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Alison Tracy Hale

Pedagogical Gothic:
Education and National Identity in Early American
Sensational Fiction, 1790–1830

Alison Tracy Hale

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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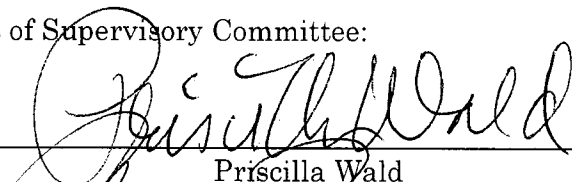
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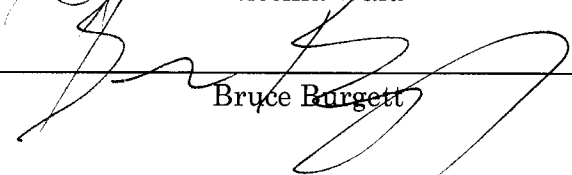
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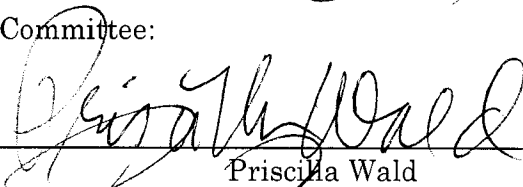


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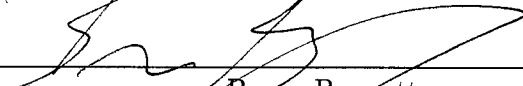


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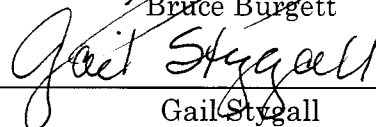
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Abstract

Pedagogical Gothic: Education and National Identity in Early American
Sensational Fiction, 1790-1830

Alison Tracy Hale

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and

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This project explores a peculiar intersection between education and violence in early American sensational fiction, and traces that conjunction, in part, to the pervasive tensions surrounding the emerging ideal of American citizenship. Initially, the study asserts that the model of citizenship developed during the early decades of American independence can be termed “pedagogical,” in that its rights, privileges, and obligations cohered around the conception of the nascent citizen as educable. This “pedagogical model” of citizenship, however, contains a paradox that is explored further in the fiction of the period; that is, that a citizenship that can and must be taught is by definition *artificial*, a reminder that impedes the naturalization of the American political identity it attempts to serve. The bulk of the study explores how the political and psychological anxieties occasioned by pedagogical citizenship are registered through a preponderance of literary scenes that identify the results of education with physical violence. By associating pedagogy and horror, these sensationalist novels participate not only in imaginatively “constructing” the citizen of the early republic, but also in exaggerating the anxieties that attended the process. The first chapter establishes the centrality of educational projects to the

ideal of American citizenship in the early years of independence and demonstrates the disjunctions between a pedagogically-inflected notion of citizenship and early national desires for political stability. Subsequent chapters offer specific readings of the following novels as they consider the implications of pedagogical citizenry for different sub-classes of early Americans: the prototypical white male citizen (Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* [1798]), the white republican woman (Brown's *Ormond* [1799] and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* [1797] and *The Boarding School* [1798]); and the Native American (Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* [1827]).

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I now succumb to the temptation to name those dearest and most supportive friends who have read my work, counseled me, consoled me, and kept me going in all manner of ways. I list them here alphabetically, because they cannot be ranked in my affections: Rachel Carnell, Heather Easterling, Marguerite Finnigan and Guyle Wilson, Stephanie L. Johnson, Peter Kvidera, J. David Macey, Nicole Merola, Melanie Wise, and Nick Yasinski and Rachel Zare. And George Erving, who provides the music. Without any one of them, my life would be immeasurably poorer.

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Finally, I owe my greatest debt to my husband, whose struggles with a far more daunting foe have unfortunately put this project in perspective, and who astounds me every day with his grace and courage. His strength and love made these pages possible. Our daughter, Cady Eleanor Kongling Hale, arrived from China at the midpoint of this project; her sunny, stalwart presence is my life’s greatest gift.

Dedication

For my husband, Dan: dearest love, best friend, mordant wit. With you, everything is possible.

And for Lillian, Cady, and Lowell: the next generation of dreamers.

Chapter 1

“An Early Attention to the Subject of Eloquence and Language”:
The Body Politic, Federal English, and American Identity

Prequel: The Making of a Nation in Language

National Fictions

“America” is neither new nor final, but from start to finish, a fiercely contested middle game. On July 4th, 1776, the thirteen states declared themselves independent, united, and free because they were not; and that knot of dependencies, discord, and responsibilities remains the United States, rhetoric and all.

*Sacvan Bercovitch, Games of Chess*¹

As eloquence is cultivated with more care in free republics than in other governments, it has been found by constant experience that such republics have produced the greatest purity, copiousness, and perfection of language. It is not to be disputed that the form of government has an influence upon language, and language in its turn influences not only the form of government, but the temper, the sentiments, and manners of the people. The admirable models which have been transmitted through the world, and continued down to these days, so as to form an essential part of the education of mankind from generation to generation, by those two ancient towns, Athens and Rome, would be sufficient, without any other argument, to show the United States the importance to their liberty, prosperity, and glory, of an early attention to the subject of eloquence and language.

*John Adams, “A Letter to the President of Congress” (September 5, 1780)*²

1. Sacvan Bercovitch, “Games of Chess,” *Centuries Ends, Narrative Means*, ed. Robert Newman (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996) 56.

2. Quoted in Dennis Baron, *Grammar and Good Taste* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982) 17.

In the lines above, written well before the conclusion of Revolutionary hostilities, John Adams articulates the deep interconnection between the emerging nation and the language in which its daily workings would be manifest. Adams, along with other leaders of the nascent nation, faced a considerable task: to make of a contentious and loosely confederated group of states a single and unified nation. As Benjamin Rush said, famously, in 1786, “Most of the *distresses* of our country [...] have arisen from a belief that the American Revolution is over.”³ More explicitly, Rush believed that upon the conclusion of the fighting “we have only finished the first act of the great drama. We have changed our forms of government, but it remains yet to effect a revolution in our principles, opinions, and manners so as to accommodate them to the forms of government we have adopted.” Thus the real work of the revolution—the transformation of the behavior and, more significantly, of the habits of mind of these new Americans, was yet to come.

The transition from colonial, monarchical subject to independent republican citizen was thus neither simple nor natural—nor could it be accomplished merely through the legal fiat of the Declaration or the powerful rhetoric of the founders themselves. John Adams’s letter, above, asserts the need for a “public institution for refining, correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English language”—a task he believes will be best accomplished by Congress using its authority to create an “American Academy” devoted to these purposes, which are essential to creating the proper republican “influences.” Adams’s desire to shore up the nation with an injection of rhetorical rigor suggests that the status of the early United States in the minds of its citizens was perhaps uniquely fragile, particularly precarious in the

3. Benjamin Rush, “To Richard Price,” 25 May 1786, *Letters*, ed. Lyman Butterfield, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1951) 388.

immediacy and visibility of its constitution. Despite (or more accurately, perhaps, because of) the explicitly artificial construction of this new nation, what Christopher Looby calls the “self creation of the new nation as a process created in language,” the first Americans lacked the kind of substantive, embodied, “somatic” experience of citizenship that would allow them to register psychologically the political and intellectual changes that had occurred, and to comprehend their new identity in practical and practicable terms: “the rational-legal foundation of the United States could seem dangerously inadequate by virtue of its neglect of the visceral need of citizens for more psychically compelling modes of attachment to their nation.”⁴ The inception of the American nation stands exposed in its early history, neither naturalized nor appropriately obscured by time, as what Jacques Derrida has identified as a self-constituting moment—one in which the speech act of declaration “performs” and “accomplishes” the act of independence it simultaneously announces:

Although in principle an institution [...] has to render itself independent of the empirical individuals who have taken part in its production, [...] it turns out, precisely by reason of the structure of instituting language, that the founding act of an institution—the act as archive as well as the act as performance—*has to maintain within itself the signature* [that authorizes it].⁵

The fundamental—or “foundational”—problem of the early national period therefore inheres, at least in part, in realizing psychologically that initial act of self-authorization; that is, the assumption of the legal and political *authority* that allows

4. Christopher Looby, *Voicing America* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996) 1, 5. For an overview of his argument that the trope of “voice” as expressed in the literature of the early republic was a way both to register the “sense of weakness and inadequacy of a nation embodied in print” (5) and to “measure [...] a fearful sense of its foundationlessness and fragile temporality” (5), see 3–7.

5. Jacques Derrida, “Declarations of Independence,” *New Political Science* 15 (Summer 1986): 8.

for the *authoring* of the nation and the identity of those belonging to it. The unique paradox of the United States, of course, is that the People in whose name the act of declaration, of independence, has been authorized “does not exist [...] before this declaration” (Derrida 10).

The United States is not, of course, unique in the “imaginary” nature of its existence. A nation in and of itself is a thing far less tangible than might be suggested by the loyalty it evokes, and thus highly problematic in its inception. While it functions as a material entity, any nation exists largely in the imagination and is realized through the emotional and psychological investment of its members. Nationhood inheres in what Ernest Renan has called “a soul, a spiritual principle” consisting of “the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories” and “present-day consent—the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.”⁶ Etienne Balibar notes that, the nation, like “[e]very social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of collective narrative.”⁷ Similarly, Benedict Anderson has observed that the nation is “an imagined political community”—a “sovereign” entity with “finite, if elastic, boundaries,” and “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”⁸ The nation, then, is something that must be imagined into existence through the deliberate will and participation of its citizens in their individual acts of identification with it, and through an individual projection into that “weft of

6. Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (NY: Routledge, 1990) 19.

7. Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” *Race, Nation, Class*, ed. Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (NY: Verso, 1991) 93.

8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991) 9, 10.

collective experience” by means of which they see themselves as integral to and coterminous with a national identity. As Balibar asserts, the construction of an identity that is simultaneously private and public, individual and national, makes real the existence of the nation as a salient category of psychological identification, and gives it reality: “*All identity is individual*, but there is no individual identity that is not historical or, in other words, constructed within a field of social values, norms of behaviour and collective symbols” (94). While this process is not uniquely American, what is, however, unique to the American nation is, as Derrida suggests, the visibility and deliberacy by which its origination was accomplished and what Michael Kramer has called the “linguisticity” of those origins in the nation’s foundational political and legal documents.

In his concern with national “eloquence,” Adams suggests that the act of self-“authoring” that took place in the new nation was haunted by the taint of artificiality in its explicit self-construction. Finding a way to “naturalize” and inculcate the proper national relationships—psychological and emotional, as well as legal and political—was a preoccupation widely shared by those involved in public life. In the case of both the political founders and those figures performing broadly politicized cultural work in the post-Revolutionary period, the national individual, as well as the nation itself, had to be imaginatively constructed within, by, and for those who would participate in it. The American body politic had to be imagined into existence even as it was being constituted as a legal and political entity—making impossible a reliance on the kind of lengthy shared history that “presupposes a past” (Renan 19) and can, in Anderson’s words, legitimate nationalism “*genealogically*—as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity” (195). In contrast, as Derrida suggests, in the American act of self-creation, “The signature invents the

signer. The signer can only authorize him- or herself to sign once he or she has come to the end [...] of his or her own signature”; thus any act of authorship in a nation thus founded becomes similarly and precariously legitimated only by “a sort of fabulous retroactivity” whose “indispensable confusion” is the precondition of both literary and national creation, and of its obverse (Derrida 10, 11).

Michael Kramer has suggested that “to write about language during this critical period of corporate self-definition was thus to engage in a highly charged kind of fiction-making,” whether that “fiction-making” was political or literary in its impulses.⁹ Thus many of Benjamin Rush’s famous contemporaries could be said, along with their didactic and political goals, to be equally concerned with a complex task of imagination: the creation of a national bond to cement the juridico-legal construct of the new nation.

Educating Citizens: Becoming American(s)

Noah Webster, certainly the most famous of America’s early educational (re)formers, believed throughout his long and diverse career that language, what he called an American English, was the great project of the post-Revolutionary nation and offered the best means of establishing a cohesive and stable nation. A shared “mother-tongue,” a uniformity of expression, pronunciation, and usage would prove,

9. Michael P. Kramer, *Imagining Language in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) ix. Kramer’s study seeks to establish a middle ground on which to understand what he calls the “linguisticity” of the early nation’s texts—both political and literary. He thus posits the self-conscious concern with “stylistic self-reflexiveness” in early “literary” texts as part of a larger commitment to “America as an ideal,” a preoccupation that deconstructs the boundaries between literary, philosophical, and political texts. My project follows the deconstructive urge represented by Kramer and by Christopher Looby; like them, I study how these writers’ “ideas about the nature or use of language imaginatively merge with ideas about America so as to *form cultural fictions, creative renderings of the nation—its meaning, its emphasis, and how it works*” (Kramer xii, emphasis mine).

for Webster and his contemporaries, the *product* of the social contract by which Americans pledged themselves to their democratic and representative form of government; it was, furthermore, a primary *mechanism* for the continuation and reaffirmation of that compact. In his treatises on language, education, and national politics, Webster asserted repeatedly that in their daily practice of a cohesive and uniform “American English,” distinct from that spoken by the British, Americans would confirm and reinforce their political bonds and embody their political participation: “[A] *national language*,” he asserts, “is a band of *national union*. Every engine should be employed to render the people of this country national; to call their attachments home to their own country; and to inspire them with the pride of natural character.”¹⁰

Echoing Rush, Webster identifies the revolution as the mere beginnings of a project of nation-formation, and argues that “[a] fundamental mistake of the Americans has been that they considered the revolution as completed when it was but just begun. Having laid the pillars of the building, they ceased to exert themselves, and seemed to forget that the whole superstructure was then to be erected.”¹¹ In Webster’s architectural metaphor, the foundation of American identity is the shared language upon which the structure rests; education functions as the staircase that allows citizens to move around within the national structure, reflecting and reinforcing the edifice. In a nation without uniform cultural origins, one in which the act of origination is so recent, and so visible, shared habits of speech within a common language offered an immediate and substantive means of

10. Noah Webster, “Now is the Time and This is the Country” *On Being American: Selected Writings, 1783–1828*, ed. Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967) 101.

11. Noah Webster, “... The Revolution... Was but Just Begun” *On Being American: Selected Writings, 1783–1828*, ed. Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967) 62.

creating—and enforcing—an essential likeness of mind and were therefore the highest priority. As Webster says, “Our political harmony is therefore concerned in a uniformity of language” that naturalizes national sympathy:

the unanimous consent of a nation, and fixed principle interwoven with the very construction of language, coeval and extensive with it, are like the common laws of a land, or the immutable rules of morality, the propriety of which every man, however refractory, is forced to acknowledge, and remain unmoved and unchanged, amidst all the fluctuations of human affairs and the revolutions of time.¹²

Simultaneously fixed and fluid, particular and universal, such a language would serve as both the product and the mechanism of the American nation, its existence the measure of national unity and its influence an ongoing force for maintaining that unity. In their daily language practices, citizens could reaffirm their political bonds through shared figures of expression, accents, and syntax. The experience of sharing a language would make possible the naturalization and the individual realization of formally inscribed institutions of government, and could give literal expression—at both the individual and corporate level—to the *vox populi* that had been politically realized in the nation’s inception.

As John Adams asserts in the letter serving as my epigraph, above, such unity could not simply be expected to evolve; it had to be manufactured, and quickly, to meet the needs of the young nation and to shore up the shaky foundations set in place by the revolution and confederation government. In keeping with their faith in the tenets of Enlightenment thought, these early patriots put their faith in plans for a systematic education, one they believed could transform the individual legal

12. Noah Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789; Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1970) 20, 29.

citizens into a cohesive body politic.¹³ As Webster suggests, such educational transformation clearly needed to be instituted even before its precise national content was fully realized: “Our constitutions of civil government are not yet firmly established; our national character is not formed; and it is an object of vast magnitude that systems of Education be adopted and pursued [...]”¹⁴ Since “[t]he impressions received early in life, usually form the characters of individuals; a union which forms the general character of a nation,” an “American” education, while only loosely defined in its scope and implementation, would ideally breed among its pupils “the principles of virtue and liberty [...] just and liberal ideas of government, and [...] an inviolable attachment to their own country” (*Fugitiv Writings* 1, 3). Such instruction should, at best, be delivered in anticipation of any potential threats to that attachment or ideals: “The great art of correcting mankind, therefore, consists

13. As will become clear throughout the study, the various thinkers I collect here have very different notions of what “education” would entail, what subjects it would cover, and who its subjects would be. However, these different approaches and plans—some philosophical, others pragmatic—share a concern for the making of the citizen from the raw material of the man. More recently, Gillian Brown’s *Consent of the Governed* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) offers an alternative reading of the centrality of Locke’s work to early American culture and thought. Brown’s argument, which I explore in greater depth elsewhere in this study, links Lockean pedagogy to American independence not through a simplistic reliance on Locke as the proponent of individual autonomy; instead, Brown explores Locke’s educational theory and seeks to reassert the connections between “consent,” agency, and constraint. She thus redefines consent as circumscribed by constraint and subjection and argues, as Elizabeth Maddox Dillon notes in her review, that “the liberty of the liberal subject is determined less by immunity to historical circumstances than by a thoughtful and, perhaps more importantly, *judgmental* engagement with them” (“The Infant Imaginary,” *AQ* 54:1 [March 2002]: 149).

14. Noah Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings*, intro. Robert K. Peters (1790; Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1977) 3. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Fugitiv Writings*.

in prepossessing the mind with good principles,” Webster claims in an essay from *The American Magazine*.¹⁵

Education, Virtue, and the Social Contract

In locating education at the nexus of individual, citizen and state, Rush, Webster, and other proponents express a key dimension of eighteenth-century thought: a belief in the crucial relationship among education, self-government, and the act of consent that inaugurated political autonomy. In its potential for transforming individuals into collectively-minded citizens, education—and especially language education—was understood as fundamental to realizing the social contract on which the nation is founded and in creating the perfect balance between the natural and civilized man. According to Rousseau’s influential essay *The Social Contract* (1762), education is implicated in the structural equality essential to the establishment of the socio-political relationship: “Rather than destroying natural equality, the fundamental pact [by which the social contract is established] substitutes a moral and legitimate equality for whatever physical inequality nature has produced among men, so that while they may be unequal in strength or intelligence, they all become equal by agreement and rights.”¹⁶ While Rousseau is known for his criticism of social institutions—like schools—that corrupt and deform mankind, his theory of the social contract paves the way for the kind of broadly defined educational projects envisioned by these first Americans. It does so by addressing the tensions and interdependence between individual rights and collective social identity, by

15. Noah Webster, “Americans, Unshackle Your Minds,” *On Being American*, ed. Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967) 83. Originally published by Webster in *The American Magazine*, 1787–88, from lectures delivered during 1785–6.

16 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract” (1762), *The Essential Rousseau*, trans. Lowell Bair (NY: Penguin/Meridian, 1975) 23.

asserting the essentially cooperative compact underlying the very existence of private property, and by locating individual “rights” in a model that is, of necessity, collectively realized through an act of voluntary and informed consent.

In Rousseau’s famous formulation, the social contract involves the voluntary surrender or submersion of man’s individual interests to the larger collective interests of the whole. The contract is designed, of course, to solve what Rousseau calls a “fundamental problem” by managing “[t]o devise a form of association which will defend and protect the person and possessions of each associate with all the collective strength, and in which is each united with all, yet obeys only himself and remains as free as before” (17). Rousseau continues: “In place of the individual persons of the contracting parties, the act of association immediately creates a collective, artificial body, composed of as many members as the assembly has voters, and the same act gives this body its unity, its collective self, its life, and its will. Such a public person, formed by the union of all other persons [...] is now known as a *republic* or a *body politic*” (17–18). In eighteenth century political theory, as Webster and Rush understood, this body is not merely a metaphor for the socio-political citizenry; it is the essence of national citizenship, and is simultaneously the means and the end of the social contract. This tension between individual and the collective, between the instinctual self and the citizen, is fundamental to the American project. It is also the dynamic that Webster, Rush, and their compatriots wished to manage, to the benefit of the corporate body, in the new nation. Through their educational interventions into the production of the body politic, early Americans hoped to negotiate the inevitable conflicts between the autonomous political individual, whose existence is a precondition of the meaningful social

contract, and the virtuous citizen who represents a kind of political perfection in his ability to subsume his individual desires for the good of the general citizenry.

In attempting to systematize education for a more uniform purpose, Webster and Rush represent a departure from purely Rousseauian thought. For Rousseau, the transformation from the “state of nature” to the “civil state” is anything but programmatic, in that it ideally reflects and makes real man’s natural freedom, instead of confining him by means of artificial and corrupting restraints:

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct and giving his acts the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when physical impulses have yielded to the voice of duty, and appetite to right, does man, who had so far considered only himself, find that he is forced to act according to different principles and to consult his reason before listening to his inclination. (20)

Learning thus occurs invisibly, naturally, without the direct agency of another. As Nicole Fermon has suggested, “Rousseau is concerned about inculcating the preconditions for social and political attachments between individuals, as well as the love of the community.”¹⁷ Much of this inculcation did not require—and, indeed, was often antithetical to—the institution of formal education. According to Fermon, Rousseau’s vision of education was to be realized largely within the confines of the family and “is designed to address the problem of reforming man in and for the social state, addressing specifically the problems of corrupt society” (105). The basic contradiction Rousseau articulates—the conflict between education’s essential role in producing the socially-contracted subject and the capacity of the educational institution, however broadly configured, to distort and corrupt mankind—emerges in what J.G.A. Pocock terms the “Rousseauian moment” of the American post-

17. Nicole Fermon, *Domesticating Passions* (Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1997) 105.

revolutionary period, a moment, that is, in which “man can avoid neither becoming civilized nor being corrupted by the process [of civilization].”¹⁸

For Rousseau, legitimate education must be a *natural* process, inasmuch as it must be consonant with the nature of mankind: “Plants are formed by cultivation, men by education [...] We are born weak, we need strength; we are born entirely destitute, we need help; we are born stupid, we need understanding. All that we lack at birth and need in maturity is given to us by education.”¹⁹ Our teachers, he suggests, are “Nature, men, and things”; “[t]he pupil in whom their lessons are contradictory is badly educated [...] Only where they are perfectly consonant and make for the same ends, does a man tend towards his true goal and live consistently. Only thus is he well-educated” (56). Despite his concern that the process be compatible with the natural aspects of humankind, the emphasis of education, for Rousseau as well as for others who would follow his ideas, was its capacity for transformation—its ability to mold and shape an individual and to substitute a new set of values and beliefs for those he previously held.

Rousseau’s stance on education—particularly in those aspects taken up by early American educators—is characterized by its emphasis on the transformation of the individual into a collective or socially-responsible being, and its efficacy in altering his behaviors: “The lot of man is our true study. He that is best able to bear its goods and ills is, I hold, the most truly educated; true education lies less in knowing than in doing” (Rousseau in Archer 63). Elsewhere Rousseau insists that

18. J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975) 533.

19. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, His Educational Theories Selected from Émile, Julie and Other Writings* ed. R. L. Archer (NY: Barron’s Educational, 1964) 56.

even though “Public education no longer exists nor can exist; for where is no country, there can be no citizens” (61), it is, nevertheless,

education which must shape the minds in the national mould [sic] and which must direct their tastes and their opinions, till they are patriotic by inclination—by instinct—by necessity [...] The true republican sucks in with his mother’s milk the love of his country, that is of law and liberty. This makes up his life; he only sees his fatherland, and only lives for his fatherland; alone he is nothing; his country lost, he lives no more; if not dead, he is worse.” (64–5)

Casting education in terms of biological familial relations, Rousseau insists that it must be compatible with our innately human qualities, and must emerge naturally from the condition and essence of free men: “National education belongs only to the free; they alone live a national life, they alone are truly bound by law” (Archer 65). The metaphor of suckling obviates the paradox of nature-nurture; education straddles the line between the two. By “directing” the course of men’s minds, education produces a patriotism that is “necessary” and “instinctual”; similarly, the “true republican” ingests his patriotism at his mother’s breast. Both images effectively blur the line between what is “innate” and what is inculcated.

Late eighteenth-century American discussions about the role and necessity of education express great concern with how best to help the republican citizen understand, practice, and identify with his altered authority with respect to his government. If education offered Americans the potential for transformation, the nature of education was equally transformed by the new nation’s demands upon it. Chief among American concerns was the question of integrity—that is, the virtuous reliability of the citizen—and how best to define and secure the rightful relationship between citizen and state, between private and public obligations. Bernard Bailyn has argued that the dilemmas of the age helped propel education, defined here as

“the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations,” into the center of social and political life.²⁰ Whereas education had earlier been the province of the family and perhaps the church, the wholesale political and societal transformations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “wrenched [education] loose from the automatic, instinctive workings of society, and cast [it] as a matter for deliberation into the forefront of consciousness” (21). Education thus becomes a highly conscious and highly self-conscious transformation enacted on both the individual and the corporate levels, “the instrument of deliberate group action. It bore the burden of defining the group, of justifying its existence” (41). In addition, Bailyn notes, the process of self-transformation encoded in active learning of skills, behaviors, and habits of mind is increasingly cast less as an invisible or natural process than as “an act of will” (41)²¹:

Responses were no longer automatic but deliberate, not insensibly acquired in childhood as part of the natural order of things, but learned, usually late, as part of a self-conscious quest for appropriate forms of behavior. Learning—the purposeful acquisition not merely of technical skills but of new ways of thinking and behaving—was essential. (36)

20. Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press for The Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, VA, 1960) 14. Of course, the concept of education as a process of cultural transmission echoes Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus,” as I discuss more fully in Chapter 3. Subsequent references to this text are made parenthetically as “Bailyn.”

21. Bailyn’s chief example is Benjamin Franklin, whose autobiography enacts the sort of process that educational practice was supposed to replicate: the motivated self-improvement of the individual that equipped him “not for limited goals, not for close-bound, predetermined careers, but for the broadest possible range of enterprise” (35). As Franklin himself notes in his “Idea of the English School,” Franklin defines his notion of a “useful” education in distinctly general terms, framing that utility in terms of what Bailyn calls an “open-ended universe” of individual possibility (35). At the conclusion of his essay, Franklin claims of the program of education he has laid out: “Thus instructed youth will come out of this school fitted for learning any Business, Calling, or Profession.” See also Benjamin Franklin, “Idea of the English School, Sketch’d Out for the Consideration of the the Trustees of the Philadelphia Academy” (1751) *Benjamin Franklin on Education*, ed. John Hardin Best (NY: Columbia Teacher’s College, 1962) 171.

An Education in Virtue

No one was more firmly convinced of the value of learning than Noah Webster. Positioning language education where private desires intersect with public obligation, Webster articulates the pervasive strains of eighteenth-century thought and engages the essential paradox that underlay the republican model of government: the conflict between private interests and the citizen's essential service to his nation—that is, the crucial issue of “virtue.” “[R]epublics could not thrive in the absence of widespread public virtue”; neither could any “system of government [...] in the last analysis stake its existence on the assumption of public virtue,” as Lawrence Cremin puts it.²² But, “being practical men,” Webster and his fellow political-education activists “proceeded on more than one front, establishing educational arrangements that would nurture piety, civility, and learning in the populace at large at the same time as they erected a political system through which the inevitable conflicts of self-interest could be reconciled” (Cremin 2). The American educational project is inextricably political, bound up in the moral and psychological production of a self-sustaining body politic and of the private individuals who make up that larger entity.

In his landmark study of American education from 1783–1876, Cremin offers a useful definition of what an all-encompassing term “education” would have been to the new American patriots embarked upon their nation-building. According to Cremin, education, as expressed in eighteenth-century philosophical, pedagogical, and political documents, can be usefully framed “as the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, or

22. Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783–1876* (NY: Harper & Row, 1980) 2.

sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from the effort, direct or indirected, intended or unintended” (ix)—what Bailyn describes as the larger process of cultural transmission. Cremin notes that Rush, Webster, and their contemporaries saw education as both a general theory and particular American instance; they “insisted with Montesquieu that the laws on education be relative to the forms of government” (2). He reminds us that “by ‘education’ they meant the full panoply of institutions that had a part in shaping human character—families and churches, schools and colleges, newspapers, voluntary associations, and, most important perhaps in an era of constitution making, the laws” (Cremin 2). Thus the early American educational project was expansive and universal in its goals, approaches, and methods, attempting to balance the paradoxical values of individual liberty and civic virtue, “dedicated to the creation of a cohesive and independent citizenry” that would be “rooted in American soil, based on an American language and literature, steeped in American art, history, and law, and committed to the promise of an American culture” (3). The logic behind educational intervention is ultimately circular: the particular ethics of American-ness remain relatively undefined except by reference to the ideal republican citizen. To be American is to be free, autonomous, and yet virtuous to the ideals of the nation. The American identity is, to great extent, the ideal Enlightenment citizen with an American accent. In this, the new American was perhaps less a completely original creation than a stylistic realization of key strains in republican thought.

The Paradox of Producing the Citizen

The task facing these patriots was complicated by the basic paradox inherent in attempting to *produce* autonomy, in reconciling political freedom with a coherent educational praxis, and in maintaining a balance between consistent and predictable

outcomes and an attention to the natural process of development. In order for the national social compact to be meaningful, its citizens' participation must be both informed and voluntary; education, therefore, must produce like-minded individuals without merely indoctrinating them into docility. Webster and his peers recognized, as well, that human attachments were complex and often contradictory, and that in our quest to become the "common subjects" of our own historical predicate, we "cannot and ought not to divest ourselves of provincial views and attachments." Instead, it was imperative that "we should subordinate them to the general interests of the continent."²³

To invoke the political aspects of education in the eighteenth century is to come face to face with the crucial elements of the political theory on which the revolutionary impulse relies, and which the educational project is supposed to shore up and replicate. The first, of course, is the notion of "consent" to a social contract that legitimates self government; the second is the concept of an inalienable self-possession that legitimates the act of consent. What we see from even a brief survey of the educational theories of the period, however, suggests that none of these anchors were as stable, let alone as unanimously understood, as their centrality suggests. The problem for these reformers is thus the need or desire to police the boundaries, limits, and direction of self-transformation so as to ensure its ultimate service to the state. In order to remake the citizen in the proper democratic image, pedagogical theory and eighteenth-century political discourse have to establish and recognize him as *malleable*, but then must struggle to assert that such malleability can be kept within acceptable parameters—without resorting to the kind of

23. Noah Webster, "Plan of Policy for Improving the Advantages and Perpetuating the Union of the United States" (1785), *On Being American*, ed. Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967) 44.

regimented education that would violate his individuality. In other words, by establishing education as the primary site at which personal, psychological and political transformations were understood to occur (and, of course, as the primary catalyst for such transformations), the political and pedagogical documents of the early national period identified the full range of educational practices—from the modeling of proper behavior to the practices of disciplining children, from the sample morals in children’s primers to the political treatises being circulated—as a terrain of contest over the limits, results, and effects of such transformation. In claiming for itself such a broad terrain, education inevitably becomes subject to greater scrutiny and more anxiety.

As the following chapters suggest, the process of creating themselves as a citizenry demands that early Americans involve themselves, politically, pedagogically, and literarily, in the fluid relationship between the personal and the political that education shapes. At this early moment in the nation’s history, debates about *who* will be recognized as *American*, and *how*, have not yet become second-nature, but remain the object of open contest and vigorous debate. This project explores the ways in which what might be seen as political or philosophical conflicts over the nature of citizenship and the constitution of American subjectiv(ies) are elaborated and expanded in the period’s fiction. In so doing, my work inevitably raises questions about the role of literature in the creation and dissemination of national culture. This study understands the relationship between literature and its historical context as reciprocal, dynamic, and dialectic. In the pages that follow, I explore the ways in which fiction intervenes in the national dialogue about what it means to be “American.” In particular, however, I examine a set of novels that expand upon what it means to have a national identity that can be understood as

“pedagogical” in its transmission. The central contradiction of American citizenship is that in order to be “stable,” it had first to be defined as “malleable”; to become “fixed,” it had necessarily to be revealed as transient, subject to intervention.

The Lockean Student: Permeability, Insufficiency, and Judgment

Eighteenth-century educators and politicians share the inescapable influence of *the* central figure of eighteenth-century education theory, John Locke, whose pedagogical and philosophical models permeated and dominated the Anglo-American world. Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) were familiar, directly or indirectly, to most eighteenth-century thinkers and thus integral to the project of national(izing) education. As Gillian Brown notes, “early Americans assimilated Lockean liberalism as they grew up” (4).²⁴ In their insistence that the primary means for solidifying the nation lay in the systematic inculcation of habits of virtue, key American figures of the post-revolutionary period were subscribing, whether directly or indirectly, to the ideas of Locke; like him, they placed their faith in the belief that “education [...] provides the character-formation necessary for becoming a person and for being a responsible citizen” (Brown 3). Education, of various types, provided the potential for inculcating the practical and psychological traits that would secure the self-reliance

24. Prior to Brown’s *Consent of the Governed* (see note 13, above), the most persuasive reading of Locke’s influence on the early nation is made by Jay Fliegelman in *Prodigals and Pilgrims* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982). Fliegelman’s work traces the revolutionary ambitions of the first Americans to a Lockean transformation in the concepts of parenthood and, more particularly, patriarchal authority. The revolution became conceptually available to its instigators through a revision of the contractual configuration of the family: from a model based on inherited authority to one of voluntary consent. Fliegelman links this shift to the increased individual authority produced in light of the Protestant Reformation, among other things, and argues that the reinscription of patriarchal loyalty as contractual and consent based, produced by the appropriate behavior of the parental figure, paves the way for the colonists’ rejection of the monarch’s authority in favor of a new consensual locus of power.

and continued existence of the citizen and, through him, the nation. It would render him impervious to the kinds of inaccurate assumptions, questionable values, and moral failings of those enemies—alien and familiar—who appeared to be massing around, or emerging from within.

In its obsession with political virtue, the historical epoch within which Webster and his fellow political educators worked—the American Revolution and the larger tide toward self-government—emerges as what J.G.A. Pocock has identified as a “Machiavellian Moment” of social and political upheaval—one “in which the republic was seen as confronting its own temporal finitude, as attempting to remain morally and politically stable in a stream of irrational events conceived as essentially destructive of all systems of secular stability.”²⁵ In his study, Pocock traces a historical confrontation over the nature of virtue and its function in society to a conflict between a revived Athenian notion of man as “*zōon politikon*, by nature a citizen,” and a Christian conceptualization of man as “*homo religiosus*, formed to live in a transcendent and eternal communion, known, however, by the ominously political name of *civitas Dei*” (462). In the increasingly separatist climate of Puritanism under which the colonies had first been settled, this conflict had been resolved (or obviated) by insisting that the individual’s goal and purpose were contiguous with those of the larger theocratic society—that the “civic was one with religious liberty, and virtue—in the civic sense—one with salvation” (463). According

25. Pocock viii. Pocock’s primary argument explores the inaugural “Machiavellian” historical moment of fourteenth-century Florence, but in his later chapters, he discusses more fully his assertion that “The American founders occupied a ‘Machiavellian Moment’—a crisis in the relations between personality and society, virtue and corruption” and that the American Revolution and Constitutional periods “form the last act of the civic humanist tradition [... and] provide an important key to the paradoxes of modern tensions between individual self-awareness on the one hand and consciousness of society, property, and history on the other” (462).

to Pocock, then, the American eighteenth-century saw, along with the uneasy reconciliation of the political and spiritual aspects of human nature, the “secularization of personality” and its shift from a sacred basis in salvation toward the secular, economic, and material bases offered by the heterogeneity of human society (463). Such secular and socially derived bases of identity were, however, invariably more liable to the kind of individual misuse, corruption, or distortion that threatened the stability and order of the social world; if “the function of property was to affirm and maintain the reality of personal autonomy, liberty, and virtue, it must if possible display a reality [...] capable of spanning the generations and permitting the living to succeed the dead in a real and natural order” (463). As social structure in the eighteenth-century became more dependent on such inheritable and potentially transferable symbols of identity (what Pocock calls “personality-sustaining property”), it became inarguably subject to the corruption inherent in a contemporaneous understanding of “credit.” The eighteenth-century saw a rise in a kind of material property that “conveys inherent dependence” (e.g., salaried office, private or public patronage, public credit; see Pocock 464) and thus experienced a larger crisis of “corruption—the substitution of private dependencies for public authority—and the threat to individual integrity and self-knowledge which corruption had always implied” (464). The liquidity of these new variations of “property” were invariably destabilizing, not only of social hierarchies, but of the individuals who understood themselves with respect to a former and more fixed social structure. Significantly, Pocock observes:

Once property was seen to have a symbolic value, expressed in coin or in credit, the foundations of personality themselves appeared imaginary or at best consensual: the individual could exist, even in his own sight, only at the fluctuating value imposed upon him by his fellows, and these

evaluations, though constant and public, were too irrationally performed to be seen as acts of political decision or virtue. (464)

The overlapping historical forces of Protestantism and capitalism, and the anti-authoritarianism and increasingly secular autonomy they produced in eighteenth-century America, were registered not only in the tremendous *opportunity* for social and political reform realized, for example, in the American Revolution, but also in the anxieties that emerged and were articulated simultaneous with its disruption of the socio-political order. These opposite impulses—toward optimism and progressivism on the one hand, shadowed by deep-seated fears of instability on the other—characterize the post-Revolutionary American republic.

Consent and the Potential for Deception

In its transformation from colonial dependent to autonomous nation, the United States revised the Lockean process of consent, freeing it of its association with a unique historical moment or action into a series of ongoing, nearly invisible rituals that permeated Americans' daily lives:

The view of representation developing in America implied if it did not state that direct consent of the people in government was not restricted, as Locke would have had it, to those climactic moments when government was overthrown by the people in a last final effort to defend their rights, nor even to those repeated, benign moments when a government was peaceably dissolved and another chosen in its place.²⁶

Instead, a representative democracy, by definition, alters the workings of consent by transforming the relationship between the consenters and their representatives in government. Consent is present not only in the threat of its withdrawal, but in the

26. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1967) 173.

daily activities whose practices registers an ongoing identification between the citizen and his representative. Bailyn continues,

Where government was such an accurate mirror of the people, sensitively reflecting their desires and feelings, consent was a continuous, everyday process. In effect the people were present through their representatives, and were themselves, step by step and point by point, acting in the conduct of public affairs. No longer merely an ultimate check on government, they *were* in some sense the government. Government had no separate existence apart from them; was *by* the people as well as *for* the people; it gained its authority from their continuous consent. (173)

Inasmuch as the representative, a kind of proxy or “double” for the will of the citizen, is simultaneously bound by virtue to express the wishes of that citizen, he also embodies the inescapable potential for duplicity, betrayal, and misrepresentation. The process of a representative democracy is, in large part, one of constituting the representation so as to most accurately mirror the body politic. Citing John Adams, Bailyn notes that “a representative assembly ‘should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason, and act like them’” (172). Furthermore, the overt political acts of individual citizens are to some extent obviated by the daily workings of representation; in contributing, through their acquiescence, to the mimetic quality of the government, the citizens are enacting what Hanna Pitkin has termed “hypothetical consent,” in which “[...] a legitimate government, one whose subjects are obligated to obey it, emerges [in practice] as being one to which they *ought to consent*.”²⁷

27. Hanna Pitkin, “Obligation and Consent I,” *The American Political Science Review* 59: 4 (1965): 999. In a two-article sequence, Pitkin demonstrates the practical impossibility of more active versions of consent theory (in which one would be expected either to perform acts of consent at multiple moments, or in which one’s consent would be only to the original contract or compact by which a society was founded.) For both Rousseau and Locke, she contends, the moment of initial social contract a retroactive and fictionally constructed myth of origin than a literal historical event. In the second installation, Pitkin notes that the act of consent, by which “men are both superior to their government and subject to it,” is so

Thus by their acceptance of the nation's legitimacy, a consent enacted largely by going about their daily business, the earliest citizens constructed the reality of the nation through practice, belief, participation. The process of educating the citizenry, however broadly that task is defined, is a primary means of assuring their ongoing attachment to, acceptance of, and vigilance towards the nation—of authorizing them into a mature and self-sustaining authority. Webster urges Americans to

unshackle your minds and act like independent beings. You have been children long enough, subject to the control and subservient to the interest of a haughty parent. You have now an interest of your own to augment and defend: you have an empire to raise and support by your exertions and a national character to establish and extend by your wisdom and virtues. To effect these great objects, it is necessary to frame a liberal plan of policy and build it on a broad system of education.²⁸

In urging Americans to “grow up,” Webster is therefore following Locke's leadership, recognizing in the nascent citizens a kind of political adolescence with the potential to produce fully autonomous beings.

In her recent re-reading of Locke's pedagogical works, Brown asserts that the significance of “opinion” in Lockean thought has been overlooked, and that the formation of “opinion”—that is, the process of identifying an issue, recognizing alternative stances toward it, and selecting one with which to ally oneself—is a

confounding in its essential paradox that “the traditional social contract theorists saw it instead as a temporal sequence: *first* men were free and could make a commonwealth, *then* they became bound to it” (“Obligation and Consent II,” *The American Philosophical Science Review* 60: 1 [1966]: 49). Her insistence on the logical paradox of the social contract coincides with Derrida's claim that a “declaration of independence” is an act of “fabulous retroactivity” (10). In both cases, the narrative sequence obviates the logical contradiction.

28. Noah Webster, “On the Education of Youth in America” (1790), *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965) 77. Here Webster echoes the description of the Revolution as the colonies' adolescent rebellion against an unjust parent, language that appears throughout the period.

primary way to connect the citizen to the state. In Brown's reading, the process of "consent" by which Americans participated in, understood, and identified with their national government is most fully realized in the process of forming opinions. According to Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the force of opinion, which he also calls reputation, is one of three "laws that men generally refer their actions to, to judge of their rectitude or obliquity"—the other two being "[t]he *divine* law" and "[t]he *civil* law."²⁹ The forming of opinion, then, operates as a kind of intellectual labor, by which means the citizen stakes a claim in the workings of his government. The production of such discernment is therefore chief among the responsibilities of the citizen, "an ongoing negotiation between individuals and the customs of their countries" (Brown 7), and is the primary site at which virtue can be both inculcated and demonstrated. For Locke, the exercise of judgment is vital to the meaningfulness of consent and thus to the act of republican citizenship:

Nor is it to be thought strange, that men everywhere should give the name of virtue to those actions, which amongst them are judged praiseworthy; and call that vice, which they account blamable: since otherwise they would condemn themselves, if they should think anything right, to which they allowed not commendation, anything wrong, which they let pass without blame. Thus the measure of what is everywhere called and esteemed virtue and vice is this approbation or dislike, praise or blame, which, by a secret and tacit consent, establishes itself in the several societies, tribes and clubs of men in the world: whereby several actions come to find credit or disgrace amongst them, according to the judgment, maxims, or fashion of that place. (Vol. I, Bk II, Ch. XVIII, 10; 476–77)

The processes involved in establishing judgment—weighing, considering, and forming an opinion—are an essential and natural aspect of society and, according to Brown, are the primary methods by which "consent" is publicly enacted. In other

29. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols., ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (NY: Dover, 1959) 475.

words, in forming and expressing his opinion about the conduct or actions of his government, the citizen recognizes the legitimacy of its authority, whether he approves or disapproves of its specific actions. By actively voicing his opinions, he renders his government *representative*; that is, worthy of, and thus legitimate in, its authority.³⁰ The forming of opinions, however, is central to the larger process of education, the primary means by which practice in the art of judgment is passed from one individual or generation to the next.

