"Tell me how you like the shoose": Gender, girlhood, and material self-fashioning in America, 1770-1850

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Introduction

In 1808, Antoinette Brevost wrote to her school friend Victorine du Pont. The young women, both in their late teens, had met at Madame Rivardi's school in Philadelphia, and while Antoinette remained in the city, Victorine had returned to her family's home, Eleutherian Mills, just outside of Wilmington, Delaware. Antoinette wrote with a purpose. "Tell me," she wrote,

> how you like the shoose? I chose the morocco, and ordered a pair for myself of the same. apropos of dress I believe we seldom touch on the subject in our letters, but I cannot resist the temptation of mentioning a handsome handkerchief just arrived from Paris! I have made one like it and will send it you by Mrs Pepper in case you should wish to possess the fashion.[1]

In a small conversational exchange, Antoinette encapsulated a wealth of material detail. She sought information about a purchase that she had made as proxy in Philadelphia on Victorine's behalf. She told Victorine that she had acquired a matching pair of shoes, underlining her certainty that her purchase of morocco leather shoes was the right one. Antoinette mentioned her new handkerchief, one "just arrived from Paris," Antoinette also noted that she and Victorine did not typically discuss matters of fashion in their letters. In her awareness that their conversations typically did not revolve around shoes and handkerchiefs, Antoinette was making a statement about the kind of young women that they were, casting the two as something other than avid proponents of fashion.[2]

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[1] Antoinette Brevost to Victorine du Pont, October 12, 1808, Victorine du Pont Bauduy Papers, 1798-1861, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 6:A, Hagley Museum and Library.

[2] Taking my lead from Mary Jo Maynes, Brigitte Søland and Christina Benninghaus' *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, I will refer to the subjects of my dissertations as "young women" or "girls" interchangeably throughout. When not using the terms to mean a female person between, roughly, twelve and twenty-two years of age, I will specify. For a more detailed discussion of this terminological distinction, see "Introduction," *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750-1960*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005) 15 fn1.

It is all too easy to dismiss the exchange as mostly trivial – a simple account of purchases and a fashionable handkerchief. I argue, however, that it was far from trivial. Antoinette's letter, and the material world that it depicts, show clearly the ways in which young women's things were sites imbued with multiple social and cultural meanings. That Victorine trusted Antoinette to shop on her behalf, signaled connection and intimacy. Antoinette was eager to make sure that her proxy-purchases were well received and also eager to assure Victorine that they would be wearing the same items. As friends, the wearing of similar items represented alliance and social alignment. Antoinette's handkerchief from Paris signaled her connection to fashionable materials and her ability to judge their quality. Despite the fact that fashion was such an uncommon topic of conversation for the two, Antoinette's letter reveals her familiarity with the vocabulary of material fashionability. The handkerchief she copied for Victorine also signaled that she believed that she had the needlework skill to copy it, not to mention access to material networks of sending to make sure that Victorine could receive it, "by Mrs. Pepper," a servant in the du Pont household.

The two girls had met while at boarding school, a common space for affluent girls in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America to begin developing both their own material skills and the social relationships that would mark their adulthood. Antoinette and Victorine had established a friendship not founded on analysis of fashions, yet Antoinette's letter indicated the tension she felt between their conversations about shared intellectual pursuits and those of a more material nature. In her letter, Antoinette was communicating much more than, "how you like the shoose?" In her request for information Antoinette was encoding subtle messages about the role of fashion and appearance, the ability and skill to be a consumer, tension between the material and intellectual world. Moreover, Antoinette's

material discussion was filled with social messages, about herself, her friend, and the relationship that they shared.

This exchange between Antoinette and Victorine, along with countless others conducted by young women in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America, whether recorded in letter or diary form, highlight the significant and often contradictory role that the material world played in the self-fashioning of young women. Affluent young women called upon a host of *things*, replete with meaning, as they made the transition from childhood to adulthood to mark and measure their accession to the performance of refined femininity along with their own sense of social, political, and cultural belonging.

Historian Ann Smart Martin argues that the study of material culture is concerned with "the way people live their lives through, by, around, in spite of, in pursuit of, in denial of, and because of the material world."[3] This list of concerns guides this dissertation. I consider the ways that American young women's material worlds, broadly conceived, influenced the selves that they were creating. While I am interested in the material possessions, desires, and admirations of young women, I am just as interested in what they rejected, did not want, or could not have. I argue that American young women, both consciously and unconsciously, used *things* – material both real and imagined – as an integral part of their adolescent self-fashioning. Historians of material culture emphasize the significance that things can have, particularly as modes of communicating identity. I suggest that young women, neither fully children nor fully adults, used their material worlds: the acquisition, approval or rejection of, admiration, longing for particular things, to define and redefine their developing adult self. This dissertation examines the ways that young women of the upper and middle classes in

[3] Ann Smart Martin, "Material Things and Cultural Meanings: Notes on the Study of Early American Material Culture," in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 53, No. 1, (January 1996), 5.

late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America engaged objects to negotiate the transition from girlhood to adulthood as well as the ways that material things allowed them to articulate particular identities, to themselves and to their communities.[4]

This dissertation focuses on an era of dramatic social instability – concentrated on the years between the American Revolution and the Civil War - but in this study, social instability was compounded by the instability of young women themselves. The young women I study were embedded in an era of unstable hierarchies, while undergoing serious instability in life course. My subjects were not adults, yet they were not children. They were not fully under parental control, but they were not married, not yet adult women in charge of their own household. They lived in a world of unstable hierarchies and their material realities (discursive and otherwise) were used to construct, display, and challenge their own selves and their place in a host of social, political, and national hierarchies.

My choice to focus on young women in this liminal life stage, typically between the ages of twelve and twenty-two and/or before their marriage, rather than young men or youth as a whole, is deliberate. While the material cultures of young men were also varied and marked specific stages of their movement toward adulthood, their material lives and consumer behavior were not scrutinized in the way that their female contemporaries' were.

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[4] I find it important to reiterate, here, that I am not arguing that young women's self-fashioning always took material forms. As historian Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor so helpfully articulates in her work on female consumers, "to say that material objects served emotional needs does not mean that most women whiled away the hours collecting, caring for, and thinking about the history and meaning of their possessions." Young women enacted their own self-fashionings in a multitude of ways. My argument is that things, which did serve emotional and personal needs, were only *one mode* by which young women were able to negotiate their developing adult identities. Young women built and defined selves through social performance, writing, reading, education and a host of other interlocking and overlapping processes, both material and not. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 169. T.H. Breen, "Baubles of Britain": The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century,"*Past and Present* 119 (May 1988): 447.

Young women were the social group most often critiqued for their preoccupation with consumption in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Women were most associated with the material world, and young women's material lives were a subject of exceptional cultural concern throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I argue that, owing to massive changes in consumer goods and practices, as well as shifting ideologies of gender and education, the material world of a young woman in 1770 looked quite different than that of her great-granddaughter in 1830. However, across the period, the functions that those material worlds, from physical objects such as books and bonnets, to material spaces and places, served in enabling young women to define and articulate a developing adult self were strikingly consistent.

The dissertation explores the multifaceted material life of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American young women, as well as meanings and significances that were placed on young women's things by young women and by others. The dissertation also attends closely the ways that young women learned to engage with their material worlds, as wearers of fashion, buyers, makers, senders, receivers, and preservers. These skills were essential components of a refined, feminine, adult identity and as they transitioned from girlhood to young adulthood, young women faced increasing pressure to use and model appropriate material behaviors. Finally, the dissertation explores the role of the material world in the ways that young women articulated identities, as well as belonging, opposition, and alignment as they moved toward adulthood.[5]

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[5] A note on terms: I define refinement, broadly speaking, along the same lines as Bushman's *Refinement of America,* as an expanding sense of performed and often highly materially-focused gentility. However, the precise boundaries of refined femininity were highly dependent on individual contexts. Thus I have focused on young women's own ideas of what constituted refined femininity for adult women and how they measured themselves against those tacit and implicit definitions. For more on refinement, see Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: People, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Vintage, 1993).

On the broadest level, my dissertation answers Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's call for a material history that exists between the minute brushstrokes of a single object and the "broad contours of refinement." In it, I engage the material lives of young women from diaries to dance cards and sketches to schoolbooks to investigate the ways that they used objects to define personal, social, cultural and national identities as they moved toward adulthood. This dissertation considers the material choices of girls whose place, in social hierarchies, family structures, and even life course was liminal, and the ways that through those choices, young women defined their own identities, personal and public, in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America. [6]

Definitions and Contexts

Before proceeding to a discussion of the material world of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America, I will briefly discuss three central concepts in this dissertation: material worlds, material education, and the transitional space of youth in the life cycle of American women. For the purposes of this dissertation I take an expansive definition of the material world of young women. Their material world could encompass physical objects in their possession, from hairpins or jewelry to books or musical instruments to large pieces of furniture, or the spaces that they inhabited. It also includes material that only existed discursively. For instance, a girl writing to a friend about the newest style of bonnets might not reference a physical object she had, but the object, captured only discursively, was still a part of her material world. The things that girls wanted, hated, imagined, or envisioned were., in some regards, just as real as the things that they had.

[6] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Hannah Barnard's Cupboard: Female Property and Identity in Eighteenth-Century New England," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*. Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel, & Fredrika J. Teute, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 269.

Kate Haulman, in her study of fashion and politics in eighteenth century America, argues that fashion, both as it was worn and as it was discussed, "was a screen onto which people projected ideas about issues such as gender relations, social order, and political authority," as well as a "vehicle through which they expressed those ideas."[7] Material things – whether worn, carried, bought, or discussed – were constantly having their meanings made and remade. The material world was a palimpsest, being continually written and overwritten by girls, their families and friends, cultural critics, and society at large. Meanings from without and within were inscribed on things, and young women, both consciously and unconsciously, interpreted and manipulated these meanings in the process of their own self-fashioning.

To manipulate and interpret required an education. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century girls needed to learn how to use, value, desire, or reject specific elements of their material world. This knowledge, though, came from a vast array of sources. It could be formal, as when schoolgirls learned to embroider elaborate patterns or use a telescope to chart the motions of the stars. Conduct manuals taught young women how to choose dresses or home furnishings. Instruction could come from parents, family members or friends in a variety of formal and informal contexts. A girl who used things in imitation of her mother or older sister was engaged in material learning just as she would be if receiving direct instruction about how to bake a cake or choose a dress. Young women also received lessons about their material behavior from the world around them. Celebrated beauties were to be copied, or scorned if a young woman sought to reject the fashionable in the course of her own self making. To that end, I suggest the concept of *material education* to encompass the wide

[7] Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 3.

variety of modes, formal and informal, that young women learned to interact with their material worlds.

The status of young women, as not children but not quite adults, lent the process of their material education more significance. Youth in antebellum America were in a liminal space, and their status reflects what historian C. Dallett Hemphill calls, "the social and historical plasticity of adolescence." Girls in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America were not yet adults, yet their choices about self-presentation and self-fashioning were weighty. Their status, not fully children yet not fully adults, rendered them socially threatening. Young women who materially transgressed the social norms, wearing a hairstyle meant for a married woman, dressing in outmoded or unfashionable clothes, or refusing to do domestic labor, could face harsh censure for their choices. Since they were no longer children, that censure could often linger into adulthood. Young women, as they self-fashioned in highly material ways, were in a precarious social position.[8]

In considering the material self-fashioning of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century young women, I use methodologies developed by David Gerber in his analysis of immigrant letters. Gerber highlights the degree to which "immigrants have always risked a radical rupture of the self, a break in their understandings of who they are." I argue that girls navigating the space between childhood and adulthood were immigrants, not in space but in time. As they articulated, refined, and redefined themselves, they were travellers in adolescence. Their letters and diaries, chronicling the ways that they used their material worlds in negotiating a new self, can be likened to those of immigrants. And, as Gerber points out, they too risked a "radical rupture of the self," as they moved toward their adult, female identity. The space of their adolescence, malleable and plastic as it was, was also precarious:

[8] Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999),161.

a time when young women's material choices and behaviors carried tremendous significance.[9]

The social, political, and economic instability in which late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American young women lived also gave their material worlds a larger significance. This dissertation's temporal boundaries are specifically designed to encompass revolution – consumer, political, and industrial as well as social. In the years surrounding the Revolution, American social hierarchies were shifting. New middle and upper classes were emerging, including what Phyllis Whitman Hunter terms the "entrepreneurial elite," raising families like the Cabots, Cheves, Lowells, and du Ponts to levels of prominence that would have previously been unavailable to them. This group was strikingly mobile. Links of kin and commerce joined major port cities including Boston and Charleston and Philadelphia with one another as well as with the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Atlantic.[10]

C. Dallett Hemphill writes about the development of a 'civilized' identity in America, reading conduct manuals from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century to consider power, social dynamics and relationships of class, age, and gender, and the ways that they shaped the identities of ordinary Americans. Phyllis Whitman Hunter's study of Massachusetts merchants in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries focuses on identity development among a group. She posits an Atlantic urban elite, a group composed of the growing monied classes on both sides of the Atlantic, who identified themselves as members by their purchasing power and acumen in developing networks of luxury goods.

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[9] David A. Gerber *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 3.

[10] Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World : Massachusetts Merchants, 1670-1780*, (Cornell University Press, 2001),170; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 10; Daniel Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy: Southern Planters in Antebellum Philadelphia*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 39,58; Haulmann, *Politics of Fashion*, 3.

Intriguingly, both Hunter and Hemphill carefully place their subjects and their research within an Atlantic framework even though their subjects are geographically American, emphasizing the critical role that transatlantic connections played in networks of material refinement and identity.[11]

The consumer revolution of the eighteenth century enabled the rise of this newly monied class, as well as their purchasing of refined identity in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Atlantic world. Though there is significant debate in the historical literature about the nature of the consumer revolution - whether it was one revolution or many, gradual or sudden, driven by producers or consumers - it is undeniable that the shift that put an increasing supply of consumer goods within the reach of a much broader swathe of Americans drastically altered the material world of the period. Regardless of its origins, by 1770 Americans were able to buy more than ever before and consumer behavior had become much more regularized, even being covered in conduct manuals of the period.[12]

Despite increasing comfort with the culture that the consumer revolution had created, American consumption between 1770 and 1850 was not without criticism. Though consumption linked Americans, affluent and otherwise, in material networks of refinement and gentility, it also served as a way to divide them. Through choices to buy or not to buy, to

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[11] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of An American Myth*, (New York: Random House, 2001), 111; Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities*; Hunter, *Purchasing Identity.* Ann Smart Martin undertakes a similar project in her *Buying Into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). For more on refinement in the early American context, see Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America.*

[12] Neil McKendrick, "Introduction," *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England*, (London: Europa Publications, 1982), 1-9; John Styles, "Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England,' in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, 535-538. In his article on consumer culture, Paul G.E. Clemens helpfully articulates a framework of consumer evolution, not revolution between 1770 and 1820, where the growth of comfort and familiarity with consumer behavior speaks to its significance. "The Consumer Culture of the Middle Atlantic, 1760-1820," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series 62, no. 4 (October 2005): 577.

display or not to display, the consuming citizens were able to articulate particular social and political stances. The choice to purchase English silk or French, for instance, or the wearing of Irish linen instead of English or American were conscious material statements about identity, social, political, and ethnic alignment.

Consumption was also a potentially destabilizing force within communities. Men and women who purchased silks, silver, sugar, tea, porcelain and a host of other commodities did so conscious that their purchases – as Ann Smart Martin puts it, their knowledge, not only of how to act, but of what to buy and use – set them apart from their less "civilized" contemporaries. Nevertheless, even those with little disposable income expressed a desire and ability to participate in consumer marketplace. Americans, rich and poor, all bought more in both formal and informal economies of the period. Throughout the Atlantic world the link between luxury and corruption made the purchase of fashionable goods a double-edged sword, both uniting citizens as consumers and undermining the fabric of the nation. While consumption powered economies, many feared that consumer behavior was a sickness and that just as overconsumption of food sickened individuals, overconsumption of goods would sicken the nation. [13]

[13] Martin, Frontier Boys and Country Cousins: The Context for Choice in Eighteenth-Century Consumerism." In *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, ed. Lu Ann De Cunzo and Bernard L. Herman, 71-102. (Winterthur, Del.: The Henry Francis Du Pont Winerthur Museum, Inc, 1996), 76; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 5,7; Serena R. Zabin, *Dangerous Economies: Status and Commerce in Imperial New York*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 59, 65-66; Roy Porter, "Consumption: Disease of the Consumer Society?" in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 58-81; Weyler, *Intricate Relations: sexual and economic desire in American fiction, 1789-1814*. (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2004), 106; Maxine Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 182, (February 2004): 85-142. For more on lower-class participation in consumer economies, both formal and informal, of the period see Cissie Fairchild, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*. John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. 228-248, (New

The tension between consumption powering economies and destabilizing the nation was often placed squarely on the shoulders of women, particularly young women. Material items and consumption were typically derided as a feminine concern. Rising consumer participation for men and women alike led had cultural critics to charge that being overly interested in things could effeminize men. Though they were often scorned for their participation in the material world, it also offered women a particular kind of power and authority. Women were charged with making the majority of purchases for their household. Thus, the shopping forays of young women were often seen as practice for their future consumer responsibilities.[14]

The shifting consumer and material world of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America had far-reaching political and economic consequences along with this host of social implications. New systems of banking, personal economy, and physical currency evolved during the period. Commercial networks grew dramatically in the years following the American Revolution, as did networks of shipping. The American postal service, though it was not widely used until the 1830s and 1840s, also developed in the period. Young women could shop for far-off friends in markets and stores near their homes and use networks of sending to make sure that their parcels reached their destinations.[15]

York: Routledge, 1993); Marie Francois, "Cloth and Silver: Pawning and Material Life in Mexico City at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *The Americas* 60, No. 3, 2004: 325-362.

[14] Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in the Tatler and the Spectator*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xii; Susan Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1; T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 173.

[15] Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, Chapter 4; Robert Garson, "Counting Money: The US Dollar and American Nationhood, 1781-1820," *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 1 (April 2001): 21-46.

Youth participation in American consumption did not escape unnoticed. Significantly, the period between 1770 and 1850 sees the rise of both youth cultures and marketing efforts directed toward young men and women as specific groups. It is not coincidence that the period in which the United States was developing as a nation was one in which attention to youth and their place in social hierarchies drew additional scrutiny. In the years around the American Revolution, increasing emphasis was put on youth as well as the vitality and power of the young. Since much Revolutionary rhetoric called upon patriots to shake off British oppression as a grown child might throw off parental authority, in the years following the Revolution America was exceptionally conscious of its status as a young nation.[16]

However, throwing off political authority led to anxiety about other social hierarchies in post revolutionary America. Increasing worry about the role of youth, not fully under parental authority, led to cultural critiques and conduct manuals focused on the particular relationship of youth to society. As apprenticeship processes declined, the strict progression of child to youth to adult was significantly less clear. Halttunen and Hemphill both stress the ambiguous place of nineteenth-century youth, both conceptually and in practice.[17]

While at the beginning of the eighteenth century, youth, their roles, and behaviors were not well defined from those of childhood, by the nineteenth century the category of youth had solidified dramatically. Youth were expected to adhere to more adult conduct. The

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[16] Joseph F. Kett, "Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 2(Autumn 1971): 283-298; Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800*, (Cambridge University Press, 1985). In her work on revolutionary era Philadelphia, Clare Lyons discusses the destabilizing of marriage and patriarchy in the 1760s. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 58. Maynes, et al. also highlight the growing notion of youth as a liminal position in social hierarchies, and the anxieties that provoked throughout Europe. Maynes, et. al, *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, 7.

[17] Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities*, 178, 223; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 12-13, 32.

expansion of youth as a liminal life stage led to concerns about the uncontrollable nature of the young population on both sides of the Atlantic. American and European commentators alike worried about the sexual uncontrollability of both male and female young people. They also expressed anxiety about youth of all classes as consumers, echoing a common elision in the period between material and sexual desires. Young people, both male and female, across the social spectrum were critiqued for their inappropriate consumer behavior and desires, poor taste, and economic wastefulness.[18]

Young women, however, were critiqued for their consumer desire far more than their male counterparts. As previously discussed, their responsibility for household consumption both associated them with the consumer and material world and rendered their individual patterns of consumption suspect. In the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Atlantic, advice manuals became much more specific about what things young women should buy, how they should buy them, and how they should behave while shopping. Ann Smart Martin, in her work on backcountry Virginia consumers, highlights shop ledgers that record the purchases of young women by themselves. These young women, she suggests, were gaining a degree of autonomy through participation in consumer arenas. However, that autonomy was also something to be feared. Literary models on both sides of the Atlantic had previously depicted the figure of the coquette, with her obsession with shoes, clothes, and lapdogs, as amusing. But by the late eighteenth century British and American fiction depicted her as a fallen woman, bound for ruin because of her immoderate desires.[19]

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[18] Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessity*, 221; Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble*, 65-66; Maynes et. al., *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, 8, 10.

[19] Maynes, et. al, *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, 10, 9; Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 145; Helen Berry, "Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth series, Vol. 12, 2002, 375-394; Walsh, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*; Theresa Braunschneider, *Our*

Despite the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century interest in and anxiety about young women and their material worlds, surprisingly little has been written about the material worlds of youth in the period. In his work on consumer culture and the American Revolution, T.H. Breen acknowledges the power and size of the youth population in the American colonies, yet suggests that those under sixteen had almost no choice in the material things that they wore and used. Most material culture works focus on children or adults, ignoring the category of female youth. However, given the deep-seated anxieties about young women, their consumption and use of things, and their preparation to be keepers of the material world of the home, I argue that they require focused analysis.[20]

Themes of the changing educational world for young women in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic have been very well studied, connecting education to changing social, religious and political agendas, philosophies of gender and gender relations, and the changes that education brought to young women throughout the Atlantic world. However, the connections between the material worlds of young womanhood and the appropriate material education for young women have gone largely unexplored. Links between those changing models of education and the material components of those educational changes, both the appropriate material world for female education as well as the material education that girls received, have been largely overlooked in the scholarship in part, I suspect, because of an assumption that the consumption, objects and material fancies of young women are a world

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Coquettes: Capacious Desire in the Eighteenth Century, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); Weyler, *Intricate Relations.* Other literature has discussed the ways by which female consumption was rendered safe by its associations with the home. In her study of female crafts in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain, Ariane Fennetaux argues that while women were often critiqued for their affinity for acquisition, crafts designed for domestic beautification allowed the female consumption to be turned from dangerous vice to domestic virtue. Ariane Fennetaux, "Female Crafts: Women and *Bricolage* in Late Georgian Britain, 1750-1820" in *Women and Things, 1750-1950, Gendered Material Strategies,* Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, Eds. (Ashgate, 2009), 91 -108.

[20] Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 64.

apart from the intellectual attainments that Wollstonecraft and other educational theorists articulated for them. I argue, rather, that far from being peripheral to the education of girls, objects and material education were central to both the education that young women received and the educational plans that were meant to shape their futures.[21]

Just what that future would be was heavily dependent on a young woman's race, class, geography, and position in the family. As children, girls had minimal material authority and responsibility. Crossing the boundary between childhood and youth was often fuzzy, marked by leaving early primary schooling, going away to boarding school, beginning to work full time, celebrating a religious or social ritual marking the end of childhood, or in more material ways by dress or coiffure. Maynes et. al. in their work on European girlhood, highlight the degree to which a young woman in the in the period might undergo many of these transitional moments, or none at all. The boundary between youth and adulthood was clearer for most, since marriage marked the end of youth for both young men and young women. Young women's assumption of a youth, rather than child, identity and how long she

[21] On the increased educational opportunities available to women in revolutionary and antebellum America see Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Mary Beth Norton *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006)*;* Mary Kelley, "Crafting Subjectivites: Women, Reading, and Self-Imagining." In *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly, 55-72. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009; Catherine E. Kelly, "Reading and the Problem of Accomplishment," in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly, 124-143, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). In his analysis of Charleston families in Philadelphia, Daniel Kilbride argues for the inherent conservatism of the French schools that were the norm for many of the subjects of this dissertation. Schools like Madame Rivardi's academy, attended by both Evelina and Victorine du Pont and Antoinette Brevost, or Madame Grelaud's in Philadelphia, attended by Amelia Eloise Russell, reinforced the elite class system in a way that their more democratizing counterparts like the Young Lady's Academy of Philadelphia did not. Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 54-57.

stayed a youth, also hinged heavily on race, class, space, and family position. For instance, poorer girls might need to step into full time work before their middle class peers, and enslaved girls might have an even more dramatically curtailed period of youth. Rural girls might similarly begin to work earlier and stay a youth longer, since rural American young women married later than their urban peers. A girl's status as a youth also depended on family position, whether she had many older sisters or was made the head of the domestic world by the early death of her mother.[22]

Nevertheless, there are some broad trends in the life course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American young woman. Many would attend school for at least a portion of their childhood, with affluent and elite young women almost invariably being at school into their youth, and usually attending a boarding school away from home for at least some time. The mean age of first marriage in America for urban girls fell between the late eighteenth century and mid nineteenth century, from 22.4 at the time of the American Revolution to 21.9 by the nineteenth century. However, for rural girls, the mean of first marriage rose slightly over the same period, from 22.4 to 22.7. In their study of western and central Europe, Maynes et. al. highlight the demographic trends in Europe that meant that in the year 1800, sixty to eighty percent of twenty-year-old women were single. While American marriage tended to take place earlier, the trend was similar. Youth, as a life-stage, was expanding. Though the end of youth was typically marked by marriage, in the period not all women married. Statistics from early nineteenth-century Boston and Charleston suggest that by the mid-nineteenth century, about one third of adult free women were not married. Though this number encompasses women who never married and those who were widowed,

[22]Maynes, et. al., *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, 3.

it should be remembered that a significant, though small minority of women would never marry, which made the end of their "youth" somewhat difficult to determine.[23]

The rapid shift in American fertility rates in the period also changed the experience of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century young women. Changes in thinking about the place and role of women and the family in the years following the American Revolution led to sharp declines in birthrate for most American women. While the colonial period had seen high birthrates and the glorification of the "fruitful" woman, family limitation became the norm in the early republic. In 1800, the average woman had 7 children, by 1850 only 5, and by 1900 only 3.5. Throughout the period covered by this dissertation young women were both growing up in smaller families and expecting to have fewer children. This change in fertility had an effect on the material lives of young women, as their domestic duties and expectations, and even the clothing they expected to wear shifted along with the birthrate.[24]

As family size and structures changed, so too did the material markers that defined the transition between childhood, youth, and adulthood. Historians of fashion have highlighted the shift in clothing concurrent with the shift in reproductive attitudes. While previous generations had a marked shift between the clothing of young, unmarried women and matrons, the women's fashion of the early nineteenth century favored light colors and

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[23] Susan Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 46; Maynes et. al., *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mils*, 1; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *Ladies, Women, and Wenches: Choice and Constraint in Antebellum Charleston and Boston*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 10-11; Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller. *Liberty a Better Husband: Single Women in America, The Generations of 1780-1840*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 5; Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 13-14

[24] Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 3-8.

high waists of children's clothing. Thus, as women were having fewer children, they were increasingly dressing like them, not marking their status as childbearing adult women.[25]

The life course of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American women was marked by material change – in clothing and hair, duties, responsibilities and permissions. In transitioning from children to youth, affluent and elite young women were often removed from familiar spaces of home to elite boarding schools. They began taking on increased domestic responsibilities. Young women had an increasing control over what they wore, what they bought, and with whom they engaged in social networks of shared material. They prepared for their material lives as adult women, gathering trousseaus, and mastering the running of a household, large or small. Thus, considering the material worlds and material educations of American young women in the revolutionary and antebellum periods is essential to understanding the ways in which they negotiated the transitional points in their life course.

Methods and Sources

The dissertation utilizes methodological frameworks pioneered by historians of material culture like Ann Smart Martin as well as interpretive techniques from art history, archaeology, and literary studies. In developing my dissertation project, I seek to locate my study between the materially concerned "object-based" studies and the culturally centered "object driven" ones.[26] Historians, in general, tend toward the latter expression of material

[25] Leslie Reinhardt, "Serious Daughters: dolls, dress, and female virtue in the eighteenth century," *American Art* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 49.

[26] One primary division in material culture is between studies that are "object-centered' and those that are "object driven." Object-centered studies involve a narrow focus on an object or a group of objects, like those in an archaeological assemblage. Their attention is, typically, on a particular facet of that object or objects – the technology and industry of its creation, its artistic or aesthetic qualities or its relation to other objects. On the other hand, object-driven

culture in their work. Harvey agues that as a community historians "are not as much interested in things or their thingness for their own sake, but as routes to past experience." However, this dissertation will attempt to both read *and* contextualize the material worlds of young women, attending to the material details of certain items, both real and imagined, as well as the cultural place and space that these things occupied.[27]

This dissertation utilizes three main types of source material to analyze objects, both material and discursive, along with spaces, and places in the material world of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century young women. The most obvious body of source material is the extant objects that were owned, used, and created by young women. Collections of dresses and samplers in museums, along with the material collections at the Hagley Library and Museum, Winterthur Library and Museum, and Massachusetts Historical Society, provided a source of physical material evidence. In particular, the Hagley Museum collections allow the direct comparison of material sources with contemporary descriptions of those sources by their owners in letters and diaries.

Textual sources that were the productions of young women such as letters, diaries, sketches and scrapbooks as well as documents related to the material world of young womanhood make up the largest source type in this dissertation. For instance, the record in a family account book about the purchase of dancing slippers or a collection of invoices for the trousseau of a new bride can also be used to articulate the range of material encounters. Similarly, a diary reference to a new dress or a coveted bracelet and the fashions and furnishings sketched by a caricaturist like Sophie du Pont are also entry points into a

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studies use the kinds of evidence generated by object-centered studies and use that evidence to answer larger questions about society and culture.

[27] Harvey, "Introduction: Practical Matters," in *History and Material Culture: A student's guide to approaching alternative sources*, edited by Karen Harvey, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 7.

discussion about eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century material worlds of girls. While archaeologists create assemblages from archaeological sites, the letters and diaries also offer the chance to create similar bodies of material evidence. While most of the items mentioned in young women's letters do not survive in physical form, sifting material details from the text allowed me to build and analyze "textual assemblages" from archival collections. It is important to remember, however, that these documentary sources are themselves material as well as textual. The layout of text on a sheet of paper, the doodles and sketches on a letter received from a friend, the physical heft of a diary, and the size and shape of a sketch are all important material evidence to be gleaned along with the text.

My last type of source materials are prescriptive, including Eliza Farrar's influential 1837 *Young Lady's Friend*, as well as more theoretical works by Mary Wollstonecraft and Judith Sargent Murray, and cultural commentary in publications of the period. These sources made extensive commentary on the material world, appropriate material uses, and ramifications of material choices of young women. These sources offer a way to consider the external meanings being applied to young women's material culture as well as the way they were consumed by the young women at whom they were aimed. Young women were avid readers, not only of the conduct manuals aimed at them, but of the works of Wollstonecraft and Murray and the newspaper articles that decried female consumption. The perspectives of these sources on young women's material lives, as well as the ways that young women interpreted them are both vital sources in this dissertation.

Of all the models of material culture history to choose from, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's techniques and focus are most applicable to this dissertation. She concentrates on a single object - a stocking, a chest of drawers, a basket – and then seamlessly spins out the social, cultural and political world that surrounded each object. Ulrich, in her essay in the collection

Through a Glass Darkly and in her monograph *The Age of Homespun*, successfully negotiates the line between object-driven and object-focused. In her essay on Hannah Barnard's chest of drawers, she argues that, "somewhere between the broad contours of refinement and the microscopic examination of paint pigments, there must be room for a social history of objects that focuses on the small politics of everyday life."[28] My dissertation strikes that balance, between the large ideological change and connoisseurial minutia as well as between individual and group experience

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological analysis of "taste" also provides an essential analytical framework for understanding the interplay of material worlds and self-fashioning. Taste, argues Bourdieu, transmutes things into signs. It creates and maintains distinctions between social classes. Bourdieu ties production and consumption to the production and legitimation of social difference. While Bourdieu focused on class difference in twentieth-century France, his methodologies are exceptionally applicable to the analysis of other places and times. Understanding the ways that classes were defined "as much by…being perceived as by its being," can help to explicate the social significance of young women's bonnets and books as agents of social self-fashioning. This concept of taste and a continual attention to what Ulrich calls "the small politics of everyday life," animate and focus this dissertation and guide its analysis of the textual and material sources of young women.[29]

Subjects and Themes

The young women who owned and produced these material and textual sources share several key characteristics. This dissertation is focused on the period's newly forming group of

[28] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Hannah Barnard's Cupboard," 269.
[29] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

middle and upper classes' daughters of doctors, lawyers, merchants and industrialists. The young female subjects of the dissertation range from the developing upper middle class of Americans to the elite, though my focus throughout has been on young women whose class status and family background meant that they had access to a world of goods that would have been inaccessible to their mothers and grandmothers. All were from relatively comfortable material circumstances,[30] all were white, and few had to or chose to work outside the home. These young women all had the resources available to them to make choices about their material worlds. They were all likely to be well schooled, most at a combination of boarding school and home, an experience which allowed them to develop a social and material network of their peers. All were also socially prominent enough to make the preservation of their letters, diaries, and things likely.[31]

Though they shared many similar characteristics, the dissertation's subjects were also different in several key ways. Their girlhoods spanned the eighty-year period between 1770 and 1850. Some lived at home, and were educated at local schools or by parents or siblings in their home. Others were residents at the boarding schools and female seminaries that proliferated in the early republic. Some were tied almost exclusively to their own home, town, and region while others traveled extensively. The subjects were drawn from three

[30] While all of the dissertation's subjects were affluent, their actual available family income varied heavily. For instance, while the du Pont family was among the social elite in their Brandywine Valley area, the family was habitually in debt as they built the gunpowder manufactory that would later be the source of the family wealth. Others, including Caroline Healey, found their family economic situations vastly variable. When her father lost a fortune in 1842, Caroline, though raised a very wealthy young woman, began teaching school to support her family.

[31] The dissertation's focus on affluent and elite young women should not be interpreted to mean that poorer girls, slaves, or free black women lacked material cultures that contoured their adolescences, because, of course, they did. Historians of the period have articulated the importance of participation in formal and informal consumer economies and the ability to follow fashion or make material choices across the social spectrum of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America. Compelling work could *and should* be done on these segments of the early American population

different regions: New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and the South, with a focus on the urban commercial centers of Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston. I selected about forty young women for the study. The regional distribution encompasses about half the informants from New England, a third from the Mid-Atlantic around Philadelphia, and the remaining twenty percent from the Charleston area. However, this regional distribution does not necessarily capture the geographic diversity of my informants.[32]

For these young women, a sense of place was often a highly complex equation. While the project started out focused on three major port cities – Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston – it quickly became apparent that geography was far more complicated. The young female subjects of my project lived in a geographically fluid environment. Charlestonians, for instance, often spent much of their year in northern ports including Philadelphia and Newport. These girls often thought and wrote about themselves as Southerners in some situations and Northerners in others. Physical separation of space meant significantly less than the culturally constructed regionalisms of these young women.

Affluent young women also travelled widely within the United States and abroad. Catherine Hickling, daughter of the U.S. consul in the Azores, wrote frequently about how "*Portuguese"* she had become on the islands while still emphasizing her ties and affinity to her Boston home. George Washington's granddaughter Nelly Custis was at times a rural Virginian, at others a New York or Philadelphia society belle. Girls lived away from home, traveled to stay with extended family and friends, and made and remade their geographic

[32] The young women who were my informants also varied in religious affiliation. Most were Protestant, while a few, including Julia and Amelia du Pont were Catholic. While I did read the diaries of several intensely religious young women, their writing followed strict conventions of genre that seemed to exclude material matters, and even most references to daily life. However, most of my subjects did not discuss their religious practices, and rarely mixed any religious references with material ones. As the project moves forward, I hope to include more religious diversity, particularly young women, including Quakers, whose religious practice included distinctly material strictures.

identities almost overnight. Thus, geographic boundaries in this dissertation are most relevant and resonant as young women discussed them. The way that a girl chose to align herself – northern or southern, urban or rural, foreigner or native – speaks far more clearly to her material world than did her actual geographic location.[33]

The sources are divided fairly evenly between two approximate periods: the first, between 1770 and 1820, and the second between 1820 and 1850. In both cohorts, the range of sources offer both longitudinal and latitudinal readings of the lives of young women or cohorts of young women together.[34] The papers of Nabby Adams, daughter of John and Abigail Adams, and her cousin Betsey Cranch offer a type of latitudinal source material. Nabby and Betsey, both in their late teens corresponded frequently in the 1780s while Nabby was in England and France with her family and Betsey was home in Massachusetts. Several of Betsey's letters and diaries also survive, offering a more longitudinal account of her daily life between 1781 and her 1789 marriage. In contrast, the diary of Charlestonian Harriet Manigault offers a substantive longitudinal study of a southerner away from the south. Harriet, the daughter of a very prominent Charleston family, moved permanently to Philadelphia with her mother and several sisters following the death of her father in 1809.

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[33] For a larger discussion of the Carolina elite's travel and residence in Philadelphia and Newport see Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 5, 129; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*. While this dissertation is focused on young women living in the north, in expanding and continuing the project, I would like to look more closely at young women living and identifying specifically as southerners. Southern plantation culture encompasses a material world all its own, one that any overarching study of American young women's material world requires.

[34] I must also underline here, the diversity of source material available. Some young women's collections were very large and covered much of their young adult life. Others were much more fragmentary, an isolated year in a diary or small collection of letters. Sources also varied in terms of detail. While a young woman might keep a daily diary for ten years, her entries might be cursory compared to the intensely personal document created in the space of four months by someone else. Thus, strict attention to the number of sources does not necessarily reflect the relative richness of a group of sources.

She kept a diary rich with personal and material detail between 1813 and marriage in 1816 when she was in her early twenties.

Another diarist, Bostonian Catherine Hickling, in her late teens, kept a record of an extended voyage between 1786 and 1789 to St. Michael's Island in the Azores where her father was the American consul, and later to London. Her diaries offer a unique perspective on the material self-fashioning of a young woman far from home. She toys frequently with ideas of place, regional identity, national identity, and belonging.

The letters and diaries of the first generation of the du Pont family in America also offer a source on regional, national, and international belonging. The daughters of E. I. du Pont, their cousins, and friends, bridge the line between the two rough age cohorts. Victorine and Evelina, the du Pont's oldest daughters were both born in France, and passed their young adulthood between 1804 and 1818. Eleuthera and Sophie, the family's youngest daughters, were born in Delaware, just outside of Philadelphia, in 1806 and 1810 respectively. Thus, their adolescences were quite removed from that of their sisters. In this regard the du Pont collections at the Hagley library provide both rich, and so far mostly untapped, latitudinal and longitudinal sources. The letters of Victorine and Evelina du Pont and their school friends, teens in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, are easily comparable with the correspondence of Betsey and Nabby and the diaries of Harriet and Catherine.

Sources from 1830-1850 period also display this latitudinal and longitudinal range, as well as a sense of interconnectedness. Eleuthera and Sophie du Pont corresponded with their sisters, school friends, and with each other throughout their adolescence. Eleuthera formed a lasting friendship with Meta Lammot while at school in Philadelphia, and their active correspondence comprises a large fraction of the du Pont papers of the era. Along with letters and diaries, Sophie du Pont was an avid caricaturist, who drew humorous scenes from daily

life for the amusement of her family and friends. This range of source material – letters, diaries, pictures, and even the du Pont children's homemade newspaper – represent the diverse range of textual and material sources in the dissertation.

The du Pont papers also represent the links and bridges so common in the source material. Eleuthera du Pont's social circle bridged regional divides. The letters of another of her school friends, Charlestonian Sophia Cheves, are in the archival collection of the South Carolina Historical Society. Sophia, like many other Charlestonian girls, was educated in Philadelphia and formed an ongoing correspondence with Eleuthera even after both had returned to their respective homes.

While Eleuthera and her school friends corresponded in Philadelphia, Anna Cabot Lowell, the daughter of a prominent Boston family, kept a diary and maintained an active correspondence with her cousin Georgina Amory in and around Boston. Anna's diaries and letters emphasize both the centrality of her relationship with Georgina, and her connections to Boston society as she makes mention of several others of the dissertation's subjects, including Anna Cabot Lowell Quincy. A decade later, Anne Gorham Everett, daughter of Massachusetts politician, minister, and diplomat Edward Everett, kept a diary of her daily life from age eleven to her death at age twenty in 1843.

In total, the young female subjects of this project span eighty years and range from Boston to the Azores to Charleston and back. I established the parameters of this dissertation to reveal differences – in region, in time, in social identity – but instead found startling degrees of continuity, similarity, and linkages across time and space. Though the young subjects of the dissertation were often separated, both geographically and chronologically, from one another, there were dramatic similarities in the ways that they related to, manipulated, and engaged with their material worlds. In reflection of the similarities of

experience that vastly outweigh differences, I will move fluidly across chronology and region in this dissertation. Common themes and similar patterns of material self-fashioning, rather than strict chronological or regional separation, shape and bound the project.

The dissertation focuses on five broad aspects of the material lives of young women in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America. I begin with the material world of the body, in a chapter on appearance and self-presentation. Young women's choices about their own appearance and assessment about the appearances of others spoke to the way that they saw themselves fitting into their social world. In proclaiming one's exemplary fashion sense, or disparaging the appearance of a disliked person, young women linked material presentation to internal personal characteristics. I offer a close reading of several girls' extensive descriptions of clothing, arguing that these passages are not trivialities but rather encode highly specific meanings about self, relation to others, class, and social hierarchy. The self-presentation chapter also attends to the attitudes of young women who were aggressively opposed to fashion and the standards of female appearance to which they felt held. While this strain of anti-fashion might seem out of place, in actuality the aggressive pursuit of not-fashion is just as telling and just as materially concerned as young women eager for the latest bonnet or most fashionable color.

In the second chapter, I consider young women's consumer behavior as it reflected on their perceptions of their own maturity, capacity for perception, value, and taste. In it, I consider the ways in which shopping savvy as a learned skill was essential female behavior as well as the ways in which consumption made women a target for criticism for their material desires. The chapter goes on to discuss the skills that successful participation in the consumer marketplace demanded, and closes with a detailed analysis of the practice of "proxy-shopping" in the social lives of early American young women.

Continuing on from proxy shopping, the third chapter focuses on the sociability of things in the lives of young women. I posit a type of materio-social network, in which objects become imbued with an aspect of a person, and become representative of social relationships. The giving of gifts, the sending of letters, and collaborating to produce items all represented social ties of affection. Young women often phrased their attachment to one another in material terms, and associated gifts and letters with the presence of absent loved ones. This was, in some regards, particularly obvious in the material cultures of death and mourning in early America, when objects took on relic-like significance to represent deceased loved ones.

In chapter four, I consider the role formal education and its associated material cultures played in young women's movement toward adulthood. I consider the ways that formal material education reflected on the future adult lives that young women envisioned for themselves as well as the futures that others envisioned for them. Branches of education had particular material facets that shaped young women's educational opportunities, as can be seen from the shift in science education over the course of the period. The chapter also discusses the material cultures of school and the schoolroom, a time when many young women were away from home and family and charged with keeping their own things in a group environment. I also complicate the line between "intellectual" education and "accomplishment," with a close reading of objects in which the two were inextricably intertwined. I close with a discussion of what happened when young women felt that the material world and the intellectual one were in conflict.

The last chapter focuses on the source of much of that intellectual conflict: the material cultures of domesticity, spaces in which these young women lived and, and most often worked. It considers the variety of attitudes toward domesticity held by girls in the period, from satisfaction to humor to despair, and the ways that those attitudes reflected upon

young, female selves. The chapter discusses the acquisition of the many material skills required of early American young women, as well as the ways that such skill marked and measured their accession to adulthood. I highlight reactions to marriage, particularly to the changing material status of young women, as they watched friends and family take over domestic duties that often left a gulf between the newly married young woman and her unmarried siblings and friends. Finally, the chapter closes with the ways in which young women viewed the material cultures of home when they were far from it. Girls who traveled discussed and compared the material world of their homes of origin to the spaces that surrounded them elsewhere, crafting a self tied to home or unmoored from the domestic world they knew well.

Taken together, the chapters interweave to explore material lives from the intimate material world of the body to the material significance of home and not-home. It insists that the often-trivialized concerns of young women were far from trivial. Things, spaces, and places, from ruffles to rivers, served as the tools with which young women enacted their own self-fashioning. The buying of one bonnet over another or sending of a letter, despising household material work, or using astronomical tools to study the stars were all acts of adolescent self-fashioning. This dissertation argues that Antoinette Brevost's, "tell me how you like the shoose," was more than a request for information. Her question, and the material discourses of her young female contemporaries, reflects on how buying, making, sharing, wearing, hating and wanting things offered young women one of the most crucial venues through which they could develop and refine adult selves.

Before closing, I also wish to explicate several editorial choices. Throughout the dissertation, I have elected to refer to my young female subjects by their first names. The choice is both practical, as I deal extensively with family groups where referring to subjects

by their surname would be confusing at best, but also because it is how they referred to themselves. With few exceptions, I first refer to a young woman by her full name and afterward by her first name, or most common nickname. Thus Margaretta Lammot, is almost invariably Meta, and Abigail Adams becomes Nabby. The choice is a deliberate one, meant to suggest a profound respect for the identities that they proclaimed for themselves. Where necessary for clarification, I have silently amended unclear punctuation (or added it, where its lack obscured meaning) but otherwise tried to allow the style of each young woman to remain. Finally, young women used a variety of date styles (some of them unclear and self-referential); for ease of reference I opted for standardization in referencing dates on letters and diaries. Where known, I note the date as month followed by date followed by year.

Chapter 1

"You dont know the fation here": appearance, fashion, and self-presentation, 1770-1850.

In 1771, twelve-year-old Anna Green Winslow wrote to her mother with an urgent dilemma. "I hope," she wrote, "aunt won't let me wear the black hatt with the red Dominie [Domino]." The combination, she insisted, would cause a stir in the Boston streets if she were to venture out in it. "Dear mamma," she continued, "you dont know the fation here –I beg to look like other folk." Anna's concern about the combination of "black hatt" and "red Dominie" may seem simple or unimportant. However, the small exchange contains a tremendous amount of information about Anna and the self that she was busily creating while pursuing her education away from her family home in Nova Scotia. Anna's letter to her mother, at the surface, reflected her knowledge and understanding of fashion and style in the urban port of Boston. Anna knew what to wear and what not to wear, and had incorporated that fashion sense into her developing adult self. She knew that the possible combination of red cloak and black hat would mark her out as hopelessly unfashionable; and that if she dressed in the colors often associated with peddlers, people might ask what she was hawking. By dressing in the wrong way, she might be marked as someone below her class and status. She hoped to avoid the non-conformity that a fashion faux pas would entail. Rather, she told her mother, she begged to "look like other folk," and fit in on the Boston streets around her. [1]

[1] Anna Green Winslow, [Diary, November 29, 1771], *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771*. Alice Morse Earle, ed. (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin, And Co. 1894), 7-8. By the mid nineteenth-century the figure of the red cloaked and black hatted peddler had become a common decorative doll in both England and America. These "notion nannies," dressed in traditional peddler attire, adorned mantelpieces on both sides of the Atlantic. While the dolls were meant to evoke a bygone era, peddlers dressed in the combination of black hat and red cape would have been a common sight in early America.

Moreover, she felt confident in saying that she, all of twelve, knew the fashion far better than her mother. Her access to the commercial and cosmopolitan environment of Boston allowed her to transcend age hierarchies, citing her greater experience. While her mother might not know the "fation" of Boston, Anna was an expert. She positioned herself as knowledgeable because of her geographic and social position, contrasted with her mother's access to fashion in the hinterland. Anna Winslow's black hat/red cape dilemma serves as an illustration of the tremendous social and cultural significance that was encoded in the appearance of young women – and those around them – in early America.

Young women's material lives were, in many ways, centered on material worlds of the body. While from 1770 to 1850, the styles of clothes, hair, desirable features, and presentation more generally varied dramatically, the central role that appearance, dress, and fashion played in the self-fashioning of young women was strikingly consistent. Appearances, both their own and those that they encountered, offered a means by which young women might read and discern features about themselves and those around them.

To Anna Winslow, and young women like her, appearance offered a means to articulate belonging, maturity, place, connections, and knowledge. When they chose one bonnet over another, scorned the whiskers of a beau, or lamented their complexions' growing assortment of blackheads they attached material appearance to internal character. Personal traits were linked, over and over again, to physical features of body, appearance, dress, and fashion. Young women in early America linked personal care with maturity when they fretted about learning to dress their hair appropriately. Their choice to be fashionable – or conscious election not to be – was made in conjunction with a host of personal characteristics. In relating what they, and those around them, wore, they were linking relationships both social

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Thus, Anna hoped to avoid dressing like them. For more on Notion Nannies, see Allison Smith's 2007 BAM/PFA exhibit. http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/press/release/TXT0162

and sartorial. The decisions they made about what they wore or rejected, admired or scorned gave young women a way to create, test, and refine their own developing subjectivities.

In exploring the ways in which young women used self-presentation, I will begin with a brief discussion of the scholarly literatures on fashion, appearance, gender, and youth in early America. Following this historiographical discussion, I will move on to consider the role that physical appearances and bodily characteristics served as material manifestation of moral, social, and cultural features. After considering bodies and physical appearance, I will transition to the ways that wearing apparel shaped young women's self-fashioning, beginning with sartorial decision making enacted by young women, as well as the slippery and sometimes dangerous ideal of the fashionable and stylish. Following these broad contextual sections, I will consider the ways in which clothing and appearance marked and articulated social relationships in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America. This section examines choices about wearing apparel as a way for young women to express allegiance or affinity or reproach for their contemporaries. Finally, I will conclude with two contrasting yet closely related phenomena: the personal and social significance of fashion – as well as the dismissal of those significances by audiences both contemporary and modern – and the personal and social significance of the anti-fashion choices made by American young women. While seemingly polarized, both of these cases serve to show the ways that self-presentation and subjectivity were intimately linked in the period.

Voiceless speech: appearances speaking volumes in early America

In her comprehensive book on historical clothing in early America, focused on the collections at colonial Williamsburg, historian Linda Baumgarten suggests that through the things that they chose to wear, people are enabled to say "subtle but important things" that they could

not or would not state directly. Clothing historian Jennie Batchelor highlights a similar function for clothing, particularly in the eighteenth-century. Clothing, she argues, "was perceived…as a powerful signifier of self." Appearances, clothing, accessories and other material cultures of the body were being read almost constantly in early America for clues to an individual's personal and social identities. The question of fashion and fashionability was of particular significance in early America. Sociologist Gilles Lipovetsky argues that fashion, as a concept, should not be considered an anthropological constant. Rather, he argues, fashion evolved in the West at the end of the medieval period. In its early period, Lipovetsky suggests, fashion, its creation and adherence, was monopolized by a limited group of the elite. However, in the years following the consumer revolutions, a broader segment of society had access to the items that marked and measured elite fashions. They were able, as Bourdieu articulates, to pursue individual distinction through consumable goods.[2]

Fashion and appearance in the period have been approached in the scholarly literature from history to literature to art. For instance, Jillian Heydt-Stevenson analyzes hats in eighteenth-century English fiction and the ways in which they reflect upon their wearers. Hats, in literature, offer transformative properties to their wearers, but also serve to deceive. In her work on eighteenth-century backcountry shoppers Ann Smart Martin devotes a chapter to exploring the significance of ribbons as costume, symbol and vehicle for social relations.

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[2] Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002), 56; Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, (London: Palgrave, 2005), 5-9; T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 160; Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15-17; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); For more on distinction and its fashion applications see Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Each of these studies uses a specific type or types of material evidence as the basis for at least some piece of their analysis of apparel choice in the early Atlantic world.[3]

Other studies focus more broadly on the creation of identity or identities through appearance. Ann Smart Martin suggests that clothing's "protean nature" allowed its wearers to both "transform [their] identities and identify the status of others" in the Virginia backcountry. Earle analyzes the sartorial self-fashionings of black and Indian populations, particularly the clothing of women, in seventeenth through nineteenth century Americas and the responses that their fashion choices provoked. Similarly, Ana Maria Presta argues that indigenous women who adopted costumes previously restricted to the wife of the Inka were adapting new identities in the wake of social change that Spanish rule provoked. In her analysis of the perplexing case of Thomas (ine) Hall, Mary Beth Norton suggests that the case of disputed gender identity "points to the importance of clothing as a gendered marker in seventeenth-century society" In all of these cases, pieces of clothing and the choice of one type of clothing over another have a clear effect on the social, racial, and gender identity of the clothed.[4]

In her work on politics and fashion in eighteenth-century America, Kate Haulman points out the paradox inherent in self-fashioning through fashion. While fashion served as a

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[3] Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, "'Changing her gown and setting her head to rights': New Shops, New Hats and New Identities," in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds, (Palgrave: 2007), 31-51; Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 169-173.

[4] Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods*, 184; Rebecca Earle, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!' Race, Clothing and Identity in the Americas (17^{th}-19^{th} centuries), in *History Workshop Journal*, No. 52, (Autumn, 2001), 175-195; Ana Maria Presta, "Undressing the *Coya* and Dressing the Indian Woman: Market Economy, Clothing, and Identities in the Colonial Andes, La Plata (Charcas), Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 90, no.1 (2010), 52; Mary Beth Norton, "Communal Definitions of Gendered Identity in Seventeenth-Century English America," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, Ronald Hoffman, Mechal Sobel & Frederika J. Teute, Eds, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 52.

form of distinction, Haulman argues, it was also inherently associated with femininity (and effeminacy) as well as negative moral connotations. Clothing and appearance, argues Haulman, was "a screen onto which people projected ideas about…gender relations, social order, and political authority," as well as a way that people could enact those ideas. Fashion could be used to perform and mediate social differences, but not without raising anxieties as well.[5]

The manipulation of their appearance and adherence to (or rejection of) the dictates fashion offered young women a way to be conscious choosers, granting them a particular kind of empowerment. Erin Mackie suggests that fashion, its pursuit and discourses, act as "counterutopias" that present avenues for empowerment to groups typically excluded from the 'rational public sphere." Similarly, Thompson and Haytko argue that fashion offers its consumers "a plurality of interpretive positions," from which they can choose to negotiate tensions between social conformity and individual agency. In the case of early American young women, discourses of fashion allowed them to claim a kind of power of choice and authority not always available to them. [6]

One of the most striking similarities across literature on clothes and appearances in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is the preoccupation with the anxieties provoked by fashion. In her study of accessories in French novels, Susan Hiner argues that the pursuit

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[5] Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 225,3.

[6] Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in the Tatler and the Spectator*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xii; Thompson & Haytko, "Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings." *Journal of Consumer Research* 24, no.1 (June, 1997), 15-16. This is not to suggest that fashion was not a double-edged sword. As will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, fashion and pursuit of it was often both encouraged and despised behavior in early American young women. Haulman, in her study of fashion and politics in eighteenth-century America emphasizes the contradiction in terms for young women whose fathers urged stern moderation but also encouraged them to always be fashionable. Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 190-194.

of social class identification through the markers of shawls and fans and other accessories, was more significant in times of "social instability." Marcia Pointon, in her study of women and jewelry in Britain, notes that the flurry of popular etiquette books of the early nineteenth century began to articulate clear rules for exactly when and where and for what occasions women of particular classes should wear specific types of jewelry. Pointon argues that the new interest in the rules of jewelry was in response to the rapid increase in social mobility in Britain in the period. Haulman too, emphasizes the degree to which the distinctions that fashion created were most keenly felt at times when "traditional hierarchies were deeply in flux."[7] However, the problem with fashion lay in its own instability.

Fashion, especially in the decades following the consumer revolution, was increasingly available to a wide swath of the public. Karen Halttunen emphasizes the degree to which post revolutionary Americans saw fashion and appearance as a control on class movement. Erin Mackie points out that fashion was double-edged, with the power to undermine authority. While it might help differentiate classes, it might also blur the lines. T. H. Breen discusses the ways in which fashion and social emulation affected social class at the time of the American Revolution. Since anyone could purchase the latest styles or newest fashions, appearances could be deceiving. For instance, in the period silk clothing was so sought after that fake-silk industries arose to meet the demand of a poorer clientele. Woolen mills in England developed processes to mimic the sheen and drape of fine silk in their own products. Clearly the possession, even if it was merely the *appearance* of possession, of imported luxury goods was significant. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fear of

[7] Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 11; Pointon, "Women and their Jewels in Eighteenth-century England" in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds, (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 26; Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 3.

falseness, or of erasing lines of class by material means is identified in the scholarly literature again and again.[8]

Anxiety about the effects of fashion, style, and appearances in early America abounded. While sumptuary laws had held issues of fashion and class in check in earlier centuries, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the concept of taste prevailed. Breen highlights the significance that imported goods took on in a world where money and not innate character might determine social order. Halttunen, too, acknowledges nineteenth-century Americans' fear that fashion was merely "a parlor version of the confidence game that was poisoning social relations outside the home." Jennie Batchelor highlights the self-perpetuating cycle of defining social classes through appearances. While women emulated their social superiors, the elite were in constant pursuit of new fashions with which to distinguish themselves. [9]

Along with exposing appearance as both reinforcing and undermining social class, the scholarly literature also emphasizes the utility of fashion, clothing and appearances as an analytical tool for broader phenomena. Kate Haulman uses fashion as a way to understand very material conflicts over power in the eighteenth century. Similarly, Joshua Miller

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[8] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 61-62; Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode*, 147; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 153-156, 158; Baumgarten provides an intriguing analysis of American garments produced from these "faked-silk" woolens, the process of creating them, and the regions where their production was prevalent. Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 43.

