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REMEMBERING THE LADIES: IMAGINING EQUALITARIANISM IN EARLY AMERICAN NOVELS OF MANNERS

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ABSTRACT

REMEMBERING THE LADIES: IMAGINING EQUALITARIANISM
IN EARLY AMERICAN NOVELS OF MANNERS

By

Jill Kirsten Anderson

In this dissertation, I discuss representations of womanhood in early American novels of manners within the context of "instrumental equalitarianism," which I use as a descriptor for textual attitudes about sexual equality. The narrators and characters in Rebecca Rush's Kelroy: A Novel (1812), John Neal's Keep Cool, A Novel. Written in Hot Weather (1817), and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Redwood: A Tale (1824) reflect an instrumental-equalitarian view of American women's roles, and each of these novels indicates that there are possible alternatives to the singularly defined function of republican motherhood and its reinforcement of the subordinating code of female coverture. In the following readings, I indicate that these texts' narrators comment on the contemporary limitations and capacities of their female characters, thus adapting revolutionary-era equalitarian thought to republican debates about feminine agency. Representations of republican women cross beyond the woman's sphere and even into the masculine realm, but this equalitarian agency is tempered by characters who act with moral certitude and without disproportionate emotional excess. If the subversion paradigm enables literary critics to uncover radical messages of feminist empowerment implanted in the subtext of early American fiction, whereas the containment paradigm illustrates how to expose conservative messages of punitive didacticism and social control; then the instrumental-equalitarian lens focuses on images of feminine capacity and incapacity, first, to complicate the binary and, second, to consider what roles these

novels' narrators imagine American women can usefully embody without creating female characters that cross the boundaries of moral realism. As moralists commenting on the manners of their elite social universe, these early American novelists of manners are concerned with purposeful instrumentality and correct outcomes; that is, their female protagonists show their readers that a heroine's ultimate contentment comes from her moral agency and capable action rather than from fatalistic dependency or inherited right.

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PREFACE

Although it has been twenty years since Jane Tompkins's Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860 (1985) and Cathy N. Davidson's Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America (1986) initiated the ongoing feminist project to recover and to study early American novels, a gap remains as we attempt to move from the revolutionary era and the 1790s into the nineteenth century. Eighteenth-century ideologies of equalitarian feminism and republican motherhood--as represented in Judith Sargent Murray's "On the Equality of the Sexes" (1790) and her "Gleaner" series (1792-1798), or in such early novels as Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple (1791, 1794) and Hannah W. Foster's The Coquette (1797)--introduce women's issues into the American literary canon; but then we tend to skip, without exploring what happens in between, to the important concerns of antebellum activism as evidenced by Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845), Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), or Fanny Fern's Ruth Hall (1855). Pausing in the first decades of the nineteenth century, however, is well worth our time because reading early novels of manners--for example, Rebecca Rush's Kelroy: A Novel (1812), John Neal's Keep Cool, A Novel. Written in Hot Weather (1817), and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Redwood: A Tale (1824)--adds further dimension to our understanding of late-republican womanhood as well as to our knowledge of American novels. That is, not only can we connect these texts to the mid-century in ideological terms by exploring their instrumental-equalitarian advocacy for feminine agency, but we can also compare these novels of manners in generic terms to such turn-of-the-century works as Kate Chopin's

The Awakening (1899) or Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth (1905).

Like their generic cousins, early novels of manners specifically offer contemporaneous portraits of "real life" as novelists and critics conceive of realistic literary methods in the first part of the nineteenth century. Although these authors rely on their own elite status as purveyors of upper-middle class bourgeois republican values and though they use conventional motifs and invasive narration--which can distract from their realism when measured extra-contextually against later exemplars of the form--novelists of manners also work diligently to set their plots in specific, American locations and to present their readers with realistic American characters, dialogue, and situations. As Tompkins indicates in her influential argument about the "sensational designs" and "cultural work" behind the conventional plots and stereotypes found in early American fiction--and in contrast to our own definitional requirements, which are based upon later nineteenth-century ideas about realism and naturalism--early nineteenth-century novelists of manners seek verisimilitude through recognizable representations of correct behavior rather than in psychological individualism. Tompkins demonstrates that such conventions as "the stereotyped character, the sensational plot, [and] the trite expression" function "as instruments of cultural self-definition" and "convey enormous amounts of cultural information in an extremely condensed form." In fact, "[t]heir familiarity and typicality, rather than making them bankrupt or stale, are the basis of their effectiveness as integers in a social equation" (xvi). "The problems these plots delineate," Tompkins adds, "... require a narrative structure different from the plots of modern psychological novels, a structure that makes them seem sensational and contrived in comparison with texts like The Ambassadors or The Scarlet Letter" (xvii).

However, it is also important to note that authors and critics in the period accede to such conventionality while simultaneously recognizing and advocating for realistic methods. In this point, then, Tompkins's assessment requires adjustment because novelists of manners purposely distinguish their novels from those romances that exploit "sensational plot[s]" (xvi). Tompkins writes, "The benevolent rescuers of Arthur Mervyn and the sacrificial mothers of Uncle Tom's Cabin act out scenarios that teach readers what kinds of behaviors to emulate or shun: because *the function of these scenarios is heuristic and didactic rather than mimetic*, they do not attempt to transcribe in detail a parabola of events as they 'actually happen' in society; rather they provide a basis for remaking the social and political order in which events take place" (xvii; emphasis mine). And yet, contemporary writers and critics define their texts as just that: the scenarios their narrators present are mimetic or verisimilitudinous transcriptions of what can actually happen. For example, in his review of Sedgwick's second novel Redwood, William Cullen Bryant discusses novels "founded on domestic incidents" (247). Bryant and other critics at the time lauded Redwood and other novels of manners as realistically American "stor[ies] of domestic life, the portraiture of what passes by our firesides and in our streets, in the calm of the country, and amidst a prosperous and well ordered community" (245). Crediting Sedgwick for "mak[ing] a more hazardous *experiment* of her powers" than those who rely on "the strong love of romance inherent in the human mind," Bryant also says that Sedgwick "has come down to the very days in which we live, to quiet times and familiar manners, and has laid the scene of her narrative in the most ancient and tranquil parts of the country; *presenting us not merely with the picture of what she has imagined, but with the copy of what she has observed*" (246; emphasis mine). However,

as Bryant implies, because the novel is generically experimental, Sedgwick's reading audience cannot have yet adapted to the new, more realistic form. As a result, Redwood's readers need "that intrigue, those plottings and counterplottings, which are necessary to give a sufficient degree of action and eventfulness to *the novel of real life*" (251; emphasis mine); and, as Tompkins has said, these conventional "plottings" make it difficult for readers two hundred years later to appreciate the unrealistic conventions that accompany these earlier writers' experiments in realistic representation.

The balanced plots in these novels of "real life" may not reflect the chaos of actual human existence nor do their balanced heroines portray the psychological complexity of women's inner lives, but these texts do merit attentive close reading because they present the realistic hopes of their narrators and characters as they are imagined in the early nineteenth century. In fact, if we take these early novelists of manners and their contemporary critics at their words, then we must seriously consider their novels as the mimetic/reflective creations of writers intent on realistically rendering the cause and effect of choices women make in their daily lives. In the following dissertation, therefore, I read the stereotypical characters as well as the conventional "plottings and counterplottings" that Rush's, Neal's, and Sedgwick's narrators present while simultaneously paying close attention to the realistic actions of these novels' heroines. One of Nina Baym's theses about the self-reliant heroines of nineteenth-century "woman's fiction," or of the female bildungsroman, is that the novels intend to engage in "emancipatory work by persuading women readers to insist on their right to personhood.... The protagonists are constructed as individuals through an expansion of their interior life and self-consciousness--they think, therefore they are" (xxi). To read

Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood, however, we must modify Baym's construction to account for the exterior presentation of social observation rather than the internal representation of self-consciousness--in other words, these heroines act, therefore they are. The plots may be contrived or even sensational at times, but the actions of the female protagonists are significant. Moreover, as moralists commenting on the manners of their elite social universe, these early American novelists of manners are concerned with purposeful instrumentality and correct outcomes; that is, their female protagonists show their readers that a heroine's ultimate contentment comes from her moral agency and capable action rather than from fatalistic dependency or inherited right.

It is in this context that I have turned to representations of womanhood in early American novels of manners and to the idea of "instrumental equalitarianism," which I use as a descriptor for the attitudes about sexual equality reflected in these texts' narrators and characters. The language comes from Nancy Cott, although I have combined the terms differently than she does in The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1770-1835 (1977). Cott positions the "equalitarian feminist view" of women in the late eighteenth century against "the program of the woman's sphere" (202), which eventually encourages the early nineteenth-century development of an "instrumental conception of their gender role" (203). In this period in which a woman's usefulness is defined by her position as a republican wife and mother, thus ascribing value to her identity inasmuch as she serves the instrumental function of raising productive male citizens, the instrumental-equalitarian lens provides an alternative way of imagining women's roles. We can begin to fill the gap between the late eighteenth century and the antebellum era when we understand that, in early American novels of manners, feminine

agency does not become entirely subsumed by the ideology of republican motherhood and its concomitant emphases on domestic sphere containment and public sphere coverture. These novels indicate that early nineteenth-century women--or, at least, their literary stand-ins--can imagine real-world situations in which their capable instrumentality is rewarded with equalitarian respect.

As a brief example of my method, I turn now to Sedgwick's first novel A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New-England Character and Manners (E. Bliss and E. White, 1822; Penguin, 2003). Originally intended as a religious tract, Sedgwick developed her ideas into a brief novel of manners, which follows the story of an instrumental-equalitarian heroine, Jane Elton, as she negotiates a place for herself after the bankruptcy and death of her parents and eventually finds a worthy husband in the Quaker hero, Robert Lloyd. This text performs an interesting function as we attempt to make connections across the decades and even centuries because, in her novel, Sedgwick purposely discusses agency while contrasting the problems of a corrupt and declining Calvinism against a more rational and less sectarian Christian perspective. Sedgwick herself was converting from Calvinism to Unitarianism at the time--and, in the novel, it is the Quaker perspective that ultimately prevails when the heroine chooses to convert at the end. Intriguingly, Mr. Lloyd is prepared to convert as well, but Jane acts first. Cott's history points out that the religious context is significant: "What precipitated some women and not others to cross the boundaries from 'woman's sphere' to 'woman's rights' is not certain; but it seems that variation on or escape from the containment of conventional evangelical Protestantism--whether through Quakerism, Unitarianism, radical sectarianism, or 'de-conversion'--often led the way" (204).

