

READING SUBJECTS:
DESIRE AND DISCIPLINE IN THE EARLY AMERICAN NOVEL, 1787-1827

A dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to describe the unique pressures brought to bear on the reading subjects of a government founded in what the Declaration of Independence calls “the Laws of Nature.” It begins by arguing that the early republic’s preoccupation with naturalized government is intimately related to the methods of privatized discipline the sentimental novel imagines. It ends by arguing that early American romanticism appropriates this correspondence between the moral and the natural world in order to naturalize imperialist ideologies. Although this dissertation is fundamentally invested in a Foucauldian understanding of modern power structures that coerce the liberal subject into privatized forms of self-regulation, it also argues that the conditions that give rise to a republican fantasy of voluntary obedience are more messily related to desire than Foucauldian readings of the novel allow: at the heart of a totalizing system of republican discipline is an anxious dependence on the unruly desires of individual subjects. Additionally, by locating a strain in early American political rhetoric and reading practices that works to naturalize culture rather than socialize desire, this dissertation questions the oppositional relationship between masculine romanticism and feminine sentimentalism that dominates accounts of nineteenth-century literary culture.

The first chapter reads Benjamin Rush’s theories of prison reform alongside William Hill Brown’s novel *The Power of Sympathy* (1789); this pairing demonstrates that sympathy’s extralegal status only increases its disciplinary potential. The second chapter argues that Charles Brockden Brown’s penultimate novel *Clara Howard* (1801) presents a model of republican virtue in which the rhetoric of civic disinterestedness relies upon the desires of the very individuals it sought to abstract. The third chapter

argues that although James Kirke Paulding and William and Washington Irving's satirical periodical *Salmagundi* (1807) attempts to liberate early national print culture from the discourse of normalizing reform, its fictitious editors can only do so by imposing their own normative standards of critique. The final chapter argues that by undermining its readers' instincts about what is and is not 'natural,' Catharine Maria Sedgwick's novel *Hope Leslie* (1827) challenges a newly emerging confidence in fiction's ability to train readers in a nationally-specific code of morals.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Triumph of Nature; or, the Rise of the American Novel	25
Chapter 2: The Means and Ends of Republican Virtue	65
Chapter 3: Fashionable Discipline	108
Chapter 4: The End of Good Feelings	151
Works Cited	190

“Hail sensibility! Ye eloquent *tears of beauty!* that add dignity to human nature by correcting its foibles—it was *these* that corrected my faults when recrimination would have failed of success—it was *these* that opened every avenue of contrition in my heart, when *words* would have damned up every sluice of repentance.”

The Power of Sympathy (1789)

“The principle of sympathy, after being often opposed by the law of the state, which forbids it to relieve the distress it commiserates, will cease to act altogether; and, from this defect of action, and the habit arising from it, will soon lose its place in the human breast... While we pity, we secretly condemn the law which inflicts the punishment.”

“An Enquiry into the Effects of Public Punishments” (1787)

Introduction

This project seeks to describe the unique pressures brought to bear on the reading subjects of a government founded in what the Declaration of Independence calls “the Laws of Nature.” The above epigraphs, pulled from two very different eighteenth-century genres, both address the early republican desire for a discipline that comes from within. In both instances, human sympathy naturalizes virtue in ways that institutionalized discipline cannot. In the first excerpt, taken from William Hill Brown’s ‘first American novel’ *The Power of Sympathy*, an unfaithful husband is reformed when he witnesses his wife’s silent suffering. In the second excerpt, taken from a political society lecture given at the home of Benjamin Franklin, Dr. Benjamin Rush argues that in order for citizens to be willing participants in the legal system, republican government must design a penal code that is conducive to the sympathy one citizen instinctively feels for another. While literary studies have long recognized the reformative aims and

disciplinary potential of sentimental fiction, they have not recognized the extent to which early nationalists attempted to institutionalize the power of sympathy. Sympathy's extralegal status is usually placed in opposition to republican forms of institutionalized discipline. Because eighteenth-century sympathetic reading practices encouraged individuals to internalize imaginary encounters with other individuals, sympathy thrived in the private channels that republican virtue worked to subsume under the larger notion of disinterested action on behalf of the public good. Functioning outside the law, within the imaginations of private individuals, sympathy had the potential both to subvert and to discipline. Literary histories of the early republic often take as their central conflict Federalism's struggle to fashion rebels of feeling into citizens of reason. This project traces a competing strain in early nationalist rhetoric, one that recognized human sympathy as a force that government should incorporate rather than subdue.

Most scholarship of the early national period assumes a high level of anxiety about the unpredictable and rebellious passions of the people; in turn scholars of the early American novel emphasize the ways that the privatized reading practices associated with this new genre posed a threat to highly public concepts of disinterested republican virtue. Although the early American novel has a reputation for didacticism, this didacticism is read as a performative symptom of an early republican wariness toward the privatized reading practices of the novel. Crudely stated, literary scholars continue to make the same argument about the early American novel as eighteenth-century political and religious leaders once did: it circulated as a dangerous genre that incited rebellious private desires. My project challenges this traditional understanding on two fronts. First, I argue that much of the political rhetoric of the early national period insists that unruly

natural feelings were precisely what would lead to the disinterested consensus so desired by early America. I then argue that the novel fulfills an early republican fantasy of voluntary regulation by granting individual reading subjects the dubious right to discipline themselves. My emphasis on the natural follows from the rhetoric of constitutionalism that begins my project, and culminates in the rhetoric of early American romanticism. Politicians on all sides of the ratification debates argued that their position was the most faithful fulfillment of the Declaration's invocation of the "Laws of Nature." Because dissent always threatens to visibly announce the unnaturalness of human law, a government that describes itself as founded on natural law must have an uneasy relationship with institutionalized discipline. This project begins by arguing that the early republic's preoccupation with naturalized government is intimately related to the methods of privatized discipline the sentimental novel imagines. It ends arguing that early American romanticism appropriates this correspondence between the moral and the natural world in order to naturalize imperialist, nationalist ideologies.

Most studies of the novel would accept the premise behind Michael McKeon's *Secret History of Domesticity* that modernity can be defined by a "distinctive division between the public and the private" (xviii). Nearly all classic accounts of the novel argue that its rise in England during the eighteenth century is a consequence of the rise of the middle class and the emergence of a private sphere.¹ The novel appealed to individual

¹ Ian Watt first makes this argument in *The Rise of the Novel*, attributing the rise of the novel to "the great power and self-confidence of the middle class" and "that vast complex of interdependent factors denoted by the term 'individualism'" (59, 60). Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel* complicates Watt's argument and tries to account for the generic and ideological oppositions within what we call the novel genre by proposing a "dialectical theory of the novel," meaning that although the novel's dominance can be explained by its ability to resolve certain generic and social problems, by taking on these problems the novel also reflects them (20). This dialectic approach continues in *The Secret History of Domesticity*, where McKeon differentiates between distinction and separation. Domesticity as a subdivision of the private—a division within—testifies to the domestic novel's ability to "absorb and incorporate the world

subjects who were newly valued for interior character markers rather than exterior class markers.² In the American context, however, this development must necessarily have a different history. As American literary scholars point out, social relations were not governed by a class system inherited from the aristocracy.³ Additionally, republican rhetoric's emphasis on disinterested publicity meant that the individual freedoms protected by England's liberal private sphere were considered a corrupting force on the American civic sphere. In the early republic, novelized forms of individualized interiority were always marked as illicit.⁴

I approach republican disinterest as a fundamentally psychologizing discourse. Precisely because republican rhetoric aimed to depersonalize the political subject, it was preoccupied with determining and regulating the motivations behind human behavior. Republican government doomed itself to operate in excess of the strictly political, not only because it attempted to preserve the laws of nature within its institutions, but also because it desired an ethical citizenry. Republican government authorizes itself through the innate moral faculty of its individual citizens, but it also seeks to incorporate that moral faculty into its own institutions. A government designed to accommodate its subjects' naturally-occurring potential for virtue must construct the condition from which

within its virtual domain, where the foundational terms of division are continuously rediscovered in successive subdivisions of the interior realm" (715).

² As Nancy Armstrong argues in her groundbreaking *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, "in place of the intricate status system that had long dominated British thinking, these authors began to represent an individual's value in terms of his, but more often in terms of *her*, essential qualities of mind" (4). Armstrong goes on to argue that the newly psychological individual of modernity "was first and foremost a woman" (8).

³ Responding to Armstrong, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon argues that "this old-world class system (rooted in feudal land-holding patterns and the ascriptive social order of political absolutism) did not exist in the United States" (141). See also Sarah Knott, who argues that the sentimentalism of the revolutionary period worked to forge different populist and aspirationalist class alliances between the middle class and the elite and lower classes: "Across the revolutionary period, the fate of sensibility was inseparable from class dynamics centered on a middling sort's seeking affiliation both above and below" (18).

⁴ See Michael Warner, who argues that "the novel generated extraordinary tensions for the republican paradigm" (150).

it originates. Additionally, the political rhetoric that descends from the Declaration must preserve the private as the source of the desire that naturalizes obedience. The republican adoption of the novel form is not so much a result of a divide between the public and the private as it is an attempt to consolidate the private into the public. The strain this fantasy of consolidation places on American concepts of civic virtue emerges in this dissertation in increasingly unstable appeals to nature, beginning with the Declaration's claim that its authority represented a return to a state nature, and ending with the early romantic claim that Indians were naturally destined to disappear in the face of American expansion.

When Cathy Davidson published her pioneering study of the early American novel, she set out to combat two prevailing falsehoods about a genre that had been thoroughly neglected: first, that there weren't any American novels published before James Fenimore Cooper, and second, that early American literature was merely imitative of Old World conventions. Davidson's ambitious study argued for the importance of the novel in the development of the early Republic by describing it as Federalism's unruly other. Appealing in unpredictable ways to a diverse audience, "the novel provided an alternate public forum on democracy" and "encouraged the practice and underscored the importance of fanciful interpretation" (7). Almost exactly ten years after Davidson's *Revolution and the Word*, Julia Stern and Elizabeth Barnes published two important follow-up studies. In *The Plight of Feeling*, Stern argues that following the trauma of the Revolution, sympathy in the early American novel encouraged readers to imagine "a broadly inclusive vision of democracy" (2). In *States of Sympathy*, Barnes argues that the sympathetic reading encouraged by the early American novel "subordinates difference to sameness" and "teaches readers to care for others as if they were reflections of

themselves” (17). Thus for Barnes, unlike for Stern, “sentimental politics reveals itself to be a politics of affinity rather than of democracy” (98). The different emphases of these two readings of early American novels—Barnes’ emphasis on inclusion and expansion and Stern’s emphasis on exclusion and homogeneity—are not differences that either would argue could be maintained with any sort of stability. As Davidson notes, “it is precisely in these interstices—the disjunctions between the conventional and the radical readings of the plot—that the early American sentimental novel flourishes” (230). I would add that our current understanding of the subversive and hegemonic forces at work in the early American novel are also reflected in eighteenth-century reactions. For example, although Benjamin Rush claimed that novel-reading “blunts the heart to that which is real,” his contemporary Jeremy Belknap blamed the seduction of a minister’s daughter on the fact that she was “a great reader of Romances.”⁵ For Rush, novels blunted sympathies; for Belknap, they inflamed them. Both figures are ostensibly opposed to the novel (although as I will argue in my first chapter, Rush’s opposition is not as indisputable as it seems), but they are opposed for entirely different reasons. Their different positions anticipate our own current critical debates about the progressive or conservative politics of the early novel. Rush’s position in particular also troubles our assumption that Federalist authorities found sympathy to be a dangerous and uncontrollable force that threatened the stability of the republic.

Underlying early republican debates about novels was an uncertainty about whether human sympathy would lead to national unity or individual deviance. Should human nature be left to its own devices or carefully regulated by cultural and political

⁵ The Rush quote is from a lecture given at the Young Ladies’ Academy in Philadelphia on July 28, 1787 (“Thoughts Upon Female Education” 31-2). The Belknap quote is from a letter to Benjamin Rush and is quoted in Carla Mulford’s introduction to *The Power of Sympathy and The Coquette* (ix).

institutions? The ratification debates addressed the inherent artificiality of the natural laws the framers were supposed to be writing. As Eric Slauter argues in *The State as a Work of Art*, the conflict between the recognition that government was “an artificial imposition” and the desire for a government that was “a natural outgrowth of society” drove the process of constitution-making (9). In *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, Sarah Knott argues that early republicans called upon the eighteenth-century notion of sensibility to make the government they were constructing feel natural. According to Knott, American revolutionaries “turned to sensibility to understand state formation. Constitutionalism—with its premise of the replacement of an organic body politic and the ability to construct a new government better suited to man’s nature—required it” (19). For Knott, “the careful synthesis of reason and feeling on which sensibility depended was fragile. The operation of sympathy was unpredictable, its objects and fault lines ambiguous and contested” (19). The unpredictable status of sympathy is precisely what interests me in this project, as I trace a strain of early national rhetoric that exploited its unpredictability using methods of representation that can only be described as fictional. Sympathy was put to work enabling a correspondence between private desires and public duty. This carefully cultivated correspondence served the dual function of regulating desire and naturalizing duty. Additionally, early national disciplinarians embraced sympathy as a fundamentally imaginative act. Sympathy, as theorized by Adam Smith, depends on an imaginative substitution: if “our brother is upon the rack,” “it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations” (9). The fact that Smith’s opening example in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* involves an act of state-sanctioned torture will become particularly meaningful in my first chapter. The modern

disciplinary systems that emerged in the early national period understood that sympathy, as an imaginative endeavor, had the potential to both unify and terrorize.

In her introduction to the revised edition of *Revolution and the Word*, Davidson writes that many of its first readers “saw it primarily as a book about the sentimental novel and a theory of women as readers and writers. This portion of the book is not the longest in terms of pages, but the book came out at the very height of debates on gender and was incorporated into those debates” (x). Although different chapters have since been anthologized, Davidson’s observation about what literary critics initially found most useful or memorable in her study of the early American novel points to an assumption that American literary study continues to perpetuate, even if in ever more nuanced and complex ways: the rise of the novel is also the story of the feminization of American culture. This argument is most famously articulated by Ann Douglas, who argues that in the nineteenth century two disempowered populations, middle class women and the liberal clergy, worked to gain influence through the production of sentimental literature, but it has also found its way into accounts of the eighteenth century. Michael Warner, for example, concludes his account of republican print culture by looking forward to a “turn toward sentiment” that is “a key element both in the extension of the national imaginary to the female readership of novels and in the emergence of a liberal paradigm for appreciating printed texts” (174). Since Warner’s groundbreaking study of republican print culture, critics have worked to complicate his identification of a “general principle of negativity” that dominated early national print culture and that excluded subjects who were particularized by their gender or race (43). Studies of the American novel now note that its imaginative and sympathetic reading practices reflected the political rhetoric of

post-Revolutionary America. Not only did this rhetoric work to persuade citizens to accept imaginative participation in representative government, but it also worked to unite a disparate citizenry by making appeals to feelings that were considered to be universal by the period's moral philosophy.

The most important of these revisionary interventions for my dissertation comes in Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's book *The Gender of Freedom*. Arguing that "republican abstraction and liberal individuation" are always operating together in the literary public sphere, Dillon notices a nostalgic lament in Warner's association of nineteenth-century sentimentality, women, and liberalism with the decline of disinterested civic virtue (37). Dillon first critiques "the temporal narrative of liberalism" that disallows women from entering the civic sphere. She then applies this critique to a new reading of print capitalist theory that understands the Habermasian literary public sphere to be located "between the state and the private sphere...as such, the literary public sphere introduces a model of publicity that includes, rather than excludes women" (34). Dillon thus resituates the public/private, masculine/feminine binaries that define both liberal political theory and republican print culture as "mutually constituting at every moment" (36). Liberal political theory presents a narrative whereby subjects leave behind the state of nature in order to benefit from the protections of civil society. Dillon points us to the fantasy dimension of these narratives, noting that liberal narratives that begin in a "state of nature" "do not describe events that have happened in the past, but rather describe the construction of subjectivities, a process that occurs in a repetitive rather than linear fashion" (24). The liberal subject never really leaves nature behind.

Dillon's sense of private and public subjectivities as mutually constitutive allows her to demonstrate the ways that the masculine subject's entry into the public sphere relies upon the construction and preservation of a private feminine subjectivity. My own project's emphasis on the disciplinary function of early American sympathetic reading practices describes the ways that fantasies of feminine transgression are put to use by patriarchal authority. When Benjamin Rush argues in his lecture "Thoughts Upon Female Education" (1787) that "the first marks we shall perceive of our declension, will appear among our women," there is no doubt that he is setting up women in allegorical relation to the moral health of the republic (22). But if the impressionable nature of women makes them an emotionally rich symbol for the vulnerable young republic, it also means that this feminine unruliness is presented not only as a standard of measuring the virtue of the republic, but also as an opportunity to increase the institutional power of the state:

I know that the elevation of the female mind, by means of moral, physical and religious truth, is considered by some men as unfriendly to the domestic character of a woman. But this is the prejudice of little minds, and springs from the same spirit which opposes the general diffusion of knowledge among the citizens of our republics. If men believe that ignorance is favourable to the government of the female sex, they are certainly deceived; for a weak and ignorant woman will always be governed with the greatest difficulty...It will be in your power, LADIES, to correct the mistakes and practice of our sex on these subjects, by demonstrating, 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. (25)

In this thinly veiled argument on behalf of his belief in the importance of an educated citizenry, Rush invites women to participate in their own subjugation by demonstrating their conduciveness to education. Women were considered unfit for both paradigms of citizenship that operated together in the late eighteenth century. They were considered unfit for republican citizenship because their dependence on husbands and fathers precluded them from acting disinterestedly. They were also considered unfit for liberal citizenship because their lack of property precluded them from consenting to the state protection guaranteed by the social contract.⁶ This passage from Rush's essay demonstrates the knotty logic driving liberal and republican methods of disenfranchisement. Although women are described as needing to be governed, Rush fantasizes that this system of domestic inequality is a form of self-government. Granting women the authority to consent to their own discipline allows for the possibility of voluntary obedience. If, as Rush declared in his essay "On the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," the difference between a successful republic and a monarchy is that a republic must "revolve upon the wills of the people," then even more than obedient subjects the new government required willing subjects. This desire for willing subjects means that republican disinterest relied intimately on the private desires of individual citizens. The early American novel is one method of negotiating this volatile

⁶ See Gordon Wood for an explanation of how republican virtue was considered unattainable for women: "To be completely virtuous citizens, men—never women, because it was assumed they were never independent—had to be free from dependence and from the petty interests of the market place" (104). For the liberal side see Dillon, esp. 19-25.

relationship, as its distance from institutionalized channels of discipline gives it direct access to “the wills of the people.”

In addition to Dillon’s study of liberalism and the literary public sphere, a second important influence on my dissertation comes in Lora Romero’s study of nineteenth-century domesticity. In *Home Fronts* Romero argues that reading nineteenth-century domestic fiction “without the gender binarisms through which the canon has been constructed requires revising critical accounts of oppositionality” (71). Following Romero, I also argue that a critical tendency to overemphasize the separation between masculine and feminine literary cultures misses the enabling nature of the relationship between discipline and transgression that early American novels demonstrate so clearly. Although I end where Romero begins, with the frontier romance and the early romantic movement, my project is deeply informed by her Foucauldian understanding of the productive relationship between discipline and transgression. I also, however, argue that Foucauldian theories of the novel need to be revised for the early American context. In general, the British novel has received more consideration as a modern disciplinary institution than the early American novel; two important exceptions are Romero’s study of nineteenth-century domesticity and Mark Seltzer’s study of Henry James’ novels, but the early American novel is still considered to be a genre that receives, rather than enforces, discipline.⁷ In his influential Foucauldian reading of the Victorian novel, D.A. Miller counters the traditional understanding of the novel as lawless space with “the possibility of a radical *entanglement* between the nature of the novel and the practice of the police” (2). For Miller, the nineteenth-century British novel, like Foucault’s prisons, schools, and hospitals, is yet another method of institutionalized discipline. Though my

⁷ Using the novels of Henry James Seltzer argues that “the art of the novel is an art of power” (14).

project is fundamentally invested in an understanding of modern power structures that coerce the liberal subject into enacting privatized forms of self-regulation, I find the conditions that give rise to a republican fantasy of voluntary obedience to be more messily related to desire than Foucauldian readings of the Victorian novel allow. What I am *not* arguing is that the early American novel induces desire merely to discipline it (or, in Miller's words, that "the novel shows disciplinary power to inhere in the very resistance to it" (27)). Instead, I argue that a government founded in natural law must work to make its subjects feel that its discipline is already in tune with their natural desires. At the heart of a totalizing system of republican discipline is an anxious dependence on the unruly desires of individual subjects.

Implicit in Miller's determination that power relations operate primarily within the domestic sphere of the Victorian novel is the underlying assumption that Romero identifies and challenges throughout *Home Fronts*: namely, that "normalization is still women's work" (50). By locating a strain in early American political rhetoric and reading practices that worked to naturalize culture rather than socialize desire, I enter this conversation by questioning the oppositional relationship between masculine romanticism and feminine sentimentalism that dominates accounts of nineteenth-century literary culture. For Douglas, the few romantics America did produce can be "characterized and defined by their defiance of sentimentalism and of incipient mass culture" (256). Feminist critics have since worked to restore the reputation of the women's fiction Douglas aligns with anti-intellectual mass culture, but they do so by arguing that this fiction is worthy of our critical attention because of its difference from the aesthetics of a male-dominated romantic movement. As Dillon notes, "in the critical

tradition of American letters, placing sentimentalism and aesthetics together constitutes something of an oxymoron” (“Sentimental Aesthetics” 495). Similarly, Eliza Richards observes in her study of Poe and the nineteenth-century poetess that feminist critics responding to Douglas have primarily done so by emphasizing the cultural and political work of antebellum women’s fiction while remaining silent on “charges of aesthetic inadequacy” (24). Although Richards’ point is that this emphasis on political critique has neglected the lyric tradition of the poetess in favor of the domestic novelist, her characterization points to a more general critical practice that values antebellum women’s fiction first and foremost as a revisionary political protest to the dominant ideologies of its time. I would also add early American romanticism to Richards’ account of neglected literary traditions that might complicate our gendered understanding of nineteenth-century literary culture. Because the early American romantic movement can be characterized as sentimental in its aims of producing literature that will move the human moral faculty, it is also a site where pastoral aesthetics function alongside of sentimental didacticism.

The movement that I call early American romanticism has been neglected in lieu of mid-nineteenth-century American Renaissance authors who supposedly represent a clear developmental break with eighteenth-century literary conventions. American romanticism is generally defined by its opposition to the nineteenth-century marketplace commodification of literature. This definition excludes any author who was popular during the nineteenth century. A classic account of American romanticism occurs in Michael Gilmore’s book *American Romanticism and the Marketplace*. Although part of Gilmore’s aim is to demonstrate the “affinities between romanticism and the marketplace

that go beyond the question of a given author's contempt for popularity or desire for success," he also claims that "the romantics can be excused for feeling that they inhabited a completely separate cultural universe from the 'scribbling women.'" (12, 8). The female contemporaries of the "undeniably major" authors Gilmore selects for his study (Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville) will never be worth examining in a book that claims to be about American Romanticism. By changing the terms of our definition of romanticism, I hope to complicate this gendered understanding of nineteenth-century literary culture. My account of American romanticism includes once popular but now forgotten authors like William Cullen Bryant, Elizabeth Lee Cabot Follen, and Fitz-Greene Halleck. In my account, the outdated moralizing tone of early romantic poetry works to articulate an immediately identifiable correspondence between the moral world and the American landscape. In their appropriation of Wordsworthian naturalism, the early American romantics also preserved a jarring sense of eighteenth-century didacticism. Bryant's claim in his *Lectures on Poetry* (1825) that "among the most remarkable of the influences of poetry is the exhibition of those analogies and correspondences which it beholds between the things of the moral and of the natural world" sounds unappealingly didactic to modern readers (19). But it would be a mistake to read this theory of poetry as unrelated to imperialistic narratives of progress.⁸ Instead, this correspondence between the moral and the natural world worked to naturalize American expansionism as an involuntary democratic impulse.

⁸ For example, Laurence Buell characterizes Bryant's new-world pastoralism as postcolonial, still "affected by the European gravitational field," whereas Whitman's "anxious patriotic hubris" has an imperialist trajectory. Buell compares Bryant's "bondage to old-world language and form" to Whitman and Thoreau's "fully Americanized" art (605-9).

If we understand the nationalist energies at work behind the moralizing naturalism of early American romantic poetry, nineteenth-century literary culture realigns itself into new genealogies. One realignment I explore in this dissertation is reading Catharine Maria Sedgwick as an early romanticist rather than as a domestic novelist. At the risk of gesturing beyond the scope of my dissertation, an even more unlikely genealogy can also be traced from Bryant to Walt Whitman. For most scholars of American poetry, Whitman's modernity and originality represent everything Bryant is not, but the nationalism that drives Whitman's call for a national literature in *Democratic Vistas* (1871) is quite clearly descended from the nationalism that Bryant expressed in his reviews of early national literature. Whitman, who, like Bryant felt that "the greatest lessons in Nature" were also "the greatest lessons...in New World politics and progress," desired "a cluster of mighty poets, artists, teachers, fit for us, national expressers, comprehending and effusing for the men and women of the States, what is universal, native, common to all, inland and seaboard, northern and southern...nothing is plainer than the need, a long period to come, of a fusion of the States into the only reliable identity, the moral and artistic one" (394, 402). Whitman's belief that literature will create a stable national moral identity mirrors Bryant's belief, as expressed in his review of Sedgwick's novel *Redwood* (1824), that the diversity represented by "the adventurous and roving natives of our seacoasts," "those who till the interior," "the hardy dwellers of our mountainous districts," "the inhabitants of the rich plains," and "the manners of the northern states...and those of the southern" can be formed into a national character by "the writer of fictitious history" (254-5). My point is not to make Bryant into something that he is not, nor is it to restore him to the canon using modernist values. But I would

like to suggest that Bryant and Whitman's shared belief that American literature would condense geographic diversity into national essence not only blurs the dividing lines of American literary studies, but also opens up new ways of perceiving the violence that accompanies the rhetoric of American exceptionalism but that so often disappears into the rhetoric of naturalism.

The pre-history that will allow this new reading of American romanticism begins with the early national inheritance of the Declaration's appeal to "the Laws of Nature." My dissertation begins with Benjamin Rush's theories of prison reform (1787), William Hill Brown's novel *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), and the ratification debates. My first chapter returns to Michel Foucault's account of the Walnut Street prison reform movement in *Discipline and Punish*, primarily to ask what Foucault does not: why does this shift in attitudes towards discipline take place in Philadelphia in the same year that the Constitution is ratified? This chapter begins by tracing rhetoric on both sides of the ratification debates that claims to place its faith in a highly naturalized concept of the human moral faculty. A central figure in these debates is Benjamin Rush. Though Rush is often cited as being opposed to novel-reading, I argue that the theories of fellow feeling that inform his description of the sympathetic witness at the scene of a public punishment are directly related to the sympathetic reading practices of the early American novel. Understanding the role of sympathy in Federalist institutions such as Rush's secretive prisons also helps us to understand how sympathy functions in a novel that seems to simultaneously describe its reformatory and destructive potential. *The Power of Sympathy* is a strange and slippery text, and the purpose of my first chapter is not to explain away this strangeness, but instead to argue that its disciplinary power lies within

the contradictions between its prefatory moral and the sympathetic connections it encourages between reader and character. In *The Power of Sympathy*, official channels of discipline are surpassed by the private disciplinary acts that make the novel's unregulated contact with individual readers so powerful. Rush's penal code and Brown's novel both demonstrate that although sympathy operates outside of the law, it still exacts a disciplinary price—its extralegal status means that its ability to punish is as unregulated as its ability to seduce.

One value that studies of early American literature do not often mention is pleasure. We understand the early novel's didacticism, melancholic overtones, and generic self-consciousness, but what we don't think about as much is fiction's ability to speculate about the pleasures of virtue. My second chapter turns to the novels of Charles Brockden Brown, particularly his understudied novel *Clara Howard* (1801), to explore this relationship between pleasure and virtue. When Brockden Brown argued in "Walstein's School of History" (1799) that fiction should provide both "moral benefit" and "pleasures," he implicated fiction in the relationship between pleasure and duty that enabled the republican ideal of voluntary obedience. Brockden Brown's final novel-writing phase suggests a model of republican virtue in which the rhetoric of civic disinterestedness relied upon the desires of the very individuals it sought to abstract. The central conflict of *Clara Howard* (1801), Brockden Brown's penultimate novel, is that Clara takes pleasure in fulfilling her duty in ways that her lover cannot. I argue that it is precisely this pleasure that marks Clara as the ideal republican subject. Turning to the British utilitarians who influenced Brockden Brown, this chapter argues that a government that authorizes itself in a highly naturalized concept of 'the good' must be

deeply committed to a morality that is motivated and naturalized by pleasure. Accounts of Brockden Brown's literary appropriation of Godwinian disinterest often overlook the ways that Godwin's political ideal relied upon a utilitarian understanding of the relationship between desire and voluntary action. Brockden Brown's fiction is often held up as exemplifying the utilitarian relationship between full disclosure and civic virtue, and therefore can be read as an example of the panopticism that characterizes Foucauldian accounts of the novel. I argue that because Brockden Brown thought fiction should aim for voluntary reform, he was skeptical of a print culture that enabled punitive republican surveillance. Recognizing the importance of voluntary obedience to Brockden Brown's republican theories opens up new ways of reading not only understudied works like *Clara Howard* and the short story "A Lesson on Concealment; or, The Memoirs of Mary Selwyn" (1800), but also more familiar texts like *Arthur Mervyn* (1799-1800), *Ormond* (1799), and *Edgar Huntley* (1799). Ultimately I argue that although Brockden Brown appropriates Godwin's ideal of voluntary obedience, he is less confident than the British utilitarian in our ability to identify the motivations that mark human action as voluntary or involuntary, as disinterested or self-interested. Rather than becoming a source of anxiety, as it does for Godwin, this uncertainty about human motivations leads Brockden Brown to celebrate fiction as the mode best suited to encouraging both virtue and pleasure.

My third chapter turns to early national periodical culture, specifically to James Kirke Paulding, William Irving, and Washington Irving's wildly popular periodical *Salmagundi* (1807). Like Brockden Brown, the editors of *Salmagundi* propose a model of reading centered on the reformatory potential of pleasure and humor. Recognizing this

relationship and the reading practices it encourages challenges our understanding of an Enlightenment print culture governed by rational, public debate and exposes the intimate connection between the pleasures of virtue and the forces of conformity. The fictitious editors of *Salmagundi* propose a new relationship with print that resists the novelized reading practices they associate with the self-interested partisanship of the American political scene. Although *Salmagundi*'s editors reject the fantasies of print diffusion that Michael Warner and Trish Loughran have identified as the primary method through which literature would be politicized in the early national period, they have no choice but to communicate with their readers through the chaotic public sphere that enables the very values they despise. This tension situates their project within the Habermas-Foucault debates about the function of criticism: despite the editors' frequent claims that they write only for pleasure, the question remains whether or not *Salmagundi* actually manages to avoid proposing a new set of normative values to replace the materialist factionalism it criticizes. This chapter focuses on the challenge *Salmagundi* poses to print capitalist models of early republican literary culture, particularly the ways that it criticizes the reflexive reading practices that are understood to connect the periodical essay to the novel. As they refuse to conform to the generic conventions of periodical writing, specifically regular circulation, corrective social critique, and a reflexive relationship between reader and author, *Salmagundi*'s editors also imagine a space for fiction that is free from market pressures—a space of literary, rather than civic, disinterest.

My dissertation ends with the nation supposedly moving past the partisanship the editors of *Salmagundi* find so distasteful. The political rhetoric of the Era of Good Feelings (1815-1825) proclaimed a return to a mythical, harmonious republic. This

nostalgia is anxiously reproduced in the frontier romance, as a complex transnational history is disciplined into a national literature. The historical romance dominated the literary market in this period because of a newfound interest in defining and naturalizing national character. I argue that Catharine Maria Sedgwick's novel *Hope Leslie* (1827) is one exception to this period's confidence in a narrative of American progress. *Hope Leslie* undermines its readers' instincts about what is and is not 'natural,' in turn challenging literature's authority as the mode best-suited to train readers in a nationally-specific code of morals. The narrative misdirections in *Hope Leslie* disrupt a newly emerging confidence in the reformatory and truthful potential of fiction and remind us that Sedgwick is as much a descendant of Charles Brockden Brown as she is a precursor to Harriet Beecher Stowe. My final chapter addresses the critical impasse that currently dominates accounts of *Hope Leslie*, as critics cannot reconcile the progressive possibilities it imagines with its conventional resolution. I argue that the novel presents a concept of history characterized by an endless cycle of transgression and discipline. In *Hope Leslie*, transgression is always a disciplinary act. Because it has been placed squarely in a tradition of sentimental women's fiction that takes the possibility of progress as its founding tenet, *Hope Leslie*'s cyclical concept of history is understood to be an example of the inevitable failure of the domestic female novelist's imagination. By resituating *Hope Leslie* within the early Romantic movement, I argue that the history it narrates represents a protest against the progressive histories that dominated the nationalist rhetoric of the early nineteenth century. My dissertation ends thinking about how *Hope Leslie*'s romantic engagement with the trope of the disappearing Indian works

to confirm and historicize the American revolution as a time when natural law was the law of the land.

It is easy to say that my dissertation is about ‘the rise of the American novel.’ I argue that republican government’s speculative and dependent relationship with the private desires of individual subject-citizens inevitably linked it to the novel’s privatized reading practices. But I also hope to disrupt the exclusionary principle that must accompany a method of literary study that can only make sense of literature in relation to a linear concept of generic and national progress. At the center of my dissertation are two texts that are frequently dismissed as outmoded mistakes in the development of a national literature. *Clara Howard* has been dismissed as a sign that Brockden Brown decided to pander to sentimental female readers at the end of his career, and *Salmagundi* is cited as an example of a literary genre that would soon be as obsolete as the authors’ Federalist politics. But when considered alongside *Salmagundi*’s investment in the literary, its discomfort with novelized reading practices challenges our understanding of American literary culture as the story of the rise of the novel; similarly, Charles Brockden Brown’s final embrace of epistolarity disrupts our understanding of the rise of the novel and the modern liberal subject as parallel and linear developments. Book ending these two ‘failures’ are two experiments that literary studies have worked to neatly contain. The final sublimation of *The Power of Sympathy*’s more transgressive impulses has been accepted as a determining convention of the domestic fiction that follows from early national seduction novels. Accordingly, *Hope Leslie*’s contradictions are regretted as generic failures rather than taken as a sign that those conventions might not be as firmly established as we would like them to be.

When I was writing the prospectus for this dissertation in the Spring of 2009, we were in the midst of the debate surrounding President Obama's decision to appoint Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. Obama's recommendation was immediately viewed in light of comments he made to Planned Parenthood in 2007 stating that an important qualification for a supreme court justice is empathy. By empathy Obama seemed to mean the ability to sympathize with the diverse histories of defendants.⁹ To someone who was fully immersed in the early republican political archive, and thus preoccupied with Federalism's unexpectedly cozy relationship with the good feelings of the social contract, the outcry surrounding Obama's "empathy nominee" seemed strange indeed. In *The Female Complaint*, the final installment of her study of sentimentality and American culture, Lauren Berlant writes that the "very general sense of confidence in the critical intelligence of affect" that characterizes sentimentality "is not usually expressed in or addressed in the political register" (2). My dissertation traces the pre-history to Berlant's account of sentimentality as an overtly feminine discourse that emerged in the nineteenth century in opposition to the "degraded space" of the political (3). I am not rehashing the Sotomayor confirmation hearings in order to make an argument on behalf of Obama's comments—I see my project as continuing the work of critics like Berlant who have detailed compassionate liberalism's highly problematic relationship with the very populations Obama claimed would benefit from empathetic justice.¹⁰ I would, however,

⁹ In this speech, Obama argued that "good intellect" is all that is required by 95% of Supreme Court cases, but "it's those five percent of the cases that really count. And in those five percent of the cases, what you've got to look at is—what is in the justice's heart. What's their broader vision of what America should be...And we need somebody who's got the heart—the empathy—to recognize what it's like to be a young teenage mom. The empathy to understand what it's like to be poor or African-American or gay or disabled or old—and that's the criteria by which I'll be selecting my judges."

¹⁰ Berlant argues that "Compassionate liberalism is, at best, a kind of sandpaper on the surface of the racist monument whose structural and economic solidity endures: in the intimate sphere of (femininity) a kind of soft supremacy rooted in compassion and coercive identification wants to dissolve all that structure through

note that the language of his critics, who gleefully argued that (feminine) empathy would interfere with (masculine) intellect, mirrors literary histories that perpetuate a narrative of masculine intellect giving way to feminine sentiment.¹¹ My project demonstrates that sympathy's current position as the political sphere's unruly other is an endpoint rather than an origin. I hope to unsettle the history of this endpoint at its own fantastic origin.

the work of good intentionality, while busily exoticizing and diminishing the inconvenient and the noncompliant" (6).

¹¹ In *The New Republic*, for example, Jeffrey Rosen collected comments from anonymous critics who "expressed questions about her temperament, her judicial craftsmanship, and most of all, her ability to provide an intellectual counterweight to the conservative justices, as well as a clear liberal alternative." This passage immediately follows a paragraph that cites Sotomayor's ability to make former clerks feel like family as one of her redeeming qualities.

Chapter 1: The Triumph of Nature; or, the Rise of the American Novel

One of the many digressions on republican virtue that make up William Hill Brown's novel *The Power of Sympathy; or, the Triumph of Nature founded in Truth* (1789) begins with Harrington's firsthand account of his trip down South:

In my tour through the United States, I had an opportunity of examining and comparing the different manners and dispositions of the inhabitants of the several republics. Those of the southern states, accustomed to a habit of domineering over their slaves, are haughtier, more tenacious of honour, and indeed possess more of an aristocratick temper than their sisters of the confederacy. As we travel northward, the nature of the constitution seems to operate on the minds of the people—slavery is abolished—all men are declared free and equal, and their tempers are open, generous and communicative. It is the same in all those countries where the people enjoy independence and equal liberty. (34)

This passage attempts to narrativize a causal relationship between subjects and government. There is a confused logic in Harrington's account that is particularly pertinent given the context of the ratification debates. Although the "nature of the constitution" influences the politics and values of Northerners, Southerners have been so corrupted by their environment that they are not suited for a republic founded on equality. Harrington's memory is directly informed by what Eric Slauter has identified as the central question of the ratification debates: "Did people make constitutions or did constitutions make people" (13)? As Slauter notes, the tension between the recognition that governments were artificially constructed and the desire for a government that

naturally reflected the cultural values of its subjects is precisely what drives “the process of constitution-making” (8-9). Harrington circles around this fantasy of a naturalized national character by suggesting that because temperament is formed by environment, it can be reformed. Southerners have an unfortunate habit that is interfering with their suitability to be subjects of a republican government, but Harrington has faith that with the abolition of slavery, Southerners will fulfill their natural potential to be republican subjects.