In addition, however, the act of making judgments asserts the individuality of the private judge/citizen, even as the social nature of such judgments renders him part of a larger corporate entity. Paradoxically, the act of asserting an opinion reinforces man's individual subjectivity as it links him to the body politic, and is simultaneously private and individual as well as public and political. In expressing his opinion, man is both truly himself and yet allied with his like-minded peers:

For, though men uniting into politic societies, have resigned up to the public the disposing of all their force, so that they cannot employ it against

30. Here I am following Pitkin's logic; that is, that the power of governmental "authority" is inherent in the notion of legitimate authority, and that "tacit" consent is more appropriately understood as a hypothetical condition: government derives righteous authority, and obliges obedience not through the physical act of the citizen's pledging of consent, but through the government's being the kind of government to which rational men *would* assent: "your obligation depends not on whether you have consented but on whether the government is such that you *ought* to consent to it" ("Obligation and Consent" II, 39). In this second half of her argument, Pitkin builds upon the notion of "hypothetical consent" and determines that the obligation that binds us to our government is based on both our "subjection to" and "superiority over" that government (49). In her discussion of the limits of that consent, and the extent of a government's legitimate authority, Pitkin further asserts that part of the act of recognizing a legitimate authority (or its opposite) requires a scrupulous scrutiny of the evidence, both in terms of the government's procedures and goals, and in the opinions of its subjects. Only through a vigilant process of investigation and evaluation, she suggests, can a society know when to be "subject" to their government, and when to invoke their "superiority" in order to rebel against it. What Pitkin and Brown share in their readings of Locke is an insistence on the political nature of the act of interpretation, and the fundamental role of opinion formation in a more broadly defined understanding of the workings of consent. See Pitkin 49–52.

any fellow-citizens any further than the law of the country directs: yet they retain still the power of thinking well or ill, approving or disapproving of the actions of those whom they live amongst, and converse with: and by this approbation and dislike they establish amongst themselves what they will call virtue and vice. (476–77)

Brown asserts that “the citizen’s continuous labor of crediting and discrediting ideas” bridges a gap between “liberal” and “republican” readings of the eighteenth-century relationship between the citizen and his government: “Liberalism, as formulated by Locke, registers the connection between the personal and public spheres” into which human experience is often wrongly divided (Brown 8, 9). In her rereading, Lockean liberalism bears more than a passing resemblance to republicanism. A more nuanced understanding of liberalism “offers a more continuous view of the citizen and the state, one in which the citizen’s thoughts continually contribute to and communicate the sovereignty of the people” (9). Personal opinion is redefined as not only inherently but explicitly political: “The most private and internal acts of individuals, those of their minds, acknowledge and engage with social standards,” Brown insists, because “Locke imagines no fixed locus, private or public, for the mental operations of persons because he regards individual deliberations as dynamic, always interactive even though issuing from a person’s particular place in the world” (9).

Citizen-child: Insufficiency and the Nascent Citizen

As Brown persuasively demonstrates, eighteenth-century educational practice and pedagogical theory were largely, and surprising unremarkedly, predicated on the contingency and the frailty—the immaturity, so to speak—of the pupil/subject. In contrast to the common view of Lockean liberalism as primarily a discourse of autonomy, Brown suggests instead that his pedagogical writings emphasize the

elaborate system of restraints within which that autonomy is produced. Brown is particularly concerned with the figure of the child as the prototypical test case of consent, “which thereby links consent with frailty and contingency” as well as with a developmental emphasis on the “potentiality and insufficiency” of the nascent citizen. By raising the specter of individual psychology and the potential of “insufficiency” without guarantee that sufficiency would be achieved, Brown’s reading of Locke renders the citizen, in both his political and private incarnations, as nascent by definition—the subject of the educational process is by definition merely *potential*.

In *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), Locke identifies maturity as a process of self-denial: “the Principle of all Vertue and excellency lies in a power of denying our selves the satisfaction of our own Desires, where Reason does not authorize them.”³¹ And this suppression was the method and result of education: “This power is to be got and improved by Custom, made easy and familiar by an *early Practice*” (107). Thus the various programs that fall under the rubric of a national pedagogy provided modes of being that were to become habituated, mentally and physically, through their constant repetition and training. Elsewhere, Locke reiterates the centrality of denial and suppression to his educational program:

As the Strength of the Body lies chiefly in being able to endure Hardships, so also does that of the Mind. And the great Principle and Foundation of all Vertue and Worth, is placed in this, That a Man is able to *deny himself* his own Desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what Reason directs as best, tho’ the appetite lean the other way. (section 33; 103)

31. John Locke, *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), ed. John W. & Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 107.

Elsewhere Locke moves from an emphasis on suppression and self-mastery to the formative or constitutive nature of “education”; the individual subject is not merely reshaped but actively constructed through his encounters with pedagogy. Locke envisions the “Gentleman’s Son” for whom his educational thoughts were initially composed, “only as white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded [sic] and fashioned as one pleases” (265). In contrast to Locke’s injunctions elsewhere to respect and accommodate the individual nature of the child, he here imagines his charge as infinitely malleable, as empty or merely potential until “fashioned” by his pedagogue(s).

Locating education at the crux of the personal and the political, on the border between self and nation, private and public, early educational theorists echo Locke’s description of education as reconstitution, destabilizing the notion of identity even further in an era obsessed by questions of counterfeit and credit, honesty and transparency. Despite their insistence on the rationalism of educational processes, such theories inadvertently invoke the dark side of the stabilizing effort because they define the subject along an unstable and changeable continuum. In their efforts to fix and specify the course from private self-interest to a self-interested public virtue, these educators simultaneously impressed upon their audience the instability of subjectivity. Efforts to stabilize national identity inevitably recall its instability. This “truth” about the impermanence of identity reaches its peak in the sensationalist fiction of the period, which situates competing discourses of self-transformation, its goals, possibilities, and consequences and depicts what we might broadly define as a “pedagogical gothic.”

Outside the Classroom: National Pedagogy and Cultural Transmission

The preceding discussion serves as a historical and philosophical prologue to the larger concerns developed in the following chapters. Turning to the novels whose interpretation makes up the bulk of this project, I move from discussions of overtly political and institutional educational interventions in the early nation into the more diffuse realm of what we might call “cultural pedagogy”—those realms in which identity is (re)produced less explicitly but no less importantly. In the chapters that follow, I explore how sensationalist novels from the first decades of the nation’s history serve the production of national identity in ways that are intimately connected to the explicitly pedagogical goals I have discussed thus far. The sensationalist fiction I discuss here form part of the broad realm of culture that Cindy Patton has called a “national pedagogy”; that is, a diffuse set of programs, agendas, and motives that serve to constitute a particular form of citizenship, and in so doing, shape a new set of American subjectivities understood largely in terms of the individual’s relationship to that notion of “citizen.”

By identifying novels as “pedagogical,” I hope to highlight their participation in the interrelated psychological and political project of producing citizens: novels both *enact* and *represent* the variety of pedagogical practices through which the lessons of nationalism and the provisions of an individual national identity are made available and necessary to the subject-citizen. These novels delimit the multiplicity of individual positions understood as possible or legible with respect to the emerging narratives of citizenship. Moreover, these literary works make available to the critic a fuller perspective on the contradictions and conflicts that will later be suppressed,

submerged, or repressed in the process of constructing these new “citizens.”³² Patton suggests that in their contemporary function, “[n]ational narratives of identity seek to harness the anxieties surrounding questions of personhood, [...] what they leave out resurfaces when the experiences of individuals conspicuously fail to conform to the definition of personhood offered in the narrative.”³³ The following chapters read novels as part of that “cultural pedagogy”—as partners in the creation of an American personhood. As fiction, these works are also free to indulge the period’s fascination with what might go wrong in this new type of citizenship, and to expand imaginatively upon the consequences of political and pedagogical practices whose results were as yet uncertain.

What Patton calls national pedagogy might also be described, more benignly, as cultural reproduction—a process that is particularly problematic in a period that struggled to define itself in terms of its “newness” and its independence from what had gone before without allowing for the upending of social, racial, sexual, and economic hierarchies already in place. As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude

32. Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) especially 54–60. Wald argues persuasively that the “fictional” nature of citizenship is something that can be invoked to stimulate the citizen’s dedication to his nation. In her analysis of Abraham Lincoln’s Civil War rhetoric, for example, she explains that he invokes the “tenuousness” of the nation’s inception into order to “h[o]ld before his audience the need to reaffirm those bonds and [...] the apocalyptic consequences of their severance” (52). “The hint of a threat reminded Lincoln’s audience of the tenuousness of an edifice that needed their upkeep,” she suggests (56).

My study, while clearly indebted to her work on many levels, suggests that in dealing with the first decades of the new nation, that “ficticity,” and thus the vulnerability of the nation itself is not something only occasionally invoked in time of crisis, but is in fact central to, if largely unstated in, the larger discussions about the production of a national identity. In this way, my argument serves as a kind of prequel to hers; the literature I examine is perhaps better described as “sensational” than as “gothic,” because what is unsettling about it is less the return (or threat) of the repressed than a more direct engagement with the tenuousness of citizenship and of any identity founded thereon.

³³ Cindy Patton, *Fatal Advice* (Durham: Duke UP 1996) 10.

Passeron have argued, the processes of education serve to reproduce both the political and social elements of a culture through “pedagogic work”; that is, through “a process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce a durable training, i.e. a *habitus*, the product of internalization of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after p[edagogical] a[ction] has ceased and thereby perpetuating in practices the principles of the internalized arbitrary.”³⁴ Although Bourdieu and Passeron are particularly interested in a later historical period when the school system has become a more discrete and unified entity, their work is relevant to my study because of their focus on the non-systematic and extra-curricular ways by which educational models replicate the cultural and social order, as well as in their attention to the contradiction between claims of political equality and “the arbitrariness of the distribution of powers and privileges which perpetuates itself through the socially uneven allocation” of the rewards of schooling (*x*). They argue that “pedagogic action”— the multiple means by which cultural reproduction can be accomplished, whether under the guidance of the family, by explicit instruction in conduct or manners, or within more formal systems of education—is “the privileged locus of the illusion of consensus” (4) precisely because the most effective pedagogies, “in preventing apprehensions of power relations *as* power relations,” function “to prevent the dominated groups or classes from securing all the strength that realization of their strength might give them” (15).

34. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, 2nd ed., trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage Publications, 1990) 31. In their sociological study, the authors define the “cultural arbitrary” as that which “cannot be deduced from any universal principle, whether physical, biological, or spiritual, not being linked by any sort of internal relation to ‘the nature of things’ or any ‘human nature,’” (8). What they term an “arbitrary” would, of course, not be understood as arbitrary by members of the culture in which it functions precisely because it becomes naturalized in its transmission. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Reproduction*.

In their service to a national pedagogy, pedagogues, theorists, and authors of the early nation attempted to mold the minds of the citizenry into the forms most appropriate for republican citizenship, exposing students and readers to a diffuse set of “mechanisms and logics that frame the evolving concept of citizen.”³⁵ As the nation struggled with questions of inclusiveness and exclusivity, of how the citizenry should be constituted, and of how to encourage or require that individuals form unvarying attachments to their new national identity, a variety of theories and projects falling under the umbrella of national pedagogy were integral to debates about who was to be counted among “the collective who are represented as the proper citizens of a nation [...] an image that people may strive for or reject, but that is, evolving though it may be, the representational site of a struggle or negotiation over who it is that a government is supposed to govern” (Patton 6). Ultimately, Patton claims, national pedagogy differentiates those with the potential to be educated into full citizenship from those who remain inextricably “Othered” in contrast. As Patton observes, “the concept of national pedagogy suggests that power-knowledge is not statically held in a state comprised of both brute and sublime apparatuses, but is a *procedure* for bringing bodies into positions of duty and obligation constitutive of identity” (9). It is the moments prior to a functional *procedure*—its self-conscious construction, and its consequences—with which this study is concerned.

35. Patton 7. While Patton defines her notion of a national pedagogy specifically in terms of the late 1980s AIDS crisis and the steps taken in service of “safe sex education,” her term is helpful to my argument because it both highlights the intersections between education and national citizenship as imagined by its subjects, and differentiates diffuse Foucauldean “governmentalities” brought to bear under the heading of “national pedagogy” from the explicit practices and divisions generally understood “education.” See, e.g., Patton 6–25.

Identifying the early national period as one when citizenship was made explicitly problematic, and where its designation was specifically in flux, I argue that in the years following the revolution—particularly in light of the tremendous self-consciousness and deliberateness with which these “Americans” were formed—“a new procedure of subject formation” was being instituted, “one in which formal moments of ‘teaching’ [we]re only a part” (Patton 8). Instead, the nascent “national pedagogy” of the period took place across a variety of teaching situations, ranging from formal instruction to a series of disparate “pedagogical moments”—those instances in which the individual was interpellated into the new social order, when he gained a new or expanded or refined sense of his newly national identity and its obligations and opportunities.

In the period just following the Revolution, the definition of and membership in the “national public” or body politic were explicitly contested in debates over the extent and necessity of governmental controls on individual citizens; in addition, the new republic’s failure to make good on its wide-ranging claims of “universal” equality (the perpetuation of slavery, the denial of citizenship rights to women and Native Americans) called its moral authority into question, raising questions regarding “[t]he meaning of citizenship, who [was] to be counted as the true bearers of America’s destiny and promise, [which] undergoes revision as society and the state fail to make good on the complex, and also evolving, fantasy of what America *is*” (Patton 7). In shaping that national fantasy, Rush, Webster, Franklin, and Jefferson, among numerous others, not only promoted the production of such an entity but also participated in its construction.

As Patton’s terminology suggests, the process of self-construction in the new nation was not merely imposed from above; instead, it depended upon the active

participation and imagination of those directly affected—those who came to understand and thus to recognize in themselves the subjects and objects of this national pedagogy. The lessons of this pedagogical program were not always explicit, nor overtly political: “pedagogy’s power arises through the invocation of a knowledge that simultaneously precedes and seamlessly becomes the possession of the hailed subject” (8–9). In this case, however, the individual citizen is not interpellated into a national ideology merely by the State’s act of recognition; instead, the process depends upon the responsiveness of citizen-subject and his eagerness to participate in the larger process. In this period of upheaval and disarray, the very notion of what it might mean to be the subject of “We the people” was unclear, and had to be imagined into existence not merely from the “top down” but from the bottom up. Bourdieu and Passeron, as well, complicate usefully our thinking about the processes by which national identity comes into existence. Their model has the benefit of acknowledging both the interaction of external and internal forces and the necessarily “mythical” nature of any originary theory of culture or individual identity:

recognition of p[edagogic] a[ction] can never be completely reduced to a psychological act, still less to a conscious acquiescence, as is attested by the fact that it is never more total than when totally unconscious. To describe recognition of p[edagogic] a[ction] as a free decision to allow oneself to be cultivated or, conversely, as an abuse of power inflicted on the natural self, i.e. to make recognition of legitimacy a free or distorted act of recognition, would be just as naïve as to go along with the theories of the social contract [...] conceived as a logical system of choices, when they situate the arbitrary selection of signifying relations constitutive of a culture in an original, hence mythical, locus. (13–14)

The goals and effects of a national pedagogy are more far-reaching than those of specific educational efforts—they have to do with the entire self-concept of the individuals who make up the body politic, and who must be encouraged to identify

themselves primarily with that national identity to the exclusion of any elements that might make them different. As Richard A. Barney has noted in his study of eighteenth-century novels of education, the early modern concept of education is more expansive than merely what takes place in formal study; it “extends far beyond mere institutional technique, investing its ultimate operation in the daily life experience of consciousness” (31). The constitution of Americans as citizens—that is, as individuals whose primary self-identification is with their national entity—pervades the political and educational discourse of the final decades of the eighteenth-century. Teaching Americans how to act like Americans is thus a question of creating an American subjectivity. It is a process, I would argue, that the novels I discuss both *accomplish* and undermine. Their horror arises in part from the inevitable paradox that in molding the citizen, they inescapably define identity as insubstantial, subjectivity as imaginary, citizenry as unnatural.

The Gothic American: Inhabiting the Fictions of National Identity

In entering a discussion about the constitution of subjectivity, we enter the purview of psychology or, more specifically, of psychoanalysis. As Priscilla Wald has suggested, the kind of “reformulation of personhood” necessitated by the dramatic cultural transformation occasioned by Revolution and independence demands a vocabulary provided by psychoanalysis (6).³⁶ While official narratives stress the continuity between the old and new conceptions of personhood, Wald argues, the

36. Wald’s analysis of the link between cultural transformation and psychoanalysis draws on the work of Frantz Fanon, an Antillean psychoanalyst whose revisions of Freud’s work suggest that “a psychoanalytic narrative of individual development is itself a national narrative” that can be mined to reveal “the relationship between culture and the unconscious (and between national and personal narratives of identity)” (8). Under this culturally mediated paradigm, “The analyst’s task is to explain how a cultural language of personhood shapes a personal experience of self” (8).

“cultural anxiety” occasioned by the discontinuities between them, as well as by the effort to suppress acknowledgement of those inconsistencies, can be read through moments of rhetorical rupture that are experienced as the “discomfort” and estrangement from the self that Freud identifies as “the Uncanny.” Moments of national upheaval thus “affect individuals’ sense of self and make them more susceptible to that disturbing sense of estrangement” (6, 7) in ways that may be political in origin but are experienced and psychologically and represented aesthetically in the literature of the period.

In its capacity for inaugurating a uniquely American identity, one predicated on the repression of its internal contradictions, the “national pedagogy” and the national citizen it attempts to construct might be said to function in ways analogous to Lacan’s mirror, providing a coherent representation or image of identity (Lacan’s *imago*) by means of which the subject constitutes himself *as* a subject. By investing in the fiction of coherence and mastery that emerged in the fiction of the national citizen, the subject represses the fragmentation, disarray, and failure of the American promise of full equality in order to emerge as the constituted American. The diffuse network of practices that located the former colonist within his newly national identity produce a fictional identity, a “mirror image” writ large, that in representing the subject back to himself as coherent allows for the imaginative investment that confers the illusion of mastery, power, and unity that enables subjectivity. But of course, Lacan’s work identifies the fictionality of that coherent subjectivity as the ultimate “uncanny”—the ultimate return of the repressed, whose repression is by definition essential to selfhood. In her reading of a problematic footnote in Freud’s “The Uncanny” (1919), Wald observes that the uncanny is predicated less on the disturbing recognition of the self than on a primal scene of

misrecognition that reveals not the true self, but “the (inevitable) inaccuracy of one’s experience of self” (6).³⁷ In failing to recognize his mirror image, Freud unwittingly reveals that “the familiar is unfamiliar (the self as stranger)” through “the experience of an altered self that calls the fundamental assumptions of what the self is and whence it derives into question” (7). In other words, in failing to recognize his own image, Freud’s encounter suggests that we are unrecognizable to ourselves, and that the “self” each of us claims is less “real” than imagined.

In reconstructing the individual as the citizen, educational practices inevitably involve the suppression of personal desires in service of the national self. The range of methods that helped to instill in the earliest American citizens their “new” identities served as well to suppress the contradictions inherent in both the national and individual realms of that citizenship. The development of a national identity allowed those designated as legitimate citizens to experience their relationship to the state as natural and to thereby naturalize the exclusion, inferiority, or unsuitability of other residents of the United States. In its multiple and diverse applications, this early “national pedagogy” is actively involved in developing a national identity, and does not suppress so much as rely on the tenuousness of subjectivity. Whereas in later periods the lure and threat of citizenship lies in this repression of its own fragility—in the possibility it appears to offer for a stable selfhood, and in the fictiveness of that stability, the gothic nature of citizenship is explicit.

37. In the key passage, Freud reports instances in which he and German scientist Ernst Mach not only failed to recognize their own mirror images, but felt a certain antipathy toward the stranger each believed he was seeing. Wald’s reading allows for a much clearer linking of Freudian and Lacanian theories of the uncanny on this point; that is, that the fundamental experience of uncanniness is an encounter with the fictionality of an integrated, essential selfhood.

As the subject of national pedagogy, the individual is necessarily conceptualized as nascent, provisional, incomplete—as “clay” ready for the kiln. A national identity is supposed to “realize” the nascent person as a sturdy citizen. But in fact, it works through estrangement and the reconstruction of a shared or composite “fiction” of identity. In attempting to establish an equivalence between the public and private domains of the self, American political rhetoric moves away from Rousseau’s concern with preserving the “natural man” and further toward a reliance on suppression and repression as the basis of a national subjectivity. The pre-pedagogical self serves as the raw material for transformation into the national subject, a process whose fictionality will later be repressed. By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, the imaginary citizen will become rhetorically naturalized in a way that represses his ficticity. My project, however, considers the historical era prior to those acts of national repression, an era where national identity is explicitly fictitious and in flux.

Educational Sensationalism: Explicating the Paradox

In the chapters that follow, I consider the relationship between the early nation’s political and pedagogical climate and the literature that emerged nearly simultaneous with the republic itself. The new and diffuse locus of authority in the United States appeared to offer its aspiring authors the opportunity for a new, or at least significantly revised and highly self-conscious, literary tradition. As Mark Patterson notes, “the central political issues [...] turned out to be the location and character of authority in the nation and how that authority was to be represented[.]” American writers attempted to define their own authority by creating new forms of

literary representation.”³⁸ Similarly, Cathy Davidson’s *Revolution and the Word* locates the emergence of the American novel in the Revolutionary and immediately post-Revolutionary moment precisely because of the shifting terrain of authority and what those political transformations made imaginatively possible for American authors: “For all practical purposes, there were no indigenous novels before the American Revolution. What we have is a genre emerging within a culture precisely as that culture attempts to define itself.”³⁹ Her explanation, like Patterson’s, Kramer’s, and Looby’s, is grounded largely in the psychology of citizenship, or, more precisely, in the psychological manifestations of the shift into autonomous citizenship—in the emotional and intellectual and visceral processes of coming to understand oneself as a citizen-agent in a vast and somewhat reckless political experiment.

The sum total of these various changes, and of the shifting terrain on which citizenship, identity, and politics rested, was a kind of overarching destabilization by which both public and private identities were demonstrated to be—and therefore experienced as—only tangentially grounded, as were the institutions with which they interacted reciprocally. In his recent study of British “novels of education,” Richard A. Barney notes that within eighteenth-century Britain, the discourses of education, philosophy, and the novel are far less distinct than the genres of each that have subsequently emerged, and that during this period, all are what we might recognize as “analogous discursive formations produced by much larger, even glacial, historical changes, such as [...] the development of an individualistic,

38. Mark R. Patterson, *Authority, Autonomy, and Representation in American Literature, 1776–1865* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988) x.

39. Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word* (NY: Oxford UP, 1986) viii.

bourgeois description of human identity and social relations.”⁴⁰ Both the novels and educational writing of this period reveal the desire and the need to “negotiate a provisional alliance between the contending values of individual autonomy and social discipline. During the novel’s early stages, in fact, the increased emphasis on either of these principles immediately invokes—or provokes—the other’s importance as a salutary antidote” (13).

For him, the role of the novel is “both anticipating and shaping eighteenth-century educational practice while locating as well the gaps or fissures inherent in a cultural logic intent on fostering constrained personal liberty” (13). Novels that drew upon the discourses and praxis of education, therefore, can be read as attempting to balance two competing descriptions of the individual’s relationship to society: “in Lockean terms [...] the reconciliation of individual rights and political responsibility, or in republican terms as the harnessing of personal ability (*virtú*) to public citizenship” (13–14). Observing, as does Brown, that the discourses of republicanism and liberalism may be competing, but cannot be seen as fully distinct or autonomous from each other, he reads “the discourses about rights and the institutions of discipline as more or less equally competing components in the articulation of early modern identity” and considers “both written discourse and material institutions during the period as having internalized a dual emphasis on egalitarianism and hegemony in the attempt to define individual citizenship” (Barney 13). Barney argues that novels share in the construction of a subjectivity that is accomplished through mundane acts of cultural reproduction, as well as in the explicit pedagogies of the classroom: “the figural representation of improvisational subjectivity is a fiction in the broadest and narrowest senses; it must be deliberately assembled from

40. Richard A. Barney, *Plots of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999) 5.

the cultural assumptions at hand, and as a process of gradual instruction, it takes the form of an ongoing story” (19).

In the chapters that follow, I attempt to recapture a particular stage in the “ongoing story” of national subjectivity. My work here intersects with Barney’s in asserting that what might be understood as a broadly “pedagogical” orientation permeates much of the discourse of the early American nation. The centrality of “education” as a topic of concern in the era following the Revolution brings together political discourse, specific discussions of pedagogy, and fiction, as it reflects larger epistemological and ontological issues brought to the fore by the need to create and to reproduce the new American citizen.

Pedagogical Gothic: The Novel and the Theme(s) of “Education”

As I note in the preceding overview, my intention in this project is not a comprehensive analysis of the actual pedagogical practices of the early Republic. Instead, I consider the theme of “education” as the term marks a certain imaginary terrain, consolidating multiple anxieties and hopes about the citizen who will inhabit the new American nation. The idea of education as it pertains to this study is perhaps better understood as a trope or a concept, one that incorporates varied discussions over how best to produce the kind of American subjectivity history now demanded. In considering materials from different discursive realms, I intend to foreground the fluidity of what I mean by “education” as it is figured in political discourse and fiction.

Similarly, I have attempted to differentiate between a particularly “gothic” horror characterized by the return of the repressed and what I here define as “sensationalist” fiction; that is, literature that involves its reader, as well as its characters, in situations that are horrifying, frightening, and even violent. By

defining works like Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* and *Ormond*, Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette*, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* as "sensational," I attempt to draw attention to the openness with which they depict the fragility of subjectivity, and draw their imaginative power from their willingness to inhabit fully the implications of the insubstantiality of selfhood. Unlike in later periods, the debates in these early years of nationhood are marked not by the *repression* of identity's fragility, but by a direct confrontation with the unsettling consequences of defining subjectivity itself as fungible.

Perhaps by the time of the Civil War, the provisional nature of the nation had been repressed, submerged beneath more readily available myths of the inevitability of American independence. In these first decades, however, that fragility and provisionality were explicit, registered largely through the deployment of "educational" models of citizenship. The texts I discuss in this study belong, albeit loosely, to the larger realm of pedagogical practice and cultural reproduction. Each has an explicitly pedagogical or didactic purpose; most fit the genre of "seduction fiction" in that they represent a young woman whose virtue in the face of a nefarious seducer represents larger questions of national virtue and integrity. Each text depicts its educational or developmental themes in the context of episodes of sometimes-shocking violence and horror. I argue that these novels' links between "pedagogical moments" and moments of horror constitute an attempt to confront head-on the instability that pervades all acts of identity within the nation.

A pedagogical approach to citizenship is necessarily paradoxical: on the one hand, it represents an attempt to shape and fix the identity of the citizen, to guarantee his loyalty, stability, and *virtue*. On the other hand, to recognize the (nascent) citizen as *educable* is to define him as pliable and thus as fundamentally

unstable. The following chapters attempt to trace some of the consequences of the contradiction at the heart of the American subjectivity and to build on the foregoing overview of the national and pedagogical situation just after the Revolution. In each case, the novels I discuss deploy the broad topic of education as a way of raising and engaging in debate over the origin and make-up of the citizen. Chapter Two, “Educational Futility and the Dilemma of *Wieland*,” reads Charles Brockden Brown’s 1798 novel *Wieland* as a series of interrogations that cast inescapable doubt on the potential for educational methods to produce political or individual stability. Written in the context of internal and external threats to American union, and responding to political calls for a way to regulate individual loyalty, the novel insists instead on the unreliability of all the practices in which a pedagogical citizenship is grounded. *Wieland* suggests the futility of attempting to discern, gather, or interpret information with absolute certainty, and asserts that no human means can produce a fully reliable citizen. *Wieland* thus suggests not that citizenship is impossible, or that the nation should be abandoned, but that national identity is inherently fluid and largely uncontrollable, and locates that assertion in its depiction of the processes of education.

Chapter Three, “Effeminacy and ‘Tinsel Glitter’: Surveillance, ‘Hypervisibility,’ and the Federalist Woman,” attends to the specific plight of women in the early nation. As neither full citizens nor complete outcasts from the national mission, women encountered pedagogical fiction that often attempted to instruct them into their second class, apolitical status. In this chapter, I first discuss two “conduct novels” by Hannah Webster Foster, *The Boarding School* (1797), and *The Coquette* (1798). These novels both represent and enact the process of educating women at the end of the eighteenth century, revealing the ways female pedagogy relies on acts of

surveillance, as well as its subtext of violence. I then turn to Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond* (1799), a novel that expands the critique of surveillance explored in Foster's novels, and depicts the costs to the nation of the asymmetrical gender relationships such surveillance fosters and maintains. In contrast to the more conventional reading that these seduction novels work primarily to naturalize female subservience and apoliticality, I argue instead that in their deployment of death and violence, *The Coquette* and *Ormond* instead suggest that women's lesser roles are anything but natural. These novels depict the violence and injustice at the heart of women's pedagogy as integral to its intents.

My final chapter, "Accidental Superiority': Education, Violence, and Assimilation in Jackson's America," moves forward some 30 years from the Federalist era in which Brockden Brown and Foster wrote, and focuses on the issues of Indian assimilation as they are re-imagined in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's 1827 novel, *Hope Leslie*. This chapter situates Sedgwick's ostensibly progressive novel in the historical context of the national discussion over the Indian question and the history of Indian education. It further puts Sedgwick's depiction of Native Americans in conversation with William Apess's contemporaneous critical explorations of American hypocrisy toward the Indians. In *Hope Leslie*, as in the political documents addressing the plight of the Indian, the arena of education offers fertile ground for competing and incompatible interpretations of the Indian's potential for full citizenship. In each case, I argue that the "horrors" the text depicts represent an explicit engagement with current debates. Far from depicting a "return of the repressed," these sensationalist novels instead occupy fully the contradictions that animate them, and in so doing, tell a story in which instability and violence are central to the creation of an American self.

The study attempts to explore the implications of several under-acknowledged elements of the literature of the early American republic. First, it suggests that much contemporary work on national identity, citizenship, and subjectivity is inadequate to exploring the particular self-consciousness with which these topics emerged in the early decades of the United States. Instead of a model of subjectivity founded on repression, my study suggests that this earlier period demands a different model, one in which the insubstantiality of identity is not hidden, but explicit. Furthermore, this project argues that the debates about the construction of a national identity, and those surrounding the production of the national citizen, cohere around a broadly defined notion of “pedagogy,” a term that encompasses both educational practices and theories and the more diffuse cultural methods of transmission. Finally, the readings that follow suggest the significance of novels to these larger political debates, not merely as they advance particular political positions, but also in their exploration of the fullest implications of the imaginary citizen and the constituted republic. In their depictions of violence, these novels express the cost of nationhood and articulate the chaos that will only later be repressed in service of American selfhood.

Chapter 2

Educational Futility and the Dilemma of *Wieland*

Political Instability and the “Solution” of Virtue

As we have seen in the previous chapter’s discussion, the ideal of political virtue, especially in its ability to negotiate between the private citizen and the public state, preoccupied post-Revolutionary America. The concept of virtue emerges as a key tool with which early Americans attempted to manage the crises and anxieties occasioned by the realities of the republic by providing a means to balance political autonomy with the demands of national citizenship and American subjectivity. Questions surrounding what a particularly American political virtue might look like—its capacities and limitations—emerge in bold relief during the final decade of the eighteenth century, as the nation wrestled with continued threats, both internal and external, to its harmony and its unity.

This chapter explores the way in which those threats are rearticulated as crises of pedagogy in Charles Brockden Brown’s most famous gothic novel, *Wieland; or, an American Tale* (1798). While the political rhetoric of the time vacillated between anxiety and attempts to impose an absolute dichotomy between the virtuous and those who were not, the novel offers a more nuanced, if ultimately more fearsome possibility. Whereas the political rhetoric attempts to fix the meaning and control the inculcation of virtue, *Wieland* explores instead the consequences of a world in which virtue is transitory, and where the meaning of one’s actions are not fixed but are instead dependent upon one’s philosophical and personal point of view. Instead

of reading *Wieland* as either reactionary or progressive, I consider how the novel inhabits the fluidity implicit in what I have called a pedagogically-oriented national identity. Unlike the usual either/or debates in which the novel is generally implicated, my work suggests that the point of the novel is *not* to argue for or against a particular source of individual, and thus national, stability. *Wieland's* ambiguity resides in its larger project, which is to explore the consequences of “pedagogical citizenship,” for good or for ill, within a representative family. The novel depicts a world in which citizens are clearly the product of what they think they know, the consequences of which are contradictory, frightening, even tragic. Rather than simply dismissing the idea of an educated citizenry, the novel involves its readers in a process of meaning-making that replicates the experience of citizenship. In *Wieland*, certainty is consistently undermined; at the same time, the consequences of ignorance are, for the Wieland family, fatal.

Historically, *Wieland* responds to prominent Federalist concerns about “virtue”—or, more accurately, to the prevalent anxiety regarding the absence of virtue, and the consequences thereof. This anxiety is central to President Washington’s “Farewell Address,” delivered September 19, 1796. The speech, which expresses the first president’s refusal to seek re-election, begins by establishing Washington’s authority precisely in terms of his personal virtue, attempting to assure his listeners of the stability and permanence of his commitment to that “relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his country.”¹ Delivered in the climate of inter- and intra-national paranoia that would culminate in the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, Washington’s “Farewell Address” invokes virtue as a means to

1. George Washington, “Farewell Address” *The Writings of George Washington From the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–99*, ed. John C. Fitzgerald (Indianapolis: Library Classics, 1988) 215.

consolidate the national union—and each citizen’s obligation to it—in the minds of his listeners, and to articulate the means by which his citizens can best gird themselves against disruptive “foreign” or alien influences.² Washington frames his speech as “some sentiments; which are the result of much reflection [...] and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a people” (217). The value of these sentiments, and their impact upon Washington’s audience, is thus predicated on his status as “a disinterested [sic] friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias [sic] his counsel.” Chief among his advice is the following lengthy warning:

[F]rom different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual and immovable attachment to it; accustoming

2. The Alien and Sedition acts, legislated in 1798, responded to Federalist anxieties regarding foreign or external “contagion” by the sort of radical democracy and concomitant political and social disorder associated with the French revolution—and, by extension, with Americans of anti-Federalist sentiment. The acts attempted to monitor and thus control the threat of foreign bodies within the body politic by limiting the movements of those designated as “Alien” non-citizens: increasing the length of residency required for citizenship, extending government control over aliens and foreigners—in short, attempting to contain the threat of contagious radicalism by clarifying the distinctions among residents of the republic. The acts were equally concerned with the corruption of communication; in addition to focusing on actual acts of sedition, they specify their attention to those who “counsel, advise” or otherwise “attempt to procure such acts [...] whether such conspiracy, threatening, counsel, advice, or attempt shall have the proposed effect or not.” (*An Act Respecting Alien Enemies* [6 July 1798] and *An Act in Addition to the Act, Entitled ‘An Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes Against the United States* [14 July 1798]. *The Avalon Project at the Yale Law School* <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/statutes/>). For a compelling reading of *Wieland* in the context of these acts, see Shirley Samuels’s “*Wieland: Alien and Infidel*” (*EAL* 25, 1990), in which she argues that “by so luridly depicting the threat posed to the [national] family by the outside world, [such] novels encouraged and promoted a conservative, closed model of the family, though at the same time, in the close circle of incestuous violence of *Wieland*, we can see that concentration on the family produces its own threats” (50).

yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our Country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts. (219)

Several aspects of this statement are worthy of further attention. First, in keeping with the tenor of the times, Washington employs metaphors of war to describe both the republic and its enemies; the national union is envisioned as a “fortress” under assault by “batteries” of those who wish her ill. More disturbingly, however, these enemies are not merely “external” and overt, but “internal” and insidious, capable of “alienat[ing]” and “enfeeb[ing]” the “sacred ties” in which the nation’s strength rests. Washington elaborates on the nature of those inroads, especially the destructive influences of self-interest that seeks power through “misrepresentation”: “You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations,” he counsels. The net effect of deception is registered in its ability to destroy the naturalized and familiar—“fraternal”—bonds that are as integral to the nation as to the family; such misrepresentations “tend to render Alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection” (223). Washington’s extended metaphor brings together the dialectical relationship between the personal and the public that is encompassed by the eighteenth-century political notion of “virtue”; that is, the fortress to which Washington refers is both the political entity of the “nation” and its “sacred ties,” the affective and “fraternal” investment by the individual in the good of his fellow citizens.

Washington, of course, is not the first to grapple with the political demons of individual interest, faction, and deception, nor in invoking his fellow citizens’

strength of mind, realized in their dismissal of “artifice,” to combat them. Similar anxieties pervade the public rhetoric of the period; the Federalist era marks the emergence of a series of domestic crises affecting the “national family” from within, as well as from without. Concerns about creating a unified citizenry had been expressed long before 1796, as had complaints about the limits of national assimilation; for example, Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*, composed in the early 1780s and published in 1785, had given full expression to his concern that an excess of immigrants, with their foreign experiences and previous peculiarities, will interfere with the kind of basic similarity and sympathy that could stabilize government by consent. In *Notes*, Jefferson expresses his skepticism that immigrants unschooled in the basic tenets of political freedom can become fully integrated players in the daily acts that constitute consensual citizenship:

But are there no inconveniences to be thrown into the scale against the advantage expected from a multiplication of numbers by the importation of foreigners? It is for the happiness of those united in society to harmonize as much as possible in matters which they must of necessity transact together. [...] E]migrants [...] will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty. These principles, with their language, they will transmit to their children. In proportion to their numbers, they will share with us the legislation. They will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its directions, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass.³

Jefferson’s diatribe captures the troubling paradox inherent in the period’s beliefs about education. On the one hand, he expresses the potential for proper pedagogy to stabilize individual identity: the principles “imbibed in their early youth” and

3. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785; NY: Harper, 1964) 83.

“transmit[ted] to their children” demonstrate the long-term effects of what is learned in childhood. At the same time, the passage articulates a profound distrust of the power of education. Despite the close ties between “principles” and “language” in the transmission of culture, Jefferson expresses considerable skepticism about the power of American English, American customs, and an American education, to integrate immigrants fully into the national family.⁴

Even more alarming, however, was the prospect that deviant and destructive forces might come from *internal* sources. Jefferson’s *Notes* had suggested that the greatest threats to the new republic were *external* in origin. Composed in the period between Jefferson’s *Notes* and Washington’s “Farewell Address,” the famously dark *Federalist Paper* No. 37 offers instead a prequel to Washington’s anxiety regarding *Americans* who fail—or perhaps *refuse*—to learn, re-learn, or conform to democratic social norms. Composed by James Madison, published serially, under the pseudonym “Publius,” and interspersed with the compositions of John Jay and Alexander Hamilton in New York City papers between October, 1787 and August, 1788, this particular contribution anticipates the themes expressed in the “Farewell Address,” asserting that the dangers to the republic may lie, not only or even primarily in the immigrants feared by Jefferson, but among the citizens of the republic itself. *Federalist Paper* No. 37 asserts that corruption and depravity are not necessarily foreign, alien, or even the product of a few, readily isolated deviants, be they external or internal; instead it suggests that dissension, factionalism, and

4. The prospect of an adult who retains a childlike malleability undermines the very stability of character that education is intended to produce, and echoes the recasting of citizens as “children” or “adolescents” in order to facilitate their development or education, as discussed in the previous chapter. See Brown, *Consent of the Governed*, and Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*.

self-interest are perhaps inherent in mankind's very nature, and thus all but inescapable in political life:

The history of almost all the great councils and consultations held among mankind for reconciling their discordant opinion, assuaging their mutual jealousies and adjusting their respective interests, is a history of factions, contentions, and disappointments, and may be classed among the most dark and degrading pictures which display the infirmities and depravities of the human character. If in a few scattered instances a brighter aspect is presented, they serve only as exceptions to admonish us of the general truth; and by their luster to darken the gloom of the adverse prospect to which they are contrasted.⁵

Political Anxiety and Federalist Fiction

As these examples briefly demonstrate, fears about the potential instability of the American citizen had tremendous currency in the 1790s, at the same moment at which the "American novel" first appears upon the scene; it is thus unsurprising that many of the nation's earliest fictional works draw upon and elaborate that anxiety. Whereas the educated citizen, in the theory and philosophy of the period, is produced through a benevolent act of pedagogical transformation, the gothic novels

5. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (NY: New American Library, 1961) 231. On the eve of the nineteenth-century, Jefferson and Madison found themselves bitterly opposed over the Federalist debates, with Madison expressing the more conservative sentiments favoring a stronger Federal government that could shape and direct the opinions and desires of the average citizen, while Jefferson's anti-Federalist beliefs favored a more direct democratic system with fewer checks between the citizen and the government that represented him. These debates about man's capacity for self-government—or his incapacity—are ubiquitous in the period I explore here, and many of the key figures I study appear on opposite sides of the shifting ground of the debate. Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster are only two of the key figures whose youthful democratic enthusiasms are sorely tested and ultimately undermined by the apparent inability of the American democratic experiment to escape the ugliness of faction and interest, and the conflicts they incur. In literary circles, Charles Brockden Brown was among those who moved to the "right" on such key issues; Jane Tompkins's reading of his 1798 novel *Wieland*, in fact, claims that the gothic tale of a yeoman farmer who commits the murders of his immediate family was intended to convey a direct message to the newly elected "republican" Jefferson to "Hold!" from his more politically expansive policies. See Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs* (NY: OUP, 1985), esp. 40–61.

of the period expand on the dark possibilities suggested by Madison, Jefferson, and Washington. Novels like *Wieland* re-imagine the citizen and his individual/political subjectivity in terms of their obverse, exploring through a kind of “anti-citizen” the reverse side of that transformative energy and its capacity for negative outcomes. Whereas the formal political discourse surrounding education largely focuses on its capacity to manage political and social anxiety, many novels of the period call that process of management into question. They represent duplicitous or immoral citizens; they depict citizenship as something outside the limits of educability, suggesting that the rewards are incommensurate with the process; they represent the voices of those excluded from the process of citizenship. The effect of many of these novels is less to shore up the democratic subject than to insist on reminding us that the “citizen” is a fictional construct, and thus by definition unstable and unable to be fixed or guaranteed in the way the republic appears to demand.

