the Wonderful Transmigration of Jack Idle into the body of an Ass," in ibid., 14-32.
eating too many custards, Anthony's soul entered the body of a pig; it is now his fate to be eaten. Wiseman's lesson for young gentry is the need to act in a manner corresponding to their elite social class: a glutton "is in actuality a hog, though he bears the name of gentleman."  

The need to behave in accordance with one's social and class position is also evident in the story of Richard Rustick, who failed to emulate his father, a wealthy gentleman, but instead resembled a "young country bumpkin," who associated with "vulgar boys and girls of the same rugged disposition as himself." As with Anthony Greedyguts, excessive passion for delicacies caused his demise; after Richard "devoured a quantity of the richest tarts," he died of a fever. In both of these stories, succumbing to passions is represented as especially abhorrent for the young gentry; the implication is that superior education and social status necessitate greater propriety. Perhaps a concern with reputation, as well as the potential for abuse of power, contributed to higher expectations for elite children.

Such expectations were grounded in the assumption that elite parents would inculcate their social norms in their children. Parental neglect contributed to the dishonesty of

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Tommy Filch, who was expelled from several academies for defrauding and robbing his schoolmates. His parents had been so "imprudently fond," that instead of giving him the whipping he so richly deserved, they "made his falsehoods and pilferings the constant subject of their amusement." Unfortunate Tommy "became a thoughtless and unhappy wanderer," and "when heated with liquor" was killed during an attempted robbery, and now lives in the body of a wolf. Such activities as running away would be almost inconceivable for girls because for a girl to leave her home would violate the gender norms of domesticity and passivity. The girls change into either a harmless birds or a snake, which suggests the Garden of Eden and Eve's role in the Fall.

Ideas about gender and social class are prominent in narratives of success and failure, which are portrayed as the result of childhood virtue and misbehavior, respectively. Locke's idea that childhood proclivities become exacerbated in adulthood is evident in The Father's Gift, which presents contrasting portrayals of good and bad children. In "The Story of the Good Boys and Girls," two boys and two girls, the children of "a fine Gentleman and Lady" were obedient, kind to servants and the poor, said their prayers, were "always clean and neat," were not proud, and never argued about toys. When they grew up, "the

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Masters became fine Scholars, and fine Gentlemen, and were honored; the Misses fine Ladies, and fine Housewives.\textsuperscript{41} Although both boys and girls were instructed to study, only men could be scholars and honored.

The second story in this book tells "The Story of the Naughty Boys and Girls." A poor widow had three sons and one daughter; the children were disobedient, refused to pray, and "grow worse, and worse, more ignorant and stupid" until their mother died of a broken heart. One son was forced to go to sea, another became a thief and was killed, and the third became a beggar. The daughter "never loved work," lived in filth, and died of a fever. The author states that "God punished their Naughtiness."\textsuperscript{42} Yet a comparison of the two stories in this book suggests that social class and concepts of virtue were related. The narrator states that virtue is "better than Birth or Fortune,"\textsuperscript{43} however, it is probably not coincidental that in the story the gentry children are virtuous and the poor children are naughty.

The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriott also emphasizes social class, but presents a tale of upward mobility. Here an earl invited Jacky, the son of "a

\textsuperscript{41}"The Story of the Good Boys and Girls," in The Father's Gift, or the Way to be Wise and Happy (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1786) 21-25, AAS 19641.

\textsuperscript{42}"The Story of the Naughty Boys and Girls," in ibid., 26-30.

\textsuperscript{43}"Good Boys and Girls," in ibid., 25.
tradesman of indifferent circumstances" to stay at the earl’s castle for a month because Jacky had the reputation of being "the best boy in town." Similarly, the earl’s wife Lady Fairframe hosted Harriott, a grocer’s daughter; the two children inherit the estate and marry. The happy ending suggests that virtuous behavior and good character leads to material rewards; children were presented with this example "that so you may to their attainments rise." 

Upward mobility through virtue, industry, and the benevolent intervention of nobility is also the theme of Virtue and Vice: Or the History of Charles Careful and Harry Heedless. The precept is given in the subtitle: "Shewing the good effects of caution and prudence, and the many Inconveniences that Harry Heedless experienced from his rashness and disobedience, while Master Careful became a great Man, only by his Merit." Both boys were sons of gentlemen, but their different behavior led to divergent lifecourses. Charles’ obedience, diligence, and generosity to the poor attracted the attention of Sir Robert Goodwill, who gave Charles a horse, paid for his schooling, and appointed him steward of the estate. Charles eventually inherited the estate when his benefactor died. In contrast to studious Charles, Harry Heedless was so careless that he "was little better than the greatest dunce in the school." When he ran away with Willy Willful, they slept in a barn.

"Master Jackey and Miss Harriott, 6-31, AAS 21114."
where rats ran over them. Harry awoke "alone and without money," wandered "like a vagrant," and was rescued when Charles apprenticed him to a merchant. Clearly, Harry's childhood indiscretions led to his misfortune in adulthood.

The eventual results of childhood misbehavior are also shown by the paintings in Tom Thumb's Exhibition which, when viewed through the perspective glass, showed the fate of delinquents. A picture of a loitering group of pickpockets becomes a vision of them on the gallows and then in hell; and a "young prodigal" in luxury, surrounded by "a crowd of harlots, pimps, musicians, and sharpers" becomes a ragged man on his way to debtor's prison. A major theme in this chapbook is that "Learning's the path to everlasting fame/ But fools shall have a vile inglorious name." A picture of Master Timothy Lounge, sitting "idle and inattentive in school" and "cramming apples into his mouth" is transformed into a portrayal of a "shabby looking" adult. Such a fate is inevitable, for "a willful blockhead is a scandal to human nature."46

The Lockean perspective that "the tempers of children are as various as those of grown people" and will determine

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45Virtue and Vice: Or the History of Charles Careful and Harry Heedless. Shewing the Good Effects of Caution and Prudence, and the many Inconveniences that Harry Heedless Experienced from his Rashness and Disobedience, while Master Careful became a Great Man, only by his Merit. (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787), AAS 20851.

46The Exhibition of Tom Thumb, 22-24, 33, AAS 29632, emphasis in original.
their character as adults is also evident in *The Wisdom of Crop the Conjuror*. Again, boys are depicted with greater diversity and in a wider variety of activities than are girls. Crop, a wise boy who can tell other children their fortunes based on their present nature, was steeped in gender norms by "old Nurse Dandlem, who used to cut his head all round, for she would say, that thick long hair makes boys look like dunces." Education is of paramount importance in this story, which promises tangible material rewards for learning and punishment for laziness, theft, and disobedience. While Tim Prattle will be whipped for avoiding school and stealing apples, and gluttonous Sam Lickspit will receive "a good many thrashings" for stealing pies, Billy Learnwell "will be a great man...shall have horses and coaches and plenty." Lydia Indolent, who also desires a "coach and six," is told she must start waking up at the reasonable hour of 6:00 AM.

All children in this story, male and female, who forsake learning because of their idleness, will be "looked upon as great Dunces." However, upward social mobility through learning is promised only to boys, such as Tom Trot, who was such a diligent student that he was hired to teach a gentleman's son, Jack Wildboy, to read. Because the young aristocrat "loved play better than his Book" and refused to learn, the gentleman apprenticed him to a blacksmith and
"took Tom as his son." Thus, this story threatens disobedient boys with loss of social status, as well as promising wealth and prestige for diligent, studious, obedient boys. Relationships between social classes are depicted as harmonious and mutually beneficial; boys who are good but poor receive private largesse at crucial steps on their climb up the ladder of success. Such stories demonstrate the contradiction in many success narratives—a pattern also present in Horatio Alger's much later stories.

Many stories for children also portray success in highly gendered terms. The frontispiece of Nurse Truelove's Christmas Box shows a boy riding on a horse and an inscription promising those who learn the alphabet that "you shall have my dapper Nag." In addition to an alphabet, the book contains "The History of Master Friendly," a little boy who was "dutiful" to his parents, "loving" to his siblings, "kind" to his playmates, "obliging to everybody," and always attended school and church. Because of his good behavior, Nurse Truelove states that "I always expected he would be a great man," and indeed, Master Friendly did become a member of Congress while retaining his benevolence and humility.  

47 The Wisdom of Crop the Conjuror. Exemplified in several characters of good and bad boys, with an impartial account of the celebrated Tom Trot, who rode before all the boys in the kingdom till he arrived at the top of the hill, called Learning. Written for the imitation of those who love themselves (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1786), 10, 29, 41, AAS 20153.

48 Nurse Truelove's Christmas Box: or, The Golden Plaything for Little Children; by which They may Learn the
In this story, the Lockean belief that the child is father to the man is embedded in a success narrative, and emphasizes that accepting one's position in the patriarchal hierarchy merits elevation in due time. Moreover, it is significant that Master Friendly's succeeded in an occupation from which women were excluded.