[9] In the broader American context Rebecca Earle discusses the ways that racial lines could be crossed by material means, especially by women who were of lower racial caste. In the seventeenth century Americas, she argues, mulattas and *mestizas* who emulated the upper classes, wearing luxury goods were able to emulate and, in some cases, achieve higher caste status. However, she insists, increasingly rigid lines of race differentiated from status made later attempts by black and Indian women mere violations of standards of "taste." Earle, "Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!" 184; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 156; Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 64; Batchelor, *Dress, Distress, and Desire*, 24; see also Joanne Entwhistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), Chapter 4.

highlights the ways that fashion and appearance can be politicized. T.H. Breen and Leslie Reinhardt both emphasize the political aesthetic embodied in women's appearances in the years surrounding the American Revolution. Imagined classical dress, argues Reinhardt, featured in portraiture, was a way for male artists and art patrons to bring female culture under control. Rather than a commercial choice made by women, their imagined classical costumes referenced the noble virtue of a republic. Each of the scholars touches on a point that is central to this chapter: that appearance, particularly the appearance of women, was a flashpoint for the "multiple and often competing anxieties," about what it all meant.[10]

Appearance, and the anxiety that it provoked, were often voiced and expressed in very gendered ways. The capacity to choose, for instance, was a point of major concern. Women who were free to choose in one area, for instance, might be suspected of other liberties as well. Reinhardt also emphasizes the degree to which the fashionable dress of "real life" was linked to threatening levels of female autonomy. Halttunen suggests that in the "sentimental" woman of the mid-nineteenth century eschewed the fashionable, for the more simple and moral beauty. Sentimental rhetoric dictated that even women's faces must be clear, an index to their true feeling rather than a mask created out of cosmetics.[11]

Particularly significant to this study is the degree to which fashion and femininity were linked in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Atlantic world. Mackie and Hiner both articulate the ways that fashion, clothing, and accessories were considered feminine concerns. The material things and the discourses of fashion, style, and consumer behavior that surrounded them were dismissed as trivial, foolish, inauthentic, or even

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[10] Haulman, *Politics of Fashion*, 3; Joshua I. Miller, "Fashion and Democratic Relationships," *Polity* 37, no. 1 (Jan. 2005), 3-23; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 281-282; Leslie Reinhardt, "Serious Daughters: dolls, dress, and female virtue in the eighteenth century," *American Art* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 55; Batchelor, *Dress, Distress, and Desire*, 11.
[11] Reinhardt, "Serious Daughters," 47, 48; Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 89, 87.

dangerous. Mackie goes further, suggesting that in scholarship, fashion has been "seen as an instrument of sexual subjugation, or, at best, a tragic waste of time."[12] Thus, to many scholars, fashion, faces, stockings, and fans were meaningless at best, and the girls who owned, shared, and discussed them were pitiable. It is this point upon which I hope to most expand.

My research has shown that the material worlds of early American young womanhood were sites replete with meaning. How young women chose to relate to their material worlds, to reject or embrace or tease or ponder physical things mattered. When they debated the length of a hem or the most fashionable color in the city, they were positioning themselves as future adults within their families, their communities, and their nation. Their attention to material detail, whether adoration or disgust, speaks volumes to the selves that they were busily creating. While learning to craft their own appearances, early American girls were simultaneously sketching the outlines of the adult women they would become.

"I jump up and *beautify* myself": Keeping up appearances in early America

In a diary account of how she spent her days, twenty-one year old Harriet Manigault noted that following an afternoon nap, "when the first bell rings, I jump up & *beautify* myself & am always ready for the second which announces dinner." The process of "beautifying" was an essential part of Harriet's daily routine. Young women in early America closely attended physical appearances, both their own and those of the people around them. Moral and personal traits were mapped onto the material spaces of the body. Thus, when Harriet noted

[12] Mackie, *Market à la Mode*, xii; Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity*, 1.

her attention to putting her person in order, she was also signaling features of her social, gendered self in the process. [13]

Cleanliness was one aspect of personal physical appearance that merits significant attention in the letters and diaries of young women. Conduct manuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century emphasize the great importance, particularly to young women, of both tidiness and physical cleanness. In her 1837 conduct book, *The Young Lady's Friend*, Eliza Farrar was very clear about the appropriate processes of cleanliness. "Clean stockings," she wrote, "neat shoes…smooth, well-brushed hair, and delicately clean hands, nails, and teeth, would make them look more lady-like…in a nine-penny calico, than they would be, in the finest merino, or most costly French print." Here, Farrar emphasizes the physical body under clothing. Clean, tidy presentation was, according to Farrar, much more important than the clothing that accompanied it. Similarly, expensive clothing could not hide an untidy presentation. To Farrar, cleanliness was king.[14]

In her history of cleanliness in early America, historian Kathleen Brown notes how striking Farrar's prescription for soap and water washing actually was. While previous

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[13] Harriet Manigault, [July 29, 1814] *The Diary of Harriet Manigault 1813-1816*, (Colonial Dames of America, Chapter II, Maine Coast Printers, 1976), 10. The language of "beautification" was not just a quirk of Harriet's speech. In 1849, Katharine Bigelow Lawrence noted that, upon the arrival of guests, she rushed away to the nursery to remove the bandage from her eye and, in her words, "beautified myself a little" and then came down. Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, May 9, 1848, Katharine Bigelow Lawrence Lowell diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852. Ms. N-1547. Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS). Harriet, too, found her beauty felled by injury. "I went into the garden & touched a plant," she wrote, "which has proved poisonous, for my face is all swelled up, & one of my eyes nearly closed, & all of it as red as fire. I think I never saw any object look so horrible as I do." She noted a few days later that she had "almost entirely recovered [her] *beauty*." Harriet Manigault, [July 11, 1815 & July 14, 1815], *Diary*. Similarly, Georgina Amory consoled her cousin Anna, stricken with the measles, hoping that "the most face defacing" malady might "be soothe by the tender sympathy of friends." Georgina Margaret Amory to Anna Cabot Lowell, March 10, 1825, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851. Ms. N-1605. MHS.

[14] Mrs. [Eliza Ware] Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend: A Manual of Practical Advice and Instruction to Young Females on Their Entering Upon the Duties of Life After Quitting School*, (New York: Samuel S. and William Wood, 1838), 118.

generations had rarely bathed fully with soap and water, Farrar argued that every part of the body should be bathed at least once a day. The prescriptive *Young Lady's Friend* signals a distinct shift in the way that cleanliness was approached in early America. Increasingly, the body was seen as problematic, needing constant care and attention to avoid unpleasant odors or appearances. Farrar's attention to cleanliness, and the young women who followed her guidelines, were adhering to a new material standard of behavior. These standards were essential, given the "widespread self-consciousness about public appearance," that Brown has identified in early America. A young woman's failure to meet them could have dire ramifications.[15]

While cleanliness was being redefined throughout the early Republic, gaining even further social significance, adhering to changing principles of the neat and tidy was not innate. The skills for keeping one's person in order were learned behaviors. Consider, for instance, Eliza Farrar's insistence that it was "not possible for persons to wash themselves thoroughly, and attend properly to their hair, teeth, and nails…women will need an hour. There is no merit in making a hasty toilet in the morning. An hour is not too much to devote to it."[16] In 1838, fifteen-year-old Caroline Healey noted in her diary, "I believe I comply with Mrs. Farrar's requisition that 'every lady should be an hour at her toilette' although my dress is exceedingly plain."[17] Caroline, an avid reader of Mrs. Farrar, was eager to place herself in the role of cleanliness disciple. She met the requirements for appropriate physical presentation. However, that Caroline was also careful to note that her dress was "exceedingly

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[15] Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 243-44, 138. Farrar's prescription is also in line with the sentimental era of fashion highlighted by Karen Halttunen. Halttunen suggests that around 1836, there was a major American shift to simple, more restrained styles and an emphasis on the pure and the natural. Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 73-76.
[16] Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend*, 164-65.
[17] Caroline Healey, Diary March 19, 1838, Reel 32,Caroline Wells Healey Dall Papers, 1811-1917, Ms. N-1082, MHS.

plan," is also telling. As we will see at the end of the chapter, while Caroline was an eager adherent to *The Young Lady's Friend*, she was also keen to prove how very unlike other young women she was. While she may have spent an hour of her morning on her appearance, she believed her time spent at toilette was for simple cleanliness, not vain frivolity.

While Caroline read and adopted Mrs. Farrar's suggestions at home, other young women practiced adult behaviors while away at school. Eleuthera du Pont's 1821 correspondence with elder sister Victorine reflects the then fourteen-year-old Eleuthera's efforts to master the adult woman's "toilette." "I am," she wrote, "getting to put up my hair much better than I did at fir[st] and I am in hopes I will be able to do it very nicely befo[re I] go home."[18] Along with the education that Eleuthera received at school, she also hoped that her time at school would allow her to master the arts of adult hairdressing. In a letter a month later, she admits that while she dressed her hair as well as she could, her teeth "were not as white as I would wish though I scrub them regularly."[19] It was an especially triumphant letter, several months later, when Eleuthera boasted to Victorine that her teeth were "dazzling."[20] The struggle for dazzling teeth may have provoked nostalgia in Victorine who, while away at school in 1806, had written home begging her mother to send charcoal tooth powder at once.[21] Whether mastering an updo or perfecting her dazzling teeth, learning to maintain ones body as an adult was an essential skill that girls needed to learn.

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[18] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 4, 1821, Eleuthera du Pont Smith, Papers, 1816-1876. Winterthur Manuscripts Group 6:C, Hagley Museum & Library (hereafter HML).

[19] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, May 6, 1821, WMSS 6:C.

[20] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, December 8, 1821. Given the amount of face-to-face social interaction in early America, Kathleen Brown emphasizes nineteenth-century American's preoccupation with white teeth as markers of gentility in both the North and the South. Brown, *Foul Bodies*, 238-239.

[21] "je te prie de m'envoyer par la premiere occasion un peu de cette poudre de charbon pour les dents" [I beg you to send me by the first occasion a little of that charcoal powder for my

Brown emphasizes the increasing attention in the early republic that was paid to teaching children, in particular, to be clean. School children were often admonished to keep up their physical hygiene, as well as maintain the cleanliness of their clothing.[22] Eleuthera du Pont's defensive response to questioning on the point of her laundry reflects both Victorine's interest in her school-girl habits and Eleuthera's insistence on her own responsibility. "I assure you," she replied curtly, "I am never dirty…you ought to consider that I only wear ruffles once a week, and therefore they do not get dirty fast."[23] When questioned on her laundry habits, Eleuthera was quick to point out that she knew what needed to be laundered and when, better than her distant sister. Her claim to cleanliness was also a claim to adult responsibility.

Nevertheless, Eleuthera's struggles to master hygiene were not limited to factors under her control. It is important to remember that, whatever their attention to cleanliness, young women were also coping with adolescent bodies. In the same 1821 letter where she boasted of her dazzling teeth, Eleuthera noted that the salts she took had "no effect at all, except that of expelling pimples. I still have a great many." She took heart, however, at noticing that "the blackies are gradually diminishing."[24] Caroline Healey noted in her 1838 diary that, while her mother criticized her for eating too much, "the fact is that people who grow like Jack's bean stalk…have voracious appetites."[25] For both Caroline and Eleuthera, their adolescent bodies proved a challenge to societal dictates of genteel femininity.

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teeth.] Victorine du Pont to Sophie Dalmas du Pont, March 25, 1806, Victorine du Pont Bauduy, Papers, 1798-1861. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 6:A. HML.

[22] Brown, *Foul Bodies*, 328-334, 338-339

[23] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 25, 1821. Earlier in April, 1821, Eleuthera similarly reminded Victorine that she understood that her "crape dress…[was] indeed very expensive," and promised to try her "best to keep it clean." Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 17, 1821, WMSS 6:A, HML.

[24] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, December 8, 1821, WMSS 6:C, HML.

[25] Caroline Healey, Diary, April 9, 1838. Reel 32.

The physical struggles of adolescence were, however, only one facet of the way that young women considered and wrote about their own appearance. Some, like Caroline, wrote about their own growth. In an undated letter to Eleuthera du Pont, Meta Lammot wrote, "I have the sad fate to be growing monstrously fat, enormous indeed…you have no idea how large I am getting." Meta's concerns with her own size revolved around her clothes. "Fashion," she wrote, "is every thing – I am coming out bloused in all my frocks." [26] Georgina Amory recounted a struggle with her own clothes in a letter to her fiancé. "Yesterday," she wrote, "you do not know how figited I was because of my dress. I could not get it on…& they laced me tighter & tighter till I could no longer breathe & they squeezed me nearly to a mummy – but all would not do."[27] While both Meta and Georgina phrased concern about their clothes not fitting, when Nelly Custis joked that she wished she could loan a friend some of her "plumpness," size was phrased as a barrier to activity. "I think," she wrote to her friend Elizabeth, "

> I could spare her some of *my plumpness* without detriment to myself, as I have a very great portion of *that* article -- although not enough to *incommode* me or to prevent me from dancing, & walking with satisfaction[28]

Despite the three girls' concern with their own size, and its ramifications, plumpness was entirely in the eye of the beholder. Eleuthera du Pont reported, perhaps in jest that, while at school, she was daily growing "fatter and fatter and fairer and fairer."[29] Size was merely one factor that young women used to assess their own appearance. However, as will be seen later

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[26] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, no date. Margaretta Lammot du Pont, Papers, 1820-1897, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A:2. HML.
[27] Georgina Margaret Amory to John Lowell, no date, Georgina Margaret Amory Lowell. Personal papers, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851. Ms. N-1605. MHS.
[28] Eleanor Parke Custis, [March 13, 1796], Lewis, Eleanor Parke Custis. *George Washington's Beautiful Nelly: The Letters of Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley Gibson, 1794-1851*. Patricia Brady, ed, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).
[29] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, December 8, 1821, WMSS 6:C, HML.

in the chapter, size and shape were much more significant in young women's assessments of those around them.

In an age where the reading of a countenance was supposed to provide a key to a person's internal qualities, young women spent time pondering their own visages. In describing her youngest brother to Eleuthera du Pont, Sophia Cheves wrote that Hayne, as she called him, "has a broad face, big mouth, and blue eyes." She went on to explain that young Hayne was "declared to be extremely like" her in appearance. The comparison, she concluded, "may be very flattering to me at some future period, but I confess that I have not the humility to think so now."[30] However sweet a baby brother might be, being compared to him in facial features might not be entirely pleasing to his twenty-year-old sister.

In her 1815 diary, Mehetable Dawes noted one May day that it had been washing day. Despite the chores expected of her, Mehetable found the weather so pleasant she couldn't stay inside. "I could not," she wrote, "keep in the house so I'm tanned as dark as an Indian." Her one line remark is extremely telling. It reflected her transgression, that as a young woman she was expected to aid with washing day, but that she had gone outdoors instead. While outdoors, she had allowed her skin to become tan – "As dark as an Indian," as she put it. After her day visiting her birds and gathering flowers, Mehetable likened her skin to that of an Indian, her newly acquired color a mark of her freedom in the outdoors. It's likely that her turn of phrase was just that, a common way to refer to skin colored by the sun. However, given the context of her observation it takes on further significance. Her skin had not been tanned by household activity, or the necessity of traveling in the sun. Her skin had taken on the color she likened to an Indian while she was rejecting domestic confinement for

[30] Sophia Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, September 1, 1829, in Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874. Family papers, 1819-April 1861. (1167.03.01) South Carolina Historical Society (hereafter SCHS).

unfettered outdoor freedom and her face was a physical manifestation of that choice. She tied her abandonment of adult, indoor, domestic responsibility to an imagined form of Indian-ness.[31]

Faces, particularly likenesses, could be the topic of young women's analysis and discussion. When she had her portrait drawn in 1841, Caroline Healey noted that Alvan Clarke, her portraitist, told her that it would not be a good likeness, since she lacked strong features. Upon its completion, Caroline noted, a friend who saw it declared "that posterity would never know how good looking," Caroline really was. In this account, Caroline noted both the artist's observation of her regular features and her friend's observation of her own attractiveness. For Caroline, ever mindful of the future, noting these comments about her appearance allowed her to boast beauty even as she claimed that such things were unimportant. Even in jest, young women discussed their own allure. In a letter to her Baltimore cousin Jane Clopper, Jane Sidell wrote teasingly about the vagaries of taste. "Every persons ideas," she wrote, on the subject of attractiveness, "are different, for instance, I think myself very handsome but cannot find any person of the same opinion."[32]

Personal appearance and self-presentation were vital ingredients in young women's formulation of individual adult identities. Historians including Brown and Christopher Lukasik emphasize the vital importance of appearance to the social world of early America.

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[31]Mehetable May Dawes, May 22, 1815, Diary, 1811-1818. Mic 1421, Winterthur Museum, Library, & Garden (hereafter WMLG).In likening her skin to the color of an Indian's Mehetable was making use of the trope of imaginary Indian. For a broader discussion of the racial implications of the trope, especially as it was in play in nineteenth-century New England see Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) and Philip J. Deloria*, Indians in Unexpected Places*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

[32] Caroline Healey, [May 23, 1841] *Selected Journal of Caroline Healey Dall, Volume 1: 1838-1855.* Helen R. Deese, Editor. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2006; Jane A. Sidell to Jane W. Clopper, 1818, Janvier Family. Papers, 1705-1913. Col. 155.WMLG.

Lukasik, in particular, focuses on the face's relationship to the "social perception of character." Character could be read in a face, and the perception of facial features could detail traits– more than just attractive or unattractive – but trustworthiness, nobility, virtue, and morality. Karen Halttunen also highlights the nineteenth century shift in the use of makeup and the ways that it reflected changing social and moral values. Fashion historians of the mid nineteenth century condemned the use of face paints in the eighteenth century, and even the rouge used during the early nineteenth century. By the end of the period that I study, the face, particularly the female face, had become viewed as a transparent index to the person within. If it was painted with makeup, the powder or rouge served to conceal rather than highlight the person within. Thus, understanding, discussing and perfecting one's countenance was essential to young women's self-presentation and also the shaping of their subjectivities.[33]

While young women's assessment and efforts to shape their own appearance was important, perhaps even more revealing about young women and their own self-fashioning was the way that they described the appearances of others. Whether critical or adulatory, the ways in which young women described the appearances of those around them often said more about the girls themselves than their social circle. Who they thought was fashionable or frumpy, awkward or elegant, a person who deserved contempt or emulation – as well as the physical and material reasons for that distinction – spoke volumes about the self that a young woman was creating. By placing themselves in judgment over others, young women were able to align their own appearances, preferences, and tastes.

Harriet Manigault was frequently critical of the appearances of others. In her diary, she wrote of hearing the South Carolina news from her uncle. Upon hearing that her brother-

[33] Michael Lukasik, *Discerning Characters: The Culture of Appearance in Early America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 10, 25-27, 49-51; Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 88.

in-law intended to send his daughters to school in Charleston, she noted that they would learn to dance at school, "for they are both great tall awkward girls." That the girls in question were about five years old does not seem to have impinged upon Harriet's assessment of their awkwardness. In discussion of her eldest sister, Elizabeth, mother of the "great tall awkward girls," Harriet notes that she has heard that she "is as fat as C[harlotte], Emma, & myself put together; I'm sure I am sorry for her if that is the case, for I know she cannot bear being very fat." When hearing news from far off relations, Harriet's assessments of them are highly physical and also relational. In suggesting that the young children of her sister are awkward, or that she has heard her sister is as big as her three younger sisters put together, Harriet is reinforcing that she is not those things. [34]

In other episodes in the diary, she shows herself to be more directly critical of appearances. After an evening out, she noted that a family friend, "did not look at all engaging; she is grown very clumsy & awkward, & I think dresses a little slovenly; her clothes look as if they were thrown on without any care." What is interesting in Harriet's criticism is the smoothness with which she elides physical characteristics – Ellen's slovenly dress and careless presentation – with her lack of social grace. Harriet goes on to note that her brother, a prospective suitor of the young lady, had told her that "he was getting quite out of love with her." Georgina Amory performed the same sort of elision when describing "affectation" to her fiancé. What was called affectation, insisted Amory, "the air of langor, or sensibility, or sweetness or prettiness which a beauty gives herself," was "rather disgusting than entertaining." Both Georgina and Harriet were mapping personal characteristics onto

[34] Harriet Manigault, *Diary*, November 9, 1814. 52. Here it is important to note that it is possible that Harriet was simply relaying information that her Uncle reported – denoting the children, then four and six, as "great tall awkward girls" may not have been Harriet's own assessment. Nevertheless, her choice to include their tall awkwardness in her diary does suggest an attention to the physical descriptors. Harriet Manigault, *Diary*, November 9, 1814. 52.

physical or material traits or appearances. At the same time, they were also articulating that they were *not* those undesirable things. [35]

While they criticized their female contemporaries, it is important to recognize that critical appearance assessments were made of men as well as other women. Sophie du Pont, always quick with a visual metaphor, wrote to her brother Henry that when she was forced to dance with her persistent suitor John Phillips, the scene was a comical one. "He is very tall & very awkward," wrote Sophie, "Imagine the tongs a little bent, shuffling about the floor with a small andiron, & you'll have the scene exactly." At the same party, she observed that a mutual friend was growing facial hair. "Oh my dear Hal," she wrote, "whatever you do, never suffer your whiskers to appear…there is nothing more hateful and disgusting, and red whiskers particularly would be insufferable." In her letters, Sophie used descriptions of appearance both for comic and cautionary purposes. Sophie's particular criticism of John Phillips was of his tall awkwardness.[36]

To be tall and deemed awkward was clearly a stumbling block for early American men. Rebecca Clopper wrote to her cousin Jane in 1817, to tell her about a potential suitor. "Jane there is," she wrote, "if you are not particular about beauty, one of the most amiable young men in this neighborhood…he is very tall, but rather awkward."[37] If Jane was not too

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[35] Harriet Manigault*, Diary*, December 12, 1814. 70; Georgina Amory to John Lowell, July 8, 1824, John Lowell Jr. Papers, MHS.

[36] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, December 1, 1830, Sophia Madeleine du Pont, Papers, 1818-1892, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9. HML; Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, December 1, 1830.

[37] Rebecca Clopper to Jane W. Clopper, October 4, 1817, Janvier Family Papers, WMLG. In a similar vein, Jane Sidell wrote to Jane Clopper regarding the looks of another gentleman in the neighborhood. He "is called handsome but I cannot say he suits my taste in that particular however every persons ideas on the subject are very different" Jane A. Sidell to Jane W. Clopper, 1818. However, tall awkwardness was not the only fault that could be ascribed to gentlemen. After a dance, Meta Lammot complained to Eleuthera du Pont that she'd been made to dance with "the pest of the room, a son of John Moss the Jew," whom she described

"particular about beauty," and could overlook his tall awkwardness, Rebecca thought he'd be an ideal cousin. In general, young women criticized the appearances of their male contemporaries for similar offenses as their female peers. Again, appearances are linked to social performances. Gentlemen who were tall and awkward were difficult dancing partners and bewhiskered young men, particularly in an era when young men were often clean-shaven, was a failure of self-presentation. But though Sophie and Jane observed a gentleman's tall and awkward bearing, Sophie's critique was for comedic effect, aimed at a suitor she despised. The same offense, in an otherwise amiable young man, was referenced as a trait that could perhaps be overlooked.

The comparison of another person's appearance with expectations also produced interesting reflections in the letters and diaries of young women. Sometimes a long awaited meeting produced disappointment. Gabrielle du Pont wrote home to her mother to report her meeting with Miss Nixon. She was, she wrote, "greatly disappointed in Miss Nixon whom I had heard uncle Francis admire so much. I cannot understand how any one could ever think her good looking."[38] Sometimes hopes were even dashed by proxy. Harriet Manigault noted in her diary that her sister had written from South Carolina after a visit with a cousin and his wife. "Nat Heyward and his wife," she wrote, "had been to see my Sister. She was disappointed in the latter for she did not think her pretty, but unassuming, affable, and amiable. She has very large & ill shaped hands and feet."[39] While Nat's wife may have been

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as "A little deformed creature forward and impertinent beyond measure." Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, March 3, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.

[38] Gabrielle du Pont to Amelia du Pont, November 19, 1830, Amelia du Pont, Papers, 1802-1859, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 5:A, HML. In the end, though, Gabrielle's perspective and not Frank's prevailed. Her uncle Francis, Samuel Francis du Pont, would marry his cousin (and Gabrielle's dear friend) Sophie in 1833.

[39] Harriet Manigault, [December 3, 1814], *Diary*, 66.

"unassuming, affable, and amiable," she was a great disappointment to Elizabeth Manigault Morris and, by extension, to Harriet because of her unfortunate hands and feet.[40]

While some appearances proved disappointing, others were the height of excitement. In a 1783 letter to her cousin Betsey, Nabby Adams included a description of 'Miss Betsy Hunter from Newport." The young woman, by Nabby's account, had arrived as a "bright and blazeing star" from the South. "Yesterday," wrote Nabby, "I had the happiness of being a silent spectator of her charms of person. She is tall and very genteel rather pale a very agreeable dark eye and dark hair beautifull mouth teeth and lips…I think she is very handsome [with] a sweetness in her countenance. To Nabby, Miss Hunter had all the charms of appearance a person could have. Her physical attributes were interwoven with more intangible ones. She was tall and genteel, pale with beautiful teeth and sweetness in her countenance. Nabby went on to describe her many accomplishments in language and poetry. Nabby's admiration for the newcomer reflects on what she found appealing, refined, and genteel.[41]

Sophia Quincy's description of Maria Upham at the Harvard commencement festivities in 1829 reflected similarly on Sophia's own interests and admirations. Maria, said Sophia,

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[40] Harriet and her sisters may have all shared this attitude. Upon hearing about the engagement of a member of her social circle, Harriet wondered at his choice. "I can't say," she wrote, "that I admire his taste much. I should have supposed that one who is so well informed as he is said to be, would chose to have a wife with a more cultivated mind than she appears to have. To be sure she is very pretty, & that is a great deal." [December 22, 1814] *Diary*, 72. While the marriage of a sensible man to an ill-educated woman might reflect slightly poor taste, it was made comprehensible because of her obvious beauty. Nat's wife, though kind and pleasant, was less attractive and thus a major disappointment.

[41] Abigail (Nabby) Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, July 17, 1783, Adams Family Correspondence, *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses,* ed. C. James Taylor. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2007. http://www.masshist.org/ff/

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> really looked beautiful, and of course drest with the best taste in the world in an elegant black dress, blonde gauze scarf, and pearl ornaments, her hair put up with an ornamental comb and a beautiful blonde gauze toque trimmed with blonde lace on her head.

Maria, possessor of the best taste, was dressed in a way that Sophia found intensely fashionable. Moreover, her blonde lace and pearl ornaments reflected a sense of fashion and taste that Sophia expected from her. Maria's fashionability had been incorporated into Sophia's conception of her personal identity. Taken to an extreme, for some young women fashionability was the only personal trait worth noting. Sophia Quincy's sister Susan wrote about a party she attended in 1819, commenting about some of its attendees. Among them was one Miss Henderson. Susan wrote,

> Miss Henderson wore a silk lace French dress richly trimmed over white satin. Pearl ornaments and pearls in her hair surmounted by 6 white ostrich plumes which waved far above the heads of her admirers. She is not interesting but the perfection of a fashionable woman.

Here, a detailed account of Miss Henderson's apparel and accessories stands in for any personal characteristics. She was entirely uninteresting, thought Susan, but still the perfection of a *fashionable* woman.[42]

Whether delight or disappointment, the ways that young women wrote about the appearances of others spoke to what they found important. Harriet Manigault and her sister thought that Nat Heyward's wife's regrettable hands and feet were more significant than her positive personal qualities. Betsy Hunter's lovely appearance was linked with her charming personal and her many personal accomplishments While young women struggled to learn and maintain their own self-presentation in the manner that they thought befit a refined young lady, they were constantly referencing others around them in that pursuit. As can be seen

[42] Sophia Quincy, [28th August 1829], *The Articulate Sisters: Passages From the Journals and Letters of the Daughters of President Josiah Quincy of Harvard University*. Edited by M. A. DeWolfe Howe, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 182; Susan Quincy, [April 21, 1819] The Articulate Sisters.

through Susan Quincy's account, much of the self-presentation based self-fashioning was a matter of wearing apparel. Though totally uninteresting, Miss Henderson's silk lace dress and rich trimmings reflected her extreme fashionability. Her lace and silk and plumes and pearls defined her social position far more than her conversation or capabilities. In many cases, in early America clothes quite literally made the woman – or at least the self she was actively working to create.

"Wore my light silk …–looked tolerably": the meanings in clothing in early America

In an account of an 1840 party, Annie Lawrence noted in her diary that she had worn her "light silk trimmed with black lace – looked tolerably…& danced the whole time." Over fifty years earlier, in her travel diary, Catherine Hickling noted that she'd visited a London "Female Asylum," for orphaned girls. The girls, she wrote, "wear a uniform, purple stuff gowns and white Aprons, handkerchiefs and round eared caps, which gives them a modest simple look." Catherine's assessment of the well clad orphans and Annie's choice of ball gown were reflective of a number of material and ideological factors. Clothing signified much about a character. The stuff gowns and round-eared caps of the orphans were appropriate to their station. They were somber and simple and reflected the status and futures of the young orphans. [43]

Annie's ball gown says something quite different. Her choice reflects a world of privilege and status. Young women, who could, unlike uniformed orphans, selected their clothing from the options available to them, usually through some combination making,

[43] Annie Bigelow Lawrence, Diary February 7, 1840, Katharine Bigelow Lawrence Lowell diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852, Ms. N-1547, MHS; Catherine Greene Hickling, Diary, March 8, 1788, Catherine Greene Hickling Prescott travel diaries, 1786-1789. Ms. N-2180. MHS. Stuff was, from the medieval period on, a simple worsted long-staple wool cloth without nap. See Valerie Cumming et. al, *The Dictionary of Fashion History,* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 272.

buying, reusing, and refurbishing. Their clothing reflected stylistic trends from near their homes as well as those circulating in the transatlantic world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most significantly, they invested their sartorial choices with personal characteristics. As seen in the cases of the Quincy girls' discussion of fashionable young women they met, or Catherine Hickling's orphans, clothing choices could be synonymous with identity. Clothing historian Linda Baumgarten argues that wearing apparel preserved in museums "hold stories in every silhouette, textile, stitch, wrinkle, and stain." I might go further – even clothes that no longer survive, ones that live on in the letters and diaries and sketches of young women continue to embody stories. True, the dresses and spencers and gloves tell stories about the young women who inhabited them; but they also tell the stories that young women - consciously and not – placed on and into the garments as part of their own sartorial self-fashioning.[44]

To choose to wear or not wear a particular item, it had to first be acquired. In early America, young women received their clothes and accessories from a variety of sources. Some made many of the clothes that they wore. The du Pont girls, for example, were extremely accomplished needleworkers. In an 1822 letter to Victorine, Eleuthera boasts that she had been asked the name of her mantua maker, "the one who fitted our plaid dresses." She took great pride in responding to her friend who, "would scarcely believe," her when she said that it was no mantua maker at all, but her sister Victorine.[45] The letters and diaries of Eleuthera, Victorine, and their sisters are filled with references to the making, mending, and refashioning of wearing apparel. Even so, the du Pont girls frequently had the help of other seamstresses. In an 1827 comical book of caricatures by Sophie du Pont called *One Day on the Tancopanican: being a series of dialogues from Reality With Illustrations*, the du Ponts

[44] Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 215.
[45] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, January 5, 1822, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

appear in the middle of a dress fitting. Scene 4th from the book is titled "The morning's amusements, i.e. trying on dresses." The sketch depicts Eleuthera wearing a dress under construction while Victorine and Mrs. Waterman, their seamstress, making adjustments. The du Ponts depended upon Mrs. W. as she is labeled in Sophie's sketch, to assist in fitting, adjusting, and refashioning their clothes.

Image not available for publication

Figure 1 "The Morning's Amusements, i.e. trying on dresses" Sophie du Pont, 1827, Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library

Other young women and their families relied on the assistance of professionals to design, lay out, and cut the pieces for new clothes which they then completed in their homes. Young women learned how and when to solicit the assistance of a dressmaker by following the lead of their mothers and older sisters. Susan Heath's 1813 diary lays out just such a transaction. Susan and her mother and sister Hannah went to Boston from their home in Brookline, to Mrs. Withington's to leave "a slip to be cut out for Hannah and a Spencer," for Susan. Two days later, Susan notes that the gown and spencer "came home," presumably in pieces, since the next day Susan recounts that since "Mama did not know how to make my

spencer…she said I had better go to Boston and let Mrs. Withington fix it." The Heaths, like many of their urban contemporaries, utilized the services of dressmakers for a part of the clothes making process. However, when patterns proved to complex, they could also recruit seamstresses to assist. Susan Heath's diaries also reveal another aspect of clothing creation, one that serves to explain why so few historic garments survive in the present: reuse. [46]

In 1814, then nineteen, Susan Heath noted that she "ript …[her] coat to pieces to have it altered."[47] The practice was not at all unusual. In the period, new fabric was far more costly than reusing existing fabric. Extant costumes from the period often show evidence of repeated re-making. Young women including Susan Heath and the du Pont girls remade their own clothing over and over, tweaking sleeves and hems and details, but they also remade existing clothes of others. As fashions in the 1820s and 1830s called for stiffer skirts, the crisp silks popular in the 1770s and 1780s were popular again. Thus, young women often found sources for their own clothes in the types of dresses worn by their grandmothers.[48]

Young women viewed clothing styles of the past with mixed feelings. Linda Baumgarten highlights the multitude of meanings that could be placed on a clothing artifact over the course of its life. "Artifacts," she suggests, "rarely retain the same meaning during their entire existence. At various times in its lifestyle the same outfit may have been…the latest fashion, dowdy…archaic, raw material" and the like. In an 1836 letter to her friend Anne Clough, Maria Lance notes the change in fashion to "tight sleeves & long stomacher[s]…such as our great grandmothers wore, I have and like them for the very oddity

[46] Susan Heath, May 15, May 17, and May 18, 1813, Susan Heath diaries, 1812-1874. Ms. N-1387. MHS. Linda Baumgarten, similarly, discusses the hybrid wardrobes of young women in the period. She highlights the wardrobe of a young woman at boarding school who combined her own clothing manufacturing with professionally made purchased clothes and accessories. Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 88.
[47] Susan Heath, Diary, October 23, 1814, Ms. N-1387. MHS.
[48] Lucy Johnson, *Nineteenth Century Fashion in Detail*, (London: V&A Publishing, 2009), 50.

of the dress." On the other side of the coin, Eliza Farrar cautioned her readers who viewed the fashions of the early nineteenth-century with disgust, that such "reflection upon past fashion should make us look…upon those which prevail in our day, in order to discover whether we are not in the practice of something which will appear equally absurd to future generations." Young women were familiar with things that were the height of fashion but had either become dowdy to the point of hilarity or so novel that they held a certain appeal.[49]

While the ways that young women discussed and used clothing, fashion, and fashionability in the creation of subjectivities remained strikingly consistent between 1770 and 1850, the clothes that they wore certainly did not. Clothing historians highlight several major shifts in clothing styles that occurred over the eighty-year period. In the later decades of the eighteenth-century women typically wore low-necked gowns over petticoats, often featuring elaborate trims and accessories. By the turn of the century, classical revival style clothing was highly fashionable. Made of layers of lightweight and light colored muslins, the gowns emphasized verticality. The styles were often tied to discourses about classical styles of government, and the virtues of simple, natural clothing. The shift in fashion also reflected an increasing interest in youth, since the gowns most closely mimicked the clothing worn by children in previous eras. By 1800, female fashion had shifted such that young women never adopted the change in style that previously marked the transition from youth to married woman.[50]

In the 1820s, the column silhouette shifted to an exaggerated x-shape with broad sleeves and an increasingly wide skirt. Where the earlier styles were influenced by classical fashion, the clothes of the 1820s emphasized "Gothic" fashion, inspired by Medieval and

[49] Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 208; Maria R. Lance to Anne Clough, undated but likely around 1836; Clough, Anne Jemima, 1820-1892. Letters, 1833-1845. (0107.00) SCHS. Eliza Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend*, 96.
[50] Reinhardt, "Serious Daughters," 49; Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, Chapter 5.

Tudor era clothing. Puffs, rows of ruffles, slashes and decorative embroidery details became very popular. What historian Karen Halttunen calls the "sentimental era" of the late 1830s and 40s emphasized sloped shoulders, less elaborate decoration, and a slimmer silhouette. Rapidly changing styles of dress led many young women to turn eagerly to their social networks, as well as emerging fashion periodical literature, to determine exactly what was the height of fashion.[51]

Though only a few miles from Philadelphia at their home in Delaware, the du Pont sisters often felt at a fashion disadvantage. They made eager use of their social connections to tie them directly to all that was new, fashionable and en vogue. In an 1823 letter to Meta, Eleuthera du Pont wrote with an urgent question. "We are," she wrote, "making up some frocks for Evelina…we are at a great loss to know the fashions. Would you be so kind to tell them to us when you write?" Without word from their urban friend, the du Ponts were unwilling to begin making up new dresses lest they be hopelessly out of fashion. In a letter to her mother that she wrote from Philadelphia, Victorine du Pont answered a similar query with a disappointment. After discussing the relative merits of the design of a new dress that her mother intended to have made for her, she continued to address a concern of fashion. "I do not," she wrote, "know any new manner for making the sleeves the fashion does not change much." When cut off from fashionable sources, women had to turn to their networks to ascertain the cut of a skirt or turn of a sleeve. [52]

In some cases, young women were forced to rely on the fashionable judgment of someone else entirely. A letter from Abigail Adams, in London, to Thomas Jefferson in

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[51] Johnson, Nineteenth Century Clothing, 40, 16; Haulman, Politics of Fashion, 217; Halttunen, Confidence Men, Painted Women, 73-76..

[52] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, May 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML; Victorine du Pont to Sophie Dalmas du Pont, April 7. WMSS Group 6:A, HML. The text reads "Je ne connait aucun novelle manniere de faire les manches la mode ne varie pas beaucoup."

France concludes with a postscript in Nabby Adams hand. "4 pair," reads the addendum, "of Shoes for Miss Adams…2 pair of Sattin and 2 of Spring silk without straps and the most fashionable Colours." Nabby did not delineate what color her new shoes ought to be, merely the materials that she wished them to be made out of. For her purposes, a request for the "most fashionable Colours," was enough. It is unclear from the letter who might be doing the choosing. Did Nabby intend Thomas Jefferson to use his judgment to select the fashionable colors? One of his young daughters? The shoemaker? Though the answer is unclear, Nabby's motives in choosing colors that were most fashionable is. Her request that ensured her that she would receive shoes that were the height of fashion in Paris where a request for particular colors might mark her as out of fashion. [53]

Young women also needed to match their wearing apparel to those around them. The wrong wardrobe on a trip, for instance, might mark one out as uncouth, unfashionable, or both. On her honeymoon, Victorine du Pont Bauduy wrote home to her sister Evelina to make an urgent request. "I wish," she wrote, "you would find a way of sending me a couple or three cambric muslin frocks, I find I have not brought enough, one must always be dressed in white here." At the height of the classical revival movement in fashion, the travelling Victorine found that she needed only white dresses made of lightweight, drape-y cambric muslin. Eliza Southgate made a similar request over a decade earlier. "I must again," she wrote in an 1800 letter,

> trouble my Dear Mother by requesting her to send on my spotted muslin…so long a visit in Wicassett will oblige me to muster all my muslins, for I am informed they are so monstrous smart as to take no notice of any lady that can condescend to wear a calico gown, therefore, dear mother, to ensure me a favorable reception, pray send my spotted muslin by the next mail after you receive this.

[53] Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, February 11, 1786, *Adams Family Correspondence*.

Eliza's request for her spotted muslin, much like Victorine's for white cambric muslin frocks, was an urgent plea not only for clothes but for the right sort of clothes. Eliza was even more explicit about her needs. The social circle that she was about to enter was so "monstrous smart," that if she appeared before them in her calico gowns she might be ignored entirely. She urged her mother to send the spotted muslin gown at once, consciously linking her social acceptance with the needed gown. [54]

Victorine and Eliza's letters also point to another key factor in sartorial self-fashioning – that knowing what *not* to wear was as important, or possibly even more important, than knowing what to wear. Victorine and Eliza were both requesting dresses that would allow them to blend with their social circles. If all the other young women wore white or spotted muslin, then appearing in society dressed in calico or color might spell social catastrophe. While living in the Azores in 1786, Catherine Hickling noted in her diary that she had two "excellent girls," who did her needlework and accompanied her on outings. It was the custom, she noted, that when they went out, "all wear black veils so that the mistress is not to be distinguished from her domestics only by a good black lace in front of the veil." All three young women wanted to dress according to the custom of the place that they were, but for Catherine, dress also offered a way to articulate her class distinction. For young women and those who advised them, learning what clothing said about the character of its wearer was absolutely vital. When clothing spoke volumes about its wearer, it could also say too much about characteristics that they might wish unspoken. [55]

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[54] Victorine du Pont Bauduy to Evelina du Pont, November 26, 1813, WMSS Group 6:A, HML; Eliza Southgate, [July 17, 1800] *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago: Selections From the Letters of Eliza Southgate Bowne*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 28-29.
[55] Catherine Hickling, April 1, 1786, *Diary*, Ms. N-2180. MHS.

At the forefront of the "what not to wear" conversations of early America was the subject of dishabille. In *The Young Lady's Friend*, Eliza Farrar describes a typical scene. "When I see," she wrote,

> a young girl come down to the family breakfast in an untidy wrapper, with her hair in papers, her feet slip-shod, and an old silk handkerchief around her neck, I know that she cannot be the neat, industrious, refined person I whom I should like for an intimate.

Farrar connected a young woman's lack of attention to her morning toilet with personal characteristics that made her undesirable. In a cautionary letter to his daughter Patsy, Thomas Jefferson warned that though some women thought, "under the privilege of dishabille," that they could, "be loose and negligent of their dress in the morning." However, he insisted, Patsy should always attend to her dressing early because, "a lady who has been seen as a sloven or slut in the morning, will never efface the impression." To both Jefferson and Farrar, external dishabille implied internal undesirability. To Farrar, a young women who came to breakfast in a state of dishabille, was not neat, industrious or refined. Moreover, to both Farrar and Jefferson, loose dress was implicitly or explicitly linked to loose morals. Despite adult prescriptions, dishabille was not always seen as a mark of laziness or grounds for reproach. Nova Scotia-bound loyalist Mary Robie noted in her 1783 diary, "I did not dress myself today so have seen no person out of our own family except Miss Philipps for a few minutes who I knew would excuse my dishabille" To Mary, dishabille was a mark of intimacy. While not the way that she would be dressed in the outside world, her dishabille was acceptable attire for her intimates. She even draws attention to the fact that her relationship with Miss Philipps, who while not her family, was close enough to excuse a lack

of formality. However, to Mrs. Farrar, there were worse fashion faux pas than appearing in an untidy wrapper and silk handkerchief at breakfast.[56]

In her section on dress, Eliza Farrar included an extra caution to the particularly intellectual American girl. "I must not," wrote Farrar

> dismiss the subject of dress without reminding those ladies, who are deeply interested in their studies, and are pursuing knowledge with an eagerness that leaves them little time or inclination for the duties of the toilet, that they are responsible to their sex for not bringing literary pursuits into disrepute by neglecting their personal appearance. Let them simplify their dress as much as they can, but at the same time they should be even more careful than others, to be always neatly equipped, and sufficiently in fashion to avoid singularity.[57]

Farrar called intellectual young women to pay closer attention to their fashion choices than their peers. To Eliza Farrar, an educated woman in her own right, young women who followed "literary pursuits," at the expense of their dress ran the risk of tarring all female intellectuals with the same unfashionable brush. While cultural commentators of the period decried the shallow vanity of fashion, Eliza Farrar reminded her literary readers that they must use fashion to "avoid singularity," even more than their less intellectual peers. Even the simplest styles must, she argued remain in fashion. Devoting attention to appearance, to what literary young women wore and did not wear, was a critical task in Farrar's book. When education and literary inclinations might be accused of unsexing women, of removing them from their appropriate behaviors and contexts. Seen in this light, Farrar's caution reflects an ongoing concern with maintaining and even heightening the femininity of female

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[56] Farrar*, The Young Lady's Friend*, 117; Thomas Jefferson to Martha Washington Jefferson, 1783. Cited in Brown*, Foul Bodies*, 143; Mary Robie, August 9, 1783, diary, May-October 1783. Ms. N-804. MHS. Additionally, Farrar's assertion that a state of morning dishabille marked a young woman as someone that she would not like to have as an intimate was likely quite an effective caution. Letters and diaries of young women who read *The Young Lady's Friend* are often very adulatory about Mrs. Farrar and those who moved in her social circles, as in the case of Caroline Healey, watched her eagerly to observe her conduct in every situation. See Caroline Healey [Thursday. April 22. 1841], *Selected Journal,* 76.

[57] Eliza Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend*, 138-139.

intellectuals. Though intellect might be a part of their identity, Farrar suggests, young women should be careful that dowdy, frumpiness would not.[58]

Knowledge and mastery of fashion helped young women avoid the peril of singularity. Fashion information, regardless of its source, helped young women select personal styles. It also marked them as in the know, as members of a community of those who were connected to fashion. While away at school in 1822, fifteen-year-old Eleuthera du Pont wrote to her sister Victorine about some new wearing apparel. "I have not yet," she wrote, "begun my colleret, but I will to it soon. Indeed to tell you the truth I am sorry that the muslin is cut for I have plenty…and they are going out of fashion." Eleuthera went on to grudgingly relate that, despite their manifest unfashionableness, she would make the colleret in any case, since the muslin was already cut. Though Eleuthera's practicality dictated that she continue her project, in discounting it as fashionable she was both showing her knowledge of Philadelphia trends and casting herself as someone who cared about the fashionability of her apparel. [59]

Over a year later, when back at home in rural Delaware, Eleuthera wrote to her friend Meta in Philadelphia with another pressing fashion question. As she prepared to begin the trimming for Victorine's dress, Eleuthera wrote to Meta that Victorine, "will not let me begin…[the trimming] till she knows whether deep patterns are fashionable or not. So, my dear Sis, I beg you will answer this important query as soon as you can as I am anxious to

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[58]In 1798 poem, Richard Polwhele called attention to the peril of the unsexed woman. "Survey with me, what ne'er our fathers saw, A female band despising NATURE'S law, As "proud defiance" flashes from their arms, And vengeance smothers all their softer charms I shudder at the new unpictur'd scene,Where unsex'd woman vaunts the imperious mien;" The poem was a piece of the transatlantic discourse on women's education, reflecting the anxiety that literary pursuits for young women might render them unsexed, inappropriate Amazonian characters. Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females: A Poem* (1798) Gina Luria, Ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 8-9.

[59] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, January 5, 1822, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

begin." Without connecting, through Meta, to the cosmopolitan world of Philadelphia fashions, Victorine could not consent to the new trimmings for a dress. While young women in the hinterland looked to more cosmopolitan counterparts for their fashion advice, those in fashion's backwaters were sometimes the subjects of teasing. Harriet Manigault wrote about her sister Elizabeth's plan to send a "new fashioned frock," to her sister Emma in Philadelphia. Elizabeth, Harriet noted, said that she was sure "Emma will laugh at the idea of her sending anything new fashioned from Carolina." At a plantation in South Carolina, far from her Philadelphia sisters, Elizabeth Manigault Morris recognized her disconnection from anything at all "new fashioned." With their choices of what to wear or not wear young women consciously placed themselves within the multiple geographies of the fashionable and stylish. [60]

The choices that young women made about their clothes spoke volumes about the adult subjectivities that they creating. In rejecting a bonnet or choosing a fashionable deep pattern for a ruffle, young women were claiming and communicating details about their access to a host of social and cultural capitals. They also had the sense of cultivating and displaying their own very good taste.[61]

"Quite the Ton:" the concept of fashion in self-fashioning

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[60] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 7, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML; Harriet Manigault, [February 26, 1815], *Diary*, 86.

[61] Despite the heavy influence of class on the development of young women's sense of 'taste' Eliza Farrar insists that the beauty of good taste is that it can "be cultivated without any peculiar expense." Farrar goes on to remind her readers that "the price of coloured muslin, or printed calico, is the same, whether the figure be pretty or ugly…The shawl is the same in value whether it is dragged around the shoulders like an Indian's blanket, or worn in graceful folds. It costs no more to buy colors that harmonize, than those that do not." The remark speaks most clearly, perhaps, to Farrar's intended audience of upper to middling young women who had the financial and cultural access to their choice of shawl, calico, and muslin. Farrar*, The Young Lady's Friend*, 112-113.

While on her honeymoon in 1813, newly married Victorine du Pont Bauduy wrote home to her younger sister. "My dear Evelina," she wrote, "I send you a pattern of the fashionable colour for coats, they call it a Mazarine blue, and it is quite the Ton." Mazarine (or Mazarin), a dark blue color named for the seventeenth-century French Prime Minister Mazarin, had risen to dramatic popularity in the early decades of the nineteenth century However, despite its being "quite the Ton," Victorine continued that she very much doubted that Evelina would favor the shade. Nevertheless, she offered to acquire it if it was wanted.[62]

The exchange between Victorine and Evelina reflects on the significance of fashion as an intangible concept. While the previous section discussed the effects of fashionability and style on young women's clothing choices, fashion exerted a pull on young women's lives beyond the choice of their actual clothing. As a concept, fashion was the concern with larger patterns of style and trend, as well as participation in them. In discussing, debating, critiquing, and yearning for fashion as a concept, young women gained access to adult modes of refined femininity. Young women were proclaiming their status as simultaneous consumers and arbiters of the fashionable. The ability to say what, exactly, was "the Ton," at any given moment held tremendous cache for early American girls, regardless of whether they actually liked the trend.

Meta Lammot often found herself the arbiter of all things fashionable for her Delaware-dwelling friends, the du Pont sisters. Since she lived in Philadelphia, she was the unparalleled expert in what was in with the fashionable urban set. Though in reality somewhat lower on the social hierarchy than the du Pont girls, Meta's geographic and social position allowed her to speak with authority in a way that Eleuthera or Sophie du Pont could

[62]Deb Salisbury, *Elephant's Breath & London Smoke: historical colours, definitions, & usages*, (Neustadt, ON: Fiver Rivers Chapmanry, 2009), 130; Victorine du Pont Bauduy to Evelina du Pont, November 26, 1813, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.

not. In a chatty letter to Eleuthera, Meta spelled out all the newest fashions for fall. The fashions were, she wrote,

> brown ribbons for leghorns, they are entirely new pattern, very rich and handsome but very high 50cts a yard. The way to trim them is a large bow at the side one inside the face, and one outside the face near the rim. The fancy bonnets are silk and velvet, with three or 4 flowers of different colours, a pink, green, and blue, or orange, crimson, and purple…White sleeves with coloured dress are very much worn. They say that black velvet coats are to be the go this winter but that's not decided."

Relating the fashionable information required Meta to marshal a host of skills. She described the new brown ribbons for leghorns (a kind of straw summer hat) in pattern, texture, and price. She also gave a detailed description of how one might use the new ribbon to trim a hat with bows in the fashionable style. Everything from the location of the bows to the eye-searing color combinations of the flowers was carefully noted by Meta as fashion-correspondent. She was able to describe what fashions were popular (white sleeves, colored dresses) and also what might "be the go," when winter came. It is interesting to note Meta's awareness of the unnamed "they" who say that black velvet is to be all the rage for coats, but no mention of who has yet to decide. Attitudes toward fashion and what was fashionable seemed to come, fully formed from the ether. [63]

That fashion emerged from some unknown authoritative point did not always guarantee young women's approval. In an 1823 letter to Meta, Eleuthera du Pont wrote, "Julia has frightened us with a description of the recent fashions. She says that they are made just like nightgowns without a body and full all round, and then drawn tight to the waist by a morocco belt. I can scarcely believe this fashion will succeed." The gowns that the du Pont's cousin Julia described seemed, to Eleuthera, bound to fail. Her own knowledge of what was

[63] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Saturday afternoon, September [no date, probably 1823], WMSS Group 7:A, HML.

or was not appealing in a garment came into contact with the reports that Julia had brought back to the Brandywine. [64]

On the banks of the Brandywine, the concept of fashion and fashionability was sometimes used to tease. In a letter to Meta, Eleuthera notes that Victorine had "worked a bag for Aunt Becky," which she was sending the next day. "It is," wrote Eleuthera, "of the same shape as those which Sophia received on her birth day. They are quite fashionable on the Tancopanican." In claiming that the purse being sent to Philadelphia was "quite fashionable on the Tancopanican," Eleuthera was mimicking the tone that so often accompanied correspondence coming from cosmopolitan locales to rural Delaware. Eleuthera, tongue in cheek, suggested that the du Ponts' rural home on the shores of Tancopanican, their own name for the Brandywine that they claimed came from its original Indian inhabitants, could follow its own fashionable dictates.[65]

In knowing or judging fashions, claiming them as essential markers of personal style or rejecting them as absurd, young women took a certain measure of consumer agency. In doing so, they labeled themselves as arbiters of taste, distinguished from other less fashionable. As in the case of Meta Lammot, knowledge of and access to fashionable styles allowed her to speak as an expert to Eleuthera and even her adult relatives. The world of fashion served as a counterutopia, allowing young women to have access to power that might otherwise be denied them because of their youth and gender.

Appearance and material symbols in early America

For young women in early America, choices about their appearance often held larger symbolic meaning. Clothing, in particular, offered a way to articulate a sense of belonging.

[64] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, May 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[65] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, October 15, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

While modern sensibilities might dictate that attending a party in the same dress as a friend is a horrifying faux pas, for early American young women matching was a mark of closeness. As teenagers, Eleuthera du Pont and Meta Lammot often went out of their way to ensure that their dresses were alike. "How did you make your Gingham frocks," asked sixteen-year-old Eleuthera, "and how do you intend making your white?" In another letter, Eleuthera wrote that she had finished making ruffles for her dress and started on ruffles for Meta. "They matched exactly," she took care to note. In a letter to Eleuthera, Meta wrote, "I want you to tell me how deep you make it so that I may do mine the same width and to send the pattern you decide upon quickly." Young women in the period, regardless of age, were eager to own and wear clothes that matched precisely, not merely to be in fashion, but to be in symbolic link with one another. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, in her study of consumption in early America, emphasizes the degree to which women knew each other's entire wardrobe. The women, she says, would shop for coordinating material and accessories, often acquiring clothes and items for far off friends.[66]

Eleuthera and Meta's coordinated wardrobe was not only a topic for personal conversation. When describing a new hat to sister Victorine, Eleuthera wrote that it was "trimmed with a bow of very pretty green and yellow ribbon," and went on to note that the trimming was both pretty and "exactly the same as Margaretta's." Meta's stepmother, to whom Eleuthera frequently referred as "mother," made both girls accessories to wear to an upcoming ball. Eleuthera described them in a letter to Victorine, emphasizing that both she and Meta had received festoons of tulle and crepe and beautiful flower wreaths, different only in the colors selected. For Eleuthera and Meta, who addressed each other as "sister" long

[66] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, May 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML; Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 1, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML; Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Tuesday morning [no date], WMSS Group 7:A, HML; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 145 .

before Meta married Eleuthera's brother Alfred, sharing identical wearing apparel offered a way to both strengthen and represent their intimate friendship. [67]

Harriet Manigault also described this type of shared wardrobe. She and sister Charlotte often attended social functions in Philadelphia wearing the same or similar dresses. In her diary, she notes this matter-of-factly, writing "Our dresses were blue crape over white satin," or, "our dresses were lawn worked at the bottom, & a flounce of lace." Harriet, apparently, saw it as unremarkable that she and her sister should appear dressed as a set. In her diaries, it is merely noted, and noted far more often than she describes her own individual dress. To Harriet, Meta, and Eleuthera a shared wardrobe allowed them to articulate belonging. Wearing matching crape dresses or ruffles of the same depth placed them in their social world. It also allowed them to articulate, for themselves, with whom they would align - to claim individual identity through group material culture. Though to a modern sensibility, matched dress does not suggest individual identity, for early American young women, these episodes of shared, matched apparel reflect upon their individual as well as their social self-fashioning. Clothing and descriptions of appearance have a relational purpose, displaying alignment and alliance with social peers. [68]

Young women's appearances could also serve as material markers of transitions in life course. When Susan Quincy attended the Peace Ball in Boston in 1815, she expressed some "hesitation about going to a public ball," because she was only sixteen. However, she described her dress "on this important occasion," in extreme detail. For Susan, the ball was an opportunity to attend a momentous event dressed in layers of muslin and satin finery, but also

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[67] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 25, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML; Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, January 5, 1822, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[68] Harriet Manigault, [February 18, 1814] *Diary*, 8; Harriet Manigault, [January 21, 1814] *Diary*, 6. See also the entry for January 26, 1814: "Charlotte & I were dressed in white crape over white satin, and they were quite ruined." 7.

one that she was not technically old enough to attend. Her finery was, perhaps, a bit precocious. Susan and other young women in early America were keenly aware of the material allowances and constraints in appearance that were based on their age and life stage. The movement from one material stage to another was tangible way that young women could chart their progress toward refined femininity. [69]

In 1848, when Katharine Lawrence was fifteen, she noted in her 1848 diary, "Put on corsets…felt rather tight at first but afterwards liked them." For Katharine, the transition to corset wearing was indicative of her growing up. By the mid-nineteenth century the shape of adult clothing demanded that women wear corsets. So, to graduate to adult clothing, corsets were a necessary first step. Thus for young women in early America, movement toward adult femininity dictated a very real change, not just in terms of adolescent growth, but the reshaping of corsetry. Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, dress reformers increasingly railed against the evils of tightly laced corsets. They encouraged a more natural silhouette, and cited the dangers to health and morals of overlacing. Despite the distinct physical transition toward adulthood signaled by corsets, I found very little evidence of that transition in the letters and diaries of young women. Katharine's experience of the wearing of new foundation garments was a distinct physical marker of her transition to adulthood.[70]

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[69] Susan Quincy, [February 23, 1815] *The Articulate Sisters*, 14.