The problem that is driving Harrington’s memory of regional difference is a question of origins; not only is the story inspired by the mistreatment of a “mechanick’s daughter” at a party, but it also leads Harrington to claim “Such is the fate of the human race, one order of men lords it over another; but upon what grounds its right is founded I could never yet be satisfied.” As a good republican, Harrington must reject inequality as a historical certainty. The first sentence of his Republic’s founding document aligns equality with natural law:

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

Unlike the unnatural relation between monarchs and their subjects, the former colonies would establish a natural relation between government and citizen.¹ Because the

¹ For a lengthy treatment of Jefferson’s own conception of “Nature,” see Michael P. Zuckert’s reading of *Notes on the State of Virginia* in relation to the fact that “The ‘ultimate reality’ to which the Declaration

Declaration establishes the “Laws of Nature” as the forces legitimizing revolution, those laws could not be easily abandoned in the next decade by the constitutional framers.² In Federalist Paper #55, for example, Madison presents the Constitution’s scheme of representation as an obvious choice for those subjects who share their government’s faith in human nature:

As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form. Were the pictures which have been drawn by the political jealousy of some among us faithful likenesses of the human character, the inference would be that there is not sufficient virtue among men for self-government; and that nothing less than the chains of despotism can restrain them from destroying and devouring one another. (346)

When government is proposed as an effect or symptom of the nature of the governed, human nature must be represented as being conducive to republicanism. The irony of this rhetoric, of course, is that Madison claims to have faith in the virtue required for self-government only in order to justify the increased control of a centralized federal

appeals is thus nature” (61). Rather than attempt a comprehensive definition of Nature in Jefferson’s oeuvre and time—as Slauter notes, “Then, as now, people differed in their understanding of what was truly natural”—I am more interested in the possibilities the natural opens up for Federalists in the next decade (11).

² Scholars have identified various methods as working to establish the appearance of continuity between the Declaration and the Constitution. For Michael Warner, writing’s association with the defiant extralegal conventions of the Revolution authorizes the written Constitution as being both transcendent and immanent (101-2). Robert Ferguson argues that in its linguistic simplicity, “the Constitution confirms a familiar past” and “belongs to the realm of common understanding in eighteenth-century American experience”(135-6). Underlying both of these historical-literary critical examples is the assumption that Americans required the Constitution to be presented as a natural continuation of the Declaration’s values and intentions.

government.³ As Slauter argues, “the didacticism of the earliest state declarations of rights registered the dilemma between the claim that the rights being enumerated were transparent and derived from nature—that they were, in a sense, written on the heart—and the acknowledgment that the people needed to be taught to read them” (227). This tension is reflected in Benjamin Rush’s claim in a lecture to the American Philosophical Society that although “our government...should possess...the moral faculty, and the conscience of an individual,” the virtue of those individuals should be carefully trained by “by means of proper modes and places of education” (40). Government should reflect human nature, but a human nature that favors republican government would be represented as needing careful cultivation.

The passage from *The Power of Sympathy* that opened this chapter is an important reminder of the fact that 1789 witnessed both the implementation of the newly ratified constitution and the publication of the ‘first American novel.’⁴ In her study of the early American novel, Cathy Davidson argues that republican anxiety surrounding the novel can be understood in the context of the ratification debates: “while the novel was widely censured in Europe, the criticism in America may well have reached its particular level of vehemence because the novel was established here in the wake of the Revolution, at a time when disturbing questions (witness the Constitutional debates) about the limits of liberty and the role of authority in the republic were very much at issue” (105).

Following Davidson, literary historians associate the rise of the American novel with the

³ For the logic behind *The Federalist*’s rhetoric, see Trish Loughran: “Rather than imagining the states as victims of the national government’s coming tyranny, *The Federalist* posits the federal state as a sitting duck in the middle of a reverse panopticon—a fledgling object subject to the surveillance of its state-parts and man-parts rather than something that can exert control and scrutiny over those parts from above or beyond” (158).

⁴ *The Power of Sympathy* was the first novel published in the United States by an American author. Earlier novels written by authors born in America were published in London. For a different set of criteria, see William Spengemann’s essay “The Earliest American Novel: Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*.”

decline of republican print culture and the emergence of the liberal state. Michael Warner argues that the novel represents a shift away from a republican understanding of print as something regulated by and experienced in the public sphere. For Warner, “the novel generated extraordinary tensions for the republican paradigm,” because it allowed readers to privately imagine how they might fulfill their civic duty; the private relationship to virtue enabled by the sentimental didacticism of early novels represented the beginning of a liberal nationalist paradigm (150). According to Warner’s influential argument, the novel’s privatized reading practices operated in direct opposition to republican values of publicity and disinterest. Similarly, in her introduction to *The Power of Sympathy and The Coquette*, Carla Mulford writes “novels like Brown’s and Foster’s were themselves part of a seductive marketplace of culture that was shifting from the public consumption of print to private use of it” (xi).

In contrast to arguments that emphasize the differences between republican and liberal reading practices and citizenship models, I argue that the unruly private desires associated with the novel’s individualized reading practices were always undergirding republican fantasies of disinterested civic virtue. As Rush declared in his essay “On the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic” (1786), the difference between a successful republic and a monarchy is that a republic must “revolve upon the wills of the people” (15). Republican virtue demands that the desires of its citizens supplement the fulfillment of their duty. If the failure of republican virtue results in empty forms of duty, as unwilling citizens are coerced into a volatile and unnatural obedience, its triumphant extreme leads to a civic sphere forced to incorporate the private desires of its citizens. Even more than obedient subjects the new government required willing subjects.

Because disobedience always threatens to visibly announce the unnaturalness of human law, a government that declares itself as founded on natural law must distance itself from the work of discipline. The early American novel's distance from official channels of discipline gives it direct access to "the wills of the people." As it manipulates the private sympathies of individual readers, the novel has the potential to produce the ideal subject for republican discipline.

As the nation debated whether, to paraphrase Slauter, people make constitutions or constitutions make people, in *The Power of Sympathy*, Harrington's friend Worthy wonders "whether the Novel makes the woman, or the woman makes the Novel" (29). Literary critics have made much of the fact that anxieties about the security of the republic were expressed in rhetoric and literature that represented women as both physically and psychically vulnerable.⁵ As Harrington's comment suggests, even within novels the female reader serves as an allegorical symbol of the vulnerability of the new nation to outside influence. I hope to show in this chapter that this rhetoric is not nearly as consistent or straightforward as literary histories have claimed. Our continued understanding of nineteenth-century literary culture as defined by the opposition between sentimental female novelists and serious romantic artists has its roots in the rhetoric surrounding the novel and women in the eighteenth century.⁶ The prefaces of eighteenth-

⁵ The novel's association with privatized liberalism is directly related to its association with women. As I noted in my Introduction, Michael Warner's final chapter in *Republic of Letters* is a key contributor to this argument. See Davidson's chapter "Ideology and Genre": "In short, female sexuality was not only fetishized but nationalized. It became...a national resource" (111). As Elizabeth Barnes notes, this anxiety operated not only via a connection between the physical purity and vulnerability of women and nation, but also via the allegorization of "emotional susceptibility": "in the postrevolutionary period, women become increasingly associated with the dangers of psychological penetration; they embody, both figuratively and literally, the suggestibility requisite for sympathetic identification" (8).

⁶ As Davidson writes in the second edition introduction of *Revolution and the Word*, "the attempt to factor gender into the analysis of the early American novel had a special weight given the tradition, since James Fenimore Cooper, of suggesting that serious writers were being drowned out by popular sentimental writers

century novels may have addressed themselves to women, but men wrote, published, and read sentimental novels. Additionally, republican political rhetoric took full advantage of the sentimental strategies employed by novels. As Elizabeth Barnes argues, “sentimental strategies of seduction are exemplary of postrevolutionary politics at large. That is seduction not only signifies the threat of illegitimate influence to the vision of democratic union, it indicates the particular mode by which patriarchal authority regains access to the American imagination after the fact of revolution” (9). The political rhetoric of the post-revolutionary period appeals to the sympathies of citizens in order to naturalize its authority. My account of the early American novel is deeply informed by critics like Barnes and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon who have troubled our understanding of clear liberal/republican and feminine/masculine divides in turn of the century American literary culture. Arguing that “republican abstraction and liberal individuation” are always operating together in the literary public sphere, Dillon “cracks apart the rigid dualism of the public/private coupling” by “arguing that the two sides of this dyad are mutually constituting at every moment, and thus that women figure on both sides of the divide” (36). Similarly, Barnes notes that “the story that waits to be told is the one that connects postrevolutionary with antebellum sentimental narratives and that recognizes the relationship between the republican and liberal agendas with which these respective periods are associated” (13). My final chapter will take up this antebellum endpoint, but first this chapter will argue that the fantasies of feminine transgression that dominate

and that those terms were coded ‘male’ and ‘female,’ respectively. My research persuaded me that those codes and equations were slippery and often false. Not all eighteenth-and nineteenth-century popular novels were sentimental; not all sentimental novels were popular; not all sentimental fiction was written or read by women” (29).

republican literary and political culture demonstrate that a government founded in natural law can only discipline its subjects in an imaginary register.

Two themes exist in unresolved tension in theories of the early American novel: the sentimental novel has enormous didactic potential because of the powerful imaginary connection it forms between reader and character; however, the novel's relationship to private individuals is also entirely unregulated and unpredictable. As Davidson argues, "given the indeterminacy of meaning in novels as well as their affective power, it is safe to say that, even when reading the same novel, mistress and maid probably did not draw the same class moral; while each may have been moved to sympathy, it is not at all clear that they felt the same range of sympathy for the same characters or savored the same sense of virtue rewarded at the novel's ending" (11). *The Power of Sympathy* clearly demonstrates the moral ambiguity that characterizes the early American novel. Brown's novel was dedicated to "the young ladies, of United Columbia," and "Intended to represent the specious causes and to expose the fatal consequences of seduction; to inspire the female mind with a principle of self complacency, and to promote the economy of human life." Claiming to teach a clear cut lesson about the dangers of seduction, the novel arose from the gossip surrounding a real world seduction. After Frances Theodora Apthorp bore her brother-in-law's child, her father insisted on a public settlement. The ensuing public attention led to Frances' suicide. Brown knew both of the families involved in the scandal, and the episode is recounted in a subplot of *The Power of Sympathy*, with the pseudonymous Ophelia replacing Frances. The fact that this rumor becomes a very minor subplot suggests the excess that characterizes this novel, as Brown pushes the concept of natural law to its limit in a novel that is about two

siblings who unsuspectingly fall in love. As Julia Stern neatly explicates, *The Power of Sympathy* is a perfect example of how the early American novel disrupts its own didactic claims: “the decidedly reactionary subtext” that subverts any neat allegorical reading of the nation-state is that “the senior Harrington’s tyrannical exploits go unpunished, while his son’s more socially expansive instincts—and with them his future—are crushed peremptorily and buried at inception” (27). *The Power of Sympathy*’s disparate subplots detailing seduction, incest, and suicide resist neat incorporation into the republican machine and support a plurality of reader responses. Not only did these novels send different messages to different readers, but assuming a correspondence between the nation and the individual blinds us to the “cultural disruption” expressed in their pages (Dillon 136).⁷ Despite *The Power of Sympathy*’s preoccupation with incest, a desire that hopelessly troubles categories of natural and unnatural, the problem of nature in Brown’s novel is often accepted at face value. Barnes, for example, concludes that “nature itself is finally offered as the author of Harrington and Harriot’s misfortune, calling into question the power of human reason and resolution ever to overcome the power of sympathy” (33). As I will go on to argue, this is precisely the reading of *The Power of Sympathy* that a republican investment in a naturalized and universal human sympathy could not bear. Rather than reading for the ways that the didactic premise of Brown’s novel works to discipline the uncontrollable natural sympathies of its characters and readers, I am interested in the ways that the sympathetic relationships it encourages between reader and character work to naturalize discipline.

⁷ Dillon outlines the dangers of relying too heavily on allegorical readings of early American novels: “these novels seem to me to delineate the difficult construction of separate-yet-entwined public and private realms that are dependent for their meaning on their *difference* from one another rather than upon their resemblance” (136).

My account of *The Power of Sympathy* seeks to push past accounts of the novel that read any departure from its prefatory moral to be sites of transgression. I argue that *The Power of Sympathy*'s officially sanctioned premise, "to expose the fatale consequences of seduction," isn't so much challenged by the individual actions of its characters as it is surpassed by them—individual, rather than institutional, methods of discipline ultimately triumph. These individual methods of discipline exemplify the kind of self-discipline required by a republic founded on the voluntary obedience of the social contract. My interest in early republican methods of managing desire inevitably leads this chapter to Michel Foucault's theory of biopower, particularly to his understanding of the mechanism by which an ever-expanding carceral system naturalizes the legal order. Foucault's resistance to binaries of subversion and hegemony also lends itself well to an analysis of the early republican novel, the morally ambiguous case study at the center of this chapter.⁸ In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that the individualization that characterizes the move into nineteenth-century disciplinary systems is reflected in a shift from accounts of exceptional lives to novels about social deviants: "This turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection" (192). Increased interest in individuals was motivated by a desire to classify and control under "normalizing judgment." Certainly the early American novel's much-documented obsession with fallen women fits into Foucault's trajectory, but how does this new mode of circulating disciplinary aims translate into

⁸ "Power comes from below; that is there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix... One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole" (*History of Sexuality* 94).

reading practices?⁹ The unpredictability of reader response is never a factor in Foucault's insistence that the novel's project of individualization worked only to objectify and subjugate, to classify and organize. Critical studies of early American print culture arrive, in different ways, to similar conclusions about the early American novel. Warner, for example, in his reading of Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* (1800-1), accepts the strangeness of this genre as following from unfamiliar republican reading practices. For Warner, early American novels "can be better accounted for by treating them as features of a republican public sphere rather than a liberal aesthetic" (152). Because the novel was not yet a privately consumed good, reading practices were regulated and informed by the norms and pressures of public discourse. Anything strange to modern readers can be explained away by the unfamiliar conventions of republican print culture. Rather than writing off the strangeness of the early American novel as simply the result of a clash of print cultures, my argument tries to acknowledge and preserve the tensions and inconsistencies that confused readers as much in 1789 as they do now.¹⁰ What Warner describes as the "law's character of duty as opposed to force" means that the much-touted civic disinterestedness of the early national period relied intimately on its subjects' private desires (100). Similarly, the success of a novel's didactic premise—its law, so to speak—depended on the sympathies of individual readers. Like republican virtue, the novel operated in excess of its institutionalized

⁹ As Mulford observes, "increasingly as the eighteenth century turned into the nineteenth century, the market in books served a populace that seems to have had tremendous preoccupation with private activities of people, but especially the private activities—the lives and the bodies—of women" (xi).

¹⁰ See Davidson: "The public of the time did not particularly want *The Power of Sympathy*. Despite Thomas's best efforts to promote his product, the book quickly sank into an oblivion from which it did not emerge until antiquarians, in the middle of the next century, resurrected it as a 'first' in American culture" (163). See also Loughran: "Davidson's work on the original reception of the novel suggests that readers were not all that taken with the storyline. Like readers today, many eighteenth-century readers found the plot awkward and far-fetched" (281).

supports. We should not assume, however, that a novel's departure from its didactic premise sends a subversive message; instead, the early American novel's unruliness points us to a disciplinary register that transcends and supports the republican project of naturalized government.

The most immediate contact between this chapter and Foucault's project occurs through Benjamin Rush, republican statesman, physician, and man of letters. Rush's essay "Thoughts upon Female Education" (1787), in which he outlines the negative effect novels have on the naturally-occurring sympathies of female readers, is frequently cited as a classic example of the tension that is supposed to have existed between novel-reading and republican virtue. I will address Rush's argument about novel-reading later in this chapter, but before doing so I turn to some of Rush's essays that are not directly about novels, but are very much about the role sympathy plays in regulating social relationships. Rush's essay on penal reform, which Foucault discusses extensively in *Discipline and Punish*, and his essay on the human moral faculty, both demonstrate that his philosophical interest in the power of sympathy aligns him surprisingly closely with the early American novelist. The crossover between the aims of Rush's penal reform and the aims of the sentimental novelist can help us understand the complementary relationship between the early American novel and the institutions against which it is so frequently opposed, as well as the role sympathy played in a republican public sphere that was supposedly governed by reason and disinterest. I argue that the tension between didacticism and subversion, between discipline and sympathy, that arises in the early American novel, is also the very tension Rush tries to account for in his Walnut Street

prison reforms, as he proposes a system that will be supplemented rather than subverted by natural sympathetic impulses.

To establish the working definition of republican virtue on which this chapter will rely, I first turn to Rush's lecture "An Enquiry into the Influence of Physical Causes Upon the Moral Faculty" (1786). Rush defines the moral faculty as "a power in the human mind of distinguishing and chusing between good and evil; or, in other words, virtue and vice. It is a native principle, and though it is capable of improvement by experience and reflection, it is not derived from either of them" (1). Rush insists on the naturalness of this moral faculty. Despite the fact that "some savage nations are totally devoid of the moral faculty," "it will by no means follow, that this was the original constitution of their minds" (11). Instead, in these always racially marked examples, the original moral faculty exists in a latent state, either because "it has wanted causes to excite it into action, or has been perverted by example" (12). Capable of either improvement or weakening (as in the case of Harrington's immorally acclimated Southerners), the human moral faculty is nevertheless a universally occurring original state. For Rush, it follows from the naturalness of the moral faculty that it is also passive—"like a sensitive plant," the moral faculty cannot control its responses to external stimuli. To make his point, Rush opposes the moral faculty to the deliberative conscience; the moral faculty is to sensation what the conscience is to perception (2). Unmistakably written in the language of the ratification debates, the relationship between the moral faculty and the conscience is one of checks and balances: "It must afford equal pleasure to the lovers of virtue to behold, that our moral conduct and happiness are not committed to the determination of a single legislative power.—The conscience, like a

wise and faithful council of revision, performs the office of a check upon the moral faculty, and thus prevents the fatal consequences of immoral actions” (14). Rush’s description of the relationship between the moral faculty and the conscience is familiar in terms of the eighteenth-century concept of sensibility.¹¹ A classic example of what historian Sarah Knott describes as sensibility’s “careful synthesis of reason and feeling,” Rush’s essay also hints at the new opportunities for control opened up by theories of government that were founded on human nature (19). According to Rush, the moral faculty is also public in nature—because it “exercises itself upon the actions of others,” “the state of the moral faculty is visible in actions, which affect the well-being of society” (2-3). In its extroversion, the natural and passive moral faculty is subject to surveillance and, for Dr. Rush, diagnosis: “the total absence of this faculty, I shall call anomia” (16). The solutions to a depraved moral faculty range from finding a suitable climate or diet to Rush’s favorite prescription, the establishment and support of public schools that will produce his famous “Republican machines,” subjects conditioned to think of themselves first and foremost as “public property” (“On the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic” 14, 10).¹²

The comfortable control Benjamin Rush feels over this highly naturalized concept of the moral faculty challenges some aspects of our understanding of early national political rhetoric. Most scholarship of the early national period correctly notes an anxiety about the unpredictable and rebellious passions of the people. Christopher Castiglia, for

¹¹ As Sarah Knott describes it, “What made sensibility particular was how it eschewed traditional dichotomies of reason and feeling, mind and body by means of sensation and perception. Sensibility was based, not in strict oppositions of head and heart, reason and passion, but rather in a naturally sensitive, briskly responsive, and thoroughly holistic self” (5).

¹² As Peter Okun writes, “Part surgeon and part utopianist, Rush diagnosed the disease and prescribed its cure: the citizen criminal was sick but salvageable. ‘The moral science’ had the power to cure him, and the state would wield it” (13).

example, argues that early national “institutionalism imagined citizens, partisan and potentially passionate, as the subjective and therefore threatening others of ‘the political’” (6). Barnes notes that the illicit relationships in seduction novels like *The Power of Sympathy* demonstrate that “sympathy, while touted as the emotional foundation of a democratic republic, also proves that feeling cannot be controlled” (2). There is no doubt that Federalism aimed to mold the passions of the people into forces appropriate to republican subjects, but what is too quickly assumed is a high level of suspicion towards these passions. What much of the political rhetoric of the early national period actually suggests is that unruly natural feelings were precisely what would lead to the disinterested consensus so desired by early America. As Sarah Knott argues, constitutionalism required sensibility, not only as a means of cohesion and national affiliation, but also because it claimed “to a construct a new government better suited to man’s nature” (19). Thomas Jefferson’s famous letter to Maria Cosway of 1787 is one example of national rhetoric that places its faith in good feelings. Jefferson’s love letter argues that the Revolution depended on the immediacy of an emotional reaction. While heads “began to calculate and to compare wealth and numbers,” the nation’s hearts “threw up a few pulsations of our warmest blood...supplied the enthusiasm against wealth and numbers...saved our country.” Not only does Jefferson argue that listening to the heart leads to encounters that break down self-interested and class-based social hierarchies, but he also founds the nation in good feelings as he categorizes the Revolution as rising out of a universally recognized moral imperative, ill-suited to deliberative judgment. Early republican belief in the supremacy of natural feeling over reason eliminated the possibility of many versions of truth and instead insisted upon one

innate and universal moral sense.¹³ The heart would become the vehicle of a much desired national consensus.

For Jefferson, morality lay firmly under the heart's jurisdiction. In his letter to Cosway, he argues that in denying the head "the feelings of sympathy, of benevolence, of gratitude, of justice, of love, of friendship, she [nature] has excluded you from their controul. To these she has adapted the mechanism of the heart. Morals were too essential to the happiness of man to be risked on the incertain combinations of the head."

Rush also argues that deliberative reason is ill-suited to moral decisions:

Happily for the human race, the intimations of duty and the road to happiness are not left to the slow operations or doubtful inductions of reason...It is worthy of notice likewise, that while *second* thoughts are best in matters of judgment, *first* thoughts are always to be preferred in matters that relate to morality. *Second* thoughts, in these cases, are generally parlies between duty and corrupted inclinations. (13)

Rush seconds Jefferson's claim that questions of morality should be answered quickly, without the tempering effects of self-interested reason. As Gary Wills has thoroughly documented, Rush's "road to happiness" would not only have been a very public notion, but also a responsibility of the government.¹⁴ If morals are essential to happiness, and if

¹³ See Fliegelman's discussion of this antirationism's impact on political oratory: "True oratory represented and reiterated shared beliefs in an effort to maintain a shared cultural world, one that provided a circumscribed scene for human action and created consensus by calling forth the universal nature of man, whose moral dictates would then ensure that sociability would rule individual behavior" (45). Eloquence was employed to "draw[] forth the indwelling moral and social nature of its auditors, compelling them to submit to law in charmed silence" (40).

¹⁴ "When Jefferson spoke of pursuing happiness, he had nothing vague or private in mind. He meant a public happiness which is measurable; which is, indeed, the test and justification of any government" (164). See Zuckert for a counterargument to Wills' reading of the Declaration as primarily informed by Francis Hutcheson and Scottish Common Sense philosophy. The primary difference is that Zuckert reads the Declaration through *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

the happiness of citizens is the government's responsibility, then the goodness of citizens would become an important measure of government's success. Rush firmly establishes virtue as the responsibility of legislative action, and argues that in order for the moral faculty to be the basis for a durable republican government, it must be properly managed: "There is but one method of preventing crimes, and of rendering a republican form of government durable, and that is by disseminating the seeds of virtue and knowledge through every part of the state, by means of proper modes and places of education, and this can be done effectually only, by the interference and aid of the legislature" (40). "Interference and aid" are conflated to justify government involvement in an ever expanding crusade of disseminating virtue.

Although Rush's belief in a universally-occurring moral faculty shows his indebtedness to Scottish Common Sense philosophy, his insistence that this moral faculty should be enforced legislatively is an important difference. Like Adam Smith, Rush is interested in motivations. Smith argued that trying to determine the cause of emotions rather than simply assessing the effects of emotion leads to fellow-feeling, because the only way to sympathize with others is to consider "the correspondent affection in ourselves" (18). But for Smith, virtuous action is extralegal—it cannot be enforced, nor can ingratitude or ungenerosity be punished by a legal system (81-2). In order to be purely disinterested, virtuous action must not be motivated by fear of punishment or expectation of reward. Similarly, for Rush the virtuous subject is one who is motivated purely by duty: "He must be taught to amass wealth, but it must be only to encrease [sic] his power of contributing to the wants and demands of the state" ("On the Mode of Education" 10-2). In this example, the virtuous subject's personal ambition must be

motivated only by the good of the state, not by self-interest. The virtuous subject loves his family and grows his coffers only because they are both part of the larger state. But unlike Smith's extralegal theory, Rush's insistence that government should possess the moral faculty of its subjects places virtue under the jurisdiction of government. As I will go on to argue, Rush's understanding of human sympathy allows him to propose methods of institutionalized discipline that take advantage of subjects' natural sympathies. Like the sentimental novel, which as Barnes puts it "effectively bridges the gap between internal and external authority, rendering the latter—represented by the novel itself—virtually indistinguishable from the readers own 'instincts,'" Rush's penal reform aimed at discipline that seemed to come from within (9).

Rush's essay "An Enquiry into the Effects of Public Punishments upon Criminals, and upon Society" (1787) reveals the consequences of virtuous government, as faith in the human moral faculty sanctions new methods for punishing criminal activity and new strategies for enforcing disinterested spectatorship. The prison reform Rush outlines in this essay is representative of the general shift away from public punishments that took place in the Atlantic world towards the end of the eighteenth century. As Caleb Smith describes it, "post-revolutionary American critics associated the scaffold with the tyranny of the old world"; "the new nation, with its social contract based on the liberty of the individual citizen-subject, required laws and punishments commensurate with its radical political vision" (8-9). Rush is a central figure in the changing attitudes Smith describes. His essay on public punishments, originally delivered as a lecture at a political society meeting at Benjamin Franklin's house, initiated a prison reform movement that is

generally understood to be the origin of the modern penitentiary system.¹⁵ In this essay, Rush argues that punishment should be conducive to naturally occurring human sympathies—because “sensibility is the centinel of the moral faculty,” punishment must not work against it (142). Rush asserts that public punishments force an abortive sympathy in spectators because they are unable to act on the sympathy they feel for criminals who were probably victims of unfortunate circumstances. In a nation that declared itself into being by listing justifications for disobedience, the law must presuppose the original goodness of criminals and take into consideration the motives behind the crime. Rush draws on Adam Smith’s interest in the knowability of the motivations behind human behavior, but not in order to theorize about fellow feeling. Instead, Rush applies Smith’s extralegal theories to arguments on behalf of penal reform: “Peculiar attention should be paid, likewise, in the nature, degrees, and duration of punishments, to crimes, as they arise from passion, habit, or temptation” (154). Justice systems should take sympathetic consideration of the extenuating circumstances that may have led to criminal acts. Rush’s essay argues that public punishment combines dangerously with natural sympathetic impulses. Through public punishments the law damages its own authority because the frustrated sympathy of spectators causes them to “secretly condemn the law which inflicts the punishment” (141-3). Because the spectator

¹⁵ Smith goes on to critique the historical discrepancies in Foucault’s famous assessment of the move from feudalism to modern disciplinary institutions, particularly in the Atlantic world, noting “Foucault’s periodization of ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ disciplines...seems to have overlooked the ongoing bodily violence that characterized power relations on colonial peripheries and plantations. The difference between the spectacle of the scaffold and the privacy of the cell was, at least in the American context, a matter not so much of chronology as of race and geography” (11). Peter Okun also notes that “penologists and historians generally agree that it was in Philadelphia, during the final decades of the eighteenth century, that ‘penitentiary-style’ imprisonment was first conceived by a group of local reformers and implemented at the Walnut Street prison” (xi). As Okun notes, “For the Revolutionary generation, America’s institutional inheritance of publicly and arbitrarily punished bodies had only evoked the brutality of monarchy. Purged of these cruelties, new penitentiary-style prisons (modeled on the facility at Walnut Street in Philadelphia) would emphasize privacy, consistency, and rehabilitation: new goals for a new nation, requiring new methods of classifying crime and the criminal” (3).

can't help but identify with the displayed criminal as a fellow human, public punishment also interferes with the cohesion so desired in the early national period by suggesting that neighbors and relations are potential criminals (144). Rush's essay does not only argue against public punishment—it also hints at the dangers of juridical systems that do not take into consideration a human nature directed by instinctual fellow feeling.

Rush's interest in human sympathy also leads him to argue that punishment should aim for reformation: "If the invention of a machine for facilitating labour, has been repaid with the gratitude of a country, how much more will that man deserve, who shall invent the most speedy and effectual methods of restoring the vicious part of mankind to virtue and happiness, and of extirpating a portion of vice from the world?" (156). Rush easily puts his knowledge of the power of sympathy to use designing covert punishments customized for individual criminals. Punishments "should be accommodated to the constitutions and tempers of the criminals, and the peculiar nature of their crimes" and should include varying degrees of "bodily pain, labour, watchfulness, solitude, and silence." Accordingly, "the nature, degrees, and duration of the bodily pain, will require some knowledge of the principles of sensation, and of the sympathies which occur in the nervous system" (154). Under this new system of secretive and individualized punishment, the imaginations of the sympathetic witnesses who made public punishment so dangerous now work in Rush's favor. Rush argues that penal codes should not be publicly announced in order to "prevent the mind from accustoming itself to the view of these punishments, so as to destroy their terror by habit." Additionally, the duration of punishments should not be publicly announced, for "the imagination, when agitated with uncertainty, will seldom fail of connecting the

longest duration of punishment with the smallest crime.” As new forms of corporal punishment are adapted to human sensibility, the threat of the disobedient sympathetic witness is also managed: “the recollection that the only design of punishment is the reformation of the criminal will suspend the action of sympathy altogether...Our sympathy, which in this case is of the *passive* kind, is mixed with pleasure, when we are assured, that there is a certainty of the operation being the means of saving the life of the sufferer” (151-2). For Rush, passive sympathy is a sympathy that is felt but not acted upon. When it is harnessed to republican duty, the uncontrollable nature of sympathetic attachment is precisely what allows government to remain unsullied by the work of discipline. A natural inclination toward universal fellow feeling is what makes the citizen most vulnerable to Rush’s reformatory discipline. What is most good in the republican subject is also the most easily managed. Discipline that reforms the potentially virtuous, rather than punishing the guilty, produces complacent (non)witnesses, secure in the belief that disciplinary reform is for the isolated prisoner’s own good.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault characterizes the penal reform movement of the eighteenth-century as a shift from the punitive to the coercive and cites Rush’s methods as evidence of a newly individualized penal system bent on reform rather than punishment. In Foucault’s account of the penal reform movement, the secrecy of Rush’s Walnut Street model serves as a critical turning point: “How did the coercive, corporal, solitary, secret model of power to punish replace the representative, scenic, signifying, collective model?” (131).¹⁶ In the early American context I have been detailing,

¹⁶ Rush was one of the first advocates of the reformatory possibilities of solitary confinement. Eric Slauter places Rush’s secretive disciplinary measures in the context of a new discourse of “the power of solitude,” and suggests that an emerging interest in the benefits and problems of solitude explains Rush’s faith in the reformatory power of solitary confinement. Slauter also suggests that certain strains of thought that

punishment becomes evidence of a disobedience that signifies the unnaturalness of government and that in turn must remain secreted away from the official and public operations of government. Foucault claims that Rush's American system is different from other eighteenth-century prison reform movements because rather than simply working to restore a subject gone astray, it worked to produce an obedient subject "subjected to habits, rules, orders, an authority that is exercised continually around him and upon him, and which he must allow to function automatically in him" (129). But Rush's republican investment in the human moral faculty makes his system about more than programmed obedience. Foucault's Eurocentric emphasis on the production of obedient subjects oversimplifies the early republic's desire for willing subjects. Whereas Foucault concludes that Rush's individualized system "took as its field of reference not so much the crime committed...but the potentiality of danger that lies hidden in every individual," I have argued that through his insistence that every criminal started out in an original state of virtue to which he can be restored, Rush works to establish a means not of warning Foucault's community of the "potentially guilty," but of encouraging a community of the potentially virtuous. Though Foucault might argue that there is no difference between the potentially virtuous and the potentially guilty, by structuring itself in relation to the potentially virtuous, Rush's penal system presents discipline as something desirable. This positive relationship to discipline will become especially important in the reading of *The Power of Sympathy* that follows.

emphasized the unnaturalness of solitude influenced Rush's theories by suggesting that solitude was an effective means of punishment (218, 225). See also Caleb Smith, who carefully traces the prison reform movement's belief in the reformatory power of solitude: "Solitude would lead, at first, to a painful alienation, but reflection and remorse would finally convert the offender into a subject worthy of freedom and grace" (84).

Like the early American novel, Rush's theories of private punishments cultivate individualized interpretive practices. But when Rush actually addresses novels, he argues that they lead to the same "abortive sympathy" as public punishments:

Let it not be said, that the tales of distress, which fill modern novels, have a tendency to soften the female heart into acts of humanity. The fact is the reverse of this. The abortive sympathy which is excited by the recital of imaginary distress, blunts the heart to that which is real; and, hence, we sometimes see instances of young ladies, who weep away a whole forenoon over the criminal sorrows of a fictitious Charlotte or Werter, turning with disdain at three o'clock from the sight of a beggar, who solicits in feeble accents or signs, a small portion only of the crumbs which fall from their fathers' tables. ("Female Education" 31-2)

Rush carefully differentiates "passive sympathy," which is felt but not acted upon, from "abortive sympathy," which prevents the novel-reader from feeling sympathy in real-world encounters. Similarly, at public punishments, "as the distress which the criminals suffer, is the effect of the law of the state, which cannot be resisted, the sympathy of the spectator is rendered abortive, and returns empty to the bosom in which it was awakened" ("Public Punishments" 141-2). Despite Rush's claim that novels force an abortive sympathy in their readers, the didactic prefaces of early American novels made the same claims for their reformatory potential that Rush made for his theories of penal reform. Well-documented are the ways that the early American novel seduces its readers into identifying with morally compromised characters, usually with the assurance that this illicit identification will be resolved through the characters' deaths—Harriot and

Harrington in *The Power of Sympathy*, Eliza Wharton in *The Coquette*, and of course Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple.¹⁷ Like the sympathetic witnesses of Rush's privately-punished criminal, novel-readers sympathize with victims of seduction but also understand that their deaths are for the characters' own good. The difference for Rush seems to be that the imaginary nature of these characters' distresses eliminates the possibility of sympathetic action, rendering sympathy itself abortive.

In a very recent article in *Early American Literature*, Richard Bell argues that Rush's statement on novel-reading was a direct response to the intense popularity of *The Sorrows of Werther*, American editions of which began appearing in the mid-1780's. According to Bell, Goethe's blockbuster changed Rush's opinion of the reformatory potential of sentimental fiction, and his response was representative of a larger paranoia that the new trend of sentimental suicides in novels was leading to sentimental suicides in real life.¹⁸ Rush himself, however, imagined his reformatory prison sentences as a kind of death. As Caleb Smith argues, Rush's scheme of solitary confinement represented "the inmate's civil death," whereby a criminal was "transformed into a deathly, passive object—and thereby prepared for his resurrection" (91). In his prison reform essay, Rush presents the reader with his own version of sentimental resurrection: "methinks I already

¹⁷ Julia Stern offers one example of this traditional seduction plot: *The Coquette*'s Eliza Wharton "offers her life in exchange for a sympathy that can exist for her only in theory precisely because it is predicated on her expedient demise" (Stern 75).

See also the Susanna Rowson's preface to *Charlotte Temple*: "I flatter myself, be of service to some who are so unfortunate as to have neither friends to advise, or understanding to direct them, through the various and unexpected evils that attend a young and unprotected woman in her first entrance into life...Sensible as I am that a novel writer, at a time when such a variety of works are ushered into the world under that name, stands but a poor chance for fame in the annals of literature, but conscious that I wrote with a mind anxious for the happiness of that sex whose morals and conduct have so powerful an influence on mankind in general; and convinced that I have not wrote a line that conveys a wrong idea to the head or a corrupt wish to the heart, I shall rest satisfied in the purity of my own intentions, and if I merit not applause, I feel that I dread not censure."

¹⁸ Bell writes that "Goethe, [Rush] believed, had broken the cherished link between sensibility and charity, and betrayed the sacred covenant between author and reader by misusing the much-trumpeted power of sympathetic identification to stir up affection for wholly undeserving characters" (100).

hear the inhabitants of our villages and townships counting the years that shall complete the reformation of one of their citizens. I behold them running to meet him on the day of his deliverance. His friends and family bathe his cheeks with tears of joy; and the universal shout of the neighbourhood is, ‘This our brother was lost, and is found—was dead and is alive’” (157). The death that Rush imagines his reformed criminal suffering is oriented toward a future payoff. In *The Power of Sympathy*, Harrington, who Bell argues represents one of the most offensive examples of Werther-derived sentimental suicides, also imagines that through death he and Harriot will be resurrected and their love will be decriminalized: “I will fly to the place where she is gone—our love will there be refined—it will be freed from all criminality—I will lay my sorrows before her—and she shall wipe away all tears from my eyes” (93). Given the tombstone inscription that concludes *The Power of Sympathy* and transforms Harriot and Harrington into a means of reforming future passersby, Harrington’s suicide seems to have achieved the refinement he hoped for. My point, which I will continue to develop below, is not that Rush didn’t actually disapprove of Goethe’s sentimental excess. Instead, I am arguing that when we take figures like Rush at their word we miss the inconsistencies that point us to the political agendas behind the cultural divisions they tried to enforce. To paraphrase Lora Romero, in “failing to exercise sufficient skepticism” towards the narratives that historical periods tell about themselves, we retrospectively eliminate the inconsistencies of those narratives in order to fit them into our own critical trajectories (7).¹⁹ In this case, we cannot overlook the fact that Rush addressed his comments about

¹⁹ As Romero puts it in her study of nineteenth-century domesticity, “In failing to exercise sufficient skepticism towards the antebellum period’s narrative of itself...contemporary cultural histories have reproduced its tropes of female power and masculine resistance, and these tropes motivate their search for an illusory position of powerlessness from which a purely oppositional literature could arise” (7).

novel-reading to the Philadelphia Young Ladies Academy. Later in this chapter I will address the gender politics of suicide, but for now I would simply like to point out that the imaginary scene of resurrection Rush offers in his lecture on public punishment suggests that his theories of prison reform are more closely related to the sympathetic reading practices of the early American novel than his criticism of the novel would suggest.

Although we are familiar with the ways that didactic novels worked to manage and direct their readers' sympathies, these novels still emerged out of theories of moral sentiment that trained sympathetic readers to identify completely with characters on the page rather than reading with any critical distance.²⁰ There was no guarantee, in other words, that readers would correctly align their sympathies with a novel's didactic premise. Although Rush criticizes novels for overexposing women to "imaginary distress," he is all too willing to incorporate the unregulated human imagination into his theories of penal reform. In fact, Rush claims that knowledge of his unpublished penal code will spread by way of narrative:

I cannot conceive any think [sic] more calculated to diffuse terror through a community, and thereby to prevent crimes, than the combination of the three circumstances that have been mentioned in punishments. Children will press upon the evening fire in listening to the tales that will be spread from this abode of misery. Superstition will add to its horrors: and romance will find in it ample

²⁰ See Barnes's reading of *The Power of Sympathy*: "The very scene in which the reader reads the spectators viewing Harrington's body bespeaks the spectacle that Harrington has become. If sympathy is to do its office, the reader must resist identifying with the onlookers, must resist becoming a spectator to the theatricality of this final scene" (37). See also David Marshall's description of how Rousseau's critique of the theater opposes sympathy to the distance of the spectator (135-77).

materials for fiction, which cannot fail of increasing the terror of its punishments.