Gendered representations of virtue and success are also evident in Nurse Truelove's second book, *Nurse Truelove's Gift, or the Book of Books for Children*. The subtitle clearly indicates the centrality of gender: "designed for a present to every little boy who would become a great man and ride upon a fine horse; and to every little girl, who would become a fine woman and ride upon in a governor's gilt coach." The book includes "The History of Miss Polly Friendly," Master Friendly's sister, who "was altogether as good as her brother; for indeed she imitated him in everything." Such language implies the precedence of boys over girls, just as in the story of Master Friendly, the son copies the father. Polly has a first name and Master Friendly does not, which suggests her inferior status because use of surnames suggests deference. Like her brother, Polly demonstrates all the behaviors desired of children in England and New England. When Miss Polly admitted that she, not the maid, broke "a whole set of fine

*Letters as soon as They can Speak, and Know How to Behave so as to Make Every Body Love Them.* (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1789), AAS 22188.
China," her mother rewarded her with a "fine watch," which she refused to wear because other children did not have watches and Polly did not want to appear proud.49

Miss Polly was also rewarded for her charity and honesty with a great many suitors, "though her fortune was but small." Mr. Alderman Foresight "was always of the opinion, that virtue and industry was the best portion with a wife" and married Miss Polly. When he became "Lord-Mayor," Polly became "the great Lady-Mayoress, and rides in the grand gilt-coach." The roles of husband and wife are clearly defined: she "made him a dutiful, obedient, and loving wife; and he in return provided to her a kind, indulgent, and affectionate husband." The concluding poem both summarizes the theme of virtue rewarded with wealth and prestige and defines woman's sphere: "See virtue here with wealth and glory crown'd/ And all the busy crowd admiring round/ While she to church with pious zeal repairs/ To hear the sermon and to say her prayers."50

Thus, this poem provides an early definition of woman’s sphere usually associated with the "cult of true womanhood" in the nineteenth century United States. It reflects how a woman's social status was largely determined by her husband's role in the community, foreshadows the "companionate" marriage ideal, and promises upward mobility.


50Ibid., 9-11.
for girls who conform to the community's ideas of good behavior. While Polly's status is ascribed by marriage, her brother's is achieved through his own effort. Virtue is rewarded with wealth and status in both cases; however, Polly requires marriage as a means to raise her social status while her brother does not. These two books must be interpreted in a transatlantic perspective, because they were first printed by John Newberry in London in 1749-50.  

The Juvenile Biographer depicts similar gendered success narratives. Miss Polly Charity, who was known for her kindness and generosity toward the poor, married an equally charitable "gentleman of fortune." Miss Nancy Careful, also an orphan, was so studious that she surpassed all the other youths in reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. Her "excellency in the finest Needle-work, her Pastry, Pickles, and Preserves" and "good Sense, meekness, and affability" earned her the notice of a young gentleman. They married, and now she rides in a coach.  

While Nancy advances her social position through marriage, the story of her brother Sammy is another gendered success narrative. An "excellent scholar," he was brought into the business of "Mr. William Goodall, a wealthy merchant in the city of Boston." Subsequently, Sammy was elected to the General Court from a New England town.  

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51 Pickering, Locke and Children's Books, 222.
Success for other diligent boys is portrayed as inevitable. Dickey Sprightly's quick mind and ability to tell "pretty stories" led to an invitation to study law, and "there is no doubt of his one Day becoming a Judge." Similarly, Jemmy Studious will become a Bishop, for he is "constantly reading" and instructing poor boys, whom he treats with respect. Thus, boys advance in society through their education, while girls do so through marriage. However, marriage was the culmination of Tommy Prudence's upward mobility. After his father went bankrupt, Tommy offered his services to Mr. Worthy, a wealthy merchant, who made him head clerk. Tommy subsequently "became a very accomplished Gentleman" and married Mr. Worthy's daughter.53

Perhaps the earliest success story to appear in America was The Famous and Remarkable History of Sir Richard Whittington, Three Times Lord-Mayor of London, which was printed nineteen times between 1770 and 1818. According to Victor Neuburg, Richard Whittington is based on a true story of a boy who was born in poverty and obscurity and rose to wealth, fame, power, and social prominence (the real Whittington died in 1423). Neuburg suggests that this story contributed to the American "rags to riches" myth so prominent in the nineteenth-century Horatio Alger stories.54


54 The Famous and Remarkable History of Sir Richard Whittington, Three Times Lord-Mayor of London, who lived in
The author of Richard Whittington tells readers that his subject is "a worthy President [sic] to imitate." Thus, the success narrative in Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography had early British precedents in children's literature.

The success narrative in Richard Whittington includes a story about a reversal of gender norms. Dick "almost starved" in the country because he refused to steal or beg. Instead, he sought employment from a wealthy merchant doing "some Drudgery in the Kitchen," and was eventually "made a member of the Family." Such language reflects the ideology that servants were included in the family government under household patriarchy. More importantly, Dick's position as a man in the kitchen, the quintessential female domain,

the Time of King Henry the Fifth (Boston: Isaiah Thomas and John Fleet, 1770), AAS 42049; Neuberg, "Chapbooks in America," in Davidson, ed. Reading in America, 95, 107. Neuberg suggests that the story is "founded substantially on fact," however, it has very implausible elements. In the story, Dick bought a cat because he was tormented by the rats and mice in the garret where he was forced to reside. His master, who was preparing to go to sea, compelled Dick to relinquish the cat so it could be taken on his ship. Upon arriving at his destination, the master told the Moorish king, whose palace was overrun with rats, of a miraculous creature that would eliminate this annoyance. The delighted king gave a substantial quantity of his treasure in exchange for the cat; when the master returned he conveyed the treasure to Dick. A successful merchant, Dick married his former master's daughter, was elected sheriff then Lord Mayor three times, built a church, college, hospital, library, free schools, and bridges. Eventually Dick cancelled the loan he made to King Henry V to finance the war with France. Such a narrative is highly unlikely; however, regardless of the accuracy of the story, Neuberg's argument that it became part of the American success myth is plausible.

55Richard Whittington, 3, AAS 42049.
violated gender norms; moreover, he was forced to take orders from the kitchen maid. The kitchen maid similarly violated gender norms when she "domineer'd over him," by chasing Dick and assaulting him with her ladle, as well as berating him verbally. She was thus represented as a shrew, one of the stereotypes of women in the popular English literature of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries.\(^{56}\) The actions of the kitchen maid exceeded the limits of Dick's forbearance, so he ran away. However, when he thought he heard the church bells chime "Turn again, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London," he returned, invested his cat in the merchant's overseas trade venture, made such a handsome profit that he became the richest man in London, and "gave liberally" to all, including the "Kitchen-wench." Richard's generosity to the maid, as well as his elevation to a social class now far above hers, implies the restoration of a proper gender hierarchy. Relationships between social classes are represented as harmonious and just; Richard's obedience in remaining at his station as a servant was rewarded with riches, and the wealthy merchant was scrupulously fair in giving Richard the full rewards of a most fortunate investment. The result is Richard's

\(^{56}\)Ibid., 7. According to Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, the negative stereotypes of women were the seductress, the shrew, and the vain woman; positive stereotypes were the chase woman, the nurturer, and the pious woman. Henderson and MacManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 47-71.
election as Lord Mayor of London and marriage to his former master's daughter.

Analysis of children's stories indicates that themes of gender were as prominent as those of liberalism, republicanism, and religion. Although all children were expected to be obedient, pious, honest, and industrious, success narratives were presented in highly gendered terms; for boys the route to success is industry while for girls it is marriage. Similarly, childhood faults are gendered; naughty girls are vain or excessively loquacious, and misbehaving boys are overtly rebellious, cruel, or dishonest. Children's fiction was influenced by Locke's beliefs that the parent is instrumental in determining the course of children's lives. Advice to parents, especially warnings against overindulgence, appear in the stories. Such admonitions suggest that Philip Greven's "moderate" style of childrearing, which emphasized the importance of parental influence and the development of self-control, was present on both sides of the Atlantic; authors of children's stories preferred it to "genteel" permissiveness. Moreover, an examination of how British stories were transmitted to America reveals the British origin of the "American" success story. Thus, the study of children's literature evokes some aspects of cultural transmission from Britain to America--stories from England were used by Americans to inculcate cultural values in their children.

Such cultural values were expressed in gendered terms;
it is possible that the gendered nature of children's literature played a role in the development of readership in the early republic. The prevalence of literature directed towards children of varying ages, from nursery rhymes and simple fables to short stories, demonstrates an awareness that children of different ages required divergent reading material. Appreciation of developmental stages would be essential for the evolution of novels written primarily for adolescents. Themes of gendered virtue and gendered success in children’s stories may have helped to prepare adolescents to accept gendered themes in success novels and domestic fiction, which were directed towards boys and girls, respectively. Thus, the gendered nature of children’s stories may have contributed to the development of female readership during the early republic. Perhaps both sexes read the same novels; however, if people read mimetically it seems likely that the success novel may have had greater influence among men and the domestic novel among women. The next chapter discusses one such domestic novel, which because all the characters are women and adolescent girls, was likely written for these groups of readers.
CHAPTER III
REPUBLICAN MOTHER, REPUBLICAN WIFE, OR REPUBLICAN FRIEND? GENDERED COMMUNITY IN HANNAH WEBSTER FOSTER'S THE BOARDING SCHOOL

Nathaniel Hawthorne characterized the best-selling women writers of his day as a "damned mob of scribbling women" whose novels were utterly without literary merit. Until recently, the study of antebellum women novelists was constrained by a tradition of literary criticism that continued his pejorative assessment. Novels by women writers were excluded from the literary canon because critics assumed an essentialist perspective that intrinsic artistic merit must be the sole criterion used in determining literary canonicity. Thus, works by nineteenth-century women writers were excluded due to the critical perception that their characterization was trite and their farfetched plots were excessively sentimental.¹

Feminist literary scholars, however, note that such a critique is socially and culturally constructed, and they argue for the inclusion of these texts in the literary canon. In so doing they challenge the assumptions about gender and the division between elite and popular culture that have been integral to the process of inclusion or exclusion in the literary canon. According to this

¹For a contemporary defense of literary essentialism, see for example Harold Bloom, The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994).
argument, ideas about what constitutes artistic "excellence" are socially constructed and therefore open to scrutiny; novels by antebellum women possess literary value. Moreover, artistic merit is not the only legitimate criterion for including a literary work: novels may also be read for what they reveal about the society that produced them, and for their role as agents of cultural formation. The arguments for the inclusion of women writers are often informed by theoretical perspectives such as post-structuralism, gender theory, reader response literary criticism, and the "new historicist" argument that literary texts cannot be understood apart from their historical context. From these perspectives, works became popular because they expressed beliefs shared by many people, thus they are worth studying for their expression of cultural meaning.²