This larger epistemological anxiety is registered in changing attitudes toward education. As Bernard Bailyn suggests, the shift from understanding education as a private and natural phenomenon to considering a topic of self-conscious political concern alters the relationship between the individual or private family and the larger society; what was once experienced as natural and continuous now appears as a sharply discontinuous and highly self-conscious turn toward public life. Bailyn observes that

[t]he border line between them grew sharper; and the passage of the child from family to society lost its ease, its naturalness, and became abrupt, deliberate, and decisive: open to question, concern, and decision. As a consequence of such a translation into the world, the individual acquired an isolation of consciousness which kept him from naked contact and immediate involvement with the social world about him: it heightened his sense of separateness. It shifted the perspective in which he viewed society: he saw it from without rather than from within; from an unfixd position not organically or unalterably secured. (*Education* 25)

Emerging as a site for highly self-conscious political, social, and personal change, “education” functions as a central trope and key occasion of anxiety in the period’s literature. These novels deal with education not merely in its formal and systemic manifestations, but also understood and represented as the larger set of processes involved in learning and socialization, including inference, deduction, or the weighing of evidence. The earliest American novels re-imagine citizenship, psychologically and individually, as well as politically, in terms of experiences that serve explicitly or implicitly to “educate”—and then re-imagine that education as a process fraught with peril, haunted not only by its potential failure to elevate the person into the citizen, but by its active opposite, the mis-transformation of the solid citizen into a figure of immorality, depravity, or vice. Perhaps the prototype of the “anti-citizen” novels of the early nation, Philadelphia author Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland; or, the Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), makes evident in its subtitle the focus of its particular anxieties linking the transformation of the individual subject with the fate of the nation.

This is not to say that the average American necessarily recognized or identified his historical moment as one involving a crisis of subjectivity—but that the period’s obsession with transformation, as well as with the potential for falsity and duplicity inherent in the rapidly changing social, political, and economic spheres, created a moment of historical indeterminacy and anxiety that is registered in a preponderance of fiction about education, or fiction in which education plays a significant role. In depicting the workings of education, these novels “manifest unresolved [...] conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view”—that

is to say, they invoke the characteristics of the gothic.⁶ The novels of this period raise the period's fears about "threats to life, safety, and sanity" in the context of their emphasis on education—its possibilities, its limits, and the uncontrollability of its outcomes and practices (Hogle 3). Understanding the preponderance of educational issues in these novels as manifestations of anxiety about the relationship between the private self and the public domain helps us to understand these novels as attempts to imagine large-scale political change in terms of its immediate, individual, and psychological implications.

Such psychological stresses need not be understood only as pathological or psycho-sexual, as is often the case in Freudian readings of the gothic.⁷ Instead, these novels refer both to the dilemma of the individual subject and to the ways in which, like all Americans of the post-revolutionary period, that subject may be "haunted by a second 'unconscious' of deep-seated social and historical dilemmas, often of many types at once, that become more fearsome the more the characters and readers attempt to cover them up or reconcile them symbolically without resolving them fundamentally" (Hogle 3). Instead of trying to "cover up" the discontinuities, however, *Wieland* rejects the assumption of a perfect correspondence between the public persona and the private citizen; by exploring the baffling private acts of the citizen, the novel makes questions about psychological interiority "public" and

6. Jerrold E. Hogle, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 2.

7. My use of the term "gothic" in this study is admittedly problematic. In identifying the fictional works discussed here as "sensational," I attempt to distinguish my interpretation of them from the body of critical work on the Gothic genre that coheres around the Uncanny; that is, around the (threatened) return of the repressed. At the same time, a novel like *Wieland* or *Ormond* clearly partakes of many of the generic features associated with the gothic: an imperiled heroine, mysterious intruders, difficulties with interpretation and vision, the threat of violence, etc. In general, I have tried to avoid references to the fiction I discuss here as "gothic," except when such avoidance is unnecessarily burdensome.

reveals the interior consequences of political transformation. In other words, the novel explores the limits of the kind of virtuous transparency between internal motive and external representation that Washington so carefully attempted to assert in his "Farewell Address." *Wieland* confounds the desire that animates the Alien and Sedition acts; that is, the need to control the processes of political change. At the same time, the novel's attention to the individual's "private" psychology renders that psychological space available for "public" consideration. *Wieland* asks whether the stability and virtue that education is supposed to instill is possible, or even desirable. An ideology of virtue argues that one can assume morality based on moral conduct, and vice versa. In *Wieland*, Brockden Brown presents identity, education, and transformation as far more complicated than the political rhetoric can account for, and thus supplements more explicitly political responses to the American crisis.

Wieland exaggerates the anxieties prevalent in the period, insisting that the processes of education, their products, and their effects are unstable and less readily managed than even the political documents have dared to suggest. Where "politicians" attempt to resolve or fix the questions they raise, Brockden Brown's fictional treatment of similar themes allows greater insight into the essentially fictional nature of the citizen-subject. In contrast to the hopes of politicians and educators, *Wieland*, demonstrates the likelihood with which formal education, as well as the component mental, moral, and social processes the term encompasses, instead produces chaos and reveals the limits of human predictability. In these ways, the novel reminds us of the inconsistency of education as a mechanism for producing citizens. Furthermore, the novel suggests that the instability of the citizen is the necessary converse to the possibility of producing a citizen, and asserts that

there may be, in fact, no reliable way to produce a reliable citizen. Citizenship in its larger sense, and education's power to construct the citizen—by instilling virtue, transparency, deductive reasoning, self-control—are revealed as fundamentally unstable, and haunted by multiple representations of their failure.

Unlike the period's political discourse, the novel insists upon the instability of nationhood, citizenship, and identity by interrogating the basic components of pedagogical practice on which they are founded. *Wieland* is less a novel "about" education than it is an education (or, perhaps, counter-education) in itself. The tale makes few stable assertions regarding the pedagogical production of national citizens, but instead deconstructs, for its readers as well as for its characters, the sensory, mental, and intellectual components that render man "educable" in the first place. *Wieland* explores the instability of familiar eighteenth-century oppositions between friend and foe, foreigner and native, citizen and alien; it does so, moreover, by calling into question the very grounds of discernment, distinction, assessment, and evaluation by which such determinations are made.

The Trouble at the Wielands'

Wieland has received much critical attention in the past twenty years, and has been viewed by scholars largely as the literary embodiment of Brown's reactionary anti-republican sentiment. Like Brown's other novels (his literary career was prodigious, if brief), *Wieland's* plot is convoluted and more than occasionally contrived, characterized by mysterious occurrences whose "explanations" within the novel frequently generate more confusion—for the readers as well as for the characters—than their initial happening did. Narrated by Clara Wieland, the novel recounts the destruction of her extended family at the hands of her brother, Theodore, after he becomes convinced that a divine voice has demanded their sacrifice. *Wieland's*

murderous attacks on his lovely and devoted wife Catharine, their children, and their hapless houseguest, Louisa Conway—as well as his attempts on Clara’s own life—occur following, although not *necessarily* as a consequence of, the appearance of a peculiar “foreigner,” Carwin, with a mysterious gift for ventriloquism and a penchant for invasive mischief. The novel is pervaded with mysterious acts of ventriloquism, some the products of Carwin’s benign trickery, others more malevolent in intention; the particular voices that prompted the murders are ultimately left unexplained, although Carwin confesses to earlier acts of ventriloquism, as well as to replicating the “divine” voice in order to convince Wieland not to kill Clara.

Wieland, Brown’s first major foray into fiction, interrupted a journalistic career focused on political commentary and criticism; most of his themes and concerns, however—the rights of women, resistance to slavery, concerns over undue foreign influence on national policy, and the workings of society in this new nation—extend across the different genres in which he worked. *Wieland* was published in autumn of 1798; in December of that year, Brown sent a copy of the book to President Thomas Jefferson. In a letter of introduction, Brown acknowledges and attempts to ward off the possible prejudice with which his novel, as a work of “fiction” with political or didactic presumptions, might be met:

I am conscious [...] that this form of composition may be regarded by you with indifference or contempt, that the history of facts in the processes of nature and the operations of government may appear to you the only laudable pursuits’. I need not say that my own opinions are different. I am therefore obliged to hope that an artful display of incidents, the powerful delineation of characters and the train of eloquent and judicious reasoning

which may be combined in a fictitious work, will be regarded by Thomas Jefferson as they are by me.⁸

Along with his journalism and criticism, Brown's fiction clearly served his desire to affect policy and public life. In the letter to Jefferson, Brown restages a key element of the novel: he insists that the reader find a particular moral or lesson in the material, and yet refuses to identify what he expects the reader to learn by reading the tale. He hopes that "Mr. Jefferson [...] will not think the time employed upon [the novel] tediously or uselessly consumed" (163) but, echoing his narrator Clara, Brown refrains from stating the particular value he hopes Jefferson will find in it. Thus Brown replicates Clara's strategy of withholding particulars in order to engage the audience in the novel's mysteries. The specific "Transformation" to which the subtitle speaks is never satisfactorily explained in the novel; is it the transformation of Theodore Wieland from a man "towering in virtue" to into a maniacal murderer, "the *man of sorrows*" (254; 263)?⁹ The transformation of Carwin, a mysterious "foreign" figure, into an inappropriate intimate in the family's life? The transformation of Clara, the narrator, from a naïve optimist into the disillusioned and despairing reporter of her family's destruction? All of these transformations occur in the novel; none is ultimately or convincingly identified by the author or the narrator as the particular site of the tale's moral. These ambiguities are what mark the novel's entry into the debates over the role and limits of "education"—and of the "educated subject" in the Federalist period.

8. Charles Brockden Brown, "Letter to Thomas Jefferson," 15 December 1798. Quoted in David Lee Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America* (Durham: Duke UP, 1952) 163.

9. Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland; Or, the Transformation*, ed. Jay Fliegeman (NY: Penguin, 1991) 254, 263.

The Gothic as National Prototype

Wieland's gothicism makes possible its complex and contradictory approach to significant political questions about the nature and constitution of the political individual. The power of the gothic inheres in its ability to express the ambiguity and indeterminacy forbidden or repressed within the rational political culture: it holds up a dark and murky mirror to the rational world. Emerging in roughly the same period as the United States itself, the gothic novel serves as an oft-discredited or overlooked feminized other to the official narratives of history. The gothic, however, may be simultaneously contradictory to authorized, official or masculine narratives and yet integral to them as it provides a subversive cultural basement where the dark underpinnings of the rational nation are expressed, and in which the silenced voices of the new democratic nation (African slaves, native Americans, women, and others disenfranchised in the official documents) find expression.

A long line of critics has addressed the dialectical relationship between American identity and the Gothic tradition that pervades American literature. Leslie A. Fiedler's foundational work *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960) attributes the preponderance of dark and gothic literary themes to the "special guilts" of the United States, and to its "failed promise" to live up to its own spiritual and secular attempts to be an exemplary city on a hill.¹⁰ Teresa Goddu has noted further that the gothic is not merely a category apart from a more conventional

10. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960; Normal, IL: Illinois State UP for Dalkey Archive, 1997) 143. Fiedler asks, "why has the tale of terror so special an appeal to Americans?" and locates his answer in the lost "dream of innocence" that propelled European expansion but that became a "Faustian nightmare" proving "that evil did not remain with the world that had been left behind" but reemerged in "the slaughter of the Indians... and the abominations of the slave trade" (143). For Fiedler, the lofty utopian goals of America render the disappointments and failures all the more compelling and propel our national fiction: "a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation" (29).

American literary history, but that it functions instead as an integral feature of the larger American narrative, which “depends on a set of gothic conventions for intelligibility.”¹¹ In her reading, the gothic strain in American fiction contradicts a pervasive and romanticized narrative of American exceptionalism, one that would view America ahistorically, as a nation without precedent, freed from the constraints of history and able to create its own trajectory. Goddu argues that “the nation’s narratives—its foundational fictions and self-mythologizations—are created through a process of displacement: their coherence depends on exclusion” of the very crises that reemerge in the Gothic (10). Unlike earlier critics who read the gothic as an “escapist” form, Goddu suggests that the gothic is not merely a register of individual spiritual or psychological “blackness” but provides an essential index of the cultural realities that “haunted” the idealized American narratives; the gothic stages a sort of national return of the repressed. The gothic trope of the family revisits the political metaphor used to impress upon citizens the urgency of their task and recovers the filial guilt that pervades the post-revolutionary era: “the guilt which underlies the gothic and motivates its plots is the guilt of the revolutionary haunted by the (paternal) past which he has been striving to destroy,” Fiedler claims (128).¹²

11. Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America* (NY: Columbia UP, 1997) 53.

12. According to Fiedler, the gothic reflects “an awareness of the spiritual isolation of the individual in a society where all communal systems of value have collapsed or have been turned into meaningless clichés” (131); such spiritual isolation and the collapse or inadequacy of communal systems is clearly a preoccupation that pervades *Wieland* (e.g., the brutal inscrutability of the Wieland men’s religious devotion; from the grandfather’s bizarre evangelism to the father’s spontaneous combustion following his failure to complete some unspecified but divinely ordained task, to Wieland’s own murderous rampage, religion has become private, suspect, and unmoored from a collective experience and hence, from social stability. Similarly, Pleyel’s dogmatic rationalism is equally inadequate and is not shared by the other characters except in Clara’s obsessive and faulty scrutiny and speculation).

Because of their emphasis on issues of personal psychology, as well as their inordinate tendency to represent the psychological costs of the recent revolution, the dissolution of authority, and the potential for deception and disaster, Cathy N. Davidson categorizes a multiplicity of early American novels as intrinsically “gothic”; that is, as providing a “symbolic space where the hierarchies of a traditional society and the excesses of individualism could both be called into question” (219). She claims that the experience of reading the novel replicates the experience of the new citizen, picking his or her way through a territory that is at once familiar and yet new:

the Gothic reader and the Gothic protagonist all along occupy much the same position. Both are mostly in the dark, and the reader, as much as the protagonist, can fear those things that go bump in the night. No overview perspective is provided. On the contrary the text wisely remains determinedly indefinite at precisely those points where clarity could dispel the murky ambiguity on which it turns. (223)

While the gothic novel, however, can generally be said to be in the hands of a creator who purposefully maintains the confusion of his reading subject, the national subject-citizen could be said to live in a gothic nation—one in which the “overview perspective” is not merely intentionally obscured or left out, but is in fact non-existent or, at best, not yet available. The reader in the gothic novel, like the citizen in this gothic republic, found herself alarmingly responsible (literally, obligated through her *response*) for the narrative continuity and the coherence of the “text” she was simultaneously reading *and* writing through her engagement with it:

“Psychologically, the early novel embraced a new relationship between art and audience, writer and reader, a relationship that replaced the authority of the sermon or Bible with the enthusiasms of sentiment, horror, or adventure, all of which relocate authority in the individual response of the reading self” (Davidson 14).

Davidson establishes a parallel between the experiences of the reader and the citizen, both of whom end up participating in a new “genre”—the novel or the national republic—where they found themselves without a clear source of centralized authority.

In particular, Davidson claims that early national fiction mediates between the political realm and its potential consequences for citizens of the new republic by creating a space for imagining those consequences, or for constructing “what if” scenarios:

The early American novel happened at those places in society where issues were unresolved, at the interstices between public rhetoric and private expression. The very formlessness of the new form made it resistant to univocal readings and served as a catalyst to enveloping explications, tentative trials, and forays into alternative possibilities or meaning where readers might not willingly venture on their own. The new novel genre welcomed the participation of its readers [...]. (260)

In fact, in the case of the Gothic novel, the genre might be said to *demand* the reader’s participation by refusing to provide explications or explanations until the end of the novel—if at all.

In the case of *Wieland*, for example, the singularly unsatisfactory explanations provided within Clara’s narrative and by the characters propel the reader along in the search for the kind of discernible meaning and fictional coherence that could provide a less ambiguous “moral” to the Wielands’ tale. As Davidson suggests, “[t]he Gothic exhibited a particular genius [...] for supplying the metaphors with which to explore a transitional culture” like the one depicted in *Wieland* (218). Reconfiguring the national family as a murderous gothic family, *Wieland* emphasizes the provisional nature of life in the new nation. As Davidson notes, the explanations offered within gothic fiction tend to shift “the locus of evil from the supernatural, the

abstract, and the remote to the human, the personal, and the present” (224) and thus relocate the forces of disorder and disaster from the spiritual to the material, physical, human, and social world. This causal dislocation defers closure and keeps the tale ongoing and open: “the clear implication is that disorder and villainy are only more or less temporarily forestalled” (225).

Wieland's message for the national family is that in a time of great upheaval, turmoil, and residual pain from the patricidal act of revolution (significantly, *Wieland's* own father and grandfather have both died by mysterious means), the only option is to become a citizen/reader whose individual authority is the only thing standing between her and chaos. The reader of *Wieland* attempts to recover some sort of provisional meaning and coherence by participating alongside Clara in her painstaking intellectual investigation of the mysterious events that plague her family. Like Clara, the reader struggles to find an explanation, only to find coherence repeatedly challenged and undermined. It is, moreover, Clara's *lack* of success in narrating her tale—the unconvincing elements of her story, her self contradictions, and the blatant inadequacy of many of her conjectures and explanations—that propels the reader into the participatory role that is ultimately revealed as simultaneously essential and yet ineffective. The reader's own investment or participation is, despite its near-certain futility, the only way to make even provisional sense of *Wieland* or, in Brown's equation/configuration, of the nation. Each citizen, *Wieland* suggests, must serve as both reader and author, through whose interpretive acts (those processes falling under the heading of “education”) the fiction of the nation becomes experienced as a reality—albeit a baffling one—by its citizens.

However, the novel's ultimate inscrutability—its resistance to comprehension by the most perceptive reader, and its frustrating insistence on confounding every method of inquiry associated with intellectual process—is finally the most destabilizing aspect of the pedagogy it offers to its readers. The novel insists that our reason, our deduction, our faith, and our senses are all we have to use in interpreting the world; simultaneously, however, it demonstrates that each of these methods is ultimately unreliable and that the conclusions reached by them—and the identity based upon them—are equally uncontrollable. In *Wieland*, the more public and impersonal practices on which progressive notions of education are founded are shown to be simultaneously necessary *and* insufficient; furthermore, the novel argues that even the individual's private interiority and "confession," understood as the most personal emanations of the private self, are unreliable. *Wieland* is terrifying in its assertion that the various techniques of epistemology, belief, and logic are merely shored up, not guaranteed, by our dependence on them, and that the selfhood these practices establish, what we might call a pedagogical identity, is equally fragile.

Like most eighteenth-century fiction, the novel's intentions are explicitly didactic: "Make what use of the tale you shall think proper," Clara tells us early in her tale. "If it be communicated to the world, it will inculcate the duty of avoiding deceit. It will exemplify the force of early impressions, and show, the immeasurable evils that flow from an erroneous or imperfect discipline" (5). The problem, however, is that no such direct inference is possible from the story she tells, or from the way she tells it. At the tale's conclusion, Clara is still imploring us "to moralize on this tale," yet now she encourages us to accept that "the evils of which Carwin and Maxwell were the authors, owed their existence to the errors of the sufferers" (278)

(in contradiction to her own previous assertion that Carwin is “the author of all our calamities” [247])—a conclusion that is all but impossible to support through a careful reading of the events. Clara concludes her tale with a final attempt to impose a retroactive Washington-style lesson regarding “vigilance” upon her tale, and to offer a simple resolution to the tragedy by placing or accepting blame: “If Wieland had framed juster notions of moral duty, and of the divine attributes; or if I had been gifted with ordinary equanimity or foresight, the double-tongued deceiver would have been baffled and repelled” (278). What is perhaps most significant about her interpretive assertions, however, is their inadequacy to the events she herself has reported, and their internal contradictoriness: to accept one interpretation is to discount another, equally plausible one that has already been offered.

My point here is not to discuss Clara’s psychological motivation for seeing herself at the center of events; it is of course she who overhears Carwin’s murderous voices murmuring in her closet; it is her bed in which her sister-in-law Catharine lies horribly murdered; it is her voice Carwin imitates in a compromising conversation that causes Pleyel to despise her. My point is that the novel sets out to generate confusion for the reader in multiple ways, all of which cast doubt not only on the facts of the case or the moral responsibility of the various characters, but, more importantly, on *all* of the processes of discernment, evaluation, assessment, and deduction by which a sound judgment might be reached. The convoluted and confusing nature of the events, Clara’s own distorted, disingenuous, and inaccurate depiction of them, and the lack of any overarching “authority” that could provide a moral or epistemological anchor combine to render not merely the democratic subject but the entire process of autonomous intellectual effort inadequate, even as its consequences are literally life-threatening. The reader shares Clara’s fears, mirrors

her confusion, and, at her mercy for our narrative information, replicates her mistrust of and fascination with Carwin as the potential villain. At the same time, Clara's rampant unreliability—her obsessive speculation, her oblique and disingenuous references to her attraction for both Pleyel and Carwin, her solipsistic obliviousness to Wieland's actions (which she, as our stand-in, reproduces in her readers by choosing what to represent—or not—for us)—create in her readers the desire to “author” our own version of the events, to get around Clara's moralizing and interpreting and to create our own story—a participatory effort that parallels Clara's narrative and that, like hers, is ultimately stymied.

While Clara demonstrates, again and again, her determination to exercise both vigilance and judgment, she nevertheless remains baffled by the evidence before her, “wholly uncertain, whether [Carwin] were an object to be dreaded or adored, and whether his powers had been exerted to evil or to good” (81). Her preoccupation with Carwin is shared by others in the family: “The inscrutableness of his character, and the uncertainty whether his fellowship tended to good or to evil, were seldom absent from our minds. This circumstance powerfully contributed to sadden us” (87). And we, as her readers, replicate her experience of investigation and, ultimately, frustration. The central paradox of *Wieland* is that while Clara attempts to maintain proper vigilance against the figure of the external enemy (Carwin) who invades her family's estate, her fixation with the threat he poses repeatedly obscures from her the “facts” of the situation—that her beloved brother, Wieland, is in fact the murderer whose acts ultimately destroy the family. While the family attempts to protect themselves from Carwin, the “alien” figure whose “misrepresentations,” as Washington would have it, “render Alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection,” the primary threat to them comes ultimately from

within the family itself. As Shirley Samuels observes, “*Wieland* contains a family destroyed from within, though agency is ascribed to outside forces” (“Alien and Infidel” 57). The most troubling implication of the novel’s events “is that they cannot finally be blamed on an alien intrusion; instead, the family-republic, like the Wieland family that serves as its model, is caught in the grip of transformations in which it discovers that the alien is already within” (60).¹³

In Samuels’s reading, *Wieland* asserts the necessity of outside institutions to maintaining the stability of the family; according to her, the novel reveals a fundamentally reciprocal relationship between the external (public) realm and internal (private) spaces that is specifically undermined by their uncanny convergence within the novel: “*Wieland*’s message may finally be that for the family to be a haven from the excesses of radical democracy, deism, and revivalism, it must be inoculated, by way of these social institutions, at once with and against the ‘outside’ world” (63). Instead, *Wieland* threatens the stability of this reciprocal dichotomy by the eerie convergence of the two poles of alien and fraternal, external and internal.

Rather than providing a kind of restorative sanctuary from which its citizens could reemerge to participate in public life, the Wieland estate is the locus of the threat to the family; “home” is revealed as the place where external threats collide

13. Samuels argues that outside institutions—institutions notably lacking or disempowered in *Wieland*, where the characters live outside of the usual structures of social community, education, or religion—may thus be necessary to the stability of the family: “*Wieland*’s message may finally be that for the family to be a haven from the excesses of radical democracy, deism, and revivalism, it must be inoculated, by way of these social institutions, at once with and against the ‘outside’ world” (63). I depart from Samuels’s more conservative reading to suggest instead that *Wieland* demonstrates the *impossibility* of an inoculated haven as the condition of national identity, which thus requires the citizen to construct an identity in the wake of tragedy and in the *absence* of the coherent structures that Samuels claims the novel advocates.

and coalesce with the unacknowledged and unrecognized threats already present there. Having overheard plotters in her closet, and intruders in her home, Clara acknowledges that her refuge has lost its sanctity and is no longer private: “That dwelling, which had hitherto been an inviolate asylum, was now beset with danger to my life. That solitude, formerly so dear to me, could no longer be endured” (68). This passage also marks Clara’s movement from peaceful solitude into a precarious and unendurable isolation. Clara is concerned here with the invasive presence of murderers she believes have concealed themselves in her closet; what she fails to realize throughout the novel is that the true threat comes, in fact, from someone already internal to her most private familial relationships—her brother, Theodore.¹⁴ While Clara’s narrative focuses obsessively on the external forces that destroy her privacy, the larger logic of the novel reminds us that such privacy and protection are already illusory, and the sanctity of the home is equally a convenient fiction. The domestic site of the Wielands’ terrors is particularly unsettling in light of the prevalent image of nation-as-family that connected many of the psychological and

14. Like everything else in the novel, the question of Clara’s sanctuary is complicated. On the one hand, as I will discuss later, Clara’s obsession with Carwin is perhaps what prevents her from noticing that her brother has become strange, and perhaps dangerous. One of the interesting features of the novel is how *absent* Theodore Wieland is from much of the narrative. Despite the novel’s title, Clara’s narrative deals far more extensively with the bizarre triangle of Clara, Henry Pleyel, and Carwin, and their various deceptions, misperceptions, and misrepresentations, than with whatever transformation her brother experiences. The novel further calls into question the whole issue of appropriate intimacy. Here, however, I am alluding to several overlapping and even contradictory aspects of Clara’s private home: first, her independent dwelling replicates the seclusion and privacy of the Wielands’ estate, and thus her isolation may, like theirs, contribute to the ease with which Carwin preys upon them all. Second, Carwin’s incursions into Clara’s life are of a bizarrely intimate nature: he acts out a conversation in which he plays her would-be killer, and casts himself as her purported savior; he enters her private chamber, invades her closet, and even reads her journal while hiding there; and he creates conflict with Pleyel by acting out a love scene between Clara and himself. Finally, as I discuss more fully on the pages that follow, there is something distinctly odd about the way the novel seems almost to substitute Carwin for Wieland in Clara’s affections, so that as he becomes more and more an intimate, Wieland becomes more and more an outsider.

political concerns of the day with “training up the body of the people like a single family.”¹⁵ As I discussed in the preceding chapter, the great hope of the republic was for a naturalized similarity, sympathy, or fellow-feeling among its speakers; that ideal, inalienable connection was frequently conceptualized through the trope of the nation as a family, whose blood relationship was validated by a private act of consent. Fears about familial inadequacy or erroneous parenting (the kind that was used to justify the Revolution as a kind of adolescent rebellion against a tyrannical and unsavory parent country) fed into the demand for the kind of education that could be substituted for inadequate familial relations, or could render such disastrous private relationships less destructive to the public realm: “All government originates in families,” Webster says, “and if neglected there, it will hardly exist in society, but the want of it must be supplied by the rod in school, the penal laws of the state, and the terrors of divine wrath from the pulpit. The government both of families and schools should be absolute.”¹⁶ Here Webster articulates the commonly understood relationship between patriarchal authority and monarchical authority; despite the fact that both forms of authority came under scrutiny in this period, the relationship between the private family and the public state was nevertheless understood to be causal and dialectical, as well as analogous. In addition, the two realms invoked by the term “self-government” (that is, both the management of one’s private impulses and the governing of a nation by its members) stood in a dialectical relationship; one’s ability to manage his personal or domestic affairs was directly relevant to his capacity to function as a responsible citizen, and

15. Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws Vol. I* (1748), trans. Thomas Nugent (NY & London: Hafner, 1949) 37.

16. Noah Webster, “On the Education of Youth in America” (1790), *Essays in Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965) 57–8.

thus to assist in producing the virtuous body politic: "A proper subordination in families would generally supersede the necessity of severity in schools, and a strict discipline in both is the best foundation of good order in a political society," Webster adds (58).

In *Wieland*, Henry Pleyel casts doubt on the attempt "to make the picture of a single family a model from which to sketch the condition of the nation" (34), but that is precisely the approach taken by the novel, and by other literary and political works of the period. Envisioning the nation as a family depicts the political and legal obligations among citizens as blood ties that are divinely ordained and unbreakable. The ubiquity of this allegory inheres in its flexibility and its capacity to subsume contradictory realities in a single powerful metaphor: the familial image invokes the intimacy of blood ties, registers the anxiety with which the nation confronted its own legal and rhetorical inception, and re-imagines and thereby naturalizes the legal concept of consent. The trope operates in both the literary and political registers of public discourse, providing a means by which to examine both their overlapping concerns and the very different ways in which fiction and political rhetoric address those issues. In political discourse, the prevalent Federalist metaphor of the family serves to assimilate, locate and discipline the individual citizen, who has come to be seen as potentially unstable and disruptive in the wake of the radical democracy of the French Revolution.

Certainly, the novel expresses a deep anxiety and pessimism about the ability of the nascent citizen (the novel is set prior to the American Revolution) to "grow up" into the kind of intellectual autonomy that facilitates self-government, both in the realm of the private self and the public citizen. Moreover, it expresses that anxiety through an exploration of the particular modes of thought that were considered

integral to intellectual adulthood, to enact the transformation of the political “child” into the consenting adult. Despite their privileged position, ideal educational and spiritual upbringing, and abundant attempts to decode and interpret the world around them, the Wielands ultimately exemplify the failures of education as self-transformation, casting doubt not only on the possibility of educating the man into the citizen, but also on the habits of mind thought to aid in such an education. As such, *Wieland* responds directly to the educational literature of the period, seizing upon the key mechanism of self-transformation and turning it upon itself.

Pedagogical Impossibilities: (Not) Making Sense in *Wieland*

Critics who have discussed the role of education in the Wielands’ story have tended to focus on the idyllic and enlightened components of Clara and Theodore’s childhood and adult situations: after finding themselves orphaned (in part by a bizarre occasion of spontaneous combustion that overtakes their dour spiritual father, thus articulating the novel’s rejection of his religious fanaticism), Clara and Theodore find themselves in the care of “a maiden aunt [...] whose tenderness made [them] in a short time cease to regret that [they] had lost a mother”(22). In addition to this idealized maternal presence, the two enjoy her “indulgence and unyielding temper” while recognizing that it is “mingled with resolution and stedfastness [sic].” Thus their primary adult figure “seldom deviated into either extreme of rigour or lenity.” The two children are allowed to grow to maturity free “from the corruption and tyranny of colleges and boarding schools,” yet still “instructed in most branches of useful knowledge” while “subject to no unreasonable restraints” (22).

In addition, Clara tells us, their upbringing has been characterized by a healthy Lockean emphasis on self-directed, experiential learning, and on the avoidance of dogma and socially-derived prejudices: “Our education had been

modelled by no religious standard. We were left to the guidance of our own understanding, and the casual impressions which society might make upon us" (24). What religious feeling they do experience is the result of the proper kind of enlightenment sensationalism, an emotional, internal, and "natural" movement toward the divine presence that occurs within the human world, rather than a reliance on received "truths":

It must not be supposed that we were without religion, but with us it was the product of lively feelings, excited by reflection on our own happiness, and by the grandeur of external nature. We sought not a basis for our faith, in the weighing of proofs, and the dissection of creeds. Our devotion was a mixed and causal sentiment, seldom verbally expressed or solicitously sought [...]. (24–5)

Theodore Wieland develops a more introspective bent, albeit one balanced by his skepticism, "pursu[ing] an austerer and more arduous path. He was much conversant with the history of religious opinions, and took pains to ascertain their validity. He deemed it indispensable to examine the ground of his belief, to settle the relation between motives and actions, the criterion of merit, and the kinds and properties of evidence," Clara claims.

In support of this balanced pursuit of knowledge, we are told that Theodore Wieland furnishes the bizarre "temple" his father had erected for his own questionable religious devotions with a harpsichord and a marble bust of Cicero, substituting for his father's obsessively private and secretive religiosity the more "healthy" intellectual, social and aesthetic trappings of the well-rounded eighteenth-century life:

This was the place of resort in the evenings of the summer. Here we sung, and talked, and read, and occasionally banqueted [...] Here the performances of our musical and poetical ancestor were rehearsed. [...] Here a thousand conversations, pregnant with delight and improvement, took

place; and here the social affections were accustomed to expand, and the tear of delicious sympathy to be shed. (26)

In place of the elder Wieland's unhealthy religious fanaticism, the present generation of Wielands engages in the social and emotional vicissitudes of the ideal community—one characterized by its isolation from the world's more egregious encroachments, but fulfilling in its sociality, balanced between spirituality and rationalism, and embracing of the intellectual, aesthetic, and affective capacities of human existence. The Wieland family is aided in this project by the presence of Henry Pleyel, Catharine's brother, who is Theodore's dearest friend, a frequent visitor to the family estate at Mettingen, and a dedicated skeptic who challenges Wieland's tendency toward an excess of faith.

The Wielands certainly appear to have enjoyed an idyllic childhood, and to be the products of an exemplary education. What, then, can possibly be the explanation for the wanton destruction that rains down upon them? The trouble at the Wielands' estate is more fundamental than an indictment of their particular education as recounted by Clara. If, as Gillian Brown suggests, eighteenth-century pedagogy is largely concerned with the manufacture of consent—that is, with producing citizens who are capable of the discernment, mental exertions, and moral judgments essential to a democracy—then the level at which the Wielands' "education" fails them is far more basic, and ultimately far more frightening in its implications, than their merely failing some sort of republican test. One of the most compelling and frustrating aspects of *Wieland* is the overdetermination of its explanatory processes: for every event, multiple theories are proposed, debated, considered, and rejected, without finally establishing anything resembling a clear causality, motivation, or justification. *Wieland* not only casts doubt on the stability of the republican subject,

but also represents the patent impossibility of judgment itself. The quandaries faced by the various members of the Wieland family run the gamut of the practices essential to informed consent; the novel thus suggests not only that we have much to fear from the wrong-headed citizen, but that there is, in fact, no other kind. Read in the context of anti-federalist hysteria, *Wieland* exacerbates the fears of the nation by suggesting that any process by which the republican citizen-subject can be produced is inherently unstable and is, in fact, more likely to produce disaster than success.

Clara herself is a large part of the problem; her own narrative is riddled with references to her unreliability: "I will die [...] when my tale is at an end," Clara assures us (260). But she appears again three years later to write the moralistic epilogue quoted above. Her actions are no less inexplicable to herself; from Carwin's arrival she is unable to account for the mysterious attraction he holds for her: "There was nothing remarkable in [his] appearances," Clara acknowledges, having encountered Carwin passing near her house. "I cannot tell why I gazed upon them, on this occasion, with more than ordinary attention" (57). His image then lingers, bizarrely, after he is out of sight: "If his image remained for any duration in my fancy after his departure, it was because no other object occurred sufficient to expel it" (58). The reader is struck by two contradictory aspects of Clara's narrative here—first, of course, is her fascination with this stranger, who returns and is later revealed to be Carwin.

Equally peculiar, however, is Clara's compulsion to provide explanations for events that should otherwise have remained unremarkable and, most likely, unremarked. In fact, her narrative is permeated with an excess of information (asides, background information, alternative hypotheses and their elaborate dismissal), so much so as to render the narrative as disorienting and "baffling" for

the readers as for the sufferers whose tale is being told. The “moral” of the Wielands’ story lies in its profusion of information and the impossibility of reconstructing those contradictory elements into a single coherent tale. *Wieland* is more extensive and far more pessimistic than a mere critique of the Wielands’ educational history or their (failed) republican vigilance against deceit. Instead, by constructing a tale characterized both by a surfeit of information and by the obvious inadequacy of that information, Brown engages his reader in processes of discernment similar to those that could transform the subject into the citizen, only to lead us to their inevitable failure. The novel enacts for us Clara’s most minute processes of evaluating, assessing, scrutinizing, deducing, and judging; as the limits of her perspicacity provoke us to study the events ourselves, we are again and again confronted with the inadequacy of our efforts.

In *Wieland*, all of the skills and knowledge upon which self-transformation is predicated are confounded. The lack of a single culprit—one duplicitous villain, a particular religious mania, an identifiable failure of vigilance, a disregard for relevant information—suggests that the problem with informed autonomy is larger than any one of these aspects. In the novel, the act of citizenship and the basing of a political structure on human beings who are expected to be legible across their dual identities—simultaneously public and private, corporate and individual—are demonstrably deranged. In *Wieland*, none of the processes of discernment that would allow one to form reasonable and supported opinions and thereby to partake of a larger social interpretations of events is even remotely reliable. In fact, it is precisely the exercise of judgment and the formation of opinion, the fundamental labor of the citizen that could, in Benjamin Rush’s terms “convert men into republican machines” who could then “perform their parts properly in the great

machine of the government of the state” that is negated by the novel’s peculiar and insistent disjunction between cause and effect, motivation and consequence, event and interpretation.¹⁷

First and foremost, the physical senses of the characters are almost completely unreliable and contradictory—not only in the case of the mysterious voices that haunt them, but even in terms of simpler acts of perception. The most compelling mis-evidence of the senses is aural; it occurs in the mysterious voices the characters hear. Early in the novel, Clara overhears what she believes are murderers in her closet and runs from her own house to her brother’s, where she sinks down “in a fit” (66). The episode produces the kind of conflict over its interpretation that characterizes the entire novel: “My friends were disposed to regard this transaction as a dream,” she tells us. Faced with a disjunction between her experiences and any rational explanation for them, Clara “revolved every incident and expression that had occurred. My sense assured me of the truth of them, and yet their abruptness and improbability made me, in my turn, somewhat incredulous” (67).

Where the senses themselves are suspect, the logical conclusions drawn from them are even more convoluted and unreliable. Clara demonstrates, in her earliest encounters with Carwin, an inappropriate and erroneous assumption that his voice and countenance will match, or will be equivalent in their attractiveness. In fact, Carwin’s vocal dexterity and the evocative power of his speech are wildly disproportionate to his undistinguished and even grotesque appearance. Upon first overhearing Carwin (and while unaware whose voice she hears), Clara allows that her “fancy had conjured up a very different image [...] worthy to accompany such

17. Benjamin Rush, “Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic,” *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965) 17.

elocution” and eloquence as she had heard from the stranger, but “this person was, in all visible respects, the reverse of this phantom” (60). In spite of, or perhaps because of, this disjunction between Carwin’s vocal gifts and his appearance (“His cheeks were pallid and lank, his eyes sunken, his forehead overshadowed by coarse straggling hairs, his teeth large and irregular, though sound and brilliantly white, and his chin discoloured by a tetter,” she notes [60–1]), Clara becomes preoccupied with his image: “This face, seen for a moment, continued for hours to occupy my fancy, to the exclusion of almost every other image [...] I could not resist the inclination of forming a sketch upon paper of this memorable visage” (61).

While Clara recognizes the oddness of her preoccupation, and is at pains to explain it, her explanations are insufficient and ring false: “Half the night passed away in wakefulness and in contemplation of this picture. So flexible, and yet so stubborn, is the human mind. So obedient to impulses the most transient and brief, and yet so unalterably observant of the direction which is given to it” (61). Clara’s justification, such as it is, is striking in its denial of agency, and in her inability to direct her attention, to resist her impulses and inclinations, or to identify her own behavior, except by attempting to rule out possibilities and, in so doing, raising their specters: “Perhaps you will suspect that such were the first inroads of a passion incident to every female heart, and which frequently gains a footing by means even more slight, and more improbable than these. I shall not controvert the reasonableness of the suspicion, but leave you at liberty to draw, from my narrative, what conclusions you please” (62). Were it not for Clara’s own suggestion, the reader would hardly be likely to attribute her fascination with the somewhat grotesque Carwin to the first stirrings of passion, and by invoking the possibility, Clara does everything but leave her reader “at liberty.” At the same time, Clara’s predicament

establishes the limits of reason; despite being aware that reason demands a more effective explanation, Clara can say only that her mind was disobedient to her will.

Theodore Wieland's is, of course, the most tragic case of sensory misperception; early on he is confused by what he believes to be his wife's voice, urging him away from the temple retreat. Clara's first interpretation is to question the validity of the senses: "The will is the tool of the understanding, which must fashion its conclusions on the notices of sense," she explains, logically enough (40). However, "If the senses be depraved, it is impossible to calculate the evils that may flow from the consequent deductions of the understanding" (39). When she brings up the matter with Wieland, however, she is told that "There is no determinate way in which the subject can be viewed. Here is an effect, but the cause is utterly unscrutable. To suppose a deception will not do," Wieland tells her (40-41). In contrast to Clara's skepticism, Wieland suggests a mysterious and obscure force that "Time may convert [...] to certainty" (41). Whereas Clara asserts the possibility of a physiological breakdown in his faculties of discernment, her brother insists on cosmic mystery that is impenetrable to human effort.

In *Wieland*, appearances defy expectations, in part because the evidence of the senses is contradictory. The voices that occur throughout the novel subvert accepted models of authority and interpretive stability. Carwin's gift confounds any possible consistency between different modes of sensory evidence, a stability that Pleyel nevertheless attempts to maintain in the face of contradiction. Pleyel, the figure who most clearly subscribes to a kind of Lockean empiricism, confronts the failed evidence of his own senses: "Which of my senses was the prey of a fatal illusion?" (98), he laments. What Pleyel sees and what he hears are mutually exclusive, forcing him to choose what he will believe—a choice that has important allegorical

implications for a nation in which citizens are being asked to invest in a union that is at the time intangible. And, significantly, Pleyel's deductions, like those of Clara and perhaps Wieland himself, are wrong.