(“Public Punishments” 152)

Although Rush objects to novels because they lead to an abortive sympathy in real world exchanges, here Rush cites romance and fiction as the unofficial channels through which the communities surrounding the prisons will be terrorized into acting virtuously. While the illicit subject matter of British novels is ill-suited for the still innocent American scene, ghost stories about American discipline will become the stuff of American romance. Foucault writes that “written legislation,” as opposed to “oral traditions and customs,” was a fundamental method of eliminating the arbitrary nature of punishments handed down from a monarch and of enforcing “the rule of perfect certainty” when it came to how a particular crime would always be punished (96). In contrast, Rush’s interest in human sympathy leads him to determine that the human imagination is the most effective channel of regulating behavior; in his system, uncertainty means that citizens are imagining on their own rather than reading a printed penal code. His unpublished code manages to both distance government from the unpleasant duties of public discipline (duties that threaten the naturalness of its authority) and to send the human imagination spinning into terrifying hypotheticals.²¹ Fiction’s distance from official channels of discipline is precisely what allows it to be an effective means of

²¹ As Caleb Smith notes, this use of the human imagination characterizes the eighteenth-century Atlantic prison reform movement: “abandoning spectacle, reformers began to explore the magnifying and terrifying power of the imagination” (53). Fiction allows the fear of punishment to spread without the damaging effects of firsthand witnessing: “mediated by the right kind of fiction, transmuted from spectacle to ‘superstition,’ the terror of punishment could be diffused without any damage to the community’s human sympathy” (55). While I am more interested in the reading practices such a method might encourage, Smith goes on to examine mostly nineteenth-century literary accounts of actual incarceration. Similarly, Okun notes “the first American novels did indeed appear at the very moment reformers were re-inventing punishment at Walnut Street. Most of those novels were published in Philadelphia, and not surprisingly, concerned themselves with similar issues, paramount among which was the nature of crime and punishment” (xx). Smith goes on to read prison reform rhetoric alongside of early American novels specifically about crime and punishment, such as Charles Brockden Brown’s gothic crime fiction.

encouraging virtue. Rush's historical reputation for being opposed to novels is troubled by his proposal that fiction and romance will further his disciplinary aims. According to Davidson, public figures of authority such as Benjamin Rush (and John Adams, Timothy Dwight, and Jonathan Edwards) were openly hostile to the "chaotic new world" represented by fiction and the novel (104). But in the passage cited above, fiction is proposed as a vehicle perfectly suited for dispensing the disciplinary aims of the new republic. This passage from Rush's essay resituates the tension Davidson outlines between censure and popularity that has dominated discussions of the early American novel, as fiction is implicated in government work.²² As I will go on to argue, Rush's willingness to embrace the uncontrollable human imagination also suggests that the full disciplinary potential of the early American novel is not found in the negative examples that work to regulate the reader's imagination, but in the sympathetic attachments that exceed institutionalized convention.

Rush's description of the sympathetic witness' instinctual response to a criminal on display anticipates David Marshall's observation in his study of the eighteenth-century European novel that "the effects of sympathy might be disturbingly similar to the effects of seduction" (86). Although *The Power of Sympathy* identifies sympathy as the force that moves Harrington to change his original plot of seduction for one of marriage, this moment could just as easily be read as the beautiful orphan Harriot seducing Harrington into marriage: "There is a *dignity* in *conscious virtue* that all my impudence cannot bring me to despise—and if it be beauty that subdues my heart, it is *this* that completes the

²² See Davidson's "Ideology and Genre" in *Revolution and the Word*: "the continuing censure of the early novel rivaled the novel's growing popularity, and that incongruity took a variety of unusual forms" (103). Fiction and the novel were often criticized as one and the same, as demonstrated by early novels' claims to truthfulness.

triumph” (15). This moment suggests that Harriot might be more than a helpless and passive victim of seduction. Instead, her “conscious virtue” seduces Harrington into acting as a good republican. If republicanism traffics in sympathy, its desire for willing subjects means it also traffics in seduction. As Barnes observes, “at its most successful, *The Power of Sympathy* seduces its readers into a sympathy it has already taught them it is criminal to feel” (20). If the early American novel is so easily read as an allegory of the nation-state, what of its relationship to fellow feeling? Despite the problems with simply calling *The Power of Sympathy* an allegory, the fact remains that it calls itself one both in its claims of moral clarity and in its attempt to make historical meaning out of the Fanny Aphthorp scandal. It is worthwhile then to think about the generic goals allegory claims for itself. Allegory tends toward virtue and reform, but it also maintains a distance between reader and text that sympathetic reading conventions work to break down.²³ Allegory teaches through instruction, not identification. The coexistence of allegory and sympathy makes for a discordant reading experience, as readers are brought into sympathetic proximity with allegorical abstractions and object lessons.²⁴

This tension between allegory and sympathy is brought into relief by Mr. Holmes’ claim in *The Power of Sympathy* that women should read satire self-reflexively:²⁵

²³ The goal of allegory “is to lead the seeker after virtue toward his goal” (Leyburn 323). The distance between reader and text that I am describing is achieved through allegory’s awareness of its reliance on temporal distance: “Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference” (de Man 210).

²⁴ Types, in other words, aren’t just allegorical, as Sarah Knott’s research on real world “sentimental coteries” suggests: “Most of all, it meant the enactment or recognition of certain types in certain situations: the sentimental traveler, the companionate spouse, virtue in distress, the sympathetic friend” (112).

²⁵ Of course it must be women who receive this instruction. *The Power of Sympathy* explicitly comments on the contemporary debates about women’s education. Mr. Holmes’ recommendation of satire occurs in the middle of a debate about the reading material parents should provide to their daughters. For more, see Mulford’s introduction: “Could the education of women improve the overall moral fabric of the nation? A lot of people seem to have thought so. For some who sought ‘a more perfect union,’ it seemed that the

Satire is the correction of the vices and follies of the human heart; a woman may, therefore, read it to advantage. What I mean by enforcing this point, is, to impress the minds of females with a principle of self correction; for among all kinds of knowledge which arise from reading, the duty of self knowledge is a very eminent one; and is at the same time, the most useful and important. (27)

Mr. Holmes' charge that women look for themselves in satirical critique is characteristically useless. Contra to allegorical instruction, satire claims to operate through censure, but the pleasure of reading satire is not in identification, but in feeling a superior distance from those who are the butt of the critique. As Worthy's favorite author reminds us, "Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it." Swift's metaphor, taken from his prologue to *The Battle of the Books* (1704), compares satire to a mirror that reflects everyone's face but the reader's. The mirror is also frequently used as a symbol for the absolute identification between reader and character that sympathetic reading claimed as its goal. But as David Marshall argues in his reading of Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782), "the mirror becomes a metaphor for the double reflection that contains both sympathy and *amour-propre*."²⁶ Mr. Holmes' instruction captures this cross-over between sympathy and spectacle as he charges women with reading satire reflexively, or, with sympathy. If satire operates through either a refusal or a comic inability to identify,

control of women's bodies would be a crucial step toward the development of a nation free of moral degradation, one that 'deserved' to function as a republic" (Mulford xii).

²⁶ *Amour-propre* is Rousseau's term for the distancing vanity that characterizes theatrical spectacles and interferes with true sympathy. Marshall finds the following oppositions in Rousseau's writings on sympathy and the theater: "actor and spectator, *amour-propre* and sympathy, theatrical society and untheatrical state of nature" (153).

sympathy relies on such identification. Satire can be aligned with the suspension of sympathy that is a function of Rush's reformatory discipline; both depend on the witness or reader understanding that the goal of the censure is for a greater good. Mr. Holmes' recommended reading practices train readers in Rush's passive sympathy. The sympathetic reader is managed by allegorical teaching moments into understanding that the characters for whom she feels sympathy must be punished for their own good.

Mr. Holmes' reading instructions inadvertently speak to Davidson's claim that maid and mistress would have had different reading experiences of the same novel—if early national readers follow Mr. Holmes' charge to look for themselves in novels, reading becomes a highly individualized practice, even if readers aren't entirely accurate or honest in their pursuit of Mr. Holmes' prescribed "self-knowledge." Within the plot of the novel, the moral authority represented by patriarchs like Mr. Holmes is further undermined by the fact that the only character in *The Power of Sympathy* who deserves the punishment of reform is Harrington's father, the perpetrator of the tragic chain of events. Harrington Sr. is sufficiently "overwhelmed with shame and sorrow" by the end of the novel, but the fact remains that the perfectly innocent Harrington and Harriot are dead (102). Harriot can hardly be described as being what Mrs. Holmes would call "a woman accessory to her ruin," and Harrington acted only as a good republican, proposing marriage rather than seducing a poor orphan. Perhaps what makes *The Power of Sympathy* so difficult is that it does establish with such clarity the innocence of Harriot and Harrington—they are emphatically not Ophelia and Martin, Brown's thinly veiled pseudonyms for Fanny Apthorp and Perez Morton. As Davidson notes, Brown's novel is

less a condemnation of impressionable women than it is a condemnation of the figures of authority who complacently allow such tragedies to occur (178-9).

Although the scandalous novel is sanctioned by its pretense of reformatory discipline, in its moral equivocation the novel suggests the dangers inherent in founding a nation on natural law. Despite her innocence in terms of sexual activity, Harriot continues to feel guilty; her memories “reproach [her] with unmerited criminality” (86). Harriot’s conclusion that human nature is criminal is unbearable—her death follows this letter. In her final letter, Harriot is “lost in a wilderness” of “fluctuating passion”:

When you pressed my cheek with the kiss of love, of fraternal affection, what meant its conscious glow? What meant the ebullition of my veins, the disorder of my nerves, the intoxication of my brain, the blood that mantled my heart? My hand trembled, and every object seemed to swim before my doubtful view—
Amidst the struggle of passion, how could I pronounce the word—how could I call you by the title of brother? (87-8)

The problem for Harriot is not that she is barred socially from acting on her desire, but that she continues to *have* an illicit desire: “The head and the heart are at variance, but when Nature pleads, how feeble is the voice of Reason? Yet, when Reason is heard in her turn, how criminal appears every wish of my heart?” Harriot has discovered that her very nature is criminal. This is precisely the self-knowledge that would render a subject incapable of carrying on in a republic founded on good feeling. Barnes argues that “once aware of their desire, Harrington and Harriot are *unable or unwilling* to return to their previous condition as autonomous beings. And it is in this that the story’s true rebellion lies” (35, my emphasis). In a republic that, in Rush’s words, must “revolve upon the

wills of the people,” unwillingness and inability to fulfill one’s duty amount to the same impediment to domestic stability. Barnes is correct to note that “the ‘natural,’ then, describes a force that overrules convention,” but a virtue that conforms to convention is not what republican duty demands. Harrington and Harriot might rebel against social convention, but they do so in order to fulfill their duty as subjects of a social contract that requires willingness rather than obedience. Sympathy, as the force that naturalizes government’s authority, holds its subjects to disciplinary standards in excess of the laws that depend on it. Harriot and Harrington’s suicides are not symptomatic of an unregulated sympathetic attachment that threatens the stability of the republic; instead, the suicides reveal the possibilities of a disciplinary register that operates outside the jurisdiction of institutionalized or familial structures. It is these private disciplinary acts that make the novel’s unregulated contact with diverse and individual readers so powerful. The forces operating in opposition to the novel’s surface-level moral lesson do not subvert or reinforce the novel’s moral, but surpass it.

Perhaps what aligns Benjamin Rush so closely with the early American novelist is the recognition that discipline that comes from within is much more powerful than discipline passed down from external figures of public authority. The positive relationship to reformatory discipline that characterized Rush’s prison reform theories recasts the frequently noted melancholic overtures of the early American novel.²⁷ The letters leading up to Harriot and Harrington’s suicides certainly describe melancholic

²⁷ See Christopher Castiglia: “The literature of the early republic registers citizens’ resentment at their loss of control over powers to associate, much less to *feel*, as they saw fit. As several critics have noted, early national literature is saturated with a profound melancholy that marks the impassable boundary between sanctioned forms of ‘private life’ and the divergent affects and attachments that animate citizens’ progressive imaginations” (18). See also Julia Stern’s chapter on *Charlotte Temple* in *The Plight of Feeling*, where she argues that the early novel’s themes of “seduction and abandonment” help the nation “work through the unprecedented sense of loss Americans experience in the wake of a Revolution that inscribes with fraternal blood the immutability of rupture from the mother country” (31).

subjects, but rather than being motivated by a secret desire to act on their incestuous attraction, both deaths are forced by a loss of faith in the world. If the virtuous subject's private desires correspond with his republican duty, this forced correspondence operates through a dangerously circular logic that can make its fulfillment even more catastrophic than its failure. Because republican government, as presented by the Declaration's logic, depends on the natural goodness of its citizens, it becomes very difficult to classify deviant private desires as unnatural. If it is our republican duty to allow the power of sympathy to dictate our behavior, to allow nature to triumph in our social relations, what happens when our natural sympathies lead us to incest and suicide?

The lost object that drives Harrington and Harriot's melancholy is not their desire for each other, but their faith in the goodness of their own natures and the nature of the world around them. For Freud, the melancholic is a particularly interesting subject because he offers insight into the psychological problem of suicide: "When in his heightened self-criticism he describes himself as petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence, one whose sole aim has been to hide the weakness of his own nature, it may be, so far as we know, that he has come pretty near to understanding himself; we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind" (246). Harrington certainly anticipates this Freudian truth. Interjected between two letters dwelling on Harriot's death is an entirely unrelated letter describing a business betrayal. An anonymous partner, who owes Harrington "his reputation and fortune," has deceived him at great cost. The betrayal leads Harrington to rant that "ingratitude, then, is constitutional, and inseparable from human nature... Unfortunate is the man who trusts his happiness to the precarious friendship of the world—I every day become more of a

misanthrope...” (90-1). Deprived of faith in the human network around him, Harrington comes to “despise [the world’s] opinion, and claims “*Independency of spirit* is my motto—I think for myself” (95). If, as Barnes argues, incest represents the extreme end of the early Republic’s “project of unification,” Harrington’s isolated despair represents a wild swing in the opposite direction (23). Suicide is couched in the language of revolution—Harrington claims it as a “right” (82), as a “duty” (98), and as a signal of independence (95). In this context, declaring independence is tantamount to committing suicide, and both depend upon a hopeless cynicism toward what constitutes human nature. How far has Harrington fallen from the self-proclaimed Lycurgus who opened this chapter!

It is possible to read Harrington’s suicide in the more forgiving terms of the Enlightenment’s moral philosophy, and it is also possible to find a sort of defiant liberation in both Harriot and Harrington’s refusal to conform their desire to social convention.²⁸ But in its alignment of independence with suicide, the novel casts a doubtful shadow over the future of a nation founded in the optimism of the social contract. If Harrington’s assessment of human nature is true, “The triumph of nature” might mean the end of republicanism. Harrington’s determination that ingratitude

²⁸ The novel seems to take David Hume’s side on suicide: “A man, who retires from life, does no harm to society: He only ceases to do good; which, if it is an injury, is of the lowest kind” (103). Adam Smith, while departing from Hume in his refusal to celebrate suicide as heroic, also argues for compassion rather than punishment toward those who commit suicide (287). The open copy of Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Werther* found next to Harrington’s body marks his suicide in several ways. One of the most important is that it would have been a recognizable symbol of the dangers of novel-reading. During the years following its publication, a rash of people killed themselves with a copy of *Werther* left in close proximity. See Georges Minois: “Goethe may perhaps rightly be charged with having inspired romantic suicide.” *The Sorrows of Werther* “arrived on the scene just as the question of the legitimacy of voluntary death reached an emotional highpoint” (266-8). This detail also marks Harrington as a sympathetic reader. As Barnes notes, “Just as the congruity of language and idea between Harrington’s and Werther’s last letters indicate a sympathetic connection between the two, so the juxtaposition of Harrington’s body and Goethe’s novel epitomizes the intimate relation between reader and text. In the final moments before his death, Harrington becomes a model reader, reading himself into the narrative and making the story his own. His suicide attests not only to the power of sympathy but the power of fiction as well” (37).

defines human nature would have dire consequences for his ability to function as a member of a reciprocal society.²⁹ One reading of the novel then is that it is chock full of anxiety about what actually constitutes human nature—is it virtue, or ingratitude, incest, and suicide? Another reading is that Harriot and Harrington’s deaths discipline the sympathetic reader. Because there is not a place in the new nation for incestuous desire, readers are comforted with the knowledge that both deaths are for the best—in this case, the good of the individual and the good of the republic coincide. But, as Barnes observes, “the high drama and emotional intensity with which their separation and eventual deaths are expressed serves to idealize their attachment rather than critique it” (36). This idealization doesn’t necessarily suggest, however, that the novel seduces its readers into similarly illicit attachments; instead, there is another, even more disturbing possibility: that the novel actually proposes Harrington and Harriot as positive examples of republican self-regulation.

Harrington’s suicide brings the notion of republican sacrifice into a new register in ways that his feminine cohorts of the seduction genre never could. In *The Power of Sympathy* readers can only sympathize with Harriot because her death puts an end to her illicit desire. Similarly, as Stern argues, in *The Coquette* Eliza Wharton expels herself from the republic in order to gain the sympathy of a collective that can only offer this sympathy in exchange for her death (75). Harriot and Eliza might be fulfilling an unspoken duty by removing themselves from the republic, but this duty remains

²⁹ See Slauter’s chapter “Being Alone in the Age of the Social Contract” for a discussion of the early national debates about the naturalness of solitude. In particular, his reading of lawyer James Otis’ conclusions about solitary individuals is relevant here: “The link Otis made between solitude and suicide—that solitude constituted a form of suicide, and that suicide was unnatural—served to make the social contract all the more natural and inevitable” (224). In this case, Otis suggests that while the social contract requires the sacrifice of some natural rights, ultimately it enables subjects to enjoy more of their natural rights than they would be able to if isolated from society. The social allows subjects to be closer to the natural.

unspoken—neither novel acknowledges their deaths as voluntary. Harriot fears her “decaying health” and Eliza dies in childbirth (88). Under what circumstances is death not only a duty but a right that can be openly acknowledged and forgiven as such? Harrington’s claim that his suicide is a right *and* a duty demonstrates the confused cyclical relationship between these terms. Subjects of the social contract have a right to the benefits of republican life only so long as they fulfill their duty to serve as public property, but this duty is limited as a right to certain segments of the republic. Only boys have the potential to become republican machines.³⁰ Harriot does not have the right to claim the civic duty Harrington fulfills with his suicide. Suicide becomes a right *and* a duty only because Harrington is no longer able to fulfill his end of the contract the republic offers him as a voting, propertied citizen. Although this discourse of rights is unavailable to Harriot, Harrington’s language demonstrates that by anointing duty as a right, the novel redirects desire toward self-discipline.

In one of the more obvious teaching moments in the novel, Mrs. Holmes writes to Myra about the dangers of a woman making herself vulnerable to seduction. Mrs. Holmes, like her husband, prescribes constant self-inspection: “So virtue fertilizes or

³⁰ Rush’s essay “Female Education” is a classic example of the ways that the porous and unsettled nature of the boundaries between private and public spheres found expression in debates about the role of women in the early republic. Women were important to the nation state but only insofar as they influenced their publicly acting husbands—Rush argues that women should be educated in order to help them serve as “guardians of their husbands’ property” and as mothers of sons. The male pupil, on the other hand, should “be taught that he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property” (“On the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic” 10). On the ways that the sacrificial social compact is gendered, see Moira Gatens: “At different times, different kinds of beings have been excluded from the pact, often simply by virtue of their corporeal specificity...Could the common denominator of these exclusions be ‘those incapable of fulfilling the appropriate forfeit’? That is, those whose corporeal specificity marks them as inappropriate analogues to the political body? Constructing women as incapable of performing military service and so incapable of defending the political body from attack could serve as an example here. This incapacity, constructed or not, is sufficient to exclude them from active citizenship. At this level, the metonymical aspects of the metaphor of the body function to exclude. Those who are not capable of the appropriate political forfeit are excluded from political and ethical relations. Rather they are defined by *mere* nature, *mere* corporeality and they have no place in the semi-divine political body except to serve it at its most basic and material level” (23-4).

improves the heart, and gathers strength and vigour by continual progression, until it centre on the consummation of its desires” (74). What does Mrs. Holmes mean by the consummation of virtue’s desires? What does virtue desire? Virtue, the novel seems to argue, desires discipline. Although the novel refuses to pass judgment on Harriot and Harrington for their desire, their desire remains the problem. Their desire for each other is replaced by the desire to be good once again, to return to the state of virtue that characterized their earlier lives. The official channels of discipline in the novel, Worthy and Mrs. Holmes, are both strikingly incapable sympathetic correspondents. The lessons on female education and the dangers of seduction taught within the novel’s pages are hopelessly irrelevant for the well-intentioned and sexually innocent Harriot and Harrington. As Davidson aptly observes, “One imagines the three of them, Worthy and the Holmeses, ensconced within their bogus ‘Temple of Apollo,’ discoursing on incest, seduction, scandal, suicide, and novel reading, while first Harriot languishes, then Myra mourns, and finally Harrington dies” (178). In response to Harrington’s increasingly frantic letters, Worthy can only offer the platitude “determine to be happy, and you will be so” and remain geographically distant until it is too late (98). Worthy keeps himself cleanly away from Harrington’s messy situation and warns “Let us watch over all we do with an eye of scrutiny—the world will not examine the causes that give birth to our actions—they do not weigh the motives of them—they do not consider those things which influence our conduct—but as that conduct is more or less advantageous to society, they deem it madness or wisdom, or folly or prudence—Remember this—” (94-5). Worthy suggests that the corrupted Harrington and Harriot should fake it and carry on. Privatized discipline prevails, however, as Harrington and Harriot hold themselves

responsible to a discourse of discipline that is in excess of Worthy's empty rhetoric. Suicide becomes a form of voluntary discipline as subjects are offered the apoptotic right to take themselves out. In a nation that founds itself on a faith in the moral faculty of its citizens, the most powerful evidence of a virtuous society is that its citizens desire the regulation that allows them to reach their potential for living virtuously. The novel, representative of newly private reading practices, fulfills this early republican fantasy of voluntary regulation particularly well, as it grants abject figures like the silenced Harriot and the disillusioned Harrington the dubious 'right' to discipline themselves.

Worthy's claim that the world is more interested in the effects of our actions than in the causes and motives behind those actions echoes Madison's claim in Federalist Paper #10 that "the *causes* of faction cannot be removed and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*" (80). Like Madison's proposal of a government that simply aims for the appearance of disinterested consensus, Worthy's discourse of utilitarian Federalist surveillance reduces republican virtue to an empty form, one in which appearances and effects matter more than motivations and causes. Although *The Power of Sympathy* narrates the lives of two characters who replace their incestuous desire with a new desire tending towards virtue, this substitution reminds us that desire is always on the move. In his last letter to Worthy, Harrington identifies desire as the force that keeps us attached to life: "O! My friend, when we find nothing we desire in this world, it is time to depart. To live is a disgrace—to die is a duty" (98). By fulfilling a duty empty of desire, Harrington withholds his extinguished desire from the prescriptive pressures of the republican machine. Devoid of desire, motivated only by empty duty, Harrington could be faking it after all. A disciplinary system that grounds

itself in the knowability of human motives must allow for, even if can't acknowledge, quite a bit of uncertainty. Desire will always haunt a disciplinary system that is more concerned with an ethical subject than a legal subject. The emerging Federalist reconciliation to the possible disjunction between causes and effects will be taken up in the next chapter, as I turn to Charles Brockden Brown's cast of lethally well-intentioned characters. Rather than the motivations behind criminal acts, the next chapter will take as its subject the unintended consequences of virtuous acts.

Chapter 2: The Means and Ends of Republican Virtue

In the republican context I have been describing, there can be no separation between means and ends. The previous chapter considered the consequences of Benjamin Rush's proclamation that each citizen should consider himself a cog in "the great machine of the government of the state," amassing private wealth "only to increase his power of contributing to the wants and demands of the state" (14-5, 12). This carefully cultivated correspondence between private desires and public duty served the dual function of regulating desire and naturalizing duty. The problem with this equation, as noted by Publius, is that "upright intentions" do not always lead to decisions that are best for the republic (34). Because even "wise and good men" might find themselves "on the wrong as well as the right side of questions of the first magnitude to society," Publius declared that "the *causes* of faction cannot be removed and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*" (34, 80). The difference between these two positions is exemplified in the difference between the two models of discipline presented in William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789). When Worthy counsels Harrington that the world will not judge "the causes" or "the motives" of his behavior, but will only be interested in how "that conduct is more or less advantageous to society," he is speaking the terms of a newly developing Federalist utilitarianism.¹ As the previous chapter argued, however, Harrington recognizes that republican duty must be performed willingly, and replies that "when we find nothing we desire in this world, it is time to

¹ In Publius's hands, utilitarian understanding of a human nature motivated by pleasure is interpreted as an unavoidable tendency to form self-interested factions. As Joseph Hamburger explains, "The framers' purpose was to understand how new political institutions would work. Thus it was necessary to succeed in 'calculating [their] probable effects' and to form 'a just estimate of their real tendency to advance or obstruct the public good.'...Consequently the framers' thinking was based on a 'rational calculation of probabilities,' and in this sense it was consequentialist and can be regarded, in a very loose sense of the term, as 'utilitarian'" (247).

depart.” While the ratification debates were settled by a practical emphasis on consequences, the early American novel speculated about the motivations behind human behavior. Writing in the decade after William Hill Brown, Charles Brockden Brown was able to position himself with more confidence in relation to the reformatory potential of fiction. His understanding of the ways that individuals influence social institutions, rather than the other way around, make his novels ideal texts for examining the ways that the rhetoric of civic disinterestedness relied upon the desires of the very individuals it sought to abstract. As his gothic novels trace the decisions made by characters haunted by unintended consequences, they also signal the fragility of a republican virtue that is to be pursued for its own sake.

As William Hill Brown and his fellow authors of the American seduction novel imitated and revised their British counterparts, during the 1790’s British political scientists began looking back across the Atlantic for models of political reform. In 1789, the same year that William Hill Brown published *The Power of Sympathy* and that the United States began operating under the new Constitution, Jeremy Bentham published *The Principles and Morals of Legislation*. Although Bentham and the British utilitarians saw much promise in American representative democracy, they were sharply critical of both the Declaration’s reliance on natural rights doctrine and the constitutional limits ratified in the next decade.² The logic of Bentham’s objections is not unrelated to the challenges of legislating morality and enforcing natural law that were outlined in the previous chapter. Bentham argues that if men have a natural right to life and liberty, then

² Hamburger argues that the difference between British utilitarians and American Federalists stemmed both from the recent American memory of revolution and from a Federalist conception of a U.S. population comprised of many different classes (244-9). American Federalists did not share the British utilitarians’ belief in a universal human interest.

“every law, or other order, *divesting* a man of *the enjoyment of life or liberty*, is void” (336).³ According to Bentham, the Declaration’s emphasis on natural law precluded the American government from enforcing any artificial code of laws. Furthermore, if it is “the business of government to promote the happiness of the society,” Bentham predicted that “in attempting to prevent the making of bad laws, you will find them prohibiting the making of the most necessary laws” (70, 335). For Bentham, because human behavior is fundamentally driven by pleasure and the avoidance of pain, it is possible to speak of a universal human interest that can eventually be realized through government facilitation and a constantly improving political science. Constitutional limits would only impede this process.⁴ Although Bentham laments in the final pages of his revised *Principles of Morals and Legislation* that the American case “is not the first instance in the world, where the conclusion has supported the premises, instead of the premises the conclusion,” his own conclusion is not one that can be sustained by American republicanism. For Bentham, the American project was a bizarre example of bad intentions gone right: *despite* an ill-advised attempt to establish a state founded on natural rights, Americans had managed to successfully establish a representative government. If, as Bentham declared toward the end of his career, “The business of government with [Americans] is not an end but a means to security and repose,” then republicanism is hardly disinterested (qtd. in Hart 560). Instead, it is motivated by the pleasures of security and repose. No matter how closely aligned Benjamin Rush imagined the means and ends of his

³ Bentham printed the first part of *The Principles and Morals of Legislation* in 1780. It was finally published in 1789, following the success of his *Defense of Usury* in 1788. Rather than revising the *Principles*, Bentham continued to produce three series of accompanying footnotes (La Fleur ix-x).

⁴ Utilitarian objections to the contradiction between natural rights doctrine and constitutionalism were debated among Americans as well. As Eric Slauter describes it, “At stake in such debates was the question of how the recognized artifice of law and politics could be used to help people be more natural, to have the blessings of the government while avoiding its burdens, and to help citizens see their lives under a political state as if politics was simply an extension of nature” (11).

republican machines to be, the private satisfaction that would come from serving the state remained a surplus motivation.

William Godwin, Bentham's contemporary and one of Charles Brockden Brown's most obvious influences, elaborated much further in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) on the problem with trying to encourage virtue legislatively. Godwin reluctantly understood rewards and punishments to be unavoidable influences on behavior: "The hope of reward...and the fear of punishment, however wrong in themselves, and inimical to the improvement of the mind, are motives which, so long as they are resorted to in society, must and ought to have some influence with my mind" (2.6.171).⁵ Although the utilitarian premise must emphasize the positive consequences of rewarding virtuous behavior, these rewards corrupt actions we should prefer for their "intrinsic excellence" with the "weight of self-interest" and weaken the moral judgment of individuals (2.6.172). If, as Benjamin Rush argued in his 1787 essay on the "Effects of Public Punishment," virtue can only be "disseminated" by "the interference and aid of the legislature," how is virtuous action to remain disinterested (40)? How are positive institutions to avoid corrupting their citizens' moral faculties through either the promise of reward or the threat of punishment? It is no accident that reward and punishment open the chapter of *Enquiry* called "Of the Right of Private Judgment." Godwin claims that individuals are as responsible to their private judgment "in civil concerns" as they are "in matters of conscience"; representative government, in other words, did not let individuals off the hook (2.6.175). More importantly, legislated systems of reward and punishment should not replace the sanctity of individual judgment lest citizens become "mere phantoms of men," "parrots, repeating what others have said" (2.6.178). The ultimate

⁵ Citations are from the 1798 edition.

goal of political authority should be “the universal exercise of private judgment,” “a doctrine so unspeakably beautiful, that the true politician will certainly feel infinite reluctance in admitting the idea of interfering with it” (2.6.18). In order to preserve the possibility of disinterested virtue, Godwin argues that the private judgment of individuals must be allowed to transcend institutionalized systems of reward and punishment.

This faith in the private judgment of individuals made Godwin more interested than Bentham in the difference between voluntary and involuntary action.⁶ David Collings argues that Godwin also shared a set of theoretical concerns with Immanuel Kant, whose *Critique of Practical Reason* had appeared in 1788. According to Collings, Godwin not only shared Bentham’s utilitarianism, but also Kant’s belief that ethical action must have no motivation other than conformity to the moral law: “Like Bentham, he insists that ethical action must lead to real good for humanity; like Kant, he holds that one must act with a fully virtuous intention” (851). Godwin’s influence on Brockden Brown thus represents an important shift in republican thinking, from Rush’s claim that the virtuous subject is motivated purely by duty to a new anxiety about the possibility of identifying the motives behind virtuous acts. Because all actions are motivated by pleasure or the avoidance of pain, Bentham argues that motives can’t be judged good or bad: “Now, pleasure is in *itself* good...pain is in itself an evil...It follows, therefore, immediately and incontestably, that *there is no such thing as any sort of motive that is in itself a bad one*” (102). Accordingly, “from one and the same motive, and from every kind of motive, may proceed actions that are good, others that are bad, and others that are

⁶ See David Collings for the similarities and differences between Bentham’s and Godwin’s systems: “Godwin shared much of [Bentham’s] project; he also adopted utility as his guiding justification for ethical norms...But he relied directly on individual virtue and would have considered the predictable subject of Bentham’s system abhorrent” (849).

indifferent.” Because Bentham doesn’t offer categories of good and bad motives, the difference between them only matters insofar as good intentions are more likely to result in beneficial consequences. For Godwin, actions must be judged based on both intention and consequence: “I would define virtue to be any action or actions of an intelligent being, proceeding from kind and benevolent intention, and having a tendency to contribute to general happiness” (2.4.149). Intention is “of the essence of virtue,” and though it is ultimately simply the means to an end, it is also what makes virtuous action possible: “Benevolent intention is essential to virtue” (4.10.433). Although Godwin’s alignment of intention and consequence parallels Rush’s conflation of private motive and public good, Godwin’s understanding of moral judgment leads him to very different conclusions than the republican statesman. Whereas Rush argued that the “proper modes and places of education” for “disseminating the seeds of virtue and knowledge through every part of the state” can only be established via “the interference and aid of the legislature,” Godwin recognized that the alignment of virtuous intention with virtuous action leads away from government interference. Ultimately morality can’t be legislated, because only private judgment can lead to true obedience: “the purest kind of obedience is, where an action flows from the independent conviction of our private judgment” (Godwin 3.6.226). Not only does this definition of obedience give transcendent authority to the private judgment of individual citizens, but it also must be supported by the desires of those private citizens. For Godwin, disinterested action is only possible when it is aligned with private desires: “Voluntary action implies desire, and the idea of certain means to be employed for the attainment of the thing desired” (4.10.424). If, as Rush

famously declared, “virtue is the living principle of a republic,” then a government that depends on the virtue of its citizens must make virtue desirable.

Duty and pleasure, in other words, needn't be immediately treated as opposing values during the early national period. David Shields attributes “the growth of a consumption-driven economy and a liberal ideology” to a republican “incapacity to appreciate the central role of pleasure in human action” (314). While Shields is referring to republican criticism of the private societies and assemblies of the early Republic, I would like to trace early national attempts to incorporate pleasure into notions of civic duty. By the end of the eighteenth century, the early American novel was particularly well situated to take on this challenge of making obedience enjoyable. In his 1799 essay “Walstein’s School of History,” Charles Brockden Brown argues that fiction is the most effective method of encouraging the virtue of individual citizens. Brown declared that “there are two ways in which genius and virtue may labor for the public good: first by assailing popular errors and vices, argumentatively and through the medium of books; secondly by employing legal or ministerial authority to this end” (335). The latter method is an insufficient mode of enforcing virtue because common individuals, not institutions, are the most powerful forces of social change. “Governments and general education” cannot be preserved from institutionalized corruption, “but individuals may be somewhat fortified against their influence.” Fiction, because of its mass appeal to numerous individuals, is the most effective method of teaching virtue, as it labors to “reform and enlighten” rather than to enforce “disquiet and remorse” (336). Brockden Brown proposes fiction as one alternative to the corrupting influence of institutions on the moral faculties of individual citizens. Unlike the anxiety about fiction that forced

William Hill Brown to claim that his novel was “Founded in Truth,” by the end of the century Charles Brockden Brown was not only able to make the early Romantic claim that fiction could be trusted to properly train individuals, but also that fiction should provide both “moral benefit” and “pleasure” (339).⁷

Always complicating Brockden Brown’s republican interest in the greater good is his belief that individuals are the only forces capable of advancing the virtue of larger social institutions. The aim may be expansive and social, but the method is individual and private: “Human society is powerfully modified by individual members” (333). Brockden Brown’s faith in the individual not only influences his understanding of the virtuous potential of fiction, but also aligns him closely with Godwin’s political theory. In Brockden Brown’s novels, public institutions are frequently circumvented in favor of his individual characters’ abilities to exact justice on their own terms.⁸ In *Ormond* (1799), for example, Constantia Dudley determines that the law is too “formal and circuitous” for her needs, and decides to act on her own, with “unseen virtue and instantaneous celerity” (68). But any confidence we may have in Brockden Brown’s accounts of the independent acts of private individuals is unsettled by his frequent reminders that “we can only make approaches to the truth” of the motives driving these actions (“Walstein’s” 333). Despite claiming that successful fiction should provide

⁷ Deirdre Lynch describes “the causal relation between imaginative literature and historical change” as a “characteristically Romantic claim” (451). In Godwin’s essay “Of History and Romance” he claims not only that the “genuine purpose of history, was to enable us to understand the machine of society, and to direct it to its best purposes,” but also that “romance, then, strictly considered, may be pronounced to be one of the species of history.” Unlike the historian, who is confined to history, the romance writer “collects his materials from all sources, experience, report, and the records of human affairs; then generalises them; and finally selects, from their elements and the various combinations they afford, those instances which he is best qualified to portray, and which he judges most calculated to impress the hear and improve the faculties of his reader.” I will return to Godwin’s essay at the end of this chapter.

⁸ See Cathy Davidson for an account of the law in what she calls ‘reformist Gothic novels’: “Moreover, as these reformist novels endlessly attest, the law lived not by its letter nor even in its spirit but by its misuse, by pettifoggery, demagoguery, and sophistry...In another sense, too, law is of the marketplace, and seeking justice translates out as hiring the best legal counsel that money can buy” (334-5).

virtuous models that can be imitated by the reader, “Walstein’s School of History” also acknowledges the impossibility of creating fictional types that correspond exactly to individual readers: “Human affairs are infinitely complicated. The condition of no two beings is alike. No model can be conceived, to which our situation enables us to conform. No situation can be imagined perfectly similar to that of an actual being” (338). Because of this inevitable lack of correspondence, authors must select incidents “which most forcibly suggest to the reader the parallel between his state and that described, and most strongly excite his desire to act as the feigned personages act. These incidents must be so arranged as to inspire, at once, curiosity and belief, to fasten the attention, and thrill the heart.” Brockden Brown’s description of a reader whose desire is excited and heart is thrilled by the characters before him suggests that he understands all too well the link outlined in the previous chapter between seduction and discipline. Strictly didactic models, like that claimed by William Hill Brown in his preface to *The Power of Sympathy*, attempt to force an identification between virtuous readers and generic epistolary types. Charles Brockden Brown’s model not only acknowledges an incongruity suited to the diverse individual readers he seeks to reach, but also understands this incongruity to be an opportunity for engaging the desires of these readers.

Accounts of Brockden Brown’s literary appropriation of Godwinian disinterest often overlook the ways that Godwin’s political ideal relied upon a voluntary obedience sanctioned by “the independent conviction of our private judgment.” Because morality that is enforced by external sources of authority precludes the possibility of truly disinterested action, there can be nothing punitive about modes of encouraging virtue.

Brockden Brown's fiction allows us to think about how the early republican desire for willing subjects changes the terms of Foucault's account of the transition from sovereign to non-sovereign rule as being "fundamentally determined by and grounded in mechanisms of disciplinary coercion" ("Lecture Two" 42-3). These coercive mechanisms operate in opposition to the law's egalitarian claims but also enable the unequal accretion of power.⁹ Brockden Brown's fiction is often held up as exemplifying the utilitarian relationship between full disclosure and civic virtue, and can therefore be read as an example of the panopticism that characterizes Foucauldian accounts of the novel. But panopticism might not be the most accurate way of accounting for Brockden Brown's novels—as Caleb Smith points out, "in the discourse of the American penitentiary system...the dominant theme was not surveillance but solitude" (98). This chapter argues that because Brockden Brown thought fiction should aim for voluntary reform, he was skeptical of a print culture that enabled punitive republican surveillance. Accompanying Brockden Brown's insistence that literature offers a powerful mode of encouraging virtue in the new Republic is an understanding that in order to do so, it must *avoid* being associated with the "punitive character" of the printed "labor of disclosure" that Michael Warner claims characterized the early American novel (166).¹⁰ Brockden Brown's goal of encouraging "the love and the zeal of virtue" in his unruly reader means

⁹ Coercive discipline is not an "infra-law" but a "counter-law": "And, although the universal juridicism of modern society seems to fix limits on the exercise of power, its universally widespread panopticism enables it to operate, on the underside of the law, a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetry of power and undermines the limits that are traced around the law" (*Discipline and Punish* 223-4).