Scholarly discussion of popular women writers and their role in early America demonstrates the convergence of the new historicist analysis of literary texts and the use of literary sources in cultural history. Cathy Davidson’s

subject in Revolution and the Word is the early American novel, and she employs an interdisciplinary method by combining the history of the book and the social history of literacy and reading patterns with poststructuralist, reader response, and new historicist literary analysis. The reconstruction of the world of the reader has important implications for the study of women writers, since during the era of the American Revolution and the early republic, most readers of novels were women. Davidson discusses the vehement arguments that were made against novel-reading, and she argues that the novel was in fact a subversive genre. As a popular literary form, the novel challenged the claim of a small elite to be the producers and arbiters of American culture. Davidson points out that novels did not demand from their readers a classical education and that novels replaced ministerial and patriarchal authority with the response of the individual reader. Sentimental novelists also engaged the debate over whether women’s inferiority was natural or cultural. Like Davidson, literary critic Michael Warner analyzes the emancipatory potential of print culture, which he suggests is constituted by a reading public. Although he does not specifically discuss women writers and readers, his inclusion of novels

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3Davidson, Revolution and the Word, esp. 3-45, 110-50.
in the public sphere accords with Davidson’s analysis.4

Mary Kelley’s perspectives concur with Davidson’s notion that women writers of sentimental fiction were important. Like Davidson, Kelley discusses the social, economic, and technological changes that were necessary for the development of a large reading public; however, her method is quite different. In Private Women, Public Stage, Kelley utilizes the collective biographies of twelve best-selling women writers, as well as her analysis of their novels, to explore their inherently ambivalent and contradictory positions. Kelley finds that women writers were the daughters and, in most cases, the wives of elite leaders in professions such as the ministry, law, politics, and commerce. These women were conscious of their dual position as an elite social class and as members of the subordinated gender in American society. They represented themselves as private and domestic, yet were creators of culture and economic providers for their families. Because their novels represented the private lives of women to a public audience, Kelley refers to them as "literary domestics" who simultaneously praised women’s selfless domestic role and attempted to transcend it.5

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4Michael Warner, The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Warner believes that early American novels were utterly without artistic merit, but should be analyzed for their role in the republican public sphere.

5Kelley, Private Women, Public Stage, 217-49.
Kelley focuses on women writers in the nineteenth century, but what of the eighteenth century? I would suggest that Kelley’s analysis of the "literary domesticity" of nineteenth-century women writers may be extended to their precursors in the late eighteenth century. There were substantial social and cultural changes intertwined with industrialization and urbanization in the mid-nineteenth century. However, continuities between women writers and readers of the mid-nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries may also be discerned. Hannah Webster Foster (1758-1840) was one such early American writer. The daughter of a prominent Boston merchant, and the wife of a popular minister in Brighton, Massachusetts, Foster led a life that resembles in some ways the lives of Kelley’s nineteenth-century women writers. Her popularity also resembles that of the mid-nineteenth century "literary domestics." Cathy Davidson notes that Foster’s first novel, The Coquette; or the History of Eliza Wharton (1797) was one of only two eighteenth-century bestsellers. (The other early bestseller was Susanna Rowson’s Charlotte Temple.) The Coquette was so popular that it was printed ten times; women circulated it among themselves until their copies physically fell apart. Such a practice implies the existence of informal networks of women readers who shared and discussed novels among themselves; it also provided access to novels for women who could not afford to purchase them and did not have access to a library. Foster wrote The Coquette and her second novel,
The Boarding School (1798), largely in an epistolary framework of letters among women. The Boarding School was only printed once, which suggests that it was less popular than The Coquette; however, the fact that it was sold in Boston, Worcester, Albany, and Baltimore indicates that it was widely distributed.

The Boarding School presents a representation of a gendered community characterized by intense and affectionate personal relationships among female adolescents. The novel is divided into two parts: the first part consists of the instructions of the headmistress of the boarding school, Mrs. Mary Williams, as her students are about to leave her charge. The second part consists of letters exchanged among

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7 Hannah Webster Foster, The Boarding School; or, Lessons of a Preceptress to her Pupils: Consisting of Information, Instruction, and Advice, Calculated to Improve the Manners, and Form the Character of Young Ladies. To Which is Added, a Collection of Letters, Written by the Pupils, to their Instructor, their Friends, and Each Other. By a Lady of Massachusetts. Author of The Coquette. Published According to Act of Congress. Printed at Boston, by I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews. Sold by them, by C. Bingham, and the other booksellers in Boston; by I. Thomas, Worcester; by Thomas, Andrews, and Penniman, Albany; and by Thomas, Andrews, and Butler, Baltimore, June, 1798. AAS 33748.
the girls, Mrs. Williams, and Mrs. Williams's two daughters. Hence, the first part of the novel is didactic and prescriptive while the second part is more descriptive. The novel represents adolescence as a distinctive stage of life, links patriotism, republican ideology, and education as an ideal for women and, most interestingly, simultaneously asserts, subverts and reaffirms gender norms and ideas about marriage. Moreover, Foster represents women as dominant within their domestic sphere in a way that is usually associated with the mid-nineteenth century; throughout the novel there are references to women as the heads of their families. Perhaps most significantly, the girls are represented as circulating and sharing their letters among themselves, a practice with ramifications emerging from the creation of a sphere of semipublic communication neither wholly public nor wholly private. The Boarding School thus provides a unique opportunity to examine the nature of communications networks among women in the early republic.

The novel may be analyzed in terms of the application and adaptation of Jurgen Habermas's seminal theory of the public sphere. Briefly, in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Habermas conceptualized the bourgeois public sphere as an ideal arena of rational discourse distinct from civil society and the state. As the dichotomy between public and private became less rigid, and access to the public sphere became more democratic, the public sphere degenerated. Habermas argues that consumer culture and
bureaucratic political parties supplanted rational and critical discourse, which led to fragmentation of the public sphere with the loss of common ground (and a cleavage between the "lifeworld" and the systems of the state). For critics of Habermas, this process of degeneration raises questions about the construction of the public sphere as a unity, the exclusion of non-male, non-bourgeois subaltern groups from the public sphere, the durability of the public sphere, and the relationship of the ideal to the actual public sphere.8

Habermas’ theories have been utilized, adapted, and criticized by historians. Perhaps the first historian to develop a feminist reconceptualization of public-sphere theory was Joan Landes, who argued that the French Republic was "constructed against women, not just without them" because the aristocratic women who had been prominent in French society and culture before the French Revolution were subsequently excluded from the public sphere. Following Landes’s example, Susan Juster has analyzed the exclusion of Baptist women from church leadership after the American Revolution as a microcosm of the exclusion of women from the

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8For a lucid overview and critique of Habermasian philosophy see Craig Calhoun’s introduction to Habermas and the Public Sphere, 1-42. Michael Schudson suggests that an analysis of voting patterns, literacy, and political journalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicates that Habermas’s theoretical model of the public sphere cannot be applied to America in "Was There Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When?" in Calhoun, ed. Habermas and the Public Sphere, 143-63.
public sphere more generally.\(^9\)

Unlike Landes and Juster, who accept Habermas' theory while applying it to women, other scholars have developed critiques of public sphere theory and applied these critiques to historical analysis. Nancy Fraser questions the existence of a unitary public sphere, and argues instead that alternative "subaltern counterpublics" were constructed by marginalized groups, including women and members of the working class. These groups could express "oppositional interpretations" more congruent with their situation than those expressed in the discourse of the dominant public sphere.\(^10\) Similarly, Geoff Eley disagrees with Habermas' perspective that fragmentation of the public sphere is symptomatic of its decline. Instead, he argues that because "competing publics" have always existed, the public sphere must be reconceptualized as a zone of contestation.\(^11\)

While Fraser's and Eley's analyses are abstract and philosophical, Mary P. Ryan uses the story of women's empowerment in "democratic public spaces," where their interests and identities were constructed and expressed, to set forth a "counternarrative" to Habermas' theory of the

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\(^{9}\) Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, 12; Juster, Disorderly Women.

\(^{10}\) Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere" in Calhoun, ed. Habermas and the Public Sphere, 123.

declension of the public sphere. She rejects the dichotomy of public and private not only because of postmodernist epistemology, but more fundamentally, because these binary opposites do not reflect the reality of women's social experiences. Thus, although Ryan discusses the social, cultural, and political history of women in a later time period than that of The Boarding School, her argument that the opposition of public and private did not apply to women may help to elucidate representations of women's associations in the novel.

The Boarding School has not been analyzed in terms of its implications for the application of Habermasian public sphere theory or critiques of this theory. The omission is not surprising given the greater popularity of The Coquette. Most discussions of Foster's work has focused on The Coquette; The Boarding School is discussed only in a comparative context with The Coquette and with other novels by early American women writers. Cathy Davidson briefly mentions The Boarding School, but focuses her discussion on the popularity of The Coquette and the cultural meaning of the seduction narrative for its female audience.13


13Davidson, Revolution and the Word 140-50; Heller, "Conceiving the 'New' American Literature," 83-90. The Coquette is a fictionalized account of the seduction and death in childbirth of poet Elizabeth Whitman, who was distantly related to Foster by marriage. Like the fiction
Sarah Emily Newton's approach broadens and extends Davidson's; while both discuss the meaning of The Coquette for its female readers, Newton also analyzes the linkages between prescriptive literature and the novels of Foster and Rowson, which she terms "hybrid conduct-fiction." These novels, Newton argues, like didactic conduct literature, present the ideal woman as pious, obedient, submissive, and domestic, and juxtapose the prudent virgin, who safeguards her chastity, with the foolish virgin, who is seduced and ruined. Yet Newton suggests that the novels also convey the idea of women's empowerment through motherhood and that they dramatize female agency by their portrayal of women making their own choices and thereby controlling their own destinies.14 Similarly, from the perspective of material culture analysis, Richard Bushman traces the origin of the "courtesy book" to the Renaissance "mirror of princes" literature, and he argues that the conduct genre diffused from the court to the aristocracy and finally to the middle classes who aspired towards refined genteel culture. Nineteenth-century domestic fiction thus functioned as a kind of master narrative upon which people modeled their

lives. Although Bushman does not mention Foster, his discussion of the diffusion of genteel accomplishments, notably letter writing, is important to consider in the context of Newton's idea that the epistolary form of "conduc fiction" functioned as a bridge between the conduct book and the novel. Perhaps most importantly, Davidson, Newton, and Bushman would agree that people in early America read novels mimetically.16

The relationship between reading and reality is relevant to an analysis of The Boarding School, because if correct, the idea of mimetic reading supports the argument that Foster sought to encourage her readers to form informal, semipublic communication networks among themselves. Groups of women would circulate their letters and commonplace books among themselves, commenting upon literary as well as personal matters. The dichotomy between "public" and "private" does not apply here because such communications networks combined elements of both. Through this process, a woman would send letters to other women who were not personally acquainted with the author of the letter. Indirect communication among a network of

15Bushman, The Refinement of America, 30-60, 280-312.