[70] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, January 26, 1848, *Diary*, Ms. N-1547. MHS. On the history of the corset in America including cultural issues brought up by corsetry see Valerie Steele: *The Corset: A Cultural History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 21-33, 35-46; Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003); Mel Davies, "Corsets and Conception: Fashion and Demographic Trends in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (October 1982): 611-641; Wendy Dasler Johnson, "Cultural Rhetorics of Women's Corsets," *Feminist Studies* 1, no.3/4 (Winter/Spring 1973): 58-72. Jill Fields, highlights the early twentieth century paranoia about corset-wearing as a guard against communism in "'Fighting the Corsetless Evil': Shaping Corsets and Culture, 1900-1930," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (Winter, 1999): 355-

While a young woman's physical shape might change as she moved toward adulthood, so did the shape of her coiffure. Just as Eleuthera du Pont fretted about learning to put up her hair well while away at school, hairstyle was one material distinction between young girls and their older counterparts. Thirteen-year-old Anna Winslow explored the world of fashionable ladies' hair when she acquired her heddus (head) roll. In late eighteenth-century America women began to wear their hair brushed and teased over a head roll. Anna had acquired a roll, which she described in her journal as "not made *wholly* of a red *Cow Tail*, but…a mixture of that, & horsehair (very coarse) & a little human hair…that I suppose was taken out of the back part of a wig." The roll, which rendered the distance from the roots of Anna's hair to the tip of it longer than the distance from hairline to chin, was a point of disagreement for Anna's aunts. Aunt Storer, she recorded, "said it ought to be made less," while Aunt Demming, "said it ought not to be made at all." While the new coiffure might have made Anna feel more grown up, she made a point of recounting to her mother that it made her "head itch, & ach, & burn like anything." For Anna, the heddus roll was emblematic of her growing up. She was transitioning from childhood to young adulthood, with all of the itch and ache and burn that meeting fashionable material standards of adult womanhood entailed. Anna's journal-letter entry for the day concludes with a nod to critiques of the fashionable, offered by cultural commentators and her aunts alike. "Nothing," she

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384. For a material interpretation of corsets, particularly their change between the 1770s and 1830s, see Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal,* 26-27 63, 121, 200, 221. Baumgarten helpfully discusses the ways in which changing corset styles rendered costumes of the past difficult to wear. Though a woman from 1850 might be the same size as a garment worn by her mother in 1830, the fashionable silhouette had changed so much that the dress would need extensive alteration if it were to be wearable. Any attempt to wear a dress from the generation before, when the columnar silhouette prevailed would be even more difficult.

noted, "renders a young person more amiable than virtue & modesty without the help of fals hair."[71]

Changes in life course that were marked by material change in the life of a young woman were precarious liminal moments. Adopting adult material cultures of appearance too early might suggest immorality or a lack of virtue. By the same token, refusing to adopt material signals of adulthood could create the sort of "singularity" that Eliza Farrar cautioned young women against. While critics despaired that girls' obsession with fashion and the fashionable would corrupt young women, the dolls that they played with as girls were fashionably dressed women. Before the 1850s, American dolls, manufactured and not, were generally in adult, rather than child or baby, form. There was no distinction between dolls that served as girls' toys and those that advertised the latest fashion. Even as children, girls teetered between too fashionable and not fashionable enough. As they came of age, they wobbled even more precariously between material cultures seen as virtue and those seen as vice. Complicating matters further was the shift in fashion in the early nineteenth century. As adult women increasingly wore simple, light-colored gowns in classical forms, they never made the transition into the material markers of adult apparel that their mothers and grandmothers did.[72]

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[71] Anna Green Winslow, [May 25, 1773], *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771*, Alice Morse Earle, ed. (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin, And Co. 1894), 71. For a more in-depth discussion of Anna and her heddus roll, and the trajectory of early American high rolling see Kate Haulman, "Object Lessons: A Short History of the High Roll," *Common-Place* 2, no.1 (October, 2001). http://www.common-place.org/vol-02/no-01/lessons/

[72] Reinhardt, "Serious Daughters," 47, 39, 50; Starting in the 1850s doll factories began to produce child-form and baby-form dolls. Calvert suggests that this shift was intimately connected with the influx of immigrants, particularly Irish, Italian and Slavic immigrants with very large families. In response to fears that these large families might overwhelm established American culture parents provided their daughters with baby-dolls to reinforce the value of small families and mother-child connections that they saw as threatened by the changing

While young women might have looked toward changes in dress or hair or even physical shape to mark and measure their progression toward adult womanhood, there were also more specific material items to mark changes in life course. Young women's wedding apparel was one such marker. For some, just being in a wedding was enough to merit discussion of their remarkable wearing apparel. After being one of ten bridesmaids in Nancy Toomer's wedding, Maria Lance wrote to Anne Clough in Liverpool to discuss the great honor. "I was not worried at all," wrote Maria, "about my dress as Mrs. Roper's generosity supplied every want. She bought me a dress, had it made up beautifully and all the little etceteras which you know a lady requires on such an occasion" A *lady*, by Maria's definition, had definite material requirements when serving as bridesmaid to a close friend. Rebecca Clopper also wrote to her cousin about bridesmaid-hood. Her friend Ann, she wrote, "intends setting a good example to her single friends – by visiting the Hymenial temple soon, she has chosen me as her maid of honour…I will very readily undertake the office of drawing her glove." The drawing off of the bride's glove for the placement of the wedding ring was a central duty of the bridesmaid in the period. Joanna Smith, at a family wedding, noted that she pitied her cousin Elizabeth the first bridesmaid, "for the bride had long kid gloves." The gloves, she continued, "were not very easy to get off," and in the heat of the moment, "poor Elizabeth in her fright, took the wrong one off." Nevertheless, the bride looked beautiful in her white satin and lace and veil, in spite of her obvious agitation during the ceremony. Both wearing one's own marriage apparel and assisting with the material aspects of the marriage of a friend or relation served as material evidence of a move toward adulthood. [73]

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demographics of the United States. Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 117.

[73] Maria R. Lance to Anne Jemima Clough, October 7, 1837, Letters, 1833-1845, (0107.00) SCHS. After the wedding, Maria made no mention of the bride's apparel, but did note that she had "behaved admirably with much dignity & self possession and…had no nonsensical

"Here follows a description of gowns worn" Un-trivializing appearance

The typed transcript of Katharine Bigelow Lawrence's diary that makes up a part of the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society includes many of Katharine's lengthy descriptions of wearing apparel. In the diary, kept between 1848 and 1852 in the years before Katharine's marriage, she records life in Boston and in London and devotes quite a bit of written space to fashion. While reading the diary transcript, though, many of these lengthy descriptions have been cut – replaced only with "here follows a description of gowns worn." The transcriber, clearly exhausted by Katharine's interest in blonde lace, satin ribbon, silver trains, and exotic flowers, made the decision to omit these passages. Why not? On the surface, they seem trivial – why should it matter that Katharine included the meticulous details of every woman's clothing? The notation about gowns worn seemed, to the transcriber, sufficient. This move, I argue, represents a way in which the material lives of early American young women, particularly their interest in appearance, is often trivialized in contemporary scholarship.

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crying and kissing, which is my aversion." Rebecca Clopper to Jane W. Clopper, July 19, 1817, Janvier Family. Papers, 1705-1913. Col. 155.WMLG. During the early decades of the nineteenth century jewelers and silversmiths increasingly marketed specifically wedding related jewelry, including rings, and by mid-century, criticism of the over-commercialization of American weddings was in full force. Barbara Penner, "'A Vision of Love and Luxury:' The Commercialization of Nineteenth-Century Weddings," *Winterthur Portfolio* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2004):1-20. Joanna Smith to Eleuthera du Pont, June 22, 1831, Papers, 1826-1876. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:C. HML. Joanna's letter includes this detail matter-of-factly, as though both the bride's beauty and her profound fear and agitation were normal parts of the wedding experience. Anna Cabot Lowell makes the same comparison at her cousin Georgina's wedding, noting in a diary entry that Georgina "looked uncommonly pretty," with "a branch of white feather flowers," in her hair while also discussing the profound silence in which they sat to await the wedding. In Chapter 5, I discuss weddings and the repeated mentions of extreme wedding distress in greater detail. Suffice it to say that the juxtaposition of bridal beauty and near-hysteria was, seemingly, an ordinary aspect of weddings in early America. Anna Cabot Lowell, April 1825, Diaries, Ms. N-1512 MHS.

Young women's things, particularly wearing apparel, were frequently trivialized in their own time. Yet the things they wore on their own bodies and those that they observed in the appearance of others served a vital relational purpose. Linda Baumgarten highlights the way that clothing acts as a language, allowing individuals to say things with their appearance. What they say, however, is constantly influenced by the shifting contexts of time and place and material meaning. Lavish description of gowns and wearing apparel most often correlated to moments of exceedingly fancy dress. Where daily dresses often merited small descriptive attention, formal (and therefore high stakes) social occasions sometimes required pages of descriptive prose. When young women described the details of their own dress or those around them, they were making claims, conscious or not, about who they were and how they fit into their social worlds, and how successful they were at presenting a social self. The details of lace or flowers or ribbons may seem tedious, trivial, or meaningless in comparison to other events described in the letters and diaries of young women. However, the following descriptions of gowns worn reflect a host of social and cultural meanings about the young women who described them.[74]

In what is, perhaps, the most climactic description of gowns worn included in the diary transcript, Katharine describes her attendance at the Queen's Drawing Room.[75] Katharine, the daughter of an American diplomat, found herself rubbing elbows with royalty. In the diary entry, she describes the dress and accessories of the Queen, her mother, and herself. "The Queen," she wrote,

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[74] Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal* 54. Baumgarten uses the example of the highly decorated and stylized pockets that women produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to consider the importance of material items beyond their function. Pockets were typically not visible to the outside world, yet many bear intricate decoration. Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 56.

[75] In the interest of space, I may abbreviate the young women's descriptions where necessary to my argument. However, I will include the passages in footnotes.

> wore a pink and silver train, white satin petticoat trimmed with white flowers. Mama wore a lilac satin train embroidered in silver, lilac satin petticoat trimmed with three flounces of Brussels lace, lilac and silver flowers, feathers, Brussels lappets and berthe. My dress was white glace silk trimmed with tulle and satin ribbon, the corsage with blonde and oak leaves, the petticoat, three skirts of white tulle over glacé looped up with white roses and jessamine. two feathers and blonde lappets in my hair. Mother's gloves were trimmed with silver, mine with tulle and ribbon.

Katharine concluded her description by noting, "it was a gorgeous and brilliant scene." Her intense descriptive efforts capture the luxury and allure of the gowns. However, it is interesting to note that Katharine placed her mother's apparel and Queen Victoria's next to each other. Moreover, while the Queen merited eleven words of apparel description, Mrs. Lawrence's lilac gown and accessories received twenty-five, and Katharine's received forty. Their apparel is also described in similar language. The Queen's pink and silver train and white satin petticoat are, if anything, much more sparely described than the flounced, flowered, and feathered clothing.[76]

Her description of dresses relates her, her mother, and the Queen. They wear similar clothes; moreover, the Queen wears clothes that are legible to Katharine. She can describe them, not with breathless awe and amazement, but as a social peer. She knows what they are and of what they are made. When Katharine met the Princess Royal in 1849, she made a similar rhetorical move. "The Princess Royal," she wrote,

> wore a green silk dress, quite short, with three flounces and a black velvet sack, fitting tightly to her figure, lace cuffs and white gloves. On her head she had a pink satin quilted bonnet. She looks like pictures of the Queen and very much like Lydia Inglis.[77]

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[76] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, June 20, 1850, Katharine Bigelow Lawrence Lowell diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852. Ms. N-1547, MHS.

[77] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, October 31, 1849, diaries, MS. N-1547, MHS. Katharine was not specific, here, about whom she meant. Possibly, she was comparing the princess to Bostonian Lydia Inglis (McLeod) the sister of Frances Erskine Inglis (Calderon de la Barca). However, since Inglis would have been an adult, twenty years Katharine's senior, perhaps she referenced a later generation. I have been unable to identify, however, a younger Lydia.

Katharine's description of Princess Victoria, then only nine, reflect on her royal status. While technically a child, the Princess's appearance warranted the description that Katharine typically granted to adults. Her dress was a subject of intense interest. Katharine also made comparisons about the princess's appearance, comparing her both to her mother the Queen and an American whom she had seen, Lydia Inglis.[78]

In describing a fancy dress ball, Katharine went out of her way to describe the costume clothing that she had worn. Her own dress had included a pink bodice, short overskirt, long underdress, satin shoes with rosettes, and a chip hat [one woven out of thin strips of shaved wood, similar to a straw hat] with ribbons put on "a la Gipsey." Her party companion Joanna's attire included "a claret velvet bodice, a bird of paradise thin short skirt…a blue silk skirt, [and] bronze boots laced with blue and yellow." She concludes the entry, not by observing how magnificent she looked, but rather by noting that "everyone said it was becoming so I presume it was," and including that she had received "a good many compliments," on the dress. By including a detailed account of her costume, and noting the approbation of others, Katharine was making a social statement about her own elite status and gentility. She, and Joanna too, were dressed *precisely* as they needed to be at the ball, and their sartorial success had been affirmed by those present.[79]

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[78] Katharine's diaries include several discussions of court dresses. In June 1850 she made two mentions of her court apparel. On June 5 she wrote, "This morning I tried on my French dresses and they fit exquisitely. There is one pink tulle over pink silk trimmed with a great deal of pink satin ribbon. My court dress is white silk, the waist being trimmed with blonde lace and green leaves. The petticoat (to which there is a waist, extra) is white tulle over white silk trimmed with six bouquets of moss roses. The extra waist is trimmed with roses and leaves. My bonnet is white tulle". Less than two weeks later, on June 12, 1850 she noted, "Went to Madame Fusy, and ordered a train for the second drawing room. Green glacé silk trimmed with blond lace, and white tulle petticoat over white silk. Bought a white barège shawl with coloured border 10s 6d. Also three Limerick lace hdkfs. for 3s 9d a piece and a worked muslin sack, for 16s."

[79] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, Diary, September 3, 1849. The entry reads: "Wednesday morning Mrs. Smith came in and we were all in preparation for the Fancy Ball. Mrs. Smith

These lengthy and detailed descriptions were not unusual.[80] While Katharine was prolific in her descriptions, such itemized apparel descriptions were entirely common in the letters and diaries of early American young women. They also served very similar relational purposes. When Nabby Adams was at court in London over sixty years before Katharine, her letter to brother John Quincy Adams reads very similarly to Katharine's court entries. "Mamma," she wrote, "in a sattin of the new fashiond Colour which is Called the spanish fly, trimed with Crepe and Gold fringe. My dress was pink sattin trimmed with Crepe and silver fringe." She also made a point of noting that Mr. Humphreys had said, "tho they saw more expensive and more superb dresses at Court they did not see one, more elegant and neat than my Ladyships." Nabby and Katharine both emphasized their own and their mothers' elegant dress while attending court activities in London. Nabby's entry highlights the fashionability of her mother's dress, made of a "new fashioned color" and trimmed elegantly. She, like Katharine, included the compliment of an outsider to prove how excellent their apparel really was.[81]

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helped us to make some bows. Joanna's dress was very pretty and very becoming. It was composed of a claret velvet bodice, a bird of paradise thin short skirt, open on two sides and fastened at intervals by bows of claret yellow, and blue ribbon over a blue silk skirt, bronze boots laced with blue and yellow. A chip hat on one side trimmed with the same ribbons. My dress was a pink bodice with a pink silk skirt very short, worn over a white muslin dress. A fall of wide black lace went round the waist. White satin shoes with pink rosettes, a chip hat trimmed with pink satin ribbon, put on a la Gipsey, black mitts with pink bows, two pearl bracelets, the skirt looped over the white at the sides with large pink rosettes, completed my costume. Everyone said it was becoming so I presume it was. I had a good many compliments upon my dress."

[80] The scenes of description of clothing are, in fact, so common and so regularized they resemble the type scenes of classical epic. Type scenes, of armoring or recognition, follow a set of recognizable patterns and narrative dictates. In many regards, these dress descriptions are an essential type scene for eighteenth and nineteenth-century young women.

[81] Nabby Adams to John Quincy Adams, February 9, 1786, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses*. The entry reads: Mamma in a sattin of the new fashiond Colour which is Called the spanish fly,1 trimed with Crepe and Gold fringe. My dress was pink sattin trimmed with Crepe and silver fringe and some Persons of taste told me that tho they saw more expensive and more superb

It is interesting to note however, that in none of these descriptions of dress, do the young women call attention to their mothers' clothes being different, less fashionable, or less appealing than their own. Where one might expect to see young women rejecting or disdaining the dresses worn by their mothers, as older women, in fact the tone shared by Katharine and Nabby is one of appreciation. Here, as elsewhere, the relational purpose of fashion seems to trump differences of age. While, perhaps, their mothers are not wearing gowns that are of the latest fashion, the fact that they are both wearing fashionable and elegant attire together seemed more important in articulating shared social identity.

Other young women executed similar descriptive passages as well. Consider Susan Quincy's description of Miss Henderson, the uninteresting "perfection of a fashionable woman," who, "wore a silk lace French dress richly trimmed over white satin. Pearl ornaments and pearls in her hair surmounted by 6 white ostrich plumes which waved far above the heads of her admirers." At the party, Susan noted that all the women there were "in full dress, gold and sliver muslins," with "lace & jewels of all descriptions." After a party, Eleuthera du Pont wrote to Meta Lammot with all the details, since she had "promised…a minute description." She began by describing Victorine's dress, accessories, and even "a bunch of false curls sent…for the occasion." "I wish," she wrote, "you could have seen her, for every person remarked how well she looked." When Eleuthera moved on to describing her own attire, she emphasized her connection to her social network. "I had on," she wrote, "my trimming dress like yours…round my neck the ruffles Louisa Courtland worked." As with many other descriptive passages, Eleuthera too connects herself to a social sphere, and

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dresses at Court they did not see one, more elegant and neat than my Ladyships. Now who think you this was. Why Mr Humphryes—and for all the World his taste is excellent." The new color, to which Nabby refers, is a greenish yellow color that was all the rage at the time. For more on Spanish fly and other historical colors, refer to Salisbury, *Elephant's Breath and London Smoke*.

places approbation for attire outside of herself – noting how "every person remarked on how well," Victorine looked. [8283]

Though these passages of "minute description," can seem like irrelevant distractions from the narrative of these young women's lives, they are not. The descriptions were doing very real social and cultural work for the young women who wrote them. Young women who described the finery that they wore for significant social events were articulating their place in the social hierarchy. The descriptions were comparative and competitive, allowing young women to note compliments and social coups. They provided a way for young women to relate themselves and their companions to outside members of the social circle. Long descriptions, so easily dismissed as "a description of gowns worn," were vital pieces of young women's self-fashioning through appearance.

"Would to Heaven every body cared as little for dress": Self-fashioning with anti-fashion

[82] Susan Quincy, [April 21, 1819] *The Articulate Sisters*. The entry reads: "The ladies were all in full dress, gold and silver muslins, lace & jewels of all descriptions gave brilliancy to the party. The ladies looked very handsome and it was a pretty sight to see them enter. Miss Henderson wore a silk lace French dress richly trimmed over white satin. Pearl ornaments and pearls in her hair surmounted by 6 white ostrich plumes which waved far above the heads of her admirers. She is not interesting but the perfection of a fashionable woman."

[83] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, August 2, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML. The entry reads: "As I have promised you a minute description I will begin by an account of our dress. Sister Victorine was dressed very becoming in straw coloured belt, shoes, collar &c Her hair was in prime order, (arranged my best) and was greatly improved by a bunch of false curls sent her by Mrs. C{??} for the occasion, and by a bouquet of her green house flowers - I wish you could have seen her for every person remarked how well she looked. The only misfortune was that the false curls were several shades lighter than her hair so that she was obliged to sit in the shade until night when the difference was not perceptible. I had on my trimming dress like yours Sashed in pink and round my neck the ruffles Louisa Courtland worked gathered and fixed to a puff thro' which was passed a pink ribbon - my neck was bare - In my hair I wore some flowers"

In an 1838 diary entry made while preparing for her social debut, Caroline Healey lamented, "Would to Heaven every body cared as little for dress and entertainments as my quiet self," and went on to declare that she sought, "no intercourse with the vain and frivolous."[84] While the previous section focuses on the ways that young women used attention to, and even affinity for, fashionable apparel to develop adult selves and relate to the world around them, for some young women fashion and dress was a sore subject. Caroline's lament, and the anti-fashion criticism of young women and cultural commentators of the period alike, seem contrary to the self-fashioning enacted with minute attention to the details of personal and social appearance. In reality, however, the discourses run in parallel. In expressing disdain or disgust or rejection of fashionability, they were relying on definitions provided by fashion. In expressing her lack of care "for dress and entertainments," Caroline was, in some ways, making dress central to her own identity.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, criticism of fashion circulated in Atlantic networks along with the trends and styles that inspired it. Breen discusses the primarily negative eighteenth-century perspectives on "fashion" and fashionable apparel. These negative perceptions center on the scorn held for the fashionable lust for novelty. Haulman emphasizes the Revolutionary satirical images that displayed fashionable American women as ludicrous mimics, eager to ape whatever was "quite the Ton," to use Victorine's phrase. Such women, insisted critics, undermined the republican ideal. That fashion was corrosive was a popular critique. While the consumer behaviors associated with fashionability were necessary to the developing economy of the early Republic, many worried about the moral ramifications of that necessity.[85]

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[84] Caroline Healey, [November 20, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 16.
[85] Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 152; Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, 157, 2, 1.

Other critics, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Judith Sargent Murray, and Hannah More, argued that women's affinity for dress – an affinity that their educations produced and encouraged – was a weakness from which they needed to be rescued. Though Murray did cite fashion change as an example of female creativity, Wollstonecraft, particularly, was utterly dismissive of fashion. Both Wollstonecraft and Hannah More, argues Jennie Batchelor, were engaged by the idea of "an authentic female subjectivity created outside the stifling embrace of affect & fashion." Young women who forwarded this model of self-fashioning were often aggressively unconcerned with what was considered fashionable, attractive, or popular. [86]

To Caroline Healey, concern with dress and appearance was applied as an insult. When her father criticized her, suggesting that her younger sister Ellen was more perseverant than she, Caroline stormed in her diary, "Ellen! a child without a care—unless her sash be of the wrong color – or her hair out of curl!" As so often was the case for Caroline, she compared her own higher aspirations to the lowly ones of her materially attentive sister. [87]

Mary Robie, like Caroline, expressed discontent at the idea of being constrained to a life of fashion. "To those," she wrote, "whose views extend no higher it must certainly be an agreeable way of passing thro life to rise in the morning…discourse on fashionable Caps Gowns &c &c." However, she planned not to live "a life so totally insipid." Sophie du Pont, unlike her sisters, was also one of fashion's discontents. Though her sisters wrote frequently about the latest trends, Sophie often expressed boredom or even outright distaste for attention to dress and fashion. She often mocked the fashionable attire of those around her with relish. In an 1830 letter to her brother Henry, Sophie noted that since "it was some years since I had at all mingled in society – every thing was a novelty." She went on to say that "the ladies

[86] Haulman, *Politics of Fashion*, 220, 219; Batchelor, *Dress, Distress, and Desire*.
[87] Caroline Healey, July 24, 1838, Reel 32, Caroline Wells Healey Dall Papers, 1811-1917, Ms. N-1082. MHS.

dresses particularly afforded me an ample field of entertainment – They dress their hair now about two feet high ornamented with flowers or feathers or ribbons or all three." While Mary suggested that she'd set her sights higher than "discourse on fashionable Caps Gowns &c," in making the high-rolled hair that was en vogue the subject of a joke, Sophie too suggested that her interests lay elsewhere. [8889]

In emphasizing their lack of interest in appearances, fashion, and clothing, however, Mary, Sophie, Caroline and young women like them were engaging with discourses of fashion and apparel. When Caroline wrote about her planned dress for a debut ball, she noted that she had "already decided that book muslin, with no ornament save a plain white satin fold, shall make me look as well, as perfect simplicity can." She went on to lament that her hair, while always "parted on my forehead, and gathered in braids behind – 'à la Grecque—' must be tortured…into some more becoming knot." In the entry on her own simplicity, Caroline references numerous styles and fashions – simple book muslin and white satin, braids "à la Grecque." While she prided herself on her simplicity, that fashion – or lack thereof – was integral to the persona that she cultivated. [90]

In an entry a few years later, she paid specific attention to her clothing, saying "perhaps my dress may amuse -- somebody who will laugh to hear--that Martha & my dressmaker -- insisted upon my looking <u>well</u>." She went on to describe the silly attempts to make her look nice. "It was, "she wrote, "an embroidered rose colored silk under a Brussels lace-- a deep fall of lace -- round the neck & elbows -- and -- a narrower--at the bottom of the bodice--& round the wrists." While she noted that her hair was plain, she highlighted the embellishment of her dress and accessories, even editing the entry to be more specific and

[88] Mary Robie, May 22, 1783, diary, May-October 1783. Ms. N-804. MHS.
[89] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, December 1, 1830, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[90] Caroline Healey, [November 20, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 16.

materially conscious. While the original line read "my dress clasped three times and a ring upon my third finger," the revised line read, "my bodice clasped three times with diamonds in front and a ring upon my third finger." Referring to her bodice, rather than simply her dress being clasped, raises the attention to material detail in the entry. She closes the entry noting, "how important this will seem to somebody when I am – in the dust."[91]

Though the young women who were staunchly opposed to fashion, who rejected attention to their personal appearances used the material cultures of appearance in different ways, they were not less significant. Both girls and cultural commentators who protested the role of fashion in the lives and selves of women were often suggesting some sort of material alternative. The choice to favor "simple, natural dress" played a part in self -fashioning as much as the latest styles and most fashionable ruffles.

The ability to know the "fation here" took on greater significance as young women enacted roles as consumers in the marketplace to acquire the things that they and others wore. In exploring the material cultures of shopping as it played into young women's self-fashioning, attending the complicated questions of appearance and self-fashioning should not be forgotten. How young women perceived their own appearance and the appearances of those around them, the items that they chose to own and wear (or not) and the symbolic resonance that they placed on material items of the body were, in many ways, at the heart of young women's self-fashioning.

[91] Caroline often expressed a similar awareness of her own future, noting in an 1842 "If I were likely to die wealthy and could pay an institution for taking care of papers so precious to me--I would do it--for a psychologist, this journal would be worth the pains" Diary, August 8, 1842. Thus, her inclusion of dress for some future reader, is an interesting testament to what she thought might be meaningful.

Chapter 2

A Consuming Femininity: Gender, Shopping, and Self-Fashioning

One day in March 1824 Philadelphian Meta Lammot wrote to her friend Eleuthera du Pont just outside of Wilmington, Delaware. "This morning," she wrote

> I went immediately after breakfast for your muslin which I purchased & hope I was not too extravagant for I paid $1.75 but as you said I might go as high as two, I ventured. You did not tell me whether it was India or Book you wished. Book very handsome for 45 cts and 1$. If I have done wrong excuse me as I did my best.[1]

The correspondence seems fairly routine: simply one girl recounting a shopping trip carried out for a friend. However, when considered as an account of self-fashioning it proves far from trivial. Meta knew where to acquire the muslin that Eleuthera required, as well as how much should and could be paid for it. She contrasted the different types of muslin and made her own choice based on the goods available. She kept an accounting of money spent as well as the funds that she had at her disposal. Most interestingly, though, is the fact that Meta took these skills to the marketplace not for herself but for her distant friend. This 'proxy shopping', common in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, prompted Meta's final line – in the self-effacing language common to young female proxy shoppers – "If I have done wrong excuse me as I did my best." Being trusted to shop for another meant being a tasteful, savvy, and careful purchaser. It meant the chance to exercise economic capital on someone else's behalf, and significant social capital on one's own. The opportunity to choose for a friend or family member signified sharing in overlapping networks of sociability, intimacy and commerce that young women were beginning to enter, not as children, but as adult participants.

[1] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, March, 1824, Margaretta Lammot du Pont Papers, 1820-1897, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A. HML.

Shopping, proxy or otherwise, was a significant and skilled activity in the life of early American young women. As adults, women were responsible for the majority of the consumption for their households, making decisions about foodstuffs as well as tablewares, clothing, furnishings and other household staples. Learning how to shop appropriately was an essential part of developing an adult female identity, even when young women themselves were usually responsible for fewer and smaller purchases. The purchases of early American girls, the ribbons, muslin, books, and candies that appear in colorful profusion in the letters and diaries of the period, are small indeed in comparison to budgeting to stock a pantry or selecting significant household purchases. Nevertheless, as Ann Smart Martin reminds readers of her essay on eighteenth and nineteenth-century shopping, despite greater interest in large-scale purchases and economic trends, "ribbons mattered too."[2] The purchases, large and small, of young women served a critical role in their development of adult identities. They remind us that to early American young women ribbons – and buttons, beads, sugarplums and sodas - most assuredly mattered.

Historian Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, in her essay on consumption in early American port cities, argues that consumer knowledge was shaped by "ideas about fashion, identity, gender, class, and economy" and that this consumer knowledge, in turn, went on to shape material life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[3] In shopping for necessities large and small young women were also using their consumption to establish adult female identities and to display those identities both to themselves and to their communities. They were

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[2] Ann Smart Martin, "Ribbons of Desire: Gendered Stories and the World of Goods," in in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850*, John Styles and Amanda Vickery, Eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 186

[3] Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, "Collaborative Consumption and the Politics of Choice in Early American Port Cities." in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850,* John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 127.

negotiating class, gender, position and selves through the things they bought and those they did not, how they discussed those goods and the means by which those goods were acquired. For young women the inflections of the consumer marketplace influenced not only their material lives but also their own self-fashioning. Since their shopping behavior and participation in the consumer marketplace were hotly debated by cultural commentators – simultaneously denounced for its corrosive influence and declared essential to the economy and polity of the new Republic - shopping became a vehicle for gendered political and economic performance as well. In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which consumption - choosing, critiquing, purchasing or evaluating the expanding world of consumer things – altered the material lives of young women and, in turn, critically shaped the ways that young women used the material world of consumption to fashion adult female selves.

I will begin with a brief discussion of the historiography of consumption and female consumers in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Atlantic world, followed by an analysis of the ways in which shoppers and shopping environments featured in the letters, diaries and other sources produced by and for young women in the period. I will then delve more deeply into young women's consumption, discussing the ways that they shopped, the things they chose, and how they developed market skills and financial acumen. Building on those topics, I will consider the larger political, social and economic significances of young female consumer behavior. Finally, I will consider the case of 'proxy shopping,' the ways in which the phenomenon sits squarely at the nexus of consumer savvy, financial skill, taste, choice and social networks of the period, and how it represented a crucial avenue for young women's self-fashioning.

Shoppers, Shopping and 'Consumer Revolution(s)'?

In *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, Neil McKendrick, John Brewer & J. H. Plumb argue for the existence of a consumer revolution. McKendrick states categorically that there "was a consumer revolution in eighteenth-century England" and that the revolution fundamentally altered material life in Britain, not because of a shift in desires but a shift in ability to acquire.[4] Their analysis of consumer revolution is closely focused on eighteenth-century economies and often relied heavily on measurements of production and per capita consumption. John Styles, along with many other critics of this formulation of consumer revolution, argues that this interpretation of the consumer revolution depicts it as the first step on the path to a modern consumer culture while obscuring the nuances of shifts in consumer behavior throughout the early modern period.[5] Styles, and others including T. H. Breen, Jan de Vries, Lorna Weatherill, and Richard Bushman, responded with work that complicated the relationship of consumers and the things they consumed, called new attention to the social and cultural ramifications of consumption in daily life, and traced the contours of the shifting consumer world of the early modern period.[6]

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[4] Neil McKendrick, "Introduction," *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England. (*London: Europa Publications, 1982).

[5] John Styles, "Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England," In J. Brewer and R. Porter. eds. *Consumption and the World of Goods in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 535-538.

[6] See essays in John Brewer and Roy Porter. eds. *Consumption and the World of Goods in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (London: Routledge, 1994); Cary Carson, et. al., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century,* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994). The essays cover both production and consumption as they were enacted on national and global stages and employ qualitative and quantitative methods. Of particular note are Breen's essay describing the process by which consumers were producers, as they acquired and devised their own meaning for objects, Cissie Fairchilds' discussion of eighteenth-century French populuxe consumer revolution and its effect on the lower echelons of French society, and Shammas' discussion of broad changes in Anglo-American consumption throughout the early modern period. Fairchilds, Cissie. "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*. John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. 228-248. London: Routledge, 1993; Carole

Nevertheless, in her 1998 essay on Hannah Barnard's cupboard, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich critiques existing studies of consumption, arguing that while historians "have a great deal to say about 'consumer revolutions,'" they have by in large overlooked the social and cultural implications of these revolutions. In the years since Ulrich published her essay, many scholars have stepped in to challenge, complicate, and enrich our understandings of the multifaceted ways in which changing patterns of consumption in the late-eighteenth century elicited social, cultural, and political responses. Paul G. E. Clemens helpfully articulates a framework that suggests consumer *evolution* rather than *revolution* between the 1770s and the 1820s. Though post-revolutionary America is often overlooked in studies of consumer change, he suggests, the increasing comfort and "ordinariness" of many products meant that Americans acquired things more than ever before even as commentators grew more uncomfortable with the potential for luxury goods to destabilize the new republic.

Similarly, Maxine Berg cites English economic and moral commentators of the late-eighteenth century who feared the effects of luxury consumption, *both* imported and domestic, upon their fellow citizens.[7] Historian Roy Porter discusses fears about overconsumption, as does Karen Ann Weyler, in her study of sexual and economic desire in American fiction. Weyler, in particular, highlights the ways in which excessive desire for luxuries was viewed as a kind of sickness in eighteenth-century America. In particular, she cites Crèvecoeur's observations of Charlestonians as a population made decadent and

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Shammas, "Changes in English and Anglo-American Consumption from 1550 to 1800," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 177-205.

[7] Paul G.E. Clemens, "The Consumer Culture of the Middle Atlantic, 1760-1820," 577; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63.

depraved by their desire for luxury goods.[8] Breen also touches on this discomfort and highlights the gendered aspect of the discourse, suggesting that despairing, mostly male, commentators decried both consumer society and the women who, they insisted, had so desired the goods in the first place. Breen also discusses anxiety about the feminizing *effects* of goods, arguing that in the eyes of eighteenth-century commentators, "the Jezebels of the consumer revolution beguiled men…not into theological error but into effeminate luxury," that could undermine the nation. In her study of shopping in eighteenth-century Britain, Clare Walsh also highlights a strand of the discourse that linked women, gender, luxury, and vice in circulation during the period. Both emphasize the degree to which consumption and consumer goods were tied to women and femininity[9]

This consumer critique should not suggest, however, that women were the sole participants in the shifting patterns of consumption in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Men throughout the Atlantic world were avid consumers, purchasing clothing, household goods, livestock (including agricultural animals, horses, and dogs) as well as a

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[8] Roy Porter, "Consumption: disease of the consumer society?" in in *Consumption and the World of Goods*. John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. (London: Routledge, 1993), 58-81; Karen Ann Weyler, *Intricate Relations: sexual and economic desire in American fiction, 1789-1814,* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2004), 106. Sam W. Haynes' *Unfinished Revolution* includes a discussion of the anxieties faced by American consumers in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. As peacetime reopened lanes of trade between America and Great Britain, Haynes suggests, American commentators feared that they would be rendered "politically free, commercial slaves" to Britain. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), Chapter 6.

[9] Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 175, 173; "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England," in in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850*. John Styles and Amanda Vickery, Eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 164. On luxury debates, see also Neil De Marchi, "Adam Smith's accommodation of 'altogether endless' desires," in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850*, Maxine Berg & Helen Clifford, eds. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). 18-36 and Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," in *Past & Present*, 182, (February 2004), 85-142.

wide array of luxury items. However Walsh argues that, though men enjoyed shopping as much as women did, women were most associated with shopping, fashions, and purchases for the home. Styles and Vickery highlight the challenges that these associations present for the modern historian. To study female consumption, they suggest, requires attention to the actual differences in the shopping behavior of men and women in the period while avoiding the construction of gendered stereotypes about the consumers.[10]

Despite the anxieties, gendered and otherwise, that the new consumer marketplace provoked, historians have also emphasized the ways that participation in new markets changed the ways that buying and identity were linked. Phyllis Whitman Hunter argues that for New England merchants, the choices they made in spending their acquired wealth "defined them as much as the means by which they gained it."[11] Hunter suggests that merchants purchased into an Atlantic culture of gentility and sophistication by acquiring silver tea sets, elaborate silks, and ornate furnishings to both set them apart from poorer Americans and link them to affluent contemporaries on the other side of the Atlantic. Others including T.H. Breen and Ann Smart Martin discuss the ways that a social status could be commodified. Martin examines the divide between "civilized" Virginians and their backwoods counterparts through the lens of material goods. Civility, she argues, was not

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[10] Walsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making" 163,152; Styles and Vickery, "Introduction," *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850*, John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 5. Patterns of male consumption in the period, while less-studied, can be seen in Linzy Brekke's "'To Make a Figure': Clothing and the Politics of Male Identity in Eighteenth-Century America," *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850,* John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 225-246; Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America*,(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011),133-135, 225.
[11] Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants, 1670-1780*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 175

merely the knowledge of how to act but "knowing what to buy or use."[12] Consumers in eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century marketplaces were gaining more than simple objects in their transactions.

Helen Berry, Claire Walsh, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor and Ann Smart Martin have all written about female consumers in the wake of the shifting transatlantic cultures of consumption. Berry and Walsh both focus on eighteenth-century British shoppers while Martin and Hartigan-O'Connor focus on Americans, but all articulate the economic and social factors, including industrialization and urbanization, that made shopping, browsing, and choosing objects a new pastime for a growing sector of the eighteenth-century female population.[13] Berry discusses the rise of the female shopper, highlighting the ways in which female participation shaped and restructured existing commercial structures in eighteenth-century Britain. Berry also focuses on the ways in which the act of shopping, browsing, and negotiating became uniquely feminine pursuits. The female pleasure shoppers, she writes, were referred to as "Silk-worms" by shop clerks because of their tendency to unroll yards and yards of silk for their browsing delight. Breen highlights the political importance of female shoppers in the American colonies, noting that in the years leading up to the Revolution men

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[12] Ann Smart Martin, "Frontier Boys and Country Cousins: The Context for Choice in Eighteenth-Century Consumerism," in *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, ed. Lu Ann De Cunzo and Bernard L. Herman, 71-102. (Winterthur, Delaware: The Henry Francis Du Pont Winerthur Museum, Inc, 1996),76.

[13] Helen Berry, "Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth series, Vol. 12, 2002, 375-394; Walsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making,"; Hartigan-O'Connor, "Collaborative Consumption,"; Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Martin, "Ribbons of Desire,". See also T.H. Breen's "Baubles of Britain" which argues that 18th-century Americans "communicated perceptions of status and politics to other people through items of every day material culture." "Baubles of Britain": The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988): 73-104.

looked to women, their daughters, sisters, and wives, to carry out the consumer sacrifices necessary to ensure the success of boycott movements.[14]

Martin highlights the hierarchy destabilizing potential of shopping, arguing that in becoming consumers "wives stepped free from their husbands…girls from mothers at least to a limited extent."[15] That girls, ostensibly subjected because of gender and age, could gain autonomy through shopping is an intriguing prospect, one that Martin highlights in her study of eighteenth-century store registers. "What is most tantalizing," she writes, "is that so many younger women – identified by the appellation 'Miss' or 'per daughter' – traveled to stores"[16] It is this tantalizing prospect – the chance to view girls stepping into authority of their own while shopping – that drives this chapter.

Despite their increasing shopping autonomy, when young women chose for themselves or for others, their choices were circumscribed by economic, cultural and social factors. For most Americans in the period, consumer behavior was an inherently social and interconnected process. Hartigan-O'Connor and Breen argue that shared consumer marketplaces, providing similar goods "from Savannah to Portsmouth," gave colonists the means to communicate through a shared experience of things.[17] The shared network of things, from Boston to Philadelphia to Charleston meant that residents of one city could easily make requests, examine possible purchases, weigh their options and send or receive items through the fluid networks of exchange that linked major American ports. Being able to compare, choose, and own similar things, Hartigan-O'Connor suggests, allowed consumers to develop "a social and even political 'sensus communis'" amongst those with a shared sense of consumer taste and that shopping could orchestrate relationships between people both at

[14] Berry, "Polite Consumption," 387; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 211.
[15] Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 145.
[16] Martin, "Ribbons of Desire," 196.
[17] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties that Buy*, 8; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv.

home and abroad. Walsh too argues that the greatest influence on female consumption was her social network that offered discerning judgment on the quality, taste and reasonableness of any prospective purchase.[18] In this regard proxy shopping can be seen as the culmination of social shopping practices in early America. Shopping by proxy bound consumers together even further as a prospective shopper and her proxy collaborated to select, purchase, and obtain the required item.

The inherently social and collaborative nature of early American consumption makes the shopping of the young women I study particularly exciting. Not only were there the tantalizing hints, as Ann Smart Martin suggests, that young women were shopping, making choices for themselves and others, but because shopping in the period was so collaborative a process it allowed young women to develop critical modes of both social and individual self-fashioning as they perused the shops of Boston and wrote detailed shopping lists from South Carolina plantations. The young women I study wielded significant economic, social and even political power; declared that they could be arbiters of things tasteful, fashionable, and economical; and made choices and decisions about their own things and about the things others would have. More intriguingly, though, they did all this while simultaneously developing adult selves – neither fully women nor children -their shopping enabled them develop their own sense of refined, adult femininity.

Shops and Shopping: young female consumer behavior and its environs

While the concept of 'shopping' - to go to stores, look at items, and consider purchases - was in its infancy at the start of my study in the 1770s, by the time sixteen-year-old Selina Bond

[18] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 126, 131; Walsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making," 169.

was journaling in the 1840s shopping was quite commonplace.[19] In an 1846 diary entry she recorded a fairly typical day, noting

> We came home from school today, at recess. first we went and bought a pair of shoes for Lizzy. next we went to Miss Belcher's to see about sun dresses, she is to come here Wednesday next to work. We went down in the village again this afternoon and bought a pair of shoes for myself and some other little things[20]

Over the course of her diary, Selina mentions multiple trips to multiple shops in a very casual way. Her diary records many similar shopping trips, usually conducted during recess or after school, almost always with her sister Lizzy at her side. In this entry, she casually mentions arranging not only the purchase of sun dresses but also the visit of a seamstress to their house, where she would work the following Wednesday. This wasn't unusual behavior for Selina, who often arranged for Miss Belcher's services, and bought at least some of her wearing apparel seemingly unsupervised by adults. Tellingly, she also records that along with a pair of shoes they also purchased "some other little things," suggesting that their small size or cost, along with the regularity with which she made such purchases, meant that there was no need to record each individually. Historian Helen Berry describes the evolution of shopping in Britain suggesting that shopping, as an activity, became part of the daily rhythm of middling and elite women in Britain.[21] Shopping was also part of the rhythm of the lives of urban American girls, whether during recess or after school or, if the young woman in question was not enrolled in a school, usually as a morning activity. In many cases the girls in question shopped without any adult supervision, often and groups of sisters or friends.

Shopping alone, away from adult supervision, was very common in the period. Berry cites evidence of girls in novels of the period, like those of Jane Austen, who were permitted

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[19] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 130.
[20] Selina Cranch Bond, February 7, 1846, Selina Cranch Bond Diary, 1 Feb. – 21 Sept. 1846, Ms. N-1859, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS).
[21] Berry, "Polite Consumption," 380.

to visit shops without an adult and Martin cites the work of Cathy Hellier whose study of social travelers suggests that girls in their late teens and early twenties had more freedom and mobility in shopping behavior than did those still in school.[22] My research shows that, by the early nineteenth century, it was unremarkable for girls as young as twelve or thirteen to visit shops by themselves, to select their own purchases, and often to select purchases for their parents or elder siblings. For urban girls frequent shopping trips for necessary supplies as well as for recreation were a familiar feature of life.[23]

Consider the shopping represented in thirteen-year-old Bostonian Anne Gorham Everett's 1835 diary. Anne shopped frequently, mostly for herself but also for her mother. Most of the trips she noted in her diary were taken alone, though occasionally she would visit several stores with her sister Charlotte or school friends She was a regular customer at Mr. Bird's for gloves, patterns, cloth and sewing supplies, Miss Carleton's for silk, beads and boots, Mrs. Comels' for soda, Mr. Quimby's for wafers and Mr. Craft's apothecary's shop for the oft purchased *Parley's* magazines.[24] Bostonian Lucy Cheever Shattuck, age twelve in the summer of 1835 just a few months before her death, also recorded her fondness for acquiring

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[22] Berry, "Polite Consumption," 379; Ann Smart Martin "Ribbons of Desire," 196.

[23] I reiterate here that this was quite common for girls in urban environments. Unsurprisingly urban girls record many more unaccompanied shopping trips than do their rural counterparts. For instance, contrast the letters of Sophie and Eleuthera du Pont when they were at school in Philadelphia with their time at their family home, Eleutherian Mills, just outside Wilmington, Delaware. When at school the girls shopped prolifically and recorded many shopping trips. While at home, most of their shopping was done by proxy.

[24] Anne Gorham Everett, July 17, 1835; July 23, 1835; September 7, 1835; September 18, 1835; September 19, 1835; September 22, 1835, Anne Gorham Everett Diaries, 1834-1843. Ms. N-1201. MHS. *Parley's Magazine* was first published in Boston in 1833, as one of many magazines designed to educate and entertain the youth of America. *Parley's* had a specific focus on geography and customs of other countries, and also published editions of *Parley's Cabinet Library* in the 1840s. *Parley's,* as well as the *Youth's Companion* were, perhaps, the most popular youth publications in America during my period, and appear frequently in girls' letters and diaries. On *Parley's* and youth magazines of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see: Margaret C. Radencich, "Two Centuries of U.S. Magazines for Youth," *Journal of Reading* 29, No. 6 (1986): 495-505; Gladys Scott, "Peter Parley: His Magazine and His Books," *Peabody Journal of Education* 57, no. 56 (1942): 290-292.

Parley's magazines, though often through relatives and friends rather than going to shops herself. While Lucy was, in all probability, unable to shop because of her rapidly failing health, she eagerly records purchases she made 'of pedlars.' On July 23, 1835, for instance, Lucy wrote that she "bought a water pot of a pedlar and paid 23 cents for it." Months earlier she had bought a tin pail from a peddler for eight cents, though there is no indication of whether it was one peddler who paid repeated visits to their house or a string of peddlers. Lucy also recorded shopping trips made for her by family members, differentiating them from gifts she was given, noting in one entry "Cousin Lucy went out and bought me a comb and some ribbon to trim my bonnet."[25] Sometimes the world of shopping and peddlers converged as when Helen Beal, shopping in Boston, recorded her amusement at the man on the street "who tried to persuade Abby [a school friend] to buy a tooth brush."[26] Girls in Boston, and in other urban centers, had a wide range of shopping options at their disposal.

For these girls, however, shopping was often recorded both as an amusement and as a chore. Hartigan-O'Connor emphasizes the degree to which shopping was often described as both a pleasing pastime and a drudgery to be endured.[27] In an 1833 diary, Bostonian Anna Quincy described encountering her friend Elisabeth and offering her a ride "as she looked pale, & perfectly fagged," not, Anna hastened to add, that she "add'd *that* to [her] invitation." The cause of her fatigue was revealed to be an exhausting shopping trip. "She had," Anna wrote, "been hunting the whole morning, not after happiness, but after a pair of long gloves, not a pair of which was to be had for love or money in Boston."[28] To young women like Anna

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[25] Lucy Cheever Shattuck, July 23, 1835; April 7, 1835; March 14, 1835, Lucy Cheever Shattuck diary, 1835-1865, Ms. N-914. MHS.
[26] Helen Beal, September 8, 1843, Helen Beal Hall diaries, 1843-1844. Ms. N-1818 MHS.
[27] Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 144.
[28] Anna Cabot Lowell Quincy, [Wednesday 10th April 1833] *A Woman's Wit & Whimsy: The 1833 Diary of Anna Cabot Lowell Quincy*. Beverly Wilson Palmer, ed.(Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, Northeastern University Press, 2003).

and Elisabeth, shopping could be both a pleasure and a chore – often both. In describing shopping as a difficult or challenging process, young women also staked a claim for their own skill and perseverance. Though she seemed less fatigued, many letters of Meta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont read as a laundry list of errands completed as in the case of this 1824 letter:

> I went to [Demerliers] to bespeak sisters shoes, and have bought the beads and needles for sister, and when I send the silk I want to know if Sister wants the purse I begin for her of that colour.[29]

A decade earlier Amelia Russell, a Massachusetts girl at school in Philadelphia, wrote

> I did not go to school in the morning as my shoes were very thin & I wanted to speak for another pair. So I went to my shoemakers who promised to make me a pair of boots against Sunday.[30]

Though this was far from the only time that Amelia forwent school in favor of shopping, the fact that, for the sixteen-year-old Amelia, a pressing need for shoes could trump attending school – not to mention her authoritative discussion of *her* shoemakers – spoke to the place of shopping in the daily life of an urban young woman.

Though shopping may have been a chore, it was one often conducted socially. Many girls recorded shopping trips taken with parents or, more often, with siblings or friends.[31] Eighteen-year-old Mary Robie, a loyalist exiled to Halifax during the Revolution, recorded shopping for a carpet with her Papa in 1783. Anne Everett wrote in her 1835 diary that she went "with Mamma to buy some things which she [Mama] wished to have." Katharine

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[29] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, January 1824, Papers, 1820-1897. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A, Hagley Museum and Library (hereafter HML).
[30] Amelia Eloise Russell, December 14, 1814, Amelia Eloise Russell diaries, 1814-1819, Ms. N-823, MHS.
[31] See Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor on shopping's social functions in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America. Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 143-145.

Lawrence, on an 1849 trip to Montreal, discusses frequent shopping trips with her mother.[32] More often, though, girls record shopping trips taken with their peers. Anne Everett spent the "Artillery Election" holiday in 1835 with her sister Charlotte buying candy for themselves and their younger siblings in Boston. The two girls, then twelve and ten, were given money and the leeway to select and purchase the items that they chose. In 1814, twelve-year-old social-shopper Harriot Coffin Sumner wrote that she

> went to take a walk with Sarah Cobb, Eliza Boott and Mary Lyman on the afternoon of the 7th of March. Eliza Boot bought a spunge Mary Lyman a quire of paper two pencils and a Geography book. I bought a skain of silk for Mamma and a Geography book[33]

Like many group shopping accounts in the period, Harriot carefully chronicles the purchases of all the friends who went along with her. She recorded her purchases, at least one made on behalf of her mother, a commonplace practice for girls learning how to shop for themselves. Intriguingly, along with the purchases, the account also collapses the act of shopping into taking a walk. In another March, 1814 entry Harriot again makes the same linguistic conflation writing "went to take a walk and bought me two sheets of embossed paper."[34] A year later in Philadelphia Amelia Russell used the same parlance, noting "R. Gilman called for me to go to drawing school but I wanted to get a pallet knife before I went…we walked some way but could not get any I liked"[35] Three decades later Helen Beal and Katharine Lawrence were still using the same turn of phrase to elide shopping activity into walking. Beal notes that on a December walk in 1843 she, Anna, Ellen, Bailey, and Lizzie "had a

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[32] Mary Robie, June 9, 1783, Mary Robie Sewall diary, May-October 1783, Ms. N-804, MHS.; Anne Gorham Everett, September 8, 1835, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201. MHS; Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, July 2, 1849, Katharine Bigelow Lawrence Lowell diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852, Ms. N-1547, MHS.
[33] Harriot Coffin Sumner, March 10, 1814, Harriot Coffin Sumner school diary, 1811-1817, Ms. N-288, MHS.
[34] Harriot Sumner, March 16, 1814, school diary, 1811-1817, Ms. N-288, MHS.
[35] Amelia Eloise Russell, March 25, 1815.

delightful walk, made some purchases for New Year's presents," and Katharine wrote, while on a trip to London, that she and a friend "walked into Oxford Street…and bought a Scotch pebble brooch for a shwal (sic) pin."[36] The elision of shopping into walking suggests not that the young women who used it were trying to minimize their retail activities, but rather that as early as 1814 shopping was so ordinary and usual an event to be undertaken that it could be folded into other routines of daily life.[37]

While the "galloping consumption" of the early republic features heavily in the documents that young women left behind, so too do the environments in which consumer activity took place. Amelia Russell, forgoing school again, wrote that while she "intended to go to school this morning," she instead went shopping with Sylvia who "was going to get a coat & …did not know all the stores."[38] It was not enough to know where the stores were, Amelia reasoned, since Sylvia did not know them all she would have to accompany her. As consumer practice evolved over the course of the post-Revolutionary period, so too did American commercial spaces, requiring young women to master the changing retail environments around them.

Richard Bushman suggests that before 1800 shops were mostly same as residential dwellings, just houses identified by signs advertising their wares.[39] After 1800, though, shops began to evolve broad, elegant windows and elaborate façades to set them apart. The

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[36] Helen Beal, December 30, 1843, Helen Beal Hall diaries, 1843-1844. Ms. N-1818 MHS.; Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, October 17, 1849, diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852, Ms. N-1547, MHS.

[37] This turn of phrase seems only to be present among girls in urban settings. Even then, not all walks are shopping trips, but most mentions of walking in cities are accompanied by buying/shopping. For girls in rural settings walking usually meant walking, typically in nature.

[38] Amelia Eloise Russell, Jan 7, 1815, diaries, 1814-1819. Ms. N-823. MHS..

[39] Bushman, *The Refinement of America: People, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Vintage, 1993), 359-361. See also, Richard Bushman's essay "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century,* Cary Carson, et. al., eds. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994).

possibility of achieving gentility and refinement through things, he argues, "led to the chief nineteenth-century addition to the geography of refinement, the genteel shop"[40] Shops served, Bushman argues, as venues for shaping the desires of consumers "not for goods alone but for a new social identity."[41] Martin, too, identifies the widening desire for 'gentility' as a contributor to the changing shopping environments of early America. As consumers became more discerning, merchants needed to compete to provide new, exciting shopping experiences. By the nineteenth century, she argues, "a merchant needed to…actively present a wide array of fashionable amenities and luxuries to maintain patronage."[42] Walsh and Berry both discuss the growing theatricality of shop windows and window-shopping in the period.[43] For Anne Everett, the shop windows were the allure of a store. "On the way home," she wrote in an 1837 diary, "we stopped to look at one of the beautiful stores, with plate glass windows, and the master showed us over the whole of it."[44] The retail experience shifted dramatically from the newly developed "shops" of the late-eighteenth-century to the wide windowed and unquestionably luxurious environments of the mid-nineteenth.