¹⁰ Warner argues that in *Arthur Mervyn*, "disclosing information, making things public, is understood as ensuring a civic source of validity" (166). Later in this chapter I will point to a moment in *Arthur Mervyn* that shows Mervyn struggling with this republican pressure to disclose. If "the strategy of disclosure confers the power of the law upon the publicity exemplified in writing," we must not only pay attention to those characters who resist acting in service of this law, but also to the ways that Brockden Brown's novels resist the authority of formal resolution and full disclosure (Warner 167).

that he is seeking voluntary converts (“Walstein’s” 334). As his fiction imagines characters who seek to direct their desires toward a voluntary obedience, it also theorizes about situations where the coercive exists without being corrupted by any disciplinary imperative. Fiction becomes the perfect mode for encouraging readers to voluntarily reform their ways.

This chapter’s opening emphasis on utilitarianism eventually brings my argument to Foucault’s account of Bentham’s panopticon and partially continues the previous chapter’s engagement with penitentiary technique. Although my project is not primarily interested in outlining an argument that connects the rise of the novel with the modern penitentiary, it is important to differentiate my account of novelized narrative and penitentiary technique from other arguments that have traced them as parallel developments. John Bender argues that the penitentiary technique that characterizes the late eighteenth-century prison reform movement was a direct result of the narrative techniques developed by the realist novel earlier in the eighteenth century. Bender’s argument depends on a strict generic separation between realism and romance and on the adoption of narrative techniques increasingly focused on omniscience, narrative control, and moral certainty.¹¹ According to Bender, these techniques developed, especially in Fielding’s novels, as “a corrective to the lack of authorial presence in epistolary fiction” (146). The sharp distinction Bender draws between novel and romance is not one that

¹¹ Bender claims “that attitudes toward prison which were formulated between 1719 and 1779 in narrative literature and art—especially in prose fiction—sustained and, on my reconstruction, enabled the conception and construction of actual penitentiary prisons later in the eighteenth century” (1). He associates prisons with romance and penitentiaries with realism; while realist novels “implied the conception of a new kind of imprisonment structured narratively along the lines of the realistic, consciousness-centered novel,” “The old prisons socially inscribed the principle that the true order of things had to be discovered through discord...and that final causes lay hidden beneath appearances. Romance novels—by their magical strategies and implicit causes—bore this cultural fiction in literary form. The novel bears another fantasy entirely, that of a reality constituted from material causes” (43).

studies of the novel form have sustained.¹² Part political memoirs, part gothic romances, Brockden Brown's novels are exemplary of the kind of generic hybridity that would be necessarily excluded from Bender's narrative. Additionally, as I will demonstrate in greater detail below, moral ambiguity is one of the most infamous qualities of Brockden Brown's first-person narrators. Despite this moral ambiguity, the argument Brockden Brown puts forth in "Walstein's School of History" demonstrates that he is openly confident in the reformatory potential of his fiction. Accordingly, this chapter will make a very different argument than Bender's. As other critics have noted, the opportunities for intellectual and ethical speculation provided by Brockden Brown's morally ambiguous novels train readers in the self-regulation required by republican discipline. Furthermore, Brockden Brown's novels insist on the preservation of the private sphere as the source of the voluntary obedience required by republican civic virtue.

In Brockden Brown's novels, the marriage plot is frequently deployed to theorize about the competing forces in Godwin's ideal of voluntary obedience. One way to read these marriage plots is as holdovers from the seduction novels like *The Power of Sympathy* that Brockden Brown is so often credited with helping the nation to move beyond. His penultimate novel *Clara Howard; or, the Enthusiasm of Love* (1801) is an epistolary novel that narrates the tortuous road to matrimony taken by Clara Howard and Edward Hartley. *Clara Howard* doesn't offer an easy example of the period's newly

¹² Michael McKeon, in critiquing Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, notes "the inadequacy of our theoretical distinction between 'novel' and 'romance'" (3). McKeon's dialectical approach to a theory of the novel shows that the authors Bender considers to be "realists" (Defoe and Fielding) also "draw upon many of [romance's] stock situations and conventions" (2). In *The True Story of the Novel* Margaret Doody argues that studies of the British novel (like McKeon's and Watt's) present "a very parochial view of the genre and history. This parochialism betrays itself in the incessant assertion that the Novel should always be separated from the Romance; there is a symptomatic determination to play down the inconvenient fact that other European literary languages make no such distinction" (1).

consensual marriage contracts.¹³ Its conflict is generated by an initial promise of marriage between two people who do not love each other, and it is tenuously resolved by a daughter fulfilling the marital hopes of her father. Ultimately the novel's plot seeks to clear the way for the good feelings that must supplement any act of obedience. Although the early national investment in the good feelings of the marriage contract meant a de-emphasizing of "parental control in the choice of a marriage partner," it also meant that private feelings were expected to supplement the marriage contract (Dillon 126). Rather than doing away with duty as an influence on behavior, this investment in good feelings meant that citizens were expected to want to fulfill their duty.

What critics have found most difficult to account for in *Clara Howard* and Brockden Brown's other novel of this later period, *Jane Talbot*, is that they seem to relapse into outmoded formal conventions, namely the sentimental and the epistolary. Although most of Brockden Brown's novels are introduced through an epistolary frame, they are better described as first-person memoir novels—the epistolary serves as an explanation for the text's existence instead of a way of moving the plot forward.¹⁴ *Clara Howard*, however, is fully an epistolary novel—plot and character development rely on

¹³ Literary representations of marriage in the early national period were a way of making visible notions of consent: "In the early Republic, marriage patterns shifted toward decreased parental control of the choice of a marriage partner, a decrease that is celebrated in the literature of the period (invariably in moral terms) as increasing the affective connection of partners at the expense of more venal concerns such as familial and financial status" (Dillon 126). Dillon goes on to argue that this new interest in representations of consensual marriage did not aim for equalizing gender relations, but essentializing them. See also Elizabeth Barnes: "In the revolutionary and postrevolutionary periods, marriage represented the ultimate in voluntary contracts; a growing belief in affectionate marriages—ones form by choice rather than arrangement—corresponded to and even symbolized contemporary political theories of government based on individual consent" (65).

¹⁴ Deirdre Lynch positions the political memoir novels of Godwin and Brown as temporary disruptions in the novel's movement toward realism's "reassuringly impersonal omniscient narrator whose voice was that of the social consensus" (460). The political memoir novel uses a first person narrator to "mobilize the autobiographical and intimate in strangely extroverted, public ways" (462). Although this extroverted intimacy explains some of the strangeness of Brown's earlier novels, examples of which will be discussed below, it doesn't explain why Brown would end his novel writing career with two epistolary novels.

the feverish exchange of letters.¹⁵ If, as Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook describes it, the end of the Enlightenment represents a shift “simultaneously from subject to citizen and from political subjecthood to psychic subjectivity,” why would Brockden Brown return to a genre that is traditionally associated with what Joe Bray calls only “a relatively unsophisticated and transparent version of subjectivity” (Cook 151; Bray 1)?¹⁶ Most readers of *Clara Howard* agree that it is primarily a critique of Godwinian rationalism. Clara becomes so blinded by a commitment to disinterested benevolence that she cannot see that, to paraphrase Sydney Krause, her reason is no longer reasonable. Because the happy pairing up of Edward and Clara at the end of the novel suggests the triumph of affect over reason, the novel’s sentimental epistolarity could be accounted for as a formal rejection of Godwin’s political memoir novels.¹⁷ Alternatively, the epistolary novel might be a genre that is better suited to expressing the private pleasures of duty. As Cook argues in her study of eighteenth-century epistolary novels, not only do these novels demonstrate the ways that domestic and private spheres are “thoroughly colonized by the public,” but also “how registers of knowledge that seem to belong to a public discursive

¹⁵ See Michelle Burnham for a detailed account of how epistolarity structures this novel: “The letters of others alter or even overturn the knowledge presumed by any individual letter writer, such that the meaning of any single letter, or the identity of any single character, becomes literally held in suspense by the ongoing succession of letters that make up the novel” (265).

¹⁶ Cook is writing about Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* as “the end of epistolarity,” when “the Enlightenment vision of an emancipatory public sphere of reasoning, disinterested citizens is exposed as an empty ideal” (167).

¹⁷ To make his argument that the novel demonstrates the limits of Godwinism, Sydney Krause emphasizes Godwin’s “undeviating theme” of disinterested benevolence: “Without it, man is a moral void” (197). Krause addresses the competing genres of *Clara Howard* by proposing that the novel sets up “a dialectic interaction” between Godwin and Rousseau in order to test the limits of the two moral theories that most influenced Brown’s career: “One mode of thought pulls against the other, and out of this tension other ideas emerge” (191). I would like to complicate this summary of Godwin’s *Enquiry*. Although Godwin certainly argues throughout the *Enquiry* that “Justice requires that I should put myself in the place of an impartial spectator of human concerns, and divest myself of retrospect to my own predilections,” he also remains deeply influenced by a utilitarianism that reduces all human action to being motivated by pleasure or the avoidance of pain. I argue that we might not need Rousseau to see the ways that Clara’s sense of duty is deeply reliant on her senses.

domain are anchored, guaranteed, and authorized by aspects of the private” (178). The fundamental difference between Edward and Clara, and Clara’s moral flaw according to most critics, is that she takes pleasure in the satisfaction that marks her acts of duty as voluntary. Brockden Brown’s return to epistolarity might not be a relapse into political conservatism after all, but a formal method of speculating about the relationship between pleasure and virtue that enabled the republican ideal.

From the very beginning of *Clara Howard*, the relationship between happiness and virtue is up for debate. The novel begins with Edward registering his unhappiness with Clara for having sent him to find Mary Wilmot, the penniless and missing orphan to whom he was previously engaged. Edward’s third letter to Clara argues that the fulfillment of duty means guaranteed unhappiness: “I believe your decision absurd, yet I know your motives are disinterested and heroic...It is the system of nature that deserves my hatred and my curses: that system which makes our very virtues instrumental to our misery” (18). In her next letter, Clara reprimands Edward for opposing pleasure to duty: “I will never *vow to honour* the man who deserves only my contempt; and my esteem can be secured only by a just and disinterested conduct. Perhaps esteem is not the only requisite to marriage. Of that I am not certain; but I know that it is an indispensable requisite to love” (20). Faced with the prospect of a marriage that has been arranged by her father, Clara must insist that pleasure and duty are not separate impulses, but are intimately bound together. Clara’s emphasis on the phrase “vow to honour” reminds Edward of the gendered power dynamics that are at stake in marriage, particularly one

that was arranged by her father.¹⁸ If she is forced to “honour” a man, Clara will at least secure a man she is able to love.

Clara Howard marks the circular logic of republican duty, as both main characters gain personally with every attempt to act with disinterest. As Clara defers marriage until she is able to naturalize the duty of filial obedience with love, any action that Edward, a self-declared “peasant,” takes to gain Clara’s respect and affection only brings him closer to marrying into wealth. Finding Mary is one way to prove that he is capable of acting against his own self-interest, but as his frequent complaints make clear, this act will be a disingenuous form of empty duty. Clara and Edward seem to support Bentham’s observation that for Americans, duty is a means rather than an end. Bruce Burgett accounts for the problem faced by Clara and Edward as a fundamental problem of republicanism: “As self-abstracting, disinterested, rational judges of others’ sentiments and interests, Clara and Edward must bracket their own sentiments and interests. But if they succeed in this process of self-abstraction, then they are left with no subjective motivation for rendering any judgment” (120). I have argued that republicanism does not demand the bracketing of these private desires, but the alignment of them with republican duty. In the previous chapter, this alignment emerged through the new government’s desire for willing subjects who would support the Declaration’s myth of naturalized origins. At the end of the century, this voluntary obedience enables a disinterested virtue uncorrupted by institutional (dis)incentive. *Clara Howard* seems to

¹⁸ See Burgett: “In either case, the completion of Edward’s bildungsroman plot entails the loss of Clara’s independence—her translation in legal terminology from a *feme sole* to a *feme covert*. In relation to both her father and Edward, Clara resists engendering logics of embodiment that mediate her relation to Edward by transforming her, as a woman, into the ‘possession’ of either a husband or a father” (129). The fact that Edward is even in a position to assure Clara that she will remain in control of her fortune marks the inevitable “economic asymmetry inscribed within the institution of marriage” (129). “Clara’s republicanism” is in tension with “Edward’s romantic liberalism,” as she argues against the concept that “passion ought to be unmediated by any such impersonal concerns.”

demonstrate that because the rewards that come with fulfilling one's duty are always self-interested, disinterest inevitably fails.

The novel seems to argue that pleasure always threatens to corrupt disinterested action. When Clara complains to Edward "Your devotion to me was fervent in proportion as the performance of my duty was attended with *anguish* and *suffering*," she argues that by resenting the good feelings that result in acting disinterestedly, Edward does not understand true virtue (25). She demands that he recognize "the fulness of that enjoyment, which, the approbation of my conscience, the sense of doing right myself, and of conferring good on others, has given me!" (25). As Clara's sense of duty frustrates Edward's desires, he in turn frustrates her act of self-sacrifice by marking the pleasure she finds in acting virtuously:

You aspire to true happiness, the gift of self-approbation and of virtuous forbearance. You have adopted the means necessary to this end, and the end is gained. Why then should I pity you? You would not derive more happiness from a different decision. Another would, indeed be more happy, but you would, perhaps be less. At any rate, your enjoyments would not be greater than they now are; for what gratification can be compared to that arising from the sense of doing as we ought? (110)

As he ventriloquizes Clara's own code of morals, Edward points to the problem with her demands. If Clara is aiming for "true happiness, the gift of self-approbation," then her motivations are self-interested. In his assessment, Clara's disinterested virtue is only a means to an end, and that end is her own happiness. As Jared Gardner has also noted, this surplus benefit of personal enjoyment complicates the rhetoric of duty and

disinterest: “As long as satisfaction, even pleasure, is the result of ‘disinterest’ then the neat split between selfishness and disinterest, the very ground on which republican virtue might be founded, is unsettled” (759).¹⁹ But we do not have to conclude, as Gardner does, that because Clara “is revealed to be governed by ambition and desires,” she has failed at her attempt to act disinterestedly. Instead, Clara has always recognized that personal satisfaction is precisely what is demanded by republican virtue. Because Clara’s satisfaction marks her actions as voluntary, her actions fulfill a necessary prerequisite of Godwinian disinterest. Because voluntary action depends on a fundamental desire for “agreeable sensation,” there is an immediate, indirect motivation behind all action that we remain unaware of, but Godwin goes on to argue that “it is the nature of the passions, speedily to convert what at first were means, into ends” (4.10.424-5). Thus “the good of our neighbor,” at first “pursued for the sake of its advantage to ourselves,” quickly replaces self-interested motives and becomes the primary aim of our actions. In the case of benevolent actions, we may at first be motivated by “the gratitude we shall excite, or the approbation we shall secure,” but this self-interested motivation quickly becomes secondary to “the disinterested and direct motive, the profit and advantage of our neighbor... This is at least the first, often the only, thing in the view of the mind, at the time the action is chosen” (4.10.432). Although the “love of agreeable sensation” is “the indirect and original motive” of all human behavior, because we remain unaware of this motive it cannot lead to voluntary action. Godwin argues that only direct motives are

¹⁹ As Krause has also noted, *Clara Howard* is about far more than Godwinian disinterest: “When suffering is sublimated by the greater-good principle, that is one thing. When the suffering induces its own inherent pleasure, that is another. In the latter instance, rational morality has been stretched beyond its bounds, and one finds oneself in the camp of Rousseau, with whom exquisite sensibility becomes a delicate instrument on which one explores the reaches of virtuosity” (190). Other equally influential discourses in both Brown’s career and 18th-century American politics recognize the intimate relation between pleasure and pain. In the tradition of Rousseauian sensibility, the pleasure Clara feels in romantic sacrifice is a perfectly viable option for achieving ‘virtuosity.’

“purely disinterested” because only motives that we are aware of can inspire truly voluntary action. Thus the identification of “self-approbation” as a motive for Clara’s behavior would not corrupt Clara’s actions. Godwin’s understanding of the potential for disinterested action is not troubled by his utilitarian understanding of a fundamental self-interest; instead, he chooses to emphasize that this indirect motivation is of secondary importance to those direct motivations that we consciously recognize.

As Clara demands that Edward enjoy her enjoyment, she redirects the problem of government onto its subject. If Edward can’t enjoy his duty, the problem lies in his own character. Clara’s understanding of the economy of duty makes her a master at manipulating its unattainable status. Although Clara argues that Edward should take sincere pleasure in fulfilling his duty, she also continues to hold up her own love and esteem as a motivating factor: “If you cannot ardently and sincerely seek [Mary’s] presence, and find in the happiness which she will derive from union with you, sufficient motives to make you zealously solicit that union, you are unworthy not merely of my love, but of my esteem” (20). At times Clara acts with confusing caprice. When Edward nearly dies after rescuing a drowning woman, for example, Clara’s fear causes her to beg him to return to her. But after claiming “The arms of thy Clara are open to receive thee,” her letter unravels:

Mary...My heart droops when I think of her. How imperfect are the schemes of human felicity. May Heaven assist me in driving from my mind the secret conviction, that her claim to your affection is still valid.

Alas! How fleeting is our confidence. Come to me my friend. Exert all thy persuasive eloquence. Convince me that I have erred in resigning thy heart and hand to another; in imagining the claim of Mary better than mine.

I call upon thy efforts to rescue me from self-condemnation; but I call on thee without hope. My reason cannot be deceived. The sense of the injustice I have done her, will poison every enjoyment which union with thee can afford me.

Yet come. I repent not of my invitation. I retract not my promise. Make me irrevocably thine. I shall at least be happy while I forget her, and I will labour to forget her. (34-5)

What is Edward to make of this invitation into a marriage that will be haunted by guilt and self-condemnation? As Clara repeatedly offers and repeals her affections she exposes the coquettish nature of the republican duty she claims to be fulfilling.²⁰ If “the art of coquetry consists in remaining inscrutable,” the art of virtue might as well (Mahoney 27). Always acting in the name of duty, and encouraging Edward to do the same, her letters to him only inspire “horror and doubt” (117). Even when the bewildered Edward finally does propose marriage to Mary Wilmot, she refuses, but before she can name the man she has agreed to marry, Edward storms out, writing “She was too blind an admirer, and assiduous a follower of Clara Howard, to accept my proffers” (118). Clara’s name stands in for Mary’s new lover, as she frustrates Edward’s plans to marry once more.

²⁰ Jared Gardner also makes this connection between Clara Howard and the coquette, but in order to further his argument about the ways that both Clara and Eliza Wharton fail at their attempts to gain narrative distance and control: Clara “imagines she can script responses without becoming invested herself” (761). Gardner is particularly invested in holding up Sedley as a figure of editorial prowess, and gives him credit for being “*truly* disinterested” because of his anonymous generosity. Despite Gardner’s recognition of the ways that Clara enjoys her acts of sacrifice, he credits Sedley with being able to act disinterestedly, and misses the ways that, in typical Godwinian fashion, his secrecy only hinders Mary’s happiness.

In characterizing Clara as a coquette, I do not mean to suggest that she is faking her interest in duty. Instead, I hope to use the structural similarities between her position in *Clara Howard* and that of the coquette figure to think about the fantasy of desire that characterizes republican notions of virtue and duty; accordingly, I turn briefly to the classic American coquette, Hannah Webster Foster's Eliza Wharton. *The Coquette* (1797) opens with Eliza describing her marriage to her recently deceased husband as one entered into via "an implicit obedience to the will and desires of my parents" (5). Newly liberated and back on the market, Eliza now hopes to find a partner who will give her the kind of marriage her host family enjoys—one of "the purest and most ardent affection" (14). Like Clara Howard, Eliza hopes to defer marriage until she encounters a partner with whom she will enjoy marital obligations. Clara Howard and Eliza Wharton have in recent criticism come to represent the competing discourses in the early national period of republicanism and a newly emerging liberalism: Clara's insistence on the disinterested fulfillment of duty would seem to be the opposite extreme of Eliza's self-interested pursuit of pleasure.²¹ But the fact that both of these characters speak so frequently of pleasure and enjoyment suggests that there is more overlap than distance between Iron Maiden and Coquette.²² As both figures seek to defer the permanent bonds of marriage, either in the name of duty or of pleasure, they demonstrate the ways that "we might view the language of virtue as a bridge rather than a rigid divide between liberal and

²¹ Julia Stern describes the "fiercely independent" Eliza Wharton as a "female practitioner of protoliberal fellowship," and argues that her downfall is a result of her understanding of sympathy as "a private matter; in this protoliberal version of fellow feeling, mutual understanding unfolds between independent persons who experience the social world largely as free agents rather than as members bound in collective relation" (73). Burgett argues that "Having learned to eschew all arbitrary, anti-democratic markers of personal worth, Clara enacts a purely republican ethic...Indeed, all of her criticisms of Edward concern his inability to abstract his selfish interests from his moral conduct, to act with proper disinterest in relation to his own sentiments and desires" (120).

²² In his essay "*Clara Howard and Jane Talbot: Godwin on Trial*," Krause famously writes "The gift of Godwin, Clara Howard—need one say—is the original Iron Maiden of American Literature" (187).

republican ideologies” (Dillon 145). As *Clara Howard* demonstrates, a duty that is voluntarily fulfilled produces a surplus of pleasure. This pleasure troubles accounts of a republican civic sphere working to divorce itself from private pleasures. The fictional lives of Clara Howard and Eliza Wharton both suggest that a government that authorizes itself in a highly naturalized concept of ‘the good’ must be deeply committed to a morality that is motivated and naturalized by pleasure.

One difference between *The Coquette* and *Clara Howard* lies in their different pretenses of resolution. For Cathy Davidson, “it is in the irresolution of Eliza Wharton’s dilemma that the novel, as a genre, differentiates itself from the tract stories of Elizabeth Whitman in which the novel is grounded and which it ultimately transcends” (230). For Davidson, this “irresolution” is a defining generic convention of the early American novel.²³ But despite the uneasy and unresolved sympathy readers feel for a character who has been betrayed by a stiflingly patriarchal marriage market, Eliza Wharton is irrefutably punished for her desire, silenced and spoken for by the tombstone inscription written by her friends. Elizabeth Barnes argues that “in order to neutralize the effects of private desire, seduction novels make desire public, as is evidenced by the novelization of Whitman’s history” (70). The “iconic testimonials—headstones and monuments—that conclude seduction stories” like *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Coquette* “testify to the sublimation of desire that perfects female character and education” (Barnes 72). I would argue that the “irresolution” readers feel at the end of *The Coquette* is symptomatic of the

²³ For Davidson, *The Coquette* is a perfect example of the early American novel’s “irresolution”: “Eliza Wharton sins and dies. Her death can convey the conservative moral that many critics of the time demanded. Yet the circumstances of that death seem designed to tease the reader into thought. It is precisely in these interstices—the disjunctions between the conventional and the radical readings of the plot—that the early American sentimental novel flourishes.” (230). See also Elizabeth Maddock Dillon: “the sympathy that Eliza’s story is clearly intended to generate among its readers indicates that a sense of loss accompanies the foreclosure of sociality.” Dillon argues that Eliza’s final letter “indicates that her pathology may be located outside of her, rather than within” (195).

insufficiency of these generic conventions to sublimate the desires that drive their novels' plots. In Brockden Brown's foray into the epistolary marriage plot, Clara Howard's desire, rather than being sublimated, is announced and maintained even past the novel's final letter. Clara Howard ends her novel teasing Mary Wilmot about the possibility of continuing to defer their respective marriages: "As so you have deferred the happiness of your Sedley for a whole month. I wonder he has any patience with you...Dear Mary, shall I tell you a secret? If you add one week of probation to the four already decreed, it is, by no means, impossible that the same day may witness the happiness of both of us" (148). Although the end of the novel finds Clara at last certain "that the sweet voice of an approving conscience is ready to sanction and applaud every impulse of my heart, and make the offices of tenderness not only free from guilt, but coincident with every duty," as critics have pointed out, her final letter continues to be written in the language of deferment.²⁴ Mary and Clara's wedding day, "whenever it shall come," will arrive off page, and the finality that will give Edward the peace of mind that is prohibited by being "doubtful of the future" is left unwritten (148, 110). By and large, seduction novels attempt to resolve themselves by "making larger social problems appear personally idiosyncratic" (Barnes 72). That is, despite the sympathy we may feel for Eliza Wharton, she still, in Cathy Davidson's words, "sins and dies" (230). *Clara Howard* reverses this logic, as Clara's virtue, her own "personal idiosyncrasy," exposes and refuses to resolve the problem of an arranged marriage. Whereas the forced resolution of *The Coquette*

²⁴ Burgett notes that "The penultimate letter from Clara to Edward obsessively pictures the physical obstacles that still stand in the way of their marriage"; "Unlike the seduced and abandoned heroines of contemporary sentimental novels, Clara thus remains both publicly powerful and, to use an only somewhat anachronistic phrase, woman-identified" (117-8). See also Burnham's essay "Epistolarity, Anticipation, Revolution in *Clara Howard*."

relies on an impossible sublimation of desire, *Clara Howard's* teasing final letter only promises the continued deferral of resolution and sublimation.

For modern readers, Clara Howard's desire seems to be the most problematic element of this novel to account for. While Eliza Wharton is punished within the generic conventions of the seduction novel, Clara Howard is punished by the critics. Gardner argues that "Clara ultimately can not secure the necessary distance on her story, and therefore she has no ability to decide properly or neutrally" (761). Edward Hartley, Gardner argues, offers "the novel's most insightful critique of Clara," in that "he insists that her motivations are not so different from his own: while he covets her body and her fortune, she covets self-approbation in terms no less ravenous" (758-9). Sydney Krause claims that the novel sends the message that "regardless of whether Clara loses more than she gains it would seem that in her applying Godwin's philosophy of benevolence to life, humanity (hers and ours) stands mainly to lose." Krause finds that "before the novel is over, her position will be fairly well devastated," as Mary and Edward's "reasonableness—as opposed to reason—does not evidently make much of a dent in the Iron Maiden's armor; for, to the end, she remains frozen in her prior philosophy in spite of its failure" (202-3). For both Gardner and Krause, Clara is fatally flawed as a republican subject because her claims to Godwinian disinterest and reason are tainted by the satisfaction she takes in being virtuous. I cite these examples from Gardner and Krause not to rescue Clara from an unjust critical reception, but in order to demonstrate how easy it is to misrecognize the early republican theoretical interest in voluntary obedience. Clara's expectation of pleasure, even according to the Godwinian standards

she appears to exceed and abandon, is exactly what makes her the model republican subject.

The fact that Clara's republican virtue can only be expressed within a marriage plot points to the gendered pressures that come with fictional representations of marriage as civic duty. Clara might be the ideal republican subject, but this idealization can only happen through a marriage plot that confines her to the domestic sphere. Although the marriage plot allows readers to speculate about the feelings that should supplement the fulfillment of republican duty, this theoretical space must center around a female subject. As Dillon argues, "the republican wife is a political being only insofar as she is represented as increasingly private—only insofar, in other words, as she conforms to new models of gendered behavior that have been coded as private rather than political" (128). Rather than leading to equal gender relations, the period's consensual marriage contracts led to strictly essentialized gender roles and reaffirmed marriage as a heterosexual institution. But in Clara's eyes, "marriage is no sensual or selfish bargain," and her determination to marry only when Mary Wilmot's happiness has been secured does seem to be an exception to the difference Dillon points out between disinterested republican virtue and "wholly interested" "marital virtue." As Burgett argues, *Clara Howard* certainly emphasizes gender division, but not in the way we might expect; instead, Clara's resistance to the "logic of embodiment" that characterizes Edward's self-interested sentimentality "inverts the emerging normative association of reason with masculinity and sentiment with femininity" and affirms "a republicanism that resists the engendering logics common to the hetero-normative plots of both Edward and Mr. Howard" (127, 129). Although I agree that Clara resists the *gendered* logic of

embodiment, I would complicate Burgett's understanding of the sharp division between republican abstraction and liberal embodiment. By demanding that Edward recognize the "fulness of that enjoyment" she takes in acting virtuously and opposing that enjoyment to the "anguish and suffering" he wants her to feel, Clara speaks of the pleasure and pain of republican disinterest in terms that can only be described as embodied.

The difficulty of accounting for Clara Howard's motivations—either as coquette or as iron maiden—is one example of the moral ambiguity that dogs all of the characters of Brockden Brown's novels. This ambiguity is well-documented, among both his contemporaries and ours. Davidson, for example, aptly describes the ways that *Arthur Mervyn* (1800-1) is able to support conflicting readings of Arthur as both criminal and ingénu: "As the history of the novel's reception attests, both stories are latent within the text and both are possible within the nation that the text evokes. One reads the ending and makes one's choice. And the choice must be, finally, the reader's, for there is no way of knowing for sure Brockden Brown's own intentions concerning his ambiguous and indeterminate narrative" (354). One common thread that emerges from these debates is that Brockden Brown's novels invite active readerly judgment.²⁵ Rather than passively

²⁵ In accounts of the early Romantic novel, Godwin is often credited with the unreliable first person narrator, an innovation that places the burden of establishing moral truth on the reader: "Through appealing to the reader as judge, Godwin seeks to activate his central philosophical belief in the 'unspeakably beautiful' doctrine of private judgment...which is based on the assumption that we have an obligation to seek out objective truths in the moral and political realm" (Clemmit 6). Brown, of course, is often read within this tradition, and although Clemmit differentiates between Brown and Godwin through Brown's skepticism toward the knowability of human motivations, she argues that he uses unreliable narrators in order to argue for increased institutional activity in the lives of private citizens: "in opposition to Godwin's exploration of the intrusion of government into private life, Brown is preoccupied with how people might behave in a world without institutional restraints. What [Wieland] highlights is a series of breaks with past traditions, which forces characters into a dangerous self-reliance" (109). Clemmit assumes that Brown's fiction is always national allegory and ignores the epistolary frame that introduces all of his memoir fiction. An alternative to Clemmit's account of Brown's conservative appropriation of Godwin brings us back to Brown's return to the epistolary genre at the end of his career as a novelist. If memoir encourages reading as witness or judge, private letters might encourage a different kind of reading. See also Rajan for a more recent alternative to Clemmit's argument. Rajan argues that "Godwin puts on trial the very genre of the

receiving lessons, readers must exercise their own moral reason. In his essay “Juries of the Common Reader,” Frank Shuffelton argues that Brockden Brown’s novels present characters who make faulty decisions in isolation and encourage readers to “compar[e] their own judgments with those of others in order to arrive at a better understanding” (108). Shuffelton’s term “public readership” is yet another concept that is challenged by the conflicting messages of Brockden Brown’s novels. For every example of characters suffering from the inaccuracies of private judgment, there is another example of characters being tortured by the punishing social ties of misguided benevolence and misplaced gratitude. Brockden Brown’s protagonists are often morally exceptional, with strong senses of private judgment, and ‘the jury of their peers’ that Shuffelton argues they should consult are just as frequently neighbors bound by localized social conventions as they are deceptive criminals.²⁶ The public of disinterested citizens participating together in a national conversation doesn’t exist in Brockden Brown’s fiction anymore than it did outside of his novels.²⁷ Moreover, both the supernatural and the sympathetic excesses that characterize Brockden Brown’s fiction suggest that rational debate will not settle anything about his novels.²⁸ Cook argues that through sympathetic reading, “the reader is

Novel as judgment: the very reaching of a moral decision formalized by a ‘deciding’ or resolving the plot.” (121).

²⁶ Some form of violence is always understood to accompany the “exclusively public principle” of Republican virtue, as “any individual who threatens the integrity of the group must be expelled in order to guarantee the hygienic purity and virtue of the collective” (Stern 73). But in *Arthur Mervyn*, this collective good (or, Shuffelton’s “jury”) is represented by Dr. Stevens’ paranoid neighbors, who characterize his benevolence as “presumptuous and cruel” and reproach him for inviting Arthur, an ill stranger, into his home (7).

²⁷ Not only do these accounts consistently emphasize reason over feeling, but they also rely on concepts of a homogenizing print culture that Trish Loughran has recently termed “American nationalism’s preferred techno-mythology” (3). See also Cook’s reading of *Letters from an American Farmer*: “the American ‘public’ described in the *Letters* is not a rational forum of disinterested citizens, but rather a battleground of private interests” (154). I will return to the conditions of early American print culture at the end of this chapter.

²⁸ As Clemit argues, “Although Brown also invites the reader to piece together contradictory pieces of information, he turns the provisional quality of the narrative to a radically different end, aiming to shock

deliberately invited to import self-interest into the text” (169). For Brockden Brown, who hopes that his fiction will instill “the love and the zeal of virtue” in his reader, the self-interest encouraged by sympathetic reading practices isn’t a rejection of republican disinterest, but a method of coercing voluntary obedience.

Even if individual consciences have more authority than social convention in Brockden Brown’s fiction, individuals can still make poor choices. Brockden Brown demonstrates the fine line between republicanism and deviance in his short story “A Lesson on Concealment; or, The Memoirs of Mary Selwyn” (1800). This story’s conflict also involves a woman, Mary Selwyn, who is pressured by her family to marry someone she does not love. She finally acquiesces in order to avoid her brother’s “eternal resentment” (27). Soon after the wedding, she falls in love with her brother’s friend, Haywood. After a moment of weakness that results in “an oblivion long enough to put our mutual destruction beyond the reach of prevention or recall,” Mary flees to a distant village and learns of her husband’s death, presumably a result of her betrayal (36-7). Eventually a traveling stranger, Moleworth, persuades her to marry him. Henry Kirvan learns Mary’s secret history after witnessing an argument between his employer, who turns out to be Haywood, and Mary’s brother. The pressure of keeping her sexual history a secret eventually kills Mary, and leaves Moleworth “the bitterest portion of the wretched” (2). The story consists of two letters, the first from Moleworth demanding that

the reader by successive revelations of the limits of rational knowledge” (113). Clemit is primarily interested in arguing that Brown departs from Godwin in this very assessment of private judgment as insufficient. For Cook, the sympathy of end of Enlightenment epistolarity can serve the same purpose: “sympathetic reading calls on the reader not in the abstract, as one of the many anonymous and disinterested readers of print artifacts who constitute a public, but as a private person whose body necessarily engages his or her special interests” (169). Cook is particularly interested in how sympathetic reading “maps out the transformation from impartial, disinterested, disembodied ‘spectator’ and ‘citizen’ to corporealized colonist.”

Henry explain why Mary is dead, and the second from Henry, narrating Mary's history and confessing to his own complicity in her secrecy.

Mary's story is, on one level, a warning about the wasteful danger of secrecy. Henry Kirvan, the character who learns Mary's secret history and hears her confession, agrees to keep her secret and blames himself for her death: "In believing passiveness and concealment most suitable to my inexperienced years, I have possibly cut short the days of Mary" (3). Mary pinpoints the problem with relying too strongly on private judgment when she claims "the reproaches of mankind affect me not but as their truth is acknowledged by my conscience. My heart is my accuser, and tells me that there is no punishment too great for my transgression" (21). Despite being assured by Henry that Moleworth will understand and forgive her, Mary privileges a private absolution that never arrives and authorizes herself to determine her own fate. Although it seems that the greater good is emphatically divorced from Mary's reasoning, she clings so desperately to this private standard of judgment precisely because it was betrayed by her first marriage. Even more than her original act of infidelity, Mary determines that her "first crime" was

to have yielded my hand, contrary to all the dictates of my heart; to vow eternal affection where none was felt; to devote my thoughts and services to one for whom I felt no sympathy... That was my offense, from which every subsequent calamity has flown; which has cut me off from all activity and usefulness; which has made me the assassin of Haywood, and my own murderer.

(33)

This original act of empty duty leaves her more confident than ever in the sense that her actions must be privately sanctioned, even if that self-enforced standard is inexplicable to her family and the surrounding community.

Although Mary Selwyn's memoirs are not subtitled "A Secret History," Mary's private secret history does provide an interesting point of comparison to the genre of the secret history that Michael McKeon traces in *The Secret History of the Domestic Novel*. For McKeon, the novelization of secret histories in eighteenth century England reflected a "gradual shift of normative weight from the public referent to private reference—more precisely, the gradual absorption of the public realm's traditional priority and privilege by the realm of private experience" (621). No longer working to expose the political secrets of public figures, novels began to detail the secret histories of private characters. Studies of the early American novel describe the opposite move, as novels are understood to manage private desires by publishing them as national allegories. As I have noted in this chapter and the last, both Barnes and Dillon have persuasively argued that reading seduction novels and their domestic plots as neat allegories of the nation-state overlook the inconsistencies and tensions within their plots that point us to the pressures the concept of voluntary consent placed on individuals. Rather than reading these novels as national allegories that make private desires into public problems, they can also be read as attempts to imagine the kinds of private lives that republican rhetoric demanded. Barnes argues that in *The Coquette*, Eliza's comment that Boyer might "seduce [her] into matrimony" "articulates the relationship between seduction and female education," and thus presents the very message that "the seduction novel is designed to obscure." Although education compromises choice in the same way that seduction compromises

choice, the seduction novel must leave readers believing that the heroine simply made the wrong choice, and consequentially, that women are too susceptible to influence to be capable of the consent that characterizes the liberal citizen (71-2). In “A Lesson on Concealment,” Mary becomes an alternative Eliza, but her fate is the same—allowing herself to be seduced into matrimony by someone she does not love does not protect her from the desires that lead her to have an affair with Haywood. Brockden Brown’s short story imagines a character who makes the ‘right’ choice, but still ends up disgraced and dead. If we apply the lessons of Mary’s secret history to Eliza’s, we can determine that marrying Boyer would still have been the wrong choice. *Clara Howard* and “A Lesson in Concealment” demonstrate the danger of a duty that isn’t supplemented by the private desires that, according to Barnes, the seduction novel worked “to neutralize” (70). Brockden Brown’s secret histories don’t publicly discipline the desires of deviant individuals, but testify to the consequences of denying the private desires that allow for the possibility of voluntary obedience.

Throughout “A Lesson in Concealment” the reader is made to understand that if Mary would only tell Moleworth about her past, all would be forgiven. But as W.B. Berthoff argues, despite the fact that the “title indicates, rather forbiddingly, a didactic Godwinian anecdote on social conduct,” “the repeated contrivance of Brown’s plot is to overbalance the presumptive dangers of secrecy by the more certain, more immediate dangers of telling the truth” (48, 51). In much of Brockden Brown’s work, secrecy is presented as symptomatic of corrupted action. In Godwinian terms, the merit of any action must be judged by its possible benefits; secrecy makes this standard of judgment impossible as it eliminates the surplus possibilities of usefulness and profit. Foucault

associates a shift in disciplinary functions with this utilitarian notion of complete transparency: “now [the disciplines] were being asked to play a positive role...to increase the possible utility of individuals” (210). Foucault is, of course, speaking of Bentham’s panopticon, which represents the shift “from a schema of exceptional discipline to one of a generalized surveillance” (209). What Foucault calls ‘panopticism’ would develop throughout the eighteenth century into a de-institutionalized, generalized police state: “It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert...” (214). The secrecy that characterized Rush’s proposed prison reforms would be replaced by a model that democratically shares the responsibility of discipline: “the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole” (Foucault 207). Accordingly, unlike the seduction novels of the previous decade, in Brockden Brown’s story Mary’s virtue is not ruined by a sexual mistake, but by her decision to keep this history a secret at all costs. Mary Selwyn’s nightmare is that she is living in Foucault’s panoptic police state. She tells Henry,

Thousands may possess your knowledge. Those who daily converse with me, my husband’s kindred and friends, may know my true character. They hate or despise me in their heart, and pity Moleworth’s delusion, while they greet me with welcomes and smiles. A thousand times may the breath of slander have blighted my name, and my crimes have been the subject of malignant whispers in the very circles which I frequent. (46)

This paranoid fantasy of republican surveillance transfers Mary’s own history of secrecy onto her neighbors—because of her own investment in privacy she not only assumes that

everyone is keeping secrets, but also fantasizes that the only person who does not have access to this secret gossip is herself. This anxiety that a verdict will be rendered by a public of gossips rather than by her own private judgment finally drives Mary to her death.