16Some women interpreted their lives in terms of master narratives. Ann Taves suggests that Abigail Abbott Bailey (1746-1815) cast her narrative of her escape from an abusive marriage in terms of popular Indian captivity narratives, such as Mary Rowlandson's, as well as from the Book of Job. Taves, ed. Religion and Domestic Violence: The Memoirs of Abigail Abbott Bailey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 15-17.
individuals who are not personally acquainted is not strictly private; however, nonpublished writing communicated in this informal manner is not strictly public, either. Rather, such indirect communication among a group defies the dichotomy of "public" and "private." Moreover, the existence of such a sphere of communication, neither wholly public nor wholly private, suggests that the terms "public" and "private" may be more flexible, fluid, and permeable for women than the concept of "separate spheres" would indicate.

Historians have produced a vast body of literature analyzing the problem of separate spheres and the implications of republican ideology for women. According to Linda Kerber, the concept that the success of the new republic depended on the private virtue of its citizens led to the creation of a semipublic role for women, that of "republican mother." This new role acknowledged women's importance in inculcating virtue in their children. Kerber describes republican motherhood as the creation of elite women, and she specifically includes Hannah Webster Foster among the architects of the new ideology. On the other hand, Jan Lewis argues that in the early republic, the role

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17 Kerber, "The Republican Mother," 187-205, and Women of the Republic, esp. 11, 248-49, 272-74. Kerber briefly discusses how Foster encouraged her daughters to write historical novels. It is also interesting to note that Kerber's reading of The Coquette differs from Davidson's: where Kerber finds a didactic warning to women to avoid seduction and novel reading, Davidson discusses the divergence between the rumors about the real women upon which the character of Eliza was based and Foster's recasting of the story to emphasize female agency.
of "republican wife" as companion for virtuous republican men was more important than republican motherhood in the early republic. The affectionate "Edenic marriage" served as a political metaphor for the ideal society in which individual interests would be subordinate to the public good. Lewis interprets the theme of seduction in popular fiction as a metaphor for the necessity of maintaining virtue in the face of corruption.\(^\text{18}\)

Just as they have developed different interpretations about the role of women as republican wives and mothers, historians also disagree on the implications for women of the ideology of separate spheres. According to Barbara Welter's classic analysis of prescriptive literature, the antebellum ideology of the pious, pure, submissive, domestic woman imposed real constraints and restrictions upon women.\(^\text{19}\) Other historians, such as Mary P. Ryan, also regard domesticity and feminism as incompatible opposites; Ryan argues that women involved in maternal associations, charitable activities, and moral reform movements in the antebellum period accepted gender inequality.\(^\text{20}\)

On the other hand, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg suggests that the ideology of "woman's sphere" had protofeminist


\(^{20}\)Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class, 186-229.
implications. Women constructed among themselves a world of intense, affectionate, personal relations among themselves, and the evangelical women who were active in Female Moral Reform societies presented a radical challenge to the idea of masculine preeminence as well as a critique of the sexual double standard.\textsuperscript{21} Similarly, Nancy F. Cott argues that the ideology of separate spheres was instrumental in the development of women's identification with one another in gendered communities, which in turn was an essential prerequisite for women's empowerment with the rise of organized feminism. Thus, within their "sphere," women discovered and explored their resources; moreover, they raised the question of whether female inferiority was rooted in the laws of God and nature, or was an artificial cultural construction.\textsuperscript{22}

These historiographical debates about gender are relevant to an analysis of The Boarding School because the novel takes place almost entirely within the domestic sphere; men are mentioned only peripherally and none is a central character. It is evident from Foster's dedication of the book "to the young ladies of America"\textsuperscript{23} that young


\textsuperscript{22}Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood, 63-125, 197-206.

\textsuperscript{23}Foster, The Boarding School, AAS 33748.
women and adolescent girls were her intended audience. For this reason, my discussion of this novel will address the historiographical debates on adolescence as well as republican motherhood, and the interrelationships between them. As noted above, historians disagree on the question of whether a concept of adolescence as a distinct stage of life existed. According to some, the transition from childhood to adulthood occurred in a series of gradual stages, while other historians argue that the idea of adolescence (or youth) was recognized in early America.

While neither historians of women nor historians of childhood have produced much on girlhood, one analysis of material culture suggests that the idea of adolescence developed earlier for boys than for girls.

Foster's dedication implies that she recognized adolescence as a distinctive stage of life for young women, implicitly raising questions of interpretation when evidence from material culture and from literary sources do not concur. The first part of the novel presents the ideals of Mrs. Williams, "the virtuous relict of a respectable

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24 Demos, A Little Commonwealth; Greven, Four Generations.


26 Anne Boylan, "Growing Up Female in Young America," in Hawes and Hiner, ed. American Childhood, 153-84; Calvert, Children in the House, 79-87.
clergyman," about what constitutes proper behavior and attitudes for young women. The pedagogical theories of John Locke inform these instructions; there are several metaphors of education as gardening, and Mrs. Williams uses examples to illustrate the principles she sets forth.\textsuperscript{27} The short didactic stories indicate the Lockean pedagogical practice of teaching by example as well as by precept. Foster's use of Locke's ideas also indicates cultural transmission from England because, according to Samuel F. Pickering, these ideas permeated the juvenile literature of eighteenth-century England.\textsuperscript{28}

Yet Foster combines Biblical allusions and Lockean ideas: Mrs. Williams tells the girls that "Your minds are good soil; and may I not flatter myself, that the seeds of instruction which I have sown 'will spring up, and yield fruit abundantly.'"\textsuperscript{29} Throughout the novel, religion, morality, and virtue are represented as central to the lives of young women. Foster's inculcation of virtue and religion through education resemble Horace Bushnell's later ideas of the "Christian nurture" of children for a gradual rather than sudden process of conversion.\textsuperscript{30} Mrs. Williams also

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\textsuperscript{27}Foster, \textit{The Boarding School}, 5-19, AAS 33748.
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\textsuperscript{28}Pickering, \textit{Locke and Children's Books}, 3-39.
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\textsuperscript{29}Foster, \textit{The Boarding School}, 16, AAS 33748.
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\textsuperscript{30}The role of parents and teachers in the conversion of children is discussed in Slater, \textit{Children in the New England Mind}, 128-58.
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emphasizes the role of women in the private domestic sphere because "She particularly endeavored to domesticate them; to turn their thoughts to the beneficial and necessary qualifications of private life."31

Thus, Foster has Mrs. Williams conceive in broad terms of the types of instruction needed by young women: practical domestic duties, especially sewing; intellectual development through reading works of literature and history; and, above all, morality, virtue, and religion. During the girls' last week at the boarding school, Mrs. Williams gives her final instructions on a variety of topics, which may be grouped into three categories. The first category consists of sewing, reading, writing and arithmetic. The order in which these are given is revealing because it represents the actual pedagogical order of education for children in early America. Female literacy in New England was widespread even in colonial times; women who signed documents with a mark may have been taught to read but not to write.32

In the context of female literacy in early America, it is important to note that opportunities for education for women greatly expanded after the American Revolution. Private female academies, similar to Foster's fictitious boarding school, first appeared in the 1780s and 1790s; one such academy was created by the best-selling woman writer of

31Foster, The Boarding School, 7, AAS 33748.

32Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender," in Davidson, ed. Reading in America, 53-80.
the eighteenth century, Susanna Rowson. Intellectual education for women was defended on the grounds that, rather than hinder the performance of their domestic duties, such education would help them to become better wives and mothers whose role in maintaining the private virtue necessary for a republic was essential. Although private academies were too expensive for most families, the idea of education for women diffused through the population as graduates of female academies became teachers. The charity school movement, which began in the middle colonies at the same time as female academies were created, was instrumental for the spread of education to girls from non-elite social classes.33

After defining education as intellectual, religious, and domestic, Mrs. Williams provides instruction on the role of ornamental accomplishments and etiquette by discussing music, dancing, self-discipline and the need to control one's temper, dress, politeness, and amusements. The final group of subjects is "filial and fraternal affection," friendship, love and marriage, and religion. It is interesting to note that friendship is placed between discussions of young women in their parental families and in their new families formed by marriage. Perhaps this reflects the high valuation placed upon affectionate relationships among women and their importance to women's

domestic sphere. It is not surprising that Mrs. Williams regards religion as "the most important theme" in an era when religion was increasingly becoming the province of women. According to Richard Shiels, as men became more involved in politics, and as individualism replaced communalism, ministers faced congregations with disproportionate numbers of women.34

Thus, Foster presents a fully articulated vision of "women's sphere" in the domestic realm. Perhaps it is significant that she has Mrs. Williams begin with sewing, the only one of these topics that applies solely to the domestic sphere unless one is a seamstress or milliner. Mrs. Williams notes its value in avoiding the scourge of idleness, as well as in the pleasure it provides, and above all she emphasizes that sewing is a practical necessity. To illustrate this last point, she tells the story of a young widow who supported herself and her four small children by needlework.35 Such a statement reflects the potentially precarious economic situation of all women, even those who "marry well," in a time when widowhood often entailed economic devastation. Jeanne Boydston argues that the separation of women's household work from the emerging capitalist economy led to a devaluation of women's unpaid


35Foster, The Boarding School, 11-13, AAS 33748.
labor, and according to Christine Stansell "widowhood was virtually synonomous with impoverishment" in the antebellum period.\(^{36}\)

In the novel, sewing was both a hedge against economic disaster and a social activity that coexists with education; when the girls practice their needlework, one of them reads aloud to the others from an "amusing and instructive book."\(^{37}\) Sewing circles became increasingly important to antebellum women, who used them as a basis for missionary, benevolent, and political activity. According to Carolyn J. Lawes, such women "redefined sewing as a public act" and conceptualized their homes as public space.\(^{38}\) Foster's representation of sewing in the first part of the novel may have foreshadowed the development of antebellum sewing circles as a public activity, just as her representation of the girls sharing their letters in the second part of the novel indicates an early stage in the formation of communication networks among women. In both cases, reading was of paramount importance.