Moreover, in her novel Sedgwick engages with various early nineteenth-century debates about American women's instrumental agency while creating a realistic depiction of and commentary on the morality of the culture she inhabits. By taking on the duties of the moral elite, Sedgwick positions herself as having the same cultural authority as prominent male intellectuals in her time. In Coming to Terms with Democracy: Federalist Intellectuals and the Shaping of an American Culture (2001), Marshall Foletta discusses moral elitism within the context the founders of the North American Review (first issue published in March 1815), which he calls "the voice of the rising generation of Boston Federalists" (73). He looks at such men as Joseph Stevens Buckminster, William Tudor, Willard Phillips, and Richard Henry Dana and ties the idea of moral elitism to Unitarianism. Sedgwick's novel reflects the fact that it was written in the same period that these Boston Federalists were developing intellectually and producing their magazine. Her project is a similar one, though she chooses a different genre. In addition, the power she asserts is significantly different from--and more equalitarian than--the partial agency attributed to republican mothers as the keepers of public morality through their role as mothers of men.

Sedgwick's narrator presents contrasting characters in A New-England Tale to depict immoral vs. moral behaviors. For example, the corrupt and antagonistic Mrs. Wilson, Jane's cruel aunt and guardian, embodies Calvinistic hubris and unthinking dependence; whereas Jane is an agent of correct conduct derived from reformed religious principles and instrumental-equalitarian action. In Sedgwick's rendering of the religions, Calvinist passivity relies irrationally on an active god to the self-destructive detriment of characters who have lost all agency and the ability to do good work, while reformed

Christian activism comes from the rational understanding that, in the words of one character, "God does not willingly grieve or afflict you" (17). Mrs. Wilson's children, Jane's cousins, have particularly suffered as a result of their mother's fatalism, and, because Mrs. Wilson never accepts responsibility for "her maternal sins" (163), she dies at the end of the novel "deceived" by her own "clamorous profession" (175). Her three children are her legacy: her eldest daughter becomes an abusive drunk and dies young (84); another daughter, due to poor education and indiscriminate novel reading, becomes a plagiarist (58) and eventually runs off with a ridiculous "french dancing master" (154), who she imagines to be "a Count in disguise" (156); and her son becomes a highway robber (164), eventually escaping to the West Indies (171) after leaving behind a letter to his mother that starkly lays bare the horror of her passive religious system. David writes, "Mother, mother! oh, that I must call you so! --as I do it, I howl a curse with every breath--you have destroyed me. You, it was, that taught me when I scarcely knew my right hand from my left, that there was no difference between doing right and doing wrong, in the sight of the God you worship.... My mind was a blank, and you put your own impressions on it; God (if there be a God) reward you according to your deeds!" (174). Clearly Mrs. Wilson's anti-republican motherhood has created monstrously useless citizens.

Meanwhile, Jane's formative years have been spent with a mother who, though not vigorous enough to oppose her husband's poor management of their affairs, makes up for her lack of agency in her marriage by raising her daughter well. She dies with "a heart-rending pang at the thought of leaving her child, poor, helpless, and friendless" (8), but the narrator acknowledges Mrs. Elton's successful parenting: "To her child she

performed her duties wisely, and with an anxious zeal; the result, in part, of uncommon maternal tenderness, and, in part, of a painful consciousness of the faults of her own character; and, perhaps, of a secret feeling she had left much undone that she ought to do" (7). In addition, both Jane and Mrs. Elton have had the support of Mary Hull, a domestic "with a mind of uncommon strength, and an affectionate heart.... She had the virtues of her station in an eminent degree: practical good sense, industrious, efficient habits, and *handy ways*..." (9). Jane's first 13 years, spent under the influence of her mother and Mary Hull, prepare her for the trials she undergoes living in the Wilson household and as she forges her own independence.

Throughout the novel, Jane's independent agency saves her from her aunt's and cousins' horrible fates, and her actions and outcome elucidate the primary characteristics of an instrumental-equalitarian heroine. These traits can be listed as follows:

(1.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine models principled action. As a moral agent, Jane consistently refuses to help her cousins in their various misbehaviors because, as she says, "...I cannot have my good name taken, it is all that remains to me" (49; cf. 73-74, 116).

(2.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine is smart. Jane excels at school and earns the top award for an essay, which she reads--very modestly, of course--in front of an assembly (54-59).

(3.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine thinks about the choices laid before her and makes good decisions. At the age of 15, Jane longs for "liberty" from Mrs. Wilson's petty tyranny (64) and chafes against her "slavery" in the service of her aunt (65). When Mary helps her raise $100 from the sale of "her mother's lace and shawls and all the little

nick-nacks she left" (64) to buy into a position at the school as an assistant to the schoolmaster (63), Jane, "when the time of emancipation was so near" (66), chooses instead to pay off one of her father's debts. Although the plan would have enabled her to move away from her aunt and into a room of her own at Mrs. Hervey's (66)--and even though she knows that the money is "the price of liberty and the means of independence"--Jane takes solace in "the consciousness of having acted right--from right motives" (74), thus achieving another kind of liberty.

(4.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine is athletic and brave. When Jane is called by John Mountain to help with a mysterious errand (102), she sneaks out in the middle of the night--overcoming her "womanish" fears "with a manly spirit" (91). As she follows a wild disciple of nature, "crazy Bet," to John's cottage, the narrator comments that Jane "was fleet and agile, and inspired with almost supernatural courage; she, 'though a woman, naturally born to fears,' followed on fearlessly..." (95). At John's cottage, Jane discovers a dying young woman holding her already deceased infant. This pathetic scene is the result of her cousin David's depravity, and, by calling Jane to his cottage in this moment of crisis, John has deferred to her moral authority, thus demonstrating that he expects Jane to act as an agent for the wronged woman.

(5.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine knows she has options and refuses to compromise when her reputation or her future is at stake. When Mrs. Wilson accuses Jane of stealing money that David has clearly taken, Jane (now 17) chooses to leave because she is "not friendless--nor fearful" (113). Though a young man named Edward Erskine declares his love at this same juncture--and though she consents to a public engagement--Jane chooses also "to accept the proposal" that has recently been made to

her "to teach some little girls who are not old enough for Mr. Evertson's school" (114). She moves into Mrs. Hervey's and will not marry until her name is cleared of the false charges.

(6.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine is "fallible" (119), but she knows how to extract herself from her mistakes. When Jane realizes that she has made a bad marriage choice (139), she dissolves the engagement (144). Intriguingly, in rejecting Erskine, Jane also rejects the partial power ascribed to the republican wife/mother. She *may* be able to influence her future husband's moral growth--because, as Mary reminds Jane, "you have Scripture for you; for the Bible says, 'the believing wife shall sanctify the unbelieving husband;' and that must mean that her counsel and example shall win him back to the right way and persuade him to walk in the paths of holiness" (122)--but, ultimately, Erskine shows himself to be "unprincipled" (135). Therefore, it is *not* Jane's duty to reform him. When she breaks with him, Jane says, "Edward! if in the youth and spring of your affection, I have not had more power over you, what can I hope from the future?" (144).

(7.) An instrumental-equalitarian heroine receives the narrative reward of a happy ending. In A New-England Tale, Sedgwick's narrator ultimately approves Jane's agency with an equalitarian marriage to Mr. Lloyd--who has been a constant presence in her life since the age of 14, and who has been a consistent moral arbiter throughout the novel. Though eleven years her elder (180), theirs is an equal, Quaker alliance, which contrasts directly with the "unequal alliance" she had originally assented to with Erskine (151).

Sedgwick's instrumental-equalitarian heroine's ability to make autonomous decisions and to act in her own self-interest is crucial to A New-England Tale.

Correspondingly, through their emphasis on feminine capacity for moral agency and independent choice, other early American novels of manners operate similarly within this early nineteenth-century instrumental-equalitarian model, which opens such texts as Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood to feminist readings that do not overstate the case in an ahistorical sense. Therefore, rather than seeing these novels as lacking the individualistic self-reliance of antebellum "Woman's Fiction" or as lacking the psychological realism of later nineteenth century novels, we can better understand their content by applying a different ideological paradigm. Twenty-first century readers may not encounter the same type of emotional investment in these heroine's fates as we experience in our sympathetic back-and-forth with such tragic heroines as Edna Pontellier or Lily Bart; however, if we focus on early novels of manners as realistic representations of the choices women had before them within their own social milieu, then we have a feminist model that enables a twenty-first century audience to engage with early nineteenth-century women's issues without depending upon the modern reader's ability to enter into a psychologically sympathetic relationship with the heroine. Instead, we can analyze these texts as novels of manners and compare their writers' uses of realistic methods as conceived in novels of "real life" at either end of the nineteenth century.

In addition to the work contained within the following pages--and because this dissertation necessarily limits its focus to the specific concerns of a bourgeois moral elite made up of the middle and gentry classes--it would be productive to consider instrumental-equalitarian ideology within a broad social context that takes into account what these writers are saying about other classes as well as within other genres. For example, Sedgwick begins with A New-England Tale and Redwood, but her wide-

ranging corpus extends well into the mid-century. Similarly, throughout his life, Neal continues to produce both fiction and commentary, including lectures and writings on women's rights. In addition, investigations into other early American novels of manners would push the study forward as would the consideration of other contemporary commentators. Sarah Josepha Hale's early novel Northwood; or, Life of North and South (1827), her collected Sketches of American Character (1829), and her other journalistic writings in the Ladies' Magazine (1828-1836) would provide additional insight into women's moral advocacy in the period. Moreover, there remains work to be done on early American novels of manners in their transatlantic context. Given Maria Edgeworth's popularity in the period, and given the fact that Jane Austen is writing at the same time as these authors, an inquiry into instrumental equalitarianism in early British novels of manners stands as a necessary next step. In my Sedgwick chapter, I briefly compare Redwood with The Absentee, but the question of American exceptionalism, in this case and others, remains to be studied more fully.