Retail environments and practices were not, however, the same across early America. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor highlights the differences between the world of retail in Charleston and Newport. In Charleston, she suggests, retailers used highly gendered advertisements of their stores and goods. Marketing catered specifically to women, assuring them that only ladies, not the male shopkeepers, had selected the merchandise for sale. In Newport, however, there was significantly less gendered marketing and a shopping environment in which men were often tasked with buying goods for their female friends and relations. The

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[40] Bushman, *The Refinement of America* 359.
[41] Bushman, "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America," 235.
[42] Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 479, 186.
[43] Walsh, ""Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making," 153,155-157; Berry, "Polite Consumption," 384.
[44] Anne Gorham Everett, May 23, 1837, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.

retail environment of a particular place shaped, Hartigan-O'Connor argues, not just the shopping experience of its inhabitants but also "local understandings about where shopping fit into ideas about gender and family."[45] Along with their powerful effect on conceptions of gender and family roles in shopping, retail environments also shaped and were shaped by social hierarchies.

Sophie du Pont, an avid comic caricaturist, once sketched Andrew Fountain's store. Fountain's was a small country store in early nineteenth-century Delaware selling to the mill community that had formed on the banks of the Brandywine creek. The caric is unusual, in that it portrays Sophie herself, rather than her friends or siblings, as a central actor. In the panel, Sophie stands at the counter of Fountain's store while a portly Fountain hands down a stack of colorful fabrics. The annotation on the back of the caric, titled "The Emporium" describes the dialogue. Sophie asks, "Mr. Fountain, will you let me look at your sewing silk?" Mr. Fountain's reply is an innocuous "Yes Ma'am, here's all we have." The caption, though, also notes that Fountain is "Handing down a pile of bombazets." The comedy in the scene derives from Fountain's country bumpkin ways, in believing that Sophie, who is asking for sewing silk (thread) wants bombazet instead. Fountain is even further distanced from fashionability and savvy by conflating bombazet –a thin twill cloth of wool and cotton – for silk. There was no silk, Sophie suggested, sewing or otherwise, in Fountain's fine "Emporium."

In teasing Fountain for his lack of sophistication, Sophie is, consciously or not, rendered herself and the viewers of her caricature as socially superior. To be 'in' on the joke, required her audience to know that they, too, were patrons of more genteel establishments and purchasers of fashionable goods. For while Fountain's store, particularly its proprietor

[45] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 142. See a larger discussion of the implications of gender and family and retail 141-143.

Andrew Fountain, appears frequently in less comedic terms in letters and diaries of all the du Pont girls, for their clothes, sewing supplies and other luxury objects, Sophie, Eleuthera and Victorine went to –or sent to– Philadelphia. Since stores, Martin argues, like Fountain's served as social hubs for the community, not just sites of purchase, Sophie's dismissal of Fountain's store and Fountain himself set the du Ponts apart from the other residents of the milling community. [46]

While their purchases and the contexts in which they made them may have varied, young women's participation in consumer activity seems a clear mark of impending adulthood. The girls who recorded purchases –from the small and mundane to the larger and more luxurious, who shopped with parents, siblings and friends, took walks that ended with a satisfying stack of purchases, and critiqued goods and the stores that sold them, were enacting a very particular sort of self-fashioning. They were crafting a part of an adult, refined, and feminine identity: the good shopper. In fashioning this identity practical shopping experience was only one facet of a larger whole. To be a good shopper, one had to "know the shops" as Amelia Russell explained. But good shopping also required a specialized vocabulary; a language of goods that young women adopted, crafted, and constructed to describe and regulate their consumer experiences.

The Language of Consumption

Young women tapped into an existing language of consumable goods when they assessed their own purchases and those of those around them. Yet by joining in a shared language of goods, they also participated in constructing a language and ideology of objects and what social, cultural, and political meanings that those items had. Through the shared language of

[46] Martin, "Ribbons of Desire," 196

goods they established their connections to other consumers and their capacity to join the ranks of genteel female shoppers. The shared language of goods, that Breen and Hartigan-O'Connor emphasized as a uniting factor, tied girls to fashionable Atlantic world of things and to sensible 'domestick management.' It marked them as tasteful, fashionable, savvy shoppers who knew where to shop, how to conduct themselves, and what to purchase, use, and display.[47]

Women's writing and conversation was replete with goods in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America. Women and girls traded patterns, discussed popular and fashionable colors and styles, considered the durability and practicality of muslin and the 'showy'-ness of ribbon. They took scrupulous note of ruffle width, assessed bows and bonnets, and advised on the construction of pantalettes and petticoats, or, what Sophie and Eleuthera du Pont and their friends called their 'unmentionables.' Many scholars of shopping and consumer culture in the period emphasize the essentially collaborative nature of female consumption when purchases were routinely vetted by friends and family, and clothes bought to copy or emulate members of a social circle who traded descriptives like"prettier," "smarter," and "daintier" to describe each others' purchases.[48]

When considering or reporting on a purchase girls often tapped into this shared language of goods, giving detailed descriptions of the objects they bought. In some cases, their writing served to justify a purchase to family or friends. Anna Winslow, a twelve-year-

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[47] Hartigan-O'Connor, "Collaborative Consumption," 133, 130. See also Walsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making," and Berry, "Polite Consumption," for discussion of appropriate shopping behavior, a discourse particularly aimed at young women in the period.

[48] Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 170; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 131-133. For a larger discussion of color and fashionability see Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 168-69; Vickery, "'Neat and Not Too Showey':Words and Wallpaper in Regency England," in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1850*. John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 201-224.

old at school in Boston in 1772, wrote to her father at home in Nova Scotia to relay information about a hat she had selected. "I have," she wrote,

> Made the purchase I told you of a few pages agone, that is, last Thursday I purchas'd with my aunt Demming's leave, a very beautiful white feather hat, that is, the outside, which is a bit of white hollond with the feathers sew'd on in a most curious manner white & unsullied as the falling snow, this hat I have long been saving my money to procure for which I have let your kind allowance, Papa, lay in my aunt's hands till this hat which I spoke for was brought home.[49]

Anna reported on her purchase knowing the significance of an item for which she had saved, and went into detail about color, material, and construction. In other situations, a girl reported purchases in this descriptive language solely for herself. Helen Beal recorded a shopping trip in 1844, writing, "we went to Kimball's in Tremont st where we each purchased to (sic) pair of shoes, a pair of morocco slippers $1 and a pair of black gaiters $1.50, they are really very handsome."[50] In the diary Helen noted the important details of her shopping trip – where her purchases were made, how much they cost, how they were constructed, and that they were, in fact, "really very handsome." To write this entry, though, required her to tap into informal shopping networks that gave her the knowledge that a dollar was a reasonable price to pay for morocco slippers from Kimball's. It meant that she considered the black gaiters and morocco slippers items that were appropriate and, perhaps, exciting wearing apparel. Though separated by fifty years, both Anna and Helen paid attention to similar details and wrote about them in similar ways; ways that allowed them to deploy skills that displayed their personal shopping savvy.[51]

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[49] Anna Green Winslow, [February 21, 1772], *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771*. Alice Morse Earle, ed, (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin, And Co. 1894), 31-32.
[50] Helen Beal, February 8, 1844, Helen Beal Hall diaries, 1843-1844, Ms. N-1818, MHS.
[51] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 132-33.

One of the most common uses of the shared language of consumer goods for young women was skepticism and criticism of the quality of goods that they considered. Deeming a good insufficiently "fine" was a means through which girls could display their shopping discernment. In an 1838 letter to her sister, Katherine Sedgwick wrote, "I did a deal of shopping yesterday morning – I looked for merinos at Smiths, but he had only one piece of very coarse green," before going on to explain that there was a piece of drap d'été "not too heavy for a cloak & very pretty, for two dollars a yard."[52] Often the protestations of insufficient quality were accompanied by a description of the arduousness of the shopping task that preceded that judgment.

After going on a shopping excursion on behalf of the du Pont girls, Meta Lammot reported that she "traveled up and down second st. and only saw two balls [of marking cotton] which were fine, but faded and dirty not worth buying but tolerably fine." On another shopping trip for the sisters, Meta wrote that despite having "been out two afternoons for the silk for sister," she had, "bought the dark, but can't get any light" to please her.[53] Similarly Amelia Russell wrote in frustration that she "went to all the stores we knew of but could find no very pretty silk."[54] In dismissing goods as insufficiently fine, dirty, or unattractive, Meta, Katherine and Amelia were demonstrating their own shopping skill. They had observed the goods available in the stores, compared them against a sense of what those goods' quality ought to be and found them wanting. Amelia and Meta's emphasis of their investment of time in visiting "all the stores" and "going up and down second st" highlight the work, even drudgery, that careful shopping required.

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[52]Katherine Sedgwick to Elizabeth Dwight Sedgwick, June 26, 1838, Sedgwick family papers, 1717-1946, Ms. N-851, MHS.
[53] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, undated; Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, January, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[54] Amelia Eloise Russell, January 7, 1815, diaries, 1814-1819, Ms. N-823, MHS.

Their awareness of quality and sense of careful shopping was not unusual. Breen highlights the shopping consciousness that evolved in the last half of the eighteenth century as buyers became well-schooled in recognizing inferior goods in shops and marketplaces. Helen Berry emphasizes the art of shopping, in which taste, practicality, and sense of worth combined in making any purchase.[55] An essential part of the schooled female consumer identity was the ability to decide that one item was superior in quality or value than another. In Meta's case, as she shops for others, her sense of quality and discernment substitute for theirs. In another letter, she writes that she purchased some new muslin for Eleuthera since she "thought that which [Eleuthera] had not fine enough."[56] Exercising judgment over goods, whether bought for themselves or for others, permitted young women to articulate their taste and perform a particular kind of shopping subjectivity.

Femininity and Financial Acumen

The quality and availability of goods in shops and markets was not the only means by which shopping allowed young women to develop personal identities. Anna Winslow allowed her money to "lay in her aunt's hands" while waiting for it to be enough for the hat she desired. Helen Beal considered the prices of her purchased shoes an important enough descriptor to be included in her diary. Part of Katherine Sedgwick's description of a very pretty fabric was its two dollars a yard price. Shopping was, thus, also a means through which young women developed an understanding of money, their connection to the financial world, and the scale of economies from domestic to national.

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[55] Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 131; Berry, "Polite Consumption," 387.
[56] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Tuesday morning, WMSS Group 7:A, HML. Though this letter is undated, it could be in response to a letter from Eleuthera to Meta July 31, 1823 in which she asks Meta's opinion of the muslin for trimming a dress.

In becoming adult women, girls needed to learn to manage money and to understand their economic power and that of their families. The informants in this study were affluent young white women, who typically had access to some measure of disposable income. The girls were entrusted with physical money of their own, and often had substantial voice in selecting larger purchases made on their behalf. Nevertheless, they also chafed against financial restrictions, lamented their lack of economic autonomy, and pleaded for items large and small when their financial resources ran out. Explicitly or implicitly, money figured all aspects of a young woman's consumer life and, in turn, the self-fashioning she enacted with things.[57]

Participation in the consumer world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was, at its core, a product of financial resources and access. Thus the self-fashioning of young women hinged upon an understanding of money and how it could and should be used. In her study of Virginia shoppers, Ann Smart Martin highlights the differences in shopping experience of wealthy girls, deemed desired customers, and poor ones who were unable to participate successfully in the material world of the shop. Similarly Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor discusses the line between women who could afford to buy, whose purchasing power reinforced their place at the top of the social hierarchy of goods, and those who could not afford the "price of refinement."[58] As Hunter articulates, in the period, buying and self-

[57] For a larger discussion of money in the early Republic see Robert Garson's article on nationhood and the material culture of American currency. The article especially calls into focus the multitude of forms that currency took throughout the period and the challenges of changing currencies across state lines. Garson, "Counting Money: The US Dollar and American Nationhood, 1781-1820," *Journal of American Studies* 35 (2001) 1: 21-46; *Republic of Debtors*; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, Chapter 4.
[58] Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 155-158; Hartigan-O'Connor, "Collaborative Consumption," 140; For the significance of individual goods to rich and poor women see Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 7.

fashioning were so linked that you *were* what you bought. The letters and diaries of young women of the period suggest that they were no exception.

Money and financial acumen appear in several forms in the letters and diaries of these young women. As previously discussed, girls assessed purchases in terms of price. Lucy Shattuck noted how many cents her purchases "of pedlars" cost. Katherine Sedgwick, Margaretta Lammot and Eleuthera du Pont considered price as well as color and composition when the purchase of fabric, lace, and ribbons. Diaries and letters also note when girls had money of their own to spend. In January 1844, Helen Beal noted, "Father gave us the money to purchase muffs with."[59] Anna Winslow noted a 1772 present, writing that her Grandmamma sent "one eight_th of a Dollar…for a New Years gift."[60] Winslow also thanked her father, both for his January 11 letter and "for the money I received therewith."[61] In several of her journals, Anne Everett noted that she and her sister went shopping in honor of Artillery election day in June, usually also noting that she had "election money Papa had given [them]."[62] That Anne and her sister, both fairly young at the time, were given "election money" to spend at their disposal reveals an intriguing point. Elite and middling girls in early America had, at least to some degree, physical money, not just family credit at the stores that they frequented, at their disposal as well as the freedom to spend it on items that they selected.[63]

In other circumstances, costs were used to define the parameters of a purchase or recall goods bought by a specific price. When discussing purchases with Eleuthera du Pont, Meta Lammot wrote that while she had bought some lace, she "could get none of the wide

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[59] Helen Beal, January 3, 1844, Helen Beal Hall diaries, 1843-1844. Ms. N-1818, MHS.
[60] Anna Green Winslow, *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow*, 31.
[61] Anna Green Winslow, *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow*, 32.
[62] Anne Gorham Everett, June 6, 1836, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[63] For a larger discussion of physical money and systems of cash and credit see Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, Chapter 4 and Ann Smart Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods*.

kind, except some at 4 [dollars] extremely fine & some of 1.37 ½ which was too coarse and bad quality." Neither was acceptable so, she wrote, she had "got some of the strip kind 2 yds at 34 cents a yd."[64] In a letter to Meta, Eleuthera wrote that her sister, Victorine, would like her to buy some bobbinet (a type of tulle), "about the same kind as she got for $2.50 cts last winter."[65] Clearly Victorine thought that Meta would be most able to remember last year's bobbinet, not by color or purchase location, but by price.

Money, or often the lack thereof, also enters the letters and diaries in entries about wants. While away at school in Boston in 1800 Eliza Southgate wrote to her mother with a request:

> Now Mamma, what do you think I am going to ask for? – a wig. Eleanor [Coffin] has got one just like my hair and only cost 5 dollars, Mrs. Mayo one just like it. I must either cut my hair or have one…Mrs. Coffin bought Eleanor's and says that she will write to Mrs. Sumner to get me one just like it; how much time it will save – in one year we could save it in pins and paper beside the *trouble*…If you will consent to my having one do send me a 5 dollar bill by the post immediately after you receive this.[66]

Eliza phrased her request in terms of elegance and cold hard cash. Her desire for a wig, she argued, was both fashionable and frugal, and it would only cost five dollars – a sum that she hoped could be sent by post at once. Eliza's request contains many of the hallmarks of savvy female shopping in the period. She set her prospective purchase in a social context, informing her mother that others had wigs just like the one she wanted, and that she was linked into a social network that could help her acquire the appropriate item. She knew how much it

[64] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, undated, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[65] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 10, 1823, Eleuthera du Pont Smith Papers, 1816-1876. Winterthur Manuscripts Group 6:C. HML.
[66] Eliza Southgate Bowne, [February 7, 1800], *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago: Selections From the Letters of Eliza Southgate Bowne*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887).

should cost, and requested that the appropriate bill be sent along from Maine to Boston with her mother's next letter.[67]

Eliza Southgate begged for money to buy a wig, but sometimes begging and pining for things in letters and diaries was for even larger purchases. Several young women noted in diaries their parents intent or reticence to acquire a piano or harpsichord for their home. Anne Everett noted, "I believe Mamma intends to get a piano soon," in an 1835 diary entry.[68] The purchase of such a musical instrument was often considered in terms of the daughter of the household's acquisition of refined musical skills that would surely follow its purchase. Susan Heath wrote to her sisters Ann and Hannah in 1811 with just such a proposal. "Tell Papa," she instructed,

> Eliza is trying to learn me to play on the Pianno, and if I had any thing to stimulate me to learn, I would with all the ease in the world, I can tell the notes now, but it will do me no good to learn, and when I go home forget it all for I shall have no Pianno to practise on. O! Papa how delighted I should be if you would get one, & you would be too after we get it into the house.[69]

In her plea for a Piano, Susan invoked the skills she had already required and emphasized how pleased her father would be with such a purchase. Betsey Cranch was a bit more circumspect in her desire for musical acquisition. She wrote to her aunt, Abigail Adams, saying that, while she had long desired to learn music, only the expense of the instrument had prevented it. Delighted, though, she reported that her father had "lately purchas'd me a good

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[67] While Eliza thought it entirely reasonable that money could be pinned to the next letter, Anna Cheves, when asking her friend Anna Dulles to shop for her, wrote that "As money is a troublesome thing to send about in letters you must trust me until you pay us your winter visit and I will then discharge this terrible debt." Anna Maria Cheves to Anna Welsh Dulles, November 8, 1841, Correspondence 1838-1858, in Louisa S. McCord family papers, 1786-1954, (1103.00) SCHS.

[68] Anne Gorham Everett, September 16, 1835, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.

[69] Susan Heath to Hannah and Ann Heath, January 9, 1811, Heath family papers, 1736-1887; bulk 1800-1865, Ms. N-1387, MHS.

second hand Harpsichord, and has determin'd to let me have a few months instruction."[70] Betsey , Anne and Susan each hoped that their parents would elect to purchase a keyboard instrument, and both Betsey and Susan framed their wishes in explicitly in terms of education and the attainment of refined skills.

Pleading sometimes proved unsuccessful as Susan Heath discovered to her dismay. The unlucky Miss Heath, then eighteen years old and living in Brookline with her family, asked her father for some money before she left for a short trip to Boston in 1813. She related the incident in her diary, writing

> I asked my kind, affectionate Father for one dollar before I went from home - & his generous heart refused me. I would most gladly have taken off my coat & stay'd at home but my cloathes had been sent to town in the morning & I followed them but not all the pleasure I took in Boston could banish the thoughts of my Father's conduct from my mind[71]

While Susan thought the sum entirely reasonable for spending money on her Boston excursion, she and her "kind, affectionate Father" did not see eye to eye. Her father's unreasonable parsimony, she insisted, was enough to ruin all of her pleasures in Boston. Susan's diaries also reveal the ways in which money and sibling rivalries often went hand in hand. Later in November 1820 Susan records a trip her mother and sister Hannah took to Boston to purchase dresses. "Mama," wrote Susan, "laid out more money for H than for any of us because she is going to Portsmouth."[72] While she does not expand further on the sentiment, and the entry could be merely one of factual reporting – that at the dressmakers, her mother had spent more money on Hannah's clothes than on anyone else's as a consequence of her impending trip – Susan's aggrieved tone throughout the diary suggests at least some chafing against the inequity.

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[70] Elizabeth Cranch to Abigail Adams, April 25, 1785, Adams Family Correspondence
[71] Susan Heath, November 5, 1813, Susan Heath diaries, 1812-1874, Ms. N-1387, MHS.
[72] Susan Heath, November 20, 1813, diaries, 1812-1874, Ms. N-1387, MHS.

Management of money, whether a young woman was allowed to oversee her own funds or not, was a defining feature in the transition of girls to adult women. In an 1824 letter to her fiancé John Lowell a few months before her marriage, Georgina Amory discussed a lengthy list of 'wedding presents' that they intended to give to friends, family, and their bridesmaids and groomsmen. The presents, including cashmeres, pins, rings and worktables, were to be bought by Georgina out of a sum given to her by Uncle Lowell, her guardian. "I am delighted with the arrangement," Georgina wrote to John, "because I shall be able to buy everything I want for presents without asking anyone's leave but yours, & that you know will never be unpleasant to me."[73] Georgina, then eighteen, felt that she was able to spend the money more freely since she had to answer to no one but John for her purchases. The "arrangement" that so pleased her signaled the impending change in her status from girl, subject to the authority of her uncle, to married woman, more responsible for her own money, and subject only to the (potentially more benign) authority of her husband.

However, the liminality of the young women I study, neither fully children nor fully adults, means that while some young women in their late teens and early twenties were beginning to take on adult roles in managing their funds, others felt stifled by their inability to act for themselves financially. Caroline Healey was frustrated by an 1840 visit to a Boston bookstore. "Went into Elizabeth – Peabody's Book Room," she wrote, "Saw a magnificent illustrated edition of the new translation of the Arabian Nights. My heart felt sick – when I

[73] Georgina Margaret Amory to John Lowell, December 5, 1824, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851. Ms. N-1605. MHS. For a discussion of cashmere in relation to nineteenth-century wedding customs see Michelle Maskiell, "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 27-65; Hiner, *Accessories to Modernity: Fashion and the Feminine in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

came away, - I longed for once – to have money at my own command."[74] The contrast between the two young women, both eighteen, one with money at her command and the other longing for that economic power, is stark. Caroline was still single, a daughter in a family headed toward financial ruin while Georgina was an affianced heiress, and a member of one of Boston's most prominent families. Nevertheless, it underscores the fluctuating and somewhat ill defined place occupied by young women in the consumer economy of the early Republic.

Advice literature, which underwent a surge in popularity after the Revolution, suggested that young women needed to develop prudent financial sense, to "see themselves as mistresses of money rather than let it be the masters of them."[75] Girls budgeted for shopping and, as Anna Winslow did in 1771, sometimes let money lay in the hands of an adult until they had saved for an item that they wanted. On May 1,1835 Anne Everett and her sister took an expedition to pay their schoolmistress Mrs. Dwight's bill.[76] Anne did not record the participation of either parent, but merely that she and Charlotte, the students, took payment directly to Mrs. Dwight.

The advice literature of the day suggested that girls should be taught to keep written accounts, carefully check receipts and have a general sense of how much things should cost.[77] All of these were necessary skills for young female shoppers, and are also well represented in letters and diaries of the period. Meta Lammot and Katherine Sedgwick evaluated fabrics in terms of price per yard, knowing what was or was not a bargain. Helen Beal knew that a nice pair of morocco slippers was worth a dollar. Girls, especially those away from their family

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[74] Caroline Wells Healey, [August 7 1840], *Selected Journal of Caroline Healey Dall, Volume 1: 1838-1855.* Helen R. Deese, ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2006), 46.
[75] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 118-120.
[76] Anne Gorham Everett, May 1, 1835, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[77] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 119.

home, kept detailed accounts of their funds and justified their purchases. Eleuthera du Pont wrote home to her sister Victorine in April 1821 saying "I suppose you will think me very extravagant when I tell you I have already spent 29 cents. I have paid four cents postage and 25 to the man who brought me the barrel of Apples."[78] In another letter she reminded Victorine that she has kept "a regular account of the money you gave me," and asked, "I wish you would write to me how much my crape frock and petticoats cost that I may write them down in my book."[79] Three years later Eleuthera wrote to Meta, saying "I have been settling my accounts for last year – I have spent $54 and read 60 volumes, only 7 amusing books (fictions)."[80] For Eleuthera tabulating dollars spent and volumes read in one breath seemed quite natural. Both were processes of improvement and education, summing up another year of wise spending of both time and money.

Keeping reliable accounts was one way that young women justified maintaining control over their own funds. In 1785, Betsey Cranch wrote a heated letter to correct her parents' confusion about her money management. "You mistook me," she wrote, "what did you think I had been doing – to run so much in debt. The sum I mentioned – I meant to pay for all – the instruction I have had or shall receive from my musick master. I was not in debt to anyone."[81] Betsey, away from her immediate family, was eager to justify herself to both mother and father, and to make it perfectly clear that she was "not in debt to anyone." Being fiscally responsible was a significant characteristic of maturity and girls, particularly those who were living away from home, were eager to display it. Anna Winslow, after saving up to buy her hat, suggested in another letter to her father that she was "thinking…to lay up a piece

[78] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 1, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[79] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 11, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[80] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, January 16, 1824, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[81] Elizabeth Cranch to Mary Smith Cranch, December 6, 1785, Elizabeth Cranch Norton papers, 1783-1822, Ms. N-260, MHS.

of money you sent me," but he had sent it for her, "to lay out I have a mind to buy a chip & linning for my feather hatt."[82] In one sentence, Anna both illustrated her prudence (that she had been thinking of laying up the money he sent) and also wise spending practices (since he had sent it to be spent, she would spend it on something needed for her newly acquired possession). Anna Winslow's saving and Betsey Cranch's debt-free lifestyle, Eleuthera du Pont's count of books and dollars and careful school-girl account keeping all reflect on the role that a girl's individual interactions with money played in her accession to adult womanhood.

Girls' perceptions of the material world were, perhaps obviously, shaped by their family's financial status. Young women made purchases on family accounts and used family credit. Credit and access to markets was always contingent upon a girl's family fortunes.[83] Anne Jemima Clough's father wrote to his thirteen-year-old daughter in Charleston saying,

> I have got the books you wished me to procure and shall not forget the pencils, Crayens, &c. &c. For I am happy to say that the Cotton trade this year will afford a liberal supply. If I co'd. only have had a little more foresight than my neighbors I might have made an independent fortune this year in Cotton.[84]

Though only thirteen, Anne was made aware of the direct relationship between her father's trade success and a "liberal supply" of drawing and writing materials.

On the other end of the spectrum, Caroline Healey's 1842 diary chronicles her father's financial ruin. Healey complained, in April of that year, of her father's unwillingness to give her the money to buy paper. "I have," she wrote,

> been waiting for a fortnight for paper – upon which to write – and have not yet got any. I asked father for some money for the third time today, and got the usual answer, that he only had enough to get his dinner – that he could not afford to buy anything but necessaries. I wonder if the two boxes of

[82] Anna Green Winslow, [February 23, 1772], *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow,* 34-35.
[83] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, Chapter 3, especially 90-96 on family credit and debt.
[84] J. Butler Clough to Anne Jemima Clough, 7 September, 1833.

> oranges – the boxes of lemons and – raisins sent home last week, were necessaries.[85]

Later that summer, after her father revealed the extent of his financial ruin, she recorded conversations with him about the possibility of bankruptcy, worry that their furniture and silver might be taken by the bank and his despair that "he had not a friend in the world…who would give him a dollar, to keep his family from starving."[86] Caroline's material world was starkly affected by her father's financial downfall, from the initial inconveniences (her lack of paper) to her eventual decision to begin teaching to support her family.[87]

Her diary is intriguing in its overt criticism of her father and his spending practices. If there was no money for paper, she reasoned, how could there possibly be money for oranges or lemons? Upon learning the magnitude of her father's debts, she was appalled not by their amount, but that they were owed not to, "those of our first merchants, but generally those of mediocre –importers."[88] By questioning her father's financial choices, Caroline was suggesting that she was the superior consumer. The girl who had, two years earlier, chafed at her lack of money to call her own, was deeply dismayed by her father's lack of financial acumen. Were there money at her command, she seemed to suggest, she could have made wiser purchases, buying items selected from reputable merchants and not the "mediocre importers" her father patronized.[89]

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[85] Caroline Wells Healey, [April 11, 1842], *Selected Journal,* 122
[86] Caroline Wells Healey, [June 18 and June 27, 1842], *Selected Journal,* 132-33, 135.
[87] For an excellent discussion of the shifting world of debt, bankruptcy, and the moral and commercial economy see Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[88] Caroline Wells Healey, [June 18, 1842], *Selected Journal,* 132-33.
[89] Mary Templin's article on the 'Panic Fiction' authored by women in the antebellum period reflects nicely on Caroline's situation. Templin argues that female-authored panic fictions, authored in response to the panic of 1837, complicate the separation of home and market. The novels suggest domestic solutions to economic problems and allowed women to enter into the economic discourse of the period. Templin, "Panic Fiction: Women's responses to Antebellum Economic Crisis," *Legacy* 21, No. 1 (2004): 1-16.

While not always as dramatic as Caroline Healey's financial straits, young women's consumer lives were constantly figured by money. They assessed costs, kept accounts, selected purchases and made monetary requests. Girls accrued bills and paid them, were participants in family economies and developed budgeting skills that they would require as adult women. Their purchases from the luxurious cashmeres Georgina Amory selected for her bridesmaids to the fifty cents Lucy Shattuck spent on a "tyre" as a plaything had larger ramifications, both in the formation of their adult identities and on social, economic and political spheres in which they lived.

Implications and Anxieties: The Ramifications of Young Women's Consumption

The purchases of young women were often dismissed as trivial by their contemporaries and still continue to be largely overlooked in current historical literature. Nevertheless, these purchases were significant in shaping the social, economic and political contexts that the girls inhabited. While their purchases may have been written off as frivolous trifles, the larger impact of the evolving consumer marketplace was not lost on contemporary commentators. They railed against the excesses of women, particularly young women, in the shops and marketplaces of the new nation. The transatlantic luxury debates lent new strength to their criticism. While Americans developed an economy dependent upon luxurious imported goods, and united as consumers around those imported goods, young women, decried as the rabid consumers of the luxurious, imported and frivolous, could also destabilize the political and social fabric of the developing nation.[90] This paradox was thrown into especially stark relief during the non-importation movements of the American Revolution.

[90] Martin, "Frontier Boys, Country Cousins," 76.

The boycott movements of the American Revolution required the support of young female consumers. Breen and Hunter both emphasize the importance of imported goods, buying them and not buying them, in formulating a unique American political identity While Breen emphasizes that colonists, male and female, rich and poor, needed to participate for the movement to be a success, he overlooks another category of analysis – age. For the movement to be successful, colonists young and old needed to participate.[91] While the economic power of young women may not have been equal to their married counterparts, garnering youth participation was essential to the movement. Appeals in newspapers called particularly to the young ladies of America to abandon silken fashion, and as Breen puts it, "embrace the sensual allure of homespun."[92] An article in the *Boston News-Letter* in February 1770 called attention to the growing "List of Mistresses of Families who have signed the Agreement against drinking Tea," but also noted that there was a separate "Agreement…for the young Ladies to sign against drinking Foreign Tea."[93] Papers up and down the Eastern seaboard printed and reprinted accounts of young women's noble and self-sacrificing (and non-consuming) behavior on behalf of their country.[94]

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[91] Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv, 24; Hunter, *Purchasing Identity*, 169. While Breen does discuss the significance of the young population – half the population of the colonies, he suggests, was made up of individuals younger than sixteen – but dismisses their consumer power, writing, "no doubt, these boys and girls engaged in consumer activities insomuch as they wore garments made of imported cloth, ate from British plates, and worked in the fields with British tools. But the decision to purchase one item rather than another…remained largely the prerogative of adults." *Marketplace of Revolution*, 64. While I do not intend to argue that the purchasing power of young women equaled that of their adult counterparts at the time of the Revolution, the letters and diaries of girls suggest that they *were* making decisions to purchase one item and not another, using their own judgment and sense of taste, as early as the 1770s.

[92] Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 282.

[93] *Boston News-Letter*, February 22, 1770, p. 3.

[94] For instance, the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* published an account of "excellent entertainment" given by officers and gentlemen of the city of Philadelphia to honor "the young ladies who manifested their attachment to the cause of virtue and freedom, by sacrificing every convenience to love of their country." July 25, 1779, the May 21, 1770

Twelve-year-old Anna Winslow took these calls to heart. In a 1772 letter to her parents, she boasts "As I am (as we say) a daughter of liberty I chuse to wear as much of my own manufactory as pocible."[95] Though younger than the primary consumers targeted in boycott movements, Anna declared herself to be a "daughter of liberty" ready and willing to abstain from imported goods. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich argues that the ideology of homespun that pervaded American political and social thought both during and after the Revolutionary boycotts was an essential means by which Americans defined themselves in a global context. Homespun and agrarian simplicity, insists Ulrich, allowed Americans, including girls like Anna, to set themselves apart from the cosmopolitan artificiality of Europe. Hunter also highlights the ways in which eighteenth-century Americans reinterpreted imported goods in developing a proto-national identity.[96]

Thus, Anna's declaration signified not just her participation in early American political protests, but also that it was a part of her own self-fashioning. Like the older women around her, as well as commentators and politicians urging her participation, she too equated non-consumption with patriotism. Thus her intent to craft her own wearing apparel stemmed from her political self-identification. She was a "daughter of liberty," who wore her "own manufactory" and had incorporated nonconsumptive patriotism as a critical part of her developing adult identity.

Boston Evening-Post commended the "Daughters of Liberty" who met and "spun 232 skeins of yarn some very fine," and the *New England Chronicle* highlighted Virginia women who had pledged not to have any suitor who had not proved his valour by service in the army August 7,1777. On quite a different note, in discussion of the occupation of Philadelphia, the *Continental Journal* commented "Indeed many people do not hesitate in supposing that most of the young ladies who were in the city with the enemy, and wear the present fashionable dresses, have purchased them at the expence of their virtue" linking the consumption of young women who wore fashionable clothing to the exchange of virtue for luxury items. July 30, 1778.

[95] Anna Green Winslow, [February 21, 1772], *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow,* 52.

[96] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of An American Myth*, (New York: Random House, 2001), 413; Hunter, *Purchasing Identity*, 148.

As well as formulating political identities, young women's shopping habits could also mark shifts in life stage. When Georgina Amory selected wedding tokens for her friends and family she was stepping into the consumer marketplace as a nearly married woman. In the period just preceding their marriage, young women were often charged with substantially more purchasing, often more autonomous purchasing, than they had before. In moving toward marriage, consumption patterns changed and, as Martin argues, the move toward marriage meant moving into an entirely "new set of economic relations."[97] For many, this rapid change in material circumstances was disconcerting, setting young women apart from unmarried friends, sisters and nieces.[98] The freedom to buy more autonomously and the responsibility of buying for a home and family rather than just oneself marked a major watershed in the consumer lives of young women.

Though the subjects of this dissertation are affluent white women, America's growing consumer culture was accessible to a much wider segment of the female population. In February of 1841 an article called "Gold Watches" appeared in the Lowell Offering. An author, listed only as "A Factory Girl" wrote to critique a recent piece by Sarah Josepha Hale in the *Godey's Lady's Book*. "I was much pleased by it," wrote the author, "with the exception of a single sentence. Speaking of the impossibility of considering dress a mark of distinction she observed, – (addressing herself, I presume, to the *ladies* of New England,) – 'How stands the difference now? Many of the factory girls wear gold watches and an imitation at least of all the ornaments which grace the daughters of our most opulent citizens." The Lowell girl, reasoned the author, may have more money to spend for herself than the six daughters of a gentleman "who receives one thousand dollars per annum." The

[97] Martin, "Ribbons of Desire," 188.
[98] See Sophie du Pont on Mary Black's marriage Diary, July 12, 1832, Papers, 1818-1892. WMSS Group 9. HML and Anna Cabot Lowell on Georgina Amory's April, 1825, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 MHS.

essay went on to decry the pettiness that led Hale and others like her to criticize the mill girls for their purchases solely because the ownership of elegant gold watches, and so many other luxury goods, was previously reserved for the very rich. "I pity," wrote the author, "the girl who cannot take pleasure in wearing the new and beautiful bonnet which her father has presented her, because, forsooth, she sees that some factory girl has, with her hard won earnings, procured one just like it."[99] Why should it be, she mused, that young women with every advantage in life begrudged a factory worker the opportunity to purchase elegant items with their hard won earnings?

While the subjects of this dissertation were, by in large, in the class of the young women of privilege pitied by the author for their vanity, the "Factory Girl" raises the shifting context of feminine consumption during the nineteenth century. Where before consumption was heavily circumscribed by social and economic hierarchies, the boom in factory employment for women led to a radical change in the consumer landscape. When factory girls could outspend the daughters of the elite, it left Hale and her contemporaries wondering how social distinctions could be maintained if many could purchase luxury items.[100] Intriguingly, though, the author of the piece also suggests that while the consumer goods purchased might be the same, their significance to their owners was not. A purchase of a watch or fan or cashmere shawl meant something different, suggested the author, for factory girls than for more privileged girls. "Gold Watches" and its construction of the intersection of femininity, gentility, consumption and self-fashioning complicates our understanding of the

[99] "Gold Watches," *The Lowell Offering*, No. 3, February 1841, p.45.

[100] Anxiety about social class and purchasing was common even in the eighteenth-century. Rebecca Earle discusses the shift from sumptuary laws of the seventeenth century to the rules of 'taste' that emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Taste, she argues, was constructed in a class-based way such that even if luxurious fashions were purchased their wearers were still held apart from gentility. Rebecca Earle, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!' Race, Clothing and Identity in the Americas (17th-19th centuries)" *History Workshop Journal* 52, (2001): 175-195.

consumer world entered by rich and poor girls alike.[101]

The case of "daughter of liberty" Anna Winslow, wedding shopper Georgina Amory, and the fierce critique by the unnamed Lowell "Factory Girl" all reflect on the ramifications that young women's consumer behavior had on the social, political, and economic world around them. They show the power of buying, choosing, shopping and not shopping to cement political identities and destabilize social hierarchies. As Georgina Amory contemplated a life of buying "without asking anyone's leave but [John Lowell's]" she was articulating a very different shopping self than the Lowell factory girls who bought fashionable goods without asking anyone's leave, but were held apart from genteel femininity by the source of their funds. Seen in this light, Martin's argument that "ribbons mattered too" becomes even more salient. Girls' consumer behavior, ribbons and all, shaped their future as adult women as well as their family structures and regional economies, social hierarchies and national political context.

"There is a trifling commission…": The case of proxy shopping

In 1841 Charlestonian Anna Maria Cheves wrote to her cousin Anna Welsh Dulles in Philadelphia beginning "there is a trifling commission which I believe you may be able to

[101] In excavations of sites of Lowell Mill boarding houses, historical archaeologists have discovered a wealth of information about the material life of young women like the unnamed "Factory Girl." They emphasize the degree to which clothing and personal adornments feature in the archaeological record, citing beads, brooches, and other jewelry excavated from the backyards of these boarding houses. These pieces of jewelry, note archaeologists, are most remarkable for their use of imitation materials. This suggests that, while Lowell Mill workers were eager to own items that looked valuable, they often purchased less costly replicas of what their affluent counterparts wore. Stephen A. Mrozowski, et. al, *Living on the Boott: Historical Archaeology at the Boott Mills Boardinghouses, Lowell, Massachusetts*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 75-76, 77, 78.

fulfill for me betaking a little trouble; and that I am sure you will do willingly"[102] She went on to ask Dulles to find a length of silk to match an existing dress she had purchased in Philadelphia. In asking Dulles to fulfill her "trifling commission" Cheves was tapping into a well-established language and tradition of proxy shopping in late eighteenth and nineteenth-century America.[103] The proxy shopping carried out by and for young women encompasses all of the facets of consumer behavior that have been considered in this chapter. Financial acumen, taste, and shopping savvy were essential tools. Proxies and those for whom they shopped communicated in a shared language of goods, and exchanged understandings of what items were finer, prettier, or more practical than others. The proxy shopping conducted by young women held its own meanings as well. While Meta Lammot debated the quality of muslin she might buy for Eleuthera du Pont and Anna Dulles struggled to find Anna Cheves some matching silk, social commentators railed against women's, particularly young women's, affinity for things. Anxieties about young women and shopping for, choosing and desiring *things* abounded in the post-Revolutionary period. Given these anxieties, proxy shopping undertaken by young women like Meta Lammot and Anna Dulles holds a particular significance. Not only were girls allowed to choose for themselves, they were charged with the power of *choosing* for others. Thus the letters and confidences traded between young women shopping for one another held not just details of what might be bought and where, but also contained a host of social and cultural meanings for both shopper and proxy.

Proxy shopping grew along with the rise in consumption over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Historians have highlighted the ubiquity of proxy

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[102] Anna Maria Cheves to Anna Welsh Dulles, November 8, 1841, Correspondence 1838-1858, in Louisa S. McCord family papers, 1786-1954, (1103.00) SCHS.

[103] A note on terminology: Throughout I will refer to the person for whom items are being purchased as the shopper and the person or persons actually in charge of selecting or acquiring said items as a proxy.

shopping, particularly in American port cities – including Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston – and the varying economic and social functions that it served. Such shopping created both vertical and horizontal ties within social hierarchies. Servants and slaves shopped for masters, families and friends shopped for one another even when separated by miles or even oceans.[104] Hartigan-O'Connor emphasizes that the very nature of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century shopping involved whole networks of involved parties. Indeed, she argues, the consumer behavior not only took place in urban shops and markets, but in letters and leisurely walks and teatime confidences.[105]

While many historians have considered the world of proxy shopping in the period, not all definitions are the same.[106] Some consider any shopping not done in person as done by proxy. Walsh helpfully suggests a differentiation between shopping by proxy, wherein the proxy shopping was conducted by friends, family or other social contacts, and shopping done by "correspondence" and carried out by agents, bankers, clerks or servants.[107] I am concentrating on shopping that Walsh's definition considers by "proxy." While young women certainly conducted correspondence shopping, and shopped through servants and slaves, the processes by which those consumer actions formulated and cemented identities and social networks were different than the relational shopping that they conducted for friends and family members.

Shopping for friends or family by proxy, Walsh insists, was so significant that the social value that proxy shopping relationships produced sometimes trumped the value of what was purchased. Proxies needed to imagine themselves as their shopper, considering what

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[104] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 132
[105] Hartigan-O'Connor, "Collaborative Consumption," 126; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 160.
[106] Hartigan-O'Connor, "Collaborative Consumption," 126.
[107] Walsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making," 170.

needed to be bought through the other's eyes.[108] At a basic level, proxy shopping encompassed many elements for the young women involved. Most obvious, perhaps, were the fiscal considerations of the transaction. A shopper and proxy had to share economic information - the proxy had to know how much to spend, what funds were available, what was too little and what was too much. They were trusted to judge value and worth in the marketplace. Proxies, however, were also responsible for understanding less quantifiable elements; taste, fashion, and quality. Since the shopper wasn't present to select items, they relied entirely on the shopping savvy of their proxy. Shoppers relied on their proxies to balance these demands, to make the best purchase possible.

Before a trip to New York, Georgina Amory (now, in 1827, Georgina Lowell) wrote to her cousin Anna to ask about what she should buy while traveling. "Will you," she asked Anna, "ask your father for that list of books he wanted? Is there anything else I am to get? Should not you like some French work collars & capes? They are very fashionable, & are sure to be a great deal cheaper…than here."[109] In this case, Georgina proposes proxy shopping for Anna, highlighting the fashionability of French work and economic sense that a purchase of collars and capes in New York rather than Boston would make. Twelve-year-old Elizabeth Sedgwick wrote to her sister Katherine to ask if she would "send by father a pair of strong buskins" as well as a locket she'd requested earlier. Katherine was to select the buskins knowing that Elizabeth's foot was "a very little longer" than hers.[110] Sometimes the proxy shopping even extended to proxy-proxy shopping, as when Eleuthera du Pont, away at school and charged with buying cambric for her sister Victorine, could not get to the store on

[108] Walsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making," 170.
[109] Georgina Margaret Amory Lowell to Anna Cabot Lowell, November 16, 1827, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851, Ms. N-1605. MHS.
[110]Elizabeth Dwight Sedgwick to Katherine Sedgwick, February 17, 1842, Sedgwick family papers, 1717-1946, Ms. N-851,MHS.

Saturday, but deputized Margaretta Lammot to buy it and bring it instead.[111] Each of these proxy shopping accounts contained request (or suggestion) of goods to be bought, and some guidance about what type of item should be acquired. They also, implicitly or explicitly, charged the proxy with the exercise of judgment in selecting the object or objects requested.

Proxy shopping developed a language of its own, borrowing heavily from the language of business and commerce of the period. Proxies and shoppers both referred to the shopping done as a "commission" even when it was being conducted for close friends or family.[112] Anna Cheves called upon Anna Dulles to take up her "trifling commission." And Eleuthera and Meta frequently speak of the commissions they undertook for friends and family. Eliza Southgate wrote to beg pardon for what her Aunt Porter believed was "neglect in executing her commission." Eliza explained that she had not received the letter, but that she would "execute that part of Aunt's request" that she could while in Scarborough.[113] As illustrated in Eliza Southgate's letter, the language between proxy and shopper was often deferential.

Anna Cheves wrote that she *wished* Anna Dulles would try to match the silk she was sending with the letter. Meta wrote to Eleuthera reminding her "I wish whenever she [Victorine] or you have any commissions of the kind you would let me do them as you may be sure they are not the least trouble."[114] Intriguingly, though the deference often went both from proxy to shopper *and* shopper to proxy. Victorine du Pont Bauduy wrote to Meta Lammot "if I thought you would take any extra trouble on my account I should not think of giving you any commissions…set my conscience at rest by promising not to go out on

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[111] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, May 7, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[112] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 131, 140.
[113] Eliza Southgate Bowne, [December 16, 1798], *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago,* 19.
[114] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Tuesday morning(undated), WMSS Group 7:A, HML..

purpose."[115] Shoppers frequently apologized for the size or frequency of their shopping requests, proxies for their difficulties in finding the right items or the challenges of sending them on, and both reassured one another that they were always eager to help.

Reassurance emerges as a hallmark of proxy shopping in the letters. In her letters, Meta articulates her willingness to "travel up and down second st." to find the right cotton or quarrel with cobblers to make sure that the shoes were appropriate for sister Evelina.[116] Because the shopper was far away, it was the job of the proxy to reassure – to make it clear that their purchases were being made and being made well. Meta's letters were full of subtle reassurance that the commissions were being carried out well. For instance, in an 1824 letter, Meta recounted that she "went out immediately after breakfast for…muslin," and in another she hastened to report that she'd only sent part of the commission, but that she'd "send the other piece by the first opportunity."[117] This reassurance also served a relational purpose. In reassuring one another that the commissions were not unwelcome, that they were being executed properly, and that the items would be as promised, the proxies and shoppers cemented social as well as commercial relations.

The act of proxy shopping linked young women to friends and family both near and far. Shopping for someone else displayed care and concern.[118] In the case of Meta Lammot and the du Pont girls, proxy shopping provided an opportunity to forge and cement fictive family ties. Years before Meta would marry their brother Alfred, Meta called all of the du Pont girls 'sister' and they referred to her in kind. The chance to shop for someone else

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[115] Victorine Bauduy in a letter from Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 10, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[116] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Saturday afternoon (undated), WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[117] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, March, 1824; Friday morning (no date), WMSS Group 7:A, HML..
[118] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 145.

implied a shared trust and intimacy, taste and sophistication. Girls who shopped for others displayed their knowledge of the things a person already had. Meta, when uncertain which type of thread Eleuthera really wanted, wrote that since she hadn't instructed, "whether it was the large or small skeins," that were needed she simply "got more of what you had the least of."[119] Anna Cheves asked Anna Dulles to buy silk to match a dress that Cheves thought she would remember, though she sent a small piece of the pattern just to make sure. Georgina Amory Lowell returned a dress of her cousin, Anna's, with a new trimming tacked on. Another young woman had, she wrote, had the piece of trimming with nothing to do with it. Nothing, that is, until Georgina remembered Anna's dress and imagined that it would fit perfectly.[120] Young women engaged in networks of proxy shopping were allowed to display their knowledge, not just of the taste and desires of their shopper, but also an intimate knowledge of the things they already had.

When children shopped for parents, as in the case of Anne Gorham Everett, it displayed a mark of maturity. In 1836 Everett noted in her diary that she "stopped in to Miss Carleton's to buy some ribbons for Mamma to line some needle books she is going to make. I chose a beautiful lemon color, and as the needle book is to be of garnet velvet it will match very well."[121] Everett, then thirteen, was eager to display not only her ability to buy ribbon, but her ability to choose for her mother – to deploy the standards of taste and fashion that she had developed to select an appropriate ribbon color for her mother's project. Elizabeth Sedgwick response to her sister's proxy shopping requests also displayed this sense of relationships strengthened by proxy shopping. "My dearest Kate," she wrote, "I send you the

[119] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Thursday morning, August (no date), WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[120] Georgina Margaret (Amory) Lowell to Anna Cabot Lowell, 1825, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851, Ms. N-1605, MHS.
[121] Anne Gorham Everett, February 5, 1836, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.

things you asked for," and continues to explain the "hunt" she was obliged to take for the items.[122] "Many thanks for the ribbon, dear Meta" Eleuthera du Pont wrote, after one of Meta's proxy shopping trips,

> I think you have been troubled enough with my commissions; and but that I am sure (from my own feelings) that you do not dislike obliging in this way I should be very much afraid to trouble you…I love to do anything for you and hope you will always afford me occasions of doing so[123]

Proxy shopping, in this case, offered more than a convenient way of getting the latest ribbons or shoes from Philadelphia to the quasi-hinterland of Delaware, but also the chance to display, promote, and maintain ties of love and friendship.

While it may have cultivated warm feelings, the culture of proxy shopping also emphasized strict financial discipline.[124] Whether given money in advance or paid back after purchasing, proxies were responsible for keeping accurate accounts. When Georgina Amory told her cousin Anna about the process of creating her birthday present, she wrote of asking her Aunt Lowell for a quarter of a dollar, "which [she] immediately transferred to Betsey charging her at the same time, if any money were left to buy some coloured paper with it."[125] Eleuthera wrote Meta in 1823 saying "I send you a two dollar note for the muslin for Victorine's ruffle…I do not know whether I send enough money but if it is not will you be so kind to make up the difference and…we can settle our accounts when we meet."[126] Meta gave accounts of purchases down to the last cent when she proxy shopped on several occasions,

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[122] Elizabeth Dwight Sedgwick to Katherine Sedgwick, April 3, 1842, Sedgwick family papers, 1717-1946, Ms. N-851, MHS.
[123] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 1, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[124] Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor has also observed this financial rigor, writing that "when Anne Simons sent a package of fabric and ribbons back to Mary Singleton, she appended an account detailing that she had spent only $5.37 ½ and explaining her plan to 'retain the balance for further commands.;" Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy*, 140.
[125] Georgina Margaret Amory to Anna Cabot Lowell, 23 March, 1820, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851, Ms. N-1605, MHS.
[126] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, July 1823.

sometimes even noting down total money given her and a running account of what she'd spent.[127] Proxy shopping was an occasion, particularly for proxies, to display both financial acumen in seeking and finding bargains as well as in a display of their account-keeping skills.

An essential part of proxy shopping that did not shape ordinary shopping behavior was the necessity of sending. Purchases made far from their intended recipients had to be sent along. Sometimes these purchases went by post, but most often they traveled through networks of family, social acquaintances, servants and employees. Meta once lamented that, while she should have "sent the Ribband yesterday," but that, the ribbon was such a small bundle that it "might be lost or the Capt neglect to send it."[128] Proxies and shoppers were always on the lookout for a traveling father or city-bound friend who could be trusted to deliver the purchased items to their owners. These young women were part of formal and informal networks of sending and receiving – part of the social network of things that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In 1838 when Caroline Healey was sixteen, she penned an entry in her diary complaining about her unhappy state. "It is," she wrote, "the soul's necessities which are forgotten – my slightest wish is gratified before it is expressed – and my mother is ever my advocate—when a new hat, or a new dress is to be purchased."[129] While her mother and sister were eager shoppers and pleased with fashion, Caroline insisted throughout her diary, she was different. She lamented her perceived spiritual neglect in terms of material acquisition. Whether in disgust with shopping as in the case of Caroline, or the school-skipping power shopping of Amelia Russell, consumption and consumer culture were critical means by which young women fashioned themselves and their material worlds. In hating stores or loving

[127] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, no date.
[128] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Thursday morning, August (no date) WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[129] Caroline Wells Healey, [November 3, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 14.

them, living in urban centers where shopping was a daily ritual or carefully composing letters describing goods for purchase by proxy, buying the latest luxury goods available or consciously avoiding their purchase – each choice, complexly woven into the social, economic and political world of American young women, allowed a girl to establish her place as a daughter, sister, and friend as well as position herself in the identity she would claim in adulthood.

These choices occurred in parlors and shop rooms, from distances of hundreds of miles or only a few blocks. They were made by young women for whom shopping was so natural that even going on a walk could result in purchases, and by others who had little exposure to urban retail environments. Shopping gave girls the space to be spendthrifts or champions of domestic economy, clever decision-makers, and savvy negotiators. In shopping, in whatever fashion, girls were the choosers. They were responsible for purchases, both large and small, and the arbiters of the tasteful, the genteel and the economical.

Shopping built consumer and social networks and cemented friendship and family ties. To be adult women, girls needed to be "mistresses of money" and discerning consumers. So, when Sophie du Pont sketched a teasing caric about Fountain's store and Anna Winslow saved for a bonnet, when Susan Heath complained about her father's parsimony and Helen Beal bought fringe for her black silk cape, all were participating in an essentially consumer self-fashioning. Their modes of consumption as youths could lay the foundation for who they would become and, consequently, affected their performance of gentility, refinement and femininity as they consciously and unconsciously crafted their adult identities.

Chapter 3

"This letter is filled with muslin": Girlhood, Sociability, and Material Culture

In 1823, sixteen-year-old Margaretta Lammot closed a letter to her friend Eleuthera by observing that her three-page letter was "filled with muslin."[1] In just one letter Margaretta, or Meta, had twice discussed her purchase of muslin as well as recounted a detailed conversation with a cobbler about the purchase of a new pair of shoes. The purchases that filled Meta's letters, however, were not for herself but were bound for Eleuthera and her sisters. Forty years before and an ocean away, a Paris-dwelling Nabby Adams composed a letter home to her cousin Betsey Cranch saying that she'd dispatched "two hats of the newest taste in England," with Mr. Smith, her father's America-bound secretary.[2] Also overseas, seventeen-year-old Katharine Lawrence recorded news from friends in Boston about the 1849 wedding of Lillie Chadwick. The letters, she observed, were especially detailed about the presents given to the bride. Katharine listed each item worn by the bride, from "small gold chain with pearl cross" from the bride's husband, to "Pearl earrings" from her aunt and a "brooch of green enamelled ivy leaves and diamonds," from Mr F. C. Gray.[3] Caroline Healey confided a very different list of gifts to her diary following her father's financial collapse in 1842. The "loss of money," she wrote, "is not the real trouble to me – the first things I have thought of – have been these. I shall not be able to send Emily Whitney a cap for her baby – nor Sophia Peabody a bunch of flowers, in season for her wedding – I cannot

[1] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Tuesday morn, Papers, 1820-1897, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A, Hagley Museum and Library (hereafter HML).
[2] Abigail Adams (II) to Elizabeth Cranch, December 10, 1784, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses,* ed. C. James Taylor. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2007. http://www.masshist.org/ff/
[3] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, November 20 1849, Katharine Bigelow Lawrence Lowell diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852, Ms. N-1547, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS).

relieve Mrs. Freeman." Caroline's was a list of gifts not given; her father's bankruptcy framed in terms of the things that she would not be able to give.[4]

These four cases, separated by nearly seventy years and thousands of miles, may seem unrelated. Yet each story illustrates the ways in which young women's social networks and practice of sociability was linked to and expressed by material objects. Nabby Adams sent her cousin fashionable hats by way of her father's traveling secretary, tapping into both transatlantic networks of fashion and travel. Katharine Lawrence carefully made note of which elements of a bride's apparel were gifts from whom, allowing her to situate bride within her Boston social sphere even while she was removed from it. Caroline Healey related her own financial privation in terms of being cut off from networks of social giving and sending of which she had previously been a member and Meta Lammot knew that the letters she sent, filled with stories of shopping for her friends, were filled with imagined muslin. The sociability of these young women was marked and measured by things.

The material culture of young female sociability finds expression in a host of sites. Girls exchanged letters and received things from friends far and near. Urban girls shopped for rural peers. They borrowed novels and worked collaboratively to create petticoats to novellas. Material things structured the rituals of young women from the cradle to the grave. Friendships were sealed and kinship affirmed by the exchange of things. From sending purchases to writing letters, giving gifts, or displaying belonging, loyalty and allegiance, early American young women articulated social relationships and enacted their performance of feminine sociability through material means.

Before discussing the material culture of female sociability, I will set the stage with a brief overview of social sending and the concept of the materio-social network. I will then

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[4] Caroline Wells Healey, *Selected Journal of Caroline Healey Dall, Volume 1: 1838-1855.* Helen R. Deese, ed, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2006), 132.

discuss the processes by which girls sent, requested and received objects, as well as the textual and material roles that correspondence played in establishing, regulating and representing young women's membership in networks of sociability. Building on the discussion of sending and receiving, I will discuss the intensely collaborative and social projects undertaken by young women in the period and the ways that shared projects created tangible and intangible links between girls and friends near and far. Next I will discuss the role that gifts, given and received, played within the development of girls' social identity, cementing alliances and sealing affections, as they moved from childhood to adulthood. Finally, I will explore the intersection of social and material life through the performances of sociability that figured the lives of most young women in the period: the material rituals of death.