Mrs. Williams places great emphasis on appropriate reading material. She cautions against the excessive

\(^{36}\)Boydston, Home and Work, 24-29; Stansell, City of Women, 12.

\(^{37}\)Foster, The Boarding School, 9, AAS 33748.

reading of novels, especially those with romantic themes, because they led to "a fondness for show and dissipation" which are the antithesis of the "simplicity, modesty, and chastity" proper to women.\textsuperscript{39} To illustrate this point, she tells the story of a young woman whose romantic dreams led to a disastrous elopement. Mrs. Williams does note exceptions: novels which "convey lessons for moral improvement"\textsuperscript{40} are permissible, but she prefers poetry, essays, and history, which help one to know human nature. To be sure, it was essential for Foster to have Mrs. Williams condone such "improving" novels because this was a means of legitimizing the publication of her own novel.

Although Foster does not mention the terms or concepts of the "republican mother," nor explicitly represents the "republican wife," Mrs. Williams herself represents an example of the ideal republican mother for the girls to emulate. Also, she provides the salutary example of a woman who is simultaneously a republican wife and a republican mother: she teaches her children "every needful branch of science" as "their guide, their example, and their friend," and she provides her husband with the "enlivening charms of rational and refined conversation" because "she is able to discuss every subject with ease and propriety."\textsuperscript{41} By

\textsuperscript{39}Foster, \textit{The Boarding School}, 18, AAS 33748.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 23-24.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 27-28.
combining in one character the republican mother and the republican wife, Foster suggests that these two concepts were mutually reinforcing. In turn, this suggests that Kerber's and Lewis's divergent interpretations of republican mothers and wives,42 respectively, may have been due in part to focusing on different aspects of the same phenomenon. Moreover, I would suggest that The Boarding School provides evidence of a third aspect of women's relationship to republicanism which may be called "republican friendship" because it suggests that affectionate friendships among women were intertwined with their intellectual endeavors.

When Mrs. Williams shifts her discussion from reading to writing, she explicitly invokes patriotic themes in her defense of women's intellectual endeavors:

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. Here the widely extended fields of literature court attention, and the American fair are invited to call the flowers, and cultivate the expanding laurel.43

Foster's application of patriotic themes to an assertion of gender equality in the intellectual, although not social and political, realm, occurs in the context of Mrs. Williams's recommendation that the young women write regularly in their

43 Foster, The Boarding School, 31, AAS 33748.
commonplace books about what they have read. They are also told to "recapitulate what you have been perusing, and annex to it your own sentiments and remarks, to some friend." In the second part of the novel, the girls are represented as circulating and sharing letters among themselves. Claire Pettengill describes this as a "reading circle," a gendered institution that maintained the network of close friendships established at the boarding school, and she analyzes how Mrs. Williams taught the girls to value sisterhood while they functioned in their separate sphere. Pettengill's argument is a valuable example of how literary criticism and social history can be mutually enhancing because her analysis is grounded in Cott's and Smith-Rosenberg's descriptions of female friendships. I would suggest that this analysis can be extended to interpret The Boarding School's representation of group communication.

Foster has Mrs. Williams go beyond urging young women to continue to refine their intellectual skills through reading and writing to recommend a form of semipublic communication. The letters in the second part of the novel represent the creation of a "subaltern counterpublic."

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44Ibid., 26.

45Claire C. Pettengill, "Sisterhood in a Separate Sphere: Female Friendship in Hannah Webster Foster's The Coquette and The Boarding School," Early American Literature 27 (1992), 185-203.

46The term is Fraser's, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," in Calhoun, ed. Habermas and the Public Sphere, 123.
among these young women: a loosely organized network based on affectionate personal friendships. As such, it is a fictional representation of the intense emotional bonding among women of which Smith-Rosenberg found abundant evidence in the diaries and letters of women between the 1760s and the 1880s. Smith-Rosenberg argues that the dichotomy of heterosexuality and homosexuality does not apply to these lifelong relationships, and notes that many of these relationships began in boarding school. Foster's novel supports the arguments of Smith-Rosenberg and Cott on the importance of these relationships, but suggests that they may also have entailed a quasi-public element because the group as a whole is represented. Letters which one of the girls received from outsiders who never attended the boarding school are circulated; and similarly a letter from a girl who had left the boarding school is read to the new group. The fact that the novel was published is also relevant because this constitutes a public representation of these relationships. As an example of "conduct fiction," The Boarding School incorporates both descriptive and prescriptive elements.

Although the novel is written in the first person singular (in the first part, through Mrs. Williams's spoken

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48 The term is Newton's, "Wise and Foolish Virgins," 140.
instructions to the girls, and in the second part, through their letters), Foster speaks in an omniscient author's voice at a critical juncture. At the conclusion of the first part of the novel, Foster describes how Mrs. Williams and the girls displayed their "most sincere affection" through "an unreserved and social correspondence, both personal and epistolary." Thus, Foster constructs communication among the girls as both a social activity and a personal communication. Her representation is significant because such semipublic communication may have foreshadowed the rise of organized voluntary benevolent associations among women in the early and mid-nineteenth century. The remainder of this chapter will explore several interrelated themes: female friendship, adolescence as a distinctive stage of life between the completion of formal education and marriage, women as the "head" of families, and the construction of gendered networks of communication by sharing letters that are neither entirely public nor wholly private.

Intense and affectionate personal friendships, the foundation of this semipublic communication, are stressed throughout the novel. Mrs. Williams's discourse on friendship emphasizes the important role of friends in reinforcing moral virtue and proper social conduct. She tells the girls didactic stories that contrast a false

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49 Foster, *The Boarding School*, 113, AAS 33748.
friend, whose facilitation of a clandestine relationship led to disaster, with a true friend, who informed the parents of the proposed elopement. Yet the letters also reveal more demonstrative language. One girl writes of "the tear of regret" upon the departure of her friend; a second writes "you have left—you have forsaken me...but I will haunt you with my letters;" and a third includes in her letter a subtle love poem. Each girl utilizes a language often associated with romantic love and courtship, which supports Smith-Rosenberg's argument that the homosexual-heterosexual dichotomy may not have applied to these relationships.

Analysis of the representations of marriage in the novel also supports Smith-Rosenberg's suggestion that, because of gender segregation, many women had difficulty adjusting to marriage. Foster has Mrs. Williams ease the girls' transition to marriage by referring to it as "the highest state of friendship." She also gives practical advice on the choice of a husband. Marriage must be based on rational choice because "religion and morality" and an "amiable temper" are essential; romantic attachment or riches will not assure happiness. The girls are

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50 Ibid., 89-96.

51 Ibid., 121, 124, 131-33.


53 Foster, The Boarding School, 92, AAS 33748.

54 Ibid., 99-101.
encouraged to seek advice from their friends and, above all, the approval of their parents. Young women must neither succumb to the wiles of a "mere gallant," nor themselves "act the coquette." Mrs. Williams acknowledged the centrality of marriage to the lives of women, telling the girls that it involves "the happiness or misery of all your days." 

The stress on the girls' choice of marriage partner, and the role of friendship in the ideal of the companionate marriage, supports Jan Lewis's interpretation of the "republican wife." However, Foster gives as much emphasis to the idea of a marriage of rational choice as she does to a marriage of affection. Mrs. Williams cautions the girls against believing the maxim "that reformed rakes make the best husbands," for this seldom occurs. Rather, "good principles, both of religion and morality," an "amiable temper," and the prospect of "a comfortable subsistence in life" are a better basis than affection alone for the crucial decision about a proper husband.

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55 Ibid., 100-02.

56 Ibid., 101.

57 Ibid., 100-05. Prescriptive literature for young men also emphasizes the importance of rational choice in marriage and the role of marriage in the happiness of men. James Burgh instructs his readers to choose a woman with "good sense," of "good nature," neither a "noted beauty" who would be "insufferable through vanity" nor one whose appearance is disagreeable, and preferably one with a "moderate fortune." Above all, she should be an "agreeable companion," a "prudent manager," and of exemplary character. See James Burgh, Youth's Friendly Monitor, or the
Some of the letters represent the trepidation many young women must have felt at the prospect of such a momentous choice. Two of the girls who have recently left the boarding school exchange letters when one of them, Harriot, attends the wedding of an acquaintance. Harriot writes to her friend Cleora of her apprehension at the "deceptions" of courtship; many marriages "which were contracted with the brightest prospects" eventually led to "wretchedness for life." Cleora's reply is highly significant because it subverts the idea that marriage was the ultimate vocation for women by asserting that celibacy may be preferable to an imprudent choice of a husband. Moreover, she suggests that by "retrieving old-maidism from the imputation of ill-nature, oddity...we shall save many a good girl from an unhappy marriage." Moreover, men would be "impelled to greater circumspection of conduct" when faced with ladies who are "independent in sentiment." Cleora concludes by asking Harriot to respond to this plan to become a "general reformer."