In this dissertation, then, I look at three early American novels of manners, Rush's Kelroy, Neal's Keep Cool, and Sedgwick's Redwood, through an instrumental-equalitarian lens. This focus works well within the context of early nineteenth-century republicanism because it implies that usefulness is a crucial measure for asserting equality between the sexes. These novels' instrumental-equalitarian heroines embody the republican principle of useful disinterestedness in the service of others and for communal improvement. In this sense, instrumental equalitarianism operates within the dictates of republican ideology, by which I mean that the phrase invokes a set of underlying and unquestioned contemporary assumptions about republican conduct that are shared by

both sexes. Even as these novels of manners reflect ideas about masculine and feminine equality in terms of moral authority, they simultaneously present an ideological perspective that upholds the value and protects the interest of an elite class of citizens. Thus a heroine like Sedgwick's Jane Elton may be able to assert her agency to become a moral leader in her community, but the domestic servant, Mary Hull, will only attain "the virtues of her station" (9)--though she, too, earns an equalitarian marriage to James, a suitable, working-class husband. Sedgwick allows Mary to claim a capacity for feeling that is equal to Jane's, but this "faithful friend" must also defer to the heroine's superiority. In one instance, for example, Mary compares her situation to Jane's and then carefully modifies her ambition: "I thought to myself then you seemed to feel just as I do when I hear the sound of James' voice; not that I mean to compare myself to you, or James to Mr. Lloyd, but it is the *nature of the feeling*--it is the same in the high and the low, the rich and the poor" (180). In addition to Mary's forthright statement about their relative positions, the narrator reinforces Jane's precedence by delaying Mary's marriage until her service to Jane and Mr. Lloyd is complete, archly commenting that "James was the only person that did not seem to have his portion of the common gladness. He had, with a poor grace, consented to defer his nuptials till Mary's return from Philadelphia" (183). Never mind that he has just returned from the Mediterranean after a six-year captivity among "the Algerines" (169); James must wait. As in this brief illustration from A New-England Tale, the novels of manners explicated in this dissertation do not question underlying ideological assumptions about social categorization even as they do enter into overt debates about sexual equality.

Ultimately, I view my approach in this dissertation as feminist because not only

am I adding to the work of recovery and canon reexamination--what Dana Nelson calls the "Americanist rediscovery project" ("Rediscovery" 287)--but I am also focusing specifically on images of women and, through such textual representations, on culturally specific attitudes about feminine capacity and agency in the early nineteenth century. Here I cite Mary C. Carruth and Sharon M. Harris. In her recent Introduction to Feminist Interventions in Early American Studies (2006), Carruth defines "feminism as a set of methodologies that analyze how cultures hierarchically construct categories of difference to establish systems of privilege and oppression" (xvi-xvii). In an article republished in that same collection, Harris includes, among various other "related issues central to a feminist perspective," studies of "authority and authorization" (3). By carefully parsing figures of feminine empowerment as well as depictions of power relations between the sexes in three republican novels, "Remembering the Ladies: Imagining Equalitarianism in Early American Novels of Manners" demonstrates that contemporary representations of republican womanhood prescribe more for their readers to consider than the subordinate and limiting authority of republican motherhood.

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Chapter 1

An Instrumental-Equalitarian Model of Feminine Agency

"Remembering the Ladies: Imagining Equalitarianism in Early American Novels of Manners" explores women's rights, obligations, and capacities in the literature of the early republic, while adding to ongoing debates about the influence of fictional representation in terms of effecting progressive social change. Republican novels of manners--including Rebecca Rush's Kelroy: A Novel (1812), John Neal's Keep Cool, A Novel. Written in Hot Weather (1817), and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Redwood: A Tale (1824)--reflect the seemingly conservative socio-political milieu of the bourgeois middle and upper classes; however, they also represent a complicated social climate that questions gender role categorization and negotiates evolving power relations between the sexes. In fact, when debating the relationship between early American novels and their implied audience, literary critics consistently conclude that the affective aspects of these texts are both subversive and conservative. Accepting this finding as a given, we must look beyond the representations of feminine sentimentality and concentrate instead on representations of female capacity.

Literary-critical and historical analyses of the revolutionary and republican eras demonstrate that the woman's sphere, with its concomitant idealization of middle-class female citizenship, emerged as the hegemonic standard by 1830.[1] Linda K. Kerber has definitively described the historical situation in Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (1980): "The domestic function of the preindustrial woman had needed little ideological justification; it was implicit in the biological and

political economy of her world.... [T]here was no sharp disjunction between ideology and practice. But the Revolution was a watershed. It created a public ideology of individual responsibility and virtue just before industrial machinery began to free middle-class women from some of their unremitting toil and to propel lower-class women more fully into the public economy." Therefore, Kerber says, the ideology of republican motherhood fills the conceptual gap: "The terms of domesticity were changed, and pundits could not bring back the past. The best they could do was to assert that properly educated republican women would stay in their homes and, from that vantage point, shape the characters of their sons and husbands in the direction of benevolence, self-restraint, and responsible independence" (231). Woman's sphere ideology becomes exclusively domestic; women's horizons begin to shrink.

In the literature of the period, then, critics observe a similar shutting down as late eighteenth-century revolutionary fervor and Wollstonecraftian feminism devolve into a uniform literary enforcement of romanticized republican motherhood, albeit with a subversive underbelly. In fact, Kerber indicates that the republican idealization retains its power well into the nineteenth century because of its flexibility: "The idea could be pulled in both conservative and reform directions. It would be vulnerable to absorption in the domestic feminism of the Victorian period, to romanticization, even, in the 'cult of true womanhood'" (284).[2] This line of thinking culminates, ultimately, in what Nina Baym has labeled "woman's fiction" (13), which "connect[s] a liberal individualism with a conservative communitarianism in a way that is typical of the antebellum era" (xxviii).[3] The mixed politics of the period's dominant ideology are reflected in our contemporary critical debates about the literature, and--as Kristin Boudreau identifies the terms in

Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses (2002)--we continue to rely on the convenient "subversion-containment paradigm that has governed discussions of American sensibility since 1977, a paradigm that is only now beginning to give way to more subtle readings of the culture" (16).[4] To avoid this dichotomization--that is, rather than reading early American novels as subversively activist or didactically conservative--I concur with Karen Weyler, who identifies the texts as "loci of cultural anxiety and energy" (2) in her 2004 book, Intricate Relations: Sexual and Economic Desire in American Fiction, 1789-1814.[5] In fact, when we insert early nineteenth-century novels of manners into binaristic discussions, we see that concerns about female capacity beyond the domestic sphere remain in the foreground. Republican-era novels of manners posit diverse roles for their implied readers among the female citizenry and reveal that the duties of female citizenship are not yet fully codified in the early decades. By portraying conventional masculine and feminine literary types as representative citizens of the republic, these novels' characters act out productive intercourse between the sexes in an era in which gender roles continue to be debated.

This dissertation argues, therefore, that during this era in which the separate spheres ideology was attaining its hegemony, there remains an alternative line of equalitarian thought--a revolutionary era hangover (stemming from the residual effects of such advances as New Jersey's voting laws, Mercy Otis Warren's history writing, and Judith Sargent Murray's "On the Equality of the Sexes")--that reflects a broad cultural anxiety about the role and nature of women as citizens. In their inventive presentations of incapable and capable female citizens within and beyond the proscriptive dictates of republican motherhood, American novels of manners retain and modify this

revolutionary-era ideal through complex representations of female agency, education, and power. Thus Abigail Adams's evocative dictate to John that he "Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than [his] ancestors" (121), continues to echo throughout the period.[6]

Part 1, Parameters and Background: The Early American Novel

For the purpose of identifying the limits of this study, I am focusing specifically on three texts, which I have classified generically as novels of manners. These novels are not seduction narratives or domestic fictions, nor are they gothic or romantic tales; rather they are hybrids that employ all of these generic conventions. In fact, because the writers themselves identify as their subject the manners of their contemporary social situations, novels of manners is the most appropriate generic designation for these texts.[7] For example, in Charles Brockden Brown's Clara Howard (1801), Hartley imagines Clara reading the work of such a novelist among other generic possibilities: "What are you doing now? Busy, I suppose, in turning over the leaves of some book. Some painter of manners or of nature is before you. Some dramatist, or poet, or historian, furnishes you with occupation" (88). Moreover, Sedgwick entitled her first novel A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New-England Character and Manners (1822), and she specifically defines this genre at the opening of her second novel, Redwood. She begins her Preface by defending "the current literature of the day" through pointing out that its seemingly inconvenient proliferation "is not an unmixed evil, but productive of many advantages" (v). After all, Sedgwick says, "As times and manners change, it must be evident that attempts to describe them must be as constantly renewed and diversified" (vi). She

explains that the "fictitious narrative" plays an important role in recording the current moment because it can "offer the present to our view in great magnitude and strong relief," and she adds that, though certain works will "command attention and respect" beyond the present day, "the course of things nevertheless has been, that as society has advanced, each generation has drawn more and more upon its own immediate resources for intellectual amusement and instruction." Therefore, Sedgwick continues, "It is the peculiar province of that department to denote the passing character and manners of the present time and place" (vii). It is these novels' contemporaneity that makes them unique.[8]

By focusing on republican novels of manners in this dissertation, I am participating in an ongoing critical movement that recognizes a previously overlooked era in the history of the American novel. In terms of the canonical American literary tradition, we remember the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for their aesthetic inadequacy. In October 1852, Emerson recorded the following observation in his journal:

> To write a history of Massachusetts, I confess, is not inviting to an expansive thinker. For, he must shut himself out from three quarters of his mind, & confine himself to one fourth. Since, from 1790-1820, there was not a book, a speech, a conversation, or a thought, in the State. About 1820, the Channing, Webster, & Everett aera began, & we have been bookish & poetical & cogitative since. (440)

Emerson continues the thought in his 1867 lecture, "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England":

> The ancient manners were giving way. There grew a certain tenderness on the people, not before remarked.... There are always two parties, the party of the Past and the party of the Future; the Establishment and the Movement. At times the resistance is reanimated, the schism runs under the world and appears in Literature, Philosophy, Church, State, and social customs. It is not easy to date these eras of activity with any precision, but in this region one made itself remarked, say in 1820 and the twenty years following.... The key to the period appeared to be that the mind had become aware of itself. Men grew reflective and intellectual. There was a new consciousness. (594)[9]

When considered in this context, the first two decades of the nineteenth century in the United States, therefore, become most notable for their lack of the "new consciousness" that is to come. Following Emerson's lead, whether consciously or unconsciously, literary critics typically see works from the period as "proto-" or "lesser than." Looking for the romantic awareness of Byron and Emerson--or, in novels, similar aesthetic and philosophical concerns to those of Godwin, Scott, or Melville--scholars have been largely disappointed by this weak-spirited age. As a result, with the notable exception of the novels of the 1790s and, possibly, the works of Washington Irving, the literary history of the early American novel in the early nineteenth century is relatively neglected.