After "hearing" Clara engaged in illicit conversation with Carwin (a conversation that Carwin later admits to falsifying specifically to mislead him), Pleyel asserts the primary role sensory evidence plays in his conclusions: "That my eyes, that my ears, should bear witness to thy fall! By no other way could detestible conviction be imparted" (118), he says, suggesting that his two senses are yet working in tandem to provide evidence he can correctly interpret. As if to foreground the sensory instability of the Wielands' world, later events are reported in terms of a single sense: recounting Carwin's staged seduction scene to Clara later in the novel, Pleyel recasts his confusion about Clara's conduct as having been produced by one sense *in the absence* of the other: "My sight was of no use to me [...] Hearing was the only avenue to information, which circumstances allowed to be open" (154). But, of course, the "only avenue to information" he can rely on is the one that Carwin's "counterfeit" voices have rendered most vulnerable to manipulation and distortion.¹⁸

Pleyel's logical, rational assessment of this "evidence" is that his earlier impressions of Clara are false when measured against the "proof" of her voice. Clara's rebuttal posits the consistency of character against the consistency of voice, arguing that one should take precedence over the other. She chastises Pleyel, claiming that the continuity of her character should outweigh the evidence of his senses: "Voices saluted your ear, in which you imagine yourself to have recognized

18. In identifying Carwin's various voices as "counterfeit" I am drawing on the characterization of Michael Gilmore in "Charles Brockden Brown" in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, Volume 1: 1590–1820 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994); see especially 645–48.

mine, and that of a detected villain. The sentiments expressed were not allowed to outweigh the casual or concerted resemblance of voice[....] The nature of these sentiments did not enable you to detect the cheat, did not suggest to you the possibility that my voice had been counterfeited by another” (134). Here Clara asserts the Lockean position on identity, as existing in “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places” (*HU* 448); she further asserts that Pleyel’s knowledge of her essential character should have outweighed the evidence of his senses. This contradiction creates a kind of epistemological no-win situation.

Pleyel’s error is his foolishly consistent dedication to Enlightenment, Lockean sensationalism; in this, he opposes—or perhaps complements—Wieland’s own resolutely Calvinist beliefs. Of their alternative systems of interpretation, Clara says, “Where [Wieland] discovered only confirmation of his faith, the other could find nothing but reasons for doubt. [...] Pleyel was the champion of intellectual liberty, and rejected all guidance but that of his own reason” (28). Both of these rigid systems, however, are equally confuted by the events of the novel, and each is revealed to be inadequate, undermining the promise and premise of education—to produce discerning adults whose acts of judgment produce effective democratic consent. In Pleyel’s case, his dependence upon legalistic certainty and the logical argument (he figures himself as a “witness” and refers to “proofs” provided by his observations) is flawed because not only is his interpretation faulty, but it is also based on inaccurate sensory input. In the course of her narrative, Clara herself variously adopts the positions espoused by Pleyel and by her brother in her own search for explanations, yet both models prove inadequate to the mysteries she must confront: “I revolved every incident and expression that had occurred. My senses

assured me of the truth of them, and yet their abruptness and improbability made me, in my turn, somewhat incredulous" (67). Were *Wieland* merely a critique of various epistemological systems, the "evidence" would no doubt be depicted as experientially accurate; instead, however, Brown chooses to render the senses themselves subject to misperception, and thereby undermines the evidence as well as its interpretation.

As Clara herself suggests, sensory evidence is the basis of all deductive, inductive, or evaluative thinking: "If the senses be depraved," she notes, "it is impossible to calculate the evils that may flow from the consequent deductions of the understanding" (39). While Pleyel may not himself be depraved, Carwin's vocal mimicry temporarily "depraves" his senses, unmooring them from reality and undermining their viability. But ultimately, Clara's attempts to divine a specific supernatural cause for the family's dissolution feel as futile as Pleyel's insistence that the evils they encounter are solely human in instigation: "There are no devils but those which are begotten upon selfishness, and reared by cunning," he claims (150). Brown is careful to contradict Pleyel's version; Carwin may be manipulative and deceitful, but his half-baked confession does little to make the potential enormity of his misdeeds commensurate with the reductive explanation Pleyel offers here.

Elsewhere, Clara acknowledges how inadequately a rational explanation fits these particular experiences: "Carwin's mode of explaining" was "such, perhaps, as would commend itself as most plausible to the most sagacious minds, but it was insufficient to impart conviction to us" (87). Here she indicts not only Carwin's truthfulness (although the characters choose to believe him later in the novel) but also the reliability of empirically-based logic in general. As he makes the family's

acquaintance, Carwin attempts to share with them tales of similar mysterious happenings elsewhere in the world, but Clara suggests that these examples are insufficient to convince the Wielands that their situation is not unique: while “Mysterious voices had always a share in producing the catastrophe, [...] they were always to be explained on some known principles. [...] I could not but remark that his narratives, however complex or marvellous, contained no instance sufficiently parallel to those that had befallen ourselves, and in which the solution was applicable to our own case” (85).

“The Author of All Our Calamities”

In addition to the disparities of causation, the novel raises recurrent questions about the stability of human identity, the continuity of individual psychology, and the transparency between motive and action that virtue demands. Carwin himself is the most obvious—but by no means the only—character whose actions and description are plagued by inconsistency and subject to suspicion. Carwin is an Englishman who has previously masqueraded as a Spaniard: “his garb, aspect, and deportment, were wholly Spanish. A residence of three years in the country, indefatigable attention to the language, and a studious conformity with the customs of the people, had made him indistinguishable from a native, when he chose to assume that character” (77). In his foreign-ness, Carwin appears likely to be one of the alien influences a good citizen should keep watch over, and Clara does.

If *Wieland* were solely political allegory, one would expect Carwin to be expelled from the family estate. With his divisive efforts thwarted, his expulsion could thereby (re)produce the familial unity and isolated tranquillity of the Wieland estate, marking his exclusion as an act of abjection in which the bourgeois American

subjects are constituted by their rejection of the unspeakable outsider. The process of *abjection*

is as thoroughly social and cultural as it is personal. It encourages middle-class people in the west, as we see in many of the lead characters in Gothic fictions, to deal with the tangled contradictions fundamental to their existence by throwing them off onto ghostly or monstrous counterparts that then seem 'uncanny' in their unfamiliarity while also conveying overtones of the archaic and the alien in their grotesque mixture of elements viewed as incompatible by established standards of normality. (Hogle 7)

In such a reading, Carwin would serve as the dark counterpart whose expulsion integrates and affirms the national/familial bond. Yet Carwin's "uncanniness" inheres less in his unfamiliarity or alien-ness than in his hyper-familiarity and his transgression of the family's privacy. In fact, the more vehemently Clara insists that Carwin is the "villain" of the story, the more the events seem to resist such a simplistic moral, and remind us instead that eliminating Carwin will not protect the family. Instead, Carwin's ventriloquism ultimately saves Clara from her brother's final murderous rampage, since Wieland himself apparently can't distinguish between the "Divine" voices in his head and those Carwin produces in the novel. Despite Clara's determined efforts to represent Carwin as the "other" to her own and her family's identities, he eludes her narrative control.

By locating Carwin as the object of Clara's fixation, the novel suggests that Carwin's dangerous attraction for her is what must be repressed in order to re-establish Clara's identity within the family; as Jerrold Hogle notes, the figure of the Other "can also be employed [...] for configuring quite familiar and basic social contradictions engulfing middle-class individuals who must nevertheless define themselves in relation to these anomalies, often creating such or similarly *othered*

beings to incarnate such mixed and irresolvable foundations of being” (6). At the same time, the novel not only refuses to allow Carwin’s excision, but positively *insists* upon his centrality to Clara’s story, and not merely as its villain. In her narrative, Clara tries to tell a gothic story of abjection, in which “the author of this unheard-of devastation” is expelled and her beloved brother is redeemed; however the novel suggests that the two cannot be so easily disentangled. This is suggested, in large part, by the peculiar coalescence that occurs between Carwin and Wieland, the two potential “villains” of the tale. Even as Clara asserts her brother’s innocence and Carwin’s “devilish” nature (246), she is undermined and contradicted by her own narrative.

“The Prey of a Fatal Illusion”

Clara’s perverse attraction to Carwin contributes to one of the novel’s strangest features: the increasing confusion—in Clara’s narrative as well as in the reader’s mind—between Wieland, the beloved fraternal figure, and Carwin. The confusion operates through a series of misrecognitions—either the failure to recognize the familiar, or the misrecognition of the unfamiliar as the familiar. Misrecognition is a fundamental component of the Freudian uncanny, and uncanniness can be invoked by either mechanism—the failure to recognize or the act of misrecognition. In *Wieland*, however, the misidentification is not *repressed* or suppressed; instead, it is central to the novel’s thematics. The family’s experience is characterized by acts of misperception so frequent as to defy coincidence; instead, Brockden Brown insists that mistakes and misidentification are the rule and not the exceptions to the experience of Americans. The many mistakes the characters make suggest the significance of forces *other than* logic and reason in determining one’s actions. Furthermore, they represent the American citizen as the prey of his impulses and

delusions, controlled by his preconceptions and wishes, rather than as the politically astute and rational interpreter upon whom a solid national foundation could be built.

Clara's initial encounters with Carwin generate a sequence of misrecognitions that result from the disjunction between his vocal and visual manifestations. She sees him passing by her house "One sunny afternoon" and her narrative is immediately disrupted by her somewhat disingenuous report on the encounter: "There was nothing remarkable in these appearances'. I cannot tell why I gazed upon them, on this occasion, with more than ordinary attention, unless it were that such figures were seldom seen by me" (57). Clara is at pains to convey a retroactive innocence on her part, even as she has introduced this episode with a reminder that she must, in discussing Carwin, adopt an artificially neutral stance: she must "limit her view to those harmless appearances which attended thy entrance on the stage" and to "tear" herself "from contemplation of the evils of which it is but too certain that thou wast the author" (57). Clara's hyperbolic assertion of blame draws attention less to Carwin's actions than to her own rhetorical inconsistencies. Describing Carwin's "authorship" in the language of performance ("appearances," "entrance on the stage") Clara attempts to expose his duplicity and artificiality; but her attempt to establish the proximity between Carwin's authority and his performance remind the reader the artificiality and fictionality of Clara's own narrative "performance," and its inadequacy.

Equally unsettling is the novel's transposition of the figures of Carwin and Wieland in Clara's mind and thus in the reader's experience, as well. As the novel progresses, Carwin is increasingly represented as a part of the intimate family circle, whereas Theodore Wieland is displaced from Clara's affection, from the

novel's attention, and thus from the reader's sympathy. Already fascinated by the unsightly but mesmerizing stranger who has appeared amongst them, Clara withdraws to sketch herself an image of him, and to stare at it—preferring to spend the evening in contemplation of the sketch rather than meeting with her brother as she had planned: “I had purposed to spend the evening with my brother, but I could not resist the inclination of forming a sketch upon paper of this memorable visage” (61). Clara's exaggeratedly understated and disingenuous account of her actions further suggests the oddity of her interest, and of the process by which Carwin comes to be inappropriately intimate to a family setting to which he should, by rights, remain external: “I can account for my devotion to this image [of Carwin] no otherwise, than by supposing its properties were rare and prodigious, Perhaps you will suspect that such were the inroads of a passion incident to every female heart, which frequently gains a footing by means even more slight, and more improbable than these. I shall not controvert the reasonableness of your suspicions, but leave you at liberty to draw, from my narrative, what conclusions you please” (62).

Clara's ambivalence and her somewhat obsessive affections are clearly articulated throughout the novel; she and Wieland share “a passion more than fraternal” (211) while her convoluted relationship with Pleyel creates one of Carwin's greatest opportunities for mischief. Yet the novel increasingly substitutes Carwin for Wieland and for Pleyel as the object of Clara's fascination. We share Pleyel's sense that Clara's interest in Carwin is unnatural and disturbing, perhaps the product of “a sensibility somewhat too vivid” (141).

Perhaps the most significant instance of misrecognition or confusion in the book concerns Clara's odd dream, which associates her brother with the threats on her life, but which she fails—or even refuses—to heed, because it contradicts what

she believes she *knows* to be true. Occurring after Carwin has become a marginal member of the family group, the dream demonstrates the lengths to which Clara will go to preserve her superficial and forced distinctions between Wieland and Carwin, even as the two figures begin to oscillate and stand in for each other in ways that will become ever more significant later in the novel, but which contradict absolutely the “moral” Clara is trying to impose upon her readers. In the dream, Clara tells us,

I at length imagined myself walking, in the evening twilight, to my brother’s habitation. A pit, methought, had been dug in the path I had taken, of which I was not aware. As I carelessly pursued my walk, I thought I saw my brother, standing at some distance before me, beckoning and calling me to make haste. He stood on the opposite edge of the gulph. I mended my pace, and one step more would have plunged me into this abyss, had not some one from behind caught suddenly my arm, and exclaimed, in a voice of eagerness and terror, ‘Hold! hold!’ (71–72)

The dream provides a microcosm of the “facts” of the novel; it is, in fact, Wieland who is the actual agent (if not, of course, decisively the moral center) of destruction in the novel, the one who has killed his family and attempts to kill his sister. And as the penultimate scene reveals, Carwin’s cries of “Hold! hold!” will ultimately prove Clara’s salvation, in that they arrest the murderous ambitions of her brother, escaped from jail to complete his divine mission. Yet Clara refuses to examine the significance of her dream, continuing to misdirect her energies toward attributing all blame to Carwin, displacing the guilt, as it were, onto the alien. At the same time, Carwin is increasingly internal as he moves among the domestic spaces of Clara’s own home, meddling intrusively in her relationship with Pleyel.

Even after the events of the murders have been made clear to her, Clara clings to her misperceptions and the conclusions she has drawn from them, refusing to see what her own dream might have revealed to her—her brother’s agency in the terrible events: “I remembered the gulf to which my brother’s invitation had

conducted me; I remembered that, when on the brink of danger, the author of my peril was depicted by my fears in his form: Thus realized, were the creatures of prophetic sleep, and of wakeful terror!" (217). Despite her remembrance, however, Clara insists erroneously upon Carwin's being integral to the events: "*These images were unavoidably connected with Carwin*. In this paroxysm of distress, my attention fastened on him as the grand deceiver; the author of this black conspiracy; the intelligence that governed in this storm" (217 my emphasis). Clara's obsession renders her incapable of reading the novel's events clearly; just as she refuses to recognize (or is incapable of recognizing) the murderer in the person of her brother, she fails to discern the actual victim she has encountered in her own bed—her sister-in-law, Catherine. Clara misreads the evidence of her sister-in-law's murdered body as primarily an attempt on her own life, a confusion that is replicated for the reader by Clara's failure to name the victim she finds in her own bed: "Some inscrutable chance had led *her* hither before me, and the merciless fangs of which I was designed to be prey, had mistaken their victim, and had fixed themselves in *her* heart" (171).

As Clara focuses obsessively on Carwin's "guilt," Wieland himself is overlooked and becomes harder and harder to recognize as a benevolent brother. The novel virtually reverses their positions within the family: Carwin, the outsider, is made central to the events of the novel, while Wieland, the "fraternal" figure central to the national trope, is increasingly excluded and described as external, strange, foreign.¹⁹

19. Carwin's personal history is mysterious and somewhat contradictory, and his identity slippery. He is clearly introduced as the external or "alien" figure in contrast to the intimate family group. Pleyel had supposedly encountered Carwin in Europe, where "proved to be English" although "His garb, aspect, and deportment were wholly Spanish" and "indistinguishable from a native, when he chose to assume that character [...] He had [...] adopted a Spanish name instead of his own, which was CARWIN" (77). In a telling phrase that echoes the novel's baffling subtitle, Carwin is said to be "invariably silent" "On topics of

Carwin's invasion, in other words, displaces of Wieland, the figure who, in Washington's familial formulation of the nation, should be integral to their well-being. Wieland's "transformation" renders him increasingly unrecognizable to his loving sister and to the reader. As Clara notes, she senses early on that Wieland has some association with tragedy; yet she refuses to acknowledge her intuition: "In my dream, he that tempted me to my destruction, was my brother [...] What monstrous conception is this? My brother!" (99). Faced with a dream that actually corresponds to what will be revealed as fact, Clara gives up on any sort of rational universe: "Ideas exist in our minds that can be accounted for by no established laws," she says (100). She thus casts doubt on the possibility of clear and logical judgment based upon a rational relationship between what is observed, experienced, and thought.

As the events progress, Wieland becomes harder and harder to recognize: "I recognized my brother. It was the same Wieland whom I had ever seen. Yet his features were pervaded by a new expression" (173). Where earlier, Carwin had been the ambiguous figure whose motives and intentions were inscrutable, as the novel progresses, Wieland's motivations are presented as the more opaque, contradicting the equivalence between "fraternity," transparency, and obligation that the political

religion and his own history, prior to his *transformation* into a Spaniard" (78 my emphasis). The ambiguity of Carwin's origins, his secrecy, and the disturbing completeness of his "transformation" at first seem to mark Carwin as a prototypical deceptive, manipulative foreigner against whom the Alien and Sedition Acts, as well as Washington's cautionary Address, are arrayed. Carwin moves freely around the national/familial space of the Wieland estate, sowing dissension and spreading dissent in direct contradiction of the political framework established to prevent such incursions. However, Carwin himself, as well as his mysterious biloquism, are later significantly and explicitly revealed to be American. In the fragmentary *Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, a prequel to *Wieland* first published serially in *The Literary Magazine*, 1803-05, Carwin claims to be "the second son of a farmer, whose place of residence was a western district of Pennsylvania" (*Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, ed. Jay Fliegelman [New York: Penguin, 1991] 281). He discovers his extraordinary powers at age 14, "some miles distant from [his] father's mansion" in "a narrow pass" where he imitates the distinctively American "shrill tones of a Mohock savage" (284).

rhetoric of the period insists upon. Instead of Carwin, it is ultimately Wieland whom Clara should fear, yet she resists this difficult truth because it violates her expectations: “Had I been a stranger to his blood [...] my safety had not been endangered [...]. I live not in a community of savages; yet [...] my life is marked for a prey to inhuman violence; I am in perpetual danger of perishing; of perishing under the grasp of a brother” (216–17). The final step in this reversal occurs when Wieland, in the grip of his delusion and recently escaped from jail, comes after Clara. In her rendition of the events; Carwin is her ally and support; her brother is “[t]he stranger” who “quickly entered the room” while Clara and Carwin are allied in their simultaneous reactions and their shared role as his audience: “My eyes and the eyes of Carwin were, at the same moment, darted upon him” (247). In this passage, Clara appears to have thrown her lot in with Carwin, who then uses his ventriloquism to interrupt Wieland’s murderous frenzy.

Yet Clara remains convinced that Carwin is somehow responsible for events, and clings to this certainty even when it appears logically and rationally unsustainable. Her insistence on Carwin’s guilt becomes obsessive, and reveals her to be just another flawed link in a chain of reasoning that is, we can only hope, stronger in its aggregate than its individual links. Clara’s obdurate condemnation of Carwin as the sole agent—even when her uncle confronts her first with Wieland’s agency and recounts a story of similar “summons” which led to her grandfather’s death (203–04) demonstrates her limits as our interpreter as the instability of her various conclusions undermine her narrative credibility.

As her readers, we suffer from Clara’s narrative excess and its insufficiency. Instead of the political moral we expect, we are left with a series of inadequate explanations: “All is wildering conjecture,” Clara says; “I cannot forget Carwin. I

cannot banish the setter of there [sic] snares” (202). Yet she later acknowledges that she “had no grounds on which to build a disbelief” (205) and asks herself, “Was I not likewise transformed from rational and human into a creature of nameless and fearful attributes? Was I not transported to the brink of the same abyss?” (204–05). Her invocation of the novel’s subtitle suggests that the transformation on which the novel is centered is one from a rational epistemological certainty to the terrifying world of ontological indeterminacy: the “abyss” to which this uncertainty conducts her. Clara continues to conflate Wieland and Carwin, brother and stranger, kin and enemy. Even when pondering her prophetic dream for a second time in the narrative, Clara refuses to believe that “My brother! [...] The man of gentle virtues and invincible benignity!” (198) could be a threat to her:

[...] I remembered the gulf to which my brother’s invitation had conducted me; I remembered that, when on the brink of danger, the author of my peril was depicted by my fears in his form: Thus realized, were the creatures of prophetic sleep, and of wakeful terror! *These images were unavoidably connected with Carwin.* In this paroxysm of distress, my attention fastened on him as the grand deceiver; the author of this black conspiracy; the intelligence that governed in this storm. (217 my emphasis)

Clara’s failure to distinguish between Carwin and Wieland (in terms of the threat each poses to her) and the novel’s persistent ambiguity regarding the origin of the voices Wieland hears suggest that *Wieland* is much more than a cautionary tale about the foreign, the abject, and the threat it poses to the American community. Instead, what the Wielands find in attempting to expel Carwin is an internal threat, Theodore Wieland, who is all the more deadly for being both familiar and integral to their community. The novel thwarts the process of abjection that could expel Carwin and realign the community; instead, it insists upon revealing the provisional nature of any act of interpretation, judgment, or evaluation. By offering multiple

explanations for the strange events, and yet refusing to offer a *satisfactory* form of closure that would verify any one perspective, view, or approach, Brockden Brown's novel reminds us that what is at stake in the novel and in the nation is not merely "truth," but "the known principles of human nature" (3). The novel finally insists that its readers confront their precarious position with respect to epistemological certainty. The "transformation" that the American citizen must undergo, his "American tale," according to the novel's subtitle, is one that will inevitably and repeatedly remind him of the inadequacy of interpretation, and the fictionality of truth. *Wieland* reminds us that the American story is always and already *fictional*, but that its stakes are no less important for their insubstantiality.

In claiming national history as fictional, *Wieland* undermines the kinds of distinctions and definition that education was expected to foster. The novel functions as a kind of gothic classroom, in which the lesson is political fragility: "The reason that Gothic others or spaces can abject myriad cultural and psychological contradictions, and thereby confront us with those anomalies in disguise, is because those spectral characters, images, and setting harbor the hidden reality that oppositions of all kinds cannot maintain their separations, that each 'lesser term' is contained in its counterpart and that difference really arises by standing against *and* relating to interdependency" (Hogle 11). The "lesson" of *Wieland* is ultimately a repudiation of the capacity for human logic, reasoning, or sensation to produce the kind of absolute certainty that Washingtonian vigilance, with its black and white distinctions, requires. What happens to the *Wieland* family suggests that vigilance is impossible—not merely because of the duplicitous abilities of the enemy, but because of the inevitable distortions inherent in our own senses, preconceptions, and emotions. What we must fear, the novel argues, are not the inroads of those who

wish us ill, but our own inability to see past our self-interest and assumptions. Through Clara, we see how inadequate an instrument human reason is, and how puny a foundation it forms for national stability.

The novel attempts to keep alive a fluid and permeable national self. By refusing to name the “enemy,” to definitively label his motives, or to accept one of Clara’s conclusions at the expense of other possibilities, *Wieland* refuses to allow the process of national subjectivity to harden into something of permanence, of “reality.” The novel’s chief goal, and its major frustration, is its imperative demand that we recognize the nation as merely another fiction in a world where certainty is unavailable through human or divine sources. As the nation’s political existence becomes ever more fully realized, what it means to be “American” will become more and more “naturalized,” its fictional status rendered increasingly invisible to its subjects. It is this act of naturalization or unconscious psychological identification that *Wieland* so powerfully disrupts. It does so by demonstrating the inadequacy of those functions generally associated with education. If the national subject can be produced through educational intervention, the novel suggests, he will be himself inevitably a fiction, one no more “real” than any other act of the imagination.

Chapter 3

“Effeminacy and ‘Tinsel Glitter’”: Surveillance, “Hypervisibility,” and the Federalist Woman

Habits and *Habitus*: Producing the Female Citizen

The preceding chapters of this study have explored the links between citizenship and pedagogy in both their political and literary manifestations. They assert the centrality of what might be called a pedagogical approach to citizenship in the early years of the American republic, and demonstrate how the fluidity inherent in conceptualizing the citizen as a pedagogically malleable entity is depicted in early gothic novels like *Wieland*. The previous chapters deal with beliefs and practices that are recognizably “educational” and whose origins can be traced relatively directly to the political concerns. The next section of my study takes a tangential approach to the topic of education. In this chapter, I turn from discussing the representative (white, male) citizen in order to pay particular attention to the role of “seduction fiction” and its twinned pedagogical and political function for women in the early years of the nation. It is perhaps misleading to identify “education” as the theme of the novels I discuss in this chapter, since the aspects of these tales in which I am most interested deal with what we generally consider the realm of personal development rather than with recognizably academic subjects. My contention, however, is that the definition of late eighteenth-century American women’s education, especially as it is thematized in the sensationalist stories of seduction that I attend to in this chapter, is less significant in terms of its strictly academic or

skill- and knowledge-instilling components and more important in terms of a larger project of producing and refining American (female) subjectivity. As in the preceding chapters, this study concerns itself with education as the term encompasses the practices of national subjectivity and helps to construct and instruct the individual in what it means to be a citizen of the new nation.

As in the previous chapters, I depart somewhat from reading the “gothic,” sensational, and violent elements of these tales as marking sites of repression. Instead, I hope to demonstrate that the violence around which these novels develop their pedagogical models is anything but concealed, hidden, or repressed. In fact, the primary political value of these texts might be said to inhere in their capacity to extend the contradictions and injustices of female education to their exaggerated yet apparently *natural* extremes. By representing the means by which women were “taught” their exclusion from full citizenship, the novels insist upon the violence of that exclusion. On the one hand, the novels represent—and to some extent, reproduce—the social conditioning by which women were increasingly, and ever more “inevitably” erased from public life. At the same time, they register the outrage—the violence—of that erasure.

While the novels, essays, and tracts of the early republic make use of a set of pedagogical terms somewhat interchangeably, perhaps the most relevant term of comparison to the scope of “education” represented in these novels is educational sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus”—the accommodations produced in the individual by his encounter with institutional, historical, and social forces; what Bourdieu and Passeron have called “the generative, unifying principle of conducts and opinions which is also their explanatory principle” because it naturalizes the conditions under which those conducts and opinions are inculcated (161). They refer

to the work of pedagogy as “a process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce a durable training, i.e. a *habitus*, the product of internalization of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself” (31). Thus defined, *habitus* reflects not merely the absorption of discrete lessons, but an internalization of the larger principles, “schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action” upon which the pedagogical activity is based (35), and which the agent then (re)enacts in the world. In other words, *habitus* refers to the daily practices by which human agents replicate dominant social structures, while experiencing their modes of replication as natural and inevitable. As such, *habitus* unites individual agency and the larger social and cultural structures, transforming them into an indissoluble subjectivity that an eighteenth-century political theorist might comfortably recognize as “virtú”—that eighteenth-century ideal union of personal morality and civic responsibility.

In using the anachronistic term *habitus* to describe eighteenth-century political and pedagogical praxis, I am following the lead of Richard A. Barney, who observes that eighteenth-century educators themselves saw their domain as extending far beyond practical skills and literacy: “the concept of education sponsored by both male and female early modern educationalists extends far beyond mere institutional technique, investing its ultimate operation in the daily life experience of consciousness” (13). Barney situates the production of the *habitus* in the development of what he calls an “improvisational subjectivity” which, in fiction and in daily life, mediates between “the contending values of individual autonomy and social discipline” (13), “reconcil[es...] individual rights and political responsibility” and “harness[es...] personal ability (*virtú*) to public citizenship” (13–4).

In this section of my study, I explore the ways in which women's fiction from the Federalist Era, like women's education more generally, negotiates the relationship between the private, interior self and the socially and politically visible expression of that selfhood. Seduction novels—a fluid category that includes novels primarily by, for, and about women—of this period, no less than the formal practices of education, attempt to define the individual according to a model of identity that guarantees a woman's public identity as the perfect correlative of her private self, thus limiting the possibilities for misrepresentation or deception. In the inevitable conflicts between individual liberty and republican duty, the broadly defined elements of a woman's "education" work to produce a becoming self-abnegation and to reshape her private desires into those more easily recognizable as socially appropriate and beneficial to the populace; in this, they function in the arena of *habitus*, "the site of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality" (205).

Bourdieu's *habitus* is the means by which the individual is inculcated into social, public systems and institutions; the term further incorporates the individual's relationship to history, in both its characteristic continuity and its unconsciousness: "The habitus—embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product."¹ It is a "present past,"

a product of history [that] produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought, and action, tend to

1. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1990) 56. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *LP*.

guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. (*LP* 54)

In defining *habitus* as the intersection between the individual and society, and by rendering it as the ongoing yet *forgotten* presence of the past, Bourdieu situates his socio-pedagogical category of analysis squarely atop the terrain delimited by psychoanalytic theorists as repression. Bourdieu’s sociological formation can be understood as providing an alternative description of two key concepts from psychoanalysis, suggesting an intersection between the sociological and psychological that is perhaps as fluid as *habitus* itself, and pointing us toward the deeper connection that ties education to horror. Bourdieu’s definition of learning as a “present past” that is “internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history” recalls descriptions of the Lacanian mirror stage by which the self’s fragility and contingency is repressed, and recalls to us that Freud famously articulates the Uncanny, the realm of horror, as precisely the return of what has been repressed. Bourdieu’s *habitus* rearticulates sociologically the repressed bases of individual identity what Wald calls “what the self is and whence it derives” (7). *Habitus*, which functions through the internalization and forgetting of an external reality in service of the fiction of coherent identity, can thus be read as a kind of sociological pedagogy of repression. These novels may represent *for their characters* an education that should finally result in repression; however, their representations necessarily record for their readers a violence that is anything but repressed, “inevitable,” or “natural.”

In Wald’s reading of Freud’s “The Uncanny,” uncanniness marks the discomfort inherent in any encounter with the origins of the self—especially as that selfhood is revealed to be fragile, contingent, or non-*essential*: Bourdieu’s formulation suggests a similar fragility in that the self is *produced* rather than pre-

existing: “nothing is more misleading than the illusion created by hindsight in which all the traces of a life, such as the works of an artist or the events at [sic] a biography, appear as the realization of an essence that seems to pre-exist them” (*LP* 55). The individual emerges through the internalization of the external values and rules of his society, and demonstrates or expresses himself through the externalization of his reshaped and refined internality or subjectivity. But this point where what is of the self comes into contact with, and is revealed to be of a piece with, that which is external to it is also what, in Lacanian terms, is known as the “extimate”—the site the self threatens to converge with the “not-self” and thus suggests that the self is itself a fiction of coherence, what Bourdieu calls “the illusion of hindsight.”

My contention here is that federalist-era women’s fiction, because it is concerned with the functions of *habitus* and the shaping of women as political and social subjects, inescapably treads on uncanny ground and requires its expression largely within the realm we designate the sensational or even the gothic. In constructing a series of pedagogical tales that might teach girls how to be national women, apolitical wives, and republican mothers, their authors inevitably invite questions about the very nature of human identity and subjectivity—questions whose fundamental threat to the coherence of the self emerge as the sensationalist strains that infuse their depictions of the purportedly rational domain of education. These novels might be said to recognize education itself as “gothic” because it involves the destruction and reconstruction of the self—acts that cannot help but remind us that the citizen-self is anything but natural. My discussion differs from other readings in its claim that these novels *precede* any large-scale historical repression of the fragility of selfhood. Instead, these novels take the fragility and

contingency of citizenship and subjectivity as their central motif—a preoccupation signaled by and represented through their focus on the educable self.

My discussion here explores the convergence of didacticism and gothicism in Federalist women's fiction by focusing on three novels from the final years of the eighteenth century. I look first to an exemplary example of "conduct fiction"—Hannah Webster Foster's *The Boarding School* (1798)—to demonstrate the workings of *habitus*. As *The Boarding School* demonstrates, Federalist women's fiction represents the development of women's identity as it is inculcated through what we might call a *pedagogy of hypervisibility*; that is, the self-consciousness of oneself as an object of scrutiny that structures women's educations. I then turn to another of Foster's novels, *The Coquette* (1797), the justly more famous and complex treatment of the social education of Eliza Wharton, to explore how that novel depicts, through Eliza's death and her "erasure" from her own story, the violence at the heart of the pedagogical enterprise, and confirms the centrality of acts of vision, surveillance, and scrutiny to female education and *habitus*. Taken together, the two works interrogate women's roles in the new republic, and focus our attention not only on the motivated exclusion of women from the political arena, but on the role education plays in both that exclusion *and* its increasing normalization.

The chapter concludes with my reading of Charles Brockden Brown's under-explored novel *Ormond* (1799), a sensational tale of besieged womanhood, secret surveillance, and physical and psychological brutality, as elaborating further on the inherent dangers of women's education as depicted in Foster's novels. *Ormond* graphically depicts the violence likely to confront a woman educated into vulnerability and *political* invisibility through the practices of pedagogical hypervisibility. While appearing at first to raise conventional Federalist anxieties

about women's identities and their potential for intellectual and moral development, Brown's novel in fact offers a stringent critique of asymmetrical social, sexual, and political power in the new republic. *Ormond* demonstrates the impossibility of sympathy between two sexes whose political status is so unequal; further, it identifies the source of that dissymmetry and the violence it fosters as the key mechanism of education or *habitus*, surveillance, and in the sexes' unequal relationship to it. In *Ormond*, men lurk and look, and women are looked at (and expect to be), subject to scrutiny not only by the eyes of the larger public, but by the violently intrusive eyes of those who purport to love them. The bleak vision offered by *Ormond* is a world in which the possibility of equitable heterosexual relationship is undermined by the masculine power structures and by the vulnerability women learn as the objects of social surveillance.

Ormond ultimately expresses a deep pessimism regarding the kind of sympathy that could resuscitate (or, perhaps, realize) the post-revolutionary nation's collective identity. The novel suggests that the political connection known as "sympathy" must be predicated on equality. By definition, *Ormond* suggests, women's lives are intentionally constrained by their educations, and the political and social constraints under which they labor put them at physical risk from men. Brockden Brown's novel suggests that men's disproportionate political, social, and political power destroys the possibility of genuine reciprocity, could (re)animate political sympathies, national unity, and heterosexual marriage.

The Paradox of Federalist Femininity: Hypervisibility and Coverture

A focus on the relationship between power and visibility is not, of course, unique to these novels. Judith Sargent Murray, an outspoken feminist and essayist of the post-revolutionary era, frames the issue of female authorship in terms of a spectrum

of visibility, echoing the discourse of observation that lies at the heart of the *habitus*. At the conclusion of her collected essays, *The Gleaner* (1798), Murray “unmasks” her text’s masculine persona, the Gleaner himself, and reveals him as one and the same with “Constantia”—a prior *female* persona whom her reader may recollect as “filling some pages in Boston, and afterwards in the Massachusetts magazine.”

Acknowledging her gender masquerade, Murray admits that “it may be proper” to “render a reason” for her deception: “Observing, in a variety of instances, the indifference, not to mention contempt, with which female productions are regarded, and seeking to arrest attention, at least for a time, I was thus furnished with a powerful motive for an assumption which [...] would prove favourable to my aspiring wishes.”² The deception, she claims, has provided her the opportunity “of making myself mistress of the unbiased sentiments of my associates” and has allowed her “to be considered *independent as a writer*” (804–05) while protecting her from the assumption “that although a female may *ostensibly* wield the pen, yet it is certain some man of letters sits behind the curtain to guide its movements” (805; Murray attributes this sentiment to followers of Rousseau). Indeed, she notes, the prejudice against women as authors is such that her current revelation is likely to encourage a series of retroactively smug “I told you so’s” from her audience:

I anticipate, on this occasion, the *significant shrug* and expressive smile of the *pedantic petit-maitres*; [...] and it will be affirmed, that the *effeminacy and “tinsel glitter”* of my style could not fail of *betraying* me at every sentence which I uttered. (804)

Murray here claims the act of authorial cross-dressing as her effort to be read simply as a writer, instead of as a *female* writer. In this passage, Murray articulates

2. Judith Sargent Murray, *The Gleaner* (Boston: 1798), ed. Nina Baym (Schenectady, NY: Union College P, 1992) 804.

her sexual identity as a woman primarily in terms of the particular type of visibility (and accompanying censure) she has attempted to escape; her assumed role as a *male* author has allowed her to enjoy an *invisibility* she characterizes as independence, in contrast to the type of spectacle or display that readers would associate with her identity as a female writer. For the twenty-first century audience, Murray's equation of invisibility with freedom is counterintuitive: today, we are more inclined to see *invisibility* as a problem, because we associate it with a *lack* of political presence. As Murray specifically notes, however, for the 18th-century woman, a heightened visibility, or what I will refer to throughout this chapter as the "hypervisibility" associated with her sex, is the ultimate trap and the primary means by which *habitus* functions. Hypervisibility is the means by which women are molded into the secondary social and political status expected of them—a public status defined specifically as inextricable from the strictures of personal behavior.

Murray's focus on her unwanted conspicuousness highlights the dilemma women faced in the early years of the American republic. What politically minded women of the early republic sought was access to the conduits of public power and influence, something that an education presumably offered. Instead, women's education, despite partaking in the revolutionary and liberatory rhetoric of the era, functioned instead to impose precisely the kind of *hypervisibility*—and with it the loss of freedom and, ultimately, the continued exclusion from the political realm—that Murray sought to escape by assuming the invisibility of the Gleaner's male persona. Murray trenchantly equates her social and political "inferiority" with the exaggerated visibility she suffers as a woman, and further asserts, in both her masquerade and in her subsequent unmasking, the centrality of a pedagogy of self-consciousness to women's experience. As a woman, Murray realizes that she can

never be “independent” of social censure for her sex, and thus in order to be visible as a thinker, she must render herself invisible as a woman, and free of the hypervisibility captured in the pejorative image of wanton female display: “tinsel glitter.”

Women’s legal identity in the eighteenth century turned similarly on contradictory notions of visibility and invisibility, expressed primarily in the practice of *coverture*, which rendered women politically legible only as the *invisible* or “covered” wife of a man. In these first decades following the Revolution, the legal and political status of women was particularly fraught. During the revolutionary hostilities, both sides had eagerly solicited women’s emotional allegiance, in part because of their invaluable potential for domestic persuasion and as personal collateral.³ In the final years of the eighteenth century, however, despite vigorous debate and considerable attention, women’s position with respect to public life remained understood primarily in the absence of a more positive definition of their roles. While women (*white* women, that is) were considered “citizens” to the extent that they were commonly rhetorically invoked as such, they nevertheless remained excluded through custom and practice from full and active participation in the workings of the republic, and were understood to lack the political autonomy necessary for the contractual basis of obligation and support on which the nation rested. As legal historian Linda Kerber reminds us, white women in Federalist America “could be naturalized; they were subject to [the nation’s] laws; as single adult women, they were vulnerable to taxation,” but they were increasingly and

3. For detailed discussion of revolutionary participation by women, see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic* (Chapel Hill: U of NC Press, 1980), especially chapters Two (“Women Invited to War’: Sacrifice and Survival,” 34–67) and Three (“What Have I To Do With Politicks?’: The Meaning of Female Patriotism,” 73–113). Hereafter cited parenthetically as *WR*.

categorically—if not always explicitly and legally—excluded from the extensive individual opportunities purportedly guaranteed by the Revolution’s liberal philosophical underpinnings.⁴

Julia A. Stern, in her study of the elaborately emotional novels of the Federalist era, has referred to the post-Revolutionary process of republican political solidification as a kind social death inflicted upon Americans at the margins of society: women, African Americans, Native Americans.⁵ The Revolution’s antipatriarchal intentions and effects, despite having opened the door for women to envision “the potential of the new politics for freeing them to develop their own relationships with the republic” (“Paradox” 354), were progressively narrowed in the face of anxiety over national stability. Stern’s work echoes Kerber’s in asserting that for most residents of the new nation, the Federalist post-revolutionary period contradicted the explicit promises of liberal individualism, conflating—in law and in practice—the social hierarchy among white males while exaggerating the legal and

4. Linda Kerber. “The Paradox of Women’s Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of *Martin vs. Massachusetts, 1805*,” *The American Historical Review* 97:2 (April 1992): 349–78, 351.

5. Julia A. Stern, *The Plight of Feeling* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997). Stern argues that “sensationalism and self-conscious theatricality mark [early American fictions] as essentially political, enacting important disruptive notions about the formation of individual and national identity in the decade following the establishment of Federalism. These tales [...] give voice to the otherwise imperceptible underside of republican culture in the age of reason, offering [...] a gothic and feminized set of counternarratives to read against the male-authored manifest accounts of national legitimation” (2). She further asserts that early American fiction “suggests that the foundation of the republic is in fact a crypt, that the nation’s non-citizens—women, the poor, Native Americans, African Americans, and aliens—lie socially dead and inadequately buried, the casualties of post-Revolutionary political foreclosure,” and thus “provide an unquiet platform for the construction of republican privilege” (2). While my study, like Stern’s, is intimately interested in the construction of that privilege and its representation in the period’s sensationalist fiction, I hope to add to her study through my own more specific focus on how educational theory and practices—ostensibly liberatory and rational in their efforts—contributed to the social and political interment of those at the cultural margins, and how sites of education become particularly gothicized in these acts of reimagination.

practical distinctions between white male citizens and those excluded from that category. In the case of women, Kerber observes, the Revolution's political transformations left untouched the "domestic tyranny" of the patriarchal system of coverture and the family practices it produced.

Regardless of the Revolution's implicit promise to extend individual rights to its citizens, women in the early republic were *femes covert*, their political identities legally and practically subsumed within those of their husbands, rendering their identity as political actors and as subjects of the legal nation highly contested, paradoxical, and largely undefined except by omission.⁶ To become a *feme covert* was, in keeping with British legal tradition, to enter into the decidedly asymmetrical relationship between "Baron" and "feme"—etymologically, between "lord" and "woman," in what Linda Kerber characterizes as a meeting between "status" on one side and mere "gender" on the other (*WR* 119). Despite its protective and benevolent intentions, the practice clearly establishes a political relationship of inequality (between master and woman) at the center of the domestic practices of marriage and family life. Legally, the married woman's existence became covered, or subsumed, by her husband's political identity; "A married couple became a legal fiction: like a corporation, the pair was a single person with a single will"—that is, the will of the husband (120). In its creation of a single representative unit, the fictional entity of the married couple acting as a single person resembles in practice the process of Federalist-era incorporation and consolidation described by Stern, Kerber, and

6. See, e.g., Kerber, *WR* 120. Kerber's book contains perhaps the most useful discussion of the tangled and heterogeneous evolution of women's legal and political position in the republic. She traces the new nation's specific reliance on English law and practice, as well as its progressive and retrogressive deviations therefrom. Because many of the specific cases Kerber cites are unavailable except in local archives, I have relied somewhat heavily on her interpretation of case law, especially her discussion of *Martin v. Massachusetts* (following).

others, in which the national “will” emerged, in practice, as no less based on traditional power and privilege of landowning white men, at the expense of their poor, female, or non-white countrymen.