Though postal networks in the United States were in their infancy, eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Americans were no strangers to networks of sending and receiving. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, for instance, highlights the social significance of clothing that passed through female hands in Revolutionary America. Sending and receiving, whether by the official post or by informal networks of objects passing from hand to hand, was socially and culturally significant. David Henkin, in his study of the development of American postal networks, identifies the ways that while Americans learned how to send things through the mail they were also creating new expectations and ideologies about "privacy and publicity, proximity and distance," within the constraints of their postal networks.[5]

[5] Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 149; David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Ninetenth-Century America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 10.

In this project, I have identified several ways that objects entered and interacted within early American social networks. Obviously, the postal service figures into any discussion of social sending in early America. Young women sent and received letters by mail. However, informal networks of sending predominate, especially for young women outside urban centers. If Eleuthera du Pont, for instance, wanted to send a handkerchief to her friend Meta she might rely on a network of city-bound adults, some her family, some in her family's employ. Other young women used networks of transportation to move their things from one to another, entrusting their letters and parcels to ship's captains and stagecoach drivers. Young women even tapped into transatlantic networks of sending to shuttle items home when they were abroad.

The items that they sent were equally varied. Letters were an essential piece of girls' social network in the period, both as texts and as physical objects. However, many more objects circulated through girls' formal and informal networks of sending. Girls away from home, at school or with friends, made requests for clothes, food, books and other personal items from parents and siblings. Consumer goods were purchased in an urban marketplace and sent to the hinterland.

All of these diverse acts of sending, though, share the essential characteristic that I have identified as involvement in the materio-social network. In her work on the political ecology of things, political theorist Jane Bennett, calls for an attention to "vital materiality" of things. Objects, argues Bennett, are not inert. Rather, they are actors, not merely acted on. Bennett argues that the considering things of the world, from garbage to groceries, being possessed of animate force fundamentally changes our relationship with them. As Bennett argues for vibrant matter, I argue that involvement of networks of sending and receiving things - be they letters or bracelets or bonnets – imbued the items with a particular kind of

vital force.[6] I suggest the concept of the materio-social network, wherein objects become essentially alive with or for a specific person or persons. Objects could be seen as proxies for their senders. Girls kissed and held letters from dear friends, near and far, as substitute physical manifestations of those people. Gifts could hold the essence of a friend. On her twenty-second birthday, Sophie du Pont noted the receipt of a gift from her friend Eliza. The gift, a chain, was accompanied by Eliza's fervent hope that it would not be valued less because it had been worn before. "Oh," Sophie concluded, "how much more shall I value it on that account."[7] The gift was more significant *because* of its previous use. The vital life of objects as embodiment reached a peak, perhaps, in the material cultures of death and mourning when physical remains became treasured objects. The social life of these things, involved in the materio-social network of young women allowed them to express belonging, connection, and relation as they moved toward adulthood.

"I am always troubling you with my <u>wants</u>": Requesting, Sending, and Receiving

While staying with family in Haverhill, Massachusetts in 1785 Betsey Cranch often found herself writing home to Braintree with a list of necessities. "My good Mama," she wrote,

> I am always troubling you with my <u>wants</u> - my black skirt, you know was to have been quilted to keep it together this winter – for want of that tis almost unfit to wear and I have no other…something must be speedily done.

In the same letter, Betsey also requests the pair of "olive color'd stays" she left at home, as well as the materials with which to mend them, and reminds her mother that she has sent "several times" for a volume of Shakespeare's works for her cousin John, who had still not

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[6] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), vii, ix.
[7] Sophie du Pont, Diary, September 18, 1822, W9-40379, Papers, 1818-1892, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, HML.

received them.[8] While Betsey may have worried that her letters were too much filled with her wants, they are very typical of the period. Girls sent frequent requests for things that they wished sent to them, for themselves as well as for their hosts and other companions.

These letters of sending and receiving allowed young women, whether far from home or not, to be linked a social network of things. While her younger sister Evelina was at school in Philadelphia and she was at home in Delaware, Victorine du Pont took advantage of materio-social networks to acquire the things she wanted. In a letter, Evelina wrote to Victorine, "Alexandrine bought what you desired in your letter to her & I send it to you"[9] To acquire what she wanted, Victorine was able to solicit a friend to choose her purchases and still trust that Evelina could be trusted to send the purchased, though unnamed, items on. Twelve-year-old Elizabeth Sedgwick wrote to her older sister Katherine in 1842, saying "Bridget Holden says she has now some time to sew every day – and therefore should like to have you send up her calico you promised to get for her by Father."[10] The requests sent by young women encompass multiple members of a social circle. Victorine recruited Alexandrine and Evelina to acquire and send her request. Elizabeth reminded Katherine of her promise to acquire calico for Bridget Holden when she needed it.

The exchange between Elizabeth and Katherine Sedgwick also highlights another significant feature of materio-social networks – the ability to send. The ability to engage in sending and its success, whether by post or family or friends, reflected a young woman's position in the social hierarchy. Bridget Holden wanted her calico sent to her by Katherine

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[8] Elizabeth Cranch to Mrs. Cranch, 2 December 1785, Elizabeth Cranch Norton papers, 1783-1822, Ms. N-260, MHS. Betsey followed this letter with another on the 6th of December, writing "I sent some time since for Shakespears works for J. – either you have not received the letter or have forgotten them – I believe he wants them much"

[9] Evelina du Pont to Victorine du Pont, May 23, 1810, Papers, 1802-1863. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 4:B. HML.

[10] Elizabeth Sedgwick to Katherine Sedgwick, February 17, 1842, Sedgwick family papers, 1717-1946, Ms. N-851, MHS.

and Elizabeth's father, and seemingly showed no concern about making the request. In spite of the growth of postal networks throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, young women most often sent their muslins, ribbons, books and sundry other goods through the hands of traveling friends, family, and acquaintances. In 1811, Victorine du Pont wrote to her sister Evelina in Philadelphia, instructing her, "John Wear is going to Town at the end of this week. We will send you something for your Chillblains and in return you must send me a large packet of letters."[11] Similarly, the newly married Anna Laight wrote from New York to her younger sister Sabina Huger in Charleston to report that she would send the "apples Sweetmeats & Raspberry by Major Hamilton who expects to set sail in eight or ten days."[12] These young women were able to tap into networks of existing transportation to move their items between one another. Such sending marked them as members, perhaps not fully adult, but members nonetheless, of adult networks of acquaintances and employees who could be pressed into their service.

Sometimes the sending networks were even more complex and involved the participation of several transporters, as when Victorine told Evelina that "Pat Brady took the bundle containing the flowers and the Umbrella to Wilmington this morning, and he gave it to the driver of Anderson's Stage, who promised faithfully to deliver it to you to day at 2 O'Clock."[13] Sophia Cheves wrote to Eleuthera du Pont about the challenges of their preparation for a move from Lancaster, Pennsylvania to St. Matthew's Parrish, South Carolina. "We were," she wrote,

> preparing with all our might for the journey south. Sewing and packing and fidgeting and sending expresses between Lancaster and the farm for pins and

[11] Victorine du Pont to Evelina du Pont, February 11, 1811, Papers, 1798-1861, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 6:A, HML.
[12] Anna Elliott Huger Laight to Sabina Elliott Huger, November 1, 1802, Wells family. Correspondence, 1802-1886. (43/2048) South Carolina Historical Society (hereafter SCHS).
[13] Victorine du Pont to Evelina du Pont, April 28, 1812, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.

> needles, tape and bobbin, till I am sure our poor coachman must have thought our heads were a little turned.[14]

Encapsulated in Sophia's story of the chaos and confusion is the underlying assumption that they have the ability to dispatch their coachman on expresses, many of them, between town and farm for their sewing notions. However complicated the request –whether it was simply a matter of placing it in the hands of a father, uncle or cousin or instead depending on a network of servants, boat captains and stage coach drivers – the ability to make the request and have that request granted, to instruct that things could be sent through trusted hands, was a signal, to both sender and receiver, of belonging and membership in a particular social sphere.

Correspondence was another area in which young women depended upon social networks of sending and receiving. While young women, particularly elite young women, sometimes used developing postal networks, they also depended upon other hands to transport their notes and letters.[15] Just after her marriage in 1824, Meta Lammot du Pont wrote to her step-mother suggesting "I think I had best send my letters as frequently as possible by Mr Dupont to save postage, do you not think so dear mother?"[16] While in Halifax with her loyalist family, Mary Robie wrote in her diary that she "wrote letters to New

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[14] Sophia L. Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, January 2, 1830, In Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874. Family papers, 1819-April 1861,(1167.03.01) SCHS.

[15] David M. Henkin, in his study of the nineteenth-century postal system, argues that the Post Office Act of 1792 began the postal network in the United States, and that it was very well developed by the 1830s, yet didn't "penetrate to the level of popular experience" until after 1840. Early letter postage was assessed by sheet and by distance, and was often prohibitively expensive for all but the elite. Nevertheless, postal sending was a key feature of the lives of some of the young women in my study, and, in urban environments particularly, post offices offered sites for young female correspondence, both supervised and not. Henkin, *The Postal Age*, 8-9, 18, 63.

[16] Margaretta Lammot du Pont to Anna Potts Lammot, October 2, 1824, Papers, 1820-1897. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A. HML.

England to go by Mrs Snelling"[17] Nabby Adams tasked her father's secretary with letters while she was living in Auteiul with her family in 1784, writing to Betsey Cranch "I hope you have received by this [time] my letters by Mr. Smith. According to our calculations he must have arrived ere this."[18] As Nabby's letter illustrates, though, girls were also concerned about whether their messages had arrived as planned. Antoinette Brevost wrote to schoolmate Victorine du Pont in 1808, saying "I wrote you by the same person who brought our spencers did you get my note?"[19] As, presumably, the person with whom the note went was a stranger to Antoinette, she hoped to make sure that her missive had reached its destination just as Nabby hoped that the letter carried by Mr. Smith had reached its transatlantic destination.

While girls tapped into networks of sending and receiving for their correspondence and other things, their participation in these networks was not always without incident. In Halifax, Mary Robie wrote in her diary that, while they had been waiting all week, their long anticipated books had still not come ashore.[20] Harriett Manigault wrote in her 1814 diary that her "mama heard about a month ago that a box of box & music which she expected from France had arrived in Boston." She continued that, once the box had been brought from Boston to Philadelphia and opened, they were all disappointed to find that it did not belong to them – and then sent it off to another member of their social circle who also expected a similar box.[21] While awaiting a shipment of "Pomagranuts" from Charleston, newly married Anna Laight wrote to her younger sister, that while she'd received the letter wherein they

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[17] Mary Robie, Diary, Monday 25th [August 1783], Mary Robie Sewall diary, May-October 1783, Ms. N-804, MHS.
[18] Abigail Adams (II) to Elizabeth Cranch, September 30, 1784, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses*.
[19] Antoinette Brevost to Victorine du Pont, October 2, 1808, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.
[20] Mary Robie, diary, Thursday 22 [May 1783], Ms. N-804, MHS.
[21] Harriett Manigault, [January 11, 1814], *The Diary of Harriet Manigault 1813-1816* (Colonial Dames of America, Chapter II, Maine Coast Printers, 1976), 6.

were mentioned she had yet to receive the parcels. There were, she mused, "several vessels that have been out 17 days from Charleston and have not yet arrived. I suppose it must be on board one of them."[22] Anna was aware of the shipping times from Charleston and the variety of vessels aboard which her Pomagranuts might be and contented herself to wait. Harriett Manigault and Mary Robie were both distressed not to receive the boxes for which they waited. Despite their ability to participate in social networks of sending and receiving, they were not always in command of their items while in transit.

When the hands through which the objects needed to travel failed to provide the service they hoped for, girls often reacted with displeasure, dismay, and amusement in equal measure. In 1820, Julia du Pont wrote to her brother Samuel Francis that she had "found a dirty little note which proved to be the identical one you wrote me last week. I suppose," she continued, "the *obliging* stage driver made two or three trips to Philadelphia with it in his pocket for it was in a most dreadful condition."[23] Georgina Amory wrote to her fiancé John Lowell, complaining,

> Sally Whitmark has sent me another parcel, declaring at the same time it was all she had, when I happened to know that she had two more, she is the most forgetful and provoaking creature, Mantua-makers & singers are, you know, proverbial for disappointing people.[24]

Julia and Margaret both expressed their frustration and at least some measure of amusement at the failure of their sending networks. Eleuthera du Pont teased about the possible failure of her sending when she wrote to Meta Lammot to verify that her message had been received. "I hope," she wrote in an 1824 letter,

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[22] Anna Elliott Huger Laight to Sabina Elliott Huger, November 1, 1802, Wells family. Correspondence, 1802-1886, (43/2048) SCHS.
[23] Julia du Pont to Samuel Francis du Pont, October 30, 1820, Julia Sophie Angelique du Pont Shulbrick, Papers, Winterthur Manuscripts Group 5:C. HML, emphasis mine.
[24] Georgina Margaret Amory to John Lowell Jr., June 6, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851, Ms. N-1605, MHS.

> [Papa] gave you a full account of how he left us, and my message, which I fear he did not faithfully deliver as he blushed when I gave it him [,] though many a young gentleman would be too happy to execute such a commission – it was to give you my love and – a kiss–[25]

Whether the sending was smooth or parcels went astray, the girls involved tapped into networks circumscribed by age, gender and social class. Their ability to request, send and receive held resonances much larger than the items exchanged – and could be broad and far reaching, crossing oceans and representing social networks as large as a nation or as small as the intimate personal tie between two individuals.

While living in the Azores with her father, consul on the island of St. Michael's, Catherine Greene Hickling wrote frequently about the differences of life on the islands from that in Boston. In her 1786 diary she pondered, "a noble garden filled with choice fruit, such as oranges, Lemons Citrons figs, and other kinds." How much, she continued, she wished that her friends and family could experience the delicious fresh oranges, as they were far more delicious "than they can be, after being gathered some months, packed in a box, and sent across the Atlantic."[26] Though Catherine understood that the noble garden's produce *could* be shipped home to her Boston friends, they could never really share in the experience of the Azores along with her. Her American friends were American and Catherine began to construct her own identity, in contrast, as an American abroad, articulating that difference in a material way.[27]

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[25] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, February 26, 1824, Papers, 1816-1876, Winterthur Manuscripts Group 6:C, HML.
[26] Catherine Green Hickling, October 17, 1786, Catherine Greene Hickling Prescott travel diaries, 1786-1789, Ms. N-2180, MHS.
[27] Catherine frequently reiterated this sentiment in her diary. On September 28, 1786 she wrote of a party she'd attended in the Azores, saying "I think my American Friends would smile to see me partaking of such fare, but in truth I am Portuguse (sic) in all but my religion."

Catherine Hickling pondered citrus, sending, and, indirectly, membership in a national community. When Georgina Amory married John Lowell, food sent and not sent also established a social community, albeit on a smaller scale. Georgina wrote to her cousin Anna to discuss the list of "cake-people"– people to whom slices of wedding cake ought to be sent, and those whom she and her mother thought should be included on the list.[28] Being on the list of "cake-people" signified intimacy with Georgina and her husband as well as membership in the social sphere that Aunt Lowell had established for Georgina, her young niece, newly married but still seeking advice on social matters.

While both Catherine and Georgina thought about sending in relation to large social groups, Eleuthera du Pont put pen to paper to engage in more private social sending. In April 1821, while she was at school in Philadelphia, Eleuthera wrote to her sister Victorine, reminding her that she was enclosing "the little plait of hair," that was promised. Yet the hair, it seems, was not sent as promised. In her next letter Eleuthera explained its absence. "I had," she wrote, "put the little plait of hair in my last letter but I took it out when I found it was to go by post."[29] While Eleuthera felt free to send the hair in a letter if it was going to be sent to her sister through informal networks of friends, employees and acquaintances, when it was going to be handled by the post she elected not to send the intimate artifact.

While the processes by which girls sent objects – from purchased goods to shoes and even Anna Laight's much anticipated Pomagranuts – reflected their social networks and access to lines of sending and receiving, personal correspondence sent between young women was uniquely important in the formulation of social identities. Simultaneously textual and

[28] Georgina Margaret Amory Lowell to Anna Cabot Lowell, April 7, 1825, Ms. N-1605. MHS.
[29] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 24, 1821 and April 25, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

material, the sent letter allowed girls to bring absent friends into their lives, join them in theirs, and situate themselves within their social milieu.

Correspondence, Sociability, and Self

Before receiving an 1837 letter from friend Anne Clough, eighteen-year-old Maria Lance worried that their separation might have affected their relationship. The two had been close friends in Charleston, but after Anne's family returned to Liverpool in 1836 Maria felt her absence keenly. "I have lately," she wrote,

> received a token & note from you which were doubly acceptable, as I had been long anxiously expecting to hear from you & had almost come to the conclusion (as the song says) that absence conquers love, but most happy am I to find that it is not so in our case.

The ocean between them, Maria worried, might have diminished their friendship. But the receipt of a note, as well as a token, reassured her that Anne's affection for her was undiminished. She hurried to reassure her friend that her affection was strengthened, despite the knowledge that they would likely "never meet again on this earth."[30] Maria used her personal correspondence with Anne, to whom she "could pour out her soul" to maintain a vital link in her social network, despite the permanent physical separation of the two friends. Letters could, perhaps more than any other artifact circulated by young women, stand in as representation of another. They were suffused with meaning both as objects and as texts, and their writing, circulation, preservation, and destruction offered vehicles by which girls articulated social selves.

In considering the ways in which letters and letter writing shaped the social selves of young women, the letters must be analyzed both in physical and textual terms. Crafting the

[30] Maria Ramsey Lance to Anne Jemima Clough, October 7, 1837, Clough, Anne Jemima, 1820-1892, Letters, 1833-1845, (0107.00) SCHS.

text of letters was an essential part of a young woman's education. Learning to write letters, appropriate in both style and form, was an essential skill that children were encouraged to practice by corresponding with siblings, cousins and adult family members. In her study on nineteenth-century letter writing advice, Deirdre Mahoney suggests that girls were instructed to select a few correspondents with whom they could hone their correspondence technique.[31] Epistolary fiction, popular in the period, also reinforced the importance of composing and executing one's correspondence.

While text was important, the material quality of letters was also essential to their reading. As objects, letters were physical manifestations of absent people, and tangible proof of social connection between individuals – and those with whom they shared their letters.[32] For instance, Julia du Pont wrote to her cousin Eleuthera in 1818 saying, "I wish I could be with you instead of this sheet of paper, to wish you a very happy birthday."[33] The physical presence of the sheet of paper, though, would have to suffice for the separated cousins. Letters were circulated among friends and family, judged on their size and heft and penmanship, lovingly preserved or burnt to cinders at the behest of the sender. As artifacts, letters are illustrations of connectedness – to social circles, to previous relationships and the bonds that future correspondence might foster.

Despite these multivalent resonances, what sets letters apart from other items that young women sent through social networks is their capacity to explicitly craft a self. Gerber argues that immigrant letter writing served as an essential element in their life remaking. In

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[31] Deirdre M. Mahoney, "'More Than an Accomplishment': Advice on Letter Writing for Nineteenth-Century American Women," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66, no. 3/4 (2003), 419.
[32] David A. Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 2008).
[33] Julia du Pont to Eleuthera du Pont, December 6, 1818, WMSS Group 5:C, HML.

writing letters home they refashioned themselves as American immigrants.[34] I argue that the young women who wrote so frequently and devotedly to one another were also engaging in a kind of immigrant life refashioning. Their journey was not geographic but temporal – traveling the space between childhood and adult womanhood. The girls fashioned and refashioned themselves, and letters served as a stage upon which they could practice their feminine penmanship, their blot their lines, and cement their place as refined adult women within a circle of correspondents.

In conversation with their circle of correspondents, young women often made reference to the intersection of the textual and material aspects of their letters. Often they downplayed both the content and appearance of their letters, critiquing idea and execution in the same breath. Anne McIver wrote to her sixteen-year-old cousin Anna in 1844 to confess "I do think that I have written you a perfect string of nonsense, and written it badly too." Anne grouped her nonsensical text with its poor execution, though she also assured Anna, "you must know I have been writing with the most miserable pen."[35] Similarly, fifteen-year-old Victorine du Pont ended a letter, written while she was away at school, "Adieu my beloved Evelina, if you feel interested in my renown burn this incoherent letter which is so abominably scribbled."[36] Mahoney, in her analysis of letter writing advice manuals aimed at women in the nineteenth century, emphasizes the degree to which letter writing manuals focused on the appearance of the letter and making appropriate selection of paper and penmanship.[37] It is unsurprising, then, that the young women were eager to excuse inadequacies of penmanship, blaming pens, papers or, as in the case of Georgina Amory,

[34] Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives*, 3.
[35] Anne McIver to Anna Ramsey McIver, January 13, 1844, Bostick, Anna Rogerson McIver, b. 1828. Papers, 1821-1880 (bulk 1840-1853). (1071.02.01) SCHS.
[36] Victorine du Pont to Evelina du Pont, April 4, 1809, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.
[37] Mahoney, "'More Than an Accomplishment,'" 415-417.

surroundings. In a letter to her fiancé, John Lowell, the teenaged Georgina wrote, "I have written horribly, but it is almost dark, & I can scarcely see, so you will pardon it."[38] It is telling, though, that despite the letters' apologies for nonsense or incoherence or scrawl, their young female writers still sent them.

Though writing manuals of the day emphasized crafting perfect lines, these young women, it seems, chose not to rewrite.[39] Though they made apologies –both for physical and textual defects in their letters – those apologies seem almost pro forma. They served as a nod to the expectation of polished letters that went hand in hand with the expectation that a lack of polish would be accepted. Georgina trusted that John would pardon her scrawl and Victorine, teasingly, entrusted any future "renown" to her younger sister. The freedom to scrawl one's letters comes through particularly clearly in a letter from Meta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont. Meta, then eighteen, wrote to Eleuthera one morning in September 1824. "My dear sister," she began,

> Do not be surprized at receiving a letter in pencil for it is an eccentric caper I have taken, to save myself going to the office for pen and ink. – The truth is I want you to get this letter to day by the boat and if I closet myself with father I shall think I must write pretty.[40]

Meta took an "eccentric caper" and wrote in pencil to avoid having her letter observed by her father, before whom she would have to "write pretty" in a way that she didn't when her writing was just for Eleuthera. If letters could stand in the place of an absent person, then the freedom to scribble a letter, to write in pencil or with a miserable pen, to share nonsensical

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[38] Georgina Margaret Amory to John Lowell Jr, no date, Ms. N-1605. MHS.
[39] As far as I can tell, all of the letters were sent to their intended recipient. The textual markers in each also suggest that the writers did not make copies to correct the "errors" – real or imagined.
[40] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Thursday morning September 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.

whims, clearly connoted intimacy, trust, and comfort. Such correspondents were, even from afar, persons with whom a girl could scrawl.

Whether the documents in question were intimate scrawls or formal letters, though, a critical aspect of letter culture was how the recipient of the letter would treat it when it arrived. Meta's "eccentric caper" of a penciled letter, for instance, bears a note at the top in Eleuthera's hand reading "inked over June 5th 1825." Eleuthera did not simply save Meta's letter, but took care to make sure that the lines penciled in would be legible for years to come. On the other hand, Victorine asked Evelina to burn her incoherent scrawl, a sentiment that was quite common in the surviving archival collections of young women's letters.[41] Meta even closed an 1824 letter to Eleuthera with a very stern admonishment. "Mind," she cautioned, "Burn this immediately after you have read it; if you don't I shall never forgive you. Do it if you care a pin for me."[42] Despite Meta's urgent plea, though, the letter's survival is testament to the uncertain material future of sent correspondence that young women feared.

In her travel diary, Catherine Hickling wrote that, as she wrote her account "for the gratification of a particular friend," she trusted that said friend would read it and "commit it to the flames." "I am not," she continued, "willing ever to have the paper used to cover pies and puddings [,] the general use of all old writing."[43] Young men also voiced such sentiments in their correspondence with young women, as in the case of John Lowell's proposal to Georgina Amory. When he proposed to seventeen-year-old Georgina in 1823, he wrote, "if it is not in your power to permit me the indulgence of those sentiments I feel toward you, I will

[41] This is particularly interesting to me, since these letters with all their "burn this immediately!" sentiment weren't burned at all, but preserved in archival collections.
[42] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, June 6, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML. "never forgive" in the letter is underscored twelve times.
[43] Catherine Greene Hickling, August 1788, travel diaries, 1786-1789, Ms. N-2180, MHS.

thank you to burn this letter & not let it's [sic] reception disturb the harmony of our acquaintance."[44] John phrased the destruction of the letter, an artifact that could "disturb the harmony" of social interaction with Georgina, as a way to reestablish the previous status quo. Catherine wanted her diary committed to the flames, she suggests, because she didn't want it to end up the victim of mundane household reuse. While their reasons for wishing their letters destroyed varied, each displayed a concern for the future life of both the text and the *physical* object of the letter in the hands of their correspondent.

Though a writer might wish his or her letter consigned to the embers to protect its contents or its writer from censure, it is important to consider the question of epistolary privacy in the period. While correspondence might be addressed from one young woman to another, it cannot be assumed that these documents were private missives from one to another. In his study of postal networks, David Henkin argues that the expectation of epistolary privacy was a topic of some anxiety in early nineteenth-century America. While Americans may have held that a sealed letter was only to be opened by its intended recipient, Henkin suggests that this was often trumped by claims of intimacy, as parents frequently opened letters of their children.[45] Since much of the correspondence between young girls bypassed the postal system entirely, to be carried by family and friends or grouped into parcels that would be sent in care of the head of the household, letters could potentially be read several times before reaching the hands of the addressee. Nabby Adams, for instance, instructed her cousin Betsey that if she had letters she should "send them to Brackets and dirrect [sic] them to General Waren or his Laidie." However, she cautioned, "you must cover

[44] John Lowell Jr. to Georgina Margaret Amory, November 30, 1830, Ms. N-1605, MHS.
[45]Henkin, *The Postal Age*, 106-107.

them if you intend I shall read them first."[46] Correspondence was, for young women in the period, often a social experience that went much beyond the two letter-writers. Thus the sharing or not sharing of a letter was absolutely central to the practice of social self-fashioning that correspondence facilitated.

The publicity or privacy of a given letter was dictated both by sender and recipient, as well as their social spheres. Families often shared letters, either by circulation among family members or by group readings as illustrated by Katherine Sedgwick's 1842 request. Her desire for privacy clearly touched a familial nerve. She responded in her own defense to her mother,

> before anything else let me tell you that I had no idea of keeping the one [letter] I wrote you private from father – I supposed you would show it to him of course, for you know I never shut him out of my confidence – it did not occur to me to specify that you might show it to him – I marked it <u>private</u> because of the general family openness & common property in anothers correspondence, for I thought you might give it to someone else to open.[47]

Katherine's request for privacy, meant to restrict the letter's contents to her parents, was misunderstood and cause for chastisement. She hurried to point out that her desire for privacy was, of course, not meant to exclude her father, but rather because of the relaxed attitude toward correspondence that she knew to be typical in her home. Eleuthera du Pont wrote Meta in 1823 and discussed the breach of privacy of a previous letter. "Victorine," she wrote, "insisted on having it [the last letter] read out to her and when she came to the place where you ask me not to read it to any body, she said 'I am <u>nobody</u>'." While Eleuthera recognized this as a violation of Meta's explicit wishes, she continued, "I suppose you will not care for

[46] Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, January 24, 1779, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses*.
[47] Katherine Sedgwick to Elizabeth B. Dwight Sedgwick, March 13, 1842, Sedgwick family papers, 1717-1946, Ms. N-851, MHS.

Sis Vic hearing it and I can assure you she did not see it all."[48] Eleuthera implied that Meta's intimacy with her sisters meant that she might not mind the breach of confidence if, after all, it was only "Sis Vic" hearing the contents of the letter. Eleuthera also reassures that Victorine did *not* see the entire letter, suggesting perhaps, that she was able to both share publicly some elements of the letter while holding private the matters she thought Meta might not wish shared with anyone else. Clearly the question of privacy, and who was or was not a member of the 'private' readership of any correspondence, was socially significant to young women, playing a role in the textual and material construction of their letters.[49]

Private and public letters also afforded a vehicle for teasing between girls and those around them. Harriet Manigault recorded a letter conflict between her brother and sister in her 1814 diary. Charlotte, it seemed, had received a letter from a young woman and instructed her brother that he was not to read it. "He said," reported Harriet, "'oh no he should not think of such a thing.'" After supper, though, she continued, he contrived to seize the letter from Charlotte's workbasket. Charlotte, continued Harriet, "pretended not to see it, as she thought that preventing him would look as if there was something in it not fit to be seen and only make him more anxious to see it."[50] Joanna Smith related a similar story to Eleuthera du Pont in 1832. Her brother Tom, she wrote, had "a habit of <u>snatching</u> Hannah's letters from her." The nefarious brother, she continued, "chased her [Hannah] around until he got possession of it, and then very deliberately took out his knife, and began cutting the seal, & making shew

[48] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 16, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[49] Amy Harris, "'This I Beg My Aunt May Not Know'" Young Letter-Writers in Eighteenth-Century England, Peer Correspondence in a Hierarchical World." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 333-360.
[50] Harriet Manigault, Diary, August 21, 1814. 19.

he was going to read it." The last laugh was, however, on Tom, Joanna wrote, as Hannah elected to take her letter away and read it in private – in his room. [51]

These stories, of mercilessly teasing brothers and feisty sisters, speak interestingly to notions of epistolary privacy. While Eleuthera felt that she had to share Meta's letter with Victorine, and that Meta wouldn't mind because it was only Sis Vic, the brothers in the stories are both marked as behaving rudely, if only in jest. Though siblings male and female often shared in reading family letters, the teasing stories illustrate that levels of privacy were, at least to some degree, gendered. That Tom Smith made such a display of taking his knife, cutting the seal, and putting on a "shew" of reading the letter implies that it was generally unacceptable behavior. While sharing a female friend's letter with a sister might not be a breach of privacy, a brother's letter-snatching and mock opening was a more substantial violation of letter confidence. Whether teasing brothers or concerned parents or news-craving sisters, the privacy or lack of it in young women's correspondence reflected the complicated interplay of private and public, as well as social equality or superiority, in correspondence. Age, gender, and intimacy with both correspondents clearly influenced decisions about who could or could not partake in the letter.

After recounting her siblings' skirmish over letter privacy, Harriet Manigault had another, quite different occasion to ponder letter privacy. Following her sister Emma's death at age seventeen, Harriet found herself writing to elder sister Elizabeth in Charleston. "I wrote a very long letter," noted Harriet, "giving her all the details of the late melancholy event, & for the first time in my life, I sent off a letter without showing it Mama, or even to Charlotte."[52] Harriet's simple statement about this correspondence reveals much about her social self-fashioning. She remarks upon a heretofore-unprecedented occasion: for the first

[51] Joanna Smith to Eleuthera du Pont, January 21, 1832.
[52]Harriet Manigault, [March 14, 1815], *Diary*, 87.

time in her twenty-one years she wrote a letter that neither her mother nor sister read before it was sent on its way. If letters stand for absent individuals, in the wake of family tragedy, Harriet stood alone and without the company of her community of familial correspondents. She stepped into the role of singular correspondent, giving her elder sister all the details of Emma's final illness and death. While taking on an adult responsibility, Harriet could not help mentioning the unusual disconnectedness that the correspondence elicited.

The practice of writing to others was by nature also accompanied by writing the self. Correspondence offered a venue for young women to practice polite social interactions and develop intimate friendships. In sending, circulating, destroying or preserving correspondence girls also demarcated their social networks. Letters exchanged offered textual connection to absent friends and material talismans of affection. They could be private or shared, venues for girls to keep their secrets or chafe against intrusion of family or friends. Most of all, though, letters allowed young women to work, individually and collectively, to make and remake iterations of their adult social selves.

Crafting a social network: collaborative construction and collective good(s)

While participation in social networks of sending and receiving shaped the ways in which young women formulated ideas about social hierarchies and their places within them, their collaborative creation of material objects also cemented social ties. Young women in the period worked in intensely collaborative ways, crafting and sharing artistic projects, and joining together to create everything from new socks to newspapers. They exchanged books, painted artistic tableaux, and traded and embellished each other's embroidery patterns. Though the items shared, created, and produced were often ephemeral and seem, perhaps, trivial, they symbolize a host of social meanings: belonging and intimacy, maturity, trust, and

competence. While collaborating to produce needed or wanted items, girls working together also served to forge individual and community identities – identities that they fashioned and refashioned as they moved toward adulthood.

Collaboration and communication sometimes went hand in hand. In 1823 Eleuthera du Pont and her sisters decided to start a newspaper. She reported, in a letter to her Philadelphia friend Meta, that they'd resolved to publish a weekly paper, "to be read out every Sunday after dinner," and planned to include "nothing but Brandywine news."[53] On September 20, 1823 the du Ponts published their first edition of *The Tancopanican Chronicle*, with a note from the editors stating,

> The Encrease of population on this renowned stream, and the number of events worthy of record that daily take place, have induced the Subscribers to undertake the publication of this paper…They hope that, their impartiality in politics, and their diligence in collecting materials will give universal satisfaction – Unlike the generality of Editors throughout, the Union, who copy one another like so many mocking-birds, The Subscribers will chiefly confine themselves to the occurrences of their immediate neighborhood.[54]

The newspaper featured a masthead, a motto, and illustrated articles including news, social commentary (pet mania sweeps Tancopanican!) – lost and found columns, and a general air of irreverence.

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[53] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, September 16, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[54] *The Tancopanican Chronicle*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Saturday, September 20, 1823, WMSS:6:A. The Tancopanican, asserted the du Pont children, was the "original" Indian name of the Brandywine.

Image not available for publication

Figure 2. The Tancopanican Chronicle, September 20, 1823. Courtesy Hagley Museum and Library.

Eleuthera and her sister Victorine were largely responsible for the production of the newspaper, but the text suggests that other family and friends were also involved, if not in production, then in the composition of the stories. While the paper is charming, it also speaks to the creation of a group identity. The editors of *the Tancopanican Chronicle*, they assured their readers, intended to confine themselves to the events of the Brandywine River and its inhabitants. Newspaper making in the period was also not uncommon. The juvenilia of the young Jane Austen, the Brontë siblings, and others show a general interest in crafting mock forms of adult print. In *Imagined Communities,* Benedict Anderson argues that national identity is formed, not necessarily by political boundaries, but in part by commonly read texts. He discusses the links between the growth of a sense of American national belonging

and group reading.[55] By the same token crafting a newspaper, even in jest, implied the growth of a collective identity. Readers of the humorous *Tancopanican Chronicle* were included, were members of a coterie of close friends and family.[56]

Along with newspapers, girls also crafted books, either in groups or by themselves, to share with others. A few years after her sisters produced The *Tancopanican Chronicle*, Sophie du Pont made several small books depicting life at home on the Brandywine River. The books are small, only 2"x 5" and contain illustrated caricatures with accompanying text on the facing page. They are meticulously illustrated, colored and bound with colored paper covers. Among the preserved books is Sophie's 1827 "One Day on the Tancopanican: Being a series of dialogues from Real Life" Surviving archival collections show that Sophie drafted these books, drawing preliminary sketches before completing the finished drawings and while she created the carics on her own, she often enlisted her sister Eleuthera to help her color the sketched images.

Sophie took care to bind her comic cartoons complete with an elaborate title pages and a title reminiscent of books of the period. Girls frequently produced similar books, either of their own writing or assembled copies of other texts, and paid close attention to the physical aspects of these crafts. In 1820, fourteen-year-old Georgina Amory was deeply concerned with crafting a formal book. She wrote to her cousin Anna of her difficulties in fashioning a book for her birthday present, saying "the covering was of mighty importance as you well know, for how to present a book to the publick without having any binding! ... No

[55]Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 40.
[56]Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Practicing For Print: The Hale Children's Manuscript Libraries," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 188-209; Katherine Dalsimer, "The Young Charlotte Brontë," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3, no. 3 (2010): 317-339.

one would read it; it would be worse than a beautiful woman without hair or without a nose."[57]

Image not available for publication

Figure 3 Sophie du Pont "One Day on the Tancopanican", 1827. Cover and Title Page, Scene 4th "The Morning's Amusement." Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library.

As they crafted books that would circulate, albeit on a smaller scale than the published novels that they consumed, Sophie and Georgina paid careful attention to the appearance of their work. Their products – books meant for their social circles' amusement and enjoyment – needed to bear marks that signaled an authentic book. So too did the *Tancopanican Chronicle's* masthead, motto, and parodied articles give it an air of verisimilitude. These items, both produced and consumed by groups of young women, were consciously emulating early American forms of print. And like those early American forms of print, the items also served to create a reading community out of its young female creators and those they included in their creation.

Along with literary forms of collaboration, young women collaborated heavily on art and handcrafting projects. Most upper-class young women were expected to master a host of domestic decorative arts such as needlework, painting, and decorative design. Often, though, their productions, from crewelwork and decoupage boxes to landscape drawings and embroidered screens, have often been dismissed as frivolous or useless decorative objects. In

[57] Georgina Margaret Amory to Anna Cabot Lowell, March 23, 1820, Ms. N-1605, MHS.

recent years there has been a concerted scholarly effort to begin viewing the craftwork done by eighteenth and nineteenth century women as more than idle frivolity and take women's artistic productions seriously. Ann Bermingham, for instance, complicates the concept of female accomplishment, suggesting that women who mastered "polite and useful arts" were offered opportunities to display and express themselves as artists in their own right. Ariane Fennetaux studies British women's bricolage between 1750 and 1820 and suggests that the art, constructed as a safe and domestic alternative to women's affinity for the material, actually allowed women to explore masculinized areas of commerce, production, and empire. Clive Edwards suggests that sewing, painting, and decorating in the household, as well as other forms of proto-DIY can be "considered as creative or interpretive consumption." All encourage scholars to think more broadly about the handicraft productions of women as venues for display, self-expression, and self-fashioning.[58] By the same token, I argue that the highly collaborative nature of these projects when undertaken by young women in the period reflects not only on their development of artistic voice and self-expression, but their social self-fashioning.

The types of collaborative work done by young women varied. Some group work was done only with peers, while other social crafting crossed vertical hierarchies of age and class, as young women worked with mothers, grandmothers, aunts, servants or tradespeople. Some group work was done to fill basic needs. Anna Winslow, for instance, wrote to her mother in 1772, with an update on the progress of turning the linen, sent from home, into shifts for Anna to wear. The shifts had all been cut out, she wrote, and nine were "finish'd

[58] Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Ariane Fennetaux, "Female Crafts: Women and Bricolage in Late Georgian Britain," in *Women and Things, 1750-1950*, Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, ed. (Burlington: Asghate, 2009), 91-108; Clive Edwards, "'Home is Where the Art is': Women, Handicrafts and Home Improvements 1750-1900," *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2006, 12.

wash'd & iron'd…My cousin Sally made three of them for me, but then I made two shirts & part of another for unkle to help her."[59] Anna acknowledged that she'd had help making her shifts, but also reported that she returned the favor by assisting her cousin sew shirts. Elizabeth Cranch noted in her diary in 1786 that she'd spent her "Morning employed in helping to make…a jacket."[60] Similarly Susan Heath, of Brookline, Massachusetts, recorded what she found a "very pleasant" Saturday in her 1814 diary. "Nancy Murdoch," she wrote "came in the afternoon & we made Sally two gowns."[61] The girls involved were sharing necessary work, joining sewing forces with others in their social circle to complete projects for themselves and for others.

While the social significance of the shirts, dresses, jackets and shifts that young women worked together to make is, perhaps obvious, the social significance of less-essential group projects should not be overlooked. In 1812 sixteen-year-old Evelina du Pont sewed tiny colored fabric swatches into a letter to her sister Victorine, drawing her into a debate with Evelina and their mother about which color would be most attractive. She also tasked Victorine, in Philadelphia, with acquiring matching fabric and ribbon.[62] When Evelina engaged both mother and sister to consider the fashion and allure of a dark mustard or blue silk she was building vertical and horizontal hierarchical ties, asking both her mother and her sister what they would choose. Soon after her marriage, Georgina Lowell wrote to her cousin Anna with a similar fashionable inquiry. "Dear Anna," she wrote, "I send back yr gown with a trimming which Susan had on her pelisse, for which she would devise no possible use, till

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[59] Anna Green Winslow, [March 17, 1772], *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771*. Alice Morse Earle, ed, (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin, And Co. 1894), 47.
[60] Elizabeth Cranch, Diary, Tuesday 31 January 1786, Elizabeth Cranch Norton diaries, 1781-1811, Ms. N-599, MHS.
[61] Susan Heath, June 11, 1814, Susan Heath diaries, 1812-1874, Ms. N-1387, MHS.
[62] Evelina du Pont to Victorine du Pont, December 9, 1812, WMSS Group 6:B, HML.

she recollected it matches yr gown precisely. If you like it will you send back the gown, & I will put it on the way you see."[63] Georgina and Susan, her sister in law and Anna's cousin, were able to join forces to work on Anna's gown only because all involved knew each other's wardrobe. Georgina could acquire Anna's gown and Susan's trimming, send it back for Anna's approval, and then complete the trimming herself. Eleuthera du Pont wrote about making a coat dress for her mother, noting, "Polly works part of it in partnership with me…we have a very handsome pattern…given to us by the Gilpins."[64] In each of these projects several hands might work on project, while another might contribute the raw materials and still another the pattern. The collaborative crafts were closely connected to multiple individuals who shared responsibility for construction of the items as well as for assessment of their quality and appearance.

The projects also involved an essential collaborative activity for eighteenth and early nineteenth-century young women: copying. While copying might seem out of place under the heading of collaboration, young women in the period actively and avidly copied as well as shared, traded, embellished and innovated new patterns and designs that they painted and stitched as decoration.[65] Seventeen-year-old Sophie du Pont wrote to sister Eleuthera in 1827 describing her entertainment elicited by the "overcreekers," (du Pont cousins who lived across the Brandywine at Louviers) who sent on Amelia du Pont's pattern book. Sophie noted that she'd been sure to copy many of the patterns in the book.[66] Antoinette Brevost, in possession of a new Parisian handkerchief "made one like it,' in 1808 and sent it to Victorine

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[63] Georgina Margaret Amory Lowell to Anna Cabot Lowell, 1825, Ms. N-1605. MHS.
[64] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, October 13, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[65] On the du Pont girls and pattern crafting see Amy Boyce-Osaki, "A 'Truly Feminine Employment': Sewing and the Early Nineteenth-Century Woman." *Winterthur Portfolio* 23, No. 4 (1988): 225-241.
[66] Sophie du Pont to Eleuthera du Pont, October 19, 1827, WMSS Group 9, HML.

du Pont in case she wished to "possess the fashion."[67] Susan Heath, then seventeen, recorded in her diary that she'd gone "down to Mrs Goddards to borrow Louisa's box to copy." Copying – of patterns, of dresses, of purchases – signified a desire for or the promotion of intimate social ties. Wearing a dress with the same ruffle or embellishment as a friend, or painting a screen with the same motif as a sister connected the young crafter with her social sphere and indicated her membership in it.

Collaborating, sharing, emulating, and copying all shaped the social networks in which young women were enmeshed. Their efforts produced necessary items and nonessentials alike, but it was their collaborative construction of these things that made them so reflective of sociable practices that girls learned to perform. Matching designs and common patterns allowed girls to materially mark themselves as members of some communities and indicate their not belonging in others. Whether joining forces to hem a set of linen shifts or copying another young woman's embroidered cuff, the social aspects of crafting allowed girls to produce and perpetuate their adult social selves.

"Unexpected proof of her affection for me": Gift Giving and Social Ties

When Meta Lammot composed one of her letters to Eleuthera du Pont, she made sure to ask Eleuthera to deliver a message. "Thank my dearest sister Victorine," she wrote, "for my belt, and tell her it gave more pleasure than I can express for such an unexpected proof of her affection for me."[68] Before Meta married Alfred du Pont and became Eleuthera and Victorine's sister-in-law she addressed both of them as sister and took great pleasure in Victorine's gift and the proof of her affection that it carried with it. Much as Katharine

[67] Antoinette Brevost to Victorine du Pont, October 12, 1808, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.
[68] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Friday morning, no date, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.

Lawrence's careful list of bridal gifts discussed at the beginning of the chapter highlighted the bride and her place in the Boston social world, Meta too saw a gift as a tangible material representation of intangible social relationships.

Historian Amanda Vickery suggests that eighteenth and early nineteenth-century it was not uncommon to ascribe "extra-material significance" to things, especially things given as gifts.[69] Gifts could represent affection and alliance and the obligation to reciprocate. Like letters, the presence of a gift could stand in for the presence of a person when they were absent. Young women wrote frequently about gifts that they gave and that they received. For instance, thirteen-year-old Lucy Shattuck frequently recorded gifts and their givers in her diary from the first entry, listing the gift of the diary, until the last just before her death. During her final illness, probably tuberculosis, she received many gifts, from flowers and magazines to a "little kitten" from Harriet Lewis and other unnamed baskets of presents from friends and family.

Though the quantity of gifts recorded was likely the outpouring of affection on a very ill child, other girls recorded similar gifts in their diaries as well. The gifts received could come from family, as in the case of a letter to her aunt Sophie Dalmas du Pont Amelia du Pont wrote to thank her for her gift of a dress. "My dear Aunt," she wrote, "Allow me to recall to your mind and offer you my gratitude for the beautiful dress that you had kindly sent me."[70] Girls also exchanged gifts with friends and peers. Twelve-year-old Anne Everett and her friend Philippa Call exchanged gifts, both purchased and not. Anne recorded an 1835 trip to Miss Bemus' shop where she bought a locket to give to Philippa. She also noted a gift of

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[69] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998),188.

[70] Amelia du Pont to Sophie Dalmas du Pont, November 15, 1808, Papers, 1802-1859, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 5:A, HML. "Ma chere Tante, Permettés moi de me rappeller a votre Souvenir et de vous offrir l'expression de ma…reconnaissance pour la superbe Robe que vous avés eu la bonté de m'envoyai"

young cherry trees for her garden plot from Philippa's garden.[71] Girls noted gifts given for no particular occasion, as the previous examples illustrate, but also for holidays – Christmas and especially New Year's Day – and birthdays. Katharine Lawrence recorded a London shopping trip taken in November, 1849 with her mother to buy Christmas presents "for the dear ones at home." The presents, bracelets, wallets, book stands and paper knives for siblings and siblings-in-law needed to be bought early in order to make a transatlantic journey home to Boston to be with their intended recipients for Christmas.[72] Fifteen-year-old Helen Beal rang in the New Year of 1844 with a list of presents from her school friends, including seals from Ellen Bailey and Miss Hill, wafers from Posey and with a box of alabaster tooth powder from her sister Lizzie.

Birthdays, in particular, offer a window into gift giving as it intersected with coming of age. For her thirteenth birthday in 1836 Anne Everett recorded a list of birthday presents that included a pincushion, needle book, emery bag and box of sugarplums. On her fifteenth birthday she observed, "Mamma gave me a hem-stitched handkerchief with lace on it, which I had never had before."[73] A year later, at age sixteen she recorded gifts including slippers, a ruffle, and a camel hair scarf. Anne noted the change in her gifts, from candy and tools of adult femininity like pincushions and needlebooks, to more sophisticated and adult items. Katharine Lawrence also noted adult presents in her diary. "I cannot realize," she wrote in her 1848 diary,

> I am sixteen…Mother and Father gave me a beautiful dressing case, Mr. Rotch brought me a book; Annie gave me a fan; Aunt Amelia a ring in the cake, and a pair of earrings; Uncle Andrew a bouquet; Uncle Francis some flowers; Prescott a card-case; Emily Otis a prayer-book; Lizzie Ticknor a

[71] Anne Gorham Everett, July 28, 1835, June 9, 1835, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[72] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, November 22, 1849, diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852, Ms. N-1547, MHS.
[73] Anne Gorham Everett, March 3, 1838, Diaries 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.

> stag horn table; Ellen Parker a pair of silver earrings; and Louisa made me a toilette pincushion… my presents were all beautiful[74]

Many of Katharine's gifts carry connotations of refined feminine sociability, the card case, for instance and the jewelry and toilette pincushion speaks to concerns of appearance and presentation, both significant to a newly sixteen-year-old Katherine.

Among Katharine Lawrence's many birthday gifts were two gifts of flowers from Uncles Andrew and Francis. Young women often noted the gift and receipt of gifts of flowers. In *The Young Lady's Friend*, Eliza Farrar cited the impermanence of flowers as a characteristic that rendered them acceptable gifts from young men to young women.[75] Young women were frequently associated with flowers, appearing in portraits holding single flowers or even bunches or baskets of blooms to emphasize their youth. Céline Grasser highlights the ways in which French and British girls in their late teens and early twenties situated themselves in the landscape of the garden – its liminal space, neither indoors nor entirely outdoors, not quite home nor fully public, allowed young women to experiment with adult selves.[76] Given these associations, then, it is unsurprising that gifts of flowers were both common and socially significant.

Young women exchanged flowers as tokens of affection for one another and received them from admirers and family members. Caroline Healey recorded flower giving and receiving multiple times in her girlhood diaries. She was often the giver of the flowers, as illustrated in an 1841 diary entry discussing her meeting with American transcendentalist Margaret Fuller. Caroline, then nineteen, was particularly impressed with Miss Fuller and

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[74] Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, March 12, 1848, diaries [transcriptions], 1847-1852, Ms. N-1547, MHS.
[75] Mrs. [Eliza Ware] Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend: A Manual of Practical Advice and Instruction to Young Females on Their Entering Upon the Duties of Life After Quitting School*. New York: Samuel S. and William Wood, 1838.
[76] Céline Grasser, "Good Girls versus Blooming Maidens: The Building of Female Middle- and Upper-Class Identities in the Garden, England and France, 1820-1870," 132.

recorded her desire to find flowers as a gift. "Succeeded," she wrote, "in finding a tolerable bouquet [here, "bunch of flowers" was struck through and the word "bouquet" careted in] for Miss Fuller – but was not satisfied that there was no – heliotrope – her favorite flower."[77] While Caroline was pleased that she had flowers to offer, she was dismayed that she could not find heliotrope. She drew a distinction between being able to offer a mere "bunch of flowers" and offering a bouquet of Margaret's favorite flower, which would have been more socially significant. In the beginning of the chapter, Caroline's dismay at not being able to send Sophia Peabody a bunch of flowers, in season, for her wedding was her significant regret at her father's financial ruin. Being able to offer flowers, and know the right ones to give, was a mark by which Caroline Healey articulated her sociability and social connection.

Flowers received also served to mark social ties. Before her father's financial collapse, Caroline recorded the flowers given to her at her coming out party. Caroline, then eighteen was remarkably sour about the whole occasion storming, weeks before the event, "I seek no intercourse with the vain and the frivolous."[78] Despite her grumbling, though, the event did, in the end, please her. "I received every attention," she wrote, after the January, 1839 party, "that any one, could wish – several bouquets were sent me, but I gave the preference to a lovely collection of exotics."[79] Caroline was pleased that she received several bouquets and that she had the right to select which offering she would carry. Sophia Quincy, one of the Bostonian 'Articulate Sisters,' daughters of Harvard president and politician Josiah Quincy, wrote about an 1829 social outing in New York with her sister Anna. "Flowers were gathered," she noted

[77] Caroline Wells Healey, [Thursday May 6, 1841], *Selected Journal*.
[78] Caroline Wells Healey, [November 20, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 16.
[79] Caroline Wells Healey, *Selected Journal, 16.*

> and presented to each of the ladies, "Forget-me-nots" sent to Miss Anna and many pretty things said on all sides, which I much regret my time and paper deny me the pleasure of transmitting to futurity[80]

For Sophia and Anna Quincy, the presentation of flowers, particularly Anna's forget-me-nots, was part of a larger ritual of courtesy and flirtation.

For the du Pont family, the giving and receiving of flowers was an even more tangible representation of their social identity and place in a social network. E. I. du Pont, the du Pont girls' father, was an avid amateur botanist and all the girls were eager gardeners. Flowers and the natural world came to symbolize them, their family and their home. In an 1823 letter to Meta, Eleuthera claimed that she would be forced to take "up a bunch of flowers in order to tempt …[Meta] down as I make my Deer follow me with bread or corn"[81] She and her sisters sent frequent bouquets to city friends. Meta noted one such bouquet in 1824, writing, "Monday morning arrived very safely the box of lovely flowers which you sent us they were but little withered"[82] The flowers, not exotics gathered from the Boston Botanic garden hothouses, but garden flowers from Eleutherian Mills evoked the du Ponts and their pastoral life.

Recipients and givers of the du Pont house flowers both explicitly linked the blooms and home. While the girls were away at school, they sent often for flowers as a remedy to loneliness and homesickness. Sophie du Pont, particularly homesick in 1825, was greeted with a letter and flowers from Eleuthera. "You say in your letters," she wrote,

> 'Oh how I wish to see some one from home' How I wish I could witness your raptures and the joyful reception you will give to the knight who is to take charge of this I intend giving him the flowers in peculiar charge and I am sure he will be charmed beyond measure with the commission.[83]

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[80] Sophia Quincy, [August 13, 1829], *Articulate Sisters*, 170.
[81] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, June 11, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[82] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, March 3, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[83] Eleuthera du Pont to Sophie du Pont, March 17, 1825, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

Eleuthera answered Sophie's desire to see "some one from home" with a visit from her cousin Frank to deliver a bouquet of flowers from home. Joanna Smith, the du Pont girls' future sister-in-law, made the same connection with the bouquet sent by Eleuthera in 1832. "The flowers," she wrote, "arrived very safely… Alexis, who was here [,] assisted me in the arrangement of them, & they made me so long to be with you all again, & him so home sick that it was quite a sad and melancholy pleasure."[84] The flowers stirred in Joanna the desire to be with her absent friends and in Alexis, his desire to be at the place where the flowers originated. In these examples flowers stand in both as representations of place –that is, Eleutherian Mills, the du Pont home, or the country – as well as social representations of the country-dwelling du Ponts who gathered them.

Gifts could embody deep emotional resonances as along with their social meanings. In 1815, Harriet Manigault wrote about a gift sent by her brother in her diary. "My Brother sent me the other day," she wrote,

> a beautiful bag made of gold. It was very kind of him to think of me, & I felt very grateful; but more than half the pleasure was spoiled by his not having sent anything to Charlotte, & I am aware she felt mortified at it although she did not show it…It is a great pity that he should show a preference which I am pretty certain he does not feel.[85]

Harriet was pleased by the gift, but deeply distressed that her brother had been thoughtless about the social ramifications of the gift. She believed that her brother did not feel any partiality between his sisters, but his gift giving behavior had suggested that he preferred Harriet and not Charlotte. Eliza Southgate also reflected on the emotional import of gifts, noting that Martha had given her a most elegant Indispensible [a reticule-type purse], white lutestring spangled with silver, and a beautiful bracelet for the arm made of her hair." The

[84] Joanna Smith to Eleuthera du Pont, October 6, 1832, Papers, 1826-1876. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:C. HML.
[85] Harriet Manigault, [October 10, 1815], *Diary*, 119-120.

gifts, a bracelet and a reticule, signified to Eliza the emotional ties the two shared, and she went on to write that Martha was "good to love me as she says, more than ever"[86] Similarly Annie Mills wrote to her friend Anna Dulles, to thank her for a gift, saying "how can I thank you dear Anna for this token of affection – the case is really beautiful…I cannot conceive how it could have been prettier"[87] Her lavish praise of Anna's wise choice of gift, its beauty, utility and appropriateness made clear that the gift signified their close bond.

Girls sometimes linked the material quality of gifts to their love for the giver or receiver. In response to her Aunt Abigail Adams' letter, in which Adams wrote that enclosed in the letter was "a tasty ribbon" for her, Betsey Cranch wrote,

> Most sincerely do I thank you…for the little token of your regard inclosed …it has recievd it[s] greatest value, as being a Gift from you. I feel a real pleasure from knowing that your fingers folded it, and that you spread it upon your Hand, and saw it was a delicate Ribbon. You know these pleasures I am sure my Aunt, and will not call me a silly Girl for telling you I felt them.[88]

Betsey, however she may have felt like a "silly Girl" in saying so, articulated a value of the gift that exceeded that of the ribbon given. Its significance was magnified because her aunt had selected it, held it in her hands, and sent it on its way to her. Georgina Amory, in choosing presents for her friends and family before her 1825 wedding wrote to her fiancé to ask for his assistance. Her cousin Anna, she wrote, "expressed a wish to have a quizzing glass. Could I get a very handsome one for her, with a very elegant chain? … Will you help

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[86] Eliza Southgate, September 9, 1802, *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago*.
[87] Annie E. Mills to Anna Welsh Dulles, September 12, 1844, Correspondence 1838-1858, in Louisa S. McCord family papers, 1786-1954, (1103.00) SCHS.
[88] Elizabeth Cranch to Abigail Adams, Sepember 26, 1784 in response to letter Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, August 1, 1784, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses*

me to think of something, for I do love Anna"[89] As with Betsey, Georgina articulated an emotional need to acquire the appropriate gift because of her love for the recipient.