For Foucault, Mary's neighbors would represent the "circuits of communication" that support "an accumulation and a centralization of knowledge." How then are we to read the moments in Brockden Brown's novels when these circuits are jammed? As Henry learns, the problem of the secret witness is what to do with knowledge that has been forced upon you. Whereas "A Lesson on Concealment" is about a character who is reluctantly coerced into "the duty of concealing," Brockden Brown's novel *Arthur Mervyn* is often held up as a clear demonstration of his investment in "the standard Woldwinite belief that secrecy is bad in itself" (9; Barnard and Shapiro 124). But although *Arthur Mervyn* seems to be a perfect example of the relationship between Godwinian transparency and panopticism, it also demonstrates the problems that arise when a system at odds with its own professed values renders the accumulation of knowledge useless. One example of the former occurs when Dr. Stevens argues that his concern for a family member who has been visiting a reputed brothel "authorized me in watching his steps and detecting his errors, with a view to his reformation" (168). Not only does Stevens' surveillance reform his relative, but it also confirms that Mrs. Villars is operating a brothel. This knowledge in turn saves both Clemenza Lodi and Acsha Fielding. If the proactive Dr. Stevens serves as one version of republican witness, what happens when incriminating knowledge is gained unwillingly? An important part of Arthur's development is learning that secrecy is always "erroneous and pernicious," most

importantly because it does not allow actions to result in any possible benefit: “my understanding had been taught, by recent occurrences, to question the justice, and deny the usefulness of secrecy in any case” (152). One exception to Arthur’s new understanding of the problems of secrecy occurs when he encounters something in the attic of Welbeck’s house that he cannot describe to Dr. Stevens. This mysterious encounter disrupts his narrative—“Here Mervyn paused in his narrative. A minute passed in silence and seeming indecision”—and leads him to claim that silence is his duty (161). As Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro have argued, the text seems to suggest that Arthur has stumbled upon fugitive slaves in Welbeck’s attic.²⁹ In this case, slavery, by being a greater crime than Arthur’s secrecy, forces him to keep a secret. Arthur is forced into the position of secret witness, as the crime of slavery makes it impossible to act according to the standards of republican virtue he has come to uphold in his development as husband, physician, and propertied urban citizen. The text, by pointing the reader to what it cannot say, registers its own silent protest on behalf of 1793’s Fugitive Slave Act.

Arthur’s forced secrecy primarily emerges as a narrative problem. In the textual disruption this secret causes, as Arthur literally pauses his narration to Stevens, the economy of slavery is presented as one of useless waste that can only result in inaction. Arthur feels he cannot act to help the fugitive slaves, as he has so impulsively throughout the novel on behalf of numerous unlikely and undeserving beneficiaries. Because inaction would put an end to both plot and character, the reader is implicated in the text’s

²⁹ See the section “Signposting the Underground Railroad” in Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro’s Introduction to their 2008 edition of *Arthur Mervyn* (xli-xliv). Arthur describes the attic as “large enough to accommodate an human being” and remarks “were it possible to contrive some inlet for the air, one studious of concealment, might rely on its protection with unbounded confidence” (161). He tells Stevens that what he saw in the attic put his “fortitude to a new test” and hopes “the time may come when no inconvenience will arise from minute descriptions of the objects which I now saw and of the reasonings and inferences which they suggested to my understanding.”

reliance on movement, action, and exposure. One of the concealed lessons of Brockden Brown's fiction might be to remind the reader that because print is a space still bound by convention, acts of reading are also opportunities for exposure and surveillance. In "A Lesson on Concealment," Henry is finally convinced of Mary's identity because of her sympathetic reactions to seduction novels:

When reading a book, she would stop at certain incidents or reflections, muse pensively, or sigh, and then, by a kind of effort, regain her composure, and resume her task. These reflections and incidents had always some connection with the hardships to which the loss of reputation and honour subject her sex, and therefore tended to strengthen the conjecture, that the comparison was secretly made between her own experience and the reasonings or relations of the book.

(15)

In turn, Henry's own sympathetic reaction to Mary's plight unravels him. As the pressures of secrecy frustrate the action that Godwinian benevolence compels, Henry, the "neglected and unthought-of witness" to scenes "big with tremendous consequences," confuses his own personal history with Mary's: "I could never, on these occasions, forget that I also had a near relation, whose fate was not unlike that of the being whom Haywood had destroyed" (13,16,15). If Mary Selwyn's memoirs offer the reader "A Lesson on Concealment" by outlining the fatal consequences of secrecy, they also narrativize the pressures placed on individuals by the roving eye of republican surveillance, a surveillance with demands that are aligned with the reader's.³⁰ The rest of

³⁰ See Krause for a description of this Godwinian pressure: "Moreover, the virtue of benevolence is not only self-attracting, but it compels action...Benevolence is not theoretic. Only in the realization does it mean anything—which is of the highest importance for Brown's use of it; he was doing precisely what Godwin prescribed. A corollary of this can be seen in the significance Godwin attaches to sincerity...It

this chapter will offer a brief survey of Brockden Brown's major novels in order to argue that his fiction troubles our traditional understanding of republican print culture's investment in full disclosure.

So far I have discussed the rarely read short story "A Lesson on Concealment" and the novel *Arthur Mervyn*, but the first novel that comes to mind when thinking about the position of 'the secret witness' in Brockden Brown's fiction is, of course, *Ormond; or, The Secret Witness*. *Ormond* aligns the reader with an even more troubling version of the republican witness—unlike Dr. Stevens, who uses his knowledge for the greater good, and Henry, who is forced into useless silence, Ormond is more spy than witness. Although Ormond is motivated by lust, his methods are authorized by the language of republicanism. The same greater good that authorizes Stevens to follow his relative to a brothel, and that authorizes Mervyn to forcefully enter that brothel, is evoked in Ormond's own justification. He also claims that he acted out of "beneficence," "disinterest," and for the "greater good" (216-7). Republican duty is again cited as a means rather than an end, as Ormond justifies his self-interested actions through a depraved sense of duty. In this text, the "secret witness" is one of Brockden Brown's most memorable villains, but through his criminal invasion of Constantia's privacy he manages to kill her father, who has been nothing but an impediment to her happiness, and the con-man Craig, who was the cause of her poverty. Ormond is the vehicle who fulfills Constantia's unconscious desires, and as he repeats to her conversations that took place "when all doors were fast and avenues shut, in the midst of silence, and in the bosom of retirement," the reader is reminded of how often Constantia has personally benefited

means, among other things, that one must tell the truth regardless of personal danger or injury to personal interests. We are under obligation that nothing be suppressed" (197-8).

from her neighbors' personal tragedies (197).³¹ The reader is aligned with Ormond not only through a shared criminal knowledge, but also through a sympathy that acts itself out through murder.

If Dr. Stevens, Ormond, and Henry Kirvan are all alternate versions of one another, then the choices we make as reading witnesses are terribly fraught. Edgar Huntley, one of Edward Hartley's hapless doubles in Brockden Brown's body of work, dissociates the act of reading from the act of witnessing. After hearing Clithero's bizarre tale he writes, "My reading had furnished me with no instance, in any degree, parallel to this, and I found that to be a distant and second-hand spectator of events was widely different from witnessing them myself and partaking in their consequences. My judgment was, for a time, sunk into imbecility and confusion" (87). Sympathy pushes Edgar into the register of witness; he cannot help but involve himself after hearing Clithero's tale and he hopes "The magic of sympathy, the perseverance of benevolence, though silent, might work a gradual and silent revolution, and better thoughts might insensibly displace those disparate suggestions which now governed him" (107). The sympathy that governs the lives of Brockden Brown's characters is not the abortive sympathy of Benjamin Rush's novel readers, but a sympathy that constantly forces them to act on behalf of the strangers they encounter—it is the sympathy of a witness rather than of a spectator. Although Edgar eventually feels he is able to make some sort of meaning out of Clithero's tale, to subject it to "a deliberate and methodical inspection,"

³¹ For example, the death of her landlord "was productive of one desirable consequence. Till the present tumult were passed, and his representatives had leisure to inspect his affairs, his debtors would probably remain unmolested. He, likewise, who should succeed to the inheritance, might possess very different qualities, and he as much distinguished for equity as Mathews had been for extortion. These reflections lightened her footsteps as she hied homeward" (33). Constantia also benefits from the plague: "Such was the colour of her fate, that the yellow fever, by affording her a respite from toil, supplying leisure for the acquisition of a useful branch of knowledge, and leading her to the discovery of a cheaper, more simple, and more wholesome method of subsistence, had been friendly, instead of adverse, to her happiness" (54).

the consequences of his interpretation prove otherwise (87). As Sarsefield holds Edgar directly accountable for the novel's final tragedy, we realize that Edgar has failed in some way at making the transition from spectator to witness, as his direct involvement in the 'chaos' of Clithero's history has ended very badly.³² As we subject Brockden Brown's novels to our own 'deliberate and methodical inspection,' how are we to avoid Edgar's mistakes?

The problem with the position of reading as a witness is that it requires action based on uncertain knowledge. As Brockden Brown argues in his essay "The Difference Between History and Romance" (1800), 'deliberate and methodical inspection' simply will not gain us certain moral truth because "motives are modifications of thought which cannot be subjected to the senses. They cannot be certainly known...Actions of different men, or performed at different times, may be alike; but the motives leading to these actions must necessarily vary" (342). If motives are how we understand the difference between Arthur Mervyn and Ormond, then the witness is an insufficient *modus operandi*, precisely because the witness relies on his or her senses: "The subject of my senses is merely the existence of the record, and not the deed itself which is recorded. The truth of the action can be weighed in no scales but those of probability" (343). Witnesses might decrease probabilities, but even the most simple and voluntary action "is capable of being analyzed into a thousand subdivisions." If "motives are modifications of thought which

³² Brockden Brown's novels often suggest that the development of a citizen involves the tempering of sympathy by reason. Arthur Mervyn, for example, muses that "if reason acquires strength only by the diminution of sensibility, perhaps it is just for sensibility to be diminished" (213). Bryan Waterman reads a scene in the novel when Arthur encounters a "a sallow Frenchman from Saint Domingo, his fiddle-case, an ape, and two female blacks" on a stagecoach as demonstrating his "emerging scientific aptitude, evidence of his transition from being over-whelmed by pluralistic Philadelphia to being the master of this diversity through rational observation" (237). But this scene also shows Arthur for the first time confronted with a difference he cannot overcome, and the absence of his usual reflection and interaction is striking. This might be Mervyn at his most scientific, but no knowledge is gained without a human intercourse that is dependent on some form of sympathetic recognition.

cannot be subjected to the senses,” then Brockden Brown’s novels will never be settled by a reader who relies only on her senses. Instead, the tragic consequences of secret witnessing that emerge in his fiction over the course of his literary career *relieve* the reader of the burden of reading as republican witness.

Pleasure, uncertainty, secrets, deferral – the themes this chapter has traced in Brockden Brown’s fiction hardly suggest an author who is confident in the reformatory potential of fiction, but instead an author who is wary of the reading practices encouraged by republican print culture. In her argument about the material conditions of early American print, Trish Loughran claims that “the genius and the ingenuity of federalism” is “the fact that the federalists were able to overcome and even exploit the absence of federal infrastructure in order to create something that, in future years, would forever *look* federal” (121). Loughran charges us to stay aware of “the gap between local practices of print production and dissemination (on one hand) and the language of federal inevitability (on the other).” Loughran’s proposal that there were many versions of federalism also speaks to my own sense that there were many versions of republican virtue. Although my reading of Brockden Brown’s body of work seeks to disrupt his fiction’s seamless incorporation into fantasies about the disinterested virtue of the early national period, I also take seriously his own argument that fiction can lead readers to love virtue because of (rather than in spite of) the pleasures of intellectual speculation it encourages.³³ If, as Foucault claims, the general adoption of panopticism means that “our

³³ Collings also emphasizes the speculative possibilities that fiction offered William Godwin: “While his novels allow him to survey the failures of absolutist projects, they also permit him to experience the fictively constructed subjectivity of protagonists embarked on such projects. Here critique and vicarious experience collapse into the same form, self-critical first-person romance, through which Godwin and his readers can project themselves into an enterprise eventually revealed to be illegitimate. If conceptual revolution is to be foreclosed in history, it may still take place in fiction” (849). See also Tilottama Rajan, who argues that the relationship between *Enquiry* and Godwin’s novels is a dynamic one of theory and

society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance,” what kind of moral truth does Brockden Brown’s fiction establish for the sympathetic reading witness (217)? In his essay “The Difference Between History and Romance,” Brockden Brown not only rehearses the Romantic argument that historians are mere observers of certainties while writers of fiction “adorn these appearances with cause and effect,” but also argues that the romancer’s interest in probabilities over certainties makes his work more conducive to the human reader: “curiosity is not content with noting and recording the *actions* of men. It likewise seeks to know the *motives* by which the agent is impelled to the performance of these actions” (342). These motives are, of course, precisely what can never be known. For William Godwin, because the romancer deals in probabilities he will always lose out to the historian:

Naturalists tell us that a single grain of sand more or less on the surface of the earth, would have altered its motion, and, in the process of ages, have diversified its events. We have no reason to suppose in this respect, that what is true in matter, is false in morals.

Here then the historian in some degree, though imperfectly, seems to recover his advantage upon the writer of romance. He indeed does not understand the character he exhibits, but the events are taken out of his hands and determined by the system of the universe, and therefore, as far as his information extends, must be true. The romance writer, on the other hand, is continually straining at a

reality: “It is thus fiction or narrative, in its exploration of these minute, realistic particulars, that Godwin sees as forcing us to confront the problem of political *justice*, of institutions that are just, in the present. At the same time justice ‘now’ will always seem impossible, since the political or moral is always a position, that is to say, an imposition. Thus we need the romance of theory in *Political Justice* as a horizon against which to think the aporia of the term ‘political’ justice within a negative dialectic: all the more so in the deeply pessimistic later fiction” (121).

foresight to which his faculties are incompetent, and continually fails. (“Of History and Romance”)³⁴

As Jon Klancher notes, the concluding paragraphs of Godwin’s essay seem to argue that because the historian is limited to natural history, historical accounts are not overwhelmed by irresolvable speculations about the future: “the romancer, meanwhile, ‘knows’ the character he constructs but cannot possibly set that character into the motion of ‘events’ without plotting them toward the false inevitability of a narrative ending.” Brockden Brown doesn’t seem to be bothered by the multiple possibilities novelists must consider: “How wide, then, if romance be the narrative of mere probabilities, is the empire of romance? This empire is absolute and undivided over the motives and tendencies of human actions” (343). Godwin’s concern about the pressures of aiming toward a “narrative ending” is not unrelated to his valuing of transparency and disclosure; Brockden Brown, however, is able to celebrate the instability of fiction precisely because he recognizes that its condition is parallel to what we are able to know of human motives.

This might explain why the ending of *Clara Howard*, a novel that is *about* very little, is given away in Edward Hartley’s introductory letter: “Now am I rich, happy, crowned with every terrestrial felicity, in possession of that most exquisite of all blessings, a wife, endowed with youth, grace, dignity, discretion” (3).³⁵ Suspense is not

³⁴ This essay, written in 1797 but unpublished until 1988, makes many of the same arguments that Brown’s version does. See Klancher: “Such knowledge of one’s own constructions also makes the romancer the narrator of true or ‘real history’: the republican romancer is not right because he is virtuously republican, but because he is reflexively self-conscious, thus comprehending the manifold circumstances and the consequences that motivate and contextualize his own characters or creations.”

³⁵ Burnham’s emphasis on the suspense generated by the novel’s epistolary structure overlooks this introductory letter: “When critics complain that *Clara Howard* lacks action, or that its lack of a central narrator hopelessly fragments the novel, they miss the way in which the careful, if tormenting, proportionality of its epistolary exchanges accomplish precisely the kind of narrative anticipation and desire, over and over again, that those same critics praise in Brown’s Gothic fictions” (269).

generated by what will happen but by how it will happen.³⁶ By the time of the ‘first American novelist,’ the early American novel may already have been in excess of its printed form. *Arthur Mervyn*, a text that is often held up as the ultimate celebration of the relationship between subjecthood and the publicity of printed discourse, actually ends with Arthur renewing his commitment to orality.³⁷ When his novel ends he is released back into his ever expanding network of irresistible sympathy, a network that is inaccessible to the reader because it relies on Arthur’s strange power of presence.³⁸ The last lines of the novel find Arthur putting aside the written text in order to consummate his marriage with Acsha Fielding: “But why am I indulging this pen-prattle? The hour she fixed for my return to her is come, and now take thyself away, quill. Lie there, snug in thy leathern case, till I call for thee, and that will not be very soon. I believe I will abjure thy company till all is settled with my love. Yes: I *will* abjure thee, so let *this* be thy last office, till Mervyn has been made the happiest of men” (330). In a reversal of

³⁶ See also Rajan for a similar reading of *Caleb Williams*: “But there is a curious redundancy in joining the textual to a legal decision, since we already know that Falkland is guilty of Tyrell’s murder. Why arrive at a conclusion at which we have already arrived? The decision demanded of the reader must therefore be of another kind: an ethical rather than a legal decision” (129). As Rajan notes, Godwin’s insistence in *Enquiry* that “the political must constantly be made responsible to individual reason and conscience, which is to say ethics, or ‘sprit’ in a more expansive sense,” means that his understanding of justice is always in excess of both legal institutions and narrative resolution (117).

³⁷ See Warner: “And if the oral conditions of his narrative suggest the frustration of [Mervyn’s] desire for such expansive and atemporal knowledge, he will find what he seeks in the fixed publicity of writing” (165). Warner argues that the moment that Mervyn takes over writing his story “indicates the end of his dependent condition.” Waterman finds that Mervyn’s growth is linked to his development of a scientific language of truth: “Scientific and moral accuracy are intricately linked: Mervyn’s newfound self-consciousness as a storytelling moralist...emerges hand in hand with his decision to apprentice himself to Stevens and to become a physician” (236-7).

³⁸ Mervyn’s power throughout his novel is rooted in his promiscuous orality. Dr. Stevens describes Mervyn as seducing him beyond the “injunction of duty” he first claims: “I scarcely ever beheld an object which laid so powerful and sudden a claim to my affection and succour” (6). Waterman argues that Dr. Stevens “wed[s] the sympathetic identification idealized in eighteenth-century moral philosophy to the cool scientific gaze of the physician” (233). Waterman exposes his own critical priorities when he insists that Stevens “diagnoses Mervyn...before sympathy stakes its claim, emphasizing his empirical skill over his sensibility” (234). But couldn’t this observation also mean that the doctor’s sympathy for Mervyn overpowers his medical diagnosis? Hearing and witnessing Mervyn speak prove to be irresistible. Stevens’ friend Wortley identifies the problem when he reminds the doctor “It was not till you heard his tale, that your own suspicions were removed. Allow me the same privilege of unbelief” (248).

traditional figural associations of pen and phallus, *Arthur Mervyn* ends with their dissociation, as the sex that will take place outside of the reader's purview is announced but not described. Printed public discourse is abandoned for the erotic pleasures of a new cosmopolitanism that is being enjoyed off page.

The turn toward pleasure that this chapter makes will be continued in the next, as I move from the republican novel to the satirical periodical essay. The next chapter also turns to one text that may be partially responsible for the twentieth-century critical tradition that dismisses *Clara Howard* as evidence that Brockden Brown abandoned the intellectual pursuits of his gothic novels and succumbed to the pressures of the feminized literary marketplace at the end of his career. Burgett puts it well: "Brown becomes the antetype of nineteenth- and twentieth-century male authors whose (masculine) art resists (feminine) sentimentality, even as it eventually falls prey to the demands of the mass market and the unenlightened taste of a female reading public" (114). In *Salmagundi*, this feminized mass market becomes the main target of the bachelor-editors' satirical critique. Despite its critical reputation, *Clara Howard* is actually a novel that clearly demonstrates that modern criticism has overemphasized the cultural divide between feminine sentimentality and masculine disinterest. In the next chapter *Salmagundi*'s profitable relationship with the "mother mob" it pretends to despise will make the falseness of this divide even more clear.

Chapter 3: Fashionable Discipline

Americans did not suddenly become novel-readers when William Hill Brown wrote “the first American novel” in 1789. As Trish Loughran and Cathy Davidson have argued, there is more evidence that readers were confused by *The Power of Sympathy* than seduced by its message.¹ This chapter turns to a production that actually was wildly popular, James Kirke Paulding and William and Washington Irving’s 1807 literary periodical *Salmagundi or, the Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq. and Others*, to ask how novelized reading practices influenced more established print cultures. More specifically it argues that the editors of *Salmagundi* propose a new relationship with print that resists the sympathetic reading practices and reformative aims of the early American novel. *Salmagundi*’s bitterly skeptical descriptions of “that awful despot, *the people*” have led critics to characterize it as, at best, Federalist and, at worst, Tory.² These characterizations overlook the transitional moment that *Salmagundi* represents in early national print culture. *Salmagundi*’s politics might be conservative, but out of its disillusionment with republican print culture emerges the beginnings of a liberal critique of the coercive forces at work in the period’s consensus-driven print culture. The difficulty of accounting for *Salmagundi* is that its conservative critiques of the democratic mob are precisely what allow it to make progressive arguments for the value of literature.

¹ As I noted in my first chapter, *The Power of Sympathy* was hardly a best-seller. See Chapter 1, note 10.

² The most famous of these characterizations comes in Stanley Williams’ biography of Washington Irving. Williams argues that the Federalist politics of *Salmagundi* “were those of the layman” and that Federalism suited Irving’s “aristocratic tastes in society and literature.” According to Williams, Irving’s early writings were “the very stuff of Tories” (93-4). See also William C. Dowling on literary federalism: “...the appearance of *Salmagundi*, joining *The Port Folio* in its separate world of wit and fancy, content to signal its distance from Jeffersonian America through satire or ridicule, marks the birth of literary Federalism as such” (67).

Print capitalist accounts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries argue that the novel developed alongside of a periodical culture increasingly defined by the concept of reflexivity. The novel, like the periodical, provided individual readers with reformative self-knowledge. In the early American context, this mutually constitutive relationship between the novel and periodical culture can be seen both in the truth claims of didactic early American novels and in the affective appeals of early national political rhetoric. My first two chapters described different methods of incorporating theories of moral sentiment into disciplinary systems. For William Hill Brown and Benjamin Rush, sympathy operated outside the law and enabled a naturalized and voluntary obedience. For Charles Brockden Brown, the novel was an ideal mode of naturalizing virtue via the pleasures of intellectual speculation. This relationship between pleasure and virtue is also at the heart of the *Salmagundi* project, but the *Salmagundi* authors attempt to divorce the pleasures of reading from any sort of ethical or moral imperative. For the *Salmagundi* editors, the obligatory moral agenda behind early national print productions results in a political culture paralyzed by partisanship. As early national print culture is maligned for being the site of self-interested factionalism, in the pages of *Salmagundi* a space opens up for fiction that is free of any reformative or political content.

In an 1819 essay for the *North American Review*, Richard H. Dana offered the following fond memory of reading *Salmagundi*:

It was exceedingly pleasant morning or after-dinner reading, never taking up too much of a gentleman's time from his business and pleasures, nor so exalted and spiritualized as to seem mystical to his far reaching vision. It was an excellent thing in the rests between cotillions, and pauses between games at cards; and

answered a most convenient purpose, in as much as it furnished those who had none of their own, with wit enough for sixpence, to talk out the sitting of an evening party.

For the fictitious editors of *Salmagundi*, the casual satisfaction that Dana remembered taking from their magazine would have made him an ideal reader. The editors announced in their January 24, 1807 introductory issue that pleasure was to be their top priority: “while we continue to go on, we will go on merrily—if we moralize, it shall be but seldom; and, on all occasions, we shall be more solicitous to make our readers laugh than cry” (70). *Salmagundi* circulated for exactly one year and twenty issues—its final issue was printed on January 25, 1808. Despite, or perhaps because of, its irregular production, *Salmagundi* was wildly popular, both in New York and nationwide, and the true identity of its authors kept readers guessing to the end.³ Its success may have been its downfall; Paulding and the Irving brothers decided to end the project after their publisher, David Longworth, secured a copyright and started raking in profits that the authors would never see. *Salmagundi*’s fictitious contributors included Launcelot Langstaff, who wrote reflective essays from his “elbow-chair,” Anthony Evergreen, who served as “a kind of patriarch in the fashionable world,” and William Wizard, who presided “in the territory of criticism” (71). These contributors were “true and independent bachelors” well-versed in the style and tradition of their English predecessors, Mr. Spectator and Will Honeycomb (229). The most obvious targets of *Salmagundi*’s satire are Jeffersonian

³ “Many of the separate numbers passed through several editions...800 copies at a shilling apiece were sold in a day—a record for that time” (Herold 32). *Salmagundi* was printed irregularly every 2-3 weeks: “As we do not measure our wits by the yard or bushel, and as they do not flow periodically nor constantly, we shall not restrict our paper as to size, or the time of its appearance. It will be published whenever we have sufficient matter to constitute a number...This will best suit our negligent habits, and leave us that full liberty and independence which is the joy and pride of our souls” (*Salmagundi* 73).

Democrats and the literary magazine *The Town*, which had produced its first issue a few weeks before *Salmagundi*'s first issue. Given New York's chaotic political scene and *The Town*'s prompt failure after only five issues, readers also quickly understand that factionalism of any stripe is *Salmagundi*'s target, particularly when it is supported by a blood-thirsty print culture.⁴ This position comes with a unique set of challenges: in order to escape what they understand to be the mob mentality of the American reading public, *Salmagundi*'s editors have no choice but to communicate with their readers through the chaotic public sphere that enables the very values they despise.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas connects eighteenth-century novels and early periodicals via the reflexivity the bourgeois reading public demanded: “[Periodicals] already sprang from the needs of a bourgeois reading public that later on would find genuine satisfaction in the literary forms of the domestic drama and the psychological novel” (43). In early periodicals, “the public held up a mirror to itself” as it “read and debated about itself.” Similarly, “the psychological novel fashioned for the first time the kind of realism that allowed anyone to enter into the literary action as a substitute for his own” (50). The coffee houses and *salons* of seventeenth-century Europe would be replaced by the book clubs and reading circles that followed on the heels of novels like *Pamela* and “formed the public sphere of a rational-

⁴ See Hedges: “*Salmagundi* is often anti-Republican in feeling, but in working to a frenzy against political factionalism it refuses much of the time to see essential differences between Federalists and Republicans. When it fulminates against the demagoguery, it realizes that both parties grub for votes among the rabble” (58). Hedges goes on to remind us that “in New York in 1807, it was not always easy to tell a Federalist from a Republican” (59). My own argument doesn't make any pretense of sorting out *Salmagundi*'s many references to local, contemporaneous political and social events and figures, many of which are simply inaccessible to a modern reader. For an essay that does carefully trace these references, see Mary Weatherspoon Bowden's essay “Cocklofts and Slang-whangers: The Historical Sources of Washington Irving's *Salmagundi*.” *The Town*, a literary magazine that published its first issue on January 1, 1807, had an explicitly corrective air and spouted column after column of theater criticism. For more, see Bowden. *The Town* is available on EVANS.

critical debate in the world of letters within which the subjectivity originating in the interiority of the conjugal family, by communicating with itself, attained clarity about itself” (51). In *Salmagundi*, the possibility of reflexive reading practices leading to self-knowledge or rational-critical debate is treated as one of the Enlightenment’s most damaging delusions. Instead, *Salmagundi* describes a reading public that is made up of irrational, self-absorbed individuals and supported by a newspaper industry that thrives in making political commentary personal. According to Michael Warner, the republican print culture that supported a Habermasian reading public was governed by a principle of negativity: “persons who enter into this discourse do so on the condition that the validity of their utterance will bear a negative relation to their persons” (38). While Warner argues that the print culture that emerged out of the ratification debates “elevated the values of generality over those of the personal” and “took on the investment of the disinterested virtue of the public orientation, as opposed to the corrupting interests and passions of particular and local persons,” the editors of *Salmagundi* point to the failure of this ideal of a generalized publicity that aimed for disinterest (108). In the New York City *Salmagundi* describes, newspapers print “opinions and speculations” that “are diametrically opposite” from paper to paper, and debates between members of this reading public start out “political” but soon “proceed to personal” (234). The concept of a nation of rational individuals reading and debating together in public is revealed to be an empty fantasy.

Paradoxically, the reflexivity that a generalized, impersonal print culture theoretically enables is directly linked to the reformative potential of sympathetic reading practices. As Elizabeth Maddock Dillon argues, the literary public sphere that emerges in

Habermas's account of the domestic novel can be characterized by "interiority and affect, not rationality" (31). In the previous chapter, I cited Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook's argument that sympathetic reading practices encourage the reader "to import self-interest into the text" (169). For Charles Brockden Brown, who hopes that his fiction will instill "the love and the zeal of virtue" in his reader, the self-interest encouraged by sympathetic reading practices is an important method for achieving the voluntary obedience that true virtue demands. *Salmagundi* associates these self-interested, reformatory reading practices with the rampant partisanship of the American political scene. In Chapter 1 I argued that in *The Power of Sympathy*, Mr. Holmes' digression on the moral benefits of reading satire represented a new novelistic way of reading satire. When Mr. Holmes suggests satire as an especially appropriate genre for young women, he encourages them to eliminate the ironic distance on which the comedic function of satire relies and participate in a sympathetic identification with its targets: "I will drop this piece of morality, with a charge to the fair reader, that whenever she discovers a satire, ridiculing or recriminating the follies or crimes of mankind, that she look into her own heart, and compare the strictures on the conduct of others with her own feelings" (27). The editors of *Salmagundi* claim that this purely corrective mode of reading satire interferes with their aim of amusement: "Perhaps the most fruitful source of mortification to a merry writer, who for the amusement of himself and the public, employs his leisure in sketching odd characters from imagination, is, that he cannot flourish his pen, but every Jack-pudding imagines it is pointed directly at himself" (87). From the very beginning, Paulding and the Irvings make it clear that the main target of their satirical collaboration

is the reflexivity of early American reading practices. For these New Yorkers, print had become all too personal.

In its warning that readers should “remember to bear in mind, that our characters are not individuals, but species,” the editors of *Salmagundi* propose a new relationship with print that resists sympathetic reading practices (80). In her book *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, Sarah Knott describes the “sentimental coteries” of the 1780’s as intimate groups of correspondents who performed the “enactment or recognition of certain types in certain situations” (112). In its differentiation between “individuals” and “species,” *Salmagundi* discourages the sympathetic world-view that Knott describes. For Knott, the living practice of sensibility meant the recognition of “sensibility’s own insight: that these selves were made in society; they were socially constructed and socially turned.” “The self-consciousness of sensibility was not in the ushering forth of a protoromantic interior”; instead, “the internal dynamic of sensibility in practice was of selves made by and in the intensity of immediate social relationships” (113). For the *Salmagundi* bachelors, “perpetually mingling in the *beau-monde*” supplies only “a kind of fashionable discipline” that trains participants to acquire “a common place vivacity” “at the expense of all original and sterling traits of character” (309). In *Salmagundi*, what Knott describes as the “intensity of immediate social relationships” is the democratic mob, and people who allow themselves to be formed by its energies are always the butt of the joke: “It is not in our hearts to hurt the feelings of one single mortal, by holding him up to public ridicule, and if it were, we lay it down as one of our indisputable facts, that no man can be made ridiculous but by his own folly” (88). As “that awful despot,

the people” run wild, “wielding newspapers in one hand,” *Salmagundi* seeks to set itself above public opinion and the print culture that supports it.

The reading practices that the editors of *Salmagundi* warn their readers against are directly related to the novelized reading practices that I have been charting. The first issue of *Salmagundi* greeted New Yorkers with instructions for how to read it:

We intend for this purpose to present a striking picture of the town; and as every body is anxious to see his own phiz on canvas, however stupid or ugly it may be, we have no doubt but that the whole town will flock to our exhibition. Our picture will necessarily include a vast variety of figures, and should any gentleman or lady, be displeas'd with the inveterate truth of their likenesses, they may ease their spleen by laughing at those of their neighbors—this being what *we* understand by POETICAL JUSTICE. (68)

In this opening message, Langstaff suggests that the reflexivity required by reformative reading practices (looking for oneself in satire as Mr. Holmes advised in *The Power of Sympathy*) is fundamentally linked to vanity. Although Langstaff hopes that his readers will not ruin the editors’ fun by complaining about imagined slights, he also seems to understand that it is hopeless to expect that readers will understand this non-identificatory way of reading. Dana’s review of *Salmagundi* offers a strikingly accurate fulfillment of Langstaff’s vision: “In the end, it took fast hold of people, through their vanity; for frequent use had made them so familiar with it as to look upon it as their own; and having retailed its good things so long, they began to run of the notion that they were all of their own making” (13). Readers, hungry for the sort of reflexivity that *Salmagundi*’s constant references to local news, scandals, and fashions encouraged, go so far as to think of the

magazine as truly their own production. The *Salmagundi* editors turn this reflexivity back onto their readers: “In truth, for it must come out like murder one time or another, the inhabitants are not only ill-natured, but manifestly unjust: no sooner do they get one of our random sketches in their hands, but instantly they apply it most unjustifiably to some ‘dear old friend,’ and then accuse us vociferously of the personality which originated in their own officious *friendship!*” (163). Like Madison in the *Federalist* two decades earlier, the *Salmagundi* editors attribute their readers’ resistance to their own cynicism: “Have we not, over and over, assured the town that we are three of the best natured fellows living?...but as it is one of the impossible things to make a knave believe in honesty, so, perhaps, it may be another to make this most sarcastic, satirical and tea-drinking city believe in the existence of good-nature” (163). The final joke is on the reader after all, as the community they have fashioned in their own image isn’t particularly flattering.

By the late nineteenth century critics were dismissing *Salmagundi* as merely imitative of its eighteenth-century British predecessors. In *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), for example, William Hazlitt gives a famously dour review of Washington Irving’s sketches: “Not only Mr. Irving's language is with great taste and felicity modeled on that of Addison, Goldsmith, Sterne, or Mackenzie: but the thoughts and sentiments are taken at the rebound, and, as they are brought forward at the present period, want both freshness and probability.” Recent critics have noticed the ways that *Salmagundi* very self-consciously parodied these British periodicals.⁵ The element of the eighteenth-

⁵ Michael T. Gilmore notes that “...*Salmagundi* satirizes the time-honored ingredients of the essay serial. It sends up fashion notes, theater criticism, and the familiar letters of a foreign visitor, and it directs mockery at the presumed didactic or use value of letters.” William Hedges argues that “Literary historians

century periodical essay that is most frequently parodied in *Salmagundi* is the concept that print can be used to establish any sort of broad, rational public consensus. Terry Eagleton argues that despite *The Spectator* (1711-12) and *The Tatler* (1709-11) being “animated by moral correction and satiric ridicule of a licentious, socially regressive aristocracy,” these early periodicals are defined by their “consensual character” (10-1). Scholars of these early periodicals agree that an Enlightenment belief in universal reason animates Addison’s and Steele’s attempts to appeal to a broad public readership. Paul Trolander and Zeynep Tenger argue that “the socially invisible spectator becomes the perfect magistrate, speaking for no particular coterie or class interest and making behavioral issues a matter of public discussion when there seems some public pretense to do so” (190), and Greg Polly argues that “even in his most dictatorial pronouncements, [Mr. Spectator] insists that his voice has never been anything more than a representation of his readers’ voices and views” (118). Habermas argues that for the public that developed in the coffee houses and supported early periodicals, this pretense of reflexivity was also a pretense of inclusivity: “The issues discussed became ‘general’ not merely for their significance, but also in their accessibility: everyone had to *be able* to participate” (37). As Warner puts it, “The key development in the emergence of modern publics was the appearance of newsletters and other temporally structured forms oriented to their own circulation...regular and dated papers, magazines, almanacs, annuals, and essay serials. They developed a reflexivity about their circulation through reviews, reprintings, citations, controversies” (94-5). These periodicals relied on the fiction that readers were generating the opinions expressed in their pages and that the editor figure

and anthologists still refuse to acknowledge the pervasiveness of parody in *Salmagundi*...one must not overlook the fact that the very format of the magazine was designed to remind readers of its ancestry” (45).

was merely reflecting back a broad public opinion: the critic is the “locus of language he receives rather than invents...the mirror in which this fascinated self-imaging takes shape” (Eagleton 22). Circulating in New York a century after *The Spectator* circulated in London, *Salmagundi* seems well aware of the fiction behind Mr. Spectator’s pretense of representative consensus. Given the bitterly partisan environment in which it was published, this skepticism toward the possibility of public consensus is not surprising.⁶

The previous chapter argued that Charles Brockden Brown’s fiction expresses suspicion toward the very values of republican print culture he is so often cited as representing. Paulding and the Irving brothers take Brockden Brown’s Gothic suspicion toward the networks of surveillance and disclosure enabled by republican print culture to a newly caustic extreme. *Salmagundi* has given up entirely on the possibility of a virtuous and disinterested republic of letters. Whereas Warner can claim of *The Spectator* that “individual readers who participate in this discourse learn to place themselves, as characterized types, in a world of urbane social knowledge, while also ethically detaching themselves from the particular interests that typify them, turning them by means of a ‘Spirit of Benevolence’ and ‘Love to Mankind’ into the reading subjects of a widely circulating form,” even as *Salmagundi*’s readers recognize themselves as the types being satirized in its pages, it offers no neutral ground of readerly reflection that is removed from the struggle among these particularities. In her book on *The Tatler* and

⁶ Hedges attributes this skepticism to a more global trend: “If the surface manner of the periodical essay was particularly unsuited to the boisterousness of life in the United States at the beginning of the 19th c., the intellectual assumptions behind the tradition were being questioned everywhere as well...Irving’s work to a considerable extent embodies the realization that eighteenth-century Reason, though it may have helped to provide the United States with desirable political institutions, not only had not made man any wiser than he was to begin with or perfected him in moral virtue, but had actually rendered much more difficult the satisfaction of longing for a positive belief in something beyond his fleeting presence in the physical world” (33).