Nina Baym's influential work Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-70 (1978) provides an influential example of this critical vein. Baym significantly begins her study in 1820. At the beginning of chapter 3, "Catherine Sedgwick and Other Early Novelists"--after briefly mentioning William Hill Brown's

The Power of Sympathy (1789), Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple (1791, 1794), and Hannah Webster Foster's The Coquette (1797)--Baym reports, "It is a sign of woman's improved view of herself that the seduction novel largely disappeared from her reading and writing in the next generation. (Seduction continued to be a staple of sensational men's fiction.)" (51-52). At this point in her discussion, she moves on to Lydia Maria Child's The Mother's Book (1832) and its condemnation of Rowson's novel (52).[10] In addition to this dismissal of the earlier decades of fiction by women, in her Introduction Baym disparages her subject while making her case for non-aesthetic, feminist readings:

> A reexamination of this fiction may well show it to lack the esthetic, intellectual, and moral complexity and artistry that we demand of great literature. I confess frankly that although I found much to interest me in these books, I have not unearthed a forgotten Jane Austen or George Eliot, or hit upon even one novel that I would propose to set alongside The Scarlet Letter. Yet I cannot avoid the belief that "purely" literary criteria, as they have been employed to identify the best American works, have inevitably had a bias in favor of things male.... While not claiming literary greatness for any of the novels introduced in this study, I would like at least to begin to correct such a bias by taking their content seriously. (14-15)[11]

Echoing Baym's qualified praise for early American fiction, Michael Warner in The Letters of the Republic (1990), sums up the standard, critical response to the novels of the early republic:

> Often didactic, seldom unified in plot, even more seldom interested in

> distinctive characterizations, and almost never given to ambiguous resonances of meaning, they are universally regarded as several decades' worth of failures. I do not intend to redeem these novels as triumphs of artistic intention. But I do think that their character and desirability can be better accounted for by treating them as features of a republican sphere rather than a liberal aesthetic. (151-152)

Baym's and Warner's descriptions point to the problem. Until recently, we have not been sure how to read novels that value "broad-based, pervasive bourgeois concerns" before "radical changes in the style and subject matter of American fiction become noticeable" (Weyler 10).

My dissertation notes this literary-historical gap. According to Henri Petter's recovery work in The Early American Novel (1971), "in each of the three decades preceding the year 1821 thirty-odd works of fiction appeared in America" (x). Cathy N. Davidson's investigation in the mid-1980s confirms Petter's estimate that "approximately one hundred novels were written between 1789 and 1820" (viii). Since then, early Americanists have taken up the challenge of reading these early novels, and scholarship on Charles Brockden Brown's novels of the late 1790s is flourishing at this time. In addition, in conjunction with Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America (1986), Oxford University Press created the Early American Women Writers series and published new editions in 1986 of Charlotte Temple and The Coquette under Davidson's editorship. Penguin Classics followed with combined editions of Charlotte Temple and Lucy Temple in 1991 and of The Power of Sympathy and The Coquette in 1996 as well as a 2002 edition of Royall Tyler's The Algerine Captive (1797). As a

result of these various efforts, significant critical scholarship has developed on the American novel of the 1790s. At a glance, therefore, the American novel in the late eighteenth century has good editorial and critical coverage. Alternatively, the early nineteenth century remains less examined--though Oxford's series has prompted new work on Tabitha Gilman Tenney's Female Quixotism (1801, 1992), Rebecca Rush's Kelroy (1812, 1992), and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's A New-England Tale (1822, 1995).[12]

As I have begun to indicate above, such assessments as Baym's and Warner's derive from the problems these texts create in terms of teleology. It has been logical for scholars of the American literary tradition--as it is represented by such influential studies as Leslie Fiedler's Love and Death in the American Novel (1960) and Michael Davitt Bell's The Development of American Romance (1980)--to develop a line of reasoning that links the American Revolution to the revolutionary nature of Charles Brockden Brown's early, gothic work and to the radicalism of the English romantics. From that foundation, critics have been able to connect the earlier works to the romanticism of the American Renaissance and to its heroes Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville. Emory Elliott's Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1724-1810 (1982) particularly illustrates the teleological troubles inherent in such readings. Though he acknowledges that critical "standards of taste have been fashioned by post-Romantic forms and styles" (7), Elliott finally observes, "Perhaps [American writers] would have done better to express their frustrations and yearnings for a new unity through a personal symbolic language, as Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, and Hawthorne did four decades later" (274). In his reading of the literature, "The

Revolutionary generation possessed the literary keys. They were finding their way toward more ironic and elusive forms" (274-275), but they just could not get there.

In Intricate Relations, Weyler elucidates this critical tradition:

> For much of the twentieth century, critics either reviled early American sentimental fiction, damned it with faint praise, or ignored its very existence. Consequently, this denigration of the sentimental enabled literary critics to distinguish Charles Brockden Brown's more "gothic" works--with gothic being used as an adjective to suggest both their political and psychological dimensions--from novels written by other early American writers.

American literary history thus names Brown as the "progenitor of a whole line of nineteenth-century novelists, including Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville." Weyler says that "this temporal dislocation of Brown further underscored his supposed difference from other early novelists: Brown, then, came to be seen as a genius who proleptically anticipated the great American writers of the nineteenth century" (140). Adding the republican novels of the early nineteenth century to this tradition disrupts these lines of influence, and the texts are, in fact, problematic because they tend toward the exterior and the bourgeois. In comparison with the interiorized passion of the works of such authors as Hawthorne or Melville, they do not thrill with the same romantic intensity--and, equally problematic for scholars of the American tradition, they do not operate within highly symbolic systems of representation.[13] Ultimately, when measured against these specific, aesthetic standards, republican novels are ignored as disappointments.[14]

Therefore, when we attempt to connect a number of texts across time--e.g., from

the late eighteenth century to the American Renaissance or even to modernism--critics have tended to explain what we see in the earlier history or literature by looking backward from a desired endpoint. In other words, a literary scholar such as Fiedler labels part one of Love and Death "Prototypes and Early Adaptations"; whereas he entitles part two "Achievement and Frustration." He discusses Brown and Cooper in the first half of his book, and then turns to, among others, Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Twain, and Faulkner in the second. Similarly, a literary historian such as Bell may argue that "[t]he Jamesian sacrifice of relation ... lies at the heart of nineteenth-century American romance" (39), and then use that lens and the "sociology of deviance" (31) to look back to the careers of Brown, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville and to note that, in each of these men's lives, "there is strong evidence that a sense of alienation preceded their choice of literary career" (35).[15] I bring up this issue of teleological assumptions not to accuse Fiedler and Bell of seeing unfeasible designs that are not attendant in the literature. Their works, of course, are seminal. I am commenting, however, that when we read early American novels of manners with our eyes on the American Renaissance rather than on the specific concerns of the republican period, this tendency can lead us to anachronistic interpretations.[16]

One way to combat the interpretive problems associated with teleological fallacies is to limit the scope of research to a particular literary genre and historical setting. Defining parameters in this manner allows for the investigation of the fictional text within its own social universe. In this dissertation, therefore, I study a selection of novels of manners published within 20 years of one another in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. This intermediary American epoch, which falls between the

postrevolutionary period and the antebellum era, could be labeled late-republican in the sense that the founding generation is completing its service during these years while the early antebellum generation is beginning to arise. As William C. Dowling indicates in his monograph Literary Federalism in the Age of Jefferson: Joseph Dennie and The Port Folio, 1801-1812 (1999), the early nineteenth century is a period in which political arguments--about Federalism, about Jeffersonian democracy, about jacobinism--are passionately contested:

> the moral urgency of The Port Folio's warfare against Thomas Jefferson arises from its bleak sense that in America in 1801 there are at work forces never dreamt of in the Athens of Pericles or the Rome of Caesar and Cicero, mysterious energies of social transformation that are in some uncanny sense impersonal, molding men and women and institutions in ways that do not answer to explanation in terms of individual intent or design. (5)

Similarly, though less dramatically, Marshall Foletta's Coming to Terms with Democracy: Federalist Intellectuals and the Shaping of an American Culture (2001) demonstrates that this is a period in which ideas are in flux:

> The argument that during the nineteenth century the communitarian philosophies of classical republicanism contested but gradually succumbed to the radically individualistic doctrines of liberalism has been demonstrated to be far too simple.... It is now clear that they drew on both webs of thought simultaneously; that individuals on both ends of the ideological spectrum drew upon the values and principles of the other

extreme, and that these philosophies were more malleable than rigid....

(12)

Rush's, Neal's, and Sedgwick's novels echo these "mysterious energies of social transformation," these contentious "webs of thought." This moment of national flux produces texts full of fluctuating sentiments.