Kerber’s analysis of *Martin v. Massachusetts*, 1805—a case that raised the issue of whether a woman could, in fact, make an independent political choice for herself, or whether the practice of coverture denied her such autonomy—provides a useful example by which to understand the legal standing of women in the new republic—or their lack thereof.⁷ In her reading of the case, Kerber describes how attorneys arguing for the return to William Martin of properties confiscated from his mother during the Revolution⁸ based their case not on the more liberal form of citizenship explored in the nation’s political doctrines or in their Lockean antecedents, but on a reactionary reinvocation of the ancient Roman definition of the citizen—one that specifically excludes women and makes masculinity or manly force the condition of citizenship: “the citizen was the man who is prepared to take up

7. The suit was brought in 1801, by James Martin, whose loyalist parents, Anna Gordon Martin and William Martin, had first vacated their land in 1779. They went initially to New York, where William Martin served with British forces, then left for England in 1783. Because the property in question had been passed through Anna’s family line, James Martin’s attorneys argued that the land, held in trust by Anna’s husband during their marriage, according to the laws of coverture, should revert to her son because, as George Blake argued, women were not genuine members of society and thus were incapable of making the kind of independent political judgment that could render them vulnerable to confiscation. Anna Martin’s land, in other words, shouldn’t have been confiscated when she fled, because only her husband, as a potential political subject, could make the choice to reject his membership in society that would legally lead to confiscation. As a *feme covert*, his wife had no choice but to abide by his political decisions and could not legally be held responsible for them. My reconstruction of Kerber’s analysis relies her discussions of this and other related cases in her previously cited works: “The Paradox of Women’s Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of Martin vs. Massachusetts, 1805,” *The American Historical Review* 97:2; and *Women of the Republic*, especially 132–35.

8. By extension, Martin’s attorneys ended up arguing for the restoration of his properties based on their *possession* by his deceased mother Anna Martin, as well as by her inability, as a *feme covert*, to have lawfully been deprived of them through her political actions.

arms to defend the republic and so, in reciprocal relationship, has the right to claim a voice in the decision to resort to arms.”⁹ This definition proscribes the extension of full rights and privileges to various residents of the nation, women necessarily among them. William Martin’s lawyers argued that, as a *feme covert*, that is, as a woman of no conceivable use in defending the political entity of which she was a member, Anna Martin had “no *political* relation to the *state* any more than an alien” (*Martin v. Commonwealth* quoted in *WR* 133); thus, her property should not have been confiscated when she fled with her loyalist husband. Their logic suggests that because, as a *feme covert*, Anna Martin was legally incapable of acting upon her own political will (since as a *feme covert* her will had been subsumed into the single married will of her husband), she should not bear the consequences of her loyalty to her husband’s choices.

In contrast to these reactionary claims, lawyers for the state of Massachusetts, in confiscating land belonging to Anna Martin’s heir and thereby inflicting on her descendants the consequences of what they identified as an act of political autonomy, had perhaps inadvertently asserted the radical possibility of the “politicized married woman,” one “redefined as a competent citizen by revolutionary legislation and challenged to make her own political choices in the crucible of revolution” (“Paradox” 370), and therefore capable of bearing the legal consequences of those choices. Their claim recognized and turned upon the idea that “[w]omen’s national citizenship contained deep within it an implicit challenge to coverture” (351). However, their attempts were defeated by their opponents’ re-articulation of citizenship’s essential masculinity; the resolution of the case

9. “Paradox” 354. For a fuller discussion of the historical precedents of the citizen as (masculine) arms-bearer, see also Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment* 90.

asserted that “[a]s inhabitants of the state, women were merely residents of the commonwealth” because “at some level, to be a ‘member’ [with all the term’s phallic connotations] was necessarily masculine and generative” (Kerber 370).

In the anxiety occasioned by the success of their act of revolutionary “patricide,”¹⁰ and by the continued fragmentation and factionalism facing the unconsolidated union, those in positions of power ultimately elected to erect in the new republic a political and social structure modeled on a masculine image—one that could replace that of the deposed parent-country. Their

anxieties for the stability of their construction led them, as they emphasized its reasonableness, its solidity, its link to classical models, also to emphasize its manliness and its freedom from effeminacy. The construction of the autonomous, patriotic, male citizen required that the traditional identification of women with unreliability, unpredictability, and lust be emphasized. Women’s weakness became a foil for republican manliness. (“Paradox” 351)

Against this re-entrenchment of masculinity as the defining voice of the nation, women’s voices were effectively removed from direct participation in the national arena by the “domestic” politics of coverture. Theoretically, coverture effaces women socially as well as politically, rendering them legally “invisible” and silent, literally “covered” by their husbands. Women under coverture (and later, by extension, unmarried women as well) become increasingly suppressed within the republic in terms of political expression and of their potential political capacities.¹¹

10. See Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, especially 38-40; 197-226.

11. For a discussion of women’s relative freedom of influence and the solicitation of their loyalties during the revolution, see Kerber, *WR*, especially Chapter 3, “The Meaning of Female Patriotism” (67–113).

Educating Women: Personalizing the Political

To say that women were largely silenced by the politics of coverture is not to argue their complete absence from public life. In fact, one of the largest problems faced by the young nation was how best to deal with demands (from women and from men) for an increased political role and improved education for women. As women were eliminated from post-revolutionary authority and influence, male voices rose to redefine the need for and nature of female education. The position of women in the nation and the production of educated females to fill that ambiguous position emerged in the context of larger debates over the subject/citizen, and the (re)production of a stable yet flexible, virtuous woman who could serve the needs of the nation, despite the need to set strict limits on the extent of her participation. In his essay "On the Education of Youth in America," Noah Webster argues that women have a unique, albeit indirect, role to play in the political health of the nation: "In order to prevent every evil bias, the ladies, whose province it is to direct the inclinations of the children on their first appearance [...] should be possessed, not only of amiable manners, but of just sentiments and enlarged understandings."¹² However, he notes that their role in the production of active (male) citizens is not the only reason we should be concerned with educating women:

their influence in controlling the manners of a nation is another powerful reason. Women, once abandoned, may be instrumental in corrupting society, but such is the delicacy of the sex and such the restrictions which custom imposes upon them that they are generally the last to be corrupted. There are innumerable instances of men who have been restrained from a vicious life and even of very abandoned men who have been reclaimed by their attachment to ladies of virtue. A fondness for the company and

12. Noah Webster, "On the Education of Youth in America" (1790), *Essays in Education in the Early Republic* ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965) 69.

conversation of ladies of character may be considered as a young man's best security against the attractives [sic] of a dissipated life. (69)

Webster's sentiments are echoed elsewhere by his compatriot and fellow educator Benjamin Rush, who asserts that "the female temper can only be governed by reason and that the cultivation of reason in women is alike friendly to the order of nature and to private as well as public happiness."¹³

Webster's concern with female fallibility, and his encouragement of education as a possible antidote to it, is neither unfamiliar nor unprecedented; women were commonly designated the objects of profound moral weakness and the source of social corruption. In an age characterized by larger anxieties about personal and political virtue, women were generally seen as the weakest links in the republican chain. The management of the female intellect, to the extent that it was considered at all, was uniquely important in the newly established republic primarily insofar as it served the needs of those who participated more actively and directly in the workings of its government—the sons. In the words of Benjamin Rush, "The equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government" (28).

As potential guardians of the public virtue, the role of women in the new republic was contradictory, at best—depicted, alternately, as potentially staunch supporters of the moral order, on the one hand, and as corruptible victims on the other, and limited to the domestic sphere even as their influence for good or ill

13. Benjamin Rush, "Some Thoughts upon Female Education," *Essays in Education in the Early Republic* ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965) 40.

greatly concerned the morality of the larger nation. Even among advocates of women's educability, the *political* functions of female education were primarily domestic: the control of unruly passions and the promulgation of proper republican (male) offspring. As Linda Kerber notes, "women's competence was not assumed to extend to the making of political decisions. Her political task was accomplished within the confines of her family. The model republican woman was a mother."¹⁴

Nancy Armstrong has argued cogently that domestic fiction of the eighteenth century, in constructing a female domain or sphere, "introduce[s] a new form of political power" wielded by women (3).¹⁵ But it is a political power that is enabled by its purported apoliticality, and it functions by vesting in women the essential qualities of the private, personal realms of emotion and passion, in opposition to the public power wielded by men. By "subordinating all social differences to those based on gender" women's novels (an expansive category that includes didactic, sensationalist, sentimental, and seduction fiction) "bring order to social relationships" (4) in a way that "not only revised the way in which an individual's identity could be understood, but [...] also removed subjective experience and sexual practices from their place in history" (9). The result is a totalizing fiction of gender dichotomy as the universal and essential "truth" of human/female experience. In Armstrong's reading of the rise of the domestic novel in England, she suggests that "as fiction progressively uncovered the 'depths' of individual identity, a complex system of political signs was displaced. Signs of wealth, status, and religious

14. *WR* 228. Kerber's now-familiar central argument is that the figure of the "Republican mother" emerges out of this conflict over women's political identity. She asserts, convincingly, that the category of republican motherhood allows women to be simultaneously political and domestic, and to reconcile their desire for political action with their need to remain virtuously external to the corrupt political realm.

15. Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (NY: Oxford UP, 1987) 3.

affiliation began to define a 'surface' that had no reliable connection with the self in which *true* motivations were buried" (253–4 emphasis mine).

Armstrong further asserts, "the very aspects of the female which supposedly resisted acculturation [e.g., passion or desire] came to play an especially powerful role in a discourse that redefined any form of political resistance as a form of individual pathology. To define political resistance in such psychological terms was to remove it [and by extension, I would argue, those who represented it] from the snarl of competing social and economic interests in which every individual was entangled" (252). Armstrong's work has important implications for my study, and for my contention that despite partaking of a liberal rhetoric of autonomy and self-sufficiency, female education in the early United States functions primarily as a mechanism for reinforcing and reproducing women's exclusion from the political sphere. This fundamental contradiction, while suppressed within the discourse of pedagogy by its language of female empowerment through reason and rationality, infuses the representation of and discussions about education in the women's novels of the period. Novels by, for, and about women, particularly in depicting and discussing women's learning, portray the workings of education in all of their coercive power. Novels like those by Brockden Brown and Foster exploit the hypocrisy of educational praxis and register the incipient violence of a pedagogy that teaches women to accept their social and political inferiority.

In novelistic representations of female education and its consequences, we can read the methods by which such exclusion was perpetrated, and recapture something of the psychological violence associated with the process. The fiction directed at women readers in the Federalist period has been studied primarily *within* the parameters of its political function—namely, as a tool for the instruction

of model females. In addition, however, I would add that fiction by, to, and about women in the early republic reveals the political violence of the “social death,” as it was being enacted, and represents sites of education as particularly complicit in women’s political exile. In these early novels, then, education is not yet the means by which the hypocrisies of national identity are repressed; it functions instead as the imaginative terrain upon which the specific contradictions between citizenship and subjection, autonomy and subservience, participation and exclusion are overtly explored.

Varieties of Didacticism: Educational Practice and Conduct Fiction

While public attention to women’s education—that is, a focus on the various technologies that could mold them into virtuous, upright, and model citizen-mothers—certainly increased in the period following the Revolution, this increase should not be confused with the large-scale creation of institutions or a preponderance of classical learning among young women and girls. Female “education” yet consisted of a mix of the homely, domestic arts, inspirational (yet carefully monitored) historical readings designed to mold her patriotism, and such “decorative” or ornamental arts as music, drawing, or painting—all designed to ensure the production of the virtuous woman whose political impulses could be properly sublimated within the representative figure of the republican mother.

Historically, the American colonies had enjoyed relatively high rates of literacy (generally higher, of course, for men than for women), although much of the instruction was done at home or in small primary schoolrooms.¹⁶ In general, male

16. For a more detailed discussion of literacy practices in colonial and early national America, see E. Jennifer Monaghan, “Literacy and Gender Instruction in Colonial New England,” *American Quarterly* 40:1 (1988): 18–41.

“literacy” tended to emphasize both reading and writing, while a woman’s instruction often ended before she was taught to write. For a short while in the post-revolutionary period, “adventure schools” and “female academies” blossomed, but in retrospect they appear as no more than brief experiments by individual women, rather than evidence of any sustained interest in the broader political education or participation of women.¹⁷ As Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen have noted, literacy levels and practices in early America were far more heterogeneous than contemporary scholars might expect, and much of the work done on female literacy overemphasizes the typicality of New England’s approaches. Female academies in the early republic were “decidedly not colleges” (“Gender and Writing Instruction” 27); women remained excluded from the fields associated with full literacy (law, medicine, ministry), and discussions and practices of women’s literacy often made little specific distinction between the ability to read and to write.

In the absence of an extensive or challenging education, women turned to the novel for entertainment and instruction. Cathy Davidson has demonstrated extensively how women’s isolation and exclusion from more direct forms of political participation encouraged and enabled the tremendous growth of the novel and its readership during this period, despite the prohibitions it elicited. She reminds us that women’s growing sense of individuation and agency was facilitated by their

17. For further information on pedagogical practices in early America see Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen, “Gender and Writing Instruction in Early America: Lessons from Didactic Fiction,” *Rhetoric Review* 12:1 (1993): 25–53, [cited parenthetically as “Gender and Writing Instruction”]; and *Imagining Rhetoric* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P), 2002. See also Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980). Because my argument has more to do with imaginative conceptualizations of pedagogy, and with its fictional depictions, I have chosen not to focus on real-life practices. Instead, my study thus far concerns itself with how American novelists imagined the purposes and consequences of “education,” and not with the specific pedagogical praxis.

reading of novels, an act that inserted them, imaginatively, into the vicarious experience of the characters' social and political choices:

Given both the literary insularity of many novel readers and the increasing popularity of the novel, the new genre necessarily became a form of education, especially for women. Novels allowed a means of entry into a larger literary and intellectual world and a means of access to social or political events from which many readers (especially women), would have been otherwise largely excluded. (10)

Precisely because of its capacity for constructing alternative representations of reality, women's fiction and the "popular fiction" of the late eighteenth-century were the subjects of tremendous conflict. The debate over the uses and abuses to which novels were subject were, like those over the status of women themselves, characterized by both a fascination with and a tremendous anxiety toward their capacity to instruct or to mislead, to be a source of virtue or a mode of contagion. The final years of the century saw the publication of the first "American novel" (William Wells Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, 1789) and a prolific outpouring of novels by the man considered America's first professional novelist, Charles Brockden Brown. (*Wieland*, 1798, *Edgar Huntly* and *Arthur Mervyn*, 1799, *Ormond*, 1799). At the same time, however, the novel was frequently considered an instrument of corruption moral turpitude. Early American novels reflect their contradictory status in their pervasive anxiety about the means and methods of "influence": the persuasive power of evil, the instability of good judgment, the depiction of outrageous acts of seduction—verbal or sexual—visited upon hapless young women by deceptive and corrupt suitors. Because women were understood as the more passionate, or emotional, and therefore the less rational sex, they were assumed to be less capable of controlling the passions that provided a potential inroad into the mind.

Woman as Anticitizen

As Gillian Brown has noted, Locke's conception of human reason, the underlying basis for his educational programs, was couched largely in terms that were coded masculine, and thereby opposed to those attributes understood to be prototypically "feminine" and characteristically novelistic—emotionalism, passion, impulsivity, impressionability. Locke believed that "Passion tyrannizes the individual by taking away mental liberty"; in addition, "Passionate and accidental clogs hinder mental movements by inhabiting the mind and inhibiting its usual activities" (110). Much of the fiction produced in the period from 1785–1810 or so attempted explicitly to instill proper republican vigilance among the larger national constituency by invoking the specter of the nation herself as a naïve young woman; the "typical" seduction plot of this period warns against the dangerous consequences of a "feminized" nation. Beset by corrupting and foreign influences, the nation and its survival are figured through her struggle and success or her cautionary failure: "the susceptible individual is usually female: a seduced girl, a deluded female reader, a hysterical woman" (112).

These novels depict the belief that republican citizenship is antithetical to the kind of involuntary submission passion imposes on the will: political *consent* as defined by Locke was predicated upon a freedom of mind that required the "individual [to] work continuously to keep intruders and tyrants at bay, to keep the mind freely and purposively moving" (112)—that is, that required a kind of mental and physical work associated with masculinity, as opposed to the emotional dithering understood as feminine. Seduction novels allegorize the political agenda of the new nation and its hostility to foreign or improper influence, as well as its susceptibility to rhetorical devices and its suspicion of self-representation through the figure of the vulnerable female faced by the wiles of the masculine seducer: as

Brown notes, “For the early United States [...] women perfectly embodied the permeability of the Lockean individual” (112), a permeability understood as deeply threatening to the nation’s well-being. At the same time, however, the use of such gendered tropes consistently reinforced the notion that women are not merely prototypical Americans, but rather prototypically *inappropriate* Americans. What Armstrong’s and Brown’s work suggests is that the increasingly gendered social world of the late eighteenth century relied heavily on popular understandings of female unsuitability (metaphorically and practically) for the public sphere. Women’s representative power, that is, is as the instructive antithesis of masculine agency and citizenship.

Eldred and Mortenson have characterized early national women’s education as “a struggle between pedagogies that promote women’s growth as individuals and pedagogies that rely on learning as a means of restraining passion and training reason” (“Gender and Writing Instruction” 28). Instead, I would suggest, the fictional depictions of women’s learning reveal the ways in which prominent pedagogical practices and values depict “restraining passion and training reason” as “promot[ing] women’s growth,” how the development of women’s “reason” was in fact training for the material political exclusion realized in republican motherhood and the domestic sphere.

Women of the republic were figured as *readers* first and foremost; as readers of novels, they were called upon primarily to discern the “proper” lessons of behavior from their reading, specifically from their identifications with or against characters. Such an increasing reliance on reading as a means to explore and increase female individuality and individual identity reinforces women’s focus on the emotional life and her exclusion of and from the political realm. It further teaches women to

continue to read personally (and relies on their doing so) and not politically, despite the political consequences of such private actions. In other words, women's sympathetic and involved reading of what are known variously as women's novels, sentimental fiction, sensationalism, and the gothic teaches them to internalize and personalize their experiences while it obscures or represses the social and political reality of their experience.¹⁸

Armstrong explains how the rise of the personal functions to repress or write over the political realities within which that personal realm is experienced: "Repression [...] operates [...] as a trope for turning the materials of history into a representation of consciousness [...] Consequently, there is very little political information that cannot be transformed into psychological information" (204). In seduction, Armstrong observes, "the female subject desires to be what the other desires her to be. To relinquish the power of self-definition is the whole objective of seduction [...] But if the woman relinquishes the power to discover a self that she believes society considers to be her true self, *then the distinction between seduction and education is rhetorical*" (205 emphasis mine).

The Workings of Women's Education: Hypervisibility, Surveillance, and the Social Circle

In defense against charges that their work promoted corruption, sensationalism, and excessive passion, authors of woman-oriented fiction tended to assert the didactic function of their texts; as negative examples, the novels explicitly claimed to act as cautionary tales that would steer young women away from the pernicious fantasies and misdeeds of their protagonists. The larger pedagogical project of the eighteenth-

18. See Armstrong, esp. 204–205.

century included what we now recognize as the separate genres of philosophy, psychology, fiction, and pedagogy¹⁹; to the benefit of authors of fiction, the functions and characteristics of the novel were often nearly indistinguishable from those of more explicitly instructional material, as in the case of an emergent genre that Sarah Emily Newton has called “conduct fiction”—that is, texts “aimed at an inexperienced young adult or other youthful reader, define an ethical, Christian-based code of behavior for life that normally includes gender role definition.”²⁰

Typified by Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Boarding School* (1798), the “genre” of conduct fiction blended anecdotal narrative with more direct and explicit lessons designed to create of its young female readers “anchors” of morality for the national ship of state. In addition, “conduct fiction” attempted, by balancing its more titillating or sensationalistic narratives with practical and moral advice, to escape the ignominy of being labeled purely “fiction”: its short didactic tales could “satisfy narrative interest and at the same time hit home some precept of conduct so that the writers can deny writing the much maligned ‘novel.’”²¹ While conduct fiction shares many basic similarities of situation and plot with the maligned seduction novel, it is

19. In his study of the relationship between pedagogical theory and the rise of the novel, Richard A. Barney asserts that educational philosophy and the novel may be seen as “analogous discursive formations produced by much larger [...] historical changes [... D]uring much of the early modern period, the two disciplines were still incompletely distinguished from one another and therefore intimately informed each other’s development, even as the ground was being laid for their ultimate disjunction by the late 1700s. This means the pedagogical orientation of both epistemology and the novel during the early eighteenth-century can be credited to a generic instability resulting from the gradual separation of ‘philosophy’ from ‘literature’ as we now understand them” (5). While Barney attempts to identify an endpoint for the separation of these two disciplines, I contend that the deliberate attempts to create and instruct a republican citizenry in post-revolutionary America necessitated their continued blending.

20. Sarah Emily Newton, “Wise and Foolish Virgins: ‘Usable Fiction’ and the Early American Conduct Tradition,” *EAL* 25 (1990): 162.

21. Newton 148; quoted in “Gender and Writing Instruction” 28.

differentiated by degree; conduct fiction generally makes explicit its “correct” interpretation or moral, where the more dramatically complex and ambiguous seduction novel, even when it provided a clear lesson, tended to involve its reader in more complex moral choices and longer, more emotionally charged identifications with its protagonist.

By pairing *The Boarding School* (1799) with Foster’s better-known novel *The Coquette* (1798), we see a fuller fictional representation of the psychological cost of women’s education, particularly the dire consequences that befell women who sought “freedom” and refused to accept hypervisibility and thereby adopt the self-restraint it required. In brief, I wish to suggest that *The Boarding School* represents relatively simply the acts of surveillance at the heart of a pedagogy of hypervisibility, while *The Coquette*, through the death of its rebellious yet sympathetic heroine, Eliza Wharton, registers more fully the inescapable violence of failing to learn women’s lessons. Both novels fit loosely into the category of “conduct fiction” in that they both attempt to instill moral lessons and as such, function to both represent and enact the workings of *habitus*. Their pairing offers insight into the nature and effects of women’s education, registering and revealing the psychological cost of the educations represented within them.

It is tempting to speculate that the chronology of the two works I will discuss (the more conventionally didactic novel *The Boarding School* is published in 1798, the year following the publication of the more novelistically complex *Coquette*) indicates Foster’s retreat from the potential ambiguity at the heart of *The Coquette*. By applauding Eliza’s independence and autonomy, *The Coquette* harbors implicit and untenable criticism of a world where such traits, in a woman, can lead to nothing but tragedy. Because of its appealing and multi-dimensional heroine, *The*

Coquette, despite its conventional “seduced and abandoned” narrative arc, absorbs its readers in Eliza’s plight and thereby provides a compelling view into the violence of women’s education. While its narrative fulfills the requisite didactic structure of transgression-and-punishment, the *Coquette* vividly renders Eliza’s spirited resistance to the rigid codes espoused by her circle of friends and family. Our sympathy for our fallen heroine, however, transforms the cautionary tale of the novel into a critique of her social world: a record of promises made and broken, freedom offered and taken away, and autonomy available only through self-denial. With its broad range of relatively undifferentiated characters, *The Boarding School* conforms more readily to the stultifying expectations for women’s education and for unambiguous didacticism in women’s novels. Unlike the singular Eliza Wharton, the cookie-cutter young ladies of *The Boarding School* generally lack the spirit and intellect to call their surroundings into question, and instead participate readily in their own subjugation.

Most readings of *The Coquette* locate it well within conventional expectations of the seduction genre, arguing that Eliza’s desires represent her “wrong ideas of freedom,” and that her death ultimately affirms the superior morality of the very social order she has railed against. Such readings overlook the force with which this novel reveals that Eliza’s errors are located not simply in her failures, but instead in the impositions enacted by the social pedagogy to which she is subjected, and by its usurpation of the rhetoric of liberation. The novel makes visible the power relationships of *habitus* and exposes the political injustice of its workings. By casting Eliza’s feminine “rebellions” in the contested language of freedom and autonomy, *The Coquette* raises overtly the possibility that Eliza is more “wronged” than *wrong* in her aspirations. The novels reveal the destructive forces at work in women’s

education—not only for women who refuse to learn the lesson of public transparency, but for those who, in embracing such “hypervisibility,” render themselves politically “invisible.” To return to Murray’s visual metaphors, Eliza’s demands for a genuine autonomy in this novel can be read as a tacit plea for a new kind of female “Visibility”—that is, for the political presence and personal agency extended in the liberatory promises of educational rhetoric. The novel’s tragic message is that Eliza’s choices are confined to either the virtuous hypervisibility she resists, or to the erasure that is ultimately her fate. The novel erects its moral erected, literally, on the tombstone of its dead heroine, a gothic twist that suggests a causative relationship between women’s “social death” and the education that enables it.

Learning to be read: the lessons of *The Boarding School*

Foster’s *The Boarding School* depicts an imaginary female school that “would discipline the work of young women scholars living and learning together.”²² The text announces itself as the “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.” Published in 1798, just a year after *The Coquette* (1797), *The Boarding School* consists largely of a series of informal lectures given by the estimable Mrs. Williams, “the virtuous relict of a respectable clergyman” who opens her school with “an eye no less to the *social pleasure*, than to the pecuniary profit of the undertaking” (5, my emphasis).²³ The latter half of the text comprises

22. Janet Carey Eldred and Peter Mortensen, *Imagining Rhetoric* (Pittsburgh, U of Pittsburgh P, 2002) 7.

23. Hannah Webster Foster, *The Boarding School* (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1798) 5 (emphasis mine).

samples of correspondence among the girls and with their former instructress that demonstrate how they have taken her lessons on virtue and propriety with them as they launched “into life, [to...] think and act more for [them]selves” (48). Mrs. Williams’s educational goals for her pupils are circumscribed by the female sphere of the home and social pursuits, in keeping with the political mores of republican womanhood: “She particularly endeavored to domesticate them; to turn their thoughts to the beneficial and necessary qualifications of private life” (7). The novel’s sequence of anecdotal lectures is delivered to the young ladies during their final week of study, as a capstone to their education, treating such topics as “Music and Dancing,” “Miscellaneous Directions for the Government of the Temper and Manners,” “Politeness,” and “Filial and Fraternal Affection,” on an equal footing with “Reading,” and “Writing and Arithmetic.”

Mrs. Williams’s lessons feature exemplary and cautionary tales about the need for reason, restraint, and morality among young ladies. A few of her exemplars display the worthy sentiments and exercise of reason that bring them modest marriages and a docile life; others emerge saddened but wiser for the trials they have undergone and, like Prudelia of the “Friday A.M.” lecture, live on in semi-permanent (but praiseworthy chastened) retirement: “A constant sense of her past misconduct depressed her spirits, and cast a gloom over her mind; yet she was virtuous, though pensive, during the remainder of her life” (88). Clearly, the price of misbehavior is an enforced return to respectable social invisibility. In keeping with the text’s focus on an appropriately feminine deportment, references to the young women’s intellectual development are few, and are subsumed by a more “practical” concern with character development and with the imposition of a coercive discipline

that would develop their self-restraint and consistency of conduct through a consciousness of their own constant visibility.

The lesson taught at *The (fictional) Boarding School*, like those taught in homes and schoolrooms across the nation, is ultimately one of suppression: the education women receive achieves civic virtue through a heightened visibility. This hypervisibility is regulated by a group of female “friends” whose primary function is the imposition of a restrictive moral order. The mechanism for this form of discipline is the purportedly benevolent surveillance operating within the bonds of friendship and practiced through the writing and reading of “personal” letters; its goal is to ensure a perfect transparency or equivalence between the private and public self. In other words, despite its liberatory rhetoric and republican instrumentalism, the female education offered by Foster’s imaginary boarding school is highly coercive, instructing young women in their secondary political status.

The friendship and sociability experienced by the school’s residents are integral to Mrs. Williams’s program of pernicious disciplinary scrutiny. Under the guise of relaxing her superior authority, Mrs. Williams creates occasions during which her pupils lapse into a kind of private behavior that is recorded and ultimately punished. On occasion, she

suspended the authority of the matron, that, by accustoming her pupils to familiarity in her presence, they might be free from restraint; and feeling perfectly easy and unawed, appear in their genuine characters. By this means she had an opportunity of observing an indecorum of behaviour, or wrong bias; which she kept in mind, till a proper time to mention, and remonstrate against it.(9)

The young ladies’ written work is similarly submitted to Mrs. Williams’s ostensibly benevolent surveillance, and offers a further means of detecting and disciplining improper instincts. Each morning, one girl reads from a selection while

the others sew; after dinner, however, “the reader of the day produced some piece of her own composition, either in prose, or verse, according to her inclination, as a specimen of her genius and improvement. This [was] submitted to Mrs. Williams’s inspection, and the candid perusal of her companions; and the subject canvassed with great freedom of opinion” (9–10). The need to submit to constant scrutiny is the *primary* “lesson” Mrs. Williams’s pupils absorb, suggesting that the goal of their education is to help them to monitor themselves in a way that aligns their private impulses with public virtue.

Such a system of education redefines the vocabulary of liberty in service of female self-suppression.²⁴ For example, autonomy, in Mrs. Williams’s pedagogical lexicon, is achieved by entry into a communal like-mindedness activated by a constant process of self-scrutiny: “To know yourselves, in every particular, must be your constant endeavour. This knowledge will lead you to propriety and consistency of action. But this knowledge cannot be obtained without a thorough and repeated inspection of your various passions, affections, and propensities” (49). The process of becoming an autonomous *female* subject, in other words, requires seeing oneself as others see one; regulating oneself as thoroughly as one’s directors would. To become a female subject in this new republic is first of all to become the object of scrutiny.

The concept of friendship, which itself depends upon an act of consent among those involved, also comes under Mrs. Williams’s revisionist purview. While friendship might appear to be a private outlet for the expression of personal feelings, Mrs. Williams cautions that the primary responsibility of friendship is often the exposure of the friend’s follies to public censure. Although often (mis)understood by

24. My point here is not that Mrs. Williams’s pedagogy (or her articulation of it in terms of liberty) is unique; rather, *The Boarding School* is fascinating in its typicality and the conventionality Mrs. Williams represents as a kind of “Everyteacher.”

“girls in general” as “an intimate acquaintance” with one “who will encourage, or at least connive at their foibles and faults and communicate with them every secret,” the primary function of friends is to mold and discipline each other, to act as a chorus of critics should one stumble—or threaten to. For Mrs. Williams and her students, friendship is defined by its ability to bring private desires into alignment with appropriate public behavior and to mold the two into an indistinguishable and properly hypervisible whole: “It is not the part of friendship to hide transactions which will end in the ruin of your friend,” Mrs. Williams cautions (94).²⁵

“Wrong Ideas of Freedom”: Eliza Wharton and the Cost of a Failed Education

The cost of women’s “education,” and its deviance from the liberatory promises of pedagogical rhetoric, is given fuller play in *The Coquette*. *The Coquette* draws much more heavily on the dangerous aesthetic charms of the novel: rich characterizations, detailed interior portraits, titillating intrigues and adventures, and the tragic death

25. The epistolarity of these novels bears special mention; letters between friends are the means by which these friendships function. In the eighteenth century, letters could be understood as public or private communication. The variable genre of the “letter” thus allowed its author and addressee the sensation of intimacy and immediacy, even though the actual audience of any given letter might be extensive, as it could be passed along by its initial recipient. The technology of female friendship, the “personal” letter, then, exists at the cusp of two realms—that of the intensely personal and private, and that of the public or political—where it does its most effective work in negotiating the conflicting desires of its subjects. As Stern observes, “the epistolary mode [represents] a powerful conjunction of the performative, vocal and textural dynamics championed separately by Fliegelman, Looby, Warner, Ziff, and Grantland S. Rice as the dominant feature of the early national narrative”(16–17). Through written correspondence, in a “unique form of theatricality, both self and other are forged in an act of imaginative projection and inscription”; finally, “Letters enable the charismatic authority of voice to circulate in the impersonal world of print, occupying a potent middle ground of quasi-embodied expression and providing a vital bridge between a developing public sphere and a newly emerging private realm, coded masculine and feminine” (17).

of its protagonist, the lively and provocative Eliza Wharton—a young woman determined to avoid a merely sensible marriage. In its basic outline, *The Coquette* closely resembles *The Boarding School*. Both works are predominantly epistolary in form, relying heavily on the intimate correspondences of a group of female friends, married and single, experienced and naïve, whose counsel makes up the bulk of the tale and provides a series of behavioral models. Both works concern themselves primarily with appropriate female behavior in the areas of courtship and marriage, and both include tragic or cautionary examples along with their emphasis on how to avoid such a fate. But while Mrs. Williams more or less successfully instills in her girls the moral lessons she sets out to convey, Eliza Wharton's story is ultimately one of pedagogical failure. Despite the best attempts of her friends and family, Eliza thwarts their loving instructions, evades their careful scrutiny, succumbs to her coquettishness, and dies disgraced and alone, if sincerely lamented. The problem the novel poses, for contemporary readers as well as for its historical audiences, rests on the ambiguity of the novel's conclusion; we are left to decide for ourselves in whom the fault lies.

The novel's social critique emerges in its depiction of pedagogical failure; Eliza's tragedy demonstrates the repressive nature of the education that would supposedly have saved her, and thereby registers the contradictions of women's (a)political status—a contradiction that female education, like the notion of republican motherhood, attempts to elide by making femininity a quasi-"political" stance (in that it serves the greater good). In *The Coquette*, the vigilant scrutiny of her family and peers fails Eliza; ultimately, the disjunction between their publically-oriented values and Eliza's individual desires leads to her exclusion from their community, and to her death. Having failed to circumscribe Eliza within their

system of values, her social community ends up, in the final sections of the novel, actually *obliterating* Eliza's defiant voice entirely, as each of her correspondents overwrites his or her "reading" of the final events of her life. Eliza's solitary death allows them to reduce her in death to what she refused to be in life: an object lesson for the novel's readers.

Having failed Eliza in life, her social community of interpreters renders her legible in death. In her failure to conform or to consign herself to the visibility of virtuous womanhood, Eliza is quite literally effaced from her own story, erased into invisibility and rewritten by her survivors on her gravestone.²⁶ In a gothic twist, the novel erects its lesson of female restraint over Eliza's interred corpse and that of her stillborn child. Eliza is "reanimated" through her community's patently inadequate testimonials. The audience is "educated" by Eliza's death, a fact that brings into poignant focus the futility of her earlier rhetoric of autonomy and freedom. Eliza's death makes explicit the social, political, and psychological violence at the heart of women's pedagogy; the repressive function of *habitus* is rendered visible in Eliza's death and in the inaccurate "reinscription" imposed upon her story.

Stern's discussion of the dead Eliza as a community fetish object, one whose demise serves the community's need to disavow her demands, illuminates her final function within that community as an object lesson for other potential mis-readers:

26. It is worth noting that, in fact, Eliza's own correspondence largely disappears from the novel prior to its conclusion. Of the 74 letters the novel comprises, Eliza's own voice disappears after Letter 68. Subsequent information about her fate is channeled through various friends, most notably Julia Granby. While many of her correspondents report actual conversations with Eliza, her authorial absence nevertheless reminds us that the final interpretation of her tale is in the hands of her audience(s): the friends whose letters conclude the novel, and the readers whose task it is to interpret the interpretations her correspondents offer. Her disappearance focuses our attention on the provisional (and largely inadequate) lessons her friends derive from her death and disgrace.

Eliza's literal death allows the chorus to achieve what [...] has only been figurative: the definitive entombment and selective *re-recovery* of the heroine's reputation through fetishistic rituals of memorial [...]. Death renders irrelevant Eliza's emphatic need for mutuality; thus, she perfectly fulfills the requirements of a community fetish. In that sense, Eliza functions most successfully after she is dead, for as a memory and a monument she can no longer resist being inscribed by the language of the majority. (154)

Throughout the novel, Eliza equates her inappropriate desires for self-expression and autonomy with a political discourse of freedom of mind *and* body—beginning with the “unusual sensation” of “pleasure” that consumes her upon leaving her parents' home and after the death of her fiancé, Mr. Haly.²⁷ Eliza specifically distinguishes between her pleasure at this freedom and the former “implicit obedience” that “nature and education had instilled into her mind” and characterizes her behavior in revolutionary terms as “the exercise of her free will.”²⁸ Casting women's lot as a kind of colonization by a superior power, Eliza objects to the confinement that characterizes the married woman's role:

[...] I recoil at the thought of immediately forming a connection, which must *confine* me to the duties of domestic life, and make me *dependent* for happiness, perhaps too, for subsistence, upon a class of people, who will claim the right of scrutinising [sic] every part of my conduct. (126, my emphasis)

Unlike Mrs. Williams's girls, Eliza recognizes surveillance as inimical to social acts of control. She observes that scrutiny, obedience, and dependence are interconnected, and that they stand in stark contradiction to her “freedom” (127),

27. My discussion of Eliza's “desire” as embodied is deeply indebted to discussions with Bruce Burgett, who first brought this passage to my attention. Similarly, my discussion of female “managers” (38ff, below) is derived in part from insights developed in his English 537 class at the University of Washington, Spring 2001.

28. Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (1797), ed. Carla Mulford (NY: Penguin Books, 1996) 107; 126.

which she understands as a state of autonomy far greater than what her society allows her. As Mrs. Richman, the voice of idealized domesticity in the novel, is quick to point out to her, Eliza “ha[s] wrong ideas of freedom”; her revolutionary insistence upon defining her own existence while resisting the pedagogical pressures of her circle of friends is ultimately met with tragedy.

Like *The Boarding School*, the epistolary form of the *Coquette* represents the pervasiveness of surveillance, as Eliza’s actions and misdeeds are communicated among her social circle. Within that group, the lessons of “freedom” are expressed not as the kind of revolutionary liberation Eliza craves, but as a set of “privileges which virtue can claim” (128). Eliza’s female correspondents attempt repeatedly to instill in her the proper, feminine version of what she calls “freedom” and, like Mrs. Williams, to redefine freedom within the constrained sphere bounded by expectations of womanhood—domesticity, friendship, obedience. Eliza, however, refuses to compromise her notions of individual freedom in order to affect the public persona that virtue requires: Like her nefarious suitor, Peter Sanford, Eliza insists on her right to be “independent of” social “censure or esteem” (131).

The novel specifies that Eliza has in fact been exposed to an education much like that offered by Mrs. Williams; her failure to conform, therefore, “cannot be the result of her education. Such a one as she has received, is calculated to give her a very different turn of mind,” an acquaintance says (147). Unlike other novels of the period that blame their protagonists’ demise on poor parenting, lax education, or a surfeit of novel-reading, *The Coquette* makes clear that nothing so simple can account for Eliza’s rebellion. Instead, the novel asserts again and again the similarity between Eliza’s desired “freedom” and that practiced by its male

characters—not only by the unscrupulous rake Sanford, but by the irreproachable Reverend Boyer as well.

The untenable political implications of Eliza’s bid for freedom—hence the necessity for its suppression—can be seen in the novel’s brief discussions of the world outside of their social circle: the theater and other amusements. In a scene that exhibits the complementarity and contradiction that surrounds discussions of women in public, Eliza’s confidant Lucy Sumner offers her critique of what might be called a “public” woman through her discussion of a circus she has recently attended:

I think it inconsistent with the delicacy of a lady, even to witness the indecorums which are practised there; *especially when the performers of equestrian feats are of our own sex*. To see a woman depart so from the female character, as to assume the masculine habit and attitudes [...] is truly disgusting, and ought not to be countenanced. (196, my emphasis)

Instead, Lucy declares that she greatly enjoys being a “spectator” at a more “rational and refined source of amusement” (196). The implications of Lucy’s critique are plain: women are to be spectators in life, or objects of critical scrutiny, rather than performers—to do otherwise is to be sexually inappropriate; that is, to be a “coquette” rather than a virtuous woman of the republic. For Lucy, the whole realm of public life resembles the grotesqueries of the circus; women in public are “disgusting” no matter what their role. She equates femininity with invisibility; at the same time, she elides female agency with spectacle, Murray’s “tinsel glitter.” Lucy believes that women are to avoid the spotlight in large part because they are *always* under scrutiny; because they are “visible,” they must choose to be *invisible*.

Unlike Lucy, who argues for a women’s passive position safely outside of the political and commercial world, Eliza expresses her desire for female autonomy and public agency by suggesting that women might function as “managers”: “it [is] a pity

they have not female managers for the theater. I believe it would be under much better regulations, than at present” (205). Eliza’s logical move from thinking about circus performers to imagining women managers in the theater reflects Eliza’s very different beliefs about the meaning of women’s visibility. For Eliza, the prospect of the public woman meaningful and desirable because it conveys agency (or vice versa: agency allows one to be “visible”)—in contrast to the prevailing belief that women must remain politically invisible and disempowered by their hypervisibility and its threat of negative scrutiny. For Eliza, it is but a short step from circus performer to female manager—both, for her, reflect a life of female action and autonomy in keeping with the rhetoric of freedom she asserts. Lucy, on the other hand, sees both roles as incompatible with the appropriately feminine reticence she equates with mere spectatorship because to her, to be visible as a female is itself a spectacle.

Ormond: The Violence of the Secret Witness

Raising similar issues about the relationships among visibility, power, and violence in women’s social development, Charles Brockden Brown’s 1799 novel *Ormond* pits feminine sensibilities against an exaggeratedly masculine philosophy of self-interested autonomy. *Ormond*, like Brown’s earlier novel *Wieland*, explores its larger questions of epistemology, identity, and social responsibility through the trials visited upon a young woman of the republic. Constantia Dudley, like Clara Wieland, is a woman educated somewhat beyond the usual female scope, a heroine whose sharp mind and generally skeptical demeanor at first seem incontrovertible assets in her attempt to get through life successfully. In addition to the usual sorts of misfortunes that befall Brown’s hapless characters (a duplicitous assistant whose thievery casts Constantia and her father into poverty, recurrent local bouts of the plague, absent friends, macabre acquaintances, and a pervasive uncertainty as to

the world's good or ill), however, Constantia must contend with the threatening affections of Ormond, a Godwinian radical who woos her with his intellectual schemes and dispassionate conversation in a peculiar rendition of intellectually romantic seduction.