The Spectator, Market à la Mode, Erin Mackie describes how “the bourgeois discourse of taste is characteristic of a large historical shift from absolutist to hegemonic modes of sociopolitical control...these modes and attitudes are instituted not through coercion but through persuasion; they are understood to be freely adopted or declined by each individual. People revise their behavior and lifestyles not under the duress of sumptuary laws or formal edict—religious or secular—but propelled by desires felt as individual and personal, truly one’s own” (21). The shift in “modes of sociopolitical control” that Mackie presents as the context for *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* is also the shift I have been tracing in the American context, as solutions for naturalizing, and thus rendering voluntary, public duty became focused on carefully managing private desires. In the same way that Addison and Steele use “codes of the imagination” to access “the desires their audience” (Mackie 61), Brockden Brown’s novels recruit willing virtuous subjects. *Salmagundi* both aligns itself with and distances itself from Brockden Brown’s project: although Launcelot Langstaff claims “it is one of our indisputable facts, that it is easier to laugh ten follies out of countenance than to coax, reason, or flog a man out of one,” the editors of *Salmagundi* are not interested in training a generation of Clara Howards (227). While recognizing the reformatory power of pleasure, *Salmagundi* also struggles against the assumption that literature must be reformatory at all, and doesn’t offer its readers any sort of norm or standard on which they can focus their desires.

Salmagundi enters the public sphere by openly making fun of *The Town*’s alignment of itself with *The Spectator*, which according to *The Town*’s prospectus, “awoke the thoughtless, purified the debauchee, stung folly, refined the rustic, elevated the merchant, and softened political controversy.” But can we take the editors at their

word when they claim that they are not interested in moralizing? In Mackie's description of a disciplinary system that works through a pretense of persuasion, an unlikely overlap with Foucault is suggested.⁷ For Foucault, "nonsovereign power" is "one of the greatest inventions of bourgeois society," and "enabled sovereignty to be democratized through the constitution of public right articulated upon collective sovereignty, while at the same time this democratization of sovereignty was fundamentally determined by and grounded in mechanisms of disciplinary coercion" ("Lecture Two" 42-3). In other words, the Enlightenment's discourse of rights has only allowed for new forms of "disciplinary coercions" that aim for social cohesion and seek to impose "a natural rule, a norm": "The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalization" (43-4). Mr. Spectator's method of accessing "the hearts and minds" of his readers through literature in order to discipline "their modes and manners" is one example of how the bourgeois public sphere normalizes its project of social control (Mackie 63). Are the editors of *Salmagundi* simply better than Mr. Spectator at hiding their reformative agenda, or are they truly hoping to create a printed space that is free from the discourse of normalizing reform?

Salmagundi can become a point of entry into the debate between Foucault and Habermas that Michael Kelly argues can be reduced to "the philosophical notion of critique" (3). For Kelly, the two positions at stake are, in Foucault's terms, that "critique is just one of many discursive practices tied to power," and in Habermas's terms, that "the role of critique is to hold power in abeyance" (2). While Habermas argues that the

⁷ I say unlikely because Mackie is indebted to the Habermasian public sphere, although her book is in part a revisionist response; she seeks to explore the "counter-models" the "rational bourgeois public sphere generates," and the ways that alternative values, such as fashion, might be "envisioned through the reactions against them enacted within that discourse" (24-5).

bourgeois public sphere had an emancipatory potential that should not be dismissed because it changed from a public sphere of rational-critical debate among individuals to one that simply provided consensus, Foucault argues that the productive relationship between discipline and transgression means that any political critique will simply give rise to new forms of coercion.⁸ I argued in my first chapter that a nation that founds itself on natural law must have a particularly fraught relationship with institutionalized discipline. Because of a necessary belief in the naturally-occurring moral faculty of its citizens, the social and political critique that circulated in early national periodicals addressed itself to a reading public that was immediately suspicious of claims to authority. As I will go on to argue, *Salmagundi*'s strategy for addressing this skeptical public is twofold: it criticizes but does not advise, and it aims to reform its readers covertly, through pleasure and humor. *Salmagundi* is thus positioned squarely in the middle of the Habermas-Foucault debates about criticism: although its editors remain highly skeptical toward the possibility of rational public debate, the question remains whether or not they actually manage to avoid proposing a new set of normative values to replace the materialist factionalism they criticize.⁹ The interrelated notions of bachelorhood, whimsy, nostalgia, and the literary are all values that critics have argued Paulding and the Irving brothers propose as alternatives to the frenzy they observe in 1807 New York; although I argue that none of these are actually presented as viable

⁸ See Nancy Fraser: “[dialectic social criticism] seeks to preserve and extend both the ‘emancipatory impulse’ behind the Enlightenment and that movement’s real success in overcoming premodern forms of domination—even while it criticizes the bad features of modern societies” (185-6). The question that Fraser imagines Habermas asking of Foucault is the same question we might ask of *Salmagundi*'s authors: “Does he aspire to a total break with the long-standing Western tradition of emancipation via rational reflection” (186)?

⁹ Structurally this question is similar to one frequently leveled at Foucault from Habermasians: “This puts Foucault in the paradoxical position of being unable to account for or justify the sorts of normative political judgments he makes all the time—for example, that ‘discipline’ is a bad thing” (Fraser 195).

alternatives, the critical tendency to impose these values on the *Salmagundi* project demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining a printed artifact that attempts to criticize the channels in which it must travel.

Salmagundi's rejection of generic conventions, market pressures, and critical acclaim divorces their project of any political content and translates into an experiment with literary, rather than civic, disinterest.¹⁰ The editors "thank heaven we are not like the unhappy rulers of this enlightened land, accountable to the mob for our actions, or dependent on their smiles for support" (305). *Salmagundi*'s editors rely on their anonymity and their status as bachelors to promote a pretense of disinterest in relation to their reading public. Whereas Mr. Spectator claims to have a "Club" of representative informants at his disposal (Warner 103-4), the *Salmagundi* contributors present themselves as eccentric and out of touch bachelors; this positioning, however, is precisely what allows the editors to claim that they are free from the demands of the public sphere. When Langstaff reports flattering conversations he has overheard about *Salmagundi*, he can assure his readers "there was no flattery in this, for they no more suspected me of being Launcelot Langstaff, than they suspect me of being the emperor of China" (180). *Salmagundi* refuses to offer its reader a moral center, as the characters who editorialize about women's fashions, Thomas Jefferson's navy, and French waltzes, are themselves

¹⁰ Eric Slauter has identified the ways that the republican principle of disinterest operated in both the political and the aesthetic realm: "Political thought not only coincided with aesthetic theory, sharing a few crucial terms like 'disinterestedness,' the self-negating stance of tasteful spectators before an art object and the proper posture of enlightened representatives in the face of party zeal: in the eighteenth century, political thought and aesthetic theory were mutually constitutive" (98). See also Jonathan Kramnick's understanding of aesthetic disinterest as it emerged in eighteenth-century criticism: "By remaining detached from any particular vocation, the Spectator can survey the whole social order. . . Disinterest is thus what we, as well as Addison, might call an imaginary relation, a relation of the imagination to the real; the Spectator is a spectator because he can imagine himself to perform an infinite number of practical labors without having his view foreshortened by the actuality of any one labor. The imagination intervenes to dilate his prospect. . . The various groups to which the *Spectator* lays claim are united in the disinterested experience of beauty, that is, in their taste" (60).

absurdly antiquated and isolated bachelors who frequently make fun of each other's contributions. Will Wizard, for example, loses all credibility as a social critic when his hopelessly old-fashioned and eccentric dress and manners are described by Anthony Evergreen in one of *Salmagundi's* funniest and most memorable essays. As William Hedges summarizes, "The praises of folly bestowed by *Salmagundi*...often ironically convey the displeasure of Paulding and the Irvings. But they are also a sign of the incompetence of Langstaff, Evergreen, and Wizard. No sure sense of authority is established in the magazine" (26). While Mr. Spectator works to cultivate the belief that his periodical depends on his readers' interest and participation, the editors of *Salmagundi* do the opposite: "We have said we do not write for money—neither do we write for fame;—we know too well the variable nature of public opinion, to build our hopes upon it—we *care* not what the public think of us" (70). The bachelors of *Salmagundi*, in other words, embrace the removal that their status as bachelors allows. Although Langstaff claims that with their bachelor status comes an obligation "to watch over the welfare of society," the editors' frequent insistence that they simply do not care what the reading public thinks of their project means that they are up to something different than Mr. Spectator.

This position of disinterest in relation to the reading public is of course frequently belied by the editors' accounts of conversations evaluating their project that they claim to have overheard in New York City taverns, as well as the constant references to highly-localized social and political figures and events. We are left with the same question Mackie asks of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator's* critiques of materialist London: "Because fashionability feeds on the kind of media saturation and sheer immediacy that papers like

The Tatler and *The Spectator* foster, we are always left with the question: Do their interventions serve to suppress or rather to stimulate the proliferation of the fashions they denounce?" (239). As Mackie reminds us, "the critic also *wants* and *needs* popularity and fashionability on his side to support his 'higher' and more rationally chosen cultural objects" (250). *Salmagundi*, even as it maligns competing periodicals, fashion, and style, is itself not only an incredibly popular participant in these channels, but also needs those competitors to produce the critiques that make it so popular. This need for periodical culture and its fashionable, democratic trappings is the truth most desperately denied by *Salmagundi*, not only in terms of its essays' content, but also through its teasingly irregular production.

This tension between fashion and the criticism it generates characterizes the unstable relationship between the critic and his readers in the early nineteenth century's public sphere. Habermas documents the rise of the critical profession as corresponding with the rise of the bourgeoisie public sphere: "In the institution of art criticism, including literary, theater, and music criticism, the lay judgment of a public that had come of age, or at least thought it had, became organized. Correspondingly, there arose a new occupation that in the jargon of the time was called *Kunstrichter* (art critic). The latter assumed a peculiarly dialectical task: he viewed himself at the same time as the public's mandatory and as its educator" (41). Critics were both the common person's champion, "spokesmen for the public" who demystified artistic production, but also "experts combating 'dogma' and 'fashion.'" Periodicals "became the publicist instrument of this criticism." William Hazlitt offers one particularly powerful argument

on behalf of the professional critic in his essay from *Table Talk* (1822), “On the Pleasures of Painting”:

To a vulgar eye there is no difference between a Guido and a daub—between a penny print, or the vilest scrawl, and the most finished performance... Where there is no conscious apprehension, there can be no conscious pleasure. Wonder at the first sights of works of art may be the effect of ignorance and novelty; but real admiration and permanent delight in them are the growth of taste and knowledge. “I would not wish to have your eyes,” said a good-natured man to a critic who was finding fault with a picture in which the other saw no blemish. Why so? The idea which prevented him from admiring this inferior production was a higher idea of truth and beauty which was ever present with him, and a continual source of pleasing and lofty contemplations. It may be different in a taste for outward luxuries and the privations of mere sense; but the idea of perfection, which acts as an intellectual foil, is always an addition, a support, and a proud consolation!

Habermas’s account of the decline of the political function of the public sphere in the mid-nineteenth century only partially accounts for the intellectualism of Hazlitt’s argument. In Habermas’s account, the liberalism of John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville “treated public opinion more as a compulsion toward conformity than as a critical force” (133). As the electorate rapidly expanded, “In order to save the principle of publicity even against the tyranny of an unenlightened public opinion itself, it was to be augmented with elements of representative publicity” (137). The professional critic was one method of combating this “tyranny of an unenlightened public opinion.” But as Jonathan Kramnick argues, the relationship between the public and the professional critic

has a longer and more ambivalent history than Habermas's narrative suggests. Kramnick argues that the English literary canon emerged in the mid-eighteenth century "out of the interplay and tension between aesthetic and historicist criticism, the one a mode that emphasized standards of taste and sublimity, the other a mode that emphasized philological expertise and linguistic difficulty" (54). Aesthetic criticism, familiar in terms of a Habermasian discourse of publicity, competed with historicist criticism's rhetoric of specialization—rhetoric that Hazlitt's argument on behalf of the professional critic certainly utilizes. Despite the differences between aesthetic and historical criticism, both schools shared concerns surrounding the shared potential for social unity and social disarray that the concept of taste presented. Kramnick's understanding of the critical profession as emerging out of an ambivalence surrounding "the foundation of taste" also helps us to make sense of *Salmagundi*'s own uneasy sense of itself as a production that satirized the very position it occupied.

Salmagundi, circulating during a moment when it became possible to reflect back on something called Enlightenment, is the professional critic's detractor but not necessarily a friend of the common man. In the pages of *Salmagundi*, critics are "freebooters in the republic of letters" who "not unfrequently create the fault they find, in order to yield an opening for their witticisms" (72). Will Wizard describes his companion Snivers as "a great critic, for he finds fault with every thing—this being what I understand by *modern criticism*" (137). While Wizard enjoys the concerts and plays he attends, Snivers picks apart each performance: "Do you not observe that the actor slaps his forehead, whereas, the passion not having arrived at the proper height, he should only have slapped his—pocket flap? This figure of rhetoric is a most important stage trick,

and the proper management of it is what peculiarly distinguishes the great actor from the mere plodding mechanical buffoon. Different degrees of passion require different slaps, which we critics have reduced to a perfect manual..." (138). The postscript at the end of this essay makes it clear that Wizard is much more interested in Snivers than in the performance of *Othello* he is supposed to be reviewing: "Just as this was going to press, I was informed by Evergreen that *Othello* had not been performed here the lord knows when; no matter, I am not the first that has criticised a play without seeing it, and this critique will answer for the last performance, if that was a dozen years ago" (141). Despite its description of the elitist and self-absorbed professional critic, *Salmagundi* hardly proposes "the people" to more naturally-inclined to art appreciation than Snivers. Instead, the editors are offended by a particular kind of criticism. Snivers is described as a "transatlantic" critic, "a true englishman," who "suffers most horribly at our musical entertainments" (82). The problem is his Britishness, not necessarily his criticism. The people's tastes need to be guided and managed, but only by critics who are properly suited to do so.¹¹

The problem of managing the people's tastes is directly related to the problem of managing a naturally-occurring moral faculty. In my first chapter I argued that because republican government was presented as establishing a natural relationship between citizen and government, early republican political rhetoric had to distance itself from the language of discipline; similarly, in the early national period, social critique that aimed to manage the people's tastes had to avoid presenting itself as the voice of authority. Eric

¹¹ Hedges argues that in the *Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle*, Irving "renounces criticism altogether" and can't find a way to practice criticism that doesn't "smack of aristocratic affectation" (26). Despite this realization, the reader is left "more sure than ever of the need for criticism." A similar move seems to be happening in *Salmagundi*, as it leaves readers struggling to understand if there is anything they can value that won't leave them the butt of a joke.

Slauter has described the ways that aesthetic debates about taste were informed by similar concerns about the consent of the governed that dominated political theory: “For European and American writers and readers the most prominent topic of aesthetic debates, the question of taste, addressed a central political problem, especially for governments based on the consent of the governed. How, political and critical writers asked, could the subjective judgments of individuals be reconciled with or even subordinated to the authority of experts? How could—and why should—one opinion count more than others?” (87). In the late eighteenth century, taste was defined by an unresolved tension between the sense that it was a naturally-occurring faculty and the realization that it could be improved through practice and education: “many writers argued that taste was inborn, but even still they seemed to find a common theme in the idea of the educability of opinion. Taste could be taught” (103).¹² Although *Salmagundi* seems to argue that the people’s tastes must be properly managed by appropriately American critics, it carefully distances itself from any pretense of cultural authority. Even as the editors identify themselves as critics, they make fun of the arrogance that position represents:

Like all true and able editors, we consider ourselves infallible, and therefore with the customary diffidence of our brethren of the quill, we shall take the liberty of interfering in all matters either of a public or private nature. We are critics, amateurs, dillitanti, and cognoscenti; and as we know ‘by the pricking of our thumbs,’ that every opinion which we may advance in either of those characters

¹² See also Denise Gigante, who traces the transition from eighteenth-century theories about taste to a romantic anxiety about the “two cultural economies of consumption, aesthetic taste and consumerism”: “In this transitional society, refocusing its energies on individual pleasure and preference, there was no extricating taste from appetite or its metaphorical cousin, consumerism” (67). I will return to an emerging concern about the market’s influence on literary production at the end of this chapter.

will be correct, we are determined, though it may be questioned, contradicted, or even controverted, yet it shall never be revoked. (68)

Just as the editors rely on the fashionable trends they criticize, their refusal to offer a positive moral agenda leaves readers craving their social critique. This seductive denial of authority allows *Salmagundi*'s editors to insert themselves as the reluctant voices of reason in a society gone bad.

Because the social criticism printed in the pages of *Salmagundi* is always voiced by such unreliable social critics, perhaps we should take Langstaff at his word when he claims that the periodical's main objective is to make merry, and not to moralize. Given our understanding of the ultimately hegemonizing tendencies of the humorous eighteenth-century periodical essay, this is difficult to do. Eagleton argues that the periodicals' "appeal to standards of universal reason" is not only a critique of monarchical absolutism, but also "typically conservative and corrective" (12). Habermas argues that the inclusivity principle that allowed for the concept of "one public" was grounded in the conflation of "property owners" with "common human beings"; although the bourgeois public sphere "turned the principle of publicity against the established authorities," membership that wasn't merely representative required "ownership and education" (56). Richard Squibbs disrupts this line of criticism by taking the whimsicality of such productions seriously, arguing that there is an ethical dimension to their "whimsy": "The reading publics they project, then, locate ultimate value in renouncing the distractions of fashion and novelty in favor of the more durable pleasures of enriching character through reading, reflection, and sociable exchange (390)." For Squibbs, the intellectual removal from the rampant consumerism of public life encouraged by these periodicals manages to

avoid becoming self-absorbed. “These whimsical personae [including Mr. Spectator and Launcelot Langstaff] transcend the status of mere loveable eccentrics, however, adopting instead a more aggressive and confrontational posture. They claim time as their domain, and make awareness of how one uses and experiences time into a potential ethical challenge to a society that increasingly conceives time as little more than an index of commercial productivity” (391). Squibbs is able to speak of *The Spectator* and *Salmagundi* in one breath because he sees both as circulating in similar historical moments and addressing similar concerns about the possibility of civic virtue.¹³ One problem with this alignment is that whereas Squibbs argues that *Salmagundi* is similar to its British predecessors in its encouragement of “the more durable pleasure of enriching character through reading, reflection, and sociable exchange,” these are precisely the pleasures that *Salmagundi* shows over and over again to be impossible in 1807 New York. As I will go on to argue, another problem with this argument is that the pleasures of aesthetic reflection and removal that Squibbs describes are made possible by a race-based labor system that remains a blind spot in the editors’ critique of the materialism of their age. Symptomatic of the privileges the editors have inherited from their aristocratic past, this blind spot addresses the questions raised earlier in this chapter surrounding the Habermas-Foucault debates about the possibilities of critique. The editors try to divorce their project from the coercive forces of reformative social critique by proposing the pleasures of pastoral reflection as an alternative to the fashionable trends that support

¹³ Squibbs begins his essay with Emerson’s writing on whim: “In many ways, the social-political milieu of Jacksonian America standing in the immediate background of Emerson’s essay recalls the writing periodical essayists saw on the walls of eighteenth-century London and Edinburgh, and early nineteenth-century New York and Philadelphia” (389).

periodical culture. But this pastoralism is itself dependent on one of the most durable systems of capitalist coercion.

In *Salmagundi*, a relentless materialist pressure for style has overtaken all forms of pleasure. Mustapha, for example, describes the “joyless routine” of a typical Gotham socialite who dances all night until she is

led off, faint, languid, exhausted, and panting, to her carriage—rattles home—passes a night of feverish restlessness, cold perspirations and troubled sleep—rises late next morning (if she rises at all) is nervous, petulant, or a prey to languid indifference all day—a mere household spectre, neither giving nor receiving enjoyment—in the evening hurries to another dance—receives an unnatural exhilaration from the lights, the musick, the crowd, and the unmeaning bustle...and the next morning rises to go through exactly the same joyless routine. (293)

This “joyless routine” is unaffordable to many—“the prosperous journey over the turnpike of fashion” is often checked by creditors—and its rewards are questionable—for one family “the mighty nothingness of fashionable life” results in “the ineffable pleasure of being forever pestered by visitors, who cared nothing about them, of being squeezed, and smothered, and par-boiled at nightly balls, and evening tea-parties...the privilege of forgetting the very few old friends they once possessed” (161). This good-natured critique of stylish life changes tone in the essay “Style at Ballston.” Written by Will Wizard, this essay recounts Anthony Evergreen’s descriptions of fashionable society at New York’s Ballston Spa, where “pleasure has taken an entire new signification, and at present means nothing but STYLE” (256).

According to Evergreen, “a dashing blade from the south...made his *entré* with a tandem and two outriders”; eventually, this Southerner’s “tandem disappeared!...in a little time longer an outrider was missing—this increased the alarm, and it was consequently whispered that he had eaten the horses, and drank the negro—(N.B. Southern gentlemen are very apt to do this on an emergency.)” Finally the second servant also disappeared, and “the dashing carolinian modestly took his departure in the *Stage-Coach!*—universally regretted by the friends who had generously released him from his cumbrous load of *style*” (257-8). There is nothing good-natured in this burlesque image of a Southern slave-owner eating his slaves in order to maintain the appearance of style. Not only have Americans become caught in a “joyless routine” of a fashionable life they cannot afford, but this lifestyle is also made possible by the actual consumption of human beings.

Despite Evergreen’s disapproving description of the Carolina slave-owner at Ballston, slavery is also part of New York state’s very recent past in 1807, a historical fact that seems to elude the editors in an essay that describes one of the purest moments of pleasure in *Salmagundi*. Anthony Evergreen visits the Cockloft’s country estate to find his friend Langstaff “relapsed into one of his eccentric fits of the spleen” and “under the influence of a whole legion of the *blues*” (246-7). The friends stroll the grounds of Langstaff’s childhood home and encounter the family servant Old Caesar, “an old negro, who has *whitened* on the place, and is his master’s almanack and counsellor” (248). Caesar is described as a rural fixture:

My readers, if haply they have sojourned in the country and become conversant in rural manners, must have observed, that there is scarce a little hamlet but has one

of these old weather-beaten wiseacres of negroes, who ranks among the great characters of the place. He is always resorted to as an oracle to resolve any question about the weather, fishing, shooting, farming and horse-doctoring; and on such occasions will slouch his remnant of a hat on one side, fold his arms, roll his white eyes and examine the sky, with a look as knowing as Peter Pindar's magpie, when peeping into a marrow-bone.

Langstaff describes Caesar as his childhood “*Man Friday*,” and wonders “why a body may not like a negro, as well as a white man!” Evergreen and Langstaff linger in the stable while Caesar tends to the horses and regales them with stories from Langstaff's childhood. Caesar's stories draw Langstaff out of his melancholy mood, and after “slipping a piece of money into old Caesar's hand to buy himself a new tobacco box,” he returns to the house “in the best possible humor.” Although he apologizes to Evergreen, “'Tis a pestilent old rogue for talking, my dear fellow...but you must not find fault with him—the creature means well,” Evergreen knows “honest Caesar could not have given him half the satisfaction, had he talked like a Cicero or a Solomon” (249). The aesthetic reflection that Squibbs argues that the editors propose as an alternative to the commercial frenzy of 1807 New York is actually not divorced from the labor systems the editors critique in “Style at Ballston.” Although Langstaff's benevolent paternalism is presented as a democratic alternative to the Carolina plantation owner's literal consumption of his slaves, the pleasure of the editors' rural retreat is reduced to services rendered by a former slave.¹⁴ The problem with the bachelors' idiosyncratic nostalgia is not, as

¹⁴ In 1788 New York banned the slave trade. In 1799 a gradual manumission act was passed, which freed all slaves born after July 4, 1799 – males at age 28, females at age 25. Slaves born before July 4, 1799 were renamed indentured servants for life. In 1817, slaves born before July 4, 1799 were to be freed July 4,

Squibbs identifies it, that “whim can appear as little more than a quietist retreat from civic engagement,” but that their retreat is actually not a retreat at all, in that it does not escape the “culture of consumption” that exhausts them in New York City (390).

Evergreen tells the story of Caesar and Langstaff in an essay titled “Sketches from Nature,” and readers understand that Caesar is simply one part of the rural landscape that provides the editors a rejuvenating break from the frantic modernity of the city. Caesar’s availability becomes the occasion for the essay; he is the mechanism by which Langstaff is returned to his usual good natured state. The nostalgic pathos that characterizes this essay, and *Salmagundi* in general, is frequently noted by critics. William C. Dowling argues that the Federalist periodicals of Jefferson’s presidency “would always view the American republic as it had emerged from the Revolutionary War as having been primarily a recovery of civic virtue within the English constitutional tradition. On these terms, the emergence of jacobinism and Jeffersonian democracy can only be understood as corruption crying out for a return to a republic that had existed just yesterday” (30). But in *Salmagundi* the memories of the bachelors who are nostalgic for an already extinct America cannot be relied upon to remember the ““good old times”” any more accurately than they remember their own failed attempts to marry (78). Launcelot Langstaff’s beloved Uncle John, for example, who never managed to marry because of his own “prodigious antipathy to doing things in a hurry,” ends stories about past romantic exploits by “telling his friends and very significantly, while his eye would flash triumph, ‘that he might have had her’” (198-9). The romantic exploits of the *Salmagundi* bachelors are presented as comic failures in communication, and the nostalgia they

1827. Until 1841, non-residents and part-time residents were allowed to enter the state with slaves and hold them temporarily.

frequently indulge in is described as “looking back with regret, conjuring up the phantoms of good old times, and decking them out in imaginary finery, with the spoils of his fancy, like a good lady widow, regretting the loss of the ‘poor dear man,’ for whom, while living, she cared not a rush” (247-8). Irving’s bachelorhood is often linked in various ways to his career as one of America’s first professional authors. Warner argues that literature “plays the role that Irving otherwise associates with marriage: it provides not just a social platform of status, but the life-orienting horizon of futurity” (“Irving’s Posterity” 784).¹⁵ Bryce Traister argues that by the time of *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), Washington Irving, “patron saint of bachelordom,” “explicitly links nostalgia to taletelling, the bachelor to the fictions of matrimony. Celibacy becomes the occasion for the production of narrative, as the presumed sexual exercise, perhaps even exhaustion, of the married state leaves the married man with nothing left to tell. On the other hand, the bachelor’s sexual renunciation produces the imaginative spark of literature...” (127). *Salmagundi* is clearly in conversation with the bachelor debates of the early nineteenth century. Langstaff, for example, is inspired to write an unpublished manifesto defending bachelors after being “startled by a proposition of one of his great favorites, miss Sophy Sparkle, ‘that old batchelors should be taxed as luxuries [sic]’” (154).¹⁶ But the bachelor’s nostalgia that Traister associates with “taletelling” can’t serve as a placeholder for any sort of reliable Republican past that the nation can return to. Instead, nostalgia is

¹⁵ Warner insightfully describes the ways that Irving struggled with his bachelor status—the connection between bachelor and author that Warner charts was particularly tortured: “Yet bachelorhood was something he consistently regarded as anomalous, problematic, and probably immoral” (2).

¹⁶ See Traister: “On the one hand, the bachelor’s idle and sexually suspect un-reproductivity served as a focal point in much of the writing about bachelors in this period. Negative accounts of the bachelor implied a range of disagreeable traits, from excessive vanity, to suspicious misogyny, to the celibate’s destruction of America itself. In his unfettered itinerancy, on the other hand, the bachelor embodied the fantasy of American freedom as self-directed mobility and political independence” (112). Sophy Sparkle’s tax proposal was not a fiction—newspapers frequently engaged with rumors that state legislatures were actually debating bachelor taxes (115-6).

presented as just another whim-wham of the Cockloft Hall bachelors, and the “spark of literature” that Traister attributes to Irving’s bachelor is presented in *Salmagundi* as a digression that must be cut off. A footnote by William Wizard at the end of Langstaff’s description of his Uncle John tells the reader that “our publisher...has begged so hard that we will not overwhelm him with too much of a good thing, that we have, with Langstaff’s approbation, cut short the residue of uncle John’s amours” (200). Any moment of reflection that the reader might have been enjoying—the occasion for the essay is Langstaff’s memory of the last time he saw his deceased Uncle—is disrupted by Wizard’s decidedly irreverent footnote.

Salmagundi never lets its reader forget that periodical culture is no place for readerly reflection. Not only are its most nostalgic essays compromised by editorial interjections, but its issues are also peppered with contributions from Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan, a persona created in the tradition of Goldsmith’s *Citizen of the World* and *Salmagundi*’s most outspoken critic of early national print culture.¹⁷ In his letters home to Tripoli, the captive Mustapha disparagingly terms America “a pure unadulterated LOGOCRACY or *government of words*” (142-3). Mustapha compares the editors of local newspapers to the medieval knights of the Crusades: “These knights denominated editors or SLANG-WHANGERS are appointed in every town, village and district, to carry on both foreign and internal warfare, and may be said to keep up a constant firing ‘in words’” (143). Mustapha attributes the bitter partisanship of the period to the frantic energy of the logocracy: “*Politicks* pervade every city, every village, every temple, every porter

¹⁷ This convention was used frequently in the eighteenth century, and is directly related to the observer perspective adopted by *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. As James Watt observes, “the oriental traveler performs more or less the same function as a range of other eighteenth-century spies and observers, by offering positions—albeit provisional and ironic—from which to view the customs and manners of modern Britain” (56).

house—the universal question is, ‘what is the news?’—This is a kind of challenge to political debate, and as no two men think exactly alike, tis ten to one but before they finish, all the *polite* phrases in the language are exhausted, by way of giving fire and energy to the argument” (233). Rumor has become the news, and “the bond of social love is broken by the everlasting intrusion of this fiend of contention, who lurks in the sparkling bowl, crouches by the fire-side, growls in the friendly circle, infests every avenue to pleasure; and like the scowling Incubus, sits on the bosom of society, pressing down and smothering every throe and pulsation of liberal philanthropy” (235).

Newspaper editors and readers alike fuel the breakdown of politeness, sociality, and friendship; editors manufacture stories, and readers limit their sources to a single newspaper: “in this country every man adopts some particular slang-whanger as the standard of his judgment, and reads every thing he writes, if he reads nothing else—which is doubtless the reason why the people of this logocracy are so marvelously *enlightened*” (234). Mustapha describes a nation of highly localized political battles that are fueled by local newspapers: “While the fury of the battle rages in every metropolis, every little town and village has a distinct broil, growing like excrescences out of the grand national altercation, or rather agitating within it, like those complicated pieces of mechanism where there is a ‘wheel within a wheel’” (145). Benjamin Rush’s republican machines have become newspaper editors.

Like the bachelors who publish his letters, Mustapha is a cultural outsider. Although the humor of Mustapha’s social commentary, like that of Goldsmith’s Chinese philosopher Lien Chi Altangi, is often based on the fact that it is voiced by a misinformed and racially inferior foreigner, his language seeps into the other essays of *Salmagundi*,

suggesting that his assessment of American politics and print culture is not so inaccurate: logocracy, bashaw, and slang-whangers are all terms that Langstaff borrows from Mustapha in his own descriptions of New York politics and print.¹⁸ *Salmagundi* uses Mustapha's position as a racial outsider to express genuine outrage at the state of American politics and print culture, but the comic frame allows the critique of American print culture to fit into the satiric realm of *Salmagundi*. In his introductions Launcelot Langstaff suggests more than once that the letters are creations of Will Wizard: "The copies of my friend's papers being confused and without date, I cannot pretend to give them in a systematic order—in fact they seem now and then to treat of matters which have occurred since his departure: whether these are sly interpolations of that meddling wight Will Wizard; or whether honest Mustapha was gifted with the spirit of prophecy or second sight, I neither know—nor in fact do I care" (169).¹⁹ Unlike Goldsmith's carefully constructed Lien Chi Altangi, *Salmagundi*'s carelessness with the

¹⁸ See Hedges: "As with so many other devices in *Salmagundi*, Mustapha is used partly to parody a hackneyed convention. In this case it is the Oriental traveler, a throwback to Montesquieu and eighteenth-century *chinoiserie*, who comments with sage irony on western manners. Yet obviously Mustapha also gives voice to many of the authors' own attitudes. It is he, for instance, who supplies the term 'logocracy'" (55).

¹⁹ In his book *Comedy and America*, Martin Roth dismisses *Salmagundi*'s Mustapha letters as "naked imitations of Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*" and calls them "perhaps the duller pieces in *Salmagundi*" (61). Contemporary readers weren't so dismissive. See Dana: "Though upon an old plan, nothing can be better done than some of Mustapha's letters..." (21). I have argued that *Salmagundi* is far less interested in maintaining the identity of Mustapha than Goldsmith was in the Lien Chi Altangi fantasy. *Salmagundi*'s carelessness with the Mustapha letters actually suggests that they are another element that parodies eighteenth-century periodical traditions. Roth's book centers around the argument that the whimsy of Irving's early writings, *Salmagundi* and *History of New York*, are more exemplary of burlesque comedy than satire, more Shandy than Spectator, and argues that their eccentric narrators play with eighteenth-century notions of the splenetic genius in order to present writing as a curative for crankiness. The editors of *Salmagundi* write "to ease themselves—and in so doing ease others," and their "satire, sarcasm, ridicule, railing—the entire range of corrective comedy—are merely ill effects of the spleen, the product of a diseased nature." Mustapha does not fit into Roth's argument because he "is limited, by weight of tradition, to the voices of the rational lout and the conscious moralist, and it was beyond Irving's power to render him whimsical." Although I agree that *Salmagundi* attempts to present a mode of cultural commentary that avoids being corrective, it seems clear that another reason Roth must dismiss Mustapha's letters is because, like Squibbs, Roth remains committed to the connection between the aesthetic principle of whimsy and readerly reflection. Even as Roth takes note of *Salmagundi*'s resistance to moralizing, he gives reading an ethical weight that simply is not supported in *Salmagundi*'s issues.

Mustapha letters suggests that they are yet another parody of eighteenth-century periodical tradition.

Like the Mustapha letters, one of *Salmagundi*'s more famous essays, "On Greatness," is also comically qualified with an introduction by Anthony Evergreen that claims it was written while Langstaff was "in one of the paroxysms of splenetik complaint." Despite this deflationary introduction, the acidic tone of this essay is striking. In this essay, the same appeals to consensus that characterize the benevolent paternalism of *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* are to blame for the worst elements of American politics. Timothy Dabble, the "LITTLE GREAT MAN" the essay follows, rises to political power through an innate ability to "argue a full hour, without taking either side, or advancing a single opinion," and learns from "a shrewd old politician" that he must "fag in the train of great men, echo all their sentiments, become their toad-eater and parasite" (251-3). The word most frequently used to describe Dabble is "useful": "The grand requisite for climbing the rugged hill of popularity—the summit of which is the great seat of power—is to be useful" (251). By useful, Langstaff explains, he means the difference between a horse "in his native state" and one reduced "into servile obedience to the bridle and the lash." According to Langstaff, men considered useful by the mob are those who libel their rivals' characters rather than debating principles, "for the great object of our political disputes is, not who shall have the *honour* of emancipating the community from the leading-strings of delusion, but who shall have the *profit* of holding the strings, and leading the community by the nose" (253). Eventually Dabble succeeds when he is recognized by party leadership to be "a very *useful* fellow, who would *go all lengths*" (255). These useful men are, of course, enabled by the logocracy. At first,

“Dabble was likewise very loud in his professions of integrity, incorruptibility, and disinterestedness, words which, from being filtered and refined through newspapers and election handbills, have lost their original signification, and in the political dictionary, are synonymous with empty pockets, itching palms, and interested ambition” (253). But once he learns the required “degrading compliance,” Dabble’s “fortune was made—he was hand and glove with orators and slang-whangers” (255).

Two elements of American political culture are being maligned in this essay: as in Mustapha’s letters, newspaper editors are blamed for the rise of men like Dabble, and the idea of ‘usefulness’ is also presented as a characteristic more highly valued than disinterest, which thanks to newspapers, has become detached from its original meaning and now implies the opposite. As Michael Gilmore notes, this concept of usefulness is firmly opposed in *Salmagundi* to the aims and lives of the idle bachelors, and to what they argue should be the aim of literature: “The pseudonymous authors of *Salmagundi* firmly distinguish themselves from the Dabbles of the world...Even in a republic, Irving insists, literature must not imitate politics as a solicitation of popular favor” (663). “On Greatness” has its counterpoint in *Salmagundi* in a story called “The Little Man in Black.” The story describes “a gloomy misanthrope” who suddenly and mysteriously arrives in Gotham. The little man in black reads and meditates all day and is ostracized by his superstitious neighbors “because he followed no trade, nor even seemed ambitious of earning a farthing” (278). Eventually he dies of neglect and starvation.²⁰ His final moments are spent with Langstaff’s grandfather, who learns that the man is “the last

²⁰ Some critics read this story as an allegory of Aaron Burr, for whom Washington Irving felt great sympathy and whose treason trial he witnessed first-hand: “It need only be added to this description of a man unjustly isolated from society the facts that ‘little’ was an adjective applied to Burr since the Revolution, that he usually wore black...that he had been sought by a mob, and the picture of the little man in black is complete” (Bowden 159-60).

descendant of the renowned Linkum Fidelius,” the scholar who provides the epigraphs for many of *Salmagundi*'s essays. This story is often treated as a comparison piece to “On Greatness”: a “counterimage to the mob-flattering ‘great man,’” “the stirrings of Romantic sensibility are unmistakable in this portrait of a bookish outsider who represents the first fully differentiated artist in American literature” (Gilmore 663). The problem with this reading is that Linkum Fidelius, “that unheard of writer of folios” who Langstaff introduces in the first issue, is yet another of *Salmagundi*'s jokes. His “learned quotations” include: “A, was an archer and shot at a frog,/But missing his aim shot into a bog,” “Style, is _____ style,” and, in the final issue, “The work’s all aback” (95, 157, 312). Not only is the antiquarian scholar a poor prototype for a newly developing Romantic aesthetic, but when the reader learns that the man in black is indeed *Salmagundi*'s sham philosopher, the sympathy they have felt throughout the story for the pathetic man and his dog also become part of the joke. For Richard H. Dana, the revelation that the man is Linkum Fidelius serves to “ease a little the aching of the heart, and leave one in a ‘most humorous sadness’” (23).

Throughout *Salmagundi*'s issues the reader is kept uncomfortably uncertain as to how she should be responding to its editors' antics. Will Wizard's irreverent note following Langstaff's sentimental essay on his Uncle John, Anthony Evergreen's introduction to Langstaff's essay “On Greatness,” and the revelation that Linkum Fidelius is the little man in black are all examples of moments that disorient the reader.²¹ Any trust the reader might have for *Salmagundi*'s editors is irrevocably unsettled in the essay

²¹ According to Larry J. Reynolds, James Kirke Paulding's burlesque novel *Koningsmarke* (1823) might cultivate a similarly uncomfortable relationship with the reader: “the attitude of the author toward reader it implies is disturbing”; Paulding “implies that his book is being written to please the popular taste and is thus inherently worthless. Consequently, if the reader is caught up in the narrative or finds it enjoyable, he finally has to deal with the discomfiting knowledge that Paulding views him as a fool” (120).