The republican novels of manners included in this dissertation, therefore, are significant because they offer their early twenty-first century readers an intimate look at the cultural tastes and social concerns of the early nineteenth-century reading public in the United States. Although overlooked until its republication in the 1990s, Rush's Kelroy is easily accessible to the early American scholarly community and has garnered recent critical attention. Sedgwick's Redwood is lesser known due to the fact that it has not had a recent paperback reissue--though there have been two twentieth-century facsimile reprints, one by Garrett Press in 1969 and one by MSS Information Corp. in 1972. My work on Neal's Keep Cool is unique: at this time only the original edition from 1817 is available and virtually no critical scholarship exists. As a basis for my own discussion, I have chosen these three authors because their fictional productions explore gender relations while debating the role of the middle-class, bourgeois American female citizen. Each offers new points of access for further investigation into representations of female citizenship. Each echoes Abigail Adams's unheard plea to "Remember the Ladies" and takes seriously the competency of woman as citizen.[17]

Among studies of the early American novel, Julia Stern's The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel (1997) and Elizabeth Barnes's States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel (1997) are important to

my own thinking about the early American novel because their works exemplify the ongoing influence of the subversion-containment paradigm in critical discussions of the affective power of this fiction. In fact, Stern's work demonstrates that the fiction of the 1790s is empowering for its readers; whereas Barnes's work shows us that the fiction of the postrevolutionary and antebellum periods is "disciplinary" and "[arises] out of the psychological interplay of real and imagined feeling" (18).

The novels of the 1790s, in Stern's configuration, give "their newly constituted American audience a gothic and feminized set of counternarratives to read against the male-authored manifest accounts of national legitimation." They express the ghost-voices of the disenfranchised other, the "non-citizens--women, the poor, Native Americans, African Americans, and aliens" (2). In addition, Stern sees herself as empowering the critically disenfranchised when she draws attention to the two women authors in her study. She suggests that, "in reading the work of the two Browns against that of Rowson and Foster, and in acknowledging the seriousness of the female writer's emphasis on feeling as a literary subject," she can "propose the unlikely existence of a fiction-making community in which [Charles Brockden] Brown figures as (feminized) inheritor rather than as (masculine) progenitor" (3).

In The Plight of Feeling, Stern reads the novels of William Hill Brown, Rowson, Foster, and Charles Brockden Brown as expressions of the profound grief experienced by Americans while they lived through a decade flanked by the French Revolution at one end and the Jeffersonian election at the other (4). She says that these texts allow Americans to mourn "for the violence of the Revolution itself and for post-Revolutionary disorder and social exclusion." In this manner, "Charlotte Temple not only makes

spectacular the notion that the Founding of the republic is a melancholic formation; it actually transforms the experience of grief into an affective ground that might allow Americans to imagine the nation as an egalitarian space" (8). Stern invests the fiction with additional force: the gendered "dialectic of voice against vision" in these epistolary texts (17)--the "dialectic of inclusion against exclusion" (3)--pushes beyond the "aspiration that 'we the people' could come to speak one voice." These texts point to "a less coherent and more democratic vision of sympathetic communion. The republican novel fancies that, however fleetingly, Americans might imaginatively contemplate if not actually assume one another's political perspectives" (5).[18] For Stern, as for Jane Tompkins, these texts do significant "cultural work" (35, 116).[19]

In contrast to Stern's study of the "power of genuine sympathy" (2), Barnes's States of Sympathy explores the problematic double-bind of sympathetic identification: by privileging connection, sympathy elides difference. She discusses multiple genres, but primarily reads the novels of the 1790s (seduction narratives) against the post-1820 novels of the antebellum period (domestic fictions): "Examining philosophical and political texts along side literary ones, we see the extent to which sentiment and sympathy pervade early national culture" (2).[20] Barnes begins with the Declaration of Independence and its "surprising conflation of the personal and the political body--a vision of 'the people' as a single and independent entity, asserting its liberal privilege in a body at once collective and individual" (1). Accordingly, when Jefferson imagines "the people," he really imagines himself, and thus "his claim that 'all men are created equal' epitomizes the power of sentimental representation--a power to reinvent others in one's own image." Such a maneuver denies diversity and privileges familiarity, and, as Barnes

notes, "sympathy is both the expression of familiarity and the vehicle through which familiarity is created." Within this concept of the body politic, the public and the private become conflated, and this "conversion of the political into the personal ... is a distinctive trait of sentimentalism; its influence is made plain in the postrevolutionary and antebellum eras where *family* stands as the model for social and political affiliations. In American fiction and nonfiction alike, familial feeling proves the foundations for sympathy, and sympathy the foundation for democracy" (2). This "familial model" devalues diversity as does sentimental literature, which "teaches a particular way of reading both texts and people that relies on likeness and thereby reinforces homogeneity. In the sentimental scheme of sympathy, others are made real--and thus cared for--to the extent that they can be shown in *relation* to the reader" (4).

In a critique, therefore, of Jane Tompkins's argument that "personal feeling has its own political power" (16), Barnes "challenges the idea that female bonding offers a new and liberating alternative to the seductive practices of a male-dominated culture. When tied to a familial model of politics, sympathetic identification inevitably traps the individual in a cycle of history bound to repeat itself" (17). This sympathy is neither a masculine nor a feminine quality: Barnes "seek[s] to move beyond readings of 'men's' and 'women's' fiction as separate but equal strains in American letters by demonstrating the extent to which sympathy contributes to a sentimental vision of union that eventually becomes the ideal for both men *and* women." Crediting Nancy Armstrong's argument in Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (1987), she explains that "sentimental literature articulates a culture's preoccupation with particular 'qualities of mind.' In American literature, these qualities--including sympathy, suggestibility, and

filial devotion--become foregrounded in narratives by and about men as well as women" (13). She describes sympathy as "self-government" (127n1) or as an "affective form of disciplinary control" (8) and engages with Adam Smith to credit him with a proto-Foucaldian approach: "In a move that anticipates Foucault's study of modern disciplinary forms, sympathy is revealed to be a self-regulating practice. What we might call conscience, and what Smith refers to as the 'impartial spectator' or 'the man within the breast,' is an agent of disciplinary sympathy arising out of the psychological interplay of real and imagined feeling" (18). In this manner, the democratic threat is assuaged and "patriarchal authority regains access to the American imagination after the fact of revolution" (9).[21]

With their equally viable and yet differing perspectives on early American novels and their affective power, such scholars as Stern and Barnes are participating in what Laura Wexler calls the "widely influential Douglas-Tompkins debate on the literary value of American domestic fiction" (9).[22] Whether the effect of sentimentality is either productively affective or detrimentally futile depends upon the implicit social power of the entity in question. I again cite Kristin Boudreau and point to the fact that there is no "either/or answer" to the question as to "whether sympathy complies with or subverts hegemonic operations. Douglas's answer is that sentimentality is conservative and ineffective; Tompkins contended that it was socially subversive and that it empowered previously disenfranchised people like women and slaves" (16-17). At this point, our thinking must evolve beyond the strategically antithetical positions of the subversion-containment paradigm in order to recognize "the complicated nature of sympathy, its effects on the spectator, the spectacle, and the culture" (17). In this dissertation I engage

in this critical dialogue by considering representations of female capacity. I read Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood as both contributory and resistant, both marking and adding to understandings of affective behavioral standards in the period. These texts moderate "the breakdown of traditional patriarchal structures attending revolution" (Barnes 9) even as they allow readers "to imagine the nation as an egalitarian space" (Stern 8).

However, I also see the writer-narrators of such texts as sophisticated cultural players in the sense that they are not as defensive about the value of their fictions as their earlier eighteenth-century counterparts. Rush, Neal, and Sedgwick betray less narratorial anxiety about their novels' generic status than do William Hill Brown, Rowson, and Foster, and they are seemingly less fearful about being misread as promoters of immoral behavior. In fact, as Weyler says in Intricate Relations, the earlier, eighteenth-century worry about the genre's inadequacy has begun to lose its potency in the early nineteenth century because fiction has become a ubiquitous part of the culture of reading:

> Even those periodicals that inveighed most bitterly against the novel were guilty of using fiction to attract readers and bulk up their numbers, just as those same periodicals were likely to include advertisements for their sale. Robert B. Winans argues, in fact, "By the 1780's and 1790's, the amount of fiction printed in the magazines far outweighed the number of essays denouncing it." (6)

Weyler adds that, "while the novel itself met with considerable hostility from some camps, the American anti-novel sentiment has perhaps been overemphasized..." (7). She points out that readers in the period did not carefully differentiate between the genres: "In late eighteenth-century newspapers, for example, novels were advertised alongside

political, economic, and religious works; frequently there was no differentiation between fictional and nonfictional works except by subtitle, if that. They were simply 'books for sale'" (11).

Part 2, Republican Bourgeois Culture and Ideology

Although they occasionally mention the social disruptions and economic costs resulting from the contemporary political situation--e.g., the Napoleonic expansion, the War of 1812, the institution of slavery, and the growth of international trade--such books as Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood operate within a worldview dominated by the bourgeois ideals of republican motherhood and patrician masculinity and tend to shy away from radical reimaginings of the political and economic structures from which their class generally benefited.[23] As David Leverenz defines the terms in Manhood and the American Renaissance (1989), these novels operate within the "patrician paradigm," reflecting "older ideologies of genteel patriarchy and artisan independence" that are indicative of the era in question but that, particularly after 1820, "were being challenged by a new middle-class ideology of competitive individualism" (3).[24] Though overtly set in the United States, these novels are Anglo-American in their outlook and they portray bourgeois concerns in the pre-Jacksonian era. Leverenz explains:

> The patrician paradigm defined manhood through property, patriarchy, and citizenship. It was the ideology of a narrow elite: merchants, gentry, large landowners, lawyers--in old English as well as old Marxist perspective, the upper bourgeoisie. Its manly ideal of character, public service, and paternalism has much in common with British aristocratic

> ideals of honor, though with much more emphasis on sturdy independence, except in the South.... The artisan paradigm defined manhood in Jeffersonian terms, as autonomous self-sufficiency. A man worked his land or his craft with integrity and freedom.

According to Leverenz, the two ideologies worked together, and, both paradigms operate effectively "with mercantile capitalism, which depended for its raw materials on independent yeomen farmers and whose characteristic mode of production was the small patriarchal village shop" (78). Leverenz's book is about the shift away from these symbiotic relationships as the competitive, entrepreneurial economic model becomes the standard: "Though a good many tensions emerge from the continuing interdependence of artisan and patrician classes, ... I argue that the basic class conflict between 1825 and 1850 comes with the rise of a new middle class, for whom manhood is based much more exclusively in work and entrepreneurial competition" (74). This shift profoundly affects the writers of the American Renaissance and their relationship with their readers because, as literary writers, they are victims of an economy that does not value their productions--and their writings reflect "the self-consciousness of being deviant from prevailing norms of manhood." They must break away from "'polite' English models" (15) and "from upper-class British conventions of taste, wit, and polish" (41) and "struggle with, rather than dismiss, the middle-class ideology of manhood taking hold in American public life" (15).[25]

In the earlier period, however--although the entrepreneurial model of manhood is developing--such American novels as Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood do not manifest this alienated and competitive relationship with their readers, either male or female.