Superficially, the novel conforms to the seduction genre, as Constantia ponders the meaning of her attraction to the mysterious Ormond, and considers the possibilities that exist for her as an impoverished and thus vulnerable young woman of the young republic. However, the novel's subtitle, *The Secret Witness*, clearly signals its preoccupation with scenes of surveillance and the functioning of power, a focus that fuels and complicates the novel's convoluted seduction plot. *Ormond's* underlying question is whether women can learn to function effectively in a male-oriented world. In attempting to answer that query, Brockden Brown's novel explores the relationships among power, "learning," and sympathy, by depicting characters—male and female—whose association with one radically negates their ability to practice the other. Through *Ormond*, Brockden Brown interrogates the contrast between a feminized ideal of "sympathy" and a masculinist philosophy of absolute autonomy, and attempts to locate for his virtuous heroine a possible marriage between the two. The novel's potential social critique, like that of Foster's *Coquette*, inheres in *Ormond's failure* ultimately to realize such an alternative, despite the multiple plots twists through which Brown attempts to bring one forth. *Ormond* demonstrates that women are at the mercy of the world around them, and that their vulnerability is the specific product of the power dynamics of visibility. In *Ormond*, women's and men's different relationship to the mechanics of vision represent their unequal access to social and political power, and exacerbate women's physical inferiority. The novel suggests that the surveillance structuring female

identity necessarily makes women susceptible to the kind of violence Ormond dispenses, and that it mitigates against the kind of political, national, and interpersonal equality to which the American revolutionary impulse supposedly attests. *Ormond* demonstrates that sympathy, citizenship, and even marriage are imperiled by the fundamental inequality into which the sexes are conditioned by their educations.

Constantia Dudley is in many ways a prototypical Federalist heroine, well schooled in virtue and the female arts. Furthermore, her story conforms to many of the constraints of the seduction novel: newly impoverished and thus economically vulnerable, she must negotiate a series of personal misfortunes in an attempt to preserve her virtue from the violating eyes of the world. After a duplicitous clerk, Thomas Craig, swindles her father out of his livelihood, Constantia and her father find themselves destitute, isolated, and imperiled by an outbreak of yellow fever. The first section of the novel depicts Constantia's efforts to maintain herself and her father and to avoid the contagion—spiritual as well as corporeal—that threatens their reduced circumstances. As befits any virtuous heroine, Constantia shrinks from the corrupting world of the lower-class streets she and her father must inhabit following their expulsion and the decimation of their social community; she “had no intercourse, which necessity did not prescribe, with the rest of the world. She screened herself as much as possible from intercourse with prying and loquacious neighbors [...] She could not at all times suppress the consciousness of the evils which surrounded and threatened her.”²⁹ But despite her desire to sequester herself from the evils of this larger world, Constantia is sufficiently moved to make

29. Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond* (1799), ed. Mary Chapman (Peterborough, ON: Broadview P, 1999) 61.

occasional forays into that world, prompted by material need (she seeks work that can sustain her and her father, including offering her services as a tutor) and by empathy (she assists others, more unfortunate than she, taken ill by the plague).

Having lost contact with the bosom friend of her childhood, Sophia Westwyn (who is ultimately revealed to be the narrator of these adventures), Constantia engages in ineffective searches for a partner, companion, or mate to replace that early intimacy. Constantia seeks the kind of ideal intellectual and moral model in whose image she can both recognize and mold herself. Her search for a new “double” in whom she can find sympathy and security, however, results primarily in “mirroring gone awry” (Stern 177). The failed mirrors are the prospective friends and lovers who disappoint or turn on Constantia, thereby revealing their fundamental *difference* from her and representing different possibilities for human intellectual, moral, and social development—none of which, ultimately, works to produce the desired union.³⁰

Upon first encountering the mysterious Ursula Monroe (later revealed to be the female soldier-of-fortune Martinette Beauvais), for example, Constantia observes, longingly, “the similitude between her own destiny and that of this unhappy exile [...] Immersed in poverty, friendless, burdened with the maintenance of her father, their circumstances were nearly parallel” (93). Constantia’s desire for a single compatible other—friend or lover—is at the core of the novel, and situates the novel’s discussion of women’s “education” within the larger scope of *habitus*—personal and intellectual development.

30. Julia Stern reads these failures as a failure of strategies of sympathy in the early republic, as a depiction of the “unraveling of sympathetic relations” in the Federalist period and the growth of “radical notions of liberty” that necessitated the exclusion of marginalized Americans (154). See also 158, 228.

Constantia's desire for a suitable partner, a sympathetic parallel, is ultimately unsuccessful, because, Brown seems to suggest, society's division of human sensibilities along strictly gendered lines has eliminated the possibility for any one person to serve as both an intellectual and emotional partner. Instead, the novel offers Constantia's seeking heart male (and masculinized female) characters who lack all sympathy, and feminine characters whose delicate educations have ill-prepared them for political or intellectual autonomy.³¹

Brockden Brown carefully balances Constantia's own "feminine" sympathies and her attachment to family and community with the "masculine" qualities of intellectual curiosity and forthrightness. She rejects a potential suitor for "the poverty of his discourse and ideas" (103), because "[e]ducation [...] had created in her an insurmountable abhorrence of admitting to conjugal privileges a man who had no claim upon her love" (104). Like Eliza Wharton, Constantia understands the limited choices available to her (marriage or poverty) in political terms, noting that "[h]omely liberty was better than splendid servitude." Unlike Foster's Eliza, however, Brockden Brown's Constantia refrains from even the appearance of impropriety, which gives greater weight to her pondering of the political, social, and economic sacrifices marriage entails for women:

Allowing that the wife is enriched by marriage, how humiliating were the conditions annexed to it in the present case! The company of one with whom we have no sympathy, nor sentiments in common, is, of all species of

31. A case could be made for Sophia Westwyn's suitability as Constantia's ideal companion or double. While the novel certainly offers Constantia and Sophia's relationship as the one that most closely approximates the ideal, I would argue that their friendship remains inadequate as a larger social model. Not only is Sophia herself married, but their homosocial union is, allegorically speaking, unsuitable for the procreation of new citizens of the equitable republic the two could form. And significantly, as Stern notes, their union is realized only offshore—again suggesting only a very compromised vision for the future of American relations. See Stern 229–30.

solitude, the most loathsome and dreary. The nuptial life is attended with particular aggravations, since the tie is infrangible, and the choice of a more suitable companion [...] is forever precluded. (103)

According to the novel, the primary element of any marriage should be *commonality*—a likeness of interests, intellect, and sympathy. A partnership devoid of such equality violates women's economic and emotional autonomy in terms that ought to be unsupportable in a republican society. In Constantia's formulation, an unfit marriage would violate a fundamental, Lockean right to her labor and the products thereof³²—a right that underpins 18th-century notions of political autonomy and the social contract, and whose centrality to American political thought would certainly have been familiar to Brockden Brown's contemporary readers:

32. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 287–89. The relevant passage from Locke's essay reads as follows:

26. God, who hath given the World to Men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of Life, and convenience. The Earth, and all that is therein, is given to men for the Support and Comfort of their being. [...] yet being given for the use of Men, there must of necessity be a means *to appropriate* them some way or other before they can be of any use, or at all beneficial to any particular Man. The Fruit, or Venison, which nourishes the wild *Indian* [...] must be his, and so his, *i.e.*, a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it, before it can do him any good for the support of his Life.

27. Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For this *Labour* being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no Man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to [...].

28 [...] 'tis the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out of the state Nature leaves it in, which *begins the Property*; [...]. The labour that was mine, removing [the items] out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed* my *Property* in them.

Now she was at least the mistress of the product of her own labour. Her tasks were toilsome, but the profits, though slender, were sure, and she administered her little property in what manner she pleased. Marriage would annihilate this power. Henceforth she would be bereft even of personal freedom. So far from possessing property, she herself would become the property of another. (103)

Ormond dramatizes Constantia's search for a relationship based not on the asymmetrical power relationships established under coverture, but on the like-mindedness, similarity, and equality she shared with her friend Sophia. The novel insists upon her virtue; clearly Constantia does not *deserve* the gothic fate that awaits her at Ormond's hands. Instead, by casting Constantia as virtuous, educated, intellectually astute, and sympathetic, the novel suggests, more forcefully than *The Coquette*, that the "errors" are in no way her own. Constantia may be naïve, but her near-rape and -murder are depicted primarily as the result of Ormond's criminal misogyny and his misuse of the masculine privilege with which society has endowed him. Furthermore, the novel links Ormond's particular powers—duplicity, surveillance, and violence—to the very vulnerabilities instilled in women by their unequal education and their concomitant lack of political and social autonomy. Constantia is nearly Ormond's victim not only because of his villainy—one rooted in his abuse of masculine privilege. She is vulnerable to him because of the larger system of *habitus* in which women's education functions—one that has reconciled her to a hypervisibility that blinds her to Ormond's evil surveillance and accustoms her to a subservience that approximates violence.

Masculine and Feminine: *Ormond's* Gendered Oppositions

Brockden Brown has clearly gone to considerable trouble to make of Constantia a model for a "new" woman—one who combines her revolutionary demands for

equality with a characteristically feminine gentleness and goodness. The novel establishes Constantia's idealized combination of these gendered traits by contrasting her with two other women, each entangled, significantly, in one of the novel's overlapping and interconnected love triangles. Helena Cleves, Ormond's erstwhile mistress and friend of Constantia, represents a stereotypically female unsuitability for republican life. Alternatively, Martinette Beauvais, a cross-dressed soldier from the continental wars, exemplifies the risks of an overly masculinized existence. These female alternatives are explored not only in terms of each other, but also against the backdrop of Ormond's quintessentially masculine philosophy of absolute self-interest.³³

In place of a suitable republican attachment to the larger society to which he belongs, Ormond preaches a doctrine of self-service and the pursuit of his own happiness:

It was the business of the wise man [...] not to attempt, by individual efforts, so chimerical an enterprise as that of promoting the happiness of mankind. Their condition was out of the reach of a member of a corrupt society to control. (127)

Ormond sees his radical autonomy as merely the most pragmatic means by which to maximize his own happiness—which, he believes, is all that man is capable of:

33. As Mary Chapman observes in her explanatory notes to the recent Broadview Press edition of the novel, Ormond's radical philosophical beliefs and political preoccupations "link him with the Bavarian Illuminati, a celebrated secret society, founded in 1776, by law Professor Adam Weishaupt, who was in conflict with the Jesuit administrators of the University of Ingolstadt" and who created "a society of intellectuals who taught in seclusion and turned susceptible youths away from the teachings of the church to embrace deistic and republican principles" (126, n. 1). While the group's actual existence was short-lived, their name continued to serve as shorthand for atheism and free-thinking; despite having been destroyed in 1787, the Order and its teachings were held partly accountable for the French Revolution.

It did not follow from these preliminaries that virtue and duty were terms without a meaning, but they require us to promote our own, [sic] happiness, and not the happiness of others. Not because the former end is intrinsically preferable, not because the happiness of others is unworthy of primary consideration, but because it is not to be attained. [...] A man may reasonably hope to accomplish his end, when he proposes nothing but his own good. Any other point is inaccessible. (128–29)

For Ormond, “compassionless” in his “radical notions of liberty” (Stern 154), societal and governmental efforts to improve the condition of their members are futile at best; his radical disillusionment suggests to him that

A mortal poison pervaded the whole system, by means of which every thing received was converted into bane and purulence. Efforts designed to ameliorate the condition of an individual were sure of answering a contrary purpose. The principles of the social machine must be rectified, before men can be beneficially active. Our motives may be neutral or beneficent, but our actions tend merely toward the production of evil. (127)

Despite the apparent high-mindedness of his philosophical pragmatism, however, the reader soon realizes that Ormond’s doctrine of self-interest rests on a base of raw masculine power. In the terms established by the novel, Ormond’s autonomy is exposed as ruthless domination over others, a power he wields through an invasive, secret surveillance. Like Carwin, the villain of *Wieland*, Ormond is possessed of “a remarkable facility in imitating the voice and gestures of others” (130). This dubious skill allows him to create the *illusion* of the “doubling” Constantia seeks—a counterfeit that the novel clearly condemns. Unlike gentler fictions, Ormond’s pretenses are realized through the masculine authority he already possesses:

He was delighted with the power [his gift for duplicity] conferred. It enabled him to gain access, as if by supernatural means, to the privacy of others, and baffled their profoundest contrivances to hide themselves from his view. It flattered him with the possession of something like omniscience [...] He blended in his own person the functions of the poet and the actor, and his dramas were not fictitious but real. (130)

Ormond's gift establishes him as well outside of the republican ideal of personal and political transparency, or congruity. It further evokes the shifting realms of fiction and reality explored in Rousseau's oft-cited "Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre" where he denounces the theater as "a forum that teaches people how *not to act compassionately*" (Stern 25):

In giving our tears to these fictions, we have satisfied all the rights of humanity without having to give anything more of ourselves; whereas unfortunate people in person would require attention from us, relief, consolation, and work, which would involve us in their pains and would require at least the sacrifice of our indolence, from all of which we are quite content to be exempt. It could be said that our heart closes itself for fear of being touched at our expense.³⁴

Rousseau's passage explains that fiction, like Ormond, merely *mimics* a genuine compassion, and thus substitutes the appearance of sympathy for an active concern with another person. The authority vested in Ormond as a man protects him from understanding the material consequences that would result from true sympathy or commonality.

As Adam Smith acknowledges, sympathy is the product of the imagination: "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel like in the like situation [...] It is by imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations"³⁵. More significantly, however, sympathy requires a certain reciprocity or exchange between the sympathizer and the sufferer, and thus demands not merely self-consideration ("what I [...] should suffer if I were

34. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre" *Politics and the Arts: "Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre,"* trans. Allan Bloom (1758; Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1968) 25. Quoted in Stern 25.

35. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1854; NY: Prometheus, 2000) 3–4.

you”) but an imaginative transference between the two (“what I should suffer if I was really you”):

But though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief, I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die; but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you; and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. (Smith, *Theory* 465–66).

Such reciprocity is what makes the act of sympathy *generous*; by imagining oneself into the position of the other, the grief is “entirely upon [their] account” and serves the sufferer almost by proxy.

Ormond’s gift, however, is clearly distinct from reciprocity or the (temporary) equality of humanity that it requires. Ormond’s “gift” is merely one of imitation, enabled by his social status. Ormond has practiced “a method of gaining access to families, and marking them in their unguarded attitudes, more easy and effectual than any other; it required least preparation [...]; the disguise, also, was of the most impenetrable kind” (144–45). Ormond is in the habit of disguising himself as “a negro and a chimney sweep” and thereby gaining admittance to private homes through “the most entire and grotesque metamorphosis imaginable. It was stepping from the highest to the lowest rank of society” (144) in a way that Stern suggests “exploits the power of color and visibility in profoundly *interested* ways” (155). Unapologetically and unselfconsciously, Ormond adopts as a disguise the racial and economic characteristics of society’s outcasts, by means of which he gains improper access to the private lives of his victims. The novel thus reminds us that Ormond’s

status, his privilege as an educated man of means, is what allows him to conceive of this plan, and further renders his disguise impenetrable: the success of his deception rests on his own social elevation, and on the inconsequentiality of the “character” he portrays. Ormond’s villainy rests on his inability to see his opportunities as the result of his privileged social status as a man. Unlike Constantia, who serves others despite the risk to her health and to her virtue, Ormond is devoid of sympathy, “the faculty through which one comes to understand another’s anguish through imaginative inhabitation” (Stern 173).

Moreover, Ormond is dangerous precisely *because* he speaks the language of equality and autonomy. As the novel demonstrates, however, his ideals of “equality” are fueled not by his desire for a genuinely equal partner (although he claims it is so), but by a desire for domination that the novel casts as particularly “masculine” and violent. Ormond, like Constantia, articulates a desire for an equitable marriage, but in his case, “love” is perverted by his inability to see beyond his own desires or to imagine himself in another’s place. Instead, his search for an equal is corrupted by his masculine inability to do anything but dominate; he vows to have Constantia “by any means.”

Helena Cleves, Ormond’s mistress before he becomes enthralled with Constantia, represents the perils of hyper-femininity. Helena succumbs to Ormond’s demands that she abandon her demands of marriage and acquiesces to his belief that

“Marriage is absurd. This flows from the generable and incurable imperfection of the female character. No woman can possess that worth which would induce me to enter into this contract, and bind myself, without power of revoking the decree, to her society.” (135)

In compromising her virtue at Ormond's urging, Helena represents the vulnerability of the exaggeratedly feminine role she represents. As Ormond says of her, "She has never been accustomed to think beyond the day [...] She scarcely comprehends the principle that governs the world [...] She is ignorant and helpless as a child, on every topic that relates to the procuring of subsistence. Her education has disabled her from standing alone" (151). Ormond believes that Helena's intellectual inadequacy violates the fundamental equality necessary for a true marriage, yet he callously uses her naivete to bring about her downfall. Indeed, her intellectual failings and her inability to respond adequately to his philosophical arguments doom Helena to the generic seduction triad of dishonor, disgrace, and death by her own hand. She is unable to respond adequately to Ormond's radical philosophy, or to his assertion that while "Certain inconveniences attended women who set aside [...] the sanction of law" in their sexual relationships, such inconveniences were "imaginary. They owed their force to the errors of the sufferer. To annihilate them, it was only necessary to reason justly"—that is, to subscribe to Ormond's creed of inviolable self-interest (135). In response to Ormond's (masculine) rhetoric of reason and rationalism, Helena can employ only the discredited (feminine) discourse of excessive sentiment: "Habit had almost conferred upon her the power of spontaneous poesy, and, while she pressed his forehead to her bosom, she warbled forth a strain airy and exuberant in numbers, tender and ecstatic in its imagery—" (167). But Ormond rejects her "museful ardors" with cold implacability, rendering her literally and figuratively speechless: "To this speech Helena had nothing to answer. Her sobs and tears choked all utterance. She hid her face with her handkerchief, and sat powerless and overwhelmed with despair" (168). Ormond's "masculine" rhetoric and his cold assertions of logic silence her.

In contrast, Constantia, with her feminine beauty and masculine intellect, represents the possibility of a companionship based in similarity: something she herself seeks and he claims to value. While earlier we learned that “He denied the reality of that passion which claimed a similitude or sympathy of minds as one of its ingredients” (132), he finds in Constantia a “doubling of existence” that both confirms and stimulates his sense of himself: “Constantia delighted her companion by the facility with which she entered his meaning, the sagacity she displayed in drawing out his hints, circumscribing his conjectures, and thwarting or qualifying his maxims [...] Her discourse tended to rouse him from his lethargy, to furnish him with powerful excitements; and the time spent in her company seemed like a doubling of existence” (165). As if to illustrate what he sees as their fundamental compatibility, Ormond exults in her “manlike energy” (166) and asks, “Is there no part of me in which you discover your own likeness? Am I deceived, or is it an incontrollable destiny that unites us?” (172). Ormond’s desire for Constantia at first conceals his desire to dominate her.

But in emphasizing the “masculine” qualities that Ormond responds to in Constantia, the novel suggests that relying on similarity to provide the basis for an equitable union is doomed. If love can be based only on sympathy, and equality only on similarity, then to be Ormond’s equal is to be masculine—“manlike,” a double. Without the imaginative ability to identify *across* lines of gender, the novel seems to suggest, there can be no equitable heterosexual union: women are invariably more vulnerable by virtue of their social education and lack of real-world power; men, by virtue of their excess of social power and privilege, are potentially violent. Indeed, the novel’s violent climax suggests that women’s only recourse to the violence of male attention is further violence.

Constantia finds Ormond's arguments in favor of their sexual union (one that he refuses to have sanctioned by social institutions) rhetorically and logically skillful, but devoid of that larger sense of social interconnectedness—that is, *sympathy*—that she requires: “His arguments seldom imparted conviction, but delight never failed to flow from their lucid order and cogent brevity” (185). Despite being flattered by Ormond's intellectually complex attempts to “free” her from the social and cultural constraints on her behavior, Constantia, unlike the hapless Helena, recognizes that the material consequences of disregarding social strictures would, in fact, be very different for her than for a man. Despite the fact that, in Ormond's eyes, marriage remained “hateful and absurd as ever,” Ormond desires Constantia “by any means. If other terms were rejected, he was willing [...] to accept her as a wife; but this was a choice to be made only when every expedient was exhausted for reconciling her to a compact of a different kind” (181). Here Constantia's wits that save her; despite her feminine naiveté, she responds powerfully to Ormond's challenge “to confute his principles” with her own arguments.

The text reveals that Ormond's intense efforts to sway her are ultimately motivated not by passion but by his desire for *power*: “Ormond aspired to nothing more ardently than to hold the reins of opinion—to exercise absolute power over the conduct of others, not by constraining their limbs or by exacting obedience to his authority, but in a way of which his subjects should scarcely be conscious. He desired that his guidance should control their steps, but that his agency, when most effectual, should be least suspected” (180).

It would be too easy to dismiss Ormond's failures as those of one power-mad man. Brown, however, broadens his portrait of the perils of masculinity through his

depiction of Martinette Beauvais, a European woman warrior who befriends Constantia and functions as a foil to both Ormond himself and to Constantia's beloved childhood friend, Sophia. In Martinette (who, confusingly, first appears in the novel under the pseudonym Ursula Monrose), Constantia encounters what she at first thinks is a more cultured and worldly version of herself:

The conduct of the stranger, her affluent and lonely state, her conjectural relationship to the actors in the great theatre of Europe, were mingled together in the fancy of Constantia [...] She forgot not their similitude in age and sex, and delighted to prolong the dream of future confidence and friendship to take place between them. Her heart sighed for a companion fitted to partake in all her sympathies. (188)

Her perceptions of this stranger are shaded by their "connect[ion] with a being like herself, who had grown up with her from childhood, who had been entwined with her earliest affections, but from whom she had been severed" (188). The novel, however, insists upon Martinette's basic unsuitability as Constantia's double; like Ormond, Martinette has been coarsened by the excesses of a masculine life. In intellect and courage, she serves as Constantia's reflection, but she is ultimately revealed as lacking in the qualities of femininity essential to sympathy.

Eager to fill Sophia's absence, and with Ormond away on a mysterious errand, Constantia is drawn to Martinette and her adventures as a mercenary in "male dress," but "did not overlook peculiarities in the conversation and deportment of this woman. These exhibited no tendencies to confidence, or traces of sympathy. They merely denoted large experience, vigorous faculties, and masculine attainments" (191). Martinette is yet another instance of a kind of false double; although "[h]er education seemed not to differ widely from that which Constantia had received" (191), her descriptions of the dramatic events of recent European history are ominously dispassionate and "unattended by transports of indignation or sorrow, or

by pauses of abstraction, such as were likely to occur in one whose hopes and fears had been intimately blended with public events” (192).

Martinette’s military career may have been sparked initially by her devotion to a young soldier, but the novel makes it abundantly clear that she enjoyed the life she found therein, and that her experiences have transformed her significantly and disturbingly into something unrecognizable as female: “I was delighted to assume the male dress, to acquire skill at the sword, and dexterity in every boisterous exercise,” she says. “The timidity that commonly attends women gradually vanished” (201) from her, leaving her “as if imbued by a soul that was a stranger to the sexual distinction” (202). The problem with Ormond, Martinette’s disturbingly masculine presence suggests, is not his *maleness* but his existence in an exclusively masculine paradigm, one that is, like her own, untempered by the sympathy and emotion necessary for reciprocal equality.

Martinette’s regret over an unfulfilled suicide mission involving a Prussian general serves as a warped parallel to Helena’s suicide and marks her mode of existence as one equally unviable for the republican woman. Whereas Helena’s suicide fits a generically feminized model of self-destruction, Martinette’s demonstrates a thirst for blood and disregard for life that render her unfeminine. Like a man, she “would have died by her own hand” by virtue of “[t]he love of liberty” (206). The contrasting representations of suicide, one motivated by hyperfeminine sensitivity and the other by a excess of manliness, mark both Helena and Martinette as unsuitable models/doubles for Constantia; neither offers the balance between reason and sentiment that she seeks. Repulsed by Martinette’s lack of womanly sentiment, “Constantia shuddered, and drew back, to contemplate more deliberately the features of her guest [...] The image which her mind had reflected

from the deportment of this woman was changed. The *likeness which she had feigned to herself was no longer seen*. She felt that antipathy was prepared to replace love” (207; emphasis mine).³⁶ In rejecting Martinette, Constantia rejects a model of female subjectivity that, in seeking equality, serves instead to eviscerate the values of the feminine: compassion, sympathy, and the vulnerability that allows for truly reciprocal exchange. Like Helena, Martinette represents a possible pole on a continuum of womanly identities; the novel rejects both as too extreme and undesirable. But *Ormond* is not merely a discussion about the well-balanced woman. In its conclusion, the novel returns to the corollary issue of masculine power, as if to suggest that debates over appropriate models of femininity are moot in the face of the real threat—masculine violence.

Man Scorned: The Violence of Watching

The novel’s horrific conclusion pits Ormond’s masculine wiles against the most significant of Constantia’s partnerships—her affectionate reunion with Sophia. This final triangle proves, ultimately, the most violent. In the return of Sophia, the dear friend and companion of her childhood, Constantia finds the intensely sympathetic and reciprocal relationship she has desired—a relationship, it must be noted, the sexualized description of which heightens its contrast with Ormond’s dry, philosophical courtship. Unlike Ormond’s arguments, which failed to move her, Constantia’s feelings for Sophia are described in the ecstatic terms of a reunion between lovers:

36. Martinette’s unsuitability as a model/double for Constantia is reinforced by her connections to Ormond; we find at the end of the novel that during his mysterious sojourn, Ormond has in fact passed himself off as her brother (275).

The succeeding three days were spent in a state of dizziness and intoxication. The ordinary functions of nature were disturbed. The appetite for sleep and for food were confounded and lost amidst the impetuositities of a master-passion. To look and to talk to each other afforded enchanting occupation for every moment. I would not part from her side, but eat [sic] and slept, walked and mused and read, with my arm locked in hers, and with her breath fanning my cheek. (241)

As if in deliberate mockery of the rational and logical argumentation deployed by Ormond, the description of Sophia and Constantia's relationship reasserts the value of emotionalism: "O precious inebriation of the heart! O pre-eminent love! what pleasure of reason or of sense can stand in competition with those attendant upon thee?" (241) However, such rapture brings down upon them Ormond's wrath, and his violence; his conviction that Constantia is his "double" puts her in the paradoxical position of being a worthy adversary (in her "masculine" intellect) and a vulnerable inferior (as a helpless woman).

The novel's final scenes—in which Ormond's ongoing surveillance of Constantia is revealed and turns to murderous rage—insist on the inescapable links among masculinity, surveillance, possession, and violence. But while Ormond's "secret witnessing" may be the most egregious example of such intrusion, the novel links it to an earlier, primal scene of observation that implicates all acts of surveillance and establishes the terms by which we are to read both Ormond's final assault on Constantia, and her own violent response.

Early on in the novel, there is a strange scene, apparently tangential to Constantia's story, of a benign midnight observation gone awry. During one of the recurrent plague outbreaks, Baxter, a local security guard, is awakened by his wife, "who desired him to notice a certain glimmering on the ceiling. It *seemed* the fitting ray of a distant and moving light [...] His employment, as the guardian of property, *naturally suggested* to him the idea of robbery" (89, my emphasis). In the grotesque

episode that follows, Baxter's purportedly innocent surveillance of the neighboring Monroe house (later, of course, revealed to be the residence of Ursula/Martinette) involves him in a macabre midnight scene in which he himself becomes a figure of horror and violation.

Approaching the house, Baxter finds that "All was darksome and waste. He listened, and *imagined* that he heard the aspirations of grief. The sound was scarcely articulate, but had an electrical effect upon his feelings" (88, emphasis mine). The language of this intensely eerie scene demonstrates the fallibility of Baxter's observations, insisting upon the origin of his perceptions within his own assumptions and imaginings. Baxter's imperfect interpretation of what he sees suggests a critique of the Enlightenment's insistence on the primacy of vision; that is, on the assumption that to *see* is to *know*.³⁷ Brown insists that what Baxter *sees* is largely produced by what he expects, and by what he imagines: his eye

caught a glimpse of a human figure passing into the house through this door. The person had a candle in his hand [...]

The person disappeared too quickly to allow him to say whether it was male or female. This scrutiny confirmed rather than weakened the apprehensions that first occurred. (89)

Fearing that "[t]he father might be sick; and what opposition could be made by the daughter to the stratagems or violence of midnight plunderers?" Baxter climbs up at the back of the building, where he "perched on a fence at midnight, mute and motionless, and gazing at a dark and dreary dwelling" (90):

In a short time the lady again appeared at it. She was in a stooping posture, and appeared to be dragging something along the floor. His blood ran cold at this spectacle. His fear instantly figured itself to a corpse, livid

37. As Julia Stern puts it, "Brown's critique of Locke inheres in the idea that vision is an utterly fallen if not a tragic sense" (169).

and contagious. Still he had no power to move. The lady's strength, enfeebled as it was by grief, and perhaps by the absence of nourishment, seemed scarcely adequate to the task which she had assigned herself [...] Her tears were either exhausted or refused to flow, for none were shed by her. Presently she resumed her undertaking. Baxter's horror increased in proportion as she drew nearer to the spot where he stood; and yet it seemed as if some fascination had forbidden him to recede. (91)

Baxter makes two major mistakes; first, he mistakes the figure of a woman for that of a man. Second, instead of a distraught daughter, he is, in fact, watching "Ursula Monroe," later revealed to be Martinette Beauvais, give her adopted father what she herself characterizes as an "interment [...] (soldier-fashion)" (208). The scene, told early on from Baxter's perspective and revisited by Martinette in the novel's later sections clearly registers Martinette's/Ursula's unfeminine traits as they will ultimately be revealed to Constantia.

Even more interestingly, however, the well-intentioned Baxter himself becomes a particularly *manly* object of horror, with his "muscular form and rugged visage, scarred and furrowed into something like ferocity" (90). His head, showing over the fence, was illuminated by the candle, which "bestowed a certain air of wildness on features which nature, and the sanguinary habits of a soldier, had previously rendered [...] harsh and stern" (90). Witnessing the woman kneeling by the shrouded corpse, Baxter glimpses the corpse—the "ghastly visage of the unhappy Monroe"—and in his shock, disturbs and alarms the mourner; "she suddenly threw her eyes upward, and gained a full view of Baxter's extraordinary countenance, just before it disappeared. She manifested her terror by a piercing shriek" and Baxter flees (92). The observer has become the observed, and the onlooker to horror has become the horror himself.

Martinette later recounts a scene far less horrific than Baxter's fevered imaginings. As Martinette says, "The death of Roselli [Monrose] I foresaw, because

it was gradual in its approach, and was sought by him as a good. My grief, therefore, was exhausted before it came, and I rejoiced at his death, because it was the close of all his sorrows. The rueful pictures of my distress and weakness which were given by Baxter existed only in his own fancy” (208). Of her supposed flight, she claims, “It was absurd to stay any longer in the house. Having finished the interment of Roselli, (soldier-fashion,) for he was the man who suffered foolish regrets to destroy him, I forsook the house” (208). But the bizarre horror of that incident lingers on, especially as it is recalled to our attention just prior to Ormond’s attack on Constantia.

The scene of Baxter’s midnight surveillance brings together the multiple levels of the novel’s peculiar and fragmentary indictment of American federalist society: the pervasiveness of the prying and mistaken figure of Baxter, whose position of marginal judicial authority invites him to spy on the private scene of interment; the unnatural stoicism of the woman soldier interring her father/commander without a tear; the ghastliness of her realization that this private moment is not, in fact, private, but is being observed by a representative of the male constabulary; and, finally, this secret and hasty interment occurring at the center of the novel’s thematics of surveillance. Like *The Coquette*, *Ormond* concludes around a corpse; or, more accurately, two corpses: Roselli’s, as recalled here, and Ormond’s own, which this scene prefigures. Finally, the scene raises the issue of reportorial accuracy: whose version are we to trust? Martinette’s later remembrance, which emphasizes her stalwart fortitude at the side of a fallen comrade; or Baxter’s, which attempts to displace the horror of his own presence by locating it in Martinette’s unnatural acts?

This primal scene of observational invasion is paired with the novel’s final scenes, where the extent of Ormond’s “secret witness” to Constantia and Sophia’s

most intimate, feminine moments is revealed. Unlike Baxter's ludicrous position with respect to that earlier scene of horror, however, Ormond's treachery concludes in violence. Ormond's final trespass reveals the inescapable continuum that connects surveillance to the masculine prerogative of power. In Ormond's case, his power is all the more threatening because he has misrepresented it in terms of autonomy and equality—a discourse that is revealed to be as false as his earlier acts of "sympathy."

In apparent defiance of the laws of nature, Constantia realizes that "[m]eanings of which she and her friend alone were conscious were thus discovered by Ormond, through some other medium than words; yet that was impossible. A being unendowed with preternatural attributes could gain the information which this man possessed, only by the exertion of his senses" (249). Although their "interviews and conversations [...] took place at seasons of general repose, when all doors were fast and avenues shut, in the midst of silence, and in the bosom of retirement," Sophia and Constantia discover that they have been overheard by Ormond while at Sophia's country home:

The theme of our discourse was, commonly, too sacred for any ears but our own; disclosures were of too intimate and delicate a nature for any but a female audience; they were too injurious to the fame and peace of Ormond for him to be admitted to partake of them: yet his words implied a full acquaintance with recent events, and with purposes and deliberations shrouded, as we imagined, in impenetrable secrecy. (246)

By treachery, Ormond has managed to invade Constantia's privacy, primarily through a series of concealed closets hidden in the dwellings she shared with her father, and in the country house that had once belonged to the Dudleys, then fallen into Ormond's hands before reverting to Constantia through the bequest of Helena

(whom Ormond had previously installed there).³⁸ These secret closets represent the extent to which Constantia's most private domestic spaces have, like her most private moments of conversation, been subjected to Ormond's invasive male presence. In a kind of layering of this penetration motif, Ormond has further come to Constantia in order to rape her, to claim from her what he believes he is entitled to by virtue of his superior, *masculine* power: "What thou refusedst to bestow it is in my power to extort. I came for that end. When this end is accomplished, I shall restore thee to liberty" (267–68). "Living or dead, the prize I have in view shall be mine" (269), he threatens.

Only at this moment does Constantia see Ormond clearly for the first time: "The evil reserved for her, hitherto obscured by half-disclosed and contradictory attributes, was now sufficiently apparent. The truth in this respect unveiled itself with the rapidity and brightness of an electrical flash" (268). She recognizes finally that his elaborate and compelling philosophies regarding the pursuit of happiness are merely justifications for the application of the brute power of his manhood: "all appeals to his compassion and benevolence would counteract her purpose, since, in the unexampled conformation of this man's mind, these principles were made

38. It is worth noting that all of the real property of value in the novel is transmitted by and through women, with men appearing only infrequently as the possessors—usually through means of injustice—of objects of value. The country house, perhaps the prime example of how property changes hands, has been acquired by Ormond after the Dudleys' financial collapse (a collapse engineered by the diabolical Thomas Craig, perhaps the clearest example of extralegal male appropriation). Ormond furnishes Helena Cleves with the house as a means of keeping her at his disposal while at a remove from his daily business and his wooing of Constantia. However, Helena leaves all of her property to Constantia at her death, returning the property to Constantia. Constantia's dealings with Ursula/Martinette revolve around the exchange of a valuable lute sold by Constantia in her financial straits, which Ursula returns in an act of pure generosity. Finally, the miniature portrait of Sophia, which Constantia treasures, goes missing because Constantia's faithless landlord, who acquired the portrait as collateral for unpaid rent, has reneged on his promise to keep it intact for her to reclaim.

subservient to his most flagitious design” owing to his “fatal perverseness of reasoning” (268).

Constantia has no obvious possibility for countering the inevitable conclusion to Ormond’s threats against her, Brockden Brown reminds us, because she is a woman: “For the contrivance and execution of fraud, all the habits of her life and all the maxims of her education had conspired to unfit her. Her force of muscles would avail her nothing against the superior energy of Ormond” (267). But counter it she does, with a display of uncharacteristic violence of her own: “The violence of Ormond had been repulsed by equal violence” (274). Rather than submit to her destruction at Ormond’s hands, Constantia draws upon her “masculine” intelligence, but in so doing, she becomes implicated in the masculine world of violence. Constantia’s foray into the world of masculine physicality is thus not without consequence; her action renders her nearly unrecognizable to Sophia, who finds her locked in the country house with the bodies of Craig and Ormond: “A figure, with difficulty recognised to be that of my friend, now appeared in sight. Her hands were clasped on her breast, her eyes wildly fixed upon the ceiling and streaming with tears, and her hair unbound and falling confusedly over her bosom and neck” (272). Unlike Martinette, however, Constantia retains the feminine attributes of fear and grief that promise to restore her to herself.

In attempting to reconcile Constantia’s act of self-defense, the novel casts into relief two radically different forms of “witnessing” associated with two very different notions of interpersonal connection: the benign narrative version practiced by Sophia Westwyn, Constantia’s bosom friend and the narrator of the tale, and the malignant, invasive and unsympathetic scrutiny imposed Ormond. Ormond’s death is revealed as the inevitable consequence of his doctrine of power as he asserted it

through acts of visual transgression, and represents his disregard for the kind of reciprocity that true equality requires. In contrast to Ormond's asymmetrical surveillance, the novel establishes a more benign and collaborative form of narrative "witnessing" that allows for a more equitable making of meaning. Like Sophia, the reader realizes that she has "been a witness" to Constantia's "personal deportment and domestic habits" throughout the novel, but a witness of a very different kind from Ormond. In the place of Ormond's spying and prying, Sophia's narrative testimonial to her friend, like the reader's own experience reading the novel, allows for the layering of alternative points of view. Martinette, for example, recounts her own story to Constantia in a narrative digression that Sophia's narration leaves unchallenged and largely uncommented upon. As the title suggests, the novel brings a masculine identified practice of "secret" surveillance that is inherently violent in its intentions and effects into conflict with a feminized (but not exclusively female) narrative practice of "witness" that is malleable, unintrusive, and collaborative—reciprocal.

Despite her centrality to the final events of Ormond's "courtship" of her dear friend, for example, Sophia as a narrator is careful to avoid labeling or encapsulating what she does not understand about him: "truly to portray the motives and related the actions of another appears utterly impossible" (126) she acknowledges, especially in the case of Ormond. This principle of incompleteness infuses her narrative; she admits the necessary partiality of her kind of "witnessing": "To comprehend the whole truth, with regard to the character and conduct of another, may be denied to any human being; but different will have, in their pictures, a greater or less portion of this truth" (126). In a statement that nicely rebukes Eliza Wharton's mourners and their self-interested reification of her,

Sophia recognizes that perfect legibility is a chimera: “To scrutinize and ascertain our own principles are abundantly difficult. To exhibit these principles to the world with absolute sincerity can scarcely be expected” (125–6).

Ultimately, in articulating a mode of observation modeled on narrative, not on visuality, *Ormond* asserts a very different role for witnesses and spectators, a role that has powerful implications for fiction. Directly repudiating Ormond’s compassionless self-interest, Sophia asserts that

It is above all things necessary that we should be thoroughly acquainted with the condition of our fellow-beings. Justice and compassion are the fruit of knowledge. The misery that overspreads so large a part of mankind exists chiefly because those who are able to relieve it do not know that it exists. Forcibly to paint the evil, seldom fails to excite the virtue of the spectator and seduce him into wishes, at least, if not into exertions, of beneficence. (237)

Ormond asserts the ultimate impossibility—and undesirability—of the kind of personal transparency or hypervisibility desired by the societies imagined in *The Coquette* and *The Boarding School*, depicting such surveillance as motivated by *power*, and thus indistinguishable from the voyeurism and violation practiced by Ormond. Instead, *Ormond* advocates a benevolent and necessarily incomplete rendering of others’ experience in order to instill virtue and generosity in the spectator. Where Ormond’s deceptions and disguises work for ill, Sophia’s gentler fictions act to benefit the larger circle of mankind, while respecting the private interiority of those whom they depict. Ormond himself remains inscrutable even in death: “A smile of disdain still sat upon his features,” she reports. The means of his death remains similarly shielded from the reader’s inappropriate attention: “The wound by which he fell was secret, and was scarcely betrayed by the effusion of a drop of blood” (273).

Throughout the novel, Constantia's "education" and her ability to decipher her world, while superior to those of every other woman in the book, prove insufficient against Ormond's masculine scheming and his coldly rational philosophies. In *Ormond*, the world of female community is set against a masculinized individuality based fundamentally on the capacity for violence and enacted through Ormond's pervasive surveillance. The violence Constantia encounters is different perhaps in degree, but not, ultimately, in kind from that experienced by Eliza Wharton, or by the pupils of *The Boarding School*. Whereas Foster's two novels situate their heroines in largely female worlds, *Ormond* reveals the extent to which the "female" realm of emotional intimacy has already been invaded by the hostile masculine forces of asymmetrical power, and thereby suggests the complicity of any education based on surveillance in women's exclusion from the political and social realms of power. The imbalance of power inherent in a female pedagogy of "hypervisibility" like that Eliza suffers is, Brockden Brown suggests, an education in inadequacy and victimhood. In both cases, the unbridgeable gulf between male privilege and female constraint is the source of violence and death. Writ large, *Ormond's* violent end suggests a grim fate for a nation founded on hopeful visions of political sympathy and fraternity. If "similarity" is essential as the basis for sympathy, the novel suggests, men and women will be unable to move beyond the asymmetry of their political and social status to become partners, spouses, or citizens. Significantly, too, it is *Ormond* himself who is the final "victim"; in this way, Brockden Brown suggests that the consequences of political asymmetry are perilous not merely for the subordinate figure.

Taken together, *The Boarding School*, *The Coquette*, and *Ormond* depict Federalist America as a place of anxious and judgmental scrutiny enacted with

particular violence against its women. The political “transparency” that was to unite the private and the public by rendering autonomy *virtuous* is depicted instead in these texts as yet another manifestation of power, status, privilege. These novels, finally, demonstrate that the real danger of an education in virtue is that one might learn its lessons all too well. Considering Foster’s more conservative novels in relation to Brockden Brown’s text suggests a more radical reading of their depiction of female discipline. The novels depict the real force exercised by concentric circles of social surveillance, female and male. They exploit the contradiction inherent between the nation’s premise of political equality and its practices of social, political, and economic asymmetry. And in their unflinching depiction of the brutality inherent in disciplining women, they identify women’s political exclusion as the source of (potential) problems for the new nation. True sympathy and a secure basis for national union will continue to evade the United States, these novels suggest, as long as women are denied full political agency and taught to be subservient.