Gifts were also a critical means by which alliances were formed. In the months preceding her wedding to Samuel Wilcocks, Harriet Manigault recorded receiving gifts from his family members. "I have received some beautiful presents lately," she wrote,

> from Mr. B. Wilcocks & his eldest sister, consisting of two magnificent shawls of canton crape…& besides that four dresses of the handsomest materials. I think they are all too kind to me. Miss W. Also gave Charlotte a very handsome scarf, & a silk dress exactly like one of mine[90]

The Wilcocks siblings' kindness, giving gifts both to Harriet and matching gifts to her sister Charlotte, emphasized their impending familial ties, and the affectionate alliance that they hoped to forge. When Charlotte and Harriet wore their magnificent gifts, they were underlining their connections to the Wilcocks family. Eliza Southgate could carry her reticule or wear her hair bracelet, Betsey Cranch could sport her aunt's gift of ribbon, and Georgina Amory's wedding gift to her cousin Anna adorned their room on the last night that they shared it as unmarried young women. Whether ribbons or crape shawls, an elegant quizzing glass or white lutestring Indispensible, the gifts given signaled a social intimacy between giver and receiver.

Some of the most emotionally and socially loaded gifts were those made from hair. Hair art and jewelry, though most commonly associated with Victorian era sentimentality, was exceedingly popular and significant in early America. Eliza Southgate emphasized that Martha gave her a bracelet made of her *own* hair. A sixteen-year-old Victorine du Pont wrote

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[89] Georgina Margaret Amory to John Lowell Jr, December 5, 1824, Ms. N-1605. MHS.. In the end, Georgina seems to have elected not to give Anna the quizzing glass as a wedding present, but rather a worktable. Anna noted in her diary that just before her wedding, "Georgina gave me a beautiful work table which served to adorn the room that night" Anna Cabot Lowell, April 1825, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 MHS..
[90] Harriet Manigault, [March 11, 1816], *Diary*, 129.

to her Mama in 1808 explaining that she hadn't "had the time to embroider the kerchief for Melie [Amelia du Pont]," but planned instead to "plait some hair to make her a necklace like [hers]."[91] As discussed earlier in this chapter, Eleuthera du Pont voiced concern that her lock of hair should not be sent through the post, but rather through the trusted hands of her fathers' employees and friends. Hair, suggests Robin Jaffe Frank in her work on mourning miniatures, has the potential to serve as a fetish, representing both love and loss. During the period, she continues, Americans used hair in a variety of memorializing forms – "chopped up or dissolved to paint miniatures, knotted into bracelets, plaited in lockets of simply displayed." [92] Amanda Vickery, too, emphasizes the emotional and material significance of hair and its capacity to literally embody a person in a thing.[93]

Girls made their own hair jewelry and jewelry for others and also bought necklaces, bracelets, brooches and rings made of and with hair.[94] Betsey Cranch, for instance, wrote, "made my hair bracelet" one January day in 1786 while Harriet Manigault described a New Year's Eve shopping trip in which she bought "a hair ring to give to Christina…in return for her purse". In all of these instances, hair is used to tie, literally and figuratively, one person to another. But while Harriet, Elizabeth Victorine and Eliza all discussed gifts of hair between living friends, hair played an even greater role in tying the living to the dead.

Sociability & Ritual: The Material Cultures of Death and Remembrance

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[91] Victorine du Pont to Sophie Dalmas du Pont, September 18, 1808, WMSS Group 6:A, HML. "Je n'ai pas eu le tems de broder le fichu de melie, mais je vais natter des cheveux pour lui faire un collier comme la mien"

[92] Robin Jaffe Frank, *Love and Loss: American Portrait and Mourning Miniatures*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 10.

[93] Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 188.

[94] Girls should learn to craft ornate hair jewelry themselves, it was suggested, because of the intimacy of the hair. If one sent hair away to have it crafted into jewelry, there was no guarantee that the hair returned was unadulterated and, more importantly, yours.

However friendly the hair jewelry exchanged by young women, hair jewelry also necessarily evoked the familiar material cultures of death and dying in early America. Sophie du Pont reflected, in a letter to her brother Henry, upon a New Year's gift in 1830 when her sister Victorine gave her a ring containing the hair of their recently deceased mother. "I cannot tell you," she wrote, "how I felt when I looked on her fair hair and thought of her whom we were always gathered round on a New Year's morning"[95]

Image not available for publication

Figure 4. Du Pont mourning bracelet belonging to Evelina du Pont Bidermann, Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library

Figure 4 shows another example of du Pont hair jewelry, in this case a bracelet woven from the hair of their mother, Sophie Dalmas du Pont, with a clasp containing the hair of their father under glass. Its accompanying documentation suggests that it was originally Victorine's, but was later given to her sister Evelina, possibly after the death of one or both parents. Hair served as a means by which people mourned, memorialized lost loved ones, or even mingled the hair of departed family members with the hair of living ones as a means to keep them still in the family.[96] After the sudden death of Anne Jemima Clough's brother in Charleston in 1843, her father sent her a letter in Liverpool assuring her, "I have got two

[95] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, January 4, 1830, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[96] See Sarah Nehama*, In Death Lamented: The Tradition of Anglo-American Mourning Jewelry.* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2012*);* On shift in death ideologies in Early America see also, Frank, *Love and Loss*, 119-123; James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*. (New York: Anchor, 1996), 95-124.

locks of the dear boy's hair, one of which I will send you."[97] Similarly, thirteen-year-old Anne Everett wrote in her diary that for New Year's she had been given "a pretty little locket, with Dear little Grace's hair in it, from Mamma, which I shall value highly." Grace, her nine-year-old youngest sister, had died earlier that year. The gifts of hair, far from being ghoulish, were representations of the lost person meant to keep them close, physically and emotionally, serving as quasi-religious relics in a largely Protestant culture of death and mourning.[98]

Young women engaged material cultures of death and dying in other ways as well. Mary Robie, while living in Halifax, wrote in her diary about being asked to be a "Bearer" to the deceased daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pyke. "I could not," she wrote, "refuse tho it is an office I could not at any time think of engaging in without uneasiness…however we must do many things disagreeable to us in conformity to the customs of the World."[99] Caroline Healey confided in her diary that, following the death of her younger brother, she did the sad duty of removing her brother's things from plain view to spare her parents the pain of seeing his toys and schoolbooks around their home.[100] Harriet Manigault reflected on the spatial change that her sister's death created, feeling uncomfortable in the room that they had always shared, and chose to move to sleep in another room instead. Though their circumstances were different – Mary, serving however unwillingly as a bearer to the young Pyke daughter; Caroline, mourning her brother even as she scoured the house for his possessions that might cause her grieving parents further grief; and Harriet, unwilling to sleep alone in a room without Emma – each of these young women engaged in a shared material understanding of death.

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[97] J. Butler Clough to Anne Jemima Clough, Dec 1, 1843, Letters, 1833-1845, (0107.00) SCHS.
[98] Nehama, *In Death Lamented*.
[99] Mary Robie, Diary, July 5, 1783
[100] Caroline Wells Healey, *Selected Journal*.

Material cultures of *mourning* also shaped the social selves of young women. In 1826 Georgina Lowell gave birth to a stillborn child. Her cousin and best friend, Anna, wrote in her diary about the pain that she suffered along with Georgina. "I was not allowed," she wrote, "to see her for nearly a week. It appeared to me a month, for I could think of no one else, & the only pleasure I had was to gather the most fragrant flowers every morning and send them to her."[101] When she was cut off from seeing her friend, Anna relied upon familiar rituals of sending flowers to stand in her stead to support her cousin. Betsey Cranch found herself caught between sociability and mourning after the 1786 death of her fiancé and "dearest friend" Thomas Perkins. After his death, she was expected to return to the sociable world, but noted in her diary her unwillingness to do so. "Never," she wrote,

> did I make a visit from home so unwillingly – my heart – my mind were not in a frame to give or receive pleasure so freely as they are wont…I strove (but the exertion was painful) – to appear cosy & chearful I dress'd but with every ornament I put on…seemed an appendage…I am resigned to my fate – but still I cannot be gay.[102]

Betsey mourned through things, expressed her unwillingness to socialize and the falseness of her countenance explaining that despite her attempt to dress and socialize as she should, "every ornament" was just "an appendage" that magnified her grief.

On quite a different note, Catherine Rees complained to twenty-one-year-old Frances Mayrant about the appalling mourning practices common in Charleston. "My dear Frances," she wrote, "it is really shocking to see in Charleston how much indifference persons show at the death of their friends, their mourning is ridiculous, canton crepe frock trimmed with crepe, & a scarlet hat & shawl."[103] While Catherine's mortification at the tasteless Charlestonians seems worlds away from the heartfelt grief of Anna and Betsey, the three

[101] Anna Cabot Lowell, May 24, 1826, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 MHS.
[102] Elizabeth Cranch, November 17, 1786, Diary, Ms. N-599. MHS.
[103] Catherine Rees to Frances Mayrant, April 4, 1816, Rees and Mayrant family correspondence, 1815-1902 (bulk 1824-1852) (0185.00) SCHS.

examples share a common theme. Each displays an understanding of mourning, as a materio-social process. The knowledge that grief could hang on dress and ornamentation like an appendage, that lovingly gathered flowers could stand in your stead with a grieving friend, and that mournful feelings could be belied by failure to heed rules of taste and decorum.

To young women, objects took on a particular kind of vitality when they entered the materio-social network. Whether as a tangible manifestation of loss, a gift given or received, or a letter posted to a friend, as they engaged with networks of sociable sending, young women were imbuing objects with a piece of their self. At the same time, acts of sending and receiving helped young women refine their own sense of who they were and where they belonged. The ability to send – to command an object to its destination – stood as a marker of status and influence. Receiving a new and sophisticated type of gift could signify increasing maturity. Social networks of things, exchanged, sent, received, and preserved, linked young women to family and friends near and far; their own access to and use of those networks marked their ascent to adulthood. The next chapter will discuss the material space and processes of education, a venue in which young women formed their adult social networks and learned how to send selves through things.

Chapter 4

Making up their Minds: Young women, education and material culture in early America

In 1814, thirteen-year old Hannah Alvard Bliss recorded a milestone in her diary. "I have," she wrote, "this day commenced going to school." Hannah went on to explain that she expected to study subjects including Geography, History, grammar and composition at school. "I wish," she concluded, "that I may make such proficiency in my studies as to give my Parents and Friends satisfaction."[1] Hannah's plans for her time at school were not unusual. She, like many of her contemporaries, expressed a desire to master the subjects offered. While Hannah claimed that she hoped to give her, "Parents and Friends satisfaction," other young women like her saw school as a venue for personal improvement, spiritual growth, or social advancement. However, for Hannah and her school-aged contemporaries what remained strikingly consistent was the degree to which their formal educations were intertwined with the material world. Though educational theorists of the era increasingly emphasized the mind-body divide, separating the intellectual world of the mind from the mundane concerns of the body, the formal educations of young women were inexorably linked to physical objects. The process of making a mind could not be extricated from the material world of a young woman's formal education.

Of course, a process of education figured young women's fashion, shopping, socializing and domestic life. Girls needed to learn – from family, friends, schoolmasters and mistresses, books and other venues – how to buy a length of ribbon, to embroider a screen, or to write to a friend. In this chapter I have chosen to focus on processes of formal education.

[1] Hannah Alvard Bliss, November 8, 1814, Hannah Alvard Bliss Clarke diary, 1814-1818, Ms. N-24, MHS.

The decades following the American Revolution witnessed the unprecedented rapid development of a wide array of venues of formal education for affluent female youth, including day and boarding schools, female seminaries and academies. I will discuss the types of formal education available, popular curricular choices, and the venues in which this education took place later in the chapter. While the types of formal education available to young women shifted dramatically over the course of my study, the role of formal education in the lives of young women, on the whole, did not.

Receiving a formal education was one prominent step between childhood and adult womanhood. During their educational process, girls wrote often about their futures. They drew explicit links between the development of their minds, whether by mastering arithmetic or embroidery, and their future lives as adult women. Like Hannah, they saw educational success as a path to giving their families, friends and even themselves satisfaction. Clearly a young woman's period of formal education was imbued with more meaning than simple mastery of subjects. Formal education, and its accompanying creation of an adult female mind, was central to the self-fashioning of young women. But, far from being separate from their physical worlds, formal education was intimately and inexorably entwined with the material. As young women crafted their minds, they were supported, constrained, schooled and shaped by things.

Before moving into my sources, I will begin the chapter with a very brief discussion of the historiography of young women's education in the early republic. I will then transition into a discussion of the ideological significance and justifications for the education of young women. This section will consider particularly how young women discussed their formal educations and why they believed they were needed. Next, I will briefly discuss the shifts in curriculum between the Revolution and 1850 – as well as the range of different educational

opportunities that existed for young women that I study. Following this section, I will focus in depth on two objects, an embroidered globe and a painted table, that exemplify the ways in which young women's education was bolstered and reinforced by their material lives. Following this object-based analysis, I will consider novel reading as a particular material culture that had power to both reinforce and pose a threat to young women's intellectual development. I will then move on to discuss the material spaces of schools and education. Whether at home, as a pupil at a day school or boarding school, periods of formal education were also often marked with material boundaries. Finally, I will close with an analysis of moments in which the gendered material lives of young women conflicted with the world of the mind.

The historiography of young women's education in the early Republic is quite extensive. While the topic has been well covered in many regards, there are few studies that consider the material world as a significant part of the education of girls. Perhaps this is a result of the gendered mind-body divide. Since theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggested that men were naturally inclined to mental pursuits while women were more linked to their bodies and their physical surroundings, it might seem a contradiction to consider the physical and material aspects of intellectual development. I argue that historians have, like Judith Sargent Murray's 1790 essay "On The Equality of the Sexes," constructed a system in which the "mechanism of a pudding or the sewing…of a garment," is inherently opposed to academic and intellectual life.[2] I propose, instead, that it is impossible to consider the formal education of young women without considering their material world. To do so effaces a spectrum of lived experiences. Some young women saw no contradiction between being an engaged scholar and mastering the art of blancmange. Others felt hobbled by a

[2] Judith Sargent Murray, *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray*. Sharon M. Harris, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

gendered material world in which their educations were held back by each stitch and seam and jar of preserves. Each of these experiences, and the range between them, is essential to understanding the formal education of girls. Whether in conflict or harmony, an early American young women's education was profoundly affected by her material world. My chapter, thus, focuses the mostly overlooked material aspects of young women's formal education.

Though the scholarship on girls' education in early America is far reaching, one of the most recognizable topics in the historiography of early American women's education is the "Republican Mother."[3] In *Women of the Republic*, Linda Kerber coined the term Republican Mother, an integral part of discussions of women in the post revolutionary period. In the early republic, politicians and cultural commentators alike cited America's great need for an appropriately educated citizenry. Without male citizens, well schooled in civic virtue, the strength of the nation was endangered. Republican Mothers were needed to educate her sons to be good citizens, and so women, too, needed to be properly educated. The Republican Mother, Kerber argues, was crucial to the development of proper civic virtue. Kerber, Rosemarie Zagarri, and Mary Beth Norton all use the concept of "Republican Motherhood" to explain the well-documented increase in educational options, including day schools, female seminaries, elite boarding schools and the like, that opened in the post revolutionary era.[4] Although they did not participate directly, women playing the role of Republican

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[3] Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

[4] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1980); Rosemarie Zagarri, The Rights of Man and Woman in Post-Revolutionary America," in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser, Vol. 55, no. 2, 1998; For more on the development and proliferation of formal educational venues for women, including female academies and female seminaries, see Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women,*

Mothers were able to take an indirect role in civic duties, and according to Zagarri, earned rights and status as participating citizens through their roles as wives and mothers.[5]

Other early American historians have come to critique this formulation of women's rights and participation. Margaret Nash, for instance, insists that historians have overstated the role of Republican Motherhood. She and others, including educational historian Maxine Schwartz Seller, propose a broader understanding of the growth in female education. Seller suggests that similar contemporary developments throughout the Atlantic World point to larger social and cultural movements – that the concept of the "Republican Mother" was just one expression of a larger trend. Nash points out that there are other factors to be considered including Enlightenment beliefs about women and rights, new religious interpretations, and the economic value of literacy and numeracy in the early republic.[6]

Republican Motherhood also overlooks some of the conflict that young women themselves expressed regarding the role of their own education and their future. To be sure, most of the young women educated in the early Republic were bound for lives as wives and mothers. However, many expressed dismay that their gender confined their scholarly pursuits. In her analysis of an early nineteenth-century Boston girls' reading group, Mary Kelley highlights the young female members' unwillingness to be relegated to a world of stockings and puddings when they could, instead, be 'useful' citizens. Nash too highlights

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Education, and Public Life in America's Republic, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 66-68.

[5] Zagarri, The Rights of Man and Woman."

[6] Maxine Schwartz Seller, "Boundaries, Bridges, and the History of Education," *The History of Education Quarterly* 31, No. 2, 1991, 204; Margaret A. Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia." *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no.2 (Summer 1997), 171-72. Republican Motherhood also extended to Republican Wife-hood. Jan Lewis argues that marriage provided the basis for Republican order and as such women needed to be loving, rational partners for their husbands. Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series 44, no. 4 (October 1987), 689-721.

discontent in the commencement addresses of students at the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia in the late eighteenth century. Some young women, Nash argues, used the revolutionary rhetoric that they had learned at the academy to articulate their own subordinate state.[7] That early American young women were being consciously educated as future mothers of the nation is clear. However, it is important to recognize both that such patterns were part of larger transatlantic shifts and that those rationales were not always palatable to the young women being educated.

Another piece of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century rationale for educating young women revolved around the establishment of cultural identity. Mary Kelley argues that in post Revolutionary America the education of women did the same work for middling sort that it had for elites in the colonial period. Educating women allowed middling Americans to establish and consolidate a particular social identity apart from their lower class contemporaries.[8] In her article on the Boston girls' reading circle, Kelley also emphasizes the social and cultural capital that all of them shared. Each came from a middle to upper-middle class family, a literate family, and a family that had invested time and resources in their schooling. [9] Daniel Kilbride, in his work on early American Southern aristocracy, argues that the prevailing mode of educating young southern women was an inherently elite and conservative way to maintain the upper class. He suggests that after the Revolution, the elite French academies including those attended by wealthy Charlestonians, were a way that the southern elite held themselves apart from the growing middle-class republic.[10] Formal

[7] Mary Kelley, "'The Need of Their Genius': Women's Reading and Writing Practices in Early America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 20; Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood," 186.
[8] Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 28, 28.
[9] Kelley, "'The Need of Their Genius,'" 7-8.
[10]Kilbride, *An American Aristocracy: Southern Planters in Antebellum Philadelphia*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 54-57

education helped to define a young woman's class, to set her apart from others not of her class. It also clearly served as a venue through which young women were taught, explicitly and implicitly, how to integrate that sense of class into a developing adult identity.

One topic of identity formation covered by many education histories is the divide between public and private. When educating girls in the early Republic, much attention was paid to what their place might be when their education was complete. Would their education allow them to participate fully in the public sphere? Or would they still be confined to the private? Christopher Grasso articulates the challenge of educated women to public discourse in the years following the Revolution. Women, he argues, were shaping print culture, and their increasing readership and print purchases, not to mention the rise in female authors, led to tension between political and literary public realms. Mary Kelley and Daniel Kilbride both helpfully formulate analytical strategies that complicate the simple divide between public and private. Kelley suggests that historians remember that, "exclusion from one sphere…does not necessarily imply confinement to another." Considering the household, or feminine space, as a binary opposite to the public, masculine, sphere, argues Kelley, obscures more than it reveals, Kilbride emphasizes the quasi-public roles played by Margaret Izard Manigault and Alice Delancey Izard, both Charleston matrons in Philadelphia, as they engaged with both culture and politics in the early republic. Both consider the overlap of privacy and publicity, and argue that there were complex and contested places that existed between the two extremes.[11] Complicating the division between a diametrically opposed

[11] Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 419-22; Kelley, Learning to Stand and Speak, 15; Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 7-8; See also Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

"public" and "private" is especially essential as I consider how girls were consciously and unconsciously crafting adult selves for a wide range of publics and privates.

The last area of educational history on which I will focus is the question of engagement. Theorists including Hannah More, Mary Wollstonecraft, Benjamin Rush, and Judith Sargent Murray were read, debated, emulated, and parodied throughout early America. The various theorists and their proposals were read, not only by those in positions of authority, but by the young women that each theorist proposed to educate. Mary Kelley, for instance, argues that the members of the Boston Gleaners reading circle were strictly opposed to the 'loud toned eloquence' of Mary Wollstonecraft. They preferred the discipline and evangelical motherhood of Hannah More.[12] Some reformers, including Judith Sargent Murray, forwarded more radical educational theories, calling for dramatic expansion in the education of (at least) elite young women; other more conservative commentators called for a return to ornamental education, focused on music, art, dancing, and languages. Yet what is most relevant to my analysis is the degree to which girls themselves adopted educational models, ideas about their own learning and formal processes of education, as a conscious plan of self-formation. I consider this topic in further detail later in the chapter.

Making a Very Fine Woman: Educating Early American Girls

In her 1783 diary, nineteen-year-old Mary Robie recorded making the acquaintance of another woman. "She has," noted Mary, "a good heart and an excellent understanding and

[12] Kelley, "'The Need of Their Genius,'" 21; Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Ch. 11 & 12; Maxine Schwarz Seller, "Boundaries & Bridges," 201-202.. While the Gleaners' tone may have been influenced by Wollstonecraft's rhetoric, it was more likely influenced by the publication of Wollstonecraft's 1798 biography. Wollstonecraft's husband, William Godwin, published what he thought an adulatory piece of prose that detailed Wollstonecraft's extramarital sexual encounters and suicide attempt. The biography essentially destroyed Wollstonecraft's credibility for decades to follow.

nothing but a good education was wanting to make her a very fine woman."[13] While a good heart and excellent understanding were all well and good, Mary seems to suggest, education was absolutely required to make a woman truly fine. The idea that education was a necessary ingredient to render a young woman socially successful was common in the late eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth century, "mental culture," gained through appropriate educational experiences, was a defining characteristic of a refined woman. Novels of the period feature heroines who, upon realizing their lack of intellectual cultivation, withdraw to a course of fervent reading and emerge beautiful, graceful, refined women.[14] Education was linked to status, as young women of wealth and social prominence were expected to attain a thorough formal education. Here, I must emphasize once more that the content of that formal education varied widely. Some girls attended schools focused on 'ornamental' education; others featured more recognizable scholarly curriculum, or a mixture of the two. Whatever the content, their education was a vehicle to both set them apart from social others, and to link them to their social peers. Kelley suggests that the Gleaners' literary pursuits were imbued with cultural capital. The young women involved, who read history and science and the classics – and wrote and spoke and debated about them, were absorbing in markers of their status. The rationale for educating young women was intensely linked to the production of their adult identity, both as individuals and as members of their social communities.[15]

Eliza Farrar, in her 1836 conduct book *The Young Lady's Friend*, addressed a young women's pursuit of formal education. She strongly cautioned young women against viewing an education as "so many quarters spent at school, and so many books committed to memory." Such students, Farrar insists, are not learning. Nor are young women who learn to

[13] Mary Robie, September 14, 1783, diary, May-October 1783, Ms. N-804, MHS.
[14] Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: People, Houses, Cities*, (New York: Vintage, 1993), 284-287.
[15] Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 53; Kelley, "The Need of their Genius,'" 21.

best their fellow pupils. "If you," she wrote, "have regarded your studies as daily tasks to be performed till a certain period, when you will be released from them, you are still uneducated."[16] Education, to Farrar and her adherents, was something that required real mental change, not merely window dressing. Connecticut seminary attendee Emeline Moore echoed the sentiment. On New Year's Day 1826 she began her school diary writing, "With the intention to improve my mind I have resolved to attend the Seminary a few months."[17] To truly educate a girl was to figuratively *change her mind* - to improve it by the addition of skills and content alike – in order to make a truly fine woman.

True education was also supposed to be a pleasure. Fifteen-year-old Susan Heath's father, in an 1810 letter, wrote reminding her that, "these days which you are spending…[in] mental improvement, will be in all human probability the pleasantest days of your life."[18] At the end of her schooling, Massachusetts teen Jane Noyes confided her fears to her diary, writing, "in all probability my school days, my happiest days are ended! ...Must I say to school and all its dear associations farewell…time nor change may not easily remove the love of school from my heart."[19] Eliza Farrar wrote glowingly of, "schools, which the scholar leaves with regret, where habits of intellectual labor have been formed, where the principle of emulation never enters, and knowledge is its own reward."[20] While these adulatory perspectives on schools and schooling might seem overly rosy, they are revealing. Jane's regret modeled precisely the attitude that Eliza Farrar endorsed. Mr. Heath, too, encouraged his daughter to consider her time spent in school as the "pleasantest days" that she would ever

[16] Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend*, 6, 2.
[17] Emeline Moore, January 1, 1826, Diary, 1826-1828. Doc. 1046. Winterthur Museum, Library, & Gardens (hereafter WMLG).
[18] Ebenezer Heath to Susan Heath, February 20, 1810, Heath family papers, 1736-1887; bulk 1800-1865, Ms. N-1387, MHS.
[19] Jane Noyes, October 7, 1823, diary, 6 May-7 October 1823. Ms. N-607. MHS.
[20] Farrar, *The Young Lady's Friend*, 3.

encounter. Each episode underlines the intimate and affectionate way that young women would, ideally, encounter their education. The process of schooling was not supposed to be a hurdle to overcome or a series of lessons to commit to memory. Rather, education was meant, by parents, teachers, and students, to grow and transform a young woman's mind.

Susan Heath's father and Mrs. Farrar were both adults encouraging this educational affection. However, the case of Caroline Healey offers an example of what happened when parents and children did not share this attitude. Caroline, during her teens and early twenties, frequently recorded conflict in her diaries. While she aspired to a higher education than she received and was an enthusiastic scholar, she often noted her parents' – particularly her mother's - ambivalence or outright disapproval of her literary pursuits. In 1838, sixteen-year-old Caroline wrote, "I have been wondering what it is that raises my spirits, and encourages me in the task which I have undertaken? Certainly neither father nor mother, brother nor sister have ever expressed any interest in what I have written."[21] In contrast to the rosy views of education, Caroline's familial apathy left her cold. While other young women may have felt encouraged to avidly pursue their education, Caroline felt faced with disapproval on all sides. I will return to the story of Caroline Healy at the end of this chapter, in discussion of the conflict between a young woman's educational and material lives.

Though, Caroline's family aside, affection for learning was generally fostered, what exactly would be learned was a point of some dispute. Between 1770 and 1850 the subjects grouped together as a girls' "formal education" shifted quite dramatically. In the 1790s typical girls' school curricula featured reading, grammar, writing, history, cyphering and geography. By the 1820s similar schools had begun to offer more advanced courses in natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, algebra, astronomy, and occasionally Latin. Maxine Schwarz

[21] Caroline Wells Healey, [September 1, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 13.

Seller notes that the curriculum of the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia was modeled on that of a typical boys school at the time. However, it was reinterpreted for 'female' needs. Writing, for instance, was taught for use in letters, or chemistry in order to help young women understand cooking. Kim Tolley, in her study of the science education of American young women, highlights the chemistry classes at the Young Ladies' Academy, noting that they were comprised of some general chemistry and some domestic chemistry lessons.[22] These curricular expansions changed the material landscape of young women's education. The growth of natural science courses, for instance, placed a premium on girls' work with botanical specimens. Expanding astronomy curricula called for telescopes and celestial globes. Shifting academic subjects meant that a young woman's schooling in 1780 was not only different in curriculum than her counterpart in 1850; it looked very different as well.

The shift in female education over the period between the American Revolution and 1850 changed, in many ways, the content and execution of American young women's education. Their education came increasingly to include more formal (at least to a modern eye) academic content and settings. In the 1770s Anna Winslow learned to spin and sew, write and cook in the homes of family members. By contrast, by the 1820s and 30s a much broader array of young women attended formal schools, either as boarders or day students, where they studied chemistry and geography from similar curricula as their male counterparts. Throughout the period, too, the ideological framework that justified women's education shifted. However, what remained strikingly consistent over this eighty-year period was the outcome of young women's education. They were all being educated for their future role as wife and mother. Young women's scholastic backgrounds were almost universally

[22] Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 86; Seller, "Boundaries & Bridges," 201; Kim Tolley, *The Science Education of American Girls: A Historical Perspective*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 57.

justified for their domestic utility. Despite changing curriculum, the branches of ornamental education including language, art, music, and dance were all still essential to the education of young women. As I will demonstrate in the next section, however, disentangling formal scholastic subjects from the ornamental ones is not so easy as it may seem.

While these curricular shifts were underway, it is important to recognize, especially when considering the material aspects of female education, that a rise in more recognizably "academic" subjects did not necessarily signal a decline of so-called 'ornamental' education. Daniel Kilbride highlights the degree to which the academically rigorous schools attended by young southern women continued to offer drawing, painting, and voice lessons. Seller, too, highlights the degree to which female academies including Madame Rivardi's Seminary for Young Ladies, attended by both Evelina and Victorine du Pont, focused on a balance between true academic rigor and ornamental subjects. Mary Kelley argues that though ornamental education seems, to a modern audience, completely at odds with intellectual attainment, early Americans felt that the two were complementary, and that ornamental subjects including music, dancing, drawing and needlework were essential in "fashioning an elite woman's subjectivity." [23]

Nevertheless, girls sometimes expressed disdain for the ornamental 'finishing school' education received by their peers. Twenty-one-year-old Margaret Morton Quincy Greene, an elite Bostonian newly married, noted a social engagement in in Charleston in 1827 when she met a very refined young lady. "The eldest Miss Morris," she wrote,

> is engaged to a Mr Butler of Philadelphia and she is indeed a beautiful creature. When she and her sister entered, I was sure at first glance they had been educated at some fashionable school, and on applying to Mrs. Rutledge she informed me their education had just received the *last finish* at Mrs.

[23] Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 55-56; Seller, "Boundaries & Bridges," 201; Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 69.

> Somebody's boarding school, in Philadelphia! I presume the engagement to Mr. Butler was the most desirable finish that could have been imagined.[24]

Margaret's snarky response to the fashionable belles of Charleston represents her disdain for the process of 'finishing,' as well as her own sense of being a more appropriately educated woman. She and her sisters, dubbed the "articulate sisters," all daughters of Harvard President Josiah Quincy had received a very different education than the lovely Miss Morris.

Ornamental or not, girls engaged actively in the curriculum offered to them. They wrote letters and diaries about lessons, topics, and their ideal courses of study. In 1772, Anna Green Winslow left her family's home in Nova Scotia to live with family in Boston and pursue her education. Her diaries are full of references to her studies, many of them in material subjects. In February 1772, twelve-year-old Anna wrote that her aunt believed it would be a "nice opportunity" if she could "perfect [herself] in learning to spin flax." Anna went on to tell her parents that she was "exerting…[herself] for this purpose."[25] During her Boston education, Eliza Southgate wrote to her father to inform him that she was learning "Embroidery and Geography at present," but that she wished he would allow her to add music to her curriculum.[26] Only a year earlier, she had proudly included some of her schoolwork, demonstrating a skill that her parents "never…[had] seen before – it is my Arithmetic."[27] Nearly thirty years later, twelve-year-old Harriot Coffin Sumner, attending school in Boston, noted in her diary that her accomplishment for the day had been "20 sums in my cyphering book."[28] Anna, Eliza and Harriot all eagerly noted their newly acquired skills, and, in Eliza's case, sent physical proof of them to far away parents.

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[24] Margaret Morton Quincy Greene, [November 29, 1827], *The Articulate Sisters,* 89.
[25] Anna Green Winslow, [February 9, 1772], *Diary*, 20
[26] Eliza Southgate, [February 13, 1798], *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago: Selections From the Letters of Eliza Southgate Bowne*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 17.
[27] Eliza Southgate, [January 23, 1797], *A Girl's Life,* 3.
[28] Harriot Coffin Sumner, March 15, 1814, Harriot Coffin Sumner school diary, 1811-1817. Ms. N-288. MHS..

As curricula shifted toward more rigorous academic subjects, they often embraced scientific learning as ideal for young women. Historian Kim Tolley has traced the science education of American girls over nearly two centuries, and argues that in the early nineteenth century, more girls studied science in school than did boys, whose educations focused more narrowly on Classics. Tolley's research suggests that between 1800 and 1860, published catalogs of female seminaries and academies include science courses including astronomy, chemistry and botany among their most frequently offered courses.[29] Madame Rivardi's academy in Philadelphia offered such science courses. In 1808, Rebecca Ralston wrote to school friend Victorine du Pont to report that she visited "Mrs. R's seminary twice a week to attend the delightful study of Chemistry."[30] There are several factors that may serve to explain the rapid expansion of science curricula in girls' schools in the early nineteenth-century. Newly developing branches of scientific study could serve as a counterpart to the heavily masculinized world of the classics.[31]

Some educational commentators of the period also emphasized the inherent religiosity of science. Judith Sargent Murray, in her 1790 essay "On The Equality of the Sexes," which argued strenuously for a rational education for girls that paralleled that of their brothers, emphasized the links between learning science and being brought closer to the divine. Murray wrote,

> In astronomy she might catch a glimpse of the immensity of the Deity, and thence she would form amazing conceptions of the august and supreme Intelligence. In geography she would admire Jehovah in the midst of his benevolence; thus adapting this globe to the various wants and amusements of

[29] Tolley, *Science Education of American Girls*, 1, 35.
[30] Rebecca Ralston to Victorine du Pont, November 29, 1808, Bauduy, Victorine du Pont. Papers, 1798-1861. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 6:A. Hagley Museum and Library (hereafter HML).
[31] Kim Tolley, "Science for Ladies, Classics for Gentlemen: A Comparative Analysis of the Scientific Subjects in the Curricula of Boys' and Girls' Secondary Schools in the United States, 1794-1850" *History of Education Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 129-153.

> his inhabitants. In natural philosophy she would adore the infinite majesty of heaven, clothed in condescension; and as she traversed the reptile world, she would hail the goodness of a creating God. A mind, thus filled, would have little room for the trifles with which our sex are…accused of amusing themselves.[32]

In her essay, Murray linked young women's science education with their increased capacity for worship of the divine. Understanding the movement of the stars or the geographic forms of the globe would both make them more rational and devout.

Murray's insistence that a scientific education would create a mind less filled with trifles aside, I suggest also that scientific subjects, often centered on material apparatuses, specimens, and physical experiments, were seen as appropriate outlets for female intellects. While science courses were intended to offer solid, logical grounding beyond ornamental education, science courses often went hand in glove with the other more ornamental subjects that girls were expected to master. Botany courses, for instance, emphasized drawing of specimens. Until the mid-nineteenth century, science courses that were offered to young women were also typically stripped of their mathematical content, rendering them more materially based than those of their male counterparts.[33]

Scientific education, whether informal and home based or as a school subject, was another very material space that uniquely marked young women's education in early America. Girls made reference to their scientific educations in letters and diaries. Thirteen-year-old Anne Everett detailed an 1836 eclipse in her diary. "There was an eclipse of the sun this morning," she wrote, "papa called me to see it just as I was going to church. I looked at it

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[32] Judith Sargent Murray *Selected Writings*, 6-7.
[33] Kim Tolley highlights this difference in mathematical content, pre-1840. As more girls' schools included advanced mathematics, however, science classes did shift at mid-century to include more algebra and geometry. Tolley, "Science for Ladies," 141.

through a piece of smoked glass, and it seemed as if a little piece was taken off the sun."[34] Anna Cabot Lowell, too, studied astronomy, and wrote about learning "the different kinds of telescopes," in her 1820 diary.[35] Selina Cranch Bond, daughter of the first director of Harvard Observatory, William Bond, made an unsurprising number of astronomical notes in her diary, regarding telescopes and eclipses. She also included in her diary, entries about trips to the library and "to see the mastodon at the college," with her siblings.[36] Eleuthera wrote home from school to note that she had the opportunity to look at "beautiful coloured Insect books. I found a great number of our specimens in them and I copied their real names."[37] In Philadelphia, Antoinette Brevost noted an 1806 eclipse in a letter to her friend Victorine du Pont. "I saw the Eclipse yesterday," she wrote,

> it began to be visible hear (sic) at 9 o'clock 45 minutes in the morning and as well as I could see there was the 3/4 of the sun Eclipsed. I hear that it was total at Boston. I conclude from this that at all places in N_th America which were in the same latitude it must have been total.[38]

Antoinette, here, was not merely relating a piece of interesting news. She was utilizing her scientific education to speculate about the path of eclipse totality.

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[34] Anne Gorham Everett, May 15, 1836, Anne Gorham Everett Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[35] Anna Cabot Lowell, Diary, October 11, 1820, Anna Cabot Lowell diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 MHS.
[36] Selina Cranch Bond, Diary, August 21, 1846, Selina Cranch Bond Diary, 1 Feb. – 21 Sept. 1846, Ms. N-1859, MHS.
[37] Eleuthera du Pont to Sophie Madeleine and Sophie Dalmas du Pont, May 20, 1822, Papers, 1816-1876. Winterthur Manuscripts Group 6:C. HML.
[38] Antoinette Brevost to Victorine du Pont, June 14, 1806, WMSS Group 6:A, HML. Sophie du Pont, in a letter to her brother Henry, waxed a bit more poetic about astronomical education. "Have you considered," she wrote, "how positively brilliant and beautiful the planet Venus is this year?...I wish I knew more of astronomy - it is an interesting and amusing study; and it must be delightful when you look on the hosts of stars which twinkle above one on a clear night, to be able to tell them apart & recognize them by name" Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, January 8, 1830, Papers, 1818-1892. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, HML.

Young women also took pride in their own ability to conduct their own educations. In 1824, Georgina Amory wrote to fiancé John Lowell, that she had "learnt a lesson of Horatius." She continued, "I call him in the Latinned manner, that you may know in what language that I read him."[39] While Georgina boasted of her classical accomplishments, Caroline Healey wrote proudly of her scholastic discipline in her 1838 diary. "I congratulate myself," she wrote, " upon my method of studying history – it is very effectual."[40] When Anne Everett, then twelve, wrote about the new botany class beginning at Mrs. Dwight's school, she presented herself as a knowledgeable source. "They are," she wrote, "to make use of the Child's Botany, which tells, very clearly, the first principles of that science, and has very good plates."[41] Even when Amelia Russell did not go to school, she wasn't hesitant to note her intellectual prowess. In 1815, seventeen-year-old Amelia wrote that while she had not gone to school, she had passed the day reading to her Aunt and a Miss Snider, who was there working for her Aunt for the day. "I read to them all day," wrote Amelia, "every now & then making some very useful observation about the book."[42] Each of these young women was unreserved in expressing their own capacity for study, intellectual ability and scholastic judgment.

The late eighteenth-century shift in young women's education coincided with substantial growth in advice manuals addressed specifically to women. C. Dallett Hemphill suggests that this growth suggests that more and more elite and middling young women were

[39] Georgina Margaret Amory to John Lowell, February 26, 1824, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851. Ms. N-1605. MHS.
[40] Caroline Wells Healey, [June 25, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 9.
[41] Anne Gorham Everett, September 30, 1835 Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[42] Amelia Eloise Russell, February 6, 1815, Amelia Eloise Russell diaries, 1814-1819, Ms. N-823, MHS.

learning conduct through books.[43] In 1820, then twelve-year-old Anna Cabot Lowell wrote that she had read "The Life of Miss Smith," by famous expurgator Henrietta Bowdler, and noted, "a most admirable letter of Miss Bowdler to Elizabeth in which she gives her excellent rules for her conduct."[44] In 1836, Anne Everett noted a new book in her diary. "There has been a new book," she wrote, "lately written by Mrs Farrar called The Young lady's Book, which is full of useful advice to a young lady and we have been reading."[45] Caroline Healy was also an avid reader of Mrs. Farrar's conduct manual, though she often downplayed its influence over her. She nevertheless mentions the book in her diary, typically comparing her own behavior to its advice, on several occasions. In one notable instance, while at a party where Mrs. Farrar was present, Caroline was keen to note whether or not she followed her own advice. In her diary, Caroline wrote,

> I have often been laughed at for not allowing a gentleman to arrange my cloak – Martha says it is very prudish and that if Mrs Farrar had not forbidden it in her Young Lady's Friend – I should never have dremt (sic) of its being improper – Of course that had nothing to do with it – but when I heard Mr Wheeler as Mrs Farrar if he should not assist her to put on her cloak – I was a little curious to know how she would get off. She threw her head up with considerable dignity saying as she did so – 'Thank you--! but I have been so long accustomed to wait upon myself that I find it much more pleasant this way.'[46]

Here, Caroline was both wary of admitting the influence of Mrs. Farrar's book, but eager to find out that her behavior was in line with the author's actual conduct. Books that provided conduct instruction or guidance, whether specifically designed as conduct manuals or not, were a key feature of the education of young women in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-

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[43] C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 106.
[44] Anna Cabot Lowell, December 6, 1820, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512, MHS.
[45] Anne Gorham Everett, November 7, 1836, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS..
[46] Caroline Wells Healey, Diary, April 22, 1841. The relevant passage from *The Young Lady's Friend* reads "Accept not unnecessary assistance in putting on cloaks, shawls, over-shoes, or any thing of the sort." Farrar, *Young Lady's Friend*, 293.

century America. While the educational reading practices of young women will be explored further later in the chapter, it is essential to include these material objects that provided significant material advice as a part of any discussion of curriculum.

Scholarly ornaments: The case of a globe and a table

Ornamental education, often highly materially focused, is often dismissed as thoroughly antithetical to real intellectual development. Educational theorists including Mary Wollstonecraft and Judith Sargent Murray decried educations that labeled girls 'educated' when, in reality, they had only mastered the art of embroidery, a few words of French, or perfected their quadrille. However, dismissing all forms of ornamental education as frivolous or un-academic does obscure the role that these skills and their acquisition played in the formal education of young women. It also imposes a modern sensibility on the educational process of the early Republic. Where a modern audience might easily say that lessons in arithmetic or geography were scholarly pursuits and painting or dancing lessons were not, I suggest that young women viewed their "formal" schooling differently. Schools often operated more as a series of modules, some of which came as a unit, others individually. At school, girls usually studied a core set of subjects along with others that could be selected à la carte. They might ask their parents for additional lessons in cyphering (mathematics), French and dancing in the same sentence, with no seeming differentiation between ornamental and non-ornamental subjects. All were part and parcel of their formal education. Moreover, ignoring or dismissing ornamental education also dismisses the significant effects that formal education had upon the girls' 'accomplishments.'

Since lessons in mathematics and music, science and sketching went together, it is not unusual that ornament and scholarship came together in the material lives of young

women. To illustrate this intersection, and the ways that it served as a fruitful academic avenue for young women, I will discuss two objects that represent the intersection of objects, ornamentation, and intellectual growth.

The first object that I will consider is an embroidered globe. Crafted around 18 14 by Mary Harlan, a student at the Westtown academy in Pennsylvania, the small globe[47] represents a critical intersection between academic and ornamental accomplishment.

Image not available for publication

Figure 5. Mary Harlan, Painted Globe, c. 1814. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Gift of Mary Harlan Taylor.

[47] Item in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Photo from http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/11035/painted-globe.

The globe (Figure 5) is about six inches in diameter, and features embroidered lines and inked and painted geographical details. The globe sampler was one of Westtown School's most recognizable innovations. Typically the globes, made by female students, were constructed from canvas spheres, filled with wool, and then covered by white or ivory silk. Girls embroidered longitude and latitude lines, the equator, tropics, and occasionally continents and other landmasses. They also used watercolors and ink to inscribe smaller details upon their globes. Mary Harlan's globe is a terrestrial one as are most of the surviving Westtown globes. However, extant examples of celestial globes show that young women at Westtown also constructed similar spheres with astronomical information. Though given the globes' inherent fragility and low survival rate, it is difficult to gauge the origin and decline of the globe sampler, historians generally suggest that they were created at Westtown for about forty years, between 1804 and 1844.[48]

The Westtown School, founded in 1799, by Pennsylvania Quakers was one of the most highly respected boarding schools in the area. The school offered classes to both male and female pupils. The coursework was similar, though the girls' school offered courses with less mathematical content, but differed in one crucial aspect. Girls spent at least a third of their academy time sewing. Westtown was known for their needlework, and, Betty Ring

[48] Betty Ring, *Girlhood Embroidery: American Samplers & Pictorial Needlework, 1650-1850*, Vol. II, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993.), 390; Judith A. Tyner, "Stitching the World: Westtown School's Embroidered Globes," *PieceWork* 12 no.5 (September 2004): 28-31. *Art Full Text* (H.W. Wilson), *EBSCOhost* (accessed April 6, 2013); Judith Tyner suggests that the paucity of celestial globes may indicate that the needlework-geography curriculum dictated that young women construct a terrestrial globe first and then create a subsequent celestial sphere if time allowed, Tyner. "Stitching the World,"; See also Judith Tyner, "The World in Silk: Embroidered Globes of Westtown School," *The Map Collector*, Spring 1996 and Judith Tyner, "Following the Thread: The Origins and Diffusion of Embroidered Maps," *Mercator's World* 6 no. 2 (March 2001).

argues, both their curriculum and their needlework were widely copied by other schools establishing themselves in the period.[49]

Sampler making is often associated with pre-Revolutionary America. Since ornamental needlework is one of the ultimate ornamental branches of education, one might expect a decline in sampler making as young women's schools began to turn toward non-ornamental curriculum. However, this is entirely untrue. Betty Ring has pointed out that, the expansion of young women's formal education brought along with it entirely unmatched sampler production. Between 1800 and 1835, she argues, more samplers were produced in the sampler-making countries of the Western world than ever before. Young women's formal education was tied with silken thread to their acquisition of needle skills. Typically, girls would construct two samplers between age five and age nine. The samplers would demonstrate basic needle proficiency rather than the advanced ornamental needlework taught to older girls at schools like Westtown. Girls who attended female academies, Ring argues, even when they were only pupils for a twelve-week quarter, almost universally produced at least one piece of ornamental embroidery work.[50]

The Westtown globe samplers, including Mary Harlan's, represent the joining of geographic knowledge and study with ornamental needlework. Geography education for young women was one of the first 'scientific' subjects adopted by female academies. Proponents argued that knowledge of geography was essential to allow girls to understand their place in the world, their nation, and the glory of God. Map creation was among common exercises for children and young adults, and the earliest jigsaw puzzles were maps that had to

[49] Ring, *Girlhood Embroidery*, Volume 2, 388.
[50] Ring, *Girlhood Embroidery*, Volume 1, 14, 16.

be assembled.[51] The young women who produced the globe samplers were combining their acquired geography skills with delicate needlework and ornamental painting to create an artistic expression of their academic pursuits.

Young women combined ornament and academics in other ways as well. One object in the Winterthur Museum collection exemplifies the intersection between intellectual engagement, ornamental education, and material life: a painted worktable. The worktable, created in Boston between 1808 and 1818, is a fairly typical example of a very common piece of furniture at the time. The worktable as an object was frequently a female possession, used to contain tools and needlework projects that were being used. Girls frequently had their own personal tables, and recorded giving or receiving worktables as gifts in their diaries. The table itself is rectangular, with canted corners creating an octagonal top, and a fabric workbag hanging below. The wooden top compartment contains a compartmented tray, including a silk pincushion, and the bottom fabric compartment offers a space for the storage of needlework in progress. It was manufactured by famous cabinetmakers Vose & Coates in Boston.[52] What sets it apart, however, is the ornamental painting done after its purchase.

[51] Children geography literature, including Martin Brückner, "Lessons in Geography: Maps, Spellers, and Other Grammars of Nationalism in the Early Republic," *American Quarterly* 51 no. 2 (June, 1999): 311-343.
[52] Winterthur Object Report, Object 1957.0983, WMLG.

Image not available for publication

Figure 6. Worktable, Winterthur Museum, 1957.0983. Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont.

The worktable is ornately decorated with painted shells, corals, seaweed and other details that evoke marine life. The painting, on the top, sides, and legs of the table, is highly detailed and rendered with attention to biological detail. The composition of the painting is, at the same time, artistic yet realistic. The shells and corals arranged over seaweed to create a balanced design that looks as though it could be naturally occurring.

Unlike the Westtown School globe samplers, not much is known about the origins of the painting on this table. However, it was very common for young women to paint tables, fire screens, and other household furniture and such painting was taught as a branch of ornamental education. However, the painted designs on the table are not simple, stylized designs of shells. The table's painting shows commitment to rendering the natural world in precision and detail. The skills to do such biological and botanical drawing were cultivated in science class.

Take, for instance, Sophie du Pont's botany book (Figure 7). Sophie, mostly educated at home under the guidance of her older sister Victorine, made copies of botanical textbooks as a part of her formal education. Her labeled text and drawings from "Drummond's First Steps to Botany," include detailed renditions of botanical specimens. Her sister, Eleuthera, made large and very precise drawings of flowers and flowering plants (Figure 4). The illustrations were possibly drawn from nature, but, given their similarities of composition to botanical texts of the day, were likely also copied. Copying was an essential pedagogical tool in the period, encouraging young people to absorb knowledge by recreating it.

Images not available for publication

Figure 7. Sophie du Pont, "From Drummonds First Steps to Botany," Winterthur Manuscripts W9-41718, Hagley Museum and Library.

Figure 8, Eleuthera du Pont (in Sophie du Pont papers) Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, Series F, Hagley Museum and Library.

Seen in the light of these pedagogical techniques, the painting on the worktable clearly illustrates a painter with some measure of scientific training. The shells, corals, and seaweed all share a similar style as the du Pont girls' botanical training pictures. Each shell and coral is painted with detail, clearly depicting the particular traits of a piece of flora or fauna. However, like Eleuthera's flowers, the table's corals and shells are each an ideal specimen. They show a *perfect* shell or coral, not as in a still life, but as in a textbook.

Through two very different objects, a pattern emerges. The line between what was ornamental and what was academic was not at all clear. So-called ornamental training in art or needlework could be turned to distinctly academic ends, as young women sketched detailed botanical drawings or inscribed silk globes with embroidered lines of latitude and longitude. Similarly, ornamental pursuits like needlework and furniture painting could display academic training in biology or geography. These objects are exemplars of moments in the lives of young women when education was very specifically material. They remind us that both branches of female education in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America were in constant interplay, with each other and with the material lives of the young women who studied.

"For my improvement as well as amusement": The precarious place of novels

While the lines between ornamental and academic pursuits was not always clear, neither was the status of some of the things to which young women turned for learning. In 1824, Georgina Amory wrote, "I have been reading Miss More's Coelebs, for my improvement as well as amusement…it makes you wish to become better & easier & more useful." Georgina, who read moralist Hannah More's didactic novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, felt that the novel was instructive, though she did admit later in the letter that she found Miss More a little

stern, since she, "evidently thinks it is a sin to live in the world…[and] to indulge in such amusements as the theater." [53] In comparison, Judith Sargent Murray argued that, "the uncultivated fair one feels a void…what can she do? To books she may not apply; or if she doth *to only those of the novel kind*, lest she merit the appellation of *learned lady*."[54] These contrasting perspectives on novels in the education and mental life of young women, exemplify a major rift. In early America, the novel was both lauded as a great teacher of women, especially young women, and simultaneously decried as an instrument in the degradation of the female mind.

Novels, along with many other reprinted works from Britain, began to circulate much more widely in the decades following the American Revolution. Historians have considered the ways in which print circulation aids in the production of identity, shared consciousness, and a variety of other discourses.[55] Clearly young women were participating in this shared world of print culture. But the world of books was not merely discursive. For young women, books were materially important as well. Anne Everett noted in her 1835 diary the day that their bookcase (hers and some or all of her siblings') was moved into their own room. An entire bookcase, loaded with their own books, was placed in their physical space as well.[56] Anne also noted the gift of books, including dictionaries and histories, from her family and

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[53] Georgina Amory to ? [likely Anna Cabot Lowell], June 20, 1824, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851, Ms. N-1605, MHS.
[54] Judith Sargent Murray, *Selected Writings*, 6.
[55] Kelly, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 155. On Print and identity see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991); T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, Ch.4; Kelley, "'The Need of Their Genius,'" 2; Davidson, Revolution and the Word, 5; Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy*, 294-299; Mary Kelley,"Crafting Subjectivities: Women, Reading, and Self-Imagining," in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly, 55-72, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
[56] Anne Gorham Everett, May 1, 1835, Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS.

friends, as well as the shared reading of novels including *Kenilworth* and *Peveril of the Peak*.[57] Anne Everett and Caroline Healey, in Boston, and Amelia Russell in Philadelphia all wrote of visiting libraries, some circulating, others merely as an excursion to admire the physical books. Anne, for instance, visited the marvelous leather-bound library of Mr. Dowse that currently resides, fully intact, in the Massachusetts Historical Society.[58] Young women shared books, copied excerpts into commonplace books and other volumes that they used for reference, and books were a central topic of conversation for girls throughout the early Republic.

Novels, though, had a particular resonance all their own. Historian Cathy Davidson highlights the ways that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novels were specifically aimed at young adult readers. Before 1820, Davidson writes, the median age of the hero and heroine of novels written in America was under 25.[59] It may have been this aim that made the novel, as a genre, threatening. Novels were also threatening because of their capacity to enthrall. They were public windows into private lives, and their seductive power was dangerous and destabilizing.[60] Christopher Grasso, in his work on public discourse in eighteenth-century Connecticut, suggests that novels were seen as particularly dangerous to female readers. In his analysis of John Trumbull's eighteenth-century satire, Grasso highlights female characters who are poorly educated, and finished by reading sentimental novels. Trumbull's satire suggests that the worst sort of female reader read sympathetically,

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[57] Anne Gorham Everett, Diary, Marcy 3, 1837, May 14, 1835. In the diary entry for April 27, 1836 Anne noted, "Today we finished Kenilworth which ended very tragically, by the death of the heroine."
[58] Anne Gorham Everett, October 31, 1835 Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS; Caroline Wells Healey, June 21, 1838 and November 15, 1838 *Selected Journal*; Amelia Eloise Russell, February 2 and 23, 1815, diaries, 1814-1819, Ms. N-823, MHS.
[59] Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 188.
[60] Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 107, 35.

identifying with each heroine in distress, swooning along with them.[61] Other critics, including Judith Sargent Murray, saw novels as frivolous entertainment unsuitable for improvement or education.

Despite these fears, many young women continued to make novels a central part of their reading, and thus self-fashioning, practice. Novels hold a place of prominence in the letters and diaries of young women. Over the course of three days in September 1786, Betsey Cranch recorded reading, either by herself or in group, four different novels.[62] The du Pont sisters were fond of *Peveril of the Peak* and Maria Edgeworth's *Harrington*. [63] Sixteen-old Sophie even wrote to her brother, first expressing her delight with and recounting her reenactments of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*.[64] Meta Lammot confided in Eleuthera du Pont that "the Court of Elizabeth is quite as interesting and amusing as any novel…[she] ever read."[65] Anna Cabot Lowell found that, after reading Kenilworth, she "could not help but dwell on Amy Robsart for a long while afterwards."[66] Girls throughout the early Republic were reading and actively engaging with the central characters in popular novels. Feeling a kinship to Amy Robsart or playing out scenes from *The Last of the Mohicans* provided young women an opportunity to test out their own developing adult subjectivities.

After Anne Clough moved to Liverpool, she and her Charleston friend Maria Lance exchanged letters about the novels that they were reading. In an 1837 letter, Maria wrote,

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[61] Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy*, 296-297.
[62] Elizabeth Cranch, Diary, September 12-14, 1786, Elizabeth Cranch Norton diaries, 1781-1811, Ms. N-599, MHS.
[63] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, April 7, 1823, October 16, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[64] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, September 18 & 25, 1826, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[65] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, March, 1824, Papers, 1820-1897, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A, HML.
[66] Anna Cabot Lowell, March 6, 1825, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 MHS.

> I have just read Modern Society and am delighted with it. What a perfect and consistant [sic] character Matlida is, but I fear, Anne, neither of us will be like her & will certainly enjoy the delights of single blessedness if we wait to be sought out by Sir Alfreds in every day life. I like Mr. Grant vastly and think I should be much more apt to look upon him approvingly It is very odd. I had just finished reading *Lady of the Lake* when I received your note mentioning your having read it.[67]

To Maria, novels not only offered sympathetic characters, but also ones that she could compare with her absent friend. Though they were no longer occupying the same social space, they could continue to jointly know the characters in the novels that they read. Sharing her fondness for Matilda or Mr. Grant with Anne was a way to continue the joint reading practice that they had almost certainly shared while Anne was in Charleston. Maria, too, draws attention to the coincidence of having read Lady of the Lake just as Anne's note mentioning it arrived. Their shared literary world spanned the Atlantic and allowed them to continue a close friendship.