They are less aggressive and more polite. Perhaps that is why in 1817 John Neal sets this first novel within New York drawing-room society and develops the story of a heroic English soldier of noble descent, despite the fact that he is in the process of commencing his career as an advocate for a purely American literature.[26] The male and female characters of Keep Cool are aristocratic- and patrician-identified as is their implied audience. The novel is populated by the members of a social "circle" that can be summoned at the touch of a bell (1: 150). The same can be said of Rush's and Sedgwick's circles of characters. Intriguingly, James Fenimore Cooper begins his career in 1820 with Precaution, a novel of manners set in England, which passed for an English novel in Britain and, in the words of William Cullen Bryant, "was a professed delineation of English manners, though the author had seen nothing of English society" (ix).[27] In Neal's "Unpublished Preface"--which was "originally intended for the NORTH AMERICAN STORIES" (v) and was actually published as a second preface to Rachel Dyer in 1828--he offers this succinct evaluation of "the great REPUBLIC OF LETTERS" (xviii): "Our best writers are English writers, not American writers. They are English in everything they do, and in everything they say, as authors--in the structure and moral of their stories, in their dialogue, speech and pronunciation, yea in the very characters they draw" (xv). Whether we care to identify the early American novel of manners as specifically British or not, this Englishness could account for some of our contemporary critical aversion to these texts, even with the late twentieth-century developments of transatlantic and postcolonial studies. It certainly irritated Neal and Emerson as they attempted to define a national literature.

However, within the context of their Anglo-patrician politeness, this "new

American bourgeoisie" (Smith-Rosenberg 269)--as characterized in republican novels of manners--also retains a certain revolutionary-era hopefulness about female capacity and women's roles. Such American women's histories as Nancy F. Cott's classic The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1770-1835 (1977) and Kerber's more recent No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship (1998) demonstrate that women writers and their male counterparts in the early nineteenth century do contemplate and articulate the socio-political options available to republican women. The ideology of republican motherhood that dominates women's sense of citizenship in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries campaigns for a certain amount of feminine power by asserting that women are the keepers of republican virtue, and yet, as Kerber notes, this role "provided no outlet for women to affect a real political decision. If women were no longer prepolitical, they certainly were not fully political. The image of the Republican Mother could be used to mask women's true place in the polis: they were still on its edges" (Women 12). Therefore, although republican motherhood empowers women as the educators of men and themselves, Kerber's point is that the ideology is inherently conservative and that it supports a line of thought in which the republican mother morphs into the nineteenth century angel of the household. However, even as republican motherhood becomes the established ideal, Kerber also shows us that women could imagine other potential futures.[28] In No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies, she asserts: "It is not anachronistic to raise this point. It *was* possible in the mid-eighteenth century to conceive of alternatives.... Women merchants had long established themselves in town commercial life. They owned stores and traded goods; a few ran newspapers" (9-10). Dana D.

Nelson offers a similar observation in her Introduction to Rush's novel: "Philadelphia records are full of instances of women who *did* succeed in a variety of businesses, like Jane Aitken, who took over her father's failing printing press from her brother and printed Kelroy" in 1812 (xii). Moreover, we need only look to the fact that single women in New Jersey were given the right to vote from 1776-1807 or to Murray's 1790 essay "On the Equality of the Sexes" to see that women at the turn of the century were hoping for a future beyond coverture.[29]

In The Bonds of Womanhood, Cott points to "two reforming interpretations of the woman's role" in this period. On the one hand, Wollstonecraft and Murray's "equalitarian feminist view" of women "stressed women's common humanity with men and their equal endowment with mental and moral powers; it denied no venture to women categorically because of their sex" (202).[30] On the other hand, the "program of the woman's sphere" contains a different sexual logic. Cott explains, "Its formulators detoured the question of sexual equality by stressing sexual propriety" (202), and this formulation became a dominant one:

> The success of the Second Great Awakening ensured that belief in woman's sphere, not equalitarian feminism, would dominate the first several decades of the nineteenth century. Following the logic of the woman's sphere, women developed an instrumental conception of their gender role (c. 1800-1830) and a new group consciousness based upon it. (203)

In other words, females are useful, active, and involved citizens because, as educators of future male citizens, they mold the character of the republic to be. This "instrumental

view" knocks the "feminist ideal" to the background and, "by accentuating the difference between men and women," avoids "the question of inferiority and superiority" (203). Although "the program of the woman's sphere" allows "a range of specific choices for venturesome women so long as they subsumed these under the rubric of *female* duties (that is, preserving the home, caring for the young or helpless, upholding morality or religion)" (203-204), it also has "severe limits" because--though they become instrumental to the development of the republic--the basic problem of women's secondary status is never resolved (204).

The situation is ultimately untenable because, Cott says, "as the ideology of woman's sphere improved women's education, it built tension in its own boundaries."[31] Therefore, the segregation encourages feminism to reemerge:

> The internal dynamics of woman's sphere, by encouraging women to claim a social role according to their sex and to share both social and sexual solidarity, provoked a minority of women to see and protest those boundaries. Organized feminism in the following decades was a revolution of rising expectations. The dual bonds of womanhood in woman's sphere prompted the reappearance of the equalitarian feminist view, on a substantial social base, after 1835. (204)

So, what happens in those three interim decades at the beginning of the nineteenth century? The logic of Cott's well-constructed historical binary points to the republican era as necessarily transitional in terms of women's roles; therefore, in our literary-critical readings of the period's texts, we should see these dual strands of thought, both intellectual-equalitarian feminism and woman's sphere instrumentalism, operating

simultaneously, and--as confirmed by the prevalence of the subversion-containment paradigm--the texts do reflect the dual nature of the historical transition from late eighteenth-century equalitarianism to woman's sphere instrumentalism. By the mid-nineteenth century--when the proponents of women's equalitarian activism and the conservators of "True Womanhood," as Barbara Welter defines it, engage in their ideological battles--new terrain has emerged.

Part 3, Representing Female Capacity: Instrumental Equalitarianism

Ultimately, we must differentiate between (1.) the intellectual equalitarianism of Wollstonecraft and Murray, (2.) the later women's rights advocacy of Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and (3.) the ideology informing representations of equalitarian thought in the early nineteenth century. Such writers as Rush, Neal, and Sedgwick illustrate women's capacity and even display women's equality with their male counterparts, but their narrators and characters do not radically subvert nor fundamentally conserve the status quo. At this time, therefore, I propose a new descriptor for the contemporary attitudes reflected in these texts. Early American novels reveal another mode of thinking about female citizenship, an "instrumental equalitarianism," that reflects anxiety about but also encourages confidence in women's self-sufficiency.[32] The instrumental-equalitarian paradigm differs from Baym's formulation in Woman's Fiction because it accounts for the external nature of these texts--that is, in these novels, narrators tell stories about characters but do not offer substantial access to the characters' interior psychologizing--without limiting the discussion by denigrating their presentational mode. For example, although Baym describes Sedgwick as one of the earliest representatives of

woman's fiction, we do better when we consider her novels of manners within the context of the early nineteenth century. Baym's label implies a post-romantic sense of selfhood that is not as apparent in the earlier fiction. In her Introduction to the second edition, Baym specifically defines the novels contained in her guide as promoters of female individualism and self-reliance:

> Woman's Fiction describes its subject as feminist in some sense because the novels advocated an individualism that had not traditionally been a woman's option; I perceive the novels as meaning to perform, and performing, emancipatory work by persuading women readers to insist on their right to personhood.... The protagonists are constructed as individuals through an expansion of their interior life and self-consciousness--they think, therefore they are. (xxi)

Instrumental-equalitarian fiction, in contrast, prioritizes external moral action over internal self-reflection. In fact, Baym says, "Women's fiction written after Sedgwick tended to be influenced by a romantic ideology; although it did not revert to sensibility, it put a stress on psychological struggle and the inner life completely lacking in the novels by Sedgwick" (61). In Baym's reading, then, A New-England Tale, Redwood, and Clarence indicate their deficiency, due to the external presentation of their heroine's personas, rather than demonstrate their engagement with a different ideological paradigm. Such narrators as Sedgwick's, whose female characters exemplify the instrumental-equalitarian model of American womanhood, report on these characters' successes or failures in terms of external evidence of moral behavior. As they face situations that disrupt their emotional equanimity or, worse yet, antagonists who question their

honorable conduct, instrumental-equalitarian protagonists rise to the occasion without panicking or falling into passionate excess, but rarely do we see the unmediated thoughts and processes that make such instances of internal self-management possible. Moreover, these texts posit an equality of merit that is neither exclusively masculine nor feminine: capacity for moral or immoral action is not specifically gendered, and both female and male characters are presented as useful models of realistically correct manners or as anti-models of absurdly incorrect behavior.