Chapter 4

'Accidental Superiority': Education, Violence,
and Assimilation in Jackson's America

The preceding sections of this project have traced an arc from the central figure of the American nation, the white male citizen, toward the outer margins of his society. Beginning with discussions about the ideal citizen as he might be produced and maintained through an education in virtue, my previous chapters have radiated outward from that central figure. *Wieland* gives us a figure who conforms superficially to the American ideal, but who ultimately demonstrates the ficticity and impossibility of it. In its representation of the gothic anti-citizen and a world where reason is obsolete, *Wieland* undermines the easy assumption of inherent fitness for citizenship. The preceding chapter moves another rung down the national ladder as it examines the political and social plight of women, whose questionable status in the new republic makes them vulnerable to the deprivations of men. This final chapter considers how race inflects issues of national pedagogy, specifically those surrounding the situation of Native American Indians.¹ Throughout this project, my emphasis has been on the flexibility of the themes I have brought together under the term “pedagogy”—how they allow American novelists to inhabit contradictory positions simultaneously, or make possible the exploration of

1. In most cases, I have chosen to reproduce the nineteenth-century convention and identify Native Americans as “Indians,” the term in common use at that time. Elsewhere in this chapter, I resort to the more politically expedient term “Native Americans,” particularly when I am not drawing upon a historical source. At the same time, I am aware that the descendants of American Indians in many cases express a preference for the term “Indian,” and that “Native American” carries with it an academic flavor.

fantastical consequences. This chapter again relies on the fluidity of that category. Rather than suggesting that the situation of Indian education parallels the issues raised with respect to white Americans, I argue instead that what is significant is the way a thematics of pedagogy allows for the simultaneous and even overlapping expression of contradictory “truths” about Indians. For Native Americans, as for women, a rhetoric of inclusion was frequently deployed to *exclude* them from full participation in the nation, a paradox that makes possible a broad critique of the injustices that faced them.

Reading Skin: William Apess and National Crimes

In the polemical essay, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man,” which concludes his 1833 collection *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*, William Apess, an itinerant preacher and Pequot Indian, offers a stunningly visceral and original image of the importance of skin color. In it, he envisions a practice of “reading” skin color, not as an index of moral or racial superiority, but as the background on which a racial history is inscribed: “Assemble all nations together in your imagination,” he demands,

and then let the whites be seated among them, and then let us look for the whites [...] Now suppose these skins were put together, and each skin had its national crimes written upon it—which skin do you think would have the greatest? [...] I should look at all the skins, and I know that when I cast my eye upon that white skin, I should enter my protest against it immediately and cleave to that which is more honorable.²

2. William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man,” *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians*; in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O’Connell (Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1992) 157.

Throughout his essay, Apess rewrites the usual schema by which skin color is judged (that is, lighter as superior), focusing his reader's attention not on the visual signifier of skin color, but on the racism that lurks beneath it: what he calls "a most holy, unrighteous, unbecoming, and impure black principle, [...] as corrupt and unholy as it can be," and "a black inconsistency" that is "ten times blacker than any skin you will find in the universe" (156, 157). In the preceding image, however, Apess abandons, briefly, his strategy of setting surface (skin color) against depth (principles) and instead inhabits, so to speak, the full possibilities enabled by white skin's very whiteness. Elsewhere in the essay, Apess has noted the numerical absurdity of race-prejudice, since God has "made fifteen colored people to one white and placed them here upon this earth" (157). Here, he envisions the skins of those disproportionately few white people in the world sewn together into a kind of grotesque tapestry, upon which their "national crimes" are "written" and can, by virtue of the resemblance between white skin and paper, be clearly read. This graphic image establishes a central connection between literacy and the inscription of a history of racial violence by white Americans, who have enacted both upon those with the misfortune of darker skin. Apess's image further illuminates a central feature of early Indian education: its facility at helping its students learn to *read* their own exclusion from the national culture even as they recognize the injustice of that exclusion.

Apess's graphic depiction of white skin as a kind of tablet illuminates the primary concern of the following chapter: the way in which the various functions of pedagogy—acts of learning, literacy, and education—are implicated in literary representations of the violence of the American Indian experience of the early 19th century. While considerable work has been done on the historical situation of early

19th-century Native Americans and their relationship to national ideology, few studies have thus far investigated the relationship between the work of intellectual assimilation and literary depictions of sensational violence specifically associated with the sites and mechanisms and results of learning. This chapter attempts to underscore the interdependence of these two apparently disparate elements common to representations of Native Americans.

In the following pages, I trace the connection between the political rhetoric of educational promise and the practice of continued Native exclusion from images of the national family. This contradiction in practice emerges in large part because of the flexibility with which “education” was understood, as my previous chapters suggest. Because of its location at the cusp of the private and the public, and because it derives simultaneously—and contradictorily—from a belief in mankind’s malleability *and* a desire to establish a stable political identity, education again emerges at the center of larger debates about Native American assimilation and their potential to become adequately “civilized” to take their place at the national table. The slippage between Enlightenment notions of the potential for all men to become educated and a more essentialist rhetoric of racial incapacity is obscured through the fluid discourse and praxis of education that serves to negotiate fictional representations of the “Indian Question.” In particular, this chapter considers Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s 1827 novel *Hope Leslie*, a relatively sympathetic look at the plight of the Indian, as it draws together the different strains of thought about Native Americans. Situating her novel in the context of developing American-Indian relations and in conversation with William Apess’s discussion of education, this final section of my study demonstrates the novel’s inadvertent complicity in the Indian

Question. Such complicity is unavoidable because the discourse of pedagogical citizenship is inherently slippery and lends itself to opposing possibilities.

Going Native: Crèvecoeur's "American Farmer" among the Indians

The history of the relationship between the United States government and the Native American tribes in Northern America, and, in fact, the so-called "Indian problem" that dominates the early part of the 19th century is at its root a largely *pedagogical* problem. Historically, the young nation's government had pursued a project with respect to the Natives that was essentially educational in nature, relying as it did on the instruction, preparation, and ultimate assimilation of the Indian into the larger white culture encroaching upon his lands. As early as 1782, J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur's fictional American Farmer lays out his plan to civilize the Natives through a program of education and by their indoctrination into the civilizing capacities of private property. Dismayed by the violence and conflict the Revolution has brought among white colonists, Farmer James declares his desire to "go native"—that is, to move himself and his fictional family somewhere "more congenial to our native dispositions than the fictitious society in which we live"³. Drawing upon the mythos of the Noble savage, James asserts that unlike his colonial brethren, who have engaged upon a course of matricidal revolution, the Natives "have not, they will not take up the hatchet against a people who have done them no harm. [...] they cannot feel the stings of vengeance, the thirst of which alone impels them to shed blood: far superior in their motives of action to the Europeans who, for a sixpence per day, may be engaged to shed that of any people on earth" (217).

3. J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Albert E. Stone (NY: Penguin, 1986) 214.

James's escapist fantasy is short-lived, however, and merely recapitulates the "progress" of the colonial era that is just ending; braced by his faith in the Lockean machinations of private property and honest labor, what he envisions is *not* embracing Native customs, however appealing they seem at first, but instead preserving and disseminating his European models of industry: "As long as we keep ourselves busy in tilling the earth, there is no fear of any of us becoming wild; it is the chase and the food it procures that have this strange effect" (220). James imagines a future in which his family enacts the purifying ritual of rejecting Europeanized artificiality in favor of a bracing exercise in the woods, where they can become "a still simpler people divested of everything except hope, food, and the raiment of the woods" (222). No sooner has he envisioned this Edenic retreat, however, than he recalls the "the danger of Indian education" (222) and lays plans to "inoculate" his own children against the corrupting pleasures of Native life with an elaborately reconstituted economic system of labor, credit, and rewards:

In order to supply th[e] great deficiency of industrious motives and to hold out to them a real object to prevent the fatal consequences of this sort of apathy, I will keep an exact account of all that shall be gathered and give each of them a regular credit [...] to be paid them in real property [...] Whatever success they may meet in hunting or fishing shall be only considered as recreation and pastime; I shall thereby prevent them from estimating their skill in the chase as an important and necessary accomplishment (223).

As a further preventative measure, James imagines extending his program of civilization to his new natives, belying his claims that he intends fully to join their society, and to live "under the wigwam."

I will make it a point to give the overplus [of his new land] to such Indians as shall be most unfortunate in their huntings; I will persuade them, if I can, to till a little more land than they do and not to trust so much to the

produce of the chase [... M]y example alone may rouse the industry of some and serve to direct others in their labours. (221)

James's optimism toward his new life, and his faith in the nobility and generosity of "the inoffensive society of these people in their villages," does not extend to full assimilation: "the strongest prejudices would make me abhor any alliance with them in blood, disagreeable no doubt to Nature's intentions, which have strongly divided us by so many indelible characters" (222). In fact, Crèvecoeur's deeply ironic depiction of the simple farmer and his flight from the Revolution erupting around him articulates multiple elements of white attitudes toward Indians on the North American continent.

James's desire to retreat among the "undefiled offspring" of Nature is, most importantly, deeply self-serving, and expresses his disillusionment with the conflict among his white neighbors rather than any sincere desire to become "perfectly Indianized" (215; 213). For James, life among the Indians serves as a kind of retreat into an "unencumbered" Rousseauian state of nature, which he envisions as a sort of vacation from the effects on civilization of the "dark wheel of fortune" (210; 205). While he praises the Natives as "uncontaminated" by the greed and factionalism of white society, he nonetheless agonizes over the "singular charm" of Indian ways, the "singularly captivating" and "bewitching" appeal of their way of life and its potential effects on his own children (211; 212; 214). His praise for these simpler people is tempered by his conviction that there is something irrational in their appeal, such that none of the Indians who have lived among whites have completely adopted white ways, while of the whites who have lived among Indians, "thousands [...] are Indians" (214). For James, the Indians function as a kind of pre-historic antecedent of civilized man, the Noble Savage who recalls for white man his original

“dispositions” toward Nature and whose ways function as a kind of restorative antidote to the excesses of civilized life.

**Indian Other: Government Policy, Race Pedagogy
and White Society’s Self-Image**

Crèvecoeur’s depiction of his simple American farmer, and of that farmer’s deep ambivalence toward the Native life, represents a predominant attitude toward Native Americans in the early years of the nation. On the one hand, official and unofficial U.S. policies express faith in the ultimate power of labor, property, capital, and education to bring the Indian into the national fold; at the same time, however, white discourse about the Native is laced with a kind of psycho-biological repugnance and expresses a prevailing sense that no project of cultural pedagogy can fully erase their Otherness.

But the erasure of Indian Otherness is perhaps not the genuine goal of American public policy. The “Indian Question” that gained full prominence in the 1820s and 1830s removal conflicts is powerful not merely for practical reasons, but because the relationship between white and Native Americans in which it intervened was fundamental to the construction and maintenance of the American self. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has persuasively demonstrated, the “American National subject,” whose self-conscious emergence I have discussed in the preceding chapters of this study, relied for its coherence in part on the ideological construction of “negative others” against whom that normative identity could be defined: white middle-class women, African American slaves, and “the American Indian warrior.”⁴

4. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Dis-Covering the Subject of the ‘Great Constitutional Discussion,’ 1786–1789,” *The Journal of American History* 79:3 (1992): 846, 849. Smith-Rosenberg’s particular focus is the initial creation of an American subject as it emerged in representations surrounding the period of the Constitutional debates, but as she notes, the

Drawing on Lacanian theories of identity-formation and citing Abdul R. Jan Mohamed's work in "The Economy of Manichaean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," Smith-Rosenberg explains that "[i]nternally fragmented subjectivities assume a coherence when they have it not, by being juxtaposed to multiple others—especially negative (feared and hated) others [...] against which the uncertain subject is consolidated and mobilized" (846). JanMohamed reminds us that in invoking the "Manichean allegory—a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object," "the discursive practices [of imperialism] do to the symbolic, linguistic presence of the native what the material practices do to his physical presence: the writer commodifies him so that he can be exploited by the administrator."⁵

As one of the "Others" against whom the American national subject emerged, Native Americans served a psychological purpose in their difference that mitigated against their ultimate inclusion and civilization, the stated goal of most national policy. Susan Scheckel has suggested that psychological pressure of and on the new national identity intensified in the wake of the successful "second revolution" of the

process of national subjectivity is ongoing, and its manifestations are fluid: "Neither subject positions nor the resultant subjectivities are biologically rooted or psychologically inherent to individuals. Rather, being ideologically constructed and socially normative, they circulate within the popular culture [...] and through social interactions [...] It is thus as subjects to and of popular and political culture that individuals internalize and affirm a particular subjectivity as 'naturally' their own" (845). I see the Removal period as posing a challenge to national identity as compelling and destabilizing as those posed by the Federalist era discussed in the preceding chapters, hence the inclusion of this historical moment in my study.

5. Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichaean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1985) 82, 83.

War of 1812; as the founders' generation died out, American identity could no longer be "embodied by the founders themselves" or represented through them, increasing the demand for a national literature that could "express and affirm the nation's distinctive identity" symbolically.⁶ The Indian question, Scheckel argues, became prominent precisely because it "provided the occasion for, and space to reflect on, national identity formation" and on "the symbolic systems according to which the meaning of the nation itself was constituted" (10).⁷ Debates over the fate of the Indians engaged both the larger body politic and the individual political body because the attitudes they exposed imperiled the fundamental American principles of equality and opportunity "by which white Americans defined their collective moral ascendancy and national legitimacy" (Scheckel 10). At the same time, progressive visions of Indian assimilation and civilization destabilized what Smith-Rosenberg calls the American's "privileged middle ground illuminated by the 'whiteness'" of his skin, a middle ground where he existed "equipoised between degenerate European aristocrats and savages native to America's woods" (848). This middle ground resonates with James's planned sojourn among the Indians, among whom he can imagine his own existence as neither bloodthirsty Euro-American nor savage Native hunter, but as something uniquely between the two.

6. Susan Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998) 7, 8.

7. Both Scheckel and Smith-Rosenberg rely on Lacan's mirror stage as a model for individual and collective identity formation. In the process, the identity in question is realized, psychologically if not actively, through an act of imaginative identification with the fictional coherence revealed in the looking-glass. This glimpse of a fictional subject endowed with mastery and agency enables the subject's propulsion into the realm of the symbolic and representative. As Scheckel observes, "Just as the construction of self-image during the mirror state as something unified and controllable to some extent depends on a denial of reality, so the construction of the nation as a homogenous union of citizens also depends on an essential denial of reality. [... I]ndians represented that which had to be denied for a coherent image of the nation to be recognized" (12). See Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (NY: Norton, 1977).

This “middle ground” was shaky ground, as even a brief survey of official policy toward the American Indian will document. Throughout the period leading up to the removals, American policy demonstrates a profound ambivalence and logical slippage with reference to its characterization of who the Indians were and what could be expected from them. In December of 1818, for example, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun echoed Crèvecoeur’s naïve farmer in his faith in the civilizing potential of capitalism and Lockean theories of property. Advocating the regulation of Indian trading, Calhoun notes that trade has the potential to civilize the Indians, and to set them on the road to a more “American” identity:

[T]rading establishments, being fixed, as they will be, in the most advantageous positions, will, in time, become the nucleus of Indian settlements, which, by giving greater density and steadiness to their population, will tend to introduce a division of real property, and thus hasten their ultimate civilization.⁸

Interspersed with such relatively optimistic predictions for civilizing the Indians, however, is a rhetoric of condescension and paternalism that will reach its apex in President Jackson’s Removal Act and the final legal disinheritance of the Natives. Calhoun’s discussion emphasizes the necessarily paternalistic role the U.S. will be forced to play:

The time seems to have arrived when our policy towards them should undergo an important change. They neither are, nor ought to be, considered as independent nations. Our views of their interest, and not their own, ought to govern them. By a proper combination of force and persuasion, of punishments and rewards, they ought to be brought within the pales of law and civilization. Left to themselves, they will never reach that desirable condition. Before the slow operation of reason and experience can convince them of its superior advantages, they must be overwhelmed by the mighty

8. John C. Calhoun, “Statement to the House of Representatives,” 5 December 1818, *Documents of United States Indian Policy, 2nd Ed.*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990) 32.

torrent of our population. Such small bodies, with savage customs and character, cannot, and ought not, to be permitted to exist in an independent condition in the midst of civilized society. Our laws and manners ought to supersede their present savage manners and customs. (32)

The rhetorically ambiguous “small bodies” (a phrase that simultaneously names small populations and invokes the infantilized body of the child-Indian) are threatened by the massive “torrent” of the white population; paradoxically, the forces of civilization are figured here in terms of their usual rhetorical opposite, as a *natural* deluge. Calhoun oscillates on the question of the Indians’ capacity to develop the “superior advantages” of “reason and experience,” which must “supersede their present savage manners and customs”; despite apparently acknowledging the Native potential to develop such traits, Calhoun advocates a stern parental discipline and the sequential distribution of earned privileges along the way:

[E]ducation, comprehending as well the common arts of life, as reading, writing, and arithmetic, ought not to be left discretionary with the parents. Those who might not choose to submit, ought to be permitted and aided in forming new settlements at a distance from ours. When sufficiently advanced in civilization, they would be permitted to participate in such civil and political rights as the respective states within which they are situated might safely extend to them. (32)

Clearly, however, Calhoun’s primary concern is not with the Indians: his plan attempts to ensure that “[t]he natural humanity and generosity of the American character will no longer be weakened by the disorders and savage cruelty to which our frontiers are now exposed” (32–3). In focusing on the *white* beneficiaries of his Indian policy, Calhoun’s statement presages Andrew Jackson’s claim, in his First Annual Message to Congress, in December of 1829, that “Our conduct toward these people is deeply interesting to our natural character” (Prucha 48). As Susan Scheckel explains, Jackson’s use of the term “interesting” resonates both with the

basic notion of enlightened self-interest that underlay eighteenth-century political philosophies of progress and with a more contemporaneous association with a discourse of aesthetics, “suggesting a somewhat distant if nonetheless intriguing engagement” (Scheckel 5). Jackson’s comment articulates simultaneously the solipsistic nature of white America’s “interest” in the Indian’s fate, a predisposition toward aesthetic representations and understandings of that fate, and a predilection for inscribing narratives of European progress onto America’s Native populations.

Jackson’s plan, coterminous with those preceding his administration, is for a distant paternalism that would allow for, but not explicitly provide, the re-education of those tribes within U.S. borders as the condition of their toleration by the government:

[T]hey may be secured in the enjoyment of governments of their own choice, subject to no other control from the United States than such as may be necessary to preserve peace on the frontier [...] There the benevolent may endeavor to teach them the arts of civilization, and, by promoting union and harmony among them, to raise up an *interesting* commonwealth, destined to perpetuate the race and *to attest the humanity and justice of this government.*” (48 my emphasis)

Jackson’s repetition of the term “interesting,” with its evocations of detachment and its reminder of the successful history of white self-interest, reasserts the centrality of American self-image to federal policy regarding the Indians; the preservation of Native Americans is trumped by the need to attest to the government’s beneficence and to reinforce what Scheckel calls Americans’ “collective moral ascendancy and national legitimacy” (10).

Jackson’s rhetoric of national self-protection is perhaps precipitated by the ongoing failure of U.S. policies toward the Natives, and by a governmental frustration perhaps implicit in the creation of the “Bureau of Indian Affairs” within

the purview of the War Department, in 1824.⁹ The contradiction inherent in asking the same department to defend against and educate Native Americans is realized in the dichotomous rhetoric of threats and enticements President Monroe included in his own earlier Special Message to Congress (27 January 1825):

[T]he removal of the tribes [...] would not only shield them from impending ruin, but promote their welfare and happiness. Experience has clearly demonstrated that in their present state it is impossible to incorporate them in such masses, in any form whatsoever, into our system. It has also demonstrated with equal certainty that without a timely anticipation of and provision against the dangers to which they are exposed, under causes which it will be difficult, if not impossible, to control, their degradation and extermination will be inevitable. (Prucha 39)

Monroe summons up images of anticipatory doom that are then countered by his (indirect) appeal to common sense and self-preservation: The nation's ability to

teach them by regular instruction the arts of civilized life and make them a civilized people [...] is the powerful consideration which we have to offer to these tribes as inducement to relinquish the lands on which they now reside and to remove to those which are designated. [...] Their elders have sufficient intelligence to discern the certain progress of events in the present train, and sufficient virtue, by yielding to momentary sacrifices, to protect their families and posterity from inevitable destruction. They will also perceive that they may thus attain an elevation to which as communities they could not otherwise aspire. (40)

What Monroe's exemplary carrot-and-stick rhetoric demonstrates, finally, is that the Indian question is, at its core, an issue of *pedagogy*. The underlying anxiety surrounding the Indians in the U.S. was an anxiety predicated on pedagogical concerns, on the selection of appropriate pedagogical tools, and on the potential of

9. Calhoun, Secretary of the War Department under President Monroe, set up the Bureau and assigned its supervision to Thomas L. McKenney, who was dismissed by President Jackson in 1830. McKenney's office was subsequently confirmed by Congress in 1832 and titled "Commissioner of Indian Affairs." See Prucha 37.

the Native American “pupils” to master the lessons of civilization. This discourse of educability, however, was simultaneous with and contradictory to an equally historic and deeply embedded narrative of racial difference and fundamental—even biological—unsuitability for civilization on the Indian’s part. As much as ten years *after* Jackson’s metaphorical “final solution” to the Cherokee dilemma, then-Indian Commissioner T. Hartley Crawford was still advocating education as “[t]he principal lever by which the Indians are to be lifted out of the mire of folly and vice into which they are sunk.”¹⁰ Drawing upon notions of their basic educability and capacity for improvement—those twinned enlightenment and eighteenth-century bases of American social and political ideology—Crawford asserts that what counts is the *type* of education offered:

The learning of the already civilized and cultivated man is not what they want now. It could not be advantageously grafted on so rude a stock. In the present state of their existence, all they could be taught, or learn, is to read and write, with a very limited knowledge of figures. [...]

To teach a savage man to read, while he continues savage in all else, is to throw seed on a rock. In this particular there has been a general error. If you would win an Indian from the waywardness and vice of his life, you must improve his morals, as well as his mind, and that not merely by precept, but by teaching him how to far, how to work in the mechanic arts, and how to labor profitably; so that [...] he will fall into those habits which are in keeping with the useful application of such education as may be given him. (Prucha 73)

More significant, however, is a report by Indian Commissioner Medill, whose “Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs” (Nov. 30, 1848) registers the pedagogical failure of an extensive history of attempts to civilize the Indians to white America’s satisfaction. Where previous policy documents emphasized the

10. T. Hartley Crawford, “Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs” 25 November 1838, *Documents of United States Indian Policy, 2nd Ed.*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990) 73.

potential for civilizing the “children of the forest,” Medill’s report draws unapologetically upon biological and racial differences to explain the nation’s pedagogical failures:

Stolid and unyielding in his nature, and inveterately wedded to his savage habits, customs, and prejudices in which he has been reared and trained, it is seldom the case that the full blood Indian of our hemisphere can [...] be brought farther within the pale of civilization than to adopt its vices; under the corrupting influences of which, too indolent to labor, and too weak to resist, he soon sinks into misery and despair. (Prucha 77)

Given such an inherently deterministic explanation for the failure of a social policy, Medill is free to attribute the ongoing tragedy of white-Indian relations and the “the rapid decline and disappearance of our Indian population” to “natural and unavoidable causes [...] rather than to wilful [sic] neglect, or to deliberate oppression and wrong” (77). In light of the Natives’ essential unsuitability for full Americanization, they are to be taught instead the lesser skills of “practical agriculture and the various necessary and useful mechanic arts” for the men, and “different branches of housewifery, including spinning and weaving” for the girls (78).

Whereas the discourse of enlightened self-interest and progress, founded upon the linchpin of private property, relied on relatively egalitarian understandings of basic human propensities, the justifications that emerged in light of U.S. policy’s failure to subdue, assimilate, or otherwise incorporate the Indians effectively into the nation drew increasingly upon a rhetoric of essentialized and racially-determined unsuitability¹¹:

11. As recent work in the history of “race” and racism has demonstrated, the conceptual abstract we understand as the biological “category” of race was not necessarily fully entrenched in the first half of the 19th Century. As Alexander Boulton discusses in “The American Paradox: Jeffersonian Equality and Racial Science,” eighteenth- and early

The strongest propensities of an Indian's nature are his desire for war and his love of the chase. These lead him to display tact, judgment, and energy, and to endure great hardships, privation, and suffering; but in all other respects he is indolent and inert, physically and mentally, unless on occasions for display in council, when he not infrequently exhibits great astuteness and a rude eloquence, evincing no ordinary degree of intellect." (Medill in Prucha 78)

Medill bluntly asserts that the mere mechanism of private property, and the stability it purportedly engenders, is simply insufficient to bring the Natives under white control, and to guarantee that they stay there. He says of the Indian, "Nothing can induce him to resort to labor, unless compelled to do so by a stern necessity"; he further asserts that "little, if any, good impression can be made upon him [...], so long as he is able freely to roam at large and gratify his two predominant inclinations. Nor can these be subdued in any other way than by the mode of colonization [...]" (78). In declaring the Native unfit, by nature and inclination, for participation in white civilization, Medill defines the Indian as outside what Cindy Patton calls the "national public": "the collective who are represented as the proper citizens of the nation" (6). Moreover, it casts Indians and white Americans as different subjects of a "national pedagogy" that "arises through the invocation of a

nineteenth-century understandings of race were shifting and fluid, albeit inconsistently developing into the pseudo-biology that would emerge in late 19th-century eugenics. Boulton discusses the origins of American racialist thought, exemplified in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), as emerging from contradictory yet not wholly incompatible "scientific" knowledge espoused in, for example, Linnaeus's classical paradigm of order and the Comte de Buffon's theoretic of historical, environmental, and evolutionary dynamism. See "The American Paradox: Jeffersonian Equality and Racial Science," *American Quarterly* 47:3 (1995): 468–71; 473–78. On the development of racial categories in Euro-American culture, see also Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000).

knowledge that simultaneously precedes and seamlessly becomes the possession of the hailed subject.”¹²

In offering this brief survey of American policy toward Natives, I intend to show how, especially in retrospect, the Indian problem emerges as one not merely of pedagogy (that is, of teaching Native Americans the behaviors, knowledge, and skills of white American civilization), but of a nationalizing pedagogy, where defining Native Americans increasingly in terms of their incapacity for “civilization” (codified in specific learned practices and in the willingness to learn those practices) confirms their unsuitability for citizenship and, ultimately, their non-existence as citizens or potential citizens. The increasingly racialized rhetoric exemplified by Medill’s report demonstrates how a focus on civilization as pedagogy allowed for the simultaneous inscription of a racial essence fundamentally unfitted for inclusion in the American corpus with the insertion of a resistant agency on the part of the Natives. These two strains allowed for the increase of racist and hostile approaches to the “Indian Question” while neatly deferring blame for the failure onto the “students” themselves.

Religious Pedagogy: Missionaries and Native American Education

Prior to the nineteenth-century development of national institutions to address the “Indian question,” efforts to create working relationships with Native Americans fell

12. Patton, *Fatal Advice* 8-9. Patton’s allusion to Althusser is deliberate; in contrast to the Althusserian model of the subject interpellated by the “structured domination” of the state apparatus, Patton’s more fluid and multidirectional concept of a national pedagogy at work during the late 20th-century AIDS crisis “highlight[s] the extent to which this nation does not exercise the form of control envisioned by Althusser” but relies instead on “teaching the nation, threatening the citizen with stupidity rather than violence” to “bring[] bodies into positions of duty and obligation that are constitutive of identity” (Patton 9). See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (NY: Monthly Review P, 1971).

primarily within the purview of the Church. Much of the “progress” made in converting and assimilating the Indians was the product of missionary efforts by white colonists and converted or “praying” Indians, many of whom relied on missionary schools that could instill both religious and cultural values among Native youth, while eradicating some of the more egregious practices of “savagery.” Recent work on the disparate and fragmentary history of Indian education reveals that official American public policy toward the tribes emerged out of the same basic beliefs and intentions toward native Americans that most often characterized missionary efforts on their behalf.

In a study of response patterns to acculturation among Native tribes, ethnohistorian Robert Berkhofer notes that while early Christian missionaries were perhaps the most benevolent representatives of white, European culture, they nonetheless shared attitudes characteristic of dominant cultures, and their encounters with the Natives were thus inevitably tinged, at best, with a belief in the cultural, if not inherent, superiority of whites and a desire to see the Indian adopt white practices in more than matters of faith. As Berkhofer notes, to many missionaries, “the only good Indian [...] was a copy of a *good* White man [sic].”¹³ In his study of Indian acculturation, Berkhofer observes that after “the loss of political autonomy,” cultural contact between missionaries and tribal members was transformed, “for the Indians lacked the opportunity to put space between them and the alien culture or to destroy its representatives among them without destructive reprisal” (201). This meant that missionaries, with their cultural if not material ties to the larger white, Euro-American society, were empowered by their proximity to

13. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., “Protestants, Pagans, and Sequences among the North American Indians, 1760–1860” *Ethnohistory* 10:3 (1963): 204.

the sources and images of American or colonial power: military and financial. In such situations, no missionary practice could be understood as free of coercion, or as simple contact between differing values. In addition, Berkhofer's study "reveals few differences in aim among the missionaries of various denominations" during the period he studies (203). Regardless of internal or inter-denominational debates, some heated, over the best way to realize the Indian's conversion and "civilization," the mostly-Protestant missionaries "consciously and unconsciously spread much the same mixture of religion and secular pursuits" (203).

These blended goals were understandable, Berkhofer claims, because "after all they were members of their own culture and held the basic values and attitudes of that culture in common with their fellow countrymen" (204). In practice, however, the prevalence of such values and beliefs among missionaries meant that even prior to generalized, large-scale, public-policy attempts to incorporate the Indians somehow into national life, white relations with Indians were driven by assumptions coterminous with those later codified legally and politically. "Like other whites," Berkhofer reminds us, "missionaries viewed the Indian as the lowest rung on the ladder of social evolution and believed that progress and civilization must triumph over savagery. In fact, they felt they were in the vanguard of the movement to force the aborigine up the ladder to the American apex" (205). Given the practical impossibility of separating secular "civilization" from Christian conversion, "the missionary pushed more aggressively for change than any other White," acting "within the larger framework of contact, especially in relation to government power. His success in implementing Christian civilization depended, in the end, upon the strength of army and annuities in thwarting tribal autonomy" (205).

Clearly, a full discussion of the intricate varieties of missionary activities and missionary schools exceeds the scope of this project. What I mean to suggest, in this short section, is that the array of “civilizing” energies put forth in the direction of Native Americans by white settlers, colonists, and ultimately, Americans is relatively consistent in its underlying assumptions and values, and that those beliefs are intricately related to questions of pedagogy: the ability and desire to educate, the limits on the willingness or ability to become “educated” by alien standards, and the consequences for identity of pedagogical “failures.” Berkhofer explains the fundamental cohesion of white inroads into Indian culture as follows: “Since Anglo-American civilization possessed basic unity over long periods of time, we should expect certain recurring long-term sequences [of behavior] in response [...], because American civilization not only determined the white responses but also delimited the Indian responses” (202).¹⁴

William Apess: A Son of the Forest

As William Apess suggests, the contradictory logic of white-Indian relations was not invisible to those who suffered under it. In “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man,” a work whose very title signifies the Indian’s problematic role as a mirror-image for white identity, Apess specifically condemns the U.S. for failing to provide Indians with citizenship and with its full rights and privileges, and casts the blame for the social problems plaguing Natives not on Indian inadequacy, but on white racism: “Why are we not protected in our persons and property throughout the

14. Berkhofer goes on to identify four basic or preliminary patterns among Native response to missionary efforts, differentiated by the degree to which cultural and religious transformation were each absorbed within the tribe and by the ability of communities to find ways to tolerate conflicting cultural and social practices without fragmentation. See 206–16.

Union?" He asks. "Is it not because there reigns in the breast of many who are leaders a most unrighteous, unbecoming, and impure black principle, and as corrupt and unholy as it can be—while these very same unfeeling, self-esteeming characters pretend to take the skin as a pretext to keep us from our unalienable and lawful rights?" (O'Connell 156) Throughout the essay, Apess toys with the contradictory beliefs of his white audience, proposing a variety of pretexts for discrimination, then cleverly reversing them to eviscerate them of their ideological power. He calls up skills attributed to the Indians:

Now I will ask if the Indians are not called the most ingenious people among us. And are they not said to be men of talents? [...] Now, if these people are held up in our view to be, I would take the liberty to ask why they are not brought forward and pains taken to educate them, to give them all a common education [...] Perhaps some unholy, unprincipled men would cry out, "The skin was not good enough"; but stop, friends—I am not talking about the skin but about principles. I would ask if there cannot be as good feelings and principles under a red skin as under a white. (156)

To those who would assert the Indians' lack of principles, Apess replies with the role of white culture in creating the Indians' current state. To those who assert the moral or "principled" superiority of the white race, Apess responds with his charges against the white nation: "can you charge the Indians with robbing a nation almost of their whole continent, and murdering their women and children, and then depriving them of the remainder of their lawful rights, that nature and God require them to have?" (157) As I noted in the excerpt with which this chapter began, Apess invokes the stunning image of "blameless" white skin as a parchment on which the national crimes can clearly be read: "I should look at all the skins, and I know that when I cast my eye upon that white skin, and if I saw those crimes written upon it, I should enter my protest against it immediately, and cleave to that which is more honorable" (157). Instead of accepting his position as a failed student, Apess turns

the blame back on his purported teachers, indicting them for their own failure to learn the lessons they preach:

By what you read, you may learn how deep your principles are. I should say they were skin-deep. I should not wonder if some of the most selfish and ignorant would spout a charge of their principles now and then. [...] Now, to cheat them out of any of their rights is robbery. And I ask: Can you deny that you are not robbing the Indians daily [...]? (160)

The “looking-glass” Apess holds up to white society demands that white Americans consider whether “you can see anything inconsistent in your conduct and talk about the Indians. And if you do, I hope you will try to become more consistent” (160). At the same time, his title and the image of reflection it invokes emphasize not only the essential similarity between the two peoples, but the Indian’s fundamental status as Other against whom white national identity is reflected, and in that coherent reflection, maintained. As Renée Bergland has suggested, American literature is populated by “Indian ghosts” whose prevalence testifies to the rhetorical, political, and discursive “removal” of Native Americans from the American scene long before official policies of eviction were articulated.¹⁵ In representing the Indian as a “looking-glass,” Apess not only invokes the Indian’s capacity to reflect the white man back to himself, but perhaps inadvertently, recalls the prevailing ideology of Indian insubstantiality and impermanence. The Indian may, as Apess suggests, offer a powerful reflection of white identity, but he does so at the risk of rendering himself immaterial. In Bergland’s argument, the figure of the Indian becomes increasingly “spectralized” as his physical presence is increasingly replaced by his imaginary function as the repressed Other (the irrational, the abject) necessary for the fiction of

15. Renee L. Bergland, *The National Uncanny* (Hanover: Dartmouth UP, 2000).

American national autonomy.¹⁶ While Apess's text attempts to subvert or to reverse such a process of spectralization, his imagery is implicated in Native erasure.

Contradictory assertions characterize Apess's autobiographical *A Son of the Forest* (1829), as well, and register the incoherence of his position as a Native in relation to white society. Throughout the text, Apess asserts the powerful lessons he has learned as a self-proclaimed "son of the forest," a phrase that clearly delineates him outside of Euro-American genealogy and connects him ancestrally with the forces of nature, rather than those of civilization. Of course, as Apess's fluidly complex logic in "Looking-Glass" demonstrates, he was well aware of the ironic associations in his title, and of the way that embracing such a term would perpetuate and perhaps amplify white criticism of Native Americans. Like any autobiography, Apess's story is developmental and thus pedagogical. He states early on the limited extent of his practical schooling, provided somewhat grudgingly by a townsman with whom Apess had been placed after being removed from his neglectful and drunken parents:

[..W]hen I attained my sixth year, I was sent to school, and continued for six successive winters. During this time I learned to read and write, though not so well as I could have wished. This was all the instruction of the kind I ever received. Small and imperfect as was the amount of the knowledge I obtained, yet in view of the advantages I have thus derived, I thank God for it.¹⁷

Apess's gratitude for his own learning stands in stark contrast to what his parents, and others of his people, had "learned" from whites. His parents' "cruel and unnatural conduct," Apess argues, he attributes

16. See Bergland 5–10.

17. William Apess, *A Son of the Forest*, in *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, ed. Barry O'Connell (Amherst: U Mass P, 1992) 7.

in a great measure to the whites, inasmuch as they introduced among my countrymen that bane of comfort and happiness, ardent spirits—seduced them into a love of it and, when under its unhappy influence, wronged them out of their lawful possessions—that land, where reposed the ashes of their sires; and not only so, but they committed violence of the most revolting kind upon the persons of the female portion of the tribe who, *previous to the introduction among them of the arts, and vices, and debaucheries of the whites*, were as unoffending and happy as [...] any people on whom the sun of heaven ever shown. (7 my emphasis)

In contrast to his limited formal schooling and to the larger debaucheries taught to the Indians, Apess constructs a model of experiential learning that he offers as an alternative pedagogy, one free of the racism and corruption he associates with white American culture, and one he encourages his reader to share: “the reader knows full well that experience is the best schoolmaster, for what we have experienced, that we know, and all the world cannot possibly beat it out of us,” he says (8–9).

Apess’s alternative pedagogy echoes his larger project; an alternative history of the relations between white Americans and Native Americans that would revise the historical record and redeem his people. Citing the “dread which pervaded [his] mind on seeing any of [his] brethren in the forest,” Apess reminds us that

the great fear I entertained [...] was occasioned by the many stories I had heard of their cruelty toward the whites—how they were in the habit of killing and scalping men, women, and children. But the whites did not tell me that they were in a great majority of instances the aggressors—that they had imbrued their hands in the lifeblood of my brethren, driven them from their once peaceful and happy homes—that they introduced among them the fatal and exterminating diseases of civilized life. (10, 11)

Here again, Apess deploys a rhetoric of “civilization” familiar from contemporaneous political documents, but does so in a way that undermines the usual connotations of the term, while reminding us of the possibility for multiple interpretations of America’s history. His fear of other Indians is based on the misinformation that

whites have provided; as such, it functions as yet another “fatal and exterminating disease” inflicted upon him by what he ironically terms “civilized life.”

His depiction of his stint in the army during the war of 1812 further emphasizes his disillusionment over the discriminatory treatment he encountered, and the hypocrisy in the nation’s practices that it revealed to him:

Now, according to the act of enlistment, I was entitled to forty dollars bounty money and one hundred and sixty acres of land. The government also owed me for fifteen months’ pay. I have not seen anything of bounty money, land, or arrearages, from that day to this. I am not, however, alone in this—hundreds were served in the same manner. But I could never think that the government acted right toward the Natives, not merely in refusing to pay us but in claiming our services in cases of perilous emergency, and still deny [sic] us the right of citizenship; and as long as our nation is debarred the privilege of voting for civil officers, I shall believe that the government has no claim on our services. (30–1)

Despite his own fervid faith, Apess notes the effects of missionary hypocrisy on “the untutored sons of the forest” who, despite their lack of intellectual training or civilization, are nonetheless savvy enough to see where the missionaries’ practices conflict with the doctrine they preach to the Natives (33). Apess’s narrative draws upon the discursive construction of civilization/savage, but refuses to respect the conventional distinction between them. In developing his own experiential and practical “pedagogy,” Apess reverses, inverts, and upends the two poles of the dyad, thereby insisting upon multiple possibilities—good and bad. In his travels, Apess tells us:

[...] I met often on the road the veriest wretches that defile the earth—such as would forget the dignity of human nature so far as to blackguard me because I was an Indian. A son of the forest would never stoop so low as to offer such an insult to a stranger who happened to be among them. I was much mortified, and believing that they ought to be corrected for so flagrant a breach of good manners and “civilization,” I thought seriously, in one or two instances, of inflicting summary punishment; but this feeling gave way

to that of pity. It appeared to me as if they had not the sense and wisdom of the brute creation. (36)

In this passage, Apess counters the usual distinction between “savage” and “civilized” by introducing a third class: the degraded white man who is lower yet than the “son of the forest” or “the brute creation.” By suggesting alternatives to the usual dichotomy, Apess disassociates intrinsic worth from skin color or race, and suggests the possibility of identities that are not so easily fixed or categorized.

Apess’s autobiography follows the logic of the picaresque, depicting in a series of short vignettes the significant moments along the way to his own, anti-intellectual enlightenment and his construction of a model of self-development that deconstructs the categories “civilization” would inflict on him. In both “Looking Glass” and *A Son of the Forest*, Apess deploys Christianity as a kind of triangulating mechanism, one that deconstructs human hierarchies and reasserts an essential sameness among human beings, white and Indian. I would suggest, as well, that Apess’s ongoing realizations and recognitions create a kind of practical pedagogy that not only supplements his “book learning,” but actually supplants it. In his didactic Christianity, Apess further constructs, piecemeal, a philosophical and pedagogical model for co-existence:

I can truly say that the spirit of prejudice is no longer an inmate of my bosom; the sun of consolation has warmed my heart, and by the Grace of God assisting me, I am determined to sound the trump of the Gospel—to call upon me to turn and live. Look, brethren, at the natives of the forest—they come, notwithstanding you call them ‘*savage*,’ from the ‘east and from the west, the north and the south,’ and will occupy seats in the kingdom of heaven before you. (51)

Apess is an eloquent spokesman for his cause, especially as he moved fluidly across the contradictory discourses of pedagogy and essentialism that typified his

era. Furthermore, he clearly outlines the opposing possibilities at work in interpretations of Native Americans. Like Apess, Catharine Maria Sedgwick sets out to recuperate the damaged reputation of the Indian. Her novel, *Hope Leslie* (1827), is noteworthy in its sympathetic depiction of its Indian characters, and in its attempt to rewrite America's history, and perhaps its future. While the novel apparently sets out to demonstrate the common humanity of whites and Indians, it ultimately falls far short. The fluidity with which the themes of pedagogy served Apess's project becomes instead Sedgwick's downfall. Instead of demonstrating the potential for an integrated future of racial and political equality, her historical novel recapitulates the struggle between a pedagogical notion of Indian identity (in which Indians are potentially educable and thus inherently equal) and a biologized discourse of inadequacy (in which Indians are essentially unfit for full incorporation in American society). In the rest of this chapter, I examine what happens to Sedgwick's revisionist project, and locate its failure in her deployment of the unstable terrain of pedagogy. At the same time, it is unfair to characterize the novel generally as any kind of "failure"; although Sedgwick is unable to conceive a happy ending for her interracial cast, she nonetheless provides a pertinent critique of the problems Native Americans and their supporters faced.