“A Retrospect, or, What You Will.” In this essay Langstaff pauses to offer a retrospect of *Salmagundi*’s first 13 issues and announces the periodical’s goal of covert reformation:

But the people of Gotham, wise souls! Are so much accustomed to see morality approach them clothed in formidable wigs and sable garbs, ‘with leaden eye that loves the ground,’ that they can never recognize her when, drest in gay attire, she comes tripping towards them with smiles and sunshine in her countenance.— Well, let the rogues remain in happy ignorance, for ‘ignorance is bliss,’ as the poet says;—and I put as implicit faith in poetry as I do in the almanack or the newspaper—we *will* improve them, without their being the wiser for it, and they shall become better in spite of their teeth, and without their having the least suspicion of the reformation working within them. (227-8)

In this passage, Langstaff announces the strategy that Mackie claims *The Spectator* implicitly employed. Mackie argues that the literary nature of *The Spectator*’s essays persuades “their audience not that they *must*, and not only that they *should*, but that they *want to* change their ways” (61). Rather than maintaining Gilmore’s “separateness of the aesthetic,” and arguing that literature should avoid reforming its readers, here Langstaff suggests that it should simply reform its readers without them realizing it, through the pleasures of laughter and poetry (663).

In my previous chapter I argued that Brockden Brown’s interest in Godwin’s theories of voluntary obedience led him to propose the pleasures of reading to be ideally suited for encouraging voluntary reform. In his retrospect, Langstaff changes the terms of Brockden Brown’s theories of voluntary reform, as he reveals that his plan all along has been to use the pleasures of reading to reform readers “without their having the least

suspicion of the reformation working within them.” If Langstaff is serious, he is proposing a disciplinary strategy that changes the active virtue of Brockden Brown’s system to a passive virtue. Langstaff is claiming to take desire out of the equation, as he produces virtuous readers who are not actively choosing to reform their ways. In my first chapter I argued that Foucault’s description of the early republican citizen who obeys an authority “which he must allow to function automatically in him” did not account for an early republican model of naturalized discipline that required willingness rather than obedience. Langstaff’s covert method of reform resembles this Foucauldian concept of programmed obedience. As usual, however, Langstaff goes on to qualify his statement by comparing the pleasure he and his fellow editors take in *Salmagundi* to that felt by the slang-whangers:

If, in addition to our own amusements, we have, as we jogged carelessly laughing along, brushed away one tear of dejection, and called forth a smile in its place; if we have brightened the pale countenance of a single child of sorrow; we shall feel almost as much joy and rejoicing as a slang-whanger does when he bathes his pen in the heart’s-blood of a patron and factor; or sacrifices one more illustrious victim on the altar of *party animosity*. (229)

Shifting yet again away from any serious statement of reform, Langstaff compares the pleasure he takes in entertaining his readers to the pleasure a slang-whanger takes in attacking a political opponent. This final sentence casts a shadow over an essay that could otherwise be dismissed as yet another jab at the moralizing of contemporary periodicals—even as Langstaff pretends to be annoyed that “many people read our numbers, merely for their amusement, without paying any attention to the serious truths

conveyed in every page,” the only moral truths he goes on to specify include nosy old ladies learning to mind their own business, “wooden gentlemen” becoming more engaging in company, and young ladies ceasing to wear red shawls, expose their elbows, and waltz (227-8). How is the reader to respond to this comparison of the satisfaction felt by the editors of *Salmagundi* to the satisfaction felt by their nemeses, the slang-whangers? In their pretense of reform the editors of *Salmagundi* are not so different from the slang-whangers; accordingly, readers who take their reformatory agenda seriously are not so different from the Dabbles.

Even authors who claim to be writing for the sake of pleasure are still writing with “mingled motives of selfishness and philanthropy” (229). Although the slang-whangers find satisfaction in party animosity, while the *Salmagundi* editors find satisfaction in making their readers laugh, according to the editors, the satisfaction both find in being authors is the same. The image of readers laughing their way to virtue, “without having the least suspicion of the reformation working within them,” and even without any idea of the object of the reform, is not as light-hearted when it is presented alongside the image of the laughing author. The tension between author and reader runs through *Salmagundi* and is never resolved—not only does it find expression in the content of the essays, but also in the periodical conventions that it flouts. The editors frequently express frustration at the conditions of their own circulation. They can’t, for example, fight back against disgruntled readers, “because if we should chance to kill our adversary . . . it would be a loss to our publisher, by depriving him of a good customer” (88). Although readers might hold the ultimate trump card of patronage, the editors even win this battle by suddenly taking themselves out of circulation after one year, leaving

their readers “to flounder in the smooth ocean of glorious uncertainty” (305). In their final number, the editors refuse to enact the convention of periodical personae ending their careers with death: “When we first adopted the idea of discontinuing this work, we determined, in order to give the criticks a fair opportunity for dissection, to declare ourselves, one and all, absolutely defunct; for it is one of the rare and invaluable privileges of a periodical writer, that by an act of innocent suicide he may lawfully consign himself to the grave, and cheat the world of posthumous renown.” The editors refuse to kill themselves off, not only to anger “critics,” “who, like deer, goats, and divers other graminivorous animals, gain subsistence by gorging upon the buds and leaves of the young shrubs of the forest, thereby robbing them of their verdure, and retarding their progress to maturity,” but also because they might resurrect their project at some point in the future: “Far be it, therefore, from us, to condemn ourselves to useless embarrassments, should we ever be disposed to finish this invaluable work, which is yet but half completed” (307). Unlike the nostalgia that has characterized their production up to this point, the editors orient their final issue toward the future, and imagine themselves as young authors who are only just beginning their careers.

As the editors oppose their future literary aims with the work of critics, who devour young authors before they are able to reach professional maturity, they also resolve the confusion about their own status as cultural critics and literary authors by firmly establishing themselves as authors.²² The editors’ resistance to the reflexivity of

²² Critics often note a shift toward the literary in *Salmagundi*. For example, Reynolds observes “Just as Irving became periodically less whimsical as the series progressed, Paulding did too, but in a more genial manner. He began to try his hand at the sustained personal essay, and three of his contributions, “Mine Uncle John” of No. 11, “A Retrospect” of No. 13, and “Autumnal Reflections” of No. 17, are mellow, polished pieces displaying a thoughtfulness and artistry absent in *Salmagundi*’s earlier numbers” (26).

eighteenth-century reading culture culminates in this claim to authorship.²³ Throughout *Salmagundi*'s issues, the relationship between author and reader has been disrupted not only by the editors' pretense of disinterest, but also by their fictitious personae. In the early republic, anonymity enabled and guaranteed disinterest. Warner describes Benjamin Franklin's experiment with anonymity as an example of the negative representativity that defined mid-eighteenth century public life: "the fictionality of the Dogood papers validates their truth claims, but not because of any potency or value in fictionality per se. Mrs. Dogood's authorship is a ruse, the very transparency of which endorses neither authorship nor fictionality, but anonymity" (84). For Warner, anonymity signifies Franklin's "fear that the contamination of the personal would occult the letters' value as civic representations." For Paulding and the Irving brothers, who, unlike Franklin, no longer have any faith in the possibility of "a public life uncontaminated by particular aspirations," anonymity is very much about fictionality. In an early issue, the editors address a rumor they have overheard:

The town has at length allayed the titillations of curiosity, by fixing on two young gentlemen of literary talents—that is to say, they are equal to the composition of a news-paper squib, a hodge-podge criticism, or some such trifle...but pardon us, sweet sirs, if we modestly doubt your capability of supporting the atlean burthen of Salmagundi...We have no intention, however, of undervaluing the abilities of

²³ Rejecting the reflexive relationship between author and reader divorces their production of any political content as described by Habermas. Habermas argues that with the rise of the eighteenth-century novel, "the relations between author, work, and public" "became intimate mutual relationships between privatized individuals who were psychologically interested in what was 'human,' self-knowledge, and in empathy...author and reader themselves became actors who 'talked heart to heart'" (50). This reflexivity was grounded in a fundamental conflation of "human" and "property owner" that gave the public sphere both its pretense of representivity and its political function as a force made up of private, property-owning citizens engaged in rational-critical debate about public authorities.

these two young men whom we verily believe, according to common acceptance, young men *of promise*. (96)

Unlike Mrs. Dogood, who relates a similar tale of overhearing people speculating about her true identity, the *Salmagundi* editors are addressing a rumor that is actually true—they are, of course, “young gentlemen of literary talents,” and not the antiquated bachelors they pretend to be. Because the true identity of the authors remained a secret to most readers, this moment of shameless self-promotion is disguised as evidence of the editors’ good-natured benevolence, as they generously refrain from “publish[ing] something that would get our representatives into difficulties.”²⁴

In the final issue, this rumor becomes a way of congratulating readers who understand the fictionality of their production:

The profound and penetrating publick, having so long been led away from truth and nature by a constant perusal of those delectable histories, and romances, from beyond the seas, in which human nature is for the most part wickedly mangled and debauched, have never once imagined this work was a genuine and most authentick history—that the Cocklofts were a real family dwelling in the city...As little do they suspect that there is a knot of merry old bachelors seated snugly in the old-fashioned parlour of an old-fashioned dutch house...who amuse themselves of an evening by laughing at their neighbours, in an honest way, and who manage to jog on through the streets of our antient and venerable city, without elbowing or being elbowed by a living soul. (307)

²⁴ It is unclear when, exactly, Paulding and the Irving brothers came clean. Amos L. Herold claims “The authorship was so well concealed that John Lambert could hear only whispers of a lawyer and two merchants, and even as late as March, 1832, the editor of the *New York Mirror* after careful enquiry felt the need of publishing an authentic statement, assigning all the poetry and all but two of the prose articles to William Irving and James K. Paulding” (33-4).

This passage sounds like it is leveling yet another criticism at readers who are so used to reading Old World novels that they can no longer recognize true histories. But readers who speculate that *Salmagundi*'s "grey-beard speculations" are the work of "smart young gentlemen" and who are skeptical of its claims to be a "genuine and most authentick history" know that its satire is first and foremost a fiction. This passage, and *Salmagundi* as a whole, does irreparable damage to the literary traditions it mocks. By celebrating the fictionality behind its own social reform, *Salmagundi* exposes the fiction behind eighteenth-century periodicals' claims of representative consensus and undermines the authority of critique the genre claims for itself. Readers who constantly look for the use-value of the *Salmagundi* project—1807 readers who want to know what the editors really think about American theater or contemporary readers who want to know what the editors thought about the Jefferson administration—will be frustrated at every turn by the editors' refusal to take any consistent position. By reminding readers that there isn't a stable reformative agenda behind their satire, the editors also relieve readers from the burden of reading like the Dabbles of the world who only look to print for its usefulness.

Salmagundi's final issue foreshadows Washington Irving's lifelong resistance to the truth claims of historical fiction.²⁵ As the political rhetoric of the next decade increasingly began to proclaim a return to a mythical, harmonious republic, its nostalgia would be anxiously reproduced in the historical romance. In the next chapter, I argue that the solutions imagined and abandoned in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's frontier romance *Hope Leslie* (1827) disrupt this growing confidence in the reformative and

²⁵ See Gilmore: "The *History* represented a watershed not simply because it demonstrated fiction's profitability, but also because it subverted the dominant literary categories of the past. Its target was the constellation of attitudes that conferred unrivaled prestige on history writing and that inhibited the development of the aesthetic imagination" (664).

truthful potential of fiction that sold itself as history. Sedgwick is not usually placed in the romantic tradition that Irving is often credited with initiating. The American romantic tradition is defined by its opposition to the rise of a market culture that commodified literary production and held literary professionals accountable to its demands and expectations. In this tradition, the financial success that the female novelists of the nineteenth century enjoyed is attributed to their willingness to cater to the demands of mass culture. We can see the beginnings of this tradition in *Salmagundi*'s association of women with the cycles of fashion and materialism it protests so profitably. A particularly vivid example of this association occurs in Mustapha's description of the "mother mob":²⁶

That *mother mob* generally preferred the attentions of the rabble, or of fellows of her own stamp, but would sometimes condescend to be treated to a feasting, or any thing of that kind, at the bashaw's expense; nay, sometimes when she was in a good humour, she would condescend to toy with them in her rough way, but woe be to the bashaw who attempted to be familiar with her, for she was the most pestilent, cross, crabbed, scolding, thieving, scratching, topping, wrongheaded, rebellious and abominable termagant that ever was let loose in the world, to the confusion of honest gentlemen bashaws. (194)²⁷

²⁶ Similarly, the congressional session that designed Jefferson's navy is described as "a most fruitful mother," "though its children are generally abortions. It has lately laboured with what was deemed the conception of a mighty navy.—All the old women and the good wives that assist the bashaw in his emergencies hurried to head quarters to be busy, like midwives, at the delivery...after a deal of groaning and struggling, instead of formidable first rates and gallant frigates, out crept a litter of sorry little gun-boats!" (173).

²⁷ The orientalist history of the word "termagant" is particularly interesting in this context. Originally used to refer to an imaginary Muslim deity invented by Westerners, eventually it came to refer to a vaguely Eastern villain, a generally overbearing person, and finally a shrewish woman. Irving, of course, famously refers to Dame Van Winkle's as "a termagant wife."

As I will argue in my final chapter, this vision of the “mother mob,” simultaneously promiscuous and capricious in her attentions, still lingers in our accounts of antebellum literary culture. In American literary histories, the female domestic novelist emerges as a byproduct of the mass culture the *Salmagundi* bachelor-author despises and desires.

Chapter 4: The End of Good Feelings

When Catharine Maria Sedgwick published *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827), fiction no longer occupied the fraught position that it did when William Hill Brown published ‘the first American novel’ in 1789, the year that Sedgwick was born. The historical romance dominated the literary market in the 1820’s, both because of a continued obsession with the utility of fiction, which the editors of *Salmagundi* found so distasteful, and also because history as a newly defined discipline was becoming a popular form of intellectual amusement—a rise that it achieved by borrowing heavily from the novel. In many ways, *Hope Leslie* is a natural ending point for a project charting the rise of the American novel. A best-seller written by a professional novelist, it is the first novel in this project that contemporary readers would easily identify as a novel, perhaps even a page-turner. Most critical accounts of *Hope Leslie* position it as an inaugural event in the rise of the women’s fiction that is traditionally described as dominating the nineteenth-century American literary market. Since its rediscovery in the 1970’s, *Hope Leslie* has been read as a precursor to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s abolitionist novels rather than as an inheritor of Charles Brockden Brown’s republican novels. In these accounts, *Hope Leslie* marks a turning point from a republican nervousness about fiction toward a nineteenth-century confidence in fiction’s reformative potential. Read in this tradition, *Hope Leslie* is invariably associated with political and social reform in ways that divorce it from the American romanticism that contextualizes its publication and values. Part of this chapter will resituate *Hope Leslie* within the early American romantic movement. *Hope Leslie*’s romanticism resides primarily in its domestication of Benjamin Rush’s universally-occurring moral faculty

into a national character trait. Fundamentally the story of a failed attempt to establish an inclusive community based in sympathy and friendship, the novel's engagement with the romantic trope of the disappearing Indian offers a particularly fraught account of the process at work behind the naturalization of nationalist ideology. By reaffirming the mutually constitutive relationship between romanticism and sympathetic reading practices, I also hope to reveal the ways that our linear understanding of the rise of the American novel as a developmental process that culminates in the American Renaissance predetermines our readings of early novels, precisely because we are always reading them against this questionable endpoint. Although the masculine-dominated canon of the American Renaissance has been challenged as a misrepresentative and inaccurate method of periodization, critics continue to argue for the inclusion of women's fiction in the American literary canon primarily because of its oppositional relationship to the aesthetics of the American Renaissance. *Hope Leslie* serves as an important example of how reductive this method of reading antebellum women's fiction can be, as critical accounts that seek to place it squarely in a tradition of domestic fiction must overlook its playful generic messiness. The ease with which this novel's contradictions are accounted for as symptomatic of domestic fiction suggests that our critical labor continues to naturalize a gendered divide in the antebellum literary canon.

Sedgwick's selection of poetry by Eliza Lee Cabot Follen, William Cullen Bryant, and Fitz-Greene Halleck for her chapter epigraphs impress upon the reader that she intends her novel to be read in the context of the burgeoning New England romantic movement. Most accounts of antebellum literature would not consider these authors as part of the American romantic movement, primarily because we continue to understand

romanticism and sentimentalism as hopelessly opposed literary categories. This distinction between romanticism and sentimentalism is most famously articulated in Ann Douglas's claim that in the nineteenth century two disempowered populations, middle class women and the liberal clergy, worked to gain influence through the production of sentimental literature. For Douglas, the few romantics America did produce can be "characterized and defined by their defiance of sentimentalism and of incipient mass culture" (256).¹ Although Douglas's account has been challenged on its most basic level, the oppositional relationship between feminine sentimentality and masculine romanticism remains a basic assumption in literary histories of the nineteenth century.² Michael Gilmore, for example, writing in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, argues that "the nineteenth-century female domestic novelists unfailingly outsold the Romantics and were successful 'businesswomen of letters,' yet they preserved many of the same attitudes about literature held by their predecessors of both genders from the early Republic." For Gilmore, these outdated conventions included thinking of artistic production in pedagogical, communal terms that "depreciated the uniqueness of the artist" (557). Though Douglas and Gilmore both oppose the female novelist to the romantic artist, they do so through very different notions of the eighteenth century. For Douglas, proper romanticism follows from an intellectual Calvinist tradition; for Gilmore,

¹ Douglas is relentless in her criticism of "the cultural irresponsibility of feminized sentimentalism," arguing that "nineteenth-century American women were oppressed, and damaged; inevitably, the influence they exerted in turn on their society was not altogether beneficial" (87, 11). In her preface to the second edition (1998), Douglas admits "Calvinism itself was my star protagonist and certainly my real love-object" and that her argument "granted a rather startling immunity" "to the male subjects I most admired, the Edwardian theologians and 'romantic' historians and authors" (xi-xii), but also concludes that "some groups and eras are, finally, for whatever historical reasons, more preoccupied with fortifying cultural barriers than with dismantling or clearing them; disbelieving or discrediting the privileged assumptions of one's time is not the same thing as reversing them" (xv).

² Lora Romero, for example, reminds us that "assertions that women dominated literary production appear as dubious as the claims made about their role in cultural consumption" (13). Not only did men control the publishing industry, but men also wrote plenty of novels. I will return to the criticism surrounding Douglas's argument later in this chapter.

romanticism is a departure from republican values. Either way, it is clear that the line critics draw between sentimental fiction and the romantic movement has plenty to do with how we read the American Enlightenment.³

Surveys of early American literature invariably associate the rise of the sentimental novel in the nineteenth century with women. Michael Warner, for example, concludes his account of republican print culture by looking forward to a “turn toward sentiment” that is “a key element both in the extension of the national imaginary to the female readership of novels and in the emergence of a liberal paradigm for appreciating printed texts” (174). For Warner, nineteenth-century sentimentality’s appeal to the private feelings of individual (female) readers is a departure from the Enlightenment values of publicity, disinterest, and reason that characterized the early Republic. I argued in my first chapter that these categories oversimplify the divide between republican and liberal political values and reading practices. My account of the early novel argues that the unruly private desires associated with the sentimental novel’s individualized reading practices were always undergirding republican fantasies of disinterested civic virtue. Even historians who support my reading of republican virtue as invested in a highly naturalized concept of the human moral faculty consider American republicanism to be a feminized version of classic republicanism. Gordon Wood, for example, finds that “the revolutionaries wanted a virtue that was natural,” but he goes on to describe this naturalized virtue as “soft and feminized” (216). For Wood, the process of feminization that Douglas details so relentlessly began as soon as the nation founded itself in natural law.

³ Colin Jager poses the same question in his study of secularization and British romanticism, *The Book of God*. Jager argues “that it is really the legacy of the *enlightenment* that is at issue. Is the enlightenment the thing that romanticism must save us from? Or is it the thing that will save us from romanticism?” (56).

Hope Leslie appears to narrativize this very process of naturalized feminization. Throughout the novel, Puritan patriarchs like John Winthrop are shown to mellow under the influence of the novel's eponymous heroine into democratic founding fathers. As Ivy Schweitzer observes, "Hope's influence serves to draw forth the kindly 'nature' Winthrop manfully represses by his dutiful application of the abstract 'letter' of Puritan doctrine" (186). Philip Gould, who correctly observes that the critical discourse surrounding *Hope Leslie* "points forward, ignoring the specifically *post-Revolutionary* nature of the language and thematics of women's writing," turns to Benjamin Rush's essay "On Female Education" to define feminine civic virtue in the context of early republican values (63). As I noted in my first chapter, in this essay Rush argues that novel-reading "blunts the heart to that which is real" and encourages women to "weep away a whole forenoon over the criminal sorrows of a fictitious Charlotte or Werther, turning with disdain a three o'clock from the sight of a beggar" (32). Rush's essay is often cited as evidence of the opposition between novel-reading and republican virtue. Gould argues that Rush's objection to women reading novels is important because it refers to a subject, a beggar, who is not a citizen: "women were to practice a form of virtue that, in the name of 'universal humanity,' effaced the distinction between citizen and noncitizen" (96). In Gould's account, the central question *Hope Leslie* poses is how civic life could incorporate this expansive feminine benevolence: "how tenable in public, political life was a code of civic ethics that, after all, collapsed the distinction between citizens and noncitizens?" (97). In my first chapter I argued that the moment Gould refers to in Rush's essay describes a form of passive sympathy that his Walnut Street prison reform movement proposed as a method of training citizens to willingly submit to republican

discipline. Gould's straightforward reading of Rush's gendered understanding of republican virtue fails to recognize the disciplinary function of Rush's notion of feminine virtue. Gould's understanding of feminine virtue and masculine citizenship as oppositions, rather than as two discourses that inform and enable each other, misses the fact that *Hope Leslie* does not end with Hope's transgressions ushering in an alternative history; instead, Hope moves into the position of enforcer of a newly benevolent social order that operates through an endless threat of assimilation posing as inclusivity.

My point is that critics who overemphasize the separation between republican/masculine and liberal/feminine political rhetoric and reading practices set themselves up to miss the cyclical relationship between discipline and transgression that *Hope Leslie* makes so abundantly clear. Amy Kaplan and Lora Romero have worked to demonstrate the inextricability of the feminine/domestic and masculine/public spheres and to disrupt the feminization of American culture narrative that has appropriated woman's fiction like Sedgwick's.⁴ In her important essay "Manifest Domesticity" Kaplan argues that "part of the cultural work of domesticity might be to unite men and women in a national domain and to generate notions of the foreign against which the nation can be imagined as home...Domestic in this sense is related to the imperial project of civilizing, and the conditions of domesticity often become markers that distinguish civilization from savagery" (582). Lora Romero's book *Home Fronts* "stresses

⁴ See also Jager's account of British romanticism's canon expansion, in particular its relatively new interest in women writers: "The conceptual challenge of this inclusiveness has always been the need to read and appreciate formerly noncanonical writers for what they are doing rather than for what they are not doing. If they are not writing Great Romantic Lyrics, then under what definition do they qualify as romantics? Faced with this difficulty, the temptation is either to construct an alternative canon (masculine romanticism versus feminine romanticism, for example) or to fold the very idea of romanticism into a larger conception of period writing" (73-4) I admire Jager's formulation here, and find a similar problem with studies in American romanticism that continue to reduce antebellum romanticism into a conflict between masculine intellectualism and feminine mass culture.

difference, contradiction, and dissent within the culture of domesticity” and thereby “undermines the received equation of a ‘feminine’ mass culture and blind allegiance to the status quo”; Romero argues that “in failing to exercise sufficient skepticism towards the antebellum period’s narrative of itself...contemporary cultural histories have reproduced its tropes of female power and masculine resistance” (7). Despite Kaplan and Romero’s work, critics consistently introduce *Hope Leslie* as a feminine revision to James Fenimore Cooper’s military histories of frontier Indian wars. Critics then either lament the fact that *Hope Leslie*’s conventional resolution defuses the progressive possibilities it imagines, or they are overly-optimistic about the choices left open by the novel’s ambivalent conclusion. In either case, critics overlook the intimate relationship between the violence of patriarchal imperialism and the good feelings of reformative feminine domesticity in favor of an oppositional relationship between the two. Because these two value systems inform and enable one another, by valuing antebellum women’s fiction first and foremost as a revisionary protest to the dominant ideologies of its time, critics set this literature up to fail.

Hope Leslie’s plot is driven by a mutually constitutive relationship between patriarchal authority and feminine transgression. The novel’s first volume develops a close relationship between Magawisca, the captured daughter of a Pequot chief, and Everell Fletcher, the novel’s white male hero. This relationship climaxes when Magawisca stops her father from executing Everell, losing her own arm in the process. Hope then helps Magawisca’s friend Nelema escape from the Puritan settlement where she has been convicted of practicing witchcraft. In return, Nelema makes Magawisca promise to arrange a meeting between Hope and her sister Faith, who was captured by

Magawisca's father and has married Magawisca's brother. This meeting is interrupted by the Puritan authorities, who arrest Magawisca. Hope then frees Magawisca. This cycle of favors returned ends when Magawisca decides to leave the white settlement once and for all, despite Hope's promise that the settlers will soon grow past their prejudices. The end of the novel makes it clear that Magawisca is made most vulnerable to Puritan violence by her friendship with the impulsive Hope. According to William Fletcher, Hope's guardian and one of the many long-suffering patriarchs in the novel, "what is difficult duty to others, hath ever seemed impulse" in Hope Leslie (160). As he argues with John Winthrop on his favorite's behalf, he seems to be describing the ideal republican subject my project has been tracing. For Hope Leslie, duty is pure impulse. Readers understand that she is ahead of her times because she does not ascribe to the Puritan belief that "whatever gratified the natural desires of the heart was questionable, and almost every thing that was difficult and painful, assumed the form of duty" (163). Like Clara Howard, Hope relies on her feelings to sanction and determine her actions. Unlike Clara Howard, however, whose tortured thought processes are anything but impulsive, Hope is described as a person for whom good works come naturally—she can't help but act on behalf of the novel's Indian captives. As Hope's involuntary impulses erase the voluntary nature of the republican duty that I traced in Brockden Brown's novels, she becomes a nearly irresistible force of discipline. With "her sunny brow" and a mouth that "curled into smiles," Hope is an exact fulfillment of the *Salmagundi* editors' description of literary reform as a covert figure who disguises her agenda with "smiles and sunshine in her countenance" (Sedgwick 126-7; *Salmagundi* 228).

The involuntary status of Hope's good works naturalizes her democratic impulses in ways that directly align Sedgwick's project with the early romantic movement. Before further addressing the gender politics behind critical readings of *Hope Leslie*, I would like to pause for a moment on the assumed division between the sentimental movement and the romantic movement that I am claiming gives rise to our gendered understanding of nineteenth-century literary culture. To do so, I turn to William Cullen Bryant's prose writings on the status of American fiction. Bryant, a member of the same liberal New England community as the Sedgwick family, reviewed at least one of Sedgwick's novels in the *North American Review*, and two poems from his 1824 collection *Poems*, "Monument Mountain" and "An Indian Story," appear in chapter epigraphs in *Hope Leslie*. Though one of the most well-respected poets of the early nineteenth century, for twentieth-century critics his Old World metrical arrangements exemplify American literature at its most imitative and unoriginal, and the moralizing overtones of the claims he made for the aims of literature now seem hopelessly outdated.⁵ In his 1935 edition of Bryant's poetry and prose, Tremaine McDowell notes that "Bryant's failure to move readers of the present century is to be attributed not only to the shift in literary fashions which has outmoded his didacticism, but also to those scenes and ideas which, a century ago, made Bryant's 'lips quiver,' and his 'eyes o'erflow'" (lxi).⁶ For Douglas, this

⁵ For more of this critical history, see Jackson: "For the last century or so there seems to have been remarkable agreement that the American poet should be free of public convention and speak toward the future in the language of the people; Bryant, however, addressed himself to a contemporary public in the language of poetry" (188). Jackson seeks to disrupt Bryant's questionable twentieth-century reputation as 'the American Wordsworth' by arguing that "Bryant's involvement in the romantic project is not so much derivative as it is directed."

⁶ McDowell also opens his volume with a version of the argument Jackson addresses: "The present volume is not designed to re-establish him as a great poet. Rather, Bryant is here accepted for what he was: a poet of minor rank when judged by absolute standards, but a significant early Romanticist and a distinguished liberal when examined historically" (v). For McDowell, Bryant's liberalism "is undoubtedly his most

modern lack of appeal would immediately disqualify Bryant from inclusion in the romantic movement: “the test which distinguishes romanticism from sentimentalism is that its language, its rhetoric, no matter how strained or foreign to modern ears, has not—to use Hemingway’s phrase—‘gone bad’” (255). As Virginia Jackson argues in her essay “Bryant; or, American Romanticism,” language which has ‘gone bad,’ or seems embarrassing or distasteful to modern ears, can often be attributed to the retired generic conventions that characterize the early American romantic movement. For Jackson, the direct address of Bryant’s poetry—a convention that Gilmore identifies as “archaic”—is precisely what distinguishes Bryant’s American romanticism from British romanticism (Jackson 202; Gilmore 614).

One thematic convention that makes early American romanticism seem particularly dated is its moralizing tone. Bryant argued in his *Lectures on Poetry* (1825) that “it is the dominion of poetry over the feelings and passions of men that gives it its most important bearing upon the virtue and the welfare of society. Everything that affects our sensibilities is a part of our moral education, and the habit of being rightly affected by all the circumstances by which we are surrounded is the perfection of the moral character” (16-7). Bryant works to naturalize the moral utility of literature, claiming that poetry should avoid being “merely didactic” by “teaching truths which the mind instinctively acknowledges” (11). What makes Bryant’s didacticism romantic is an understanding of the close relationship between the moral and the natural world. For Bryant, “among the most remarkable of the influences of poetry is the exhibition of those analogies and correspondences which it beholds between the things of the moral and of

notable characteristic—because in the work of any transitional author such as Bryant, novel and forward-looking aspects are obviously more significant than are obligations to the past.”

the natural world” (19). These correspondences between the moral and natural world are universally recognized: “the simplicity and clearness of the truths with which [poetry] deals prevent any mistake in regard to their meanings or tendencies. They strike the mind by their own brightness, and win its assent by their manifest and beautiful agreement with the lessons of our own experience.” This unmistakable clarity about a naturalized code of morals is not limited to poetry—for Bryant, it is the standard by which all literature should be judged. In his review of Sedgwick’s novel *Redwood* (1824), Bryant outlines his general views on the American novel, and concludes by congratulating her for writing a novel, “the design of which is professedly to instruct,” that manages to avoid being didactic:

It is not enough to say of this novel, that the reader is relieved and refreshed at due intervals, by being let out from the instructions of the author into the great world about him, to amuse himself with what is going on there; and is then gently recalled to the lesson, which the author wishes to teach. It is doing it better justice to say, that the world itself is only then made to the reader, what it ought always to be, the great school and place of discipline, the experience and observation of which should form us to virtue. (270-1)

According to Bryant, *Redwood* is particularly successful in teaching its lesson because it trains readers to take their instruction from the world around them—rather than teaching readers a lesson, the novel teaches them how to read for the lessons that already exist in the natural world.

In the hands of the early romantics, the naturalized code of morals that this project has been tracing becomes an explicit method of naturalizing national character via

literature. Like most critics of his day, Bryant argued that American history, landscape, and diversity provided ideal subjects for the novelist, but he also argued that the best novelists appeal to their readers by democratizing their characters. “Distinctions of rank” and “the amusements of elegant idleness” “are trappings which the writer of real genius, the anatomist of the human heart, strips away when he would exhibit his characters as they are, and engage our interest for them as beings of our own species. He reduces them to the same great level where distinctions of rank are nothing, and difference of character are everything” (*Redwood* 252). Readers soon “ask for objects of sympathy and regard, for something, the recollection of which shall dwell on the heart, and to which it will love to recur; for something, in short, which is natural, the uneffaced traits of strength and weakness, of the tender and the comic, all which the pride of rank either removes from observation or obliterates.” Reading is a naturally democratic enterprise, and the simple character traits that all readers crave “are to be found abundantly in the characters of our countrymen, formed as they are under the influence of our free institutions, and shooting into a large and vigorous, though sometimes irregular luxuriance” (253). Democracy and the freedom of American institutions not only make for ideal readers, but also for ideal subject matter. Most inspiring for Bryant is the history of American progress:

It is hardly possible that the rapid and continual growth and improvement of our country, a circumstance wonderfully exciting to the imagination, and altogether unlike anything witnessed in other countries, should not have some influence in forming our national character. At all events, it is a most fertile source of incident...The hardy and sagacious native of the eastern states, settles himself in the wilderness by the side of the emigrant from the British isles...and then you

see cornfields, and roads, and towns springing up as if by enchantment. In the mean time pleasant Indian villages, situated on the skirts of their hunting grounds, with their beautiful green plats for dances and martial exercises, are taken into the bosom of our extending population, while new states are settled and cities founded far beyond them. (254-5)

I cite this passage at length both because it is so typical of the early nineteenth-century evaluations of American literature that gave rise to historical romances like *Hope Leslie*, and also because it is such a clear statement of romantic historicism. American farms, roads, and towns appear “as if by enchantment,” Indians do not face removal policies, but are “taken into the bosom of our extending population,” and expansive American settlements exceed even native claims to the land. Inevitable, exceptional, and already the stuff of romance, American progress is a source of both “national character” and literary “incident.” In his poetry Bryant might lament the Indian’s disappearance and protest industrialization through pastoral nostalgia, but the theory underlying these sentiments is clear—the Indian will disappear in the face of American progress, and literature is the best way to feel good about this disappearance.⁷

Bryant’s argument that American progress is ideally suited for American fiction demonstrates the nationalist energies behind the close relationship between history and fiction in the antebellum period.⁸ During the first decades of the nineteenth century,

⁷ For examples in Bryant’s poetry of the native’s inevitable disappearance, see “The Prairies” (1832) and “The Ages” (1821). For more on the convention of the dying Indian in antebellum verse culture, see Kate Flint’s essay “Is the Native An American?”: “Although the publication of these Dying Indian poems offered a succession of prompts to a reader’s capacity for sympathetic feeling, their accumulation has effectively made history seem prescribed. The repeated trope performs a kind of cultural genocide” (64-5).

⁸ In addition to the nationalist rhetoric driving the rise of the historical romance genre, the theological influences on antebellum history-writing are also well-documented, and contribute in a large part to the sense of progress that dominated accounts of American history, particularly accounts like Bryant’s that

history put to use the characteristics of fiction that contemporary literary historians have argued were most threatening to notions of civic virtue. As George Callcott explains, history in the antebellum period changed from being an unappealing philosophical discourse to a research-based method that “required one element more than scholarship and style: that element was feeling. To be either true or interesting, history required the historian’s passion, his subjective insight, his individual genius” (122, 147). The potential for feeling, passion, and individual subjectivity to train readers in a nationally-specific code of morals was now openly acknowledged by the historian. The imaginative fantasies of romantic novels that replaced reality and trained readers in Benjamin Rush’s passive sympathy were newly legitimated by the historical romance’s relationship with history. As Laurence Buell argues, these historical romances were considered historical as long as they relied on timeless concepts of human nature: “Historical fiction...was to provide an illusion of mimesis that legitimated it as realistic yet at the same time was not simply a mimesis and indeed owed some of its mimetic power to projection onto the past of romantic fantasy and present-minded ideology—defined at the conscious level, to be sure, as authorial perception of the constants of human nature” (241). The primary purpose of history-writing was to capture national essence, a principle that supposedly was privileged with much consensus following the War of 1812 and the bipartisan rhetoric of the Era of Good Feelings. While history allowed fiction to appeal to readers as a newly intellectual, useful endeavor, fiction’s access to the desires of individual

were influenced by the Unitarian movement. Callcott writes that “the American idea of progress differed from the European both in its sense of origins and in its sense of God...Few Americans ever lost the Puritan belief that somehow behind it all was a divine guidance” (15). Buell sums up the difference between Unitarian and orthodox-Congregationalist histories of the seventeenth-century Puritans as a contrast between history as progress and history as fall: “Was that history to be seen as a process of evolution from worthy but defective original principles toward greater purification and enlightenment, or was it to be seen as an increasingly embattled attempt on the part of the faithful to maintain what was alleged to be the pristine piety of the founders?” (217).

readers allowed history to impress readers' imaginations into the service of national fantasies of cohesion and consensus.

Sedgwick's often-cited preface to *Hope Leslie* participates in the antebellum exchange between history and fiction: the narrator tells the reader that although the novel is not "in any degree an historical narrative," "real characters and events are, however, alluded to" in order to achieve the author's aim to "illustrate not the history, but the character of the times" (3). Callcott argues that because "it was the purpose of history to strengthen society by supporting the basic principles in which men believed—society's concepts of morality, religion, and nationalism," "it was not falsifying the past to select those facts which illustrated a particular principle, for principles were certain and the facts of history were not. The facts which supported absolute principles were the relevant facts, the ones worth using, and the facts which did not support them were misunderstood, irrelevant, and, in all probability, simply untrue" (177). Like any good early national historian, Sedgwick claims in the preface to her novel that "a full delineation of these times was not even attempted; but the main solicitude has been, to exclude every thing decidedly inconsistent with them." Jeffrey Insko argues that the novel undermines historical authority by revealing its inherent fictionality: "in an extraordinary admission of historiographical partisanship, [the preface] frankly draws attention to the inevitable (often willful) blindness that always attend historical investigations" (186). Though Insko is one of the few critics to recognize the irony that characterizes Sedgwick's narrator, given the fact that this "historiographical partisanship" was considered an important aim of early national history-writing, Sedgwick's preface doesn't actually seem to be a challenge to the authority of history—and if it is, then the

intimate relationship between these two genres in this period means that it is also a challenge to fiction. In other words, if *Hope Leslie* seeks to undermine historical authority, it also works to undermine literature's authority as the mode best suited to appealing to the era's naturalized concept of national essence.

Sedgwick's novel invites readers to freely interpret its tale of the seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay colony through their own contemporary understanding of American history, but it also undermines any confidence readers might feel in their modern superiority. Hope is first described through a comparison to the novel's 1827 readers: "Nothing could be more unlike the authentic, 'thoroughly educated,' and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie; as unlike as a mountain rill to a canal—the one leaping over rocks and precipices, sportive, free, and beautiful, or stealing softly on, in unseen, unpraised loveliness; the other, formed by art, restrained, within prescribed and formal limits, and devoted to utility" (126). This description of the women of Sedgwick's present, characterized by artifice, discipline, and utility, hardly represents the progressive history that Bryant thought the native author should capture. The narrator's unfavorable comparison also alerts readers to the possibility that any claims she makes about the progressiveness of the present age might be disingenuous:

The character of man, and the institutions of society, are yet very far from their possible and destined perfection. Still, how far is the present age in advance of that which drove reformers to a dreary wilderness!—of that which hanged quakers!—of that which condemned to death, as witches, innocent, unoffending

old women! But it is unnecessary to heighten the glory of our risen day by comparing it with 'the preceding twilight.' (15)

Lucy Maddox cites this passage as evidence that Sedgwick accepts “without question the view that the intellectual and psychological narrowness of Puritan culture has given way to the enlightened liberalism of the nineteenth century and that change has been brought about by the actions of people who recognized injustice and refused to submit to it” (94). Maddox’s eagerness to contrast Sedgwick’s “zeal for reform” unfavorably to Hawthorne’s “skepticism about the validity of reform movements” misses the narrator’s own skeptical parenthetical insertion two paragraphs later (111-2). The narrator tells us that when William Fletcher decides to move his family from Boston to the isolated settlement at Springfield, “Mrs. Fletcher received his decision as all wives of that age of undisputed masculine supremacy (or most of those of our less passive age) would do, with meek submission.” This sarcastic comment makes it impossible to read the previous passage as a straightforward statement in support of American progress.⁹ *Hope Leslie* does not encourage its readers look back at the Puritans from a more progressive point in American history.¹⁰ Although the novel’s younger generation, represented by Hope, Magawisca, and Everell, are characterized by an increased understanding of the common humanity shared by men and women, whites and Indians, Magawisca’s voluntary exile at

⁹ See also Insko, who argues “when we take note of the narrator’s characteristic irony and her tendency to refuse to privilege ‘the present day,’ such earnestness instead seems purposefully exaggerated by the narrator’s exclamatory phrasing, which undermines her rhetoric of advancement as it pertains to the ‘present age’—whatever that age might be” (192).