Affectionate Schoolmaster: To the American Youth, who Wish to Walk in Virtue’s Path, Shine in Honorable Employments, and be Respected as Useful and Worthy Members of That Society, In which They Must Soon Appear, with best Wishes for their Prosperity (Worcester: Thomas, 1797), 17-20, AAS 48083.

58Ibid., 134-35.
59Ibid., 136-37; emphasis original.
60Ibid., 137.
Harriot's response, if one could call it that, is to become the first of the group to marry. Laura informs Mrs. Williams of Harriot's marriage with a lament: "Have I not lost my amiable friend and associate?" While Smith-Rosenberg suggests that intense, affectionate relationships among women were regarded as fully compatible with marriage, this fictional letter suggests that sometimes young women were jealous when a friend married. Laura admits "the idea of rivals to that affection and benevolence" which the girls experienced at the boarding school "with the utmost reluctance." After acknowledging her sorrow at the loss of her dear friend, and the prospect of a diminution of the gendered community she had treasured at the boarding school, Laura expresses her "timidity and apprehension" at the prospect of "the great uncertainty" of marriage, and asks Mrs. Williams for additional advice. Young women would have been well aware that many marriages that began with promise became unhappy, and apparently Laura fears the consequences of a poor choice.

Mrs. Williams begins her response to Laura with a reprise of the instructions given at the boarding school: marriage is a most serious matter, because "domestic

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61 Ibid., 216.


63 Foster, The Boarding School, 137, AAS 33748.
happiness is the foundation of every other species." She adds additional cautions against "disparity of tempers," "disparity of years," irreverence, and intemperance. Mrs. Williams compares the family to "a little commonwealth," a trope which had been popular since the days of the earliest Puritan colonies. In this letter, Mrs. Williams both counsels wifely forbearance to the husband and implies the equality of women in the domestic sphere. Because "little disagreements and misunderstandings" can result in "bitterness that can hardly be eradicated," young women are urged to exhibit always "the most cheerful acquiescence" to their husbands, and to "studiously avoid every expression, and even look, which may irritate and offend." Yet such deference is placed in the context of the need for concord between the two heads of the family--husband and wife--in the important matter of childrearing: "the union and cooperation of the heads are indispensably necessary" for proper family government.

Thus, after subverting the idea that the destiny of women must be to become wives and mothers through Cleora's letter to Harriot, Foster reasserts it with Harriot's marriage and Mrs. Williams's additional advice on marriage to Laura. Still, it is significant that the possibility of

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64 Ibid., 223.
65 Ibid., 223-24.
66 Ibid., 22.
making a choice to avoid marriage was raised at all. Through Cleora’s letter to Harriot, Foster seems to be suggesting that the lower status and social position of spinsters was a matter of custom, and thereby subject to change. Perhaps such an overt challenge to the cultural disparagement of spinsterhood could be expressed more readily in a novel than in prescriptive literature because, as Davidson notes, more subversive content could be asserted in novels than in didactic literature.⁶⁷

Most women did marry and become mothers. The references throughout *The Boarding School* to women as the "head" of families suggests the idea of women's empowerment within their sphere.⁶⁸ The first such reference to women as the "head" of their families occurs with Mrs. Williams's parting instructions to the girls at the boarding school. Here, the idea is linked to a concept of female adolescence as the ideal time for young women to "get wisdom" because they are then "free from those domestic cares, which will engross and occupy your minds, when placed at the head of families."⁶⁹ Mrs. Williams also uses women's position at the head of families to emphasize her belief that a

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⁶⁷Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 36-54.


⁶⁹Foster, *The Boarding School*, 27, AAS 33748.
knowledge of arithmetic is "absolutely necessary" for women. She tells the girls that "when placed at the head of families, it will be very friendly to the order and economy of your domestic affairs," and illustrates this point with the story of a young woman who saved her family from destitution with her astute management of the family finances when her mother died and her father was ill.\textsuperscript{70} According to Jeanne Boydston and Christine Stansell, the reality of women's participation in the emerging capitalist system was obscured by the ideal of domesticity and economic dependence.\textsuperscript{71} The Boarding School implies that young women were aware of the very real possibility that they might have to assume financial responsibility for their families.

The letters of the girls, as well as Mrs. Williams's instructions, also express the idea of women as the "head" of their families. Laura's letter of lament at Harriot's marriage clearly refers to both women's dominance in the domestic sphere and marriage as the line of demarcation from adolescence to adulthood: according to Laura, Harriot "threw aside the sprightly girl" to substitute "the dignified and respectable head of a family."\textsuperscript{72} Cleora notes in one of her letters that "young ladies of fashion" frequently do not perform domestic duties, which they

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{70}Ibid., 35-38.
\textsuperscript{71}Boydston, \textit{Home and Work}, 120-41; Stansell, \textit{City of Women}, 11-37.
\textsuperscript{72}Foster, \textit{The Boarding School}, 216, AAS 33748.
\end{flushleft}
associate with servility. Thus, "when called to preside over families, they commit many errors." Such warnings about the consequences of inexperience place women in the home, in a separate domestic sphere, but as the head in that sphere. The final letter in the novel, Mrs. Williams's letter of consolation to Caroline, whose mother has died, also expresses the idea of women's dominance in the domestic sphere: "As the eldest daughter, you will be placed at the head of your father's family" with responsibility for her younger siblings. It is noteworthy that Mrs. Williams refers to Caroline's mother as her "best friend" and states that Caroline is now "in a measure" her own guardian, with all the responsibilities and obligations this entails. The father is barely in the picture; indeed, men appear only peripherally in the novel, usually in Mrs. Williams's didactic stories. Foster thus has Caroline's position diverge from the status of "femme covert," which the legal system mandated for non-adult women. Unmarried and below the age of majority, Caroline has become the head of her family because of an unforeseen tragedy.

While several letters represent women as the head of their domestic sphere, another letter indicates broad ideas of gender difference and separate spheres. In one of her letters, Matilda compares the relationship between men and

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73 Ibid., 198.
74 Ibid., 249-50.
women to "a happy symphony" because "both sexes are reciprocal instruments of each other's improvement." Yet, she places greater emphasis on the salutary effect of women on men; for example, "the rough spirit of the one is tempered by the gentleness of the other." Again, this suggests that the influence of women is predominant in the domestic sphere. While Mrs. Williams says that men offer women friendship and economic support, her warnings about the dangers of seduction and the need to choose a husband rationally are much more prominent than her descriptions of the potential joys of marriage.

To prepare the girls for their responsibilities as heads of families, Mrs. Williams expresses the idea that they are in a distinctive stage of life, a time when it is of the utmost importance for them to acquire the wisdom that they will need in the future. The idea of adolescence as a separate stage of life is also expressed in one of the letters. One of the girls writes to a friend that her mother spoke of the need to continue to learn more after the completion of her school education, while she is still free of the "domestic cares and avocations" which will be her lot in life. Thus, adolescence for relatively elite young women is conceptualized as the time between the end of formal education and the beginning of marriage. This

75 Ibid., 176.
76 Ibid., 178.
definition was likely very different for young women from other social classes, however. Adolescence was therefore considered to be a social role rather than a social and biological stage of development (i.e., the onset of puberty) which marks modern concepts of adolescence.

Thus, Hannah Webster Foster expresses the idea of adolescence as a distinctive stage of life, and she emphasizes the necessity of education to prepare for marriage and motherhood. Through the letters, she provides information on what she considers ideal reading material for young women. Two of the girls, Cleora and Caroline, exchange letters criticizing some popular essayists. Cleora reports that her father believes that she dislikes Pope because he treats ladies "satirically," while she criticizes the "pitiful wit" of writers who "lavish abundant eloquence on trifling foibles." Caroline agrees with Cleora's critique of writing that is "of no consequence to the body natural, moral, or political." Another one of the girls, Laura, expands Mrs. Williams's cautions about novel reading with her comments on Richardson. Although she enjoys his

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Ibid., 127-30. The threefold concept of the body in the above phrase merits special attention. Perhaps the "body natural" may be associated with the corrupting influences of luxury, passion, and artifice--attributes that could be applied to both the literature the girls critique and the archetypal male seducer. The "body moral" would seem to imply the role of women as guardians of virtue in their domestic roles; also, virtue and morality are connected to religion throughout the novel. Although women were excluded from formal participation in the "body political," the role of republican mother sanctioned their indirect, quasipublic role.
novels, they "undermine the fabric of virtue, by painting vice and folly in alluring colours."\(^78\) Instead, she prefers "more solid and useful branches of literature" such as history. Similarly, Matilda recommends to Harriot Milliot's *Elements of Ancient and Modern History* because it combines "dignity with pleasure."\(^79\) Sophia’s letter to Maria, one of Mrs. Williams’s daughters, also criticizes popular novels. Sophia asked a friend's brother to recommend some reading material; when he suggested Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, she replied that "wit, blended with indelicacy, never meets my approbation." Similarly, Sophia criticized the "frolic and buffoonery" of Tristam Shandy, and claimed that Swift "has no claim to purity." Instead, she chose Dr. Belknap’s *History of New Hampshire*, which she praises as "writing for the public good."\(^80\) Still, her comments presuppose familiarity with the popular novels she critiques.