Early novels of manners--as opposed to woman's fiction or to sentimental, domestic, romantic, or historical novels--are particularly conducive to multivalent socio-historical readings due to the transitional nature of the early nineteenth century and because they overtly address contemporaneous social issues and emphasize what their narrators describe as realism. As Weyler points out, "Early American fiction reflects the values of its time, as novelists--both male and female--experimented with narrative authority as a means of commenting on rapidly-changing social conditions" (19); the novels, therefore, attempt to reproduce the culture:

> Although novels written prior to the second decade of the nineteenth century are certainly not ideologically consistent--some texts espouse conservative messages, while others seem subversive or even quite liberal, and still others are so unstable that they simultaneously illustrate the constraining and liberalizing tendencies present in the culture at large--Intricate Relations posits that broad-based, pervasive bourgeois concerns, as well as narrative style, unite these works. (10)

Weyler's subtitle, Sexual and Economic Desire in American Fiction, 1789-1814,

elucidates her major emphases. In her analogous equation, the sexual realm is to women as the economic realm is to men--and both men and women are chastised for excessive behavior in each of these separate spheres. I concur with Weyler's assessment of the "sometimes progressive, sometimes oppressive, development of bourgeois subjectivity" (19); however--rather than focusing on the segregated spheres of sex and economics--my concern is with female agency or feminine capacity, especially in those moments when female characters attempt to find their way through typically male situations or to operate outside of prescribed gender roles. For example, in Rush's Kelroy--a cautionary tale about a widow who fails to navigate the masculine realm because she cannot control her temper--the narrator indicates an instrumental-equalitarian worldview through her self-identification as a "moralist" (7) as well as through the presentation of a secondary, well-balanced character named Helen Cathcart. In contrast, in Neal's Keep Cool--a comic satire about men and women governing their passions while manipulating social relationships--the narrator sets women against men in a battle of the sexes that implies women are as capable as men when negotiating challenges of wit and passion. Finally, in the exemplary Redwood--"a sketch of the character and manners of the people of this country" (x)--Sedgwick's narrator presents various models of instrumental-equalitarian American womanhood, particularly through her characterizations of the novel's independent heroines, Ellen Bruce and Deborah Lenox. Moreover, Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood show that late eighteenth-century equalitarian feminism does not fade out and then reappear in 1835, but rather that "the question of inferiority and superiority" (Cott 203) remains in the foreground because these writers continue to be influenced by earlier debates about women's capacity for equality with men. Ultimately Baym concurs

with this reading of the literature: "prominent Victorian-American women of letters ... who came to adulthood in the 1820s when the ideology of republican womanhood continued to exert some power expressed themselves with particular force; their Victorianism supplemented and complicated rather than supplanted their Enlightenment republicanism" ("Between" 39).[33]

The key here is that these novels offer, for the period, potentially realistic representations of female agency in addition to and contrasted against the romanticized or sentimentalized portrayals of womanhood with which contemporary novel readers were already familiar.[34] Contemporaneous critical debates about novels and about American literature indicate that representations are valued as realistic when they enable moral reflection rather than simply exciting a thrilling response. For example, though he relies on gothic conventions in his work, in the Preface to Arthur Mervyn, Brown refers to himself as a "moral observer" and explains that he "has ventured to methodize his own reflections" on the "evils of pestilence" prompted by the epidemic of 1793. He plans "to deliver to posterity a brief but faithful sketch of the condition of this metropolis during that calamitous period" (231). Bryan Waterman points out that this stance puts Brown's "novelistic enterprise on a plane with the observational practices carried out by his scientific friends" (240), and this classification of novelist-as-moralist and realistic observer is evident in contemporary criticism of the genre.[35] In an 1817 review of Keep Cool in The Portico, the critic addresses the following common complaint about American novels in comparison with their British counterparts: "It is said, that the quiet tranquillity of our domestick scenes, do not furnish incidents of sufficient interest or variety, to form the groundwork of an agreeable tale." The United States lacks

mysterious and "venerable Castles," "haughty Barons," "proud Chiefs whose *clans* are in eternal strife," and "furious Banditti, who keep a whole province in awe." The critic continues by redefining the genre along realistic lines:

> But it is not in painting from such scenes as these, that a writer can expect to give his Novel the character of excellence. The most useful lessons of wisdom are those which are derived from the most natural and most common occurrences. The conversations at the family fire-side of an American farmer, may supply as many subjects to the moralist, as those in the drawing-room of a noble lord. (162)

The Portico reviewer here emphasizes a frequently repeated sentiment in the period: until American novelists present "natural" and "common" portraits that draw on domestic sources, the United States will not have a literature of its own nor will novelists' "lessons of wisdom" prove to be applicably useful. The novelist-as-moralist must offer realistic scenes to encourage mimetically moral response. He continues:

> In fact, human nature is the same every where, and the more closely the writer of a Novel copies nature in the delineation of his characters, the more powerful will be the impression of the moral, which it is his business to deduce, from their examples. It is on this account that the Novels of Fielding, Richardson and Smollett, hold so high a rank in English literature. Their pictures are correct resemblances of real life. Every reader who looks into them, will find something that he has seen in his daily intercourse with his neighbors. (162)

After this discourse on the genre and the tradition of "correct resemblances of real life" in

English novels and their universal appeal, The Portico's critic compliments Keep Cool's writer for characters "such as have occurred within the knowledge of almost every reader" (163). At the conclusion of the review, he returns to his thesis: "There is not so much variety of *incident*, as the mere novel-reader would expect to find; but there is, what is of more value, a greater regard to verisimilitude, than is to be met with in most modern novels" (169). For this reader, in a real sense, the truth is in there: the literature is correct because it accurately reflects the social scene and encourages proper moral reflection.

Sedgwick's contemporary reviewers similarly comment on her realistic characters and her natural portrayals of American incidents. In an 1824 review of Redwood in The Atlantic Magazine, for example, the critic states unequivocally that "we recognize what we have all seen and heard and observed, but what no one has so faithfully depicted," and then he goes on to compliment the author for "the fidelity of every scene to nature" (236). William Cullen Bryant discusses novels "founded on domestic incidents" (247) in his 1825 review of Redwood, and he pushes the point further by positioning "the novel of real life" (251) as a conduit for transatlantic, intercultural learning:

> By superadding, to the novelty of the manners described, the interest of a narrative, they create a sort of illusion, which places [the foreign reader] in the midst of the country where the action of the piece is going on. He beholds the scenery of a distant land, hears its inhabitants conversing about their own concerns in their own dialect, finds himself in the bosom of its families, is made the depository of their secrets, and the observer of their fortunes, and becomes an inmate of their firesides without stirring

> from his own. Thus it is that American novels are eagerly read in Great Britain, and novels descriptive of English and Scottish manners as eagerly read in America. (250-251)

These critics value what American writers such as Rush, Neal, and Sedgwick have presented to the public because their novels are realistic in the sense that they are representative of the contemporary American scene. This is not the psychological realism of Henry James or Edith Wharton but rather a realism that suggests typicality. These novels describe American settings and citizens of the United States in a period when domestic literary critics are working diligently in their periodicals to distinguish American productions from their contemporary and antecedent British competitors. As these selected excerpts indicate, the critics appreciate the verisimilitude of the characters because they reflect American manners, and they applaud the realism of the novels because these texts define and disseminate American moral ideals.

To return to the primary concern of this dissertation, then, in early American novels of manners the various narrators and characters comment on women's capacities within a realistic social setting that is familiar to their readers. Rush's Kelroy, Neal's Keep Cool, and Sedgwick's Redwood reflect an instrumental-equalitarian view of American women's roles, and each of these novels indicates that there are possible alternatives to the singularly defined function of republican motherhood and its reinforcement of the subordinating code of female coverture. In each of the following chapters, I focus on one novel of manners to illustrate an approach that looks beyond the strictures of the established subversion-containment paradigm, thereby elucidating the ideology of instrumental equalitarianism that these novels make evident. In these

readings, I indicate that these texts' narrators comment on the contemporary limitations and capacities of their female characters, thus adapting revolutionary-era equalitarian thought to republican debates about feminine agency. Representations of republican women do cross beyond the woman's sphere and even into the masculine realm, but this equalitarian agency is tempered by characters who act with moral certitude and without disproportionate emotional excess. If the subversion paradigm enables literary critics to uncover radical messages of feminist empowerment implanted in the subtext of early American fiction, whereas the containment paradigm illustrates how to expose conservative messages of punitive didacticism and social control; then the instrumental-equalitarian lens focuses on images of feminine capacity and incapacity, first, to complicate the binary and, second, to consider what roles these novels' narrators imagine American women can usefully embody without creating female characters that cross the boundaries of reality. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate this middle way.

In chapter two, "Feminine Intellectual Equalitarianism and the Moral Elite in Rebecca Rush's Kelroy (1812)," I point to the narrator's self-identification as a "pensive moralist" and posit that, by claiming such a position, Rush's novelist-as-moralist equates herself with what Marshall Foletta defines as "the moral elite," thus taking on the work of "provid[ing] direction and leadership for those less skilled" (70). In Kelroy, therefore, Rush instructs her readers by contrasting two unrealistic characters, the moody Mrs. Hammond and the sentimentalized Emily, against a more balanced, instrumental-equalitarian heroine, Helen Cathcart. Rush's characterization of this secondary heroine attests to the value of a well-developed moral sensibility when combined with thoughtful refection and informed by a good education. Though the sentimental heroine cannot

survive the narrative, the more intellectual and well-balanced Helen lives on, not only to bear witness to the tragedy, but also to be rewarded with an equalitarian marriage.

In chapter three, "Dueling with the Female Reader: The American Fair and John Neal's Countrywomen in Keep Cool (1817)," I argue that Neal's narrator's equalitarian engagement with his audience encourages female readers to act as instruments for their own interpretations as they judge the novel's various characters. Neal's novel rambles amiably, but at its core his narrator delivers two stories: one that centers on the hero Henri Sydney and his antagonist Charles Percy, which explores the horrifying effects of dueling and, in this manner, attempts to please those conventional readers who require such officious instruction; and one that follows Elizabeth Granville, Louisa Courtly, and Laura St. Vincent, which portrays the marriage market as a battle of the sexes and, in so doing, aspires to entertain his fellow citizens, his countrywomen--that is, those "smart girl[s]" (1: 38), who "are one of the jury" (1: 31), and fully capable of "understand[ing] *trap*" (2: 96). In this comic novel of manners, this trio of female characters all find their happy endings in marriage; through his characterizations of the less conventional Mrs. Granville and Laura St. Vincent, however, Neal's narrator presents a fiction that explores instrumental-equalitarian American womanhood while pushing the boundaries of bourgeois gentility.

In chapter four, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick's 'Novel of Real Life': Instrumental Action and Equalitarian Agency in Redwood (1824)," I discuss the instrumental-equalitarian model of American womanhood by focusing on the actions of a pair of independently minded female agents, Ellen Bruce and Deborah Lenox. Although she relies on sentimental and romantic conventions to forward the action of her complicated

plot, Sedgwick's novel is also an experiment in genre as she attempts to craft a "novel of real life." The narrator relies on a knowing and, at times, dramatic irony to engage with the reader of her fiction, while she simultaneously portrays realistic American situations with an underlying instrumental morality that reinforces bourgeois republican values. Thus Sedgwick's novel is ultimately neither feminist nor conservative. The Unitarian daughter of a Federalist-Calvinist father strikes a middle ground, and yet--even as Sedgwick's Aunt Debby represents an outmoded revolutionary independence and her Ellen does not have the radical foresight to imagine a Seneca Falls-style activism--her characters' practical contributions portray the indispensable value of autonomous American women in the early nineteenth century.