¹⁰ For Gould, Sedgwick’s conception of history is informed by both a lingering republican nervousness about cyclical history and a gendered critique of masculine military history: “Sedgwick’s exposure of masculine republicanism subverts a theory of exceptional, progressive history by, oddly enough, invoking the Whiggish concept of cyclical time” (79). For Gould, “republican womanhood derived from those anxieties in Whiggish thinking that cast the republic as a fragile, fated thing” (67). Interestingly, Gould also argues that “as a literary convention...marriage becomes the site of the historical translation from republican/cyclical time into progressive time, a change signaling the escape from the necessity of a patriarchal brand of republicanism” (132).

the end of the novel reiterates the cyclical nature of history Sedgwick is proposing—Indians will not disappear for the first time with Andrew Jackson’s 1830 Indian Removal Act; instead they are disappearing yet again. History is repeating itself, as it inevitably will. This formulation is slightly different than the iteration of the doomed native that Romero finds in James Fenimore Cooper’s preface to *Last of the Mohicans*: “The elegiac mode here performs the historical sleight of hand crucial to the topos of the doomed aboriginal: it represents the disappearance of the native not just as natural but as having already happened” (35). If the historical romances and romantic poetry of the decades of Indian removal policy portray the Indian’s disappearance as “both spontaneous and ineluctable,” by suggesting that Indian removal is a repetition, Sedgwick’s version of the disappearing Indian also presents Indian removal as a national character trait that has very little to do with modern progress and industry. The criticism leveled at Sedgwick for being unable to imagine a progressive ending for her revisionist history misses the fact that in 1827, history didn’t seem particularly progressive. Readers who are disappointed at the novel’s ending for precluding the progressive possibilities it begins with have missed the lesson its skeptical narrator points out over and over again: there is nothing progressive or exceptional about American history.

Only by placing *Hope Leslie* in the context of the New England romantic movement can we understand the critique it marshals against the progressive histories that dominated the nationalist rhetoric of the early nineteenth century. Almost across the board, literary historians place *Hope Leslie* squarely in the tradition of sentimental women’s fiction that takes the possibility of progress as its founding tenet. Dana Nelson, for example, opens her essay “Sympathy as Strategy in Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*” by

rehearsing the notion that because sentimentality was primarily a strategy of disenfranchised women, it was deployed as a method of critique, but one that was always necessarily qualified by the precarious position of the women writers who deployed it (192). Nelson's reading follows on the heels of revisionary critics like Jane Tompkins and Nina Baym, who challenged histories like Douglas's that overlooked the political valence of sentimental fiction. Tompkins was one of the first critics to argue that "the popular domestic novel of the nineteenth century...offers a critique of American society far more devastating than any delivered by better-known critics such as Hawthorne and Melville" (124), while Baym interrogated the assumption that "gender made [women writers] part of the consensus in a way that prevented them from partaking in the criticism" (9).¹¹ Although these arguments represent an important challenge to Douglas, they also continue to resurrect the same gendered terms of Douglas's argument. For Douglas, the best of the serious romantic historians, though explicitly "imperialist," "intermittently sensed and expressed the corrosive and seeping ambiguity of American success, although they could present no alternative to the cult of progress" (181). In Douglas's account, women writers like Sedgwick offered no such intellectual engagement with theories of history. Instead, "when women wrote historical novels, they did so to express discreetly veiled hostility to the very history they were apparently extolling...The mission of the heroine in these novels is to free the hero from history: she rescues him paradoxically from the historical novel, which she transmutes to a

¹¹ Baym offers a particularly devastating reading of literary histories as being more concerned with using literature to defend individual authors' already preconceived notions of Americanness, notions that inevitably exclude women. Baym's description of contemporary literary histories sounds strangely similar to antebellum ideas of history-writing; like the antebellum historians who struck out to define a national essence, the American literary critic "all too frequently ends up using his chosen authors as demonstrations of Americanness, arguing through them to his definition" (6).

domestic tale” (184-5).¹² Critical accounts of *Hope Leslie* demonstrate how invested we continue to be in the terms of debate that Douglas has set—across the board, critics detail the novel’s revisionary engagement with history and the good feelings that lead its female characters to impulsively transgress oppressive laws.¹³ This mode of reading has led to an unproductive critical impasse, as critics are unable to reconcile *Hope Leslie*’s progressive possibilities with its conventional resolution. The most assertive claim Nelson can make is that “*Hope Leslie* is finally equivocal” (202). The palpable critical disappointment with the ending of *Hope Leslie* demonstrates our conflicted investment in both the transgressive otherness of women’s fiction and its inevitable conventionality.

My purpose in accounting for this critical history is to argue that *Hope Leslie* is associated with the conventionality of the domestic novel before the conventions of that genre were firmly established. The most recent version of this argument appears in Ezra Tawil’s account of the frontier novel in his book *The Making of Racial Sentiment*. Tawil argues that “the most significant contributions these domestic frontier romances made to the political terrain for ‘slavery’ was anticipatory in nature. That is to say, in producing certain ideas about race, and particularly racial sentiment, they provided the terms in which slavery would eventually become the primary and explicit subject of representation in the next generation of American literary production” (96). Part of

¹² Douglas is not the only critic who makes this argument. See Buell, who cites *Hope Leslie* as an example of “romances that do little more, by way of touching base with history, than to invoke the Puritan era as a symbolic backdrop against which to lay out a melodrama, pitting individual against society, that belongs to no particular realm of time except the realm of romance.” *Hope Leslie* in particular “rerun[s] the Cinderella plot that Sedgwick has previously introduced into American writing as the archetype for woman’s fiction” (242).

¹³ In the context of his argument about the novel’s engagement with early national republican rhetoric, Gould also argues that feminine virtue in the novel functions purely as protest: “paradoxically apolitical and politically affective, female virtue enables Hope (and Magawisca) to function as viable agents of protest”; “Hope is indeed Sedgwick’s last hope to oppose and expose the early republic’s discourse of Puritan order” (105, 107).

Tawil's purpose is to challenge the critical history I have just described, where the recovery of women's fiction "seems to have reproduced the central terms of the antithesis between domestic and frontier fiction" (93). Although I share Tawil's interest in the ways that sympathy and racism operate together in both men's and women's frontier fiction, his understanding of the frontier romance as "anticipatory" also predetermines his reading of *Hope Leslie* as supporting conventions and values that were not as firmly established for Sedgwick as they would be for Stowe in mid-century. For example, Tawil argues that the racial logic of the novel excludes Magawisca from becoming a sentimental heroine because she is unable to adapt to the Fletcher household's domestic scene: "There is an incompatibility between Indianness and domesticity as fundamental as the opposition between the wild and the tame...Indians, in effect, are antidomestic" (124). Domesticity, however, is hardly presented as a positive value in the novel. Instead, domesticity is repeatedly presented as a restrictive and artificial value that interferes with natural impulses. The difference between Volume I and Volume II of Sedgwick's novel can be characterized as a shift from the *vacuum domicilium* of the frontier to the "petty domiciliary tyranny" of the urban (131, 315). While the frontier's lack of domestic spaces allows Hope to act on her natural impulses, the Winthrop's civilized Boston "government-mansion," where Hope is sent after helping Nelema escape, forces its "inmates" to act according to the artificial codes of domesticity (149). Jennet and Mrs. Fletcher are the novel's two unpromising representatives of domesticity. Both die spectacular deaths that can be read as symptomatic of their relationship to the domestic—the silently submissive Mrs. Fletcher is killed in an Indian attack after refusing to remove her family to the fort until her husband returns home, and the

aggressively tyrannical Jennet is killed in an explosion after trying to derail Everell and Hope's plan to liberate Magawisca. *Hope Leslie* is an example of women's fiction that is hyper-aware of domesticity as a discourse that enables more than resists patriarchal conquest.¹⁴ Only an understanding of Sedgwick's participation in the early romantic movement allows us to escape a mode of reading that is always looking back from the height of the mid-century cult of domesticity.

In many ways, *Hope Leslie* fits smoothly into the values of the early romantic movement that Bryant represents in this chapter, particularly his claim that literature should encourage readers to see connections between the moral and the natural world. A romantic belief in nature as the site of uncorrupted morality certainly connects Hope and Magawisca. Magawisca's belief in the Great Spirit and Hope Leslie's own vague religious sentiments, "pure and disinterested" and unbound by "the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith," are conflated into the romantic deism that finds expression in Bryant's theories of poetry.¹⁵ Magawisca, "whose imagination breathed a living spirit into all the objects of nature," is Hope's Indian sister: "I love to lend my imagination to poets' dreams, and to fancy nature has her myriads of little spirits...He must have a torpid imagination, and a cold heart, I think, who does not fancy these vast forests filled with invisible intelligences" (104). As Maddox observes, Hope and Magawisca are "sharers of a sensibility that instinctively values 'the voice of nature' over the rigidity of Calvinist dogma" (97). One of the most frequently described scenes in *Hope Leslie* occurs when

¹⁴ As Christopher Castiglia argues, the novel's "sustained critique of religion and romance stands as an indictment not so much of the author's Puritan forefathers but of the cultural fathers who determined domestic femininity in [Sedgwick's] own day" (162).

¹⁵ Hope's vague religious sentiments can be attributed to Sedgwick's own participation in the New England Unitarian movement. As Maddox explains, Sedgwick "embraced the new 'Liberal Christianity,' which aimed at replacing the Calvinist doctrines of natural depravity and special election with an emphasis on the ability of the individual to be guided toward the good by the light of reason and intuition" (95). What is less clear is that the novel demonstrates a Unitarian faith in progressive improvement.

Magawisca tells Everell her version of the Pequot War. After describing her brother's death at the hands of his English captors, she pauses her narration to say "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—if ye had such a law and believed it, would ye thus have treated a captive boy?" (53). Similarly, when Hope frees Nelema, the narrator tells us "This was a bold, dangerous, and unlawful interposition; but Hope Leslie took counsel only from her own heart, and that told her that the rights of innocence were paramount to all other rights, and as to danger to herself, she did not weigh it—she did not think of it" (124). Acts of transgression in the novel signify an unnatural, unjust system that can be subverted by characters who listen to their natural impulses.

The status of transgression in the novel is reminiscent of the early national rhetoric I examined in my first chapter that linked the Revolution to unruly acts of the heart. In his Letter to Maria Cosway (1787), for example, Jefferson categorized the Revolution as rising out of a universally recognized moral imperative, ill-suited to deliberative judgment. Like Jefferson's impulsive revolutionaries, Hope and Magawisca's actions are determined by a natural code of morals written on the heart. *Hope Leslie* nationalizes this naturalized morality by linking it to the American landscape. Digby, a minor character who is a frequent enabler of Hope's schemes, responds to her self-consciousness that she has perhaps been "too headstrong in [her] own way" by telling her "why this having our own way, is what every body likes; it's the privilege we came to this wilderness for" (235). Digby's rhetoric suggests that the spirit of revolution is somehow a natural resource of the American wilderness that will soon triumph over the "pretty tight rein" held by "the gentles up in town there, with the

Governor at their head.” Similarly, when Hope’s aunt objects to a proposed outing, claiming “it was ‘very unladylike, and a thing quite unheard of in England,’ for a young person...to go out exploring a new country,” Hope replies “that our new country develops faculties that young ladies, in England, were unconscious of possessing” (102). Hope links exposure to the American wilderness to the development of new faculties. The human moral faculty that inspired Rush and Jefferson because of its universality is now claimed to be a particularly American trait.

Throughout the novel, acts of transgression, particularly those that operate across racial lines, are motivated by natural impulses. In one of the most dramatic and memorable scenes of the novel, Magawisca scales the Indians’ sacrifice-rock and stops Everell’s execution by hurling herself between her father and his captive: “the blow was leveled—force and direction given—the stroke aimed at Everell’s neck, severed his defender’s arm, and left him unharmed. The lopped quivering member dropped over the precipice” (97). The narrator explains this shocking feat through natural metaphor: Magawisca was “impelled by a determined spirit, or rather, we would believe, by that inspiration that teaches the bird its unknown path, and leads the goat, with its young, safely over the mountain crags.” Sedgwick reverts to what by 1827 was an almost out-dated conflation of American Indian with American rebellion.¹⁶ As Insko observes, when Magawisca anticipates Patrick Henry in 1637 and demands that Governor Winthrop grant her “death or liberty,” “the fervor of the Revolutionary fathers, their oratorical authority,

¹⁶ Philip Deloria argues that when colonists played Indian to protest British rule (the Boston Tea Party is the most obvious example), they “solidified their common understanding of themselves as Americans, their freedom an ancient thing linked intrinsically to the continent, its custom, and its nature” (32). “As the United States moved from Revolution to nation building, an identity that carried connotations of savagery and of the idea of rebellion—no matter its origins or its multiple meanings—was destined to receive an increasingly chilly welcome” (40). Post-revolution, “Indian costume now signified an American identity based upon republican order rather than revolutionary potential” (56).

suddenly appears autochthonous, as if somehow *native* to the land itself, while the native Magawisca becomes a proto-nationalist, less an enemy than a source of founding principles” (179). *Hope Leslie* troubles the naturalness of these impulses for white Americans by suggesting that the values claimed by the American revolutionaries did not descend from the Puritans, but from Indians. ‘National essence,’ it seems, can skip a generation. Magawisca’s “contagious” call for liberty leaves the Puritan audience feeling conflicted, “their reason, guided by the best lights they possessed, deciding against her—the voice of nature crying out for her” (310). When Magawisca saves Everell at the sacrifice rock this scene is doubled, but with an important difference. Before Magawisca intervenes, though there were “some whose hearts moved them to interpose to save the selected victim,” like the Puritans who watch Magawisca’s trial, “they were restrained by their interpretation of natural justice, as controlling to them as our artificial codes of laws to us.” But after Magawisca sacrifices herself for Everell, “the voice of nature rose from every heart, and responding to the justice of Magawisca’s claim, bade him ‘God Speed!’” (97). Unlike the Puritans, the Indians are able to act on their sense of natural justice. *Hope Leslie*’s romanticism anxiously circles around the white settlers’ secondhand knowledge of natural law via a nostalgic pathos for a mythic time when natural law was the law of the land.

Magawisca becomes Hope and Everell’s conduit to the natural world and its lessons of personal freedom and cross-cultural understanding. Hope and Everell’s natural impulses must be cultivated by someone indigenous to the land. When Hope argues with William Fletcher for Nelema’s freedom, she uses a secondhand paraphrase of Magawisca’s words: “I repeated what I had often heard, you, Everell, say, that

Magawisca believed the mountain, and the valley, the air, the trees, every little rivulet, had their present invisible spirit—and that the good might hold discourse with them. ‘Why not believe the one,’ I asked, ‘as well as the other?’” (111).¹⁷ Similarly, at the end of the novel, Hope can only accustom herself to her sister’s Indian marriage after considering Magawisca’s parting words: “the suggestions of Magawisca, combining with the dictates of her own heart, produced the conclusion that this was a case where ‘God had joined together, and man might not put asunder’” (359). The novel ends reminding its readers that Hope must struggle to feel correctly, or as Magawisca dictates that she should. By presenting Magawisca as the source of Hope’s good feelings, the novel suggests that Hope’s transgressive impulses might only be second nature after all. Importantly, Hope is more conducive to Indian naturalism than Magawisca is to English domesticity. While Mrs. Fletcher despairs that one might as well “yoke a deer with an ox” as compel Magawisca to help Jennet with “the drudgery of domestic service,” Hope takes naturally to the American wilderness (32).¹⁸ No scene implies Hope’s natural affinity for Indian culture more than her theatrical entrance following the Bethel massacre. As Magawisca retreats into the forest with her father and his captives, Hope Leslie enters playing the part of Indian Princess:

Mr. Fletcher was attended by two Indians, who followed him, bearing on a litter, his favourite, Hope Leslie. When they came within sight of Bethel, they shouted

¹⁷ Castiglia, reading biographically alongside Sedgwick’s relationship to her childhood servant Mumbet, notes that Magawisca “comes to the Fletcher home as a captive taken through the very colonial aggression that she enables Hope to condemn...the use of the exoticized woman of color to represent the wild ‘other’ of domesticity builds on constructions of Native and African Americans as more ‘natural,’ less ‘civilized’ than whites, even while the white heroines criticize such constructions” (163).

¹⁸ Tawil uses Magawisca’s unsuitability for domesticity to argue that the novel clearly presents her as “an unnatural and hence undesirable mate” for Everell (127); this reading not only overlooks the fact that Hope is equally disinclined to “domestic drudgery,” but also that Hope’s willingness to rebel against its oppressive norms is precisely what makes her well-suited for Everell.

the chorus of a native song. Hope inquired its meaning. They told her, and raising herself, and tossing back the bright curls that shaded her eyes, she clapped her hands, and accompanied them with the English words,--“The home!—the home!—the chieftain’s home!”—“And my home too, is it not?” she said. (71)

Hope, “who had left a palace in England,” translates the “native song” as easily as she translates the isolated “rustic dwelling in the wilderness” into home. Unlike the Indian Princess of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century iconography that figured America as primitive, fertile, and available, Hope is an Indian-Columbia hybrid.¹⁹ Bethany Schneider argues that Sedgwick’s first novel *A New England Tale* (1822) “proposes that belonging to and being of this particular land is the prize for those white people who can read its special sacred status...Indigeneity in a sacred landscape, like salvation, is conferred in a moment of passionate recognition” (354). Part of Schneider’s point is that recognizing this strategy allows us to read an “Indianless novel as an Indian novel,” but when Sedgwick employs a similar strategy in her explicitly Indian novel, Magawisca’s original presence never fully allows Hope to achieve white indigeneity (355). Although Hope easily becomes the novel’s substitute for Magawisca, a move that subdues the threat of interracial marriage posed by Magawisca and Everell’s adolescent attachment, this act of substitution also forever marks Hope as once removed from the natural law written on Magawisca’s heart.

Hope’s triumphant entrance following the Bethel massacre marks the beginning of the end of the potential romantic attachment that the novel suggests has been developing between Magawisca and Everell. This potential attachment is one example of

¹⁹ Deloria explains that early nineteenth century national iconography replaced the Indian Princess with Columbia, who “signified the dignity and gentility of civilization” rather than “primitivism, sexuality, and miscegenation” (53).

the ways that Sedgwick's narrator uses her readers' instincts against them through willful acts of diegetic misdirection.²⁰ The narrator first describes Everell and Magawisca together as "no unfit representatives of the people from whom they sprung" (22). Everell, a member of the first generation of white settlers born on American soil, is a particularly attractive example of frontier adolescence: he has a "smooth brow and bright curling hair," "hope and confidence and gladness beamed in the falcon glance of his keen blue eye," and "the active hardy habits of life, in a new country, had already knit his frame, and given him the muscle of manhood" (22). Magawisca, we learn in the following paragraph, is "slender, flexible, and graceful; and there was a freedom and loftiness in her movement which, though tempered with modestly, expressed a consciousness of high birth. Her face, although marked by the peculiarities of her race, was beautiful even to an European eye" (23). Physically representing the best of their respective races, Everell and Magawisca appear to be a natural pair. This appearance is soon confirmed by the development of an intimate friendship that does not go unnoticed by their guardians. In one of the two letters included in the first volume, Mrs. Fletcher warns her husband "that innocent and safe as the intercourse of these children now is, it is for thee to decide whether it be not most wise to remove the maiden from our dwelling. Two young plants that have sprung up in close neighbourhood, may be separated while young; but if disjoined after their fibres are all intertwined, one, or perchance both, may perish" (33). Given that Mrs. Fletcher's "vague forebodings" and "fearful thoughts" of Indian attacks are quickly fulfilled, her speculations about Everell and Magawisca also promise to come true. Later in the novel, Digby confirms the reader's initial impression

²⁰ This misdirection is not an anachronistic observation. Nineteenth-century reviews of *Hope Leslie* remark on Everell and Magawisca's relationship, and Lydia Maria Child's frontier romance *Hobomok* (1824), a novel that also experiments with interracial marriage, would have been on Sedgwick's readers' minds.

by recalling that Everell and Magawisca were once “as good as mated.” Everell replies that he “might have loved her—might have forgotten that nature had put barriers between us” (224). An attachment that was once described as being as natural as two young plants joining fibers is later characterized as barred by nature.

As Tawil notes, the racial logic at work behind the substitution of Hope for Magawisca is unmistakable: “in order for the love story to proceed and the white hero and heroine to be united, the Indian must disappear. But this disappearance must also be attended by an outpouring of transracial sympathy” (128). What is less clear is why a novel that insists upon the morality of natural impulses would so deliberately mislead its readers’ sympathetic instincts. In an era of historical writing defined by “a general consensus about essence, morality, progress, and national character,” where “the most pervasive single assumption was the existence of moral law,” what would it mean for a historical novel to make the reader question her ability to read for this moral law, particularly when national identity is at stake in its recognition (Callcott 173, 156)? In his review of *Redwood*, Bryant argued that romances set in the past are easier to write than domestic tales set in the present, because “in reading narratives of the romantic kind, our curiosity comes in aid of the author. We are eager to learn the issue of adventures so new to us. The imagination of the reader is also ready with its favorable offices. This faculty, always busiest when we are told of scenes and events out of the range of men’s ordinary experience, expatiates at large upon the suggestions of the author, and, as we read, rapidly fills up the outline he gives with bright colors and deep shades of its own” (247). In *Hope Leslie* readers’ imaginations work against them, as the narrator’s “outlines” and “suggestions” lead readers toward a fantasy of interracial marriage that is

then emphatically described as unnatural. Readers are punished for the same desire they imagine Magawisca and Everell must feel for each other. Just as what happens on the frontier enables what can happen in the Winthrops' parlor, carefully disciplining readers' imaginations in the first volume prepares them to correctly feel the necessity of Magawisca's disappearance in the second volume. But by using the conventions of romance writing to play with readers' feelings, the novel also de-naturalizes appeals to good feelings by presenting the possibility that these appeals can be duplicitous rhetoric. If the historical romance gained legitimacy because of a national consensus about human nature, then Sedgwick's novel resists this standard by constantly undermining her readers' instincts about what is and is not 'natural.'²¹

Throughout the novel, the narrator's sarcastic interjections and manipulative plot devices never allow readers to forget that they are reading a work of fiction. If, as Buell argues, "the utilitarian cast of American critical thought" meant "a strategic forgetting of the fictional element" in historical fiction, Sedgwick makes use of a heavy-handed, ironic narrator to constantly remind her readers of this fictional element (241). Sedgwick's novel not only disrupts fiction's appropriation by the forces of nationalist history, but also appears to be uncomfortable with the generic expectations of women's fiction as they were beginning to be defined in the early nineteenth century. *The North American*

²¹ Gould argues that "the implied reader is a duped one who self-reflexively witnesses his, or her, own misjudgments and thereby embraces the text's thematic offer of a humane benevolence" (110). I, obviously, am arguing the opposite—that these narrative misdirections unsettle the sympathetic reader's instincts, instincts that are based on assumptions about sameness. Gould also argues that although the novel's "epistemological traps" work to "subvert the conspiratorial paranoia at the heart of classical republicanism" and "debunks republican vigilance," its "potential rapists" and "Whiggish conspiracies" also suggest that "republican vigilance would seem to be necessary" (112). I again disagree and would argue that the novel suggests that Republican surveillance is ineffective against villains like Sir Philip – Hope's best defenses are her not the Puritan patriarchs who try to arrange a marriage with Sir Philip, but her own natural instincts. Like Charles Brockden Brown's Gothic novels, Sedgwick's novel also seems to argue that secrecy is sometimes necessary in a corrupted system.

Review used its review of *Hope Leslie* as an excuse to welcome women to the realm of novel-writing: “The purity and the goodness of women have here done their proper work. They are seen and felt in the elegant literature of the times. They have greatly contributed to chasten the morals of literature, and establish a code of laws, by which offences against decency are condemned as offences against taste” (410). The female author, the review continues, “cannot be false to her nature. The cause of virtue must always find in her an advocate” (411). In a slightly different vein, the *Western Monthly Review* congratulates Sedgwick for recognizing her own limitations: “At present, the aim of all, who write for the imagination, is to produce an effect. The author cares not what established rules he violates, in making his book, if, by so doing, he can create a sensation in his readers. This mania does not seem to have touched our authoress. Her story presents a regular account of well regulated people, who figure only in still life.” According to this review, Sedgwick “was probably aware” that the “many powerful minds” who novelized the Puritan character before her left nothing new to say, and so she “confined herself” to reality, with the exception of her unrealistic portrayals of “the savage mind” (290). Although neither of these reviews should be considered the last word on how *Hope Leslie* was received by nineteenth-century readers, they both locate the success of women’s fiction in its moral seriousness, rather than in its imaginative potential.²² *Hope Leslie*’s narrative playfulness challenges the limitations imposed on women’s fiction by these reviews and reminds us, in Romero’s words, “to exercise sufficient skepticism towards the antebellum period’s narrative of itself” (7). The novel’s most explicit rejection of these generic expectations occurs in the novel’s final chapter,

²² Consider, for example, Lydia Maria Child’s assessment of Sedgwick’s “kind and playful humour” in her review of Sedgwick’s fiction in Sarah Hale’s *Ladies’ Magazine* (“Miss Sedgwick’s Novels” 234).

when the narrator carelessly glosses over the details of Hope's hard-won domestic bliss: "We leave it to that large, and most indulgent class of our readers, the misses in their teens, to adjust, according to their own fancy, the ceremonial of our heroine's wedding" (369). If the marriage plot is one of the clearest markers of domestic fiction, this dismissal is a striking moment of genre confusion, as the narrator appears completely uninterested in the domestic portion of her tale.²³ In his review of *Redwood*, Bryant claimed that unlike romances, when writing domestic novels, "it will not do to trust to the imagination of the reader to heighten the interest of such a narrative; if it ever attempts to fill up the sketch given by the writer, it is not often in a way calculated to increase its effect, for it is done with plain and sober hues, that color the tissue of our own lives." Whether or not Sedgwick's decision to leave the details of Hope's wedding to "the imagination of the reader" is a playfully defiant response to Bryant's instructions about writing domestic fiction, it is clear that as Magawisca disappears into "the deep, voiceless obscurity" of the "far western forests," the narrator loses interest in her tale (359). Sedgwick's decision to rush through the novel's final domestic details can partially be explained by the fact that once Magawisca disappears, Hope's marriage is beside the point—what matters is that Magawisca's disappearance enables Hope and Everell's marriage. But the narrator's dismissive tone also allows us to recognize that Hope is not the moral center of this questionably domestic novel.

Because Hope's arrival coincides with Magawisca's retreat, she becomes the figure who disciplines the reader's expectation that Everell and Magawisca are "as good

²³ According to Tawil, domestic frontier romances "concern themselves not only with white-Indian warfare, but also—by virtue of their incorporation of interracial romance plots—with the question of how one conducts a courtship under such conditions. They thus meet the generic standards of domestic fiction as well" (93).

as mated.” Although Hope is a figure of unruly transgression, at the end of the novel, her transgressions have instituted a new order that seeks to banish figures like Jennet who do not have the appropriate natural impulses and to incorporate figures like Magawisca who do. Although playing Indian in the revolutionary period “allowed individuals to cross the boundaries of law and civilization while simultaneously reaffirming the existence and necessity of those boundaries,” in Sedgwick’s novel playing Indian allows Hope to institute new boundaries that seek to include Magawisca (Deloria 26). Scott Bradfield argues in his book *Dreaming Revolution* that in the early national period “transgression began to be conceived of as a disciplinary activity” (xi). Just as the American Revolution established a more natural government, by the end of the novel, Hope works to establish a democratic order founded in the good feelings of friendship and equality. One of her final orders of business is to convince Magawisca to return to the white settlement. Hope once again tries to paraphrase Magawisca, promising “as you would say, Magawisca, we will walk in the same path, the same joys will shine on us, and, if need be that sorrows come over us, why, we will all sit under one shadow together” (349). In this final rhetorical battle of natural metaphor, Magawisca has the last word, replying “the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night” (349). Recognizing no difference between Puritan theocracy and Hope’s democracy, Magawisca continues to resist efforts of inclusion that rest on assimilation. By refusing Hope’s insistence that they can in fact “walk in the same path,” Magawisca disrupts the process whereby sympathy naturalizes reformatory discipline by making it appear to coincide with the reader’s own feelings.²⁴ *Hope Leslie*’s opening premise that “the difference of

²⁴ As I noted in my first chapter, Elizabeth Barnes argues that in early national novels sympathy is the force that “bridges the gap between internal and external authority, rendering the latter—represented by the novel

character among the various races of the earth, arises mainly from difference of condition” is confirmed by the reader’s sympathetic impulses, but is denied by the novel’s resolution. According to Elizabeth Barnes, Sedgwick’s novels are typical of the ways that antebellum domestic fiction domesticated the uncontrollable nature of sympathetic attachment that haunted early republican seduction novels: “Sympathy proves the golden rule of Sedgwick’s domesticity...in converting the hapless protagonist of seduction fiction into a new and virtuous heroine, Sedgwick attempts to reform the role of sympathy itself—to teach by *positive* rather than by negative example” (80). In *Hope Leslie*, however, Hope’s triumph over the authorities and her simultaneous adoption of their disciplinary language coincides with the narrator distancing herself from her heroine.

Magawisca’s refusal of Hope’s final request forces Hope to reveal the reformatory agenda behind her appeal to good feelings. Perhaps most troublingly, Hope, who once defended Magawisca’s belief in the Great Spirit now wishes “that a mind so disposed to religious impressions and affections, might enjoy the brighter light of Christian revelation—a revelation so much higher, nobler, and fuller, than that which proceeds from the voice of nature” (352). Hope also begins to speak the language of public good that she has resisted throughout the novel. When she asks Magawisca how she can win over her sister, still in captivity in the Winthrop mansion, Magawisca asks her “if any charm could win your affections from Everell Fletcher?” Hope, “summoning all her courage,” “answered in a tolerably firm voice, ‘yes—yes, Magawisca, if virtue, if duty to others required it, I trust in heaven I could command and direct my affections’” (350). Of course the reader knows that commanding and directing affections is precisely what

itself—virtually indistinguishable from the reader’s own instincts” (9).

Hope's attempt at disinterested matchmaking has demonstrated to be impossible. After Hope impulsively thrusts Esther and Everell together, although she is "exulting in her victory over herself," she actually has "put the happiness of all parties concerned in jeopardy," and Esther ends up feeling "cruelly, fatally injured" (225-6, 290). Hope's insistence that her sister should learn to "command and direct" her affections when "duty to others required it" sounds all too similar to the appeals to the greater good that throughout the novel have signaled the avoidance of superior moral claims. Governor Winthrop, for example, responds to Everell's outrage that Magawisca has been imprisoned with the reminder that "private feelings must yield to the public good" (245). When Hope meets her sister, the reader understands for the first time that the novel's heroine is capable of dishonesty. As Insko points out, Hope at last resorts to trying to bribe her sister with jewels, the same strategy employed by the villainous Sir Philip to persuade Magawisca to take Rosa into the wilderness.²⁵ This is not the first time in the novel Hope has acted the part of seducer. When Hope and Magawisca first meet, Hope zeros in on Magawisca's primary vulnerability, her feelings for Everell. In turn Magawisca recognizes Hope as a force to be resisted: "'They tell me,' she said, 'that no one can look on you and deny you aught; that you can make old men's hearts soft, and mould them at your will'" (199). By coding Hope's persuasive charms first as the rhetoric of seduction, and then as the rhetoric of Puritan theocracy, Magawisca reveals the artifice behind Hope's benevolent democracy and disrupts the process of naturalization that threatens to assimilate her.

²⁵ Insko also notices this separation between the narrator and Hope, and argues that although it is clear that "the otherwise 'progressive' Hope views her sister as transgressing against 'natural' racial boundaries," what is less clear is "that this view is shared by Sedgwick" (196). This is an overly generous reading. Faith is hardly a symbol of successful interracial marriage; she is "child-like" and her face "pale and spiritless, was only redeemed from absolute vacancy by an expression of gentleness and modesty" (240).

Recognizing that Hope's appeals to sentiment at the end of the novel are in fact empty rhetoric—a symptom of her own second-hand knowledge of the natural law written on Magawisca's heart—allows us to read Magawisca's refusal to stay in the white settlement as dissent rather than failure.²⁶ Hope tries to assimilate Magawisca by naturalizing consent through the good feelings of friendship, gratitude, and equality. By refusing Hope's invitation to join this new community, Magawisca insists upon a republican conception of citizenship based in consent, a concept that Hope's involuntary impulses work to erase.²⁷ Sedgwick's version of the disappearing Indian reinvests civic duty with the notion of consent and allows for the possibility of revolutionary dissent. In the years leading up to the Indian Removal Act, the status of Native American citizenship was particularly problematic.²⁸ As Rogers Smith explains, although Jeffersonian notions of consensual citizenship were not extended to Native Americans because of “ascriptive notions of who was capable of consent,” they originated in protests over Federalists' claims that “expatriation was not a ‘natural right’ that could be exercised at will” (Smith

²⁶ For critics who remain invested in the feminization of American culture narrative, Magawisca's refusal signifies that she is racially unsuited for the proper sentiment required for membership in Hope and Everell's enlightened community. Maddox, for example, argues that “the potential is clearly there in Magawisca to become part of the new, feminized realignments of family and faith in America. She chooses, however, to remain loyal to her domineering Indian father, and so condemns herself to a wandering obscurity and permanent separation from white civilization and all that it has to offer” (107-8). Maddox concludes that both *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie* argue that “although it might have been reasonable, even admirable, for the Indians to resist submission as long as white culture was controlled by Puritan males, continued resistance makes no sense now that the culture has become enlightened through its feminization” (110). To me, the point of this final scene is that Everell and Hope cannot see that their friendship is what has endangered Magawisca all along.

²⁷ Ivy Schweitzer argues that recognizing the choice Magawisca makes at the end of the novel allows its characters to recognize the “limits of their comprehension—and thus control—of the other.” This recognition “clears the way for the future possibility of ethical friendship across difference” (205). I wholeheartedly agree that Magawisca's choice opens up a space for equality with difference, but I'm not so sure Hope and Everell are in favor of keeping this space open. Hope, for example, belies sympathy's trajectory toward sameness when she wishes that she might retain Magawisca in order to teach her Christianity.

²⁸ As Rogers Smith describes it, “on the common-law, *jus soli* understanding of birthright membership, no one had a better claim as native-born Americans than Native Americans...And if they were not [citizens via birthright], then apparently they were members of sovereign independent nations, with whom Jeffersonians should deal only through peaceful, consensual treaties” (184).

158, 167). Citizenship debates were as much bound up in debates about “the potentially anarchical implications of pure consensualism” as they were in extending the rights of citizenship to disenfranchised populations. Magawisca represents this right of individual dissent throughout the novel, as she refuses both the protection and the authority of white law. In her trial scene, for example, she declares “I am your prisoner, and ye may slay me, but I deny your right to judge me” (302). Because we tend to read women’s fiction as always making an argument on behalf of a liberal model of citizenship that argues for inclusion based on universal rights, it is easy to overlook moments when the assimilationist pressure of this citizenship is presented as a threat to be resisted.²⁹ As Lauren Berlant argues, “whether consensually or passively transmitted, national identity requires self-ablation” (4). For Magawisca, this “self-ablation” would mean assimilation. Magawisca’s final farewell challenges the fantasy of belonging that is supposed to be at the center of the relationship between the sentimental novel and disenfranchised readers.³⁰ Although her insistence that “the Indian and the white man” are as fundamentally different as “day and night” resists the trajectory toward sameness that defines sympathetic identification, her final words also send a message that is more disturbing than, in Maddox’s words, Sedgwick’s investment in “the Indian’s instinct for revenge,” or, in Tawil’s words, Sedgwick’s determination to establish “an incompatibility

²⁹ For Warner, women in the early nineteenth century argued for equal rights “though the normative language of the liberal tradition” and “appealed to the ideal of a disinterested, abstract, universal public—just the kind of public in which particularized views and the gendered body would always seem matter out of place” (*Publics and Counterpublics* 41).

³⁰ Again, see Warner: In the same way that the early nineteenth century’s rhetoric of nationalism allowed for “imaginary participation” that could be extended to women “as symbolic members of the nation,” the sentimental novel allowed women “to attribute public value to reader identification (*Letters of the Republic* 173-4).

between Indianness and domesticity” (Maddox 108; Tawil 124).³¹ As the possibility for individual dissent that Magawisca represents is domesticated into a national fantasy about the American revolution, the novel forces her to serve as a static symbol for the primary value claimed by the American exceptionalism that justified Indian removal.

If the American historical romance novel works to domesticate human nature into a force of national cohesion, this act of domestication must function through an exclusionary principle that preserves nature’s possibilities rather than as a colonizing principle that works to assimilate them. By creating a separation between the reader and the domestic plot, *Hope Leslie* registers its own protest against the artificial confines of domesticity, but it can only do so by replacing the white woman of domestic fiction with the Indian woman of frontier fiction. Women are understood to be the nineteenth century’s ideal liberal subjects because their status as imaginary citizens enabled them to imagine a relationship between sympathetic understanding and political inclusion. Women served as the immediate source of the unregulated sympathy that naturalized civic duty but that also excluded them from actually being considered citizens. In a similar move, *Hope Leslie* presents the Indian woman as the primary source for the natural law that America claims for itself. Magawisca’s instinctive understanding of natural law is appropriated in order to naturalize an authority that cannot imagine her as an actual member of its community, not only because of her racial identity, but also because it requires her to remain an unadulterated source of the natural law that justifies

³¹ See Elizabeth Barnes: “Insofar as democracy implies the representation of individual difference, sentimental politics reveals itself to be a politics of affinity rather than of a democracy. Individual material differences are elided through models of sympathy that teach readers to view other ‘selves’ as projections of their own and to care for others in proportion to how convincingly those others can be shown as related to oneself” (98). Tawil notes that “it is [Magawisca’s] voice as an Indian which speaks with the most authority on the matter of racial difference” (125). For Tawil, the fact that Magawisca insists on natural difference is what most strongly reinforces the novel’s message that her relationship with Everell is against natural law.

its own founding. As Colin Jager describes it, “second nature is culture naturalized and has the further advantage of always having been naturalized before one inherits it” (142). *Hope Leslie* demonstrates that this function of naturalizing culture is precisely what the disappearing Indian provides for the American romantics. In her seminal study of the rise of nineteenth-century British domesticity, Nancy Armstrong argues that the novel followed from conduct books that “transformed the female into the bearer of moral norms and socializer of men” and “changed the qualities once attributed to her nature and turned them into techniques for regulating desire” (89). This project has traced the opposite effect of novels, locating a strain in early American political rhetoric and reading practices that worked to naturalize culture rather than socialize desire. This strain culminates in the nostalgia of the early Romantic movement, as the claim to natural law that sanctions America’s founding mythology is found to be as elusive as yesterday.

Where dwelleth yesterday? And where is Echo’s cell?

Where has the rainbow vanished?—there does the Indian dwell.

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