Family History, *Hope Leslie*, and the Indian Question

In a recent article, Karen Woods Weierman has detailed the complex connections between novelist Sedgwick's family history and her sympathetic portrayal of interracial relationships in *Hope Leslie*. Noting the Sedgwick family's troubled historical relationship to missionary schools in their own New England area, Weierman develops her reading of the politics of *Hope Leslie* in terms of Sedgwick's familial link to two failed mission schools; to the controversial marriage between

Sedgwick's cousin, Harriet Gold, and Cherokee Elias Boudinot; to her distant relationship to Eunice Williams, a white woman captured in 1704, who chose to remain among the Indians and married a Kahnawake Mohawk; and to her resultant desire to respond to the crisis of Cherokee removal with a novel offering "a viable alternative to the pervasive pattern of conquest and despair: a familial and political bond that values Cherokee nationalism and discusses Cherokee claims in the language of republican rights, Christian love, and the rule of law."¹⁸ Despite the fact that the novel, set well before the Revolution and following the Pequot War of 1637, makes no explicit reference to the contemporary question of the Cherokee's fate, Weierman suggests that in creating her historical romance, Sedgwick manages to invoke three "layers" of white-Indian history: the Pequot War and Colonial/Indian relations; the eighteenth-century plight of the Indians of Stockbridge, MA (Sedgwick's home); and, of course, the national crisis of Cherokee removal which surrounded the composition of the novel. "In Catharine Maria Sedgwick," Weierman argues,

we witness a well-intentioned writer, challenged by a shameful family history of Indian mistreatment—source of the family's wealth and position in Stockbridge—confronting her own privilege. Fiction allows her to explore her own implication in a dark past, and she calls the Mahicans [sic] to life so that she can honor them. (443)

Sedgwick's novel, in its sympathetic portrayal of Indians, may legitimately be read as an attempt to expunge the psychological guilt occasioned by her family's role in

18. Karen Woods Weierman, "Reading and Writing *Hope Leslie*: Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Indian 'Connections,'" *The New England Quarterly* 75:3 (2002): 442. For Weierman's discussion of Eunice Williams, see esp. 419–21. As Weierman notes, Williams's story has been told in both a popular captivity narrative and contemporary version: John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1707), ed. Edward W. Clark (Amherst: U Mass P, 1976) and John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive* (NY: Vintage, 1994).

the expulsion of the Indians from what became the town of Stockbridge. As Weierman documents, Sedgwick's father, Theodore, purchased some of the final plots of land owned by the survivors of local Indians who had fought alongside the Americans in the Revolutionary War. While the Indians had begun leaving the Stockbridge area much earlier, encouraged in their departure by white "land grabbing" practices that encouraged them to run up debts against which their land was forfeit, and by a purportedly "missionary" church that had, by 1773, excommunicated all of its Native American members, Theodore Sedgwick's final act of disenfranchisement had the psychological force of a nail in the coffin.¹⁹ Catharine Sedgwick's careful construction of *Hope Leslie's* fictional geography resonates with the actual fate of the Stockbridge Indians; she situates Mononotto and his band of Pequots and Mohawks in the valley of the Housatonic River, and Magawisca's noble sacrifice (her arm for Everell Fletcher's life), "quite tellingly, on a mountain in the future town of Stockbridge" (Weierman 430).

Sedgwick's reinvention of an early moment in white and Indian relations thus recalls the failed promises of the two mission schools in her family's past, as well as the larger failure of the new U.S. government to protect its Indian allies. Magawisca's ultimate fate—to be displaced in Everell's affections by the rich, beautiful orphan Hope, to lose her arm in a futile yet noble act of preservation, and to remove herself, nobly, from the novel's conclusion and from any question of an interracial love triangle—echoes the larger pedagogical failure represented by the mission schools' corruption and by the government's failure to protect the rights of its Native non-citizens. Within the novel, the large-scale failure to "civilize" the Natives at first appears to rest firmly upon white shoulders. Ultimately, however,

19. See Weierman, esp. 425–28.

the novel fails to subvert the national rhetoric that blames the Indians for their own fate. Sedgwick's tale is deeply divided; pro-Indian in intention but severely limited in its attempts to re-imagine white and Indian relations. This discussion locates the reasons for that "failure" in the pedagogical theoretics on which Sedgwick relies, in the failure of education to transform the Natives in a way that could actually foster their inclusion in the white world.

At its heart, then, *Hope Leslie* is a novel about "education"—about the different forms education can take, and about the possibilities that someone can be transformed by what he or she learns. Despite Sedgwick's explicit attempts to tell a story of optimism and possibility, one predicated on her ostensibly sincere belief in the full humanity and capability of Native Americans, the tale of *Hope Leslie* ultimately re-enacts the despair and frustration of American policy toward Indians. In so doing, it expresses a deep ambivalence, if not pessimism, about the Indian potential for true "civilization" and assimilation into American culture. In the novel, the issues surrounding "education" become flexible vehicles by which Sedgwick can espouse and disavow Native Americans' innate abilities and capacities for progress, and can suggest the Indians' agency in their own continuing disenfranchisement and alienation. Sedgwick's novel, then, much like the political rhetoric of the period in which she writes, both argues for the Indians' inherent nobility and yet justifies their extermination, a paradox that turns on the novel's complex and inconsistent representation of what constitutes identity. Cultural differences, those values and beliefs learned within the conflicting white and Native cultures, emerge as the particular site at which the Indians' ultimate unsuitability for citizenship is depicted and reinforced; at the same time, the psychological and physical violence that

accompanies these scenes represents the inherent violence of attempts to re-educate or civilize those from alternative belief systems.

The central figure in the novel's struggle over assimilation is Magawisca, the noble daughter of Mononotto and the slain Moneca, captive and servant to the Fletcher family, and the story's image of Indian possibility. Sedgwick imbues Magawisca with the characteristics of the noble savage: "freedom and loftiness in her movement," and a "wild and fantastic grace, that harmonized well with the noble demeanor and peculiar beauty of the young savage."²⁰ But Magawisca is also the story's historian and conscience: "[...] it was an expression of dignity, thoughtfulness, and deep dejection that made the eye linger on Magawisca's face, as if it were perusing there the legible record of her birth and wrongs" (23). Magawisca herself is thus a "text" upon which her people's history can be read; she functions, further, as the voice of a revisionist history espoused within the novel, a history of the sufferings perpetrated against her people: "from Magawisca's lips" the tales of white-Indian conflict "took a new form and hue." Her telling, "was not merely changing sculptors to give the advantage to one or the other of the artist's subjects; but it was putting the chisel into the hands of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged" (53). At the same time, Sedgwick's complimentary imagery reinforces an image of history as an aesthetic creation, one "chiseled" differently by different sculptors, even if the narrator chooses to name one as "truth."

Early on, the novel represents Magawisca as intellectually adept, quick and gifted in mastering the new society into which, as a child captive, she has been forcibly introduced. Her childhood friend, Everell "hath taught her to read, and

20. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, ed. Mary Kelley (1827; New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1987) 23.

reads to her," his mother reports in a letter to her absent husband, and she "doth take much delight in describing to him the customs off her people, and relating their traditionary tales, which are like pictures, captivating to a youthful imagination" (32). Mrs. Fletcher recognizes her "rare gifts of mind" and her innate nobility. In Everell's reading,

If [...] he meets with any trait of heroism, (and with such, truly, her mind does seem naturally to assimilate) he straightway calleth for her and rendereth it into English, in which she hath made such marvelous progress, that I am sometimes startled with the beautiful forms in which she clothes her simple thoughts. (31-2)

But the narrative simultaneously undermines Martha Fletcher's complimentary description of Magawisca and Everell's intellectual reciprocity, by equating Magawisca's offering with an entertaining diversion, instead of recognizing it, as the novel claims, as an alternative history worthy of respect, and by emphasizing the simplicity of her thoughts while praising her eloquence in expressing them. Despite Magawisca's intellectual flexibility, however, she is fundamentally unsuited for adaptation into her role in the Fletcher household. She resists in "blindness and deafness" and with a "fixedness of principle" Mrs. Fletcher's attempts to convert her to the Puritan faith: "I have in vain attempted to subdue her to the drudgery of domestic service," Mrs. Fletcher complains in the same letter, "but as hopefully you might yoke a deer with an ox" (32). Magawisca's difference is a difference in kind, not in ability: "it appeareth impossible to her to clip the wings of her soaring thoughts, and keep them down to household matters" (32). If Magawisca's intellectual gifts mark her potential suitability for incorporation into the white world, they define just as distinctly her inalienable isolation and otherness, the resistance to white incorporation that she represents.

This is further reinforced by the novel's insistent pairing of Magawisca with the ancient crone Nelema, "one of the few survivors of a tribe who had been faithful allies of the Pequods" (36). Nelema makes several dramatic appearances in the novel, and each highlights the conflict between her historical knowledge and Indian ways and the futuristic orientation and progressivism of the white colonists. Nelema's tragic history and her alternative forms of knowledge (tribal medicine, Indian theology) stand in stark and tragic contrast to Magawisca's youth and beauty, but their repeated proximity hints that Magawisca may share her fate.

Nelema, like Magawisca, bears the memories of her people's past, and sees them in marked contrast to the privileged future the settlers expect for their children. When Nelema threatens Mrs. Fletcher's children, she does so by invoking the extermination suffered by hers:

"I had sons too—and grandsons; but where are they? They trod the earth as lightly as that boy [Everell]; but they have fallen like our forest trees, before the stroke of the English axe. Of all my race there is not one, now, in whose veins my blood runs. Sometimes, when the spirits of the storm are howling about my wigwam, I hear the voices of my children crying for vengeance, and then I could myself deal the death blow." (37)

Nelema's parting blow is to drop a talisman, "an arrow, and the rattle of a rattle-snake enveloped in the skin of the same reptile," which Mrs. Fletcher demands Magawisca "read" for her because she is "deeply skilled in the ways of her people" (38). Magawisca is again implicated in the conflict between cultures, and linked with Nelema's tragedy.

Like Magawisca, Nelema recognizes the injustice of English claims to victimization, but unlike Magawisca's words, her recollections are disregarded. She reminds the Fletchers of her tribe's ruthless slaughter at the hands of the English, who "spared not our homes[; ...] there where our old men spoke, where was heard

the song of the maiden, and the laugh of our children; there now all is silence, dust and ashes” (37). Nelema’s history emphasizes the genocidal properties of the English attack, which spared not the elderly, women, or children, but instead exterminated the very heart of the tribe. Magawisca’s story of her own family’s destruction at the hands of the English echoes Nelema’s in its emphasis on English ruthlessness and the destruction of her tribe, “in our own homes” (49), by English who set fire to the town and prevented them from escaping. In their shared function as the novel’s historians, Magawisca and Nelema recall Apess’s attempt to rewrite American history and to recuperate the Indian perspective. That they ultimately fail in their attempts (Nelema fails outright to persuade her hearers of the injustice she has suffered and its importance; Magawisca, as I discuss below, leaves her historical interpretation with her hearers, but only as an emotional catalyst, not as the instigator of social and political change) reinforces the futility of Apess’s quest.

As Magawisca reminds Everell, “You English tell us, Everell, that the book of your law is better than that written on our hearts, for ye say it teaches mercy, compassion, forgiveness”(51). In reminding him of this essential difference, however, she reveals that her function in the story is, finally, less to assert the viability of the Native than to provide yet another useful “looking-glass” to be held up to white culture, to exist beyond the pale of “civilized” identity as an emblem of autonomy and to normalize, through her resistance, the more mundane autonomy of conscience demonstrated by the story’s *white* heroine, Hope Leslie. In contrast to Magawisca’s extreme acts of resistance, Hope’s minor rebellions against Puritan strictures are glossed over; they are seen as legitimate acts of a member of society. Magawisca’s position *outside* the social circle helps to solidify Hope’s interior position by offering us a view of someone whose demands are truly irreconcilable. In

relation to Magawisca, Hope's acts of resistance seem relatively tame, and are rendered less threatening to her community.

“All is as it Should Be”: Dis-membering and Remembering Magawisca

Similarly, Magawisca's nobility is sacrificed on the altar of Everell and Hope's intra-racial romance, much as her arm is sacrificed for Everell's life. According to Weierman, Magawisca's sacrifice—she “interposes” her arm between her father's weapon and Everell's throat, saving him and rendering herself permanently disfigured—represents the bloody sacrifices of those Stockbridge Indians who fought alongside the Americans in the Revolution yet received nothing, not even honest treatment, in recompense (see esp. 430–31). Despite these historical resonances, I would argue that the more immediate effect of Magawisca's disfigurement is to neutralize her as a genuine threat to the practice of intra-racial marriage, to remove her from contention for Everell's love, and to pave the way for a white heroine who shares certain of her traits, but who lacks the problematic racial and historical identity Magawisca bears.²¹ Magawisca's severed arm repays her debt to Everell, who has befriended her and listened to her stories, but who has also given her literacy in white culture—a tradeoff that leads directly to her disfigurement. At the

21. Another historical romance from the removal era, Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok*, (ed. Carolyn L. Karcher [1824; Rutgers: Rutgers UP, 1990]), uses a similar logic of Indian displacement to provide a romantic conclusion for its white heroine. Mary Conant, the rebellious and free-spirited daughter of a stern Puritan settler, scandalizes her father and her community by marrying Hobomok, a friendly Indian, after her Episcopalian fiancé is presumed drowned. When the fiancé miraculously reappears, the noble savage abandons Mary and their son to her first love, her father realizes that an Episcopalian son-in-law is preferable to an Indian, and Mary's youthful interracial act of rebellion inaugurates a new era of familial relations free of the most egregious and paternalistic excesses of Puritanism. My suggestion here is that Magawisca's act, like Hobomok's noble departure, validates Indian nobility at the expense of viability; in both cases, nobility of spirit is something that can be fully realized only *after* the racial and sexual threat the character posed has been neutralized.

same time, her deformity “tames” her, leaving her spirit reasonably intact, but clearly marking her as physically flawed, and thus unfit for romance with the handsome young Everell. (In keeping with Sedgwick’s progressive views, Magawisca’s “deformity” takes the burden off of her racial unsuitability as a potential mate for Everell; she is disqualified not by her race but by her deformity—which, of course, is the product of her racial loyalty). Significantly, too, the instrument of her deformity is her own father, the act that provokes it her own, and the psychic agency in the tragedy is therefore *Indian*, not white. In other words, there is no white character to blame for Magawisca’s predicament; while her tragedy may reflect back on the series of altercations that have created Mononotto’s rage, her disfigurement is laid at her own feet, so to speak. This is significant because it recasts the failure of her assimilation or acculturation in terms of her free will and minimizes the historical events that created the shared predicament; her sacrifice is the product of her tragically noble nature and of an equally tragic history, and none of it can be attributed to a specific white character in the novel. Magawisca’s injury, that is, represents her active failure to comply with white expectations, and does so in a way that subtly reinforces her responsibility for her alienation.

Magawisca’s tragedy is that despite her knowledge and repudiation of white culture, she has not managed to remain unaffected by it, or by her feelings for those in it. She tells Hope that she has “learned to deny even the cravings of [her] own heart; to pursue [her] purpose like the bird that keeps her wing stretched to the toilsome flight [...],” but then disavows her claim to have escaped completely the world of (white) men: “‘But ah! I do but boast,’ She continued, casting her eyes to the ground. ‘I may not trust myself; that was a childish scream that escaped me when I saw Everell’” (191). The price of Magawisca’s incorporation into the white world is

the kind of autonomous freedom she could have experienced in her Native world, as a creature more of nature than of ‘civilization.’ The novel dispenses with her all too readily. Everell acknowledges merely that he “might have loved her—might have forgotten that nature had put barriers between” them (214), but even this forlorn epigraph is denounced by Digby, the voice of common sense and mundane order, who insists that “things would naturally have taken another course after Miss Hope came among us” (214). The narrator resists Digby’s easy formulation of “naturalness,” noting that he habitually “arranged every thing in his own mind, according to what he deemed natural and proper” and was “too complacent [...] to receive any check from his garrulity” (215), but the plot trajectory in fact recapitulates Digby’s claim that without Magawisca around, “all is as it should be” among the Fletchers (214).

In her disfigurement, isolation, and invisibility, Magawisca comes even more to resemble Nelema. Nelema represents the Indian threat inscribed in cultural terms; her insistence on clinging to her own traditions and beliefs demonstrates, as effectively as a biologized discourse of racism, her role *outside* of the legitimating discourses of national pedagogy. The novel can be read largely as a meditation on the competing pedagogies and bodies of knowledge that define as incorporable or not the physical bodies of their practitioners. By this I don’t mean that the novel advocates a particular classroom practice or formal education; indeed, the novel’s representative of a “classical” education and book learning, Hope’s tutor Mr. Cradock, provides most of the novel’s comic relief with what Hope’s Aunt Grafton calls “this scholar foolery” (111), of which, Hope says, “being in the language of the learned, I could not [...] understand one word” (111). In a novel that investigates the cultural variations of knowledge and learning, Cradock’s brand of pedantry is

perhaps the most reviled, in keeping with Sedgwick's own biographical disdain for the formal schooling she termed a "waste."²² Cradock's self-described "best Latinity[,] with which many years of daily and nightly study have possessed" him is clearly more useless than the discredited Indian learning with which he comes into contact.

In her alternative forms of knowledge, Nelema embodies the fearsome Otherness of Indian practices and beliefs, a contrast to "civilized society" that becomes further evident when she is called upon to rescue the ridiculous pedant Mr. Cradock, who has been bitten by a snake. Hope, who has witnessed the scene, reports it thus in a letter to Everell, absent at school in England:

"She first threw aside her blanket, and discovered a kind of wand, which she had concealed beneath it, wreathed with a snake's skin. She then pointed to the figure of a snake delineated on her naked shoulder. 'Foolish child!' she continued, for she saw me shudder, 'it is a sign of honour [sic], won for our race by him who first drew from the veins the poison of the kind of all creeping things.'" (104)

Despite Nelema's scolding, Hope is unable to comprehend the knowledge and skill Nelema's actions demonstrate. She reports that Nelema's ministrations

"Were repeated at short intervals, during which she brandished her wand, making quick and mysterious motions, as if she were writing hieroglyphics on the invisible air. She writhed her body into the most horrible contortions, and tossed her withered arms wildly about her, and, Everell, shall I confess to you, that I trembled lest she should assume the living form of the reptile whose image she bore?" (104–05)

However sympathetic Sedgwick's intentions, the novel nonetheless contrasts the different modes of learning—Everell's "English" education and Nelema's archaic

²² Mary Kelley, "Introduction," *Hope Leslie* by Catharine Maria Sedgwick (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993) xiv.

forest wisdom—and allows Hope’s sympathetic yet uncomprehending interpretation of Nelema to stand. Hope’s gossipy servant, Jennet, claims that Nelema’s healing powers are witchcraft and suggests that they use on her the spiritual test of reading the Bible (something New England colonists believed the genuinely diabolical could not do): “try her then—see if she can read in the Bible—or Mr. Cotton’s catechism—no, no; but give her your aunt Grafton’s prayer book, and she will read as glib as a minister” (106). Jennet’s suggestions center on the validity of different literacies: as an agent of Satan, Nelema would, in Jennet’s puritanical schema, be unable to produce words from the “good books”—the Bible or the texts of the Puritan Minister (John) Cotton, but would be positively “glib” when reading from the heretical Book of Common Prayer. In attempting to defend Nelema, however, Hope asserts not the value of Nelema’s medical knowledge—which would validate Indian expertise as a legitimate alternative to white Christianity—but her functional illiteracy in the English language: “Jennet [...] you are mad outright—you seem to forget that Nelema cannot read any thing.” To which Jennet responds with an assertion of Nelema’s active agency in her illiteracy (toward Scripture) and her Satanic hyper-literacy, an accusation that continues to frame her within the workings of Puritan discourse, rather than evincing any understanding of Nelema in her own cultural or historical context: “her master makes short teaching—there are none so deaf as those that won’t hear” (106).

This extended conversation makes clear the centrality of various forms of literacy, authorized or not, in the determinations of spiritual, moral, and cultural identity that are central to the novel; it further reinforces my earlier assertion that like Magawisca, Nelema ultimately functions to describe the limits of possibility for autonomous identity: Hope’s spirited defense of Nelema is significant for what it

reveals about Hope's kindness and sympathy—*not* for its support of Nelema's cultural ideology.

Despite the tale's controversial hook, the depiction of interracial marriage, the central conflict in the story is, finally, a conflict between conflicting ideologies *within* white society; the novel's "Indian" setting is primarily a device for expressing the far regions outside of white society, in relation to which Hope's small rebellions against Puritan ideological rigidity are re-configured as genuinely American. Leaving aside the question of Sedgwick's intentions, the autonomy appropriate for the novel's fiery white heroine is ultimately unsuitable for her Indian counterpart, Magawisca, whose unsuitability both defines and reinforces the impermeability of national identity. The competing pedagogies that ultimately matter are those that constitute the proper relationship between authority and obedience for the novel's *white women*; like its contemporary, Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* (1824), *Hope Leslie* is perhaps more accurately read as a polemic on women's roles and freedoms than one espousing Native American humanity. This is not to suggest that Sedgwick sets out to misuse her Native American characters; in fact, it seems to me more likely that with the best of intentions, Sedgwick simply ran afoul of the very real inconsistencies of American culture. Thus despite the novel's early attempts to construct a working epistemology that would accommodate Magawisca's heroism and potential, these attempts founder against the cultural strangeness and illegibility of Indian knowledge. *Hope Leslie* sets out to refute racialized understandings of Indian inferiority, but is unable to negotiate its way out of the morass of contradictory beliefs.

In attempting to construct a national ideology that could be genuinely inclusive, Sedgwick runs up against the limits of national pedagogy—Indian

resistance, the intractability of cultural values, the illegibility of alternative sources of wisdom and belief. Whereas the novel attempts to argue against such deterministic forces, its representations of Indian assimilation recapitulate the practical problems of national acculturation. In fact, the only truly “successful” act of assimilation in the novel is Faith Leslie’s enduring marriage to Oneco, Magawisca’s brother. As Weierman observes, however, Faith and Oneco’s “happy union” is not a true “‘marriage of cultures,’ for Faith has lost her own, and it has been replaced by another that has grown over time” (418). In fact, Hope’s response to her little sister, dressed in Native clothing, is one of revulsion, and thus reinforces the book’s ultimately exclusionary force. Like Magawisca, Faith will, by the novel’s end, disappear conveniently into Indian life, where her cultural liminality, and the possibility for white re-culturation that she represents, are conveniently out of sight and mind.

Hope sees her sister, “in her savage attire, fondly leaning on Oneco’s shoulder,” and “her heart died within her; a sickening feeling came over her, *an unthought of revolting of nature*; and instead of obeying the first impulse [...] she retreated to the cliff, leaned her head against it, averted her eyes, and pressed her hands on her heart, as if she would have bound down rebel feelings” (227, my emphasis).²³ Hope’s reaction is significant in two ways; first, her visceral revulsion at seeing her sister completely absorbed into Indian life undermines the novel’s insistence upon Native humanity and (potential) equality. Second, the ambiguous syntax with which her revulsion is expressed testifies to Sedgwick’s own tangled emotions and reveals the psychological cost of imagining her way outside of conventional beliefs: attempting

23. I suspect that much of the initial confusion could be cleared up by the addition of a hyphen, so that the “unthought-of revolting of nature” is simply an appositive of her “sickening feeling.” However, the phrase resonates in a variety of ways, as I discuss above.

to envision a joyous union of two peoples united in love, she instead, like her heroine, must choke back her repulsion, the almost incoherent and certainly unwelcome “unthought of revolting of nature” that she both witnesses and experiences. In Sedgwick’s somewhat awkward phrasing, it is unclear whether Hope’s nature itself revolting, or whether, more likely, she finds something unnatural and revolting in the image of her sister she sees before her. Hope’s “rebel feelings” resist her conscious attempts at acceptance of her sister.

In fact, the only way the family can recuperate Faith during her brief, unhappy “captivity” among them is by depicting her among them as pre-conscious, as a child or an animal. In this, she becomes fully “Indianized”—existing rhetorically simultaneously in terms of her potential for incorporation in white society (as a child) *and* her “natural” unsuitability (as a wild animal). Faith is repeatedly referred to by her family as a “poor child”; her aunt provides her with “all her old playthings” (266), but Faith chooses instead a memento of her Indian life, “a string of bird’s eggs” Oneco once gave her. Her despair renders Faith almost inhuman; she goes “from window to window, like an imprisoned bird fluttering against the bars of its cage.” Returned to her white family, Faith becomes “spiritless, woe-begone—a soulless body—and [...] repel[s], with sullen indifference, all Hope’s efforts to win her love” (338). Faith’s example begs the question of white acculturation into Indian life, but the novel backs away from fully investigating her unsettling fate, or the visceral revulsion her altered state generates in her sister. Instead, the novel negates its initial premises—that Natives are capable of the kind of intellectual, moral, and affective development that justifies their full incorporation into the American national family—and stages instead an Indian retreat from such demands. Faith, as a white woman, could conceivably function as an articulate

spokeswoman for the values of native life, and for the ultimate compatibility of whites and Natives; instead, her character retreats into childish silence and is ultimately returned to her beloved forest, like a caged animal being set free.

Magawisca, the other strong voice in defense of Indian adaptability, is similarly silenced and sent away. Despite the early promise of a relationship between them, she echoes Everell's resigned acceptance of the impossibility of any real, officially sanctioned union between them. The knowledge she and Everell shared, early on, was that English "superiority" was merely a myth: "he had gratified her strong national pride, by admitting *the natural equality* of all the children of the Great Spirit; and by allowing that it was *the knowledge of the Englishman—an accidental superiority that forced from the uninstructed Indian* the exclamation, 'Manitto!—Manitto!—he is a God.'" (263, my emphasis).

Paradoxically, the acceptance and the education that should have allowed Magawisca a place in the Fletchers' white world has instead fostered her "strong national pride" and reconfirmed her, like Apess, as a "forest-child." Sedgwick succeeds in displacing, within the world of her narrative, the pure and easy assumption of white racial superiority, but does so only at the cost of Native acculturation.

Everell's basic acceptance of Magawisca, far from allowing her greater freedom of movement, instead recasts her exclusion as largely a matter of her inclination and what she has learned. Whatever the shift in causation, the net result remains the same. As the novel ends, Magawisca increasingly inhabits the phantom realm to which she has been relegated, and the novel becomes more and more insistent as to her continued exclusion, reinscribing her not as the victim of white racism or even of

her sacrifice on love's behalf, but as an autonomous being, the measure of whose autonomy is her choice to remain outside of the functioning (i.e., white) society.

Ultimately, Magawisca becomes disembodied, renouncing her desires as a woman in service of her idealized departure into a purely Indian world:

Her affection for Everell Fletcher had the tenderness, the confidence, the sensitiveness of woman's love; but it had nothing of the selfishness, the expectation, or the earthliness of that passion. She had done and suffered much for him, and she felt that his worth must be the sole requital for her sufferings. She felt, too, that she had received much from him. He had opened the book of knowledge to her—had given subjects to her contemplative mind, beyond the mere perceptions of her senses; had in some measure dissipated the clouds of ignorance that hung over the forest child, and given her glimpses of the past and the distant [...] (263)

In this passage, Magawisca is herself spectralized, transformed by her act of self-resignation from Everell's potential lover to an etherealized maternal figure, whose sacrifice on his behalf will be rewarded only by "his worth"—a worth that will be realized within white society, by his marriage to a white woman who embodies but a tiny portion of Magawisca's nobility of spirit. By casting this resignation as Magawisca's choice and her destiny, Sedgwick manages to defuse the role of white prejudice in Magawisca's fate, to allow her the independent self-hood necessary to stage her retreat from human society and physical passion. As the timid Puritan Esther remarks, "if Magawisca could be induced to renounce her heathenish principles, and promise, instead of following her father to the forest, to remain here, and join the catechized Indians," she could escape punishment for her crimes against the Puritan town (279). It is, however, the measure of Magawisca's nobility that she, like Hope, is uncompromising in her beliefs. But the very thing that defines Magawisca's individuality and her superiority simultaneously defines her as

unincorporable in the larger society. Hope's defiance, on the other hand, can be allowed to stand as a new model for white female agency.

In Hope's case, the refusal to bow to arbitrary authority has rewarding consequences; her disobedience allows her a brief meeting with Faith, facilitates her rescue of Magawisca, and ultimately unites her with Everell. Her obedience to her guardian, Mr. Fletcher, is enabled by the fact that "he never requires submission" (180). Hope's philosophy clearly echoes romantic notions of morality and freedom:

As to advice, it needs to be very carefully administered, to do any good, else it's like an injudicious patch, which, you know, only makes the rent worse; —and as to authority, I would not be a machine, to be moved at the pleasure of anybody that happened to be a little older than myself. (180)

In contrast, Hope's conventionally obedient friend Esther expresses a more Puritan, hierarchical understanding of authority that the novel clearly disavows: "it would be a sin presumptuously, to do aught, in any way, to countervail the authority of those chosen servants of the lord, whose magistracy we are privileged to live under" (278). Esther's official versions of authority and obedience are clearly at odds with the autonomy displayed by Hope, Everell, and Magawisca. Everell agrees with Hope that, in matters of conscience, "there must be a warrant [...] for sometimes resisting legitimate authority" (278), but their rebellion against arbitrary authority and their attitude toward the personal dictates of conscience brings the two together as a model for a new, less orthodox, but no less exclusive national identity.

In contrast to Hope and Everell's minor deceptions in the service of a friend, Magawisca ultimately defines herself as outside of the purview of American institutions altogether. Her repudiation of Puritan authority images a contemporaneous Indian resistance to white law: "I am your prisoner, and ye may slay me, but I deny your right to judge me. My people have never passed under your

yoke—not one of my race has ever acknowledged your authority,” she claims, invoking thereby a historical image of the social contract from which she and her people have been excluded, and which thus makes no claims on their loyalty or obedience (286). Here again, the force of Magawisca’s rhetoric rearticulates her exclusion as her own refusal to be subject to white laws and dictates, ignoring the history of exclusion in favor of a more palatable emotional truth. Magawisca insists, finally, upon the arbitrary nature of the Puritans’ “legal” power, and on its substructure of violence: “I neither confess nor deny aught [...] I stand here like a deer caught in a thicket, awaiting the arrow of the hunter” (287). Even as she voices her critique of English rule, Magawisca herself repeats the animal imagery that has been used to displace and discredit her people. If her statement offers a stringent criticism of the brutality of white power, it also confirms her victimization by that power, and reinforces the imagery that maintains her exclusion. Ultimately, Magawisca rejects both the legal and spiritual bases of Puritan authority: the Bible “contains thy rule, and it maybe needful for thy mixed race; but the Great Spirit hath written his laws on the hearts of his original children, and we need it not” (287). Her public rejection of Puritan spiritual authority marks Magawisca’s final renunciation of any role in or alongside their society. In a final act of defiance, she cries,

“Take my word, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle. The white man cometh—the Indian vanisheth. Can we grasp in friendship the hand raised to strike us? Nay, and it matters not whether we fall by the tempest that lays the forest low, or are cut down alone, by the stroke of the axe.” (297)

By casting this speech in Magawisca’s words, however, Sedgwick backs away from endorsing the full power of what she says. Instead, Magawisca, like so many other

Indian heroines of the 1820s, ends up predicting her own fate, while further guaranteeing its outcome. By negating the difference between acts of nature (“the tempest”) and those of man (“the axe”), Magawisca emotionally absolves the Puritans of their role in her people’s displacement, even as she indicts them for it. Her speech, however minimal its effects on her ultimate fate, leaves a restlessness among its hearers

in the breasts of a great majority of the audience, a strange contrariety of opinions and feelings. Their reason, guided by the best lights they possessed deciding against her—the voice of nature crying out for her. (294)

Even in sympathy, though, her audience is concerned primarily with their own internal dilemma between reason and “nature,” that romanticized yearning toward Magawisca’s doomed nobility, which functions as a kind of catharsis for white readers without fully engaging the complex issues the novel has invoked. In the final analysis, Magawisca’s fate registers the suppression of “nature” by “reason” that the novel has enacted. Her reassertion of the bonds of nature comes too little, too late, and becomes an exercise in mourning for her white audience, not a force for real social or political change.

Again, I should note that I do not intend to disparage Sedgwick’s motives in writing a novel that sought to depict Native Americans as noble, intelligent, and motivated in their enmity with invading white colonists. As a novelist, Sedgwick is limited by the imaginative scope possible within her historical context. As Apess suggests, she is finally unable to see Magawisca as more than a prototype for her own spirited white heroine. As Hope displaces Magawisca in the novel’s action, in Everell’s affections, and in the reader’s interest, the story recapitulates the expulsion of the Natives, and Magawisca’s canonization establishes her as myth, divesting her in the process of any claim to a life in contact with white society.

Despite the social and political criticism the novel offers, its ultimate effect on its readers is one of explanation, not alteration. The novel recasts Indian exclusion as something hurtful, but as something foreordained by Indian nobility, as well as by white exclusion. In reproducing a moral of Indian expulsion, *Hope Leslie* demonstrates the limits imposed on a pedagogically disseminated citizenship. The novel is unable to produce a genuinely mobile ideal of citizenship. In her autonomy and bravery, Magawisca appears to be an outstanding potential citizen, but the novel fails to distinguish between her innate or personal qualities and their relationship to her culture. Struggling to define American selfhood as something portable, Sedgwick instead reasserts an impermeable cultural boundary that Magawisca cannot, or will not cross. Like other American rhetoric, *Hope Leslie* cannot contend with an Indian heroine whose nobility demands loyalty to her own culture, the price of which is her exclusion from American life. As in the political documents it unwillingly echoes, the novel occupies shifting positions with respect to what constitutes identity. *Hope Leslie* traces the pendulum's arc of pedagogical citizenship, from possibility to exclusion. Where first it articulates the inclusive possibilities of a national identity based on what can be learned, it concludes by reaffirming, seemingly against the will of its author, a more essentializing notion of belonging. This internal contradiction, this conflict between what is promised and what can be realized, is represented in the psychological and physical violence inflicted on Magawisca, and in the reassertion of a national family from which she is patently excluded.

Epilogue

“From Slavery to Freedom”: Beyond Gothic Pedagogies

As is the case for many dissertations, the preceding study merely begins a much larger project that explores the relationships among American political identities, the nationalizing functions of early educational practices, and the novels that frequently re-imagine those elements in terms more outrageous than the political discussions acknowledge. The questions I have raised here will likely find their better answers located outside the realm of a primarily “literary study,” in the rich materials that give evidence of daily life in the new nation. In order to understand more fully how early Americans conceived of their national identities—as inevitably plural, and inflected heavily by the significant forces of economics, race, social class, and other divisive factors—my project must now expand simultaneously outward and inward: *out* to the publicly available texts that articulate early pedagogical praxis, and *in* to the individual responses of early Americans.

Given my lifelong affinity for stories, I began my initial investigations upon the terrain with which I am most familiar: literature. The novels I explore in these pages brought to my attention a peculiar blend of didacticism and horror, the conjunction of learning and terror, that I have begun to untangle and account for. Unlike many existing arguments about the political and didactic uses of early fiction, my work addresses the fact that the terror and violence that emerge in these texts, are not themselves necessarily, primarily, or effectually pedagogical in the most conventional sense; that is, they do not demonstrably serve, in most cases, a readily identifiable political cause. Instead, these works seem to make horror,

violence, and fear the *condition* of pedagogy in ways that are not easily traced or delineated, and that have pointed me to the psychological and emotional aspects of early American pedagogies.

This study examines only a small sampling of the works that pair education and horror, asking them to “stand in” for the numerous other works from the period that draw on the purportedly “logical” realm of pedagogy in their deployment of the irrational, the horrific, the gothic. It remains for me to understand fully the conjunction of these two forces, and its significance. The work represented here does, however, confirm the link between pedagogy and horror as one that animated more than a few early American imaginations. In addition, it locates that connection, at least in part, in education’s fundamental capacity for *transformation*. And in the early periods with which my study is concerned, issues of “transformation” are often figured in, as well as in service to, the larger political “transformations” the new nation was undertaking. I thus consider the personal and political transformations of the individual primarily in their relationship to that larger cultural and political change taking place.

I have chosen, in this early iteration of the project, to focus my attention on one particular, albeit particularly vast, aspect of American political identity as it appears in fiction: the roots of that identity in pedagogical philosophy. My term “pedagogical citizenship” marks the centrality of Enlightenment discussions of man’s educative potential to the broader theories regarding his political rights and obligations. The term further attempts to address the shifting elements that make up early American pedagogy—from grammars and primers, Sunday schools, and fireside lessons, to one-room schoolhouses, female academies, seminaries and colleges—while recognizing that the transmission of cultural and political

expectations occurs largely outside of the schoolroom. My study is thus intentionally amorphous, since as works of the imagination, the stories upon which I expend most of my energy transcend particular sites or representations of education and instead address larger and more nebulous themes associated with them.

The preceding chapters attempt to sketch out some of the different ways in which early authors imagined the shape and the consequences of American pedagogies, particularly as those pedagogies were dedicated to the project of national citizenship. In drawing on the citizen as pupil, political theorists in the early Republic invoked two seemingly contradictory conceptions: one is the Enlightenment's familiar faith in mankind as infinitely perfectable, capable of being transformed into the kind of rational citizen who could realize the dream of the new American republic. The other implication of pedagogical citizenship, of course, is the necessary corollary of essential human instability; man is capable of being changed, but the direction, motivation, and consequences of transformation are themselves potentially uncontrollable.

At the heart of my study is the dialectic of education itself: its capacity to shape and to transform, as well as to distort or deform. The novels I discuss explore the potentialities—positive and negative—inherent in self-transformation; they consider, as well, the possibility that transformation can fail to occur, or can produce unanticipated, even horrific, consequences. They recognize that education both empowers and impedes, frees and imprisons, reveals and constrains.

Any project that, like mine, situates novels within the public discussion and makes them historical documents invites questions about the legitimacy of their fanciful representation of political themes and questions of "fact." In my work so far, I have attempted less to order the "facts" than to reimagine their emotional and

political impact within the emerging national culture. As Jane Tompkins has cogently asserted, novels and stories “offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment” (xi). This is perhaps nowhere so true as in the early United States, a nation whose very inception is concurrent with a phenomenal increase in the telling of everyday stories about everyday people. It is inevitable, then, that many of those stories should themselves reflect the ways in which Americans were thinking about themselves *as* Americans, considering the meanings and the contradictions of their political identities at a time when their national affiliations were visibly in flux. In this, my project attempts less to codify the actual practices of early Americans than, in the words of Catherine Maria Sedgwick, “to illustrate not the history, but the character of the times” (5). It is perhaps a truism that the “character” of the early nation is one shaped by self-consciousness about the national and political identity that would emerge; nevertheless, the preponderance of public discussion about the nation’s future that forms the political context for these works compels our acknowledgment.

As even this brief survey suggests, the relationship between horror and pedagogy is manifested across many of the social, economic, racial, and sexual lines within early American culture: it permeates the privileged white Wieland family estate, the female society established by *The Boarding School*, and the frontier relationships between the Leslie family and the local Native Americans. At the same time, the predominantly white authors and characters included in this study draw attention to those whose pedagogical opportunities were far more limited: in attending almost exclusively to the situation of white Americans of considerable status and privilege, these texts echo early national political discussions of

“equality” and “rights.” Missing from these works, and from my study thus far, are the situations of slave, the laborer, the poor merchant, to whom educational opportunity was not on offer. In their continued absence, “Pedagogical Gothic” reflects the social and political inequity that has haunted the United States and its claims to egalitarianism. As in most eras, issues of political and social abstraction, however pertinent to the lives of those on the margins, are largely the purview of those with the leisure to engage in them, and the practical skills and opportunity to do so. With social privilege, too, comes access to the modes of print, publication, and preservation that ensure one’s historical *presence* for future scholars.

No one has made this case more eloquently than Frederick Douglass, whose 1845 autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* illustrates the tremendous power education holds for those denied it. Douglass recounts how literacy transformed him from a “brute” to a “man,” establishing a parallel between his struggle for physical freedom and his yearning for literacy.¹ As his master, Mr. Auld notes, “A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master [...] Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world [...] It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master [...] It would make him discontented and unhappy.” (29). To be “unfit” for a slave is, of course, Douglass’s deepest desire; to be awake to the injustice of his enslavement, to be “discontented and unhappy” in his enslavement is to be fully human. In his pursuit of learning, “the pathway from slavery to freedom” (29), Douglass interjects his presence into the white cultural text of history, asserting for himself a space between the lines written by white America:

1. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* ed. William L. Andrews and William S. McFeely (1845; NY: Norton, 1997) 46.

When left [alone], I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. (35)

As even the brief example of Douglass suggests, much remains to be done. Perhaps most significantly, "Pedagogical Gothic" does not yet make use of the wealth of primary pedagogical materials from the period of the study. In relying on fictional representations, I have deferred part of the story. It lies in the daily interactions between teachers and pupils, in classrooms and outside of them. To understand the effects of nation and pedagogy on the identities of early Americans, I need a fuller survey of the pedagogical materials in use, as well as greater insight into the hopes their providers held for them. In addition, I hope to identify more specifically the "nationalizing" elements of these early and diverse pedagogical practices in order to understand more accurately the relationship between learning and practicing citizenship in the early republic. Such materials will enrich the connections between the large-scale cultural and political shifts and their impact on individual American psyches.

Finally, and most importantly, my study demands the voices of early Americans as individuals, not merely as fictional characters. My next task will be to find historical and archival materials through which diverse individuals can "speak" of their own experiences with pedagogy, with nationalism, with the promises and betrayals of citizenship. Letters by *real* women, lessons from a *real* boarding school: these will fill out the imaginative arena of the novel that I have begun with.

America's self-serving mythos of opportunity is predicated in large part upon access to education. As a teacher, I live every day with the power of the myth and the reality of educational opportunity. This study has emerged from my own vexed relationship to education, and my frustration with its increasing commodification in

the early 21st Century. Ideally, education offers the practical skills essential for survival; in addition, it could provide a reflective, contemplative, and critical mindset desperately needed in today's increasingly dichotomous culture. Education is also the site of contentious battles over questions of race, economic and social justice, morality, and patriotism. The paradox of education today is perhaps different in its particulars, but reflects the same tensions that this study has attempted to voice: the conflict between notions of education as intellectual development, skepticism, and autonomy and its functions of constraint, discipline, obedience. The questions education raises are no less important today, and no easier to answer.

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