Girls also explicitly referenced novels for their moral or didactic content. In 1808, Rebecca Ralston wrote to Victorine du Pont, "I have just finished a very good novel called 'Rosella' - It points out very forcibly the impropriety of indulging in Romantic flights - The effects are shown on the mother of the heroine."[68] Twelve-year-old Anna Cabot Lowell, writing in Boston over a decade later, noted that she had read *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* and, though "it was written for the benefit of those in the lower ranks of life…it contains many useful hints, on neatness, industry economy & Good management."[69] *Glenburnie*'s author Elizabeth Hamilton might have been surprised that her satirical novel had been so instructive. Even *The Young Lady's Friend* referenced novels' didactic power, instructing young women to look to Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* or Scott's *The Antiquary* to see the ill

[67] Maria Lance to Anne Jemima Clough, October 7, 1837, Anne Jemima Clough, 1820-1892, Letters, 1833-1845, (0107.00) SCHS.
[68] Rebecca Ralston to Victorine du Pont, October 11, 1808, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.
[69] Anna Cabot Lowell, November 3, 1820, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 MHS.

effects that could be brought about by sneering at others.[70] Whether engaging with characters or rejecting their models, young women who reveled in novel reading were formulating their own identities against them.

However, novel reading was not without its detractors. Mary Robie, in Halifax exile with her loyalist family, was not convinced by a visitor who argued that novels were, "very injurious to young people." Rather, she commented in her diary, "they are replete with incidents never to be met with in real life…but as those who read them know that how then can it do them any injury."[71] Sophie du Pont and her sisters displayed some vacillation on the topic of the propriety of novels. While each sister mentioned reading and enjoying novels, the stories were approached with some caution. Just before her twenty-second birthday, Sophie du Pont confided in her diary, "I am glad to find that novels have not that influence on my thoughts & feelings they once had – I can take them up or lay them down like any other recreation."[72] Sophie's relief at being less moved by novels echoed critics who deemed novels overly enthralling and seductive, particularly to young minds. Eleuthera also questioned the intellectual value of novel reading. When teased by her sister that, if engaged, she and her suitor might have to both take daily lessons, Eleuthera went on to suggest that it would certainly have been better for her cousin Julia "had she followed this plan instead of reading nothing but novels for two years past."[73] Several years before, while at Mrs. Hughs' school, Eleuthera wrote to Victorine to reassure her that she, "need not be the least afraid of Mrs Hughs making us read novels for the books she expects are on their way… we shall then

[70] Farrar, The Young Lady's Friend, 275-75.
[71] Mary Robie, May 21, 1783, Mary Robie Sewall diary, May-October 1783, Ms. N-804, MHS.
[72] Sophie du Pont, Diary, September 13, 1882, W9-40379, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[73] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, February 12, 1824, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

read History."[74] Eleuthera's message was clear; serious studies could not be replaced with novel reading. Mary Kelley's Gleaners' reading circle rejected novels outright. While fiction might entertain, novels did not add to the intellectual project that the Gleaners' undertook. Fiction cultivated the affections, while more steady reading could cultivate reason. [75]

Of all the goods that circulated through young women's hands in early America, novels were possibly the most controversial and polarizing. While some argued that novels, and fiction more generally, were excellent pedagogical tools that encouraged young women to read and that offered them models for life, others argued just as strenuously that novels were inherently corrosive. Girls did not stand, however, outside this debate. They discussed novels and their value with family and friends, and pondered them in letters and diaries. Novels had a physical presence; they passed from hand to hand, girls borrowed from libraries and each other, copied down passages to be preserved, and consciously emulated the characters that they admired. Whether categorically rejecting novels or reading them enthusiastically, young women's participation in the world of novels and reading, both discursive and material, formed an essential piece of their formal education.

"So good an account of my school": Material spaces of education in early America

In an 1829 letter to her school friend, Eleuthera du Pont, twenty-year-old Sophia Cheves wrote about her efforts to school her young sister and cousin. "I am afraid I can not," she wrote,

> Give so good an account of my school as you do of yours…The routine of our school is pretty regular…I hear them their lessons, make them read and cipher, give them a little scolding, then a piece of ginger bread, and then send

[74] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 1, 1821 WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[75] Kelley, "'The Need of Their Genius,'" 15-16.

> them to play. In the afternoon I make them sew, give them a little more scolding, and get out of their way as soon as I can.[76]

Sophia's informal schooling of her younger sister and cousin represents a significant way in which young women were both educated and were educators. Especially before the rapid proliferation of female academies and seminaries, but regularly for years after, many young women received the majority of their education at home. That education could be overseen by a governess, schoolmaster or mistress, or even a parents or older siblings. The lessons could be informally offered, or strictly regimented, and could involve a host of academic disciplines, domestic tasks, or a combination thereof. In such schools, the material world of the home and that of the school collided.

Young women acting as students and teachers at home was only one material space in which education took place. Between 1770 and 1850, a young woman's formal education could take place in one or several of many spaces. Girls attended boarding schools, went to day schools while living at home or with relatives or friends, and took lessons from older sisters, mothers, or cousins. Their period of study could be long or short, formally organized or comprised of impromptu lessons here and there. In spite of the range of possible spaces of schooling that young women experienced, they do group into several rough categories. I will begin by considering the categories of school space and place, as they were experienced by young women, along with the major material features of those educations. I will then consider the unique material cultures of boarding school and of home school, and the ways in which these particular surroundings influenced young women's fashioning of adult identities.

Sometimes schooling took place without a girl's departure from home. As in the case of Sophia Cheves' school plan for her young family members, some girls and young women

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[76] Sophia L. Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, April 10, 1829, In Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874, Family papers, 1819-April 1861, (1167.03.01) SCHS.

conducted all or most of their formal education at home under the guidance of an older relative or teacher. The schoolmistress could be, like Sophia, minimally engaged in pedagogy, focused more on occupying her small charges. However, the school could also be quite rigorous. Though Eleuthera du Pont, like all of her sisters, had gone away to school in her early teens, she was still completing lessons under the direction of her sister, Victorine, when she was seventeen. In a letter to Meta Lammot, Eleuthera recounted a teasing conversation she had had with her sister-schoolmistress. "Sister," she wrote,

> made us laugh a great deal this morning by declaring that she would make me go on with my regular lessons till after I was twenty. this as you may suppose I made no objections – but she added that if I was engaged before then she would make my intended read out to us…I proposed as a much better plan that she should take him as a scholar, and that thus we should improve our minds a great deal more than is usually the case at such times.[77]

What is remarkable, other perhaps than the image Eleuthera and her imagined fiancé taking lessons from Victorine, is the relative comfort that Eleuthera had with the idea that she would be taking regular lessons at home until she was twenty. However, comfort with home-based scholasticism varied, even within families.

In an 1828 letter to her brother Henry, away at school, eighteen-year-old Sophie du Pont lamented, "I have no room of my own this winter…I don't like to bring my books and papers out and begin to study before the family, because I am laughed at and discouraged (mind, this is entre nous)."[78] Far from Eleuthera's relaxed attitude about her lessons from Victorine, Sophie's letter to Henry displays some distress about her independent scholarly pursuits. There could be several reasons for such a disparity within one household. Without question the du Pont family encouraged the children, male and female, to pursue their education. All the du Pont children were sent away to boarding schools for at least a quarter.

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[77] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, February 12, 1824, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[78] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, January 10, 1828, WMSS Group 9, HML.

Their surviving correspondence and library underlines their support and encouragement for witty and well-read daughters as well as sons. However, Sophie's family often characterized her as serious and studious, in comparison to her siblings. Her expression of dismay at lacking a room of her own, where she could pursue intellectual pursuits in private, may have stemmed from fears of being teased for studiousness. Nevertheless, she, like Eleuthera laid out plans for formal study of mathematics, languages, and literature that lasted well beyond her short time at boarding school.[79]

That the du Ponts conducted much of their formal schooling at home was hardly uncommon. Harriet Manigault and her sisters did not go to school, when they lived in Philadelphia or while in the country, but rather were educated by their mother and grandmother at home. The Gleaners, a circle of Boston girls studied by Mary Kelley, would have either attended one of the city's female academies or had their advanced formal education supervised at home.[80] Many other young women had a hybrid educational experience, conducting some lessons at home while attending day schools for others.

Anne Everett's schooling, during her girlhood in Boston in the 1830s, exemplifies the day-school experience of urban girls in the nineteenth century. She and her younger sister Charlotte attended Mrs. Dwight's school for most of their lessons. Her diaries of the period are filled with stories of her daily school routine. Rainy days, for instance, meant bringing their dinner from home and eating (and game playing) along with the other girls who stayed.[81] In 1835, when Anne was twelve, Mrs. Dwight's school moved to a larger building.

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[79] In *Learning to Stand and Speak*, Mary Kelley also highlights the danger that young women faced in claiming the same level of education as a man. They could be derided as 'bluestockings' and deemed unfeminine. Sophie's angst about being seen to study and teased for it could also have stemmed from worry about the bluestocking label. Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 99.
[80] Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 12; Kelley, "'The Need of Their Genius,'" 8.
[81] Anne Gorham Everett, May 6, 1835, August 7, 1835, Diaries, Ms. N-1201, MHS.

"The scholars," Anne noted, "will carry their desks and books home, and keep them during the vacation," only returning them once the new schoolroom was ready.[82] An entry a month later confirmed that the new building was ready as Anne wrote that she liked "the new school house very well."[83] Later that year, she noted that she and Charlotte were "to learn Latin at school, instead of at home." While the reasons for the shift could have encompassed any number of shifts within the home schooling environment, it is also likely that it was facilitated by the expansion of Mrs. Dwight's school, since Anne noted a new botany class only a few days later.[84] Day school was, for Anne and girls like her, a sort of halfway point between home and boarding schools. Day schools introduced girls to a small range of 'school goods' – items that were theirs to use, but not fully their possessions. The schools changed their material routines, as Anne and her sister brought a packed lunch to school and, unusually, took home their desks and books over a summer holiday. These school materials occupied a different category than the girls' own possessions. While away from home and at school, girls' were faced with different material rules which occasionally led to friction, nowhere more obvious than when girls were boarding students.

Without question, one of the largest influences on many early American young women's self fashioning, was her experience as a pupil at a boarding school. Girls were sent away from home for school for academic reasons and social ones. Many parents sent daughters to boarding schools that would train them to be elegant gentlewomen. Along reading, writing, and refinement, though, girls also formulated exceptionally close social relationships with their fellow students.[85] In a letter to her cousin Eleuthera, going to school

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[82] Anne Gorham Everett, Diary, June 9, 1835, Diaries, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[83] Anne Gorham Everett, Diary, July 6, 1835, Diaries, Ms. N-1201, MHS.
[84] Anne Gorham Everett, Diary, September 21, 1835, Diaries, Ms. N-1201, MHS.; Botany lessons are noted on September 30, 1835.
[85] Kilbride, *American Aristocracy*, 65.

for the first time, Julia du Pont wrote that while at school, "you will form friends whom will be agreeable to you throughout life; rise in your classes and finally be accomplished."[86] In Julia's estimation, school was first a place for friends, then study, and finally the chance to be an accomplished young lady. Boarding schools created new opportunities for self-fashioning, as the girls involved, like Julia, sought social and academic growth and an accomplished adult identity and social network. Unsurprisingly, many young women at school wrote, in diaries and letters home, about the unexpected shifts in their material worlds that boarding schools provoked.

In a letter home to her parents from school in Massachusetts, Eliza Southgate chronicled her new boarding school. "We get up," she wrote, "early in the morning and make our beds and sweep the chamber, it is a chamber about as large as our kitchen chamber, and a little better finished. There's 4 beds in the chamber, and two persons in each bed, we have chocolate for breakfast and supper."[87] In her description of a day at school, Eliza focused on material spaces and differences. Chocolate twice a day, shared rooms, and early morning sweeping marked her boarding school place as fundamentally different than her home. In an 1821 letter to her sister Victorine, Eleuthera du point wrote "I should be very glad if you could send me one of the little trunks as Mrs Hughs does not allow us to take our books out of the school room."[88] Eleuthera asked for more things to be sent from home, because she was facing material constraints that were atypical. Since she called attention to the spatial limit placed on books at home, presumably she had grown used to being able to take books throughout the house when at Eleutherian Mills.

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[86] Julia du Pont to Eleuthera du Pont, January 9, 1821, Julia Sophie Angelique du Pont Shulbrick Papers, Winterthur Manuscripts Group 5:C, HML.
[87] Eliza Southgate, [May 12, 1797] *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago,* 4-5.
[88] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 1, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

Girls faced other material struggles while at school. Some, like Eliza Southgate were called upon to share rooms or beds with their schoolfellows, but felt it a privation. For girls unused to sharing, the pressures of not having a room by themselves marked boarding school as a very different space. Eliza Southgate wrote to her mother in 1797 missing the material comforts of home. "I never," she wrote, "missed our closet so much, and above all things our cheese and Butter which we have but very little of." It was also a struggle to have one's own things in the shared environment of boarding school.

Eleuthera du Pont wrote home again and again in frustration about the lack of privacy. In April, 1821, fourteen-year-old Eleuthera wrote a long letter to Victorine to relate "the fatal catastrophe of…[her] Pot of Sweetmeats." She recounted the tale of woe; how she had shared the sweetmeats sent from home with her friends, that there had been half a jar remaining and placed in the pantry for safekeeping. But upon her return, the jar was empty. "The Jar," she concluded, "was not a great treat to me as I only tasted them once."[89] The next day, she wrote a letter to her sister Sophie complaining that her schoolmates, each given their own garden plot, had raided hers for crocuses. Later that month, though, she was triumphant when she'd acquired the garden plot of one of her fellow students.[90] Clearly it was a very different environment than her home, where privacy and control over one's one things was more attainable.

The most controversial things at Eleuthera's school, though, might not have been possessions at all, but rather tickets. As was the case with many schools – even the schools that Victorine held at Eleutherian Mills for her younger siblings, and the Sunday schools that they hosted – tickets were given out as premiums for academic or personal performance.

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[89] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 7, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[90] Eleuthera du Pont to Sophie du Pont, April 8, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML; Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 24, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

Tickets were collected and, typically, could be redeemed for prizes, or used to rank pupils. Early in her school career, Eleuthera wrote to sister Sophie to explain the rules. "The scholars," she explained, "vote for the person they think the most amiable and the one who has most votes receives a medal…the person who has the most tickets receives the next prize."[91] Sophia Cheves, in a chatty letter to Eleuthera the following year, detailed all of the prizes to be given out during examination season and which of their school friends might be expected to earn them.[92] Tickets in the boarding school, were of major social as well as academic significance. So, in May 1821, when Eleuthera witnessed Miss Griffith, a student, give Helen, a fellow student, some of her own tickets to allow her to win first place, Eleuthera was extremely disapproving. In a letter to her sister, she wrote that when, "one of the girls asked me whether I thought it was wrong to borrow tickets," she had quite seriously replied that, "it was very wrong."[93] The school ticket system gave academic and behavioral success a material form. The tickets were intimately linked to personal qualities, and thus their commodification in trade, or gift, or loan was suspect. Trading tickets to win a premium, whether in rhetoric or personal conduct, was a violation of Eleuthera's conception of appropriate school behavior.

Taken in one light, Eleuthera's trials seem petty and insignificant, the schoolroom drama of a fourteen-year-old and her peers. Her garden squabbles or ticket policing seem like the protestations of a child. I argue, though, that these moments in the lives of young women were moments in which they were crafting adult social selves. Their desire to be granted the

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[91] Eleuthera du Pont to Sophie du Pont, February 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[92] "We are now very near what is, for us the most important period of the year –The examination, which will take place next week. This year, there are, I believe, fifteen premiums; six or eight, of which, are medals. Three of them are for writing, one, of gold, for the best, which the girls in general allot to Rebecca White, Anne K [?] or Ceclia Carpentier. another, of silver which is I suppose for the second class, and a third, for greatest improvement." Sophia Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, November 27, 1822.
[93] Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, May 5, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

privilege of controlling one's own space and things, to decide when to share and when to withhold, and the appropriate usage of things was a piece of their developing identity. Eleuthera and her friends were, in the unfamiliar space of the boarding school, allowed to practice being away from family and negotiating their own selves.

Things could also make them feel at home. The letter home, begging for items, is very legible to the modern audience. Any child away at summer camp, might make similar requests. And as with comtemporary summer campers, eager for Mallowmars, things girls received while at boarding schools filled several parallel roles. The sending fulfilled needs, but it also and allowed them to claim an identity based on what was home. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the du Pont girls, when they were away at school, almost constantly wrote home to ask for flowers. Though the blossoms were decorative, they also served to mark the receiver in particular ways. Flowers, sent to Philadelphia from rural Delaware, were a sign of pastorality – that the du Pont girls lived in a beautiful natural setting. They carried with them the cachet of being able to command the transport of their requests over distance. Items that they received at school also allowed them the luxury to have things whenever they liked. Eleuthera frequently expressed gratitude for things sent to her, including apples and barley, that were hers and hers alone. The items that they received could be kept to themselves, or shared and savored; especially significant in the more controlled material space of the boarding school.[94]

Other girls, away at boarding schools, used the sending and receiving of things in similar ways. Helen Beal, while away at school in Roxbury, Massachusetts, noted several times the receipt of fruit from her family's home in Kingston. In an 1843 diary entry, Helen

[94] Here, I mean to suggest, not that the material world of the boarding school was harsh or impoverished. Merely that they had less material control over things than they did at their own homes.

notes the, "beautiful pears and peaches which grew in our own garden," that she received at school.[95] She also noted that, when her sister Judith visited, she "brought us…cloaks and a basket of pears and one of cake also, which is very nice."[96] Helen was connected to home and family by her school visitors, and especially the physical reminders of home that they gave her. Whether pears or peonies, the items sent to young women away at school were imbued with significant social meaning.[97]

"The Mechanism of a Pudding": Educational Pursuits, Domestic Constraints

When Judith Sargent Murray advocated for the equality of the sexes in a 1790 essay, she condemned a world in which women were, "allowed no other ideas, than those which are suggested by the mechanism of a pudding, or the sewing of the seams of a garment."[98] Murray insisted that women were being prevented from intellectual accomplishment by things. That objects, of domesticity and ornament, was preventing the development of girls into rational intellectual adults. "We have," she argued, "from our early youth been adorned with ribbons and other gewgaws…being taught that the ornamentation of our exterior ought to be the principal object of our attention"[99] Murray argued that ornamentation of the exterior could only lead to impoverishing the interior, the working mind.

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[95] Helen Beal, September 13, 1843, Helen Beal Hall diaries, 1843-1844, Ms. N-1818, MHS. Helen also notes that, upon their return to school in December, 1843, they "brought some apples from home." The sending of fruit was also important to the du Pont girls who received barrels of apples, and noted when they were empty. See Eleuthera du Pont to Sophie Dalmas du Pont, April 29, 1821, WMSS Group 6:A, HML. "Mon baril de Pommes est fini depuis samedi."

[96] Helen Beal, Diary, October 7, 1843, Ms. N-1818, MHS.

[97] Sending was not always well received. In April 1821, Eleuthera wrote home to Victorine, saying "I still have a great many raisins and I think I will not want any more." Eleuthera du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, April 1, 1821, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.

[98] Murray, *Selected Writings,* 7.

[99] Murray, *Selected Writings*, 7.

Things only worsen, argued Murray, as girls age. She compares a brother and sister, arguing that while the boy's mind is cultivated and "led by the hand through all the flowery paths of science," a girl must be "wholly domesticated."[100] Sophie du Pont and Caroline Healey would have agreed with her. In an 1831 letter to her brother Henry, Sophie wrote, "I should be too happy, girl as I am, if I had the opportunities you have…I should find much pleasure in the very studies you seem to despise."[101] Sophie frequently mused, in letters and diaries, about how much she would like to pursue further study. Caroline Healey lamented, "I wish that a woman might enjoy – the advantages of a college education, of the severe and studious training, which is lavished upon our young men…At fifteen—a woman's education—in common parlance—is finished—at twenty five—a man's—just begun."[102] Both Sophie and Caroline lamented the educational disparity that existed between men and women. Caroline even makes an explicit argument about age, that young women are cut off from learning much earlier than their male counterparts.

While Murray argued that girls could be expected to master domestic skills early, then move on to more intellectual pursuits without sparing domestic life any further thought, Caroline Healey found her intellectual life and desires constantly hobbled by the material world of domesticity.[103] She frequently wrote about the conflict she felt between her own reading and writing and domestic duties expected of her. When her mother asked for help sewing nightcaps, one afternoon in 1836, Fourteen-year-old Caroline wrote that she could not refuse. "So," she wrote, "throwing down chateaubriand I began to 'ply the polished shaft' thinking that if I were not employing my time for the best possible advantage, I

[100] Murray, *Selected Writings*, 6.
[101] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, December 5, 1831, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[102] Caroline Wells Healey, [July 7, 1839] *Selected Journal,* 21.
[103] "I answer," wrote Murray, "that every requisite in female economy is easily attained…that when once attained, they require no further *mental attention*." Murray, *Selected Writings*, 7.

was…pleasing mama. But the feeling of satisfaction would not come."[104] When overjoyed that her father had purchased a share in the Boston Library, Caroline reported that her mother, "is sorry, she says she 'shall see nothing but books now and there are fitter occupations for Caroline in this large family.'"[105] It was not merely the domestic routine that Caroline found objectionable. It was the expectation that, regardless of her intellectual capacity, she was first and foremost bound by the material constraints of femininity and gendered responsibility. "I am," she stormed, "and always have been—physician and surgeon—for the family—why cannot I go to the medical school at Paris-- and come forth like the accomplished Mrs. Y. who delights the public with her advertisement as an unrivaled 'sage-femme'?"[106] To Caroline, her every thought and movement was circumscribed by the material world of femininity. There was always another pudding to make or hem to sew.

Worse, though, she felt as though her intellectual desires made her the target for even more domestic responsibility. She was in frequent conflict with her mother throughout her young adult life. When she was seventeen, she confided to her diary that she believed that, "if I were out shopping—flirting—parading and gossiping all day, she would not complain—but—so long as I devote my time to books and my pen – why 'there are a thousand things about the house which I might do—what would be more useful.'"[107] Caroline equates the kind of femininity that would meet her mother's approval in material terms –of shopping and parading - as well as behavioral ones. If she were the flirting, shopping, gossiping daughter, she believed, she would not be forced into domestic duties. Obviously, this is only Caroline's perspective. We have no record of how Mrs. Healey responded or felt about her daughter.

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[104] Caroline Wells Healey, [March 21, 1836], *Selected Journal,* 6.
[105] Caroline Wells Healey, [November 15, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 16.
[106] Caroline Wells Healey, [July 27, 1839], *Selected Journal,* 24.
[107] Caroline Wells Healey, [October 2, 1839], *Selected Journal,* 27-28.

However, it is easy to imagine that Caroline's refusal to participate in more stereotypically feminine behavior could lead her parents to enforce a more domestic role.

Her mother's rebukes of her intellectual endeavors were just as material. At her mother's bedside one morning in 1838, Caroline noted in her diary, she was holding a stack of blank books for her writing. "She enquired," Caroline continued, "what they were –I told her, and mentioned the price –'All that you will ever write in them will not be worth the money. was her reply."[108] Caroline's mother's cutting response, was made particularly hurtful in its calculation of her intellectual value in terms of cold cash. To her mother, her intellectual desires were fruitless and would never even warrant the investment she made in paper and ink.

Perhaps Caroline's most succinct summation of the conflict she felt between her education and her domestic duties came in the summer of 1838. "Was obliged," she wrote, "to leave my desk again, to make blanc-mange for M.A [her sister Marianne]. – I wish I was a man, in that case I might hope to make something of myself –but being a woman I never can."[109] To Caroline there was no middle ground. She was doomed to make blanc-mange. To sew nightcaps. Her femininity trapped her within the material world of the domestic, from which it was impossible to make anything at all of herself. Education and intellectual work, she believed, would always be subjugated by the material world of femininity. Nevertheless, she did go on to prove herself wrong, becoming a feminist and Transcendentalist lecturer and author.

Whether their intellectual pursuits were endorsed or censured by family, friends, and society, young women experienced the intersection of education and the material world in a host of ways. Some young women eagerly read novels, mastered scientific apparatuses and

[108] Caroline Wells Healey, [August 23, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 12.
[109] Caroline Wells Healey, [June 25, 1838], *Selected Journal, 9*.

yearned to be trusted with the housekeeping. Others used the expectation that they create ornamental art as an outlet to render botanical figures on worktables or map the continents of the world in silk and ink. In all of these endeavors, though, young women were using the material spheres of their education – objects, both real and imagined, places, and spaces – in the process of creating an adult identity.

In the next chapter, as I explore the intersection of the domestic and the material world in the lives of young woman, I call the reader's attention to the very real ways in which contradictions were standard in the lived experiences of young women. Though the mind-body divide suggests that formal education should have little to do with silken embroidery and the sharing of scandalous novels, these objects and things like them were critical to the educations of early American girls. Remember too, that for each material circumstance, there is a spectrum of response. While Caroline Healey felt her education oppressed and restricted by the material culture of the home, as I will discuss in the following chapter, Anna Cabot Lowell responded with pride and pleasure at her domestic mastery. It is material experiences *as well as* the way that young women related to them, that is the heart of this project.

Chapter 5

"'We will take care that the fires should burn, & the house should not.' Domestic material culture of young women.

In an 1832 letter, Sophie du Pont teasingly responded to her traveling sister Victorine's housekeeping reminders. "We will," Sophie assured her, "take care that the fires should burn, & the house should not."[1] Sophie's joke, certainly in keeping with the lively correspondence the du Ponts shared, illuminates the domestic world of Eleutherian Mills. Victorine's departure from Eleutherian Mills, where she had charge of the house and its daily operations, left her younger sisters in charge. Her absence necessitated extensive instructions and reminders about the many domestic matters left in Sophie and Eleuthera's care. It is important to note, though, that when the letter was written Sophie was twenty-one and Eleuthera, twenty-five. Victorine's remonstrances and Sophie's snarky response remind the reader that, despite being women in their twenties, the household structure of Eleutherian Mills meant that Eleuthera and Sophie were still subordinate members of their household. Though many of her peers were in charge of their own homes, Sophie was very much not a housekeeper.

In fact, in her letters and diaries, Sophie made frequent references to her dislike of household work and the duties of a housekeeper. Yet her teasing tone reminds Victorine that she and Eleuthera can, in all probability, remember to keep the home fires burning in their grates. Along with the domestic hierarchy displayed in Sophie's joke, lies a deeper concern that must have preoccupied the du Ponts. Their tranquil domestic setting was, in some regards, far from tranquil. Sophie joked about fire, despite the largely unspoken but omnipresent knowledge that their home sat surrounded by an active gunpowder works. The

[1] Sophie du Pont to Victorine du Pont Bauduy, January 26, 1832, Winterthur Manuscripts Group 9, Hagley Museum and Library (hereafter HML).

danger of fire, of calamitous, house-shaking explosion, was a very real one. Though most late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century domestic spaces were less physically imperiled, the material world of domesticity often proved an explosive flashpoint for young women's conflicted feelings about their place, class, and gender. Domestic tasks and spaces inflected the du Pont correspondence, as well as the letters and lives of other early American young women.

The material world of the home and the domestic was at the heart of young women's developing adult selves. Young women learned domestic skills, both in their classrooms and at home. Their days were spent to varying degrees, in domestic pursuits. Most were preparing for life as an adult woman, in charge of a domestic world. Just as many of the educational paths for young women were, centrally, geared toward making them ready to be good wives, mothers, and reasonable creatures, so too was domestic preparation for the future. As within the material world of education, though, responses varied. Some approached the material cultures of domesticity with a tongue-in-cheek irreverence. Others, as in the case of Caroline Healey, felt imprisoned and limited by a domestic world that enclosed them. Still others reveled in the acquisition and mastery of the material world of the home, particularly when they perceived their domestic duties as a venue in which they held positions of authority and power. Their homes and domestic material culture shaped their identities as children and their responses to it spoke to the adult women that they were becoming.

Before moving to young women's domestic material life and surroundings, I will first discuss the broad contours of historical scholarship on women and their domestic lives, as well as historical and object-driven analysis on domestic spaces and things. Following this brief historiographical discussion, I will move on to discuss the domestic skills, tasks, and spaces that marked the lives of young women, from girlhood to womanhood. These sections

will provide context for four avenues of domestic research: the domestic caricatures of Sophie du Pont, the discourse of the 'housekeeper' in young women's daily lives, marriage and its domestic responsibilities, and displacement from home, both as a space and as a concept. Each of these four avenues will offer a particular view of what domestic material and spaces meant and how young women used them to articulate - to themselves, their families, or their communities – an adult female identity.

Separate spheres and 'True Women': Women, Domesticity, and Domestic Spaces

As with scholarship on female education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the historiography of women and domesticity in early America is vast. In particular, there has been a vigorous scholarly debate for nearly fifty years about the nature of the nineteenth-century ideology of "separate spheres," a gendered understanding of the world that posited women's domestic world of home and family sharply separated from and contrasting with men's public worlds of politics and production or "work." Historian Linda Kerber calls the "sphere" as a way of thinking about women and their world, as a trope upon which historians have come to rely. Over time scholars have described and interpreted women's domestic sphere, its boundaries, its meaning for women, and its permeability in different ways.[2]

Most of the early feminist scholarship was dominated by a debate over whether nineteenth-century women's ostensible relegation to a separate domestic sphere was oppressive or liberating. Barbara Welter wrote about the "Cult of True Womanhood," in 1966 in direct response to the publication of the *Feminine Mystique*. Like Friedan argued for women in the mid-twentieth century, Welter found the nineteenth-century domestic sphere was also a prison in which women were trapped and forced to adhere to impossible standards

[2] Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75, no.1 (June 1988), 10

of the "cult."[3] In the 1970s, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Nancy Cott suggested alternate interpretations of separate spheres, especially the meaning of domesticity for women. Smith-Rosenberg proposed that domesticity bound women together in an intense, intimate, and supportive female world. Rather than a prison, she argued that women lived within "a world bounded by home, church, and the institution of visiting," that was almost exclusively female. Cott examined the ways that women's shared domestic life and work, and the separation between the female world of the home and non-female world beyond, created a sense of shared womanhood that was both nurturing and constrictive. It was this shared female community – much of it built and maintained around the material spaces and responsibilities of the home, she argued, that made feminism possible.[4]

In the 1980s and 1990s, Historians turned their attention to the causes, function, and consequences of the "separate spheres" as an ideology. Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton examined the late eighteenth-century roots of the phenomenon, and argued for a political origin, suggesting that the Revolution offered new political possibilities for freedom yet at the same time required the codification of the separate spheres ideology to limit women's own independence. Young women, for instance, needed to be educated, not for their own benefit but for their future role as mothers of the republic. Jeanne Boydston argued for the ideology's economic basis, suggesting that, in the construction of nineteenth-century separate spheres that accompanied industrialization, work was conceived as a place of danger, for men, and home was a sanctuary over which women presided. This led to a glorification of wifehood and motherhood, and, in turn, more fully feminized the domestic sphere. Moreover, domestic

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[3] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, XVIII, (1966), 151; Kerber, "Separate Spheres," 11

[4] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1975), 10, 16; Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 63-100, Kerber, "Separate Spheres," 15-16.

work, Boydston argued, began to be constructed not as work, but the *natural* role of women. Housework, in the period, was "pastoralized," viewed as a natural feminine role in the home, decidedly distinct from the masculine world of "work [5]

While the separation of the world of the home, along with its material responsibilities, from the outside world and the material surroundings of young women are both central questions, in this chapter and in my overall project, I find the separate spheres paradigm not particularly helpful. I, like historian Amanda Vickery, question the utility of the separate spheres ideology, particularly since the concept of women's association with home, domestic duties, and childrearing is so very widely applicable.[6] Focus on both the domestic world as a strictly female environment and the bounding of women to domestic, private spaces also obscures the tremendous range of lived experiences.[7]

Nonetheless, however separated or permeable the boundaries separating the world of the home from the outside, young women incorporated domestic material objects, spaces, and responsibilities into their own material self-fashioning. In this dissertation, I am focused on

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[5] Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Ch. 7. See also *American Literature* 70 no.3 No More Separate Spheres! (September 1998). Archaeologist Deborah L. Rotman uses archaeological evidence from Deerfield, Massachusetts to suggest a move beyond the dichotomy of domestic and not domestic life, Rotman, "Separate Spheres? Beyond the Dichotomies of Domesticity," *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 4 (August 2006): 666-674. Separate spheres has also shaped historical inquiry. For instance, Amanda Vickery, in her work on Georgian domesticity, highlights the degree to which separate spheres analysis has led to very little study on men in their domestic environments, creating a major gap in the scholarly literature. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 52.

[6] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 289-92, 7.

[7] Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Marilyn Francus, . *Monstrous Motherhood: 18th-century culture and the ideology of domesticity*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 5-6.

the material aspects of the domestic world of young women and their responses to it, in writing and sketching and enacting their own versions of domesticity. For some it was felt as a prison, while for others it was a passionate occupation; some were snarky, some were absorbed, but the range of responses went into developing an adult identity. Moreover, glossing domesticity with femininity obscures all gradation. Age, family position, inclinations, talents, and social status all marked the particular type of domesticity a young woman enacted. While Richard Bushman, in his work on the growth of refinement in early America, highlights the increasing separation of work and home, for many young women home and work were increasingly intertwined. The du Pont girls, for instance, spent their young adulthood at home in the middle of a gunpowder works. Amy Boyce Osaki highlights this overlapping of the 'separate' spheres, pointing out that Eleuthera du Pont (and her sisters) sewed for their home, but despite their relatively genteel identity, also spent a large portion of their time sewing sacks, labels, and other pieces essential to the functioning of the mill.[8] Selina Bond, daughter of the first Harvard astronomer, made frequent references to new telescopes, observations, and calculation done by her father and brothers.

Smith-Rosenberg's work on female friendships both excludes the essential and sustaining friendships that young women had with brothers, male cousins, and family friends, *and* glosses over conflicts between women. While many did "accept their mother's world and turn automatically to other women for support," some did not. Some accepted it with reservations, expressed concern about domestic futures, and some rejected it outright. While Smith-Rosenberg imagines a world without mother-daughter hostility or intergenerational conflict, the case of Caroline Healey and her mother belies such rosy imagery.

[8] Amy Boyce Osaki, "A 'Truly Feminine Employment': Sewing and the Early Nineteenth-Century Woman," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vo. 23, No. 4, (1988), 241.

As a concept, "separate spheres" is not a particularly generative way to consider my sources. While domestic material culture – the world of the home with which young women had grown up and that which they anticipated taking up as adults – had a tremendous influence on the self-fashioning that they enacted, as previous chapters have shown, it was only one way that young women crafted selves through things. Their shopping and clothing, social worlds and educational processes also gave them material means by which to articulate, to themselves and their communities, who they intended to be. Significantly, in light of the separate spheres debate, these material cultures were often public, occurring outside of the feminine realm of the home.[9]

Rather than focusing on the distinctiveness of women's sphere or spheres or permeability of the domestic environments inhabited by early American young women, material culture studies offer a more helpful perspective on the symbolic meaning and experience of the domestic world. Margaret Ponsonby, for instance, argues for small-scale qualitative analysis of household inventories to show how homes "were used as arenas of social and cultural behavior and meaning."[10] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Age of Homespun* offers multiple examples of domestic items that embody ideas about the self, as well as social and cultural place. Hannah Barnard's cupboard, for instance, reminds us that the majority of women's inheritances in the period were in the form of household goods. Domestic items, from tools to painted chests, were seen as the possession and purview of women. Object-

[9] Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood*, 5; Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: People, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 441-442; Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," 17.

[10] Margaret Ponsonby, "Ideals, Reality, and Meaning: Homemaking in England in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Design History* 16, no. 3 (2003), 204; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of An American Myth*, (New York: Random House, 2001),141, 111. Ulrich's chapter 5 on a Revolutionary era Niddy-Noddy also analyzes the interlocking political and domestic worlds of young women, also highlighting work and courtship as connected characteristics in the lives of young women.

driven studies like Ulrich's offer a more useful way to think about the material surroundings of the home in early America.

"My sewing never suits": Domestic skills, tasks, and spaces as venues for self-fashioning

As discussed in the previous chapter, Caroline Healey frequently wrote in her diaries about the distress that her domestic responsibilities provoked. She contrasted the opportunities for education available to her male peers with the domestic responsibilities that were assigned to her. Unsurprisingly, then Caroline's response to the domestic education was similarly fraught. In 1838, fifteen-year-old Caroline recorded the details of an altercation with her mother. "I shall," she wrote, "never make an elegant seamstress, I am sure for my sewing never suits mother."[11] In noting that her stitches were too large to please her mother, Caroline commented on her lack of domestic mastery. For young women, learning to sew, clean, cook, or manage a household was often a substantial component of their informal education.[12] Their development of domestic skills, the execution of those tasks, and the spaces in which they were enacted, present a major stage for adolescent self-fashioning. Whether, like Caroline, they lamented their confinement in domestic pastimes that they did not enjoy or seemed pleased by increasing skill or household responsibility, the domestic played a significant role in the adult identity that young women created.

Unfortunately for Caroline, her domestic distress continued later that year. In a September diary entry, she remarked that her mother's "daily life seems to express but one

[11] Caroline Wells Healey, [April 17, 1838], *Selected Journal of Caroline Healey Dall, Volume 1: 1838-1855*. Helen R. Deese, ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2006), 8.

[12] I say informal, though sewing skills and some cooking was taught in formal schools as well. However, my research suggests that most young women mastered the majority of their domestic skills at home, under the guidance of mothers, sisters, aunts, and other older women in their lives.

wish – that I were as fond as housewifery as my sister Ellen. She knows not the depth of the wound she probes."[13] Though she found domesticity confining, her mother's criticism, both overt and implied, was a wound to Caroline. Nevertheless, in reporting the incident to her father, she said defensively that she "considered herself born for a better purpose."[14] Caroline's dilemma seemed to be her alienation from the domestic material world. The work of the household was not for her; it was perennially for someone else. Caroline described herself as born for something higher than the "angel of the house" role forwarded in the domestic ideologies of her time, yet still found herself judged on her failure to master key domestic skills. For Caroline, every stitch was time taken from more valuable intellectual pursuits. Yet even her stitches were found wanting. In contrast, other young women seemed to integrate their domestic learning more smoothly.

In an 1828 diary entry, eighteen-year-old Anna Cabot Lowell described her daily routine. After discussing her more formal academic learning, she wrote,

> Besides these literary occupations I endeavour according to Sister's advice to acquire some knowledge of domestick concerns…I have made many different kinds of pudding & several entirely by myself, & attended to the cooking of vegetables, to the churning of butter & a variety of other like useful trades. I devote an hour & a half to ironing and pleating every Tuesday: my great ambition is to be able to do up muslins beautifully; for this I think really useful. I should like too, to become very expert in cutting out & making gowns, petticoats, inside handkerchiefs &c but I almost despair of accomplishing it.[15]

Anna, like Caroline, drew a distinction between 'literary occupations' and 'domestick concerns.' However, to Anna, both were branches of equally valuable knowledge to be acquired. Her diary entry suggests pride at her domestic accomplishments, especially those she had undertaken without help. The entry also demonstrates her domestic ambitions, tasks

[13] Caroline Wells Healey, [September 1, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 13.
[14] Caroline Wells Healey, [September 1, 1838], *Selected Journal,* 13.
[15] Anna Cabot Lowell, June 2, 1826, Anna Cabot Lowell diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512 Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS).

that she hoped to master because of their usefulness. For Anna, mastery of useful domestic tasks seemed to occupy similar space as her mastery of other academic subjects.

Anna Winslow's education in Boston almost sixty years before was significantly less academically focused. Her time in Boston, staying with family and learning a variety of skills, was marked and measured by her acquisition of domestic skills. When, in the winter of 1772, Anna was afflicted with several sores on the fingers of her right hand, she resolved to use her free left hand to learn to spin flax. "I hope," she wrote to her mother, "to give you ocular demonstration of my proficiency in *this art*, as well as several others."[16] The next day, her letter to her mother reported that she had "paid…respects to Master Holbrook, "her writing master, but that she had "not paid…compliments to Madam Smith," her sewing mistress because of her continuing finger pain. "So," she continued, she planned to "lay [her] hand to the distaff, as the virtuous women did of old."[17] Anna's education was conducted both in the home and outside of it, but she had masters and mistresses for academic and domestic skills alike. She mastered skills in spinning, writing, and needlework that she eagerly hoped to prove to her absent parents.

Along with needlework and general housekeeping, young women also discussed mastering the culinary arts. Just as Anna Lowell boasted of completing puddings, several on her own, thirteen-year-old Anne Everett also wrote about her culinary forays. "Charlotte and I," she noted in an 1835 diary entry, "made a rose cake, which was very good. Though as we did not know how exactly to make them we did not make them quite right."[18] Anne's story illustrates both that she and her sister were allowed to attempt a cake on their own, but also

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[16] Anna Green Winslow, [February 9, 1772] *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 177*1, Alice Morse Earle, ed. (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin, And Co. 1894), 21.
[17] Anna Green Winslow, [February 10, 1772], *Diary*, 22
[18] Anne Gorham Everett, June 18, 1835, Anne Gorham Everett Diaries, 1834-1843, Ms. N-1201, MHS. A later entry in the same year recounts rose cake success.

that they were not specifically prepared to do so. In contrast, the recipes listed in Emeline Moore's diary demonstrate her skill and familiarity with culinary routines. In the same diary she used to chronicle her time at a female seminary, she took notes about readings and jotted down several recipes. One of them, for lemon mince pies was noted.

> Squeeze a large lemon, boil the outside till tender enough to beat to a mass, add to it three large apples chopped, and four ounces of suet, half a pound of currants and four ounces of sugar; put the juice of the lemon and candied fruits as for other pies Make short crust and fill the patty pans as usual.[19]

Emeline's recipe assumes a tremendous amount of culinary knowledge. Since, presumably, the recipe was for personal use and not intended for anyone else, her recipe is mostly a list of ingredients. She notes that the juice of the lemon and candied fruits should be prepared "as for other pies," and includes that a short crust should be made and filled "as usual." Unlike Anne and her sister, who "did not know how exactly" to make their rose cake, Emeline's recipes suggest that she was practiced baker who knew the all the necessary steps.

Whether taking on culinary tasks by themselves, or in groups, food preparation was an essential skill for many early American young women. In 1816, Susan Heath noted in her diary that her day had been taken up by the manufacture of sausages. "Made Sausages," she wrote, "horrible work. but got through mighty easy owing to borrowing Mr Perry's convenient machine."[20] For Susan, the material task of sausage making was onerous but made slightly more bearable by another element of the material world – a borrowed tool. One June day in 1826, Sophie du Pont described a day spent making "Rhasbery preserves" with her

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[19] Emeline Moore, Diary, no date. Diary, 1826-1828. Doc. 1046. Winterthur Museum, Library, & Garden (hereafter WMLG) Her recipe for "A light Cake baked in a cup" is similar. "One and one half pounds of sugar half a pound of butter rubbed into two pounds of flour one glass of wine one of rose water eight eggs and half a nuttmeg [sic]" The recipe is more of a list of ingredients, rather than a detailed outline for how to use them.

[20] Susan Heath, Friday 27th 1816, Susan Heath diaries, 1812-1874. Ms. N-1387. MHS.

friend Polly.[21] Similarly, in an accounting of her daily chores, Mehetable May Dawes recorded that she, "ironed – cured mangoes, or rather pickled em."[22] In her 1814 diary, Harriet Manigault noted that, since it was Tuesday, her sister "Emma was very housewifely employed in making a cake."[23] Young women made food with one another, they prepared household staples, and their social place was defined by food.[24] Food preparation was sometimes necessary household work, other times it was for entertainment. In any case, the physical making and arranging of food was a central piece of young women's domestic education and identity.

Domestic tasks extended far beyond food preparation though. In a letter to her friend Eleuthera, Meta Lammot described just one day as including washing, furniture rubbing, lamp cleaning, table setting and hearth whitening. Betsey Cranch's diaries are filled with domestic tasks. Her entries recount mornings and afternoons of lace making, sewing, refurbishing clothes for herself and for others, and most importantly, knitting.[25] Knitting, particularly during the late eighteenth century, as hand spinning declined, was increasingly

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[21] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, June 29, 1826, du Pont, Sophie Madeleine. Papers, 1818-1892. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9. HML.
[22] Mehetable May Dawes, August 15, 1815, Diary, 1811-1818. Mic 1421. WMLG.
[23] Harriet Manigault, October 10, 1814, *The Diary of Harriet Manigault 1813-1816*, (Colonial Dames of America, Chapter II, Maine Coast Printers, 1976).
[24] There is a large body of scholarship on food and social identity production. See, for instance, Nina M. Scott, "Measuring Ingredients: Food and Domesticity in Mexican *Casta* Paintings," *Gastronomica*, 5, no. 1 (January 2005): 70-80, in which Scott argues that *Casta* paintings feature food and food preparation prominently as markers of social identity. See also Carole L. Counihan, "Female Identity, Food, and Power in Contemporary Florence," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Apr., 1988): 51-62; Barbara Shortridge, "A Food Geography of the Great Plains," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (Oct., 2003): 507-529; Cindy R. Lobel, "'Out to Eat' The Emergence and Evolution of the Restaurant in Nineteenth-Century New York City," *Winterthur Portfolio* 44 no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2010): 193-220.
[25] Elizabeth Cranch, February 6, 1786, March 16, 1786, March 22, 1786, June 22, 1786, September 26, 1786, November 3, 1786, November 4, 1786, Elizabeth Cranch Norton papers, 1783-1822. Ms. N-260. MHS. Entries on handicrafts are usually quite brief, as in the September 26 entry "Sat composedly to knitting," or the November 4 entry, "made me a Bonnet."

central to the domestic world of women.[26] Anna Winslow, writing of her accomplishments to her absent parents, illustrates the domestic shift when she noted that she had spun 30 knots of linning yarn, and (partly) new footed a pair of stockings."[27] In the years that followed Betsey Cranch and others wrote far more often about knitting. Selina Bond wrote, in her 1846 diary, that she had been "keeping very busy knitting this evening," and had "begun a little 'thing,'" though she did not know what it was called, to keep her ears warm.[28] While for Selina knitting was a productive way to keep busy in the evening, Betsey Cranch attached more emotional significance to her work. Betsey, away from her family, described her handiwork linking her to her home. "I have been wishing," she wrote to her mother, "that I could take my knittiry work- & set on one side of you Mama, as Sister is now sitting on the other."[29] For Betsey, the "knittiry" she was doing while away reminded her of both the physical and emotional place of home, in the company of her crafting mother and sister.

Of course, domestic tasks were not always ones that elicited warmth and love of home. Young women's domestic tasks were sometimes frustrating, especially when they involved clothing maintenance. Susan Heath complained frequently in her diaries about their 'monstrous wash' days.[30] Mehetable Dawes noted that she'd been preoccupied with the ironing one day in 1815. "Fretted myself hot," she wrote, "over the ruffle of a shirt cause twas so awful wide – put away all clean clothes."[31] Meta Lammot complained to Eleuthera du

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[26] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Age of Homespun*, 376.
[27] Anna Green Winslow, [February 22, 1772] *Diary*, 34.
[28] Selina Cranch Bond, February 13, 1846, Selina Cranch Bond Diary, 1 Feb. – 21 Sept. 1846. Ms. N-1859 MHS.
[29] Elizabeth Cranch, December 6, 1785, Elizabeth Cranch Norton diaries, 1781-1811. Ms. N-599. MHS..
[30] Susan Heath, Susan Heath diaries, 1812-1874. Ms. N-1387. MHS. For instance, May 6, 1816 "had a monstrous wash." She also makes reference to "uncommon large" washes. Her sister Mary made similar observations in her 1824 diary.
[31] Mehetable May Dawes, August 1, 1815, Diary, WMLG. Mehetable had a better wash day earlier that year, noting in her diary that while it was "washing day to be sure," it had been

Pont that she would "never have done mending," because she had, "piles upon piles to do."[32] The washing, ironing, mending, and maintaining of a family's clothes were among the most repetitive domestic chores expected of young women. Caroline Healey reported in an 1838 diary, "At my needle still, for the last four days, I have worked from 7 in the morning till 10 at night steadily. I have finished three dresses and made 2 drilling skirts…Pretty well for a blue-stocking."[33] Caroline's reports of monotony are punctured by her, possibly sarcastic, reflection that her work is impressive for a 'blue-stocking.' In her construction herself as an intellectual, she cast her productive sewing work as particularly impressive.

However, even in these chores, young women sought out assistance from their social networks. Seventeen-year-old Eleuthera wrote to Meta, "do tell me if your bombazine dress has been washed? For mine is very dirty and Sister will not get it washed till we know whether it will spoil it or not." Four days later, Meta responded, much to Eleuthera's chagrin that she had not yet washed the dress, and couldn't say whether it would wash well or not.[34] Though ironing, washing, mending, and sorting clothes were not necessarily as personally rewarding as more voluntary handicrafts (or the other tasks that absorbed young women's time), they also figured the self-fashioning of young women. Domestic duties divided their days and their responses to them, grudging or otherwise, shaped their perceptions of domestic femininity.

Domestic space perceptibly and imperceptibly shaped the material lives of early American young women. Domestic space in the period was a mixture of public spaces and

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"so pleasant I could not keep in the house so I'm tanned as dark as an Indian…gathered a great variety of flowers." Dawes, May 22, 1815, Diary, WMLG.

[32] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, Thursday afternoon May [no date], Papers, 1820-1897. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 7:A. HML.

[33] Caroline Wells Healey, [October 25, 1838] *Selected Journal*.

[34] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, February 12, 1824, Papers, 1816-1876. Winterthur Manuscripts Group 6:C. HML; Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, February 16, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.

private ones. It required there to be private, family areas and public ones to carry out social obligations.[35] The spaces in which their domestic lives were enacted, as well as their access and control to domestic spaces were all important to young women's formulation of their place. Young women could be frustrated at being denied access to rooms that were typically theirs. Just as Sophie du Pont, in the last chapter, expressed dismay at having no room of her own, twelve-year-old Anna Lowell noted in a diary entry that she had been peevish at her own lack of chamber. "Mr Maury," she wrote, "came yesterday...and lodged here. I showed great ill-humour, at being obliged to sleep with Sister in order to accommodate him." Young Anna went on to suggest that she ought to pray for a way to correct her selfishness.[36] Moreover, despite their gap in ages (Anna was twelve, Sophie seventeen), for both girls, being deprived of a space of their own – one that was typically theirs – was grounds for complaint. Both girls also voiced discomfort with their response. Anna noted in her diary that her response had shown "great ill-humour." Sophie cautioned her brother that her anxiety about being denied her own room and made to study in public space was strictly, "entre nous."[37] While they complained, they felt their possessiveness of personal space in some degree inappropriate.

Other young women commented more generally on the spaces in which they lived. Anna Winslow, for instance, noted in February 1772, that while others told her it was "a bitter cold day," she knew nothing about it, because she spent the day in her "aunt's chamber…with a nice fire," while "sitting in Aunt's easy chair, with a tall three leav'd screen," behind her. Her evocation of coziness contrasts with Sophie du Pont's dismay at her domestic situation. She wrote to her sister Victorine, while their house was undergoing

[35] Margaret Ponsonby, "Ideals, Reality, and Meaning," 201-214.
[36] Anna Cabot Lowell, October 8, 1820, Diary, Ms. N-1512 MHS.
[37] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, January 10, 1828, WMSS Group 9, HML.

repairs, exclaiming, "quel tapage dans ce palais," [what a din in this palace]. While Anna's domestic space provided a welcome contrast from the bitter cold of a Boston winter, the racket of construction disturbed the sanctuary Sophie associated with her home.

Sophie and Anna's contrasting views of a moment in their home both reflect on the comfort or lack thereof domestic spaces. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century witnessed the development of a new conception of domestic comfort. The idea of comfort meant more than a physical state. Anna Winslow was, for instance, physically comfortable in her aunt's house. Maria Lance, however, was expressing more than just physical comfort when she described her home to her absent friend Anne. "I think," she wrote, "you would be quite satisfied if you could see our parlor now for we have at last got the picture hung up & these little additions with new carpet & our curtains nicely fixed up give us quite the air of comfort."[38] Comfort in the home was due to material improvements, but those improvements – carpets, pictures, curtains – were not for physical comfort alone. The "air of comfort" that Maria boasted of was more emotional. It was also essentially linked to consumer goods. Things, particularly those that reflected the taste and feelings of the occupants, could lend domestic comfort to a space. Over the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries an increasing emphasis was put on creating a sense of comfort that untied material comfort with moral, spiritual, and emotional comfort.[39] Housekeeping manuals of the period emphasized the paramount importance of *comfort*, rather than luxury or display, within a domestic setting. And since the housekeeping manuals were directed primarily at women, household comfort

[38] Maria Lance to Anne Jemima Clough, no date, Clough, Anne Jemima, 1820-1892. Letters, 1833-1845. (0107.00) South Carolina Historical Society (hereafter SCHS).
[39] John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 292. Crowley suggests that the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century allowed for the development of this material-emotional comfort as a domestic sense.

was their particular purview.[40] This growth of comfort was especially significant for young women as they established their own ideas of what it meant to keep a comfortable home. As with choices about self-presentation that girls and young women made when they chose bonnets and jackets and dress ruffles, the power they held as arbiters of household comfort gave them authority over their domestic spaces. Deciding what gave an "air of comfort" was another way in which young women articulated developing adult senses of taste and judgment.[41]

While young women's choices about domestic style, fashion, and comfort were physical avenues by which they could articulate subjectivity, sometimes the material space of the household was used for self-fashioning in much broader terms. After her marriage, Georgina Amory Lowell wrote to her cousin Anna, lamenting, "Indeed I can hardly now realize that you are gone from me forever, that though we shall see each other often, we shall nevermore live under the same roof."[42] Marriage had divided the cousins, not geographically, but materially. Georgina and her husband still lived close to Anna and her family. They visited frequently, but they would no longer live in the same place together. Despite the fact that they were still in frequent contact, their separate domestic lives meant that Georgina felt that her cousin was gone forever. More permanent separations had domestic ramifications for young women as well. As I discussed in Chapter 3, when Harriet Manigault's sister Emma

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[40] Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, 261-89. Crowley contrasts the more masculine architecture of comfort in contrast with manuals like Catharine Beecher's.

[41] This is also apparent in discussions of household decorating. When Lucy Parker noted in an 1841 diary that "the united force," of her household (she did not mention the gender balance of the group) painted the kitchen, she closed by observing that it looked "quite stylish." The entry reflects both on Lucy's domestic labor but also her judgment of the decorating choices that were made in the kitchen. Lucy Parker diary, 1841-1843. Ms. N-660. MHS. For more on paint and domestic decorating see Amanda Vickery's work on the Georgian home and room color, Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 171-17.

[42] Georgina Amory Lowell to Anna Cabot Lowell, May 20, 1825, Personal papers, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851. Ms. N-1605. MHS.

died in 1815, she was uncomfortable sleeping alone. Rather than continue to sleep in the room and bed she had shared with her sister, Harriet moved her bed into her mother's room.[43] Domestic spaces, shared or not shared, were markers of intimacy and position. No longer being able to share a roof with a friend or sister represented a massive social change. Young women's physical places in their homes were marked with social significance.

In some cases, home and self were completely intertwined. When Sophia Cheves was making a trip to the country for a wedding, she thought of her friend Eleuthera. "I have scarcely an idea," she wrote, "of home and the country which does not make me think of you…I always took you as my guide in every plan I ever formed for spending my time in the country."[44] To Sophia, Eleuthera du Pont and her family were the country home they inhabited. Going to the country made her think of Eleuthera, her model for all things pastoral. The du Pont sisters encouraged their friends and even each other to think of home and nature at once. When her return from school neared, Victorine du Pont wrote to her sister Evelina reassuring her, "our Brandywine will be decked out in all its rural charms to receive you."[45] Their identities were firmly rooted, not in the urban centers of their education or social lives, but on the banks of the Brandywine. Their cousin Amelia, however, offered a contrast. In an 1810 letter to her cousin Evelina, fourteen-year-old Amelia who lived across the creek from Eleutherian Mills wrote that they spent their time "as agreeably as one can at 30 miles from the city."[46] Though Victorine, Evelina, Eleuthera, and Sophie looked eagerly forward to their return from urban centers to their country home, their overcreek cousins did not feel the

[43] Harriet Manigault, January 21, 1815, February 19, 1815, *Diary*, 79,85.
[44] Sophia L. Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, March 6, 1829, Sophia Lovell Cheves Haskell, Correspondence. In Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874, Family papers, 1819-April 1861. (1167.03.01) SCHS.
[45] Victorine du Pont to Evelina du Pont, May 16, 1813, Bauduy, Victorine du Pont. Papers, 1798-1861, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 6:A. HML.
[46] Amelia du Pont to Evelina du Pont, November 30, 1810, Papers, 1802-1859. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 5:A. HML.

same. Amelia and her sister were much more interested in the urban life that the not-quite-close-enough Philadelphia had to offer.