Other letters represent how the girls' choice of reading material was informed by patriotic concerns. One of the young women, Julia, writes that "the spirit of Columbian

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 160-61.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 201.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 204-09. The idea that the past could be profitably studied with an eye on the present was prominent in the 1780s and 1790s as statesmen looked to ancient republics for guidance on how to ensure the survival of the new American Republic. See for example Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 22-93; Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 3-45, and *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 95-109.
independence exults in my bosom" at the opportunity to read a geography treatise by an American author, Dr. Morse, rather than a foreign author. Julia explicitly links the study of history and geography to patriotism; through this knowledge one becomes aware of "our particular advantages of soil and situation, peace and good government, virtue and religion."

Another girl, Matilda, couches her challenge to "false notions of sexual disparity, in point of understanding and capacity" in the patriotic language of republican civic virtue: "the American fair are enlightened, generous, and liberal...and each branch of society is uniting to raise the virtues...of the whole." 

Thus, Foster's exchanges of affectionate letters between friends who are concerned with education and patriotism may be considered representations of what might be called republican friendship. In this context, ideas about the intellectual inferiority of women are subverted while their place in women's sphere of home and marriage are affirmed. This in turn suggests that the republican wife, mother, and friend coexisted. The concept of republican motherhood may have been more a shift in emphasis than a fundamental ideological change. Indeed, Mrs. Williams herself is simultaneously a republican mother and a republican friend (and, as a virtuous widow, her role as

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81 Foster, The Boarding School, 225, AAS 33748.
82 Ibid., 150-51.
republican wife is implied). During most of the day at the boarding school, she fulfills the role of republican mother; however, during breakfast she "suspended the authority of the matron."\textsuperscript{83} Mrs. Williams's dual role thus reconciles Cott's perspective that female friendships existed mostly among women of the same generation, and Smith-Rosenberg's argument that girls bonded across generations with their mothers' friends.\textsuperscript{84} Both discuss the important role of boarding schools in the establishment of female friendships, but Foster's novel suggests that at least some of such friendships might be considered republican in character.

One trait of republican civic virtue was suspicion of human passions and aristocratic excesses.\textsuperscript{85} The Boarding School couches these suspicions in terms of instruction in proper etiquette, which is permeated with exhortations to virtue and modesty. Mrs. Williams cautions her young students to avoid excessive attachment to amusements such as dancing, plays, and playing cards; they must remember that "modesty, diffidence, discretion, and humility are

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  \item \textsuperscript{83}Ibid., 9. Pettengill observes that Mrs. Williams was "a 'sister' as well as a mother, a friend as well as a teacher" in "Sisterhood in a Separate Sphere," 190.
  \item \textsuperscript{84}Cott, \textit{Bonds of Womanhood}, 177; Smith-Rosenberg, "Love and Ritual," in Smith-Rosenberg, \textit{Disorderly Conduct}, 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{85}Wood, \textit{Creation of the American Republic}, 3-45; Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," 334-56.
\end{itemize}
indispensable appendages of virtue and decency."86 Yet young women are not expected to renounce all desires because yearning, "if properly directed, may be of great utility."87 Thus, Foster's perspective reflects the acceptance of the existence of passions and the need to curb them, both of which were integral to the idea of republican civic virtue, as well as to Puritanism and evangelicalism.88 According to Ruth Bloch, there were numerous affinities between Protestantism and republican civic virtue;89 this convergence is evident in The Boarding School.

One aspect of the theme of virtue, the dangerous delights of cities, is addressed by several of the letters in the novel. The very first letter is a scathing critique of urban life; the "noise and confusion of a commercial city" are contrasted with the rational pleasures of the

86 Foster, The Boarding School, 37, AAS 33748.
87 Ibid., 55.
88 Edmund Morgan argues that the Puritans accepted sexuality within marriage and focused their discipline of adulterers and fornicators on reincorporating them into the community in The Puritan Family, 133-60, and "The Puritans and Sex," 591-607.
89 Bloch, suggests that republicanism and individualistic liberalism may be more complementary than contradictory. See "Religion, Sentimentalism, and Popular Revolutionary Ideology," in Hoffman and Albert, ed. Religion in a Revolutionary Age, 234-40. However, The Boarding School suggests that her argument could be modified when applied to women, because although Lockean pedagogy is practiced in the novel, and republicanism and religion are major themes, individualism is absent. Thus, there may have been a "gender gap" between men and women in political understanding in the late eighteenth century.
boarding school, which is located in the country and called "Harmony-Grove." Moreover, another letter contrasts the "listless tribe of yawning mortals"\(^9^0\) with the agreeable nature of life in the country. This second letter is also noteworthy because it provides an example of how letters were circulated to people other than the initial recipient. Harriot includes in her letter to Laura a letter from her friend Amelia, and criticizes Amelia's attachment to cities, amusement, and foreign novels.\(^9^1\) The inclusion of the second letter suggests a sharing of ideas and letters among loosely connected networks of friends. This is significant because, first, it implies a mode of communication in between public and private; second, it may indicate an early stage of the development of a female counterpublic. To clarify the question of what constitutes public and private communication, it may be helpful to consider extreme examples. A strictly private communication would be intended for one individual, never be communicated to another, and concern matters of interest only to the two individuals involved. A completely public communication would be presented and distributed so that anyone who wished could have access to it. Many actual communications, like the fictitious shared letters in *The Boarding School*, fall somewhere between these two theoretical extremes.

\(^{90}\)Foster, *The Boarding School*, 115, AAS 33748.

\(^{91}\)Ibid., 155-57.
Another example of semipublic communication occurs in the context of a letter from Julia to Anna, a daughter of Mrs. Williams, concerning the death of Dr. Clarke, a beloved minister. Julia praises Dr. Clarke’s writings, but includes a letter which a group of young ladies wrote to him "some years ago." These young women wrote to both praise and critique Dr. Clarke’s ideas about vice, virtue, and gender. They began by thanking Dr. Clarke for a sermon which "warned the youth to avoid the devious walks of vice and dissipation." The sermon was especially directed to young women who behaved like "agreeable trifles" instead of "rational friends." The young women who wrote the minister the anonymous letter noted that frivolous conduct frequently receives "the most flattering encouragement" from gentlemen and that the "serious, prudent female" is seldom preferred even by those who present themselves as "men of sense."  

Foster’s critique of male behavior is placed in the context of broader issues of gender. The young women note that "generally speaking, they (men and women) are equally to blame." They thus explicitly counter the idea that women are the cause of the frivolous behavior that culminates in vice; men are equally complicit. According to the girls, men’s complicity is greater, because men set themselves as superior. The young women wrote that "as the male assumes the prerogative of superior judgement and abilities, they

92 Ibid., 237-42.
ought to prove the justice of their claims by setting nobler examples." Moreover, they urged Dr. Clarke to preach more sermons addressed to both men and women because "the concurrent exertions of both" are necessary.\textsuperscript{93}

This letter is significant for several reasons. First, it demonstrates an awareness and resentment of the gendered nature of social constructions about vice and virtue. Second, it indicates the willingness of young women to critique the ideas of their minister. In this context, it is noteworthy that Julia wrote the letter to a daughter of Mrs. Williams, possibly with the intention that the letter would be shared with others. Indeed, Mrs. Williams herself had subverted the notion that women should turn to their minister for guidance on religious matters. Before the girls left the boarding school, Mrs. Williams encouraged them to read the Bible and seek explanations of scriptural passages from "some judicious and pious friend, or in the writings of some judicious and learned commentator."\textsuperscript{94} Such a statement indicates female agency in the interpretation of religious doctrine; the girls are not instructed to accept passively what their ministers have to offer. Third, this letter is significant because of the very fact of its existence. Foster is representing a form of semipublic communication among young women who express their concerns

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., 238, 241.

\textsuperscript{94}Ibid., 28.
both to their minister and to one another. Their letters are a mode of theological discourse which, while not opposed to acceptance of ministerial authority, is rather different from uncritical submission. Foster was embedding a gendered critique of an actual minister in The Boarding School; John Clarke's sermons were published in Boston after his death.\textsuperscript{95}

The idea that it is proper for women to question their ministers and to seek guidance on theological matters, such as the interpretation of Biblical passages, has the broader implication of subversion of the gendered norm of the passive, submissive woman. Foster also suggests in the novel that gender norms are socially constructed and thus subject to change. This is evident with Mrs. Williams's instructions on the need to avoid flattering seducers; she states that "custom only has rendered vice more odious in a woman than in a man." Moreover, Mrs. Williams suggests that if seducers were met with contempt, they would be "impelled to relinquish their injurious designs."\textsuperscript{96} Foster's critique of the double standard of morality foreshadows the attempts of the Female Moral Reform Societies of the 1830s to legislate penalties for seduction while presenting the women

\textsuperscript{95}John Clarke, Sermons (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1799), AAS 35312. Women played important roles in seventeenth-century colonial religious life; personal conflicts between women and their ministers were far from infrequent. See Ulrich, Good Wives, 215-35.

\textsuperscript{96}Foster, The Boarding School, 105, AAS 33748.
involved as victims of male lust.97

Other letters indicate disagreement among the young women on the question of seduction. Julia writes to Maria, one of Mrs. Williams's daughters, about an acquaintance who fell prey to a seducer and bore an illegitimate child. According to Julia, there is "no excuse" for such conduct. Despite the attempts of women "to excite the pity of the world," the sole reason women find themselves in such straits is because they have succumbed to "flattery and vanity." Maria's reply begins by agreeing with Julia that tales of seduction demonstrate the deleterious effects of allowing the passions to rule; however, Maria asserts that passions are "alike disgraceful to both sexes." Moreover, she suggests that it dishonors the male character to "take advantage of the tender affection" of women.98 When Mrs. Williams read Julia's letter to her pupils, one of the girls told her own story: the illegitimate daughter of "people of fortune," she was given away at birth, and had often been "insultingly reproached" as a consequence. That she was a member of the gendered community in the boarding school suggests that the school offers the potential to cross the lines of social difference.

Indeed, one of the letters demonstrates Foster's

97Smith-Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman," in Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct, 109-23; Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class, 105-44.

98Foster, The Boarding School, 184-85, 192, AAS 33748.
awareness that cultural norms of virtue, purity, and propriety for women are largely dependent upon social class position. Maria, one of Mrs. Williams's daughters, recounts the story of how she went for a walk and saw a young woman with an infant. The young mother asked for shelter for the night, and Maria agreed to provide it because "to know she really needed charity, was a sufficient inducement...to bestow it, without scrupulously inquiring whether she deserved it or not." At this point the young mother told her story: she was born in Ireland, came to America, and lost her parents at a very early age. She explained her current predicament in terms of environment and social class: she was "brought up in ignorance of those principles of decency, virtue, and religion," was seduced by a man who reneged on his promise of marriage, had no friends who could help, and was now searching for employment. Maria brought her back to the boarding school, where she was hired as a servant. However, the young mother was also incorporated into the gendered community because Maria decided to teach her reading and "the principles of virtue and religion." Although the novel does not specifically mention the young mother's Catholicism, by implication it was the source of her ignorance of religion (here normatively constituted as Protestantism).

99 Ibid., 227.

100 Ibid., 229.
Foster has Maria recognize, and make allowances for, social class and ethnicity in the application of the "principles of virtue and religion" in terms that anticipate those of the Female Moral Reform Societies. Maria writes that to meet women who have been seduced with "extreme bitterness and acrimony" may discourage all designs to regain virtue; while the "soothing voice of forgiveness, and the consequent prospect of being restored to reputation and usefulness" may redeem them. Maria's ideas are given in terms of both social class and gender, and suggest a gendered community of women, albeit one differentiated by social class. While "allowance may be made for those whose ignorance occasions their ruin," there is no excuse for those who have the advantages of a good education and proper upbringing. Thus, the question of whether a "good" woman who falls has any way to redeem herself is raised but not answered. The need for charity is expressed in gendered terms; Maria writes that "it is melancholy to see our fellow-creatures reared up, like the brute creation." 101 Such gendered sympathy anticipates the perspective of antebellum evangelical social reformers that women were the victims of the unrestrained passions of men, as well as providing a model for benevolent activity by middle and upper class women on behalf of those less fortunate.

Thus, the novel raises issues addressed decades later.

101 Ibid., 230.
by the Female Reform Societies, such as challenges to the double standard of sexual morality and the creation of a gendered community within women's sphere. It also represents the agency of women in religious matters and challenges depictions of women as frivolous and emotional: these young women discuss intellectual matters among themselves and approach marriage as a rational choice. Their affectionate friendships serve as the basis for the formation of a gendered communication network which provides intellectual stimulation as well as emotional sustenance. Adolescence is represented as a distinctive stage in the lifecourse of women; it is a time when these friendships are developed. Women will become republican friends, republican wives, and republican mothers in that order, and eventually will be all three simultaneously.

The novel can be approached on at least two levels of analysis. First, Foster's biography and her fiction suggest that she may be considered one of the earliest American "literary domestics." Foster's representation of the circulation of letters among the young women may be interpreted as a reflection of an idealized group of friends, or as a prescriptive form of encouragement for young women to develop such semipublic networks of association and communication. Her critique of the double standard of morality in a gendered community has

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102 The term is Kelley's, Private Women, Public Stage.
implications for the development of benevolent moral reform. Apparently, Foster simultaneously accepted "women's sphere" while attempting to transcend it.

Second, the publication of The Boarding School can be analyzed as an entry of women's concerns into the literary public sphere, and as one small indication of the development of a secondary public sphere among women. If one accepts the arguments that the public sphere, republican government, and print discourse were mutually constitutive, and that sentimental novels had subversive, emancipatory potential for women readers, then the significance of this novel becomes apparent. If people read novels mimaetically in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Foster's representation of a gendered "reading circle," might have influenced other women to communicate among themselves in a similar manner. Informal reading groups, within which women could question the gendered norms of their society, may have foreshadowed the rise of formal organizations of female moral reformers. Most importantly, both Foster's representation of semipublic communication networks, and the publication of the novel suggest that for women there was no clear separation of the categories

103 Warner, Letters of the Republic; Davidson, Revolution and the Word, esp. 110-50.

104 Bushman, Refinement of America, 30-60, 280-312; Davidson, Revolution and the Word, 3-45, 110-50; Newton, "Wise and Foolish Virgins," 139-67; Pettengill, "Sisterhood in a Separate Sphere," 185-2-3. The term is Pettengill's.
"public" and the "private." Thus, The Boarding School has implications for the application of Habermasian public sphere theory to historical analysis. If the boundary between public and private is flexible and fluid, perhaps "public" should join race, class, gender, and ethnicity as a central category of historical analysis.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated representations of gender in juvenile literature. Although the study of fiction reveals little about the actual lives of children, it can elucidate how the middle- and upper-class writers and readers of stories for young people interpreted their culture. However, the study does have a material basis because the success narratives in children's fiction imported from England and printed in America express the values of industry, honesty, and thrift which the middle classes adopted. Also, juvenile fiction is considered in the context of the social history of the family.

Previous interpretations of children's literature have demonstrated the presence of Lockean pedagogy, of the ideology of civic republicanism, of free-market liberalism, of religion, and of both continuities with and divergences from England. This study demonstrates that some stories contain themes of liberalism, republicanism, and religion simultaneously; moreover, themes of gender and social class were equally prominent. Early success narratives were highly gendered. While the virtues of deference, obedience, industry, piety, and honesty were essential for both boys and girls, boys achieved upward mobility through their own efforts while girls did so through marriage. However, almost invariably boys were given a boost up the ladder of success from a benevolent aristocrat, although they are
represented as achieving their just rewards because of their own efforts. Similarities between mid-eighteenth century British success narratives and the Horatio Alger fiction stories suggest that the "American" success story has clear British precedents. The seeds of American ideas about "women's sphere" and the role of "republican mothers" in educating their children are also present in early British children's literature.

In general, male characters in children's stories are depicted in a much wider range of activities than females. The most frequent character flaws for girls are unregulated speech and vanity, while for boys cruelty, gluttony, and theft occur often. Children's literature often contained didactic instructions for parents, which emphasized the parental role in shaping the character of the child and inculcating virtue. Obedience, honesty, and industry are presented as religious, as well as moral, duties for children.

The American patriot and printer Isaiah Thomas, who was the first to publish juvenile literature in America, adopted stories from the British printer John Newberry. Thomas embraced Newberry's advertising methods as well, and sometimes inserted advertisements within fictional narratives. Some of these exhortations to capitalist consumer behavior occurred in conjunction with tales of virtue rewarded. Thomas made only desultory attempts to Americanize the children's stories; sometimes he altered
only the title page while in the stories themselves, British titles of nobility and place names remained. The presence of quintessentially American middle-class values in early British children's fiction suggests the centrality of cultural transmission for the self-creation and self-definition of the middle class in the United States.

The presence of juvenile fiction, ranging from nursery rhymes, to collections of illustrated short stories, to novels, demonstrates that authors recognized that children of various ages required different types of reading material. Divergences between American and British juvenile literature appear earlier novels for adolescents than in children's stories. Hannah Webster Foster's novel associates patriotism with the ideal of intellectual education for adolescent girls while early British children's stories do not, although they also emphasize the desirability of literacy for women.

Scholars have described the roles of American women as "republican wives" and "republican mothers;" this study suggests that these concepts were complementary rather than contradictory. Moreover, a third concept, which might be called "republican friendship," was also present among young women, who discussed weighty intellectual matters among themselves in the context of their close, affectionate friendships. The girls in the novel valued such experiences for their own sake and did not see them exclusively as means to nurture good children or support virtuous republican
husbands and citizens. Women would thus be republican friends, republican wives, and republican mothers in that order. Foster represents women as the "head" of their families in a way that is more usually associated with the mid-nineteenth century.

Adolescence for young women was represented in Foster's novel as a distinctive stage of life between the completion of formal education and marriage for young women. In contrast to some scholarly interpretations, which emphasize marriages based on romantic attraction, this study suggests that rational choice was equally important. Young women felt considerable trepidation at the prospect of marriage because it would determine the course of the rest of their lives.

Foster's novel portrays young women sharing letters among themselves, suggesting that young women formed semipublic communications networks. These informal reading groups, where women could question the gender norms of their society, may have foreshadowed the rise of formal organizations of female moral reformers. Informal networks of semipublic communication, neither wholly public nor entirely private, suggest that the line between "the public" and "the private" may have been flexible and permeable for women. Thus, the novel has implications for the application of Habermasian public sphere theory to historical analysis.

Currently, there are two feminist critiques of Habermas: while Joan Landes and Susan Juster describe the
exclusion of women from a unitary revolutionary public sphere, Mary Ryan and Nancy Fraser argue for the presence of multiple, competing public spheres. The present study suggests that the categories of "public" and "private" need to be further problematized and analyzed because they may constitute a continuum rather than an antinomy. While the utility of such categories as analytical devices must not be underestimated, perhaps the terms of debate may be broadened to include cases where the public-private dichotomy does not apply.

This thesis makes two contributions to the current debates over childhood, cultural, and gender history. First, a review of juvenile literature intended for different age groups suggests both continuities with and divergences from England. Values of filial obedience, piety, humility, and industry were emphasized continuously from early eighteenth-century England to nineteenth-century America. Yet distinctively American innovations, such as uncritical patriotism, were evident by the late eighteenth century. These shifts may be more a matter of degree than kind, however. Second, by the late eighteenth century, women were represented as dominant within their private domestic sphere, in a way usually associated with the mid-nineteenth century. Fiction from the late eighteenth century both critiques the gendered double standard in the manner of mid-nineteenth century female moral reformers, and anticipates the nineteenth-century domestic novel. Through
fiction, women could create a protofeminist discourse for a gendered reading public; although women were barred from formal political participation, they were never excluded from the "public," broadly conceived.
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