When young women learned domestic skills, did household work, and crafted domestic spaces, both real and imagined, they were actively preparing themselves for their future lives. Whether as married women, head housekeepers of their own homes, or as unmarried women living with parents or siblings or other family, the vast majority of young women in the period were being prepared for a domestic life. Their own sense of the home and where they fit into it was an essential component of their adolescent self-fashioning. That is not, however, to suggest that they all enjoyed it. Rather, that their responses to domesticity and domestic work reflect on the women that they imagined themselves becoming, as well the women that they did not.

Domesticity and Comedy in Sophie's Delaware

Sophie du Pont had a conflicted relationship with her own domestic future. She loved her home, her place, and her family. She did not, however, appreciate the endless round of domestic tasks that the household entailed. Her sketches of life at home embody this tension. The scenes mark life at home with material details. Rooms are simply furnished, but feature meticulously detailed objects within. The objects are not neatly arranged, but exist in the space of the caricatures as if they had been in use. While comedy is almost always a feature of Sophie's drawings, the comic drawings of domestic work always illustrate housework gone wrong. While other drawings take their comedy from jokes made by their characters, or humorous turns of phrase, the domestic comedy is almost slapstick. Tasks from cleaning to cooking almost always center on domestic failure. In this regard, Sophie du Pont's domestic

caricatures offer, not a comprehensive window into domestic life at Eleutherian Mills, but rather a take on domesticity through the eyes of one, slightly snarky, young woman.[47]

The collection of carics, as Sophie called them, ranged from small pencil sketches to more detailed, hand-colored drawings. Most were created between 1823, when Sophie was thirteen, and her marriage in 1833. The drawings depict Sophie, her family, friends, and neighbors as well as the chemists, engineers and manufacturers employed by her Father's gunpowder business, as they lived and worked at Eleutherian Mills. It is tempting to see the carics merely as the humorous productions of a precocious young woman. Yet a close reading of the small and often silly sketches reveals much more. In sketching comedy from daily life, Sophie du Pont also drew herself and her continuous attempt to negotiate a place within the domestic stage of her coming of age.

Sophie's caricatures offer significant material details about domestic life at Eleutherian Mills. Consider Sophie's *A Scene in Peach Season*. In the scene three young women, according to the caption on the reverse of the drawing Sophie, Victorine and Nora Lammot, devour juicy peaches in a room at Eleutherian Mills. While the domestic scene is spare, as are all of Sophie's drawings, the small included details of furniture, dressing table, and fireplace decoration serve to locate the room as a particular space, rather than an anonymous one. Though the items are not so detailed as to be legible to the outside viewer, to Sophie's audience every item in the room would be entirely familiar, and a part of the home environment. Even the peaches that the girls are eating are a reminder of the place and space of home for the du Ponts. Their extensive gardens provided fruit for the family, and the

[47] Without any doubt, the definitive work on Sophie du Pont's drawing and writing is Betty-Bright Low & Jacqueline Hinsley's *Sophie du Pont: A Young Lady in America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1987). The book, now out of print, combines drawings from three archival collections with the letters and diaries of Sophie and her family and friends. It is, without a doubt, the authoritative voice on Sophie, her life, and her art.

growth, harvest, and consumption of peaches, pears, and strawberries appear frequently in the du Ponts summer letters to one another. Sophie's drawing of herself, her sister and sister-in-law, eating their fill of clingstone peaches also represents the domestic material world of Eleutherian Mills.[48]

Image not available for publication

Figure 9 Sophie du Pont, A Scene in peach season: The pleasure of eating clingstones. Acc # 1818, Hagley Museum & Library.

[48] Note also, that in this caric, home is pictured as a place to devour. It does not display dainty, polite eating, but rather three young women stuffing their mouths full of peaches. The captions indicate that, while Nora struggles to force herself far out the window so as not to drip juice on the floor, Sophie and Victorine are rendered mute by mouths full of peach. While all three were well-mannered young ladies, the rules of decorum, Sophie's drawing suggested, might go literally out the window at home.

Similarly, the rough sketch Sophie drew of her "little blue room," in the old home (one of the few sketches that Sophie may have made and kept after her marriage) was generally spare but highly focused on the material details that made the scene her particular room.[49] The notation on the back of the drawing calls attention to the unseen views from each of the windows – one looked up the creek, the other over the piazza and powder yard – as well as "my little white table with my desk on it," and "I, reading, book in the stand Alexis made me." The details that Sophie chose to include in the picture, books and bookcase and writing instruments, highlight her scholastic interests – particularly those she enjoyed pursuing in a room of her own. Sophie's writing desk merited particular interest in the scene. Given her prolific letter writing, and how much letter connected her to her absent friends and siblings, it is unsurprising that it was an element of domestic material culture that merited specific mention.

[49] There is no date on this image. The guess that it was created after her marriage to cousin S.F. du Pont is based on her notation of the room at "the old home." Since Sophie never lived anywhere except Eleutherian Mills until after her marriage, it seems likely that this is one of the very few sketches she made following her wedding. Its rough, unfinished nature compared to many of the other carics,

Image not available for publication

Figure 10 Sophie du Pont, My Little Blue Room, Accession # 1818, Hagley Museum and Library

Sophie's desk survives in the museum collections at Hagley. As the caption on her drawing indicates, it was solely her desk. The case, a typical folding writing desk, has a brass plaque on the top engraved "S. M. du Pont," and unfolds to provide storage for letters and papers, inkwells and a green felt writing surface. The desk, which could be locked, offered Sophie her own private means of communicating with the world. While the desk is quite heavy for its size, it was also portable, a way that Sophie could bring at least a piece of Eleutherian Mills with her when she traveled.

Image not available for publication

Figure 11. Sophie du Pont's writing box. Exterior. Accession # G84.19. Courtesy Hagley Museum and Library.

Image not available for publication

Figure 12 Sophie du Pont's writing box. Interior. Accession # G84.19. Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library.

Sophie's 1827 book of carics "One Day on the Tancopanican" also features spare yet materially detailed drawings of Eleutherian Mills. In scene the first, Sophie depicts her sisters Eleuthera and Victorine upon waking in the morning. The two are in the bed that they share. The room is again, minimally sketched, but the material details that Sophie chose to include - a table with candlestick and comb, the discarded shoes on the floor, and the rumpled bedclothes – are evocative of a particularly female domestic life. Sophie and her sisters often described the environment at Eleutherian Mills as being in a state of dishabille. Occasionally the du Pont girls were as well. In an 1831 letter to her sister Eleuthera, Sophie described the mad scramble when visitors came calling. "Our parlor," she wrote,

> was in the greatest dishabille I have seen it in since the memorable day of Messrs. Carroll & Co.'s invasion – I was dissecting old frocks, here lay an antiquated sleeve, there a wing estropiée [crippled] …instinctively I caught up the nearest articles & darted out of the room…Vic descended as she was, ses cheveux coiffées à la Méduse [her hair coiffed like Medusa]…you may suppose I laughed.[50]

The du Ponts and their domestic world were not prim and proper. Their spaces were lived in. They engaged in hijinks and lounged at home. Sophie's carics display a domestic world sprinkled with the material leavings of young women – an odd shoe here, a scissors there, a dress in progress or a left-behind handkerchief. In the spartan world of her drawings, these materials marked the boxy rooms as home.

Image not available for publication

Figure 13 Sophie du Pont, Scene 1st, One Day on the Tancopanican, c. 1827. Hagley Museum and Library.

Sophie was, perhaps, the du Pont daughter most attached to her home. As a teen, she aspired to remain single and at home for the rest of her life. But she did not relish the idea of being a housekeeper that such a future entailed. Her comedic sketches of daily life at

[50] Sophie du Pont to Eleuthera du Pont, March 26, 1831, WMSS Group 9, HML.

Eleutherian Mills display some of this tension. Sophie renders the material elements of her home with great care. Yet her most domestic scenes, those involving cleaning or cooking or sewing, are the most comedic. While she conceded that it was necessary to master the skills of the household, such tasks only appeared in her carics when some aspect of household maintenance had gone awry

Image not available for publication

Figure 14 Sophie du Pont, Transvasing the currant wine, Accession # 1818, Hagley Museum and Library

Many of Sophie's carics are not in the first person, but rather drawn from the perspective of an outside observer, and so she sometimes appears in her own drawings. However, usually she situates herself at the edge of a scene, turned away from the viewer. Even in the caric of her own wedding preparations, her sister Eleuthera takes center stage

while Sophie sits at the margin. In "Transvasing the currant wine" Sophie is front and center. She holds a large jug of currant wine while Victorine fills smaller bottles. Sophie's narrative text on the back reads

> Vic, O! Jeremiah! If only I had a funnel!
> Soph, (gravely) "Vic if I bend this the least bit, I'll empty it all down your back-"
> Vic "You little wretch! I'm spilling! I'm spilling! hush! hush!

The saga of the currant wine continued in two other illustrations, in which the corked jugs begin to explode, to Victorine's immense dismay. She also recorded the incident in a letter to Eleuthera. "I have laughed," wrote Sophie,

> so much today that I am almost sick…After dinner she went up into her room to cork the….I was sitting in the parlor, when the most dreadful screams of "Help! help! Mary! help!" assailed my ear I rushed to the pantry whence the sounds proceeded and beheld Vic the picture of despair, supporting in her arms a burst jug…Jane…and Vic screaming a qui mieux mieux [to outdo the other]. I, wishing to render all the assistance in my power, instantly joined the chorus…the confusion became so great, everyone rushing against each other and screaming…that I fled – leaving them to do the best they could.[51]

Seventeen-year-old Sophie's drawings and comedic rendition of the incident of the currant wine offer several hints about her domestic life. First, and most obvious, is her deep amusement at the wreck of the wine. Victorine, mistress of the house, was often portrayed by Sophie as overly stuffy and serious. Drawing her in the midst of a domestic catastrophe of her own making added extra humor to the occasion. In "Transvasing the currant wine," Sophie is the maker of mischief. While pressed into the service of her sister, she threatens to let the demijohn tip. Her interest is not in completing domestic tasks. Her caric emphasizes her unserious attempts to complete domestic work.

Sophie's other domestic scenes evoke a similar humor. In a caric, likely drawn when Sophie was around twenty, the kitchen at Eleutherian Mills is thrown into chaos by a rodent

[51] Sophie du Pont to Eleuthera du Pont, November 1827, WMSS Group 9, HML.

invader. As with Sophie's description of the currant wine incident, the scene in this caric emphasizes the disarray and cacophony of the kitchen. Servants shriek and attempt to batter the mouse with poles, Eleuthera leaps to the rescue with tongs, and Sophie watches the clamor from her perch at the top of the stairs. As with her description of the bursting of the wine bottles, in this drawing Sophie places herself outside the frame of action. While in "Transvasing the currant wine" she portrays herself leading some domestic mischief, when domestic action is occurring, Sophie seemed more comfortable removing herself from the situation. Given Sophie's aversion to the chores and preoccupations of housekeeping, her stories and carics that consciously placed her away from those material cultures were a way that she negotiated her place within the social and domestic world of Eleutherian Mills. She was not the housekeeper that her sister Victorine was, nor was she an accomplished seamstress as her sister Eleuthera. She defined herself by not being an expert housekeeper, by not enjoying the times when she was charged with the care and keeping of the house. Her drawings and stories allowed her to express domestic dissatisfaction in comedic terms.

Image not available for publication

Figure 15 Sophie du Pont, no title, c. 1831. Nemours Foundation.

Sophie's drawings are, very clearly, renditions of her friends, family, and domestic surroundings. What is particularly striking, though, is the similarity of the scene to that described in Susan Heath's diary almost two decades earlier. In an 1812 diary, seventeen-year-old Susan recounted another unwelcome kitchen visitor. She wrote,

> In the evening we were all frightened at the appearance of a creature in the kitchen…no one had the courage to kill it, Therefore Aunt Eliza was obliged to come over and get some body from our house. Clara went with her – and with the tongs carried it out of doors and killed it.[52]

While Susan's account is serious and Sophie's decidedly comic, the similarities between the scenes suggest a degree of domestic continuity between Brookline, Massachusetts in 1812

[52] Susan Heath, October 28, 1812, diaries, 1812-1874, Ms. N-1387, MHS.

and the Delaware countryside of 1831. While the domestic lives of women in early America shifted rapidly in the early eighteenth century, that phenomenon slowed in the years following the Revolution. So while the domestic material culture of Anna Green Winslow in 1770s Boston, with spindles and distaffs, would have been quite foreign to Sophie du Pont, the material world of Susan Heath's home would not.

"A horrid employment": Young women and housekeeping

Another striking continuity in the material domestic lives of early American young women was their interest in holding the title of "housekeeper." Being housekeeper, or being in charge of the housekeeping denoted more than a simple list of tasks or responsibilities to young women in early America. Rather, it suggested authority, maturity, and the power to make decisions about her domestic material world. While Sophie chafed against the imposition of housekeeping, calling it a "horrid employment," other young women actively sought out the role of housekeeper.[53] Whether they accepted the title gladly, undertook it with reservations, or rejected it outright, having charge of the house, its occupants, and the material running of the home was clearly a way that young women articulated their familial and social identities as they moved from childhood to adulthood.

As illustrated by her caricatures, Sophie du Pont was an unwilling housekeeper to say the least. On the rare occasions that she was left in charge of Eleutherian Mills, she eagerly awaited her sister Victorine's return. While she teased Victorine about keeping the home fires burning, Sophie wrote to her other siblings of her dislike, not of housework, but specifically of housekeeping. "I hope to see Victorine return on Saturday," wrote Sophie in an 1832 letter, "and am delighted with the idea of enjoying her society once more, as well as being released

[53] Sophie du Pont to Eleuthera du Pont, June 12, 1832, WMSS Group 9, HML.

from the cares of housekeeping to which I am not at all partial."[54] A year and a half before, Sophie wrote to Henry that she had been left, "in solitary state as housekeeper," when her father and Victorine had gone to Philadelphia. "You may," she continued, "suppose I am overwhelmed with business and almost bewildered with having so much to do. I have had to race from garret to cellar until I am tired to death."[55] Though Sophie complained about her domestic chores, it is significant that she did not elaborate on them. Merely having taken on the mantle of housekeeper signified, to Sophie, assuming a host of material responsibilities that left Sophie racing "from garret to cellar," until she was "tired to death." When she wrote her complaints about housekeeping to Eleuthera and Henry, Sophie was between twenty and twenty-one. While many young women her age were responsible for houses of their own, Sophie's place within the domestic hierarchy of Eleutherian Mills made her forays into the world of housekeeping rare – a fact which clearly pleased her.

While Sophie may have been disgruntled with her housekeeping, Eleanor Parke Custis had a very different perspective on the title. Nelly, step-granddaughter of George Washington, wrote a letter from Mount Vernon in 1797 about her own housekeeping to her Philadelphia friend Elizabeth Bordley. "I am also," she wrote, "deputy Housekeeper, in which employment I expect to improve much, as I am very partial to it."[56] In another letter, the year before, she noted that she was "housekeeper, Nurse—(and a long train of Etcetera's at present. Mama & Sister Eliza went from this to Hope Park yesterday, & left *me* here, to take care of My Sister Peter, young neice [sic]—& the house." Nelly was an eager housekeeper, hoping to advance her skills and be more often in charge of the house.

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[54] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, May 30, 1832, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[55] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, December 20, 1830, WMSS Group 9, HML.
[56] Eleanor Parke Custis (Lewis) [March 18, 1797], *George Washington's Beautiful Nelly: The Letters of Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley Gibson, 1794-1851*. Patricia Brady, editor, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

Similarly, in an 1844 letter to her cousin Charleston cousin Anna, Anne McIver wrote, "So now you are a housekeeper dear Anna, and will probably have use for such things, I send you a recipe for making ice cream which has never been known to fail."[57] Since sixteen-year-old Anna had keeping of the house, reasoned her cousin, she would be in need of the perfect ice cream recipe. To Anne McIver, the role of housekeeper required culinary authority extended by a recipe never known to fail.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Amanda Vickery both highlight the social significance that young women's 'deputy housekeeping' held in the period. Many young women began to shadow their mothers, older sisters, or other female role models more intensely as they moved toward marriageable age. Even Nelly's vague tone of complaint, when she noted that her mother and sister had left her with charge of siblings and the house, still sounded boastful. Unlike the domestically disinclined Sophie, for Nelly the opportunity to be named "deputy Housekeeper," carried with it connotations of maturity and competence.

In a letter to her school friend Victorine du Pont, Rebecca Ralston poked fun at the ideal of the housekeeper. "Do you know my dear," she wrote,

> that I have grown quite domestic. I have prevailed upon mama to make me <u>house keeper</u> – you will when you arrive find your crazy friend metamorphosed into a sober housewife...I have grown so grave that I have scarcely laughed for an age—I think if I continue in this good course I shall be celebrated as the most industrious amiable girl in town.[58]

When she continued the letter the next day, she teased Victorine about the nonsense that she'd written the night before. Nonsense or not, though, Rebecca's teasing is revealing. The role of housekeeper, she teased, had made her grow domestic and serious. It's implied that Victorine would hardly recognize her formerly "crazy friend," who had been changed –

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[57] Anne McIver to Anna Rogerson McIver, January 13, 1844, Bostick, Anna Rogerson McIver, b. 1828. Papers, 1821-1880 (bulk 1840-1853). (1071.02.01) SCHS.
[58] Rebecca Ralston to Victorine du Pont, January 12, 1809, WMSS Group 6:A, HML.

metamorphosed – into a "sober housewife." In Rebecca's jest, housekeepers are so grave that they scarcely ever laugh. These traits of the housekeeper, her steadiness and sobriety, Rebecca joked, would clearly make her the most amiable (and industrious) girl in Philadelphia. Rebecca's joke speaks to her conception of what an "ideal" domestic young woman should do – and what, perhaps, she did not feel herself to be. Like Sophie, Rebecca may have used humor to distance herself from domestic responsibilities for which she was not entirely ready. All jokes aside, Rebecca, along with many girls her age, did plead with their mothers to be "housekeeper," entrusted with the care of the house and the domestic material world. Her nonsense to Victorine seemed to bear a certain amount of truth about her desire to be a competent housekeeper.

Young women who were given command of their houses, in whatever abbreviated way, often reveled in their newfound authority. In 1808, Antoinette Brevost, another school friend of Victorine's, wrote to describe her new home. "I feel," she wrote, "like a person of consequence since I have had the care of giving orders about the house for the arrangement of things as they come in."[59] Antoinette drew a clear link between feeling "like a person of consequence," and command over the domestic material world. Though only about eighteen at the time, she was given the task of directing movers, articulating where the items should be placed in the new domestic space.[60]

While being made deputy housekeeper had the potential to mark girls as mature and responsible, those responsibilities also impinged upon their time. The essential tasks of the household were time consuming, particularly when special housekeeping was required.

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[59] Antoinette Brevost to Victorine du Pont, October 2, 1808, WMSS Group 9:A, HML.
[60] Antoinette Brevost went on to become a "person of consequence" when she opened a female seminary in Pittsburgh. Mary Johnson's article about her teaching career offers some background: Johnson, "Antoinette Brevost: A Schoolmistress in Early Pittsburgh," *Winterthur Portfolio* 15 no. 2 (Summer 1980): 151-168.

Eleuthera du Pont noted in a letter to Meta Lammot that, because of the impending visit of guests, she had been "fully employed till dinner time with Housekeeping Affairs especially as I was making floating islands &c in honor of Mr. Rumsford and Charles who dined here."[61] By the same token, Meta's letters to Eleuthera are also filled with housekeeping and its time consuming qualities. After an 1824 tea party, for which Meta spent the day preparing for the arrival of eighteen visitors who never appeared, she groused about their impertinent behavior. "Was it not provoking?" she asked Eleuthera, that none of them should have given their regrets and spared her the multitude of tea preparations.[62] In a letter from school in Philadelphia, Sophia Cheves wrote to Eleuthera to relay a message from another friend. "Isabella," she wrote, "begged me to tell you that she will answer your letter next week. it will not be in her power before that time as she is now both Housekeeper and Nurse."[63] The domestic tasks that young women were expected to complete as "housekeeper" absorbed their time and structured their days. For some it was a mark of honor, for others a burden to be overcome. Yet each was, in her own way, assimilating the world of domestic material culture, as well as the title of housekeeper, into her developing adult identity.

For most young women, the domestic material shifts that marked their passage from childhood to adult womanhood culminated in marriage. Upon their marriage, most genteel women were charged with more domestic responsibility than ever before. While differences of class and familial position made minor modifications to their roles, most were in charge of managing family consumption, overseeing household servants, taking care of the domestic material culture, and overseeing the household space.[64] In her 1823 diary, seventeen-year-old

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[61] Eleuthera du Pont to Margaretta Lammot, April 7, 1823, WMSS Group 6:C, HML.
[62] Margaretta Lammot to Eleuthera du Pont, March 18, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[63] Sophia L. Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, July 24, 1822, Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874. Family papers, 1819-April 1861. (1167.03.01) SCHS..
[64] Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, 8-9.

Jane Noyes noted that her sister Lois had married. "She has," wrote Jane, "entered a new sphere of action and it is my sincere desire she may have every necessary blessing here, that she may be enabled to perform the many duties incumbent in the matrimonial state."[65] To Jane, her sister's marriage had moved her into a different "sphere of action," which brought with it new material duties and obligations. After her own marriage to Alfred du Pont in 1824, Margaretta Lammot noted her morning chores in a letter to her stepmother. "This morning," she wrote, "I have some stockings to mark for him & cravats to hem, and shall endeavour to get into industrious habits immediately and not think because I am a bride, I am privileged to be lazy."[66] Meta reassured her stepmother that, in spite of her status as a bride, she would work to build habits of industry and housewifeliness.

However, it is important to remember that for many young women, marriage meant one shift in domestic responsibility while housekeeping might mean another one entirely. This was certainly the case for Meta Lammot and Alfred du Pont, who lived at Eleutherian Mills during the early years of their marriage before their nearby home, Nemours, was completed. It wasn't until 1826 that Sophie noted, in a letter to her brother Henry, that she was making "[Meta] a pincushion and covers for when she goes to housekeeping."[67] Sometimes "going to housekeeping" came along with marriage, but at other times months or even years could pass before a married couple took up their own home. Thus, marriage

[65] Jane Noyes, Diary, May 6, 1823, Jane Noyes diary, 6 May-7 October 1823, Ms. N-607, MHS. While Jane may here refer to sexual obligations of the marital state, I suggest that given her previous reference to a "new sphere of action," Jane's mention of "duties incumbent in the matrimonial state," refers to Lois's new domestic material world.
[66] Margaretta Lammot du Pont to Anna Potts Smith Lammot, October 2, 1824, WMSS Group 7:A, HML.
[67] Sophie du Pont to Henry du Pont, Friday morning [April, 1826], WMSS Group 9, HML.

sometimes signaled a dual domestic material shift, accompanied first by a change in social status and then by a more significant domestic change.[68]

These shifts were not always welcome ones. Young women whose friends and relations married sometimes felt deep anxieties, both for them and for the future of their friendship. In her 1832 diary, Sophie du Pont, then twenty-one, recorded her thoughts about the marriage of her friend Mary Black. "When I saw," she wrote, "all Marys [sic] preparations – a sense of sadness stole over me—I thought of her quitting forever the home of her childhood & of all the cares she was taking on herself."[69] For Sophie, a member of Mary's wedding party, the marriage signaled a definite end. Mary was leaving "the home of her childhood," and taking on a whole new world of adult material concerns.

Anna Cabot Lowell's violent reaction to her cousin Georgina's 1825 marriage resonates with Sophie's concern. In her diary, Anna recounted the days that she spent with Georgina just before her wedding. "I never," wrote Anna,

> knew any body who seemed to be more deeply affected than she was at the awful change which was going to take place in her situation…when we went to bed, Georgina came into my room. We embraced each other. I would have said something, but my head was too full.

Finally, when the wedding came, after sitting in "profound silence…waiting the appointed hour," Anna wrote, "When Uncle Charles said…' I now pronounce you a married couple, whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder,' I could see that Georgina trembled, & am sure I felt almost as if a death blow had been struck."[70] For Anna the marriage of her dearest friend and cousin was a fearful thing. She felt sure that she and Georgina would be forever

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[68] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale* addresses the phenomenon of "going to housekeeping" in her "Matrimonial writes" chapter. Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 134-161.

[69] Sophie du Pont, Diary, July 12, 1832 Papers, 1818-1892. Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9. HML.

[70] Anna Cabot Lowell, April 1825, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512, MHS.

separated, even if they remained geographically close. Later in the same diary entry, she noted that she had seen Georgina almost every day since the wedding, and had dined at her house three times. “She does,” wrote Anna, “the business of her house with ease, dignity and propriety.”[71] Though the entry went on, it is impossible to know what Anna said after noting Georgina’s propriety, since the diary entry has been heavily censored. Anna noted on the diary’s cover that she had reread the entries multiple times in adulthood and, at some point, she chose to black over much of text that she had written in response to Georgina’s marriage.

Anna’s response to Georgina’s marriage, like Sophie’s to the marriage of Mary Black both hinged upon the drastic material change in their status. They both phrased their anxieties about marriage in highly material terms. For Anna, Georgina’s marriage meant a change in status that would leave a gulf between them. That gulf, while highly emotional, was also material. However close they might remain, Georgina’s authority over the “business of her house,” meant that she was an adult and Anna was not. Georgina made a similar observation, just a month after she married, in a letter to Anna. After noting that she had spent the day reading all the notes and letters Anna had ever sent her, she recalled, "What a delightful time we used to have…when we were both children."[72]

Whether the occasion for celebration of dismay, a young woman’s marriage signaled a departure from her previous life. Marriage and charge of the domestic material world rendered a young woman separate from her unmarried friends. While young women might vie to be dubbed deputy housekeeper, the material responsibilities of adult married life were a profound change. The role of “housekeeper,” whether deputy or actual, had a tremendous

[71] Anna Cabot Lowell, April 1825, diaries, 1818-1894, Ms. N-1512, MHS.
[72] Georgina Margaret Amory Lowell to Anna Cabot Lowell, May 20, 1825, John Lowell Papers, 1808-1851. Ms. N-1605. MHS..

influence upon the ways young women constructed their developing adult identities and the way that they portrayed them to their social world.

"The Custom of the Country:" the material cultures of home… away from home

While domestic material culture was an integral part of a young woman's adolescent identity, it was sometimes most strongly asserted when a girl traveled from home. Living in France while her father, John Adams, served as a diplomat gave Abigail (Nabby) Adams ample room to compare life in France with life in Massachusetts. In a 1784 letter to her cousin Betsey Cranch, Nabby wrote about life in Paris. "We never," she wrote, "have but one course and a dessert unless we have company, then the custom of the Country obliges us to have two."[73] Nabby's insistence that they followed Massachusetts habits of domestic life, unless compelled by the "custom of the Country," is intriguing. Many young women, including Nabby, who travelled away from home were compelled to articulate the material strangeness of their surroundings, in relation to the material familiarity of home. Whether traveling to another town or crossing an ocean, their own domestic material world took on increasing significance the face of the custom of another place.

Nabby was critical of France, its domestic life, and inhabitants. In a letter to Betsey Cranch from Auteuil in 1784, Nabby insisted, "if you wish to gain a higher relish for your own Country I would advise you to visit Europe." Her feelings on French women were not much better. "I wish," wrote Nabby, "I could give you some idea of the French Ladies, but it is impossible to do it by letter, as I should absolutely be ashaimed to write, what I must if I

[73] Abigail (Nabby) Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, December 10, 1784, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses,* ed. C. James Taylor. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2007. http://www.masshist.org/ff/

tell you truths.."[74] To Nabby, the customs and habits of the French were vastly different than those familiar to her. Catherine Hickling articulated a similar feeling of displacement. When her father was consul to the Azores, Catherine spent time on St. Michael's Island. Her travel diary is filled with observations about the strangeness and difference of customs on the island. "I sleep," she wrote,

> in a state bed, my sheets were trimmed with broad lace, my curtains were a bright yellow…a mirror over my head to see my pretty self as I lay in bed, and all the saints they worship hung round the room with a full dressed image of the Virgin, to guard me as I slept, strange infatuation.[75]

Catherine contrasted her Azores bedroom, with its Catholic iconography, with what she was comfortable and familiar. Though only a few miles from home, Susan Quincy did the same. On a trip with her sister, she wrote that,

> the chamber assigned…was large, the walls covered with a paper ornamented with figures of Turks and furnished with old fashioned heavy furniture. We thought of the green room at Monkbarn and almost expected a spectral visitor, - but no strange mysterious dream disturbed us.[76]

Susan, in her description of the spooky, gothic room that she and her sister encountered on travel, references the Sir Walter Scott novel *The Antiquary*, published that year. To explain to absent sisters the space of her traveling bedroom, she relied upon the imaginary world of a popular novel. For young women away from home, a sense of their own domestic space and material world took on further significance in articulating their sense of personal, social, and even national identity.

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[74] Abigail (Nabby) Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, September 30, 1784, Adams Family Correspondence. *Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses,*.

[75] Catherine Green Hickling, September 12, 1786, Catherine Greene Hickling Prescott travel diaries, 1786-1789, Ms. N-2180, MHS.

[76] Susan Quincy, [September 1816], *The Articulate Sisters: Passages From the Journals and Letters of the Daughters of President Josiah Quincy of Harvard University*. Edited by M. A. DeWolfe Howe, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 18.

Material customs, too, were subject to comment and comparison by displaced young women. While away from Boston, Caroline Healey made note of local traditions. "It is," she wrote, "the fashion here, to keep one's front door shut, and to introduce even strangers into the kitchen first; This may do in a place like Dartmouth…but it would not do in Boston."[77] Fifty years earlier and almost three thousand miles away in the Azores, Catherine Hickling also found the domestic customs of her hosts quite different from her home. "Our dinner," she wrote, "consisted of all the danties of the season and I was placed in the seat of honor which is the head of the table, in my country that would be a strange place for a guest."[78] Catherine saw a seat at the head of the table as an unusual place for the honored guest. To Caroline, ushering guests in through the kitchen seemed like a violation of the rules of proper conduct, informal and indecorous. While such behavior, she reasoned, could be acceptable in the hinterland of Portsmouth, it would never do in Boston. Caroline and Catherine were both displaced, not only by their travel, but also by the domestic material world that they encountered. They expressed their surprise by direct comparison between that which would happen at home and their travel experience.

While the young women in my study came, primarily, from the north, they did express senses of both northern and southern regional identities. These identifications were, unsurprisingly, based strongly on the perceptions of domestic lives of each region. After Mark Healey's financial collapse, Caroline Healey took up teaching at a school in Georgetown to help the family finances. One day in late September, she noted in her diary, a student approached her. "As I passed," she wrote,

> Hellen Offly came up with something nicely folded in a napkin – 'Miss Healey' said she 'mother made me a pumpkin-pie, and I thought that as you

[77] Caroline Wells Healey, [June 8, 1838] *Selected Journal*.
[78] Catherine Hickling, September 12, 1786, travel diaries, 1786-1789, Ms. N-2180, MHS.

> were from the North – you might like a piece' I kissed the dear little thing and found not a piece, but the whole pie, to which I did ample justice.[79]

To Hellen Offly, Miss Healey's northern origins tied her to the pumpkin pie that she offered. As a New Englander, Caroline was marked as other by her primarily southern students. Charlestonian Sophia Cheves also offered an opinion on Southerners. As was the case with many elite Charlestonians in the period, Sophia had spent a large fraction of her life away from the South. In one letter to Eleuthera du Pont she even remarked that their garden in Charleston was but a shadow of what it was, "but to our Northern eyes it is beautiful."[80] Nevertheless, when she married a South Carolinian, she proclaimed a distinctly Southern identity. She explained to her old school friend that,

> the southern plan, in such cases, is to go into debt immediately by taking property on credit, live on your plantation on hog and hominy to use a very expressive country saying, and disappear from the world till you can afford again to reappear. I cannot ask you what you think of such a plan, for you know I suppose but little of a country life to the south.[81]

Sophia Cheves Haskell, with her Northern eyes, was quick to assert her mastery of the plantation lifestyle. She stressed her expertise further, remarking that Eleuthera would know "but little of a country life to the south." While Sophia had previously considered Eleuthera expert in all matters of country life, when it came to country life in the South, Eleuthera was out of her depth.

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[79] Caroline Wells Healey, September 28, 1842, *Selected Journal,* 158. On the subject of regionalism and regional identity, Healey also noted in her diary that "Southern girls seem to have more of the animal in them, than our Northern damsels—they do love to eat drink & sleep" Healey, October 20, 1842, *Selected Journal,* 165.
[80] Sophia L. Cheves to Eleuthera du Pont, May 20, 1830, Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874. Family papers, 1819-April 1861, (1167.03.01) SCHS.
[81] Sophia L. Cheves Haskell to Eleuthera du Pont, 1830, Haskell, Charles Thomson, 1802-1874, Family papers, 1819-April 1861, (1167.03.01) SCHS.

The most dramatic domestic material difference between north and south articulated by young women was that of slavery. Just after her marriage, Maria Quincy Greene wrote home to Cambridge describing life in Charleston. "I am daily," she wrote,

> astonished to hear the imprudence of masters and mistresses in talking of their slaves in their presence…totally disregarding their feelings, as much as if they were mere animals. The idea that they are rational and accountable creatures seems to have never occurred to their owners. They feed and clothe them, and are kind to them as they would be to a favorite horse, and seem to regard them in no other light. These animals, so much despised, can feel however as I have more than once observed.[82]

To Maria, the treatment of slaves as animals, no better than a favored horse, was shocking. However, in describing her list of domestic duties, Sophia Cheves Haskell noted that they would, "stay at home and take care of the garden and the chickens, and the little negroes, and who knows what else."[83] To Sophia, having slaves to care for was to be mentioned in the same breath as the chickens and the garden – just one more domestic *thing* to be managed. Sophia was, in her southern-ness, the same as the masters and mistresses that northerner Maria so disparaged.

Given the significant role that domestic material culture played in the self-definition of young women, it is, perhaps, unsurprising that their desire to define themselves through the domestic was so pronounced in times when they were the other. When they were away – separated from the domestic spaces and tasks that so contributed to their sense of their own place in the world – they engaged actively in comparisons. While the domestic material world was only one of the many arenas in which young women established, challenged, and articulated their developing adult identity, it was so very central. While I began with young women and the self-fashioning that they enacted on their own bodies, I chose to close with

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[82] Margaret Morton Quincy Greene, [December 3, 1827] *The Articulate Sisters,* 91.
[83] Sophia L. Cheves Haskell to Eleuthera du Pont, April 23, 1831, Charles Haskell Papers, SCHS.

their homes. Their domestic lives figured who they were as children. Domestic material culture offered something to embrace or reject or scorn or endure in equal measure. And their domestic lives shaped their expectations for their own future. Home, and its material culture, left a persistent impression on them. While young women were neither *always* at home in the domestic, nor *always* imprisoned within its confines, the domestic material world of young women was central to the adults that they would become.

Epilogue: or, "It is not customary for the story to go on after the heroine is married."

At the end of her diary, Harriet Manigault noted, "at one o'clock on the 30th of May I was married…with that thought I shall end my memoirs, for it is not customary for the story to go on after the heroine is married."[1] Harriet's diary entry echoes a feeling shared by many of her contemporaries. After her marriage, Sophie du Pont stopped drawing and sharing the comical caricatures of which she had made so many as a young woman. Marriage, to them, indicated a significant rupture from life as it had gone on before. While the departure from childhood into young womanhood was not always so abrupt, it too was a significant transition marked by material changes. For young women in between these two transitional moments their material world offered a way to define and refine the adult selves that they were forming.

After their marriage, young women were engaged in a new material world. Typically, they took charge of a household and became more autonomous in their material choices. However, their adolescence had given them the material skills that they required to make that transition. They had crafted social networks that were constantly reinforced by the exchange of material objects. They had mastered domestic skills and that mastery, as well as their perception of the skills' value, provided the context for their adult domestic role.

The material world of young women was a palimpsest, constantly being written and rewritten with meanings from without and within. Advice manuals prescribed the appropriate material behaviors in almost any situation, while Mary Wollstonecraft and Judith Sargent Murray decried young women's overfondness for material geegaws, laces, and ribbons. Young women responded to these authors, to parents, to newspapers and other cultural commentaries that inscribed significances on things – by placing their own significances on them.

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[1] Harriet Manigault (Wilcocks) [June 6, 1816] Manigault, Harriet. *The Diary of Harriet Manigault 1813-1816*, (Colonial Dames of America, Chapter II, Maine Coast Printers, 1976).

In assessing, manipulating, embracing and rejecting material things, the affluent young white women in this dissertation were making claims about who they were and where they belonged. Caroline Healey's gifts of flowers and Eleuthera du Pont's schoolroom sharing of sweetmeats positioned them in their social environments. Meta Lammot and Katherine Sedgwick's proxy-shopping for friends and family allowed them to display their skill, maturity, and intimate knowledge of another's needs – as well as granting them the power to choose for another. This power of choice, is, perhaps, the crux of my dissertation.

Most studies of material culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America fail to engage youth cultures and material worlds as a specific category. While the material cultures of adulthood and childhood are studied, the liminal category of youth is overlooked. Yet given the early republic's preoccupation with young women's material worlds and material desires, consideration of their unique material cultures, as well as their participation in social networks, consumer markets, and discursive worlds is essential. The power of young women's choices left adults uneasy. Their liminal position in the unstable social world of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America endowed their material lives with particular significance.

Despite massive changes in the American material landscape during the post revolutionary and antebellum periods, the role that young women's material lives played in their creation of their adult identities. Through dramatic changes in fashionable silhouette, the lavish gowns worn by Nabby Adams and her mother at the English court in the 1780s played much the same role that they did when Katharine Lawrence and her mother met Queen Victoria in the 1840s. Though the domestic spaces that shaped their performances as adult women were vastly different, Sophie du Pont and Anna Green Winslow's responses to their domestic responsibilities were an essential part of that grown up self-fashioning. While their material worlds may have looked nothing alike, the continuity in the things that those material worlds represented to young women was striking.

These material worlds were written in their letters and diaries, imprinted on their paintings, drawings and needleworks, and encouraged or decried in the cultural commentary of the day. Physical things, from curtains and writing desks to petticoats and pimples held representative meanings. Regardless of scale, whether a young woman was concerned with her own physical appearance or about the physical space of a distant land, those representative meanings served different purposes in the self-fashioning of young women.

Things could display alignment. Wearing the same clothes or shoes as a friend or sister indicated relationship and intimacy. When Eleuthera du Pont and Meta Lammont compared the depth of their ruffles, or Harriet Manigault noted her sister's dresses that matched hers, they were indicating closeness. Proxy shoppers, who consumed for someone else, were making claims about their alignment of taste and consumer understanding. When separated from her friend Anne Clough by an ocean, Maria Lance articulated how their continued correspondence allowed her to maintain a physical connection with one of her dearest friends. Stacks of letters and locks of hair exchanged were physical, tangible manifestations of sustained intimate relationships while expressions of loyalty to the "custom of the country" allowed young women to display allegiance writ large.

Just as material things allowed young women to display markers of geographic or regional belonging, their material world also illustrated how flexible their geographic identities were. In adopting the dress or food or other material tradition of somewhere that was not home, young women found that they could create a new spatial and geographic conception of identity. Alternatively, material could reinforce or define a young woman's sense of regional identity even when she was far from home. When Caroline Healey ate the pumpkin pie offered to her – as a New Englander- by her southern student, she aligned herself with Boston and home. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, geographic identities were fluid and malleable, and often tied – directly or indirectly – to physical objects.

Objects could also serve as tangible and intangible markers of status. When young women flexed their purchasing power in consumer marketplaces or articulated their capacity to manage their own money, they were directly and indirectly confronting their own status and the economic and social capital of their families. When Eleuthera or Sophie du Pont could command material goods to be sent to or received from Philadelphia, they were making a statement about their place, their status, and their class. The material education, both formal and informal, that young women received was a very visible reflection both of their own class and the status that was imagined for them as adult women.

Throughout the chapters, the significance of material rejection emerged as a common theme. Though it is easy to see young women's protests of disgust, for dresses or households or shopping as disconnected from the material world, they are just as integral to the material self-fashioning of young women. Caroline Healey's rejection of fashionable frippery in favor of simple, plain, honest clothing reflects her awareness, understanding and embrace of one sartorial style over another. Sophie du Pont's dislike of housekeeping and the domestic material obligations was linked, in her mind, to a rejection of the adult role she thought awaited her. In expressing material distaste, whether for the cut of a bonnet or the domestic duties of adulthood, young women were not distancing themselves from the material, but actively engaging with it.

Essential personal qualities could be held within the stitches of a dress or the taking of tea. Material manifestations of personal identity could be large, as when the du Pont girls connected themselves to the pastoral setting of their home, or small, as when Betsey Cranch materially mourned the death of her fiancé in private. They could be made in sweeping claims about appearances or small moments of material snark. When young women read novels, and related themselves to the characters, they were making a claim about who they were related to a physical novel, read, traded and shared. Anna Winslow's twelve-year-old patriotism marked her as a "daughter of liberty" who chose to wear as "much of her own manufactory as pocible." While things could hold personal meaning, they could also reflect on much larger issues.

Material things presented young women a way to reflect on their gender. Particular things could represent femininity and womanhood, whether loved or despised. Amelia Russell's eager shopping trips and reflections on her own developing adult fashion sense and the unnamed Lowell Mill girl who gave meaning to the purchase and consumption of refined feminine accessories were both expressions of their individual sense of what it might mean to be an adult woman. Caroline Healey, though, saw the material world of womanhood actively prevented her from being the intellectual that she would like to be. Hated or adored, material cultures of femininity were being constantly engaged, assessed, embraced, and rejected – sometimes simultaneously.

The dissertation also offers an attempt to historicize the material life of young womanhood. Though decades before the conception of modern "teenagerhood," early American young women lived material lives that are strikingly similar to that of later generations. Both groups' consumption and material engagement were and continue to be greeted with a certain measure of scorn. These "material girls" are trivialized, their consumer behavior ridiculed and disparaged (and economically discounted), and their material lives dismissed as insignificant or irrelevant. I hope to intervene in two points: first, to suggest that the invention of the young female consumer is not new, but has been an essential component in early American economies since the nation began. Second, I argue that material culture, both tangible and intangible, is a site of meaning making. Young women in early America performed countless acts of self-fashioning through things. The multivalent material cultures of girls, overwritten with meanings from within and without, serve a vital purpose in the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Their very marginality – the fact that they are in-between - makes young women an ideal category of material analysis. Young women in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, neither adults nor children, utilized a parade of things to articulate to themselves and represent to their social worlds the adult identities that they were taking up. My dissertation insists that the often-trivialized concerns of young women were far from trivial, and that their things held a vast

panoply of meanings. Material culture – having, wanting, debating, and desiring things- played a vital role in the self-fashioning of young women in early America as they teetered in the space between child and adult.

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Winterthur Museum, Library, and Garden	WMLG
Massachusetts Historical Society	MHS
South Carolina Historical Society	SCHS

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Dramatis Personae

Listed by her full name. Alphabetized by maiden name. Married name listed in parentheses. Archival collection noted in short form. Where published diary is available, it is noted.

Abigail [Nabby] Adams (Smith) (1765-1813) Daughter of John and Abigail Smith Adams. Married William Stephens Smith in 1786. Spent her teenage years in Massachusetts, as well as stints in London, Paris, and Auteuil during her father's diplomatic sojourns. Adams Family Papers online, MHS

Georgina Margaret Amory (Lowell) (1806-1830) Daughter of Jonathan and Lydia Fellows Amory. Married John Lowell in 1825. Following the death of her mother (in 1807) and father (in 1820) she lived in Boston with her aunt and uncle and cousins including **Anna Cabot Lowell**. Her papers (in the archival collection of her husband) include letters written and received during her late teens and early twenties. MHS

Helen Beal (Hall) (1828-1864) daughter of Thomas and Betsey Beal of Kingston, Massachusetts. Married Dr. George Rogers Hall in 1850 and moved to Shanghai. Archival collection includes a diary she kept while at Mr. Kent's school in Roxbury, Massachusetts between 1843 and 44. MHS

Antoinette Brevost (c.1790-1823) Daughter of Jean Brevost, born in France and moved to Philadelphia in 1792. Antoinette was a close school friend of **Victorine du Pont** at Mme. Rivardi's academy, and later taught at her family's academies in Pittsburgh and Natchez, Mississippi. Died, along with her parents, during a yellow fever epidemic. Archival collection includes letters exchanged letters Victorine du Pont between 1806 and Antoinette's 1823 death. HML

Selina Cranch Bond (1832-?) Daughter of the first director of the Harvard Observatory William Cranch Bond and Selina Cranch (Bond). Kept a diary during 1846 that described daily life at her family home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. MHS

Anna Maria Cheves (Huger) (1822-1884) Daughter of Langdon and Mary Elizabeth Dulles Cheves. Married Thomas Pinckney Huger in 1841. Sister of **Sophia Lovell Cheves (Haskell)** See *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 35, No 2 (Jul. 1934). SCHS

Sophia Lovell Cheves (Haskell) (1809-1881) Daughter of Langdon and Mary Elizabeth Dulles Cheves. Married Charles Thomson Haskell in 1830. Sister of **Anna Maria Cheves (Huger)** See *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 35, No 2 (Jul. 1934).SCHS

Anne Jemima Clough (1820-1892) Daughter of James Butler and Anne Perfect Clough, born in London and lived in Charleston between 1822 and 1836. Following her 1836 move to Liverpool, she continued to correspond with Charleston friend **Maria Ramsey Lance (Bacot)** until her death. See B.A. Clough, *Memoir of Anne Jemima Clough*, 1897. SCHS

Elizabeth [Betsey, Elisa] Cranch (Norton) (1763-1811) Daughter of Richard and Mary Smith Cranch. Cousin of **Abigail [Nabby] Adams (Smith)**. Married Jacob Norton in 1789.

Spent her youth in and around Braintree, Massachusetts. Archival collections include letters exchanged with her cousin Nabby, as well as with her family, and several diaries kept during her youth. MHS.

Eleanor [Nelly] Parke Custis (Lewis) (1779-1852) Daughter of John Parke and Eleanor Calvert Custis, and granddaughter of George and Martha Washington. Married Lawrence Lewis in 1799. Her letters to friend Elizabeth Bordley Gibson were published in the book *George Washington's Beautiful Nelly*, Patricia Brady, editor.

Mehetable May Dawes (Goddard) (1796-1882) Daughter of William and Lydia Gendell Dawes, prominent Bostonians. Mehetable kept a diary about her daily life in Boston between 1811 and 1818.

Anna Welsh Dulles (Stille) (1822-1906) Daughter of Joseph Heatly and Margaret Welsh Dulles. During her youth, she lived in Philadelphia and St. Matthew's Parish, South Carolina and archival collections include correspondence with family and friends in Charleston, Columbia, and St. Matthew's Parish. Married Charles Janeway Stille in 1846. SCHS

Amelia du Pont (1796-1869) Daughter of Gabrielle Josephine de la Fite de Pelleport and Victor Marie du Pont. Born in France, she spent her youth at her family home, Louviers, in Delaware. Married William Clifford in 1812, and their marriage was annulled by the General Assembly of Delaware. Mother of **Gabrielle Josephine du Pont (Breck),** sister of **Julia Sophie du Pont (Shulbrick).** HML

Eleuthera du Pont (Smith) (1806-1876) Fourth daughter and fifth child of Eleuthère Irenée du Pont and Sophie Dalmas du Pont. Sister of **Victorine**, **Evelina**, and **Sophie du Pont** Eleuthera was born and spent most of her youth at her family home, Eleutherian Mills, just outside of Wilmington, Delaware, though she attended school in Philadelphia and travelled frequently. Archival collection includes her extensive correspondence with family and, especially, close friend and eventual sister-in-law **Margaretta [Meta] Lammot (du Pont).** Married Thomas Mackie Smith in 1834. HML

Evelina [Lina] Gabrielle du Pont (Bidermann) (1796-1863) Second daughter of Eleuthère Irenée du Pont and Sophie Dalmas du Pont. Sister of **Victorine**, **Eleuthera**, and **Sophie du Pont**. Born in France, and emigrated with her family in 1800 to settle just outside of Wilmington Delaware where she spent most of her youth. Married James Antoine Bidermann in 1816. Archival collections include correspondence exchanged with family and friends during time at school, and while away from home. HML

Gabrielle [Ella] Josephine du Pont (Breck) (1813-1891) Daughter of **Amelia du Pont** and William H. Clifford. Lived at Louviers, outside Wilmington, Delaware with her mother and grandparents. Married William Breck in 1836. HML

Julia du Pont (Shulbrick) (1806-1882) Daughter of Gabrielle Josephine de la Fite de Pelleport and Victor Marie du Pont. Sister of **Amelia du Pont**. Born in Wilmington, Delaware, she spent her youth at her family home, Louviers. Married Irvine Shulbrick in 1824. HML

Sophie [Sophia, Soph] Madeleine du Pont (du Pont) (1810-1888) fourth daughter and fifth child of Eleuthère Irenée du Pont and Sophie Dalmas du Pont. Sister of **Victorine**, **Evelina**, and **Eleuthera du Pont**. With the exception of a brief period at boarding school in Philadelphia, Sophie passed the majority of her youth at her family home, Eleutherian Mills, just outside Wilmington, Delaware. Married first cousin Samuel Francis du Pont in 1833. Archival collections include Sophie's extensive correspondence, several diaries, schoolbooks and papers, and her collection of approximately 200 humorous sketches. HML

Victorine Elizabeth [Vic] du Pont (Bauduy) (1792-1861) Eldest child of Eleuthère Irenée du Pont and Sophie Dalmas du Pont. Sister of **Evelina**, **Eleuthera**, and **Sophie du Pont**. Born in France, and emigrated with her family in 1800. Spent most of her youth at her Wilmington, Delaware home or at Madame Rivardi's boarding school in Philadelphia. Married Ferdinand Bauduy in 1813. Ferdinand died six weeks later and Victorine never remarried, remaining at Eleutherian Mills until her death. Archival collections include incoming and outgoing correspondence between Victorine and her sisters, parents, and friends. HML

Anne Gorham Everett (1823-1843) Daughter of Edward and Charlotte Gray Brooks Everett. Spent her the majority of her teenage years in Cambridge, Massachusetts before moving to London in 1840. Her fifteen diary volumes, kept from age eleven until her death, from influenza, at age twenty, chronicle daily life. A memoir of her life with excerpts from her diaries was published by her childhood friend Phillippa Call Bush in 1857. MHS

Caroline Wells Healey (Dall) (1822-1912) Daughter of Mark and Caroline Foster Healey. Born and spent her youth in Boston, Massachusetts, before taking a teaching position at a school near Washington D.C. She married Charles Henry Appleton Dall in 1844 and was active as an author and Transcendentalist. Before her diary, she kept a diary between 1838 and 1845. Archive also includes an 1896 reconstruction of several destroyed diaries from 1835-40 and 41-42. Extracts of her diary were compiled and published as *Daughter of Boston: The Extraordinary Diary of a Nineteenth-Century Woman*, Helen R. Deese, Ed. MHS.

Susan Heath (1795-1874) Daughter of Ebenezer and Hannah Williams Heath. Lived in Brookline, Massachusetts and kept a diary about daily life, society, and housework throughout her youth. MHS.

Catherine Greene Hickling (Prescott) (1767-1852) Daughter of Thomas Hickling. Originally from Boston, she kept a travel diary between 1786 and 1789 when she traveled to live with her diplomat father on St. Michael's Island in the Azores and then to London. Married Boston attorney William Prescott Jr before 1795. MHS.

Margaretta [Meta] Elizabeth Lammot (du Pont) (1807-1898) Daughter of Daniel and Susan Parham Beck Lammot. She spent her youth in Philadelphia, attended school with Eleuthera du Pont, and corresponded extensively with the du Pont sisters. Married Alfred V. du Pont, brother of **Sophie**, **Eleuthera** and **Victorine du Pont** in 1824. HML

Maria Ramsey Lance (Bacot) (1819-) Daughter of William and Maria Fraser Lance. Spent her youth in Charleston, and corresponded regularly with her friend **Anne Jemima Clough** until her death. Married Richard Bacot before 1840. SCHS

Annie Bigelow Lawrence (Rotch) (1820-1893) Daughter of Abbot and Katherine Bigelow Lawrence. She spent her youth in Boston and Washington D.C., where her father was a prominent politician. Annie kept a diary describing her daily life and social occasions, as well as several trips between 1838 and 1856. She married Benjamin Smith Rotch in 1846. Sister of **Katherine Bigelow Lawrence (Lowell).** (MHS)

Katherine Bigelow Lawrence (Lowell) (1832-1895) Daughter of Abbot and Katherine Bigelow Lawrence. A Bostonian, she spent most of her youth in and around Boston, and chronicled a trip to London when her father served as minister to England. The Massachusetts Historical Society holds a two volume typed transcript of her diary, however the location of the originals remains unkonwn. She married Augustus Lowell in 1854 and among their children were astronomer Percival Lowell and poet Amy Lowell. Sister of **Annie Bigelow Lawrence (Rotch)**. (MHS)

Anna Cabot Lowell (1808-1894) Daughter of John and Rebecca Amory Lowell. Cousin of **Georgina Margaret Amory** and also of Georgina's eventual husband John Lowell. Spent her youth living with her family in Boston, Massachusetts. Archival collections include several letters as well as diaries kept from 1818 until her death in 1894. MHS

Harriett Manigault (Wilcocks) (1793-1835) Daughter of Gabriel and Margaret Izard Manigault. Born in South Carolina, but moved permanently to Philadelphia following the death of her father in 1809. Kept a diary of her daily life in Philadelphia and at the Manigault's country home outside Philadelphia, Clifton, between 1813 and 1816. Married Samuel Wilcocks in 1816. Her diary was published by the Colonial Dames of North America as *The Diary of Harriet Manigault 1813-1816*.

Anna Rogerson McIver (Bostick) (1828-1896) Daughter of Mary Hanford and Alexander M. McIver. She lived in Cheraw and Greenville, South Carolina, where her father was a district attorney and later a South Carolina state representative. Archival collection includes letters sent to her by family and friends. Married Reverend Joseph M. Bostick, the widower of her sister Helen, after 1867. SCHS

Frances Mayrant (Bentham) (1795-) Daughter of Ann Richardson and William Woodrup Mayrant. Archive collection at the South Carolina Historical Society includes a letter from her cousin, Catherine Rees regarding Charleston social life in 1818.Married Robert Bentham in 1819. SCHS

Mary Robie (Sewall) (1764-1834) Daughter of Thomas and Mary Bradstreet Robie of Marblehead, Mass. Loyalist family in exile in Halifax, Nova Scotia during the American Revolution. Kept a diary of life in exile in 1783 when she was nineteen. Married Joseph Sewall in 1788. MHS

Amelia Eloise Russell (1798-1880) daughter of diplomat Jonathan Russell of Mendon, Mass. Attended Madame Grelaud's in Philadelphia while living there with an uncle. MHS

Joanna Smith (du Pont) (1815-1876) Daughter of Francis Guerney and Elizabeth Smith. Spent her youth living with her family in Philadelphia, where she attended Miss Ardley's French School. Corresponded with her future sisters-in-law **Sophie** and **Eleuthera du Pont.** Married Alexis du Pont in 1836. HML

Lucy Cheever Shattuck (1823-1835) daughter of George Cheyne and Eliza Cheever Davis Shattuck. Lived in Boston and kept a diary between March and September, 1835, when she died at age thirteen, likely from tuberculosis. See *New England Historical and Geneaological Register*, Vol. 36 [July, 1882]. MHS

Eliza Southgate (Bowne) (1783-1809) Daughter of Robert and Mary Southgate. She was born in Scarborough, Maine, and spent her youth with family throughout New England, as well as at several boarding schools in Boston. A collection of her teenage letters was published as *A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago*, in 1887. She married Walter Bowne in 1803, and died in Charleston, South Carolina in 1809.

Harriot Coffin Sumner (Appleton) (1802-1867) daughter of Jesse Sumner and Harriot Coffin Sumner. Harriot spent her youth in Boston, and kept a diary between 1811 and 1817 discussing daily life, social occasions, and school at Dr. Park's in Boston. Married Nathan Appleton in 1839. MHS

Anna Cabot Lowell Quincy (Waterston) (1812-1899) Daughter of Josiah and Eliza Susan Morton Quincy. One of the "Articulate Sisters," along with sisters Married Robert Cassie Waterston in 1840. Diary published in *A Woman's Wit and Whimsy* as well as excerpted in *The Articulate Sisters* MHS

Anna Green Winslow (1759-1780) Daughter of Joshua and Anna Green Winslow. Born and raised in Nova Scotia, Anna went to stay with family in Boston in 1771 when she was twelve. Wrote letters to her mother between 1771 and 1773 which were published in 1894 as *The Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston Schoolgirl of 1771*, edited by Alice Morse Earle. She likely died around 1780, probably of tuberculosis.