Notes

[1] See Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (203-204); Kerber, Women of the Republic (276); Kerber, No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies (34-36). For Kerber, the ideology of republican motherhood continues well into the 20th century. She comments, "It would be revived as a rallying point for twentieth-century Progressive women reformers, who saw their commitment to honest politics, efficient urban sanitation, and pure food and drug laws as an extension of their responsibilities as mothers" (Women 284). In No Constitutional Right, Kerber traces its influence through to the 1990s: "Over the years, one by one, the legacies of the old law of domestic relations were attacked by the argument that difference was not privilege; that different treatment left women vulnerable, not protected.... Not until 1992 did the Supreme Court specifically announce that it would no longer recognize the power of husbands over the bodies of their wives. That is the moment when coverture, as a living legal principle died" (307).

[2] Barbara Welter's influential 1966 article in American Quarterly established the antebellum "complex of virtues which made up True Womanhood":

> The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues--piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife--woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power. (152)

[3] See Baym, Women's Fiction: "Works of the genre I am calling women's fiction

meet three conditions. They are written by women, are addressed to women, and tell one particular story about women. They chronicle the 'trials and triumphs' (as the subtitle of one example reads) of a heroine who, beset with hardships, finds within herself the qualities of intelligence, will, resourcefulness, and courage sufficient to overcome them. The genre began in America with Catharine Sedgwick's A New England Tale (1822), manifested itself as the favorite reading matter of the American public in the unprecedented sales of Susan Warner's Wide, Wide World (published late in 1850), and remained the dominant fictional type until after 1870" (22).

[4] From this point forward, I will use Boudreau's expression without additional attribution.

[5] See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Black Gothic: The Shadowy Origins of the American Bourgeoisie." She notes that "the novel is a particularly useful genre for historians in search of the play of ideological contradiction and rhetorical confusion." She continues, "Its evocative nature intensifies its ability to enact discursive inconsistencies and social conflict. While the prescriptive genres of a culture--sermons, advice books, political magazines--seek to repress ambiguity, the novel plays on dangerous desires. Ultimately affirming the permissible, it makes its readers familiar with the forbidden and the transgressive" (248-249n15).

[6] In her 31 March 1776 letter to John, Abigail writes, "I long to hear that you have declared an independency--and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could"

(121).

[7] Moreover, the novels fit within the generic designation in the sense that we use the term today. To quote Holman and Harmon's accepted standard, the novel of manners is "dominated by social customs, manners, conventions, and habits of a definite social class. In the true *novel of manners* the mores of a specific group, described in detail and with great accuracy, become powerful controls over characters. The *novel of manners* is often, although by no means always, satiric; it is always realistic, however" (325). The term "realistic" may require some interrogation; however, in the present context, I am content to think of these texts as realistic expressions of social behavior written in the sentimental mode.

[8] In her discussion of Sedgwick's Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times (1830), Patricia Larson Kalayjian makes a similar point: when we classify such novels "as domestic fiction, our assumptions disable us, for we discover only that which we know we will find. We fail to entertain the notion that the text might be experimental and groundbreaking, a nascent novel of manners, one of the first novels of the city, and within each of these subgenres, a powerful and insightful critique of contemporary society" (105).

[9] Foletta draws attention to Emerson's comments in Coming to Terms with Democracy. He points out that Emerson "credited the [North American] Review's Edward Everett with contributing to the breaking up of this intellectual sterility" (9).

[10] Julia Stern and Elizabeth Barnes have similar omissions: although their books theoretically could include the first two decades of the nineteenth century, they avoid engaging with the American novel in this period. Stern purposely limits her scope to the

novels of the 1790s; however, The Plight of Feeling posits "a collective mourning over the violence of the Revolution and the preemption of liberty in the wake of the post-Revolutionary settlement" (2). Therefore, her larger point--that "the early American novel brilliantly animates the notion that the Federalist epoch is 'an age of passion,' dominated by hate, anger, fear, and, most hauntingly, grief" (1)--should bear out in the republican period, considering its own political conflicts and the continuing influence of Federalist concerns. States of Sympathy technically covers the early nineteenth century; however, like many critics before her, Barnes actually jumps from the postrevolutionary period to the antebellum period. She does allude to the 00s and 10s: "Nina Baym has shown that popular seduction fiction declined in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, to be superseded by the domestic novel's female bildungsroman of legitimate love and happy marriage" (11). The problem is, as I have indicated, that neither Baym in the cited study (Woman's Fiction) nor Barnes delves into those "first two decades."

[11] In her 1993 Introduction Woman's Fiction, 2nd ed., Baym modifies her earlier assertion. She emphatically points out that she "did not mean that [she] has not found a 'great book' in some universal sense." Baym continues, "I used the first person pronoun to convey that the books did not fit the literary criteria that I myself had been trained to use" (xv).

[12] Clearly we are on the move at this time. In fact, researchers in the rapidly expanding area of early American postcolonial studies mark our forward progress. For example, Edward Watts's Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic (1998) contains extended discussions of Hugh Henry Brackenridge's Modern Chivalry (1792-1815) as well as George Watterston's novel The Lawyer (1808). In addition, Michael

Drexler is currently working on a new edition of Leonora Sansay's Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo (1808) and Laura (1809). Postcolonial studies in this period have proliferated. See Robert Blair St. George, ed., Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America (2002). In that collection, Smith-Rosenberg reads Arthur Mervyn (1799-1800) against Leonora Sansay's Zelica (1820). See also, Malini Johar Schueller and Edward Watts, eds, Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies (2003). Drexler's article in that anthology, "Brigands and Nuns: The Vernacular Sociology of Collectivity after the Haitian Revolution" (2003), also looks at Sansay's and Charles Brockden Brown's novelistic discussions of the Haitian Revolution.

[13] As Leverenz reminds us, "F. O. Matthiessen repeatedly emphasizes the American tradition of 'Protestant inwardness,' in contrast to the English tradition of social stratification and manners, as an enabling frame for the American Renaissance." Posited in his classic study in 1941, Matthiessen's influential thesis cannot include or account for early American novels of manners, and his work "set the direction for a generation of literary studies" (75).

[14] The charge of anachronism is a well known complaint. For example, in her 1985 discussion of Brown's novels in Sensational Designs Tompkins says, "Modern critical expectations about the nature of literary production have replaced those that motivated the writing of Wieland, and the result is a variety of interpretations that reflect the concerns of twentieth-century critics more closely than they do the concerns that animated Brown's novel" (41).

[15] Bell's reading of Brown is interesting in light of Caleb Crain's insights in American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation (2001) in which

he writes, "It haunted Brown to think that despite his flurry of emotionality [in his letters] he might not make any real connection" (61). Even as sympathetic friendship allays loneliness, fear of insincerity or false emotion triggers anxiety or alienation. Crain explains, however, that "Brown became an author in a nurturing and competitive community of men who sheltered and contained him ... Brown's letters are marked by the struggle to take nourishment from his friends' affection without mistaking their lives for his, to sympathize without becoming someone else or losing himself" (97).

[16] This gap is significant in the field. Many critics leap from Charles Brockden Brown or Susanna Rowson to the novels of Cooper or Hawthorne. For a representative sample--in addition to Baym, Bell, Elliott, Fiedler, Tompkins, and, more recently, Barnes and Boudreau--see Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (1957); William Spengemann, The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789-1900 (1977); Robert S. Levine, Conspiracy and Romance: Studies in Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville (1989); and Shirley Samuels, Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation (1996).

[17] Adams's famous protest about her deficient education reverberates directly. In her 14 August 1776 letter to John, she writes, "If you complain of neglect of Education in sons, What shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it. With regard to the Education of my own children, I find myself soon out of my debth, and destitute and deficient in every part of Education.... If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women" (153). Similarly, in her autobiography written for her niece in 1853, Catharine Sedgwick complains, "I have all

my life felt the want of more systematic training, but there were peculiar circumstances in my condition that in some degree supplied these great deficiencies, and these were blessings ever to be remembered with gratitude. I was reared in the atmosphere of high intelligence. My father had uncommon mental vigor. So had my brothers. Their daily habits, and pursuits, and pleasures were intellectual, and I naturally imbibed from them a kindred taste" (75-76). The picture is one of a girl or a young woman finding her own education in spite of a system working against her. As Sedgwick sees it, however, their protests have been heard. She writes, "What would the children now, who are steeped to the lips in 'ologies,' think of a girl of eight spending her whole summer working on a wretched sampler which was not even a tolerable specimen of its species." Happily, her father instilled "that love of reading which has been to me 'education'" (74).

[18] Weyler believes that Stern's book goes too far in its claims for the disenfranchised of the 1790s: "Although Stern compellingly contends that the novel makes visible the social invisibility of certain kinds of non-citizens (e.g., those who are non-white, non-American, or non-male), her engaging close readings of these selected works most vividly emphasize the withholding of rights from white women, who play much larger roles in these texts than do Native Americans, African Americans, or aliens...." She adds, "Like Stern, I see these concerns emerging in the novels of the early Republic, but I locate them several decades later, in the 1820s." I agree with Weyler's assessment. In the republican era, we are not yet to Uncle Tom's Cabin and its antebellum consciousness (19).

[19] Robert Daly's recent discussion of Sedgwick's 1835 historical novel, The Linwoods; or, "Sixty Years Since" in America, exemplifies perfectly the subversive vein

in late twentieth-century theoretical interpretation. For Daly, The Linwoods is Sedgwick's "bravest book" because she dives right into cultural activism by placing "human and historical complication back into the great icon of the American Revolution" (144). His essay looks at "what mischief and madness have to do with the memetics of our culture and with the enabling of our cultural agency." Daly provocatively uses the concept of the "meme" to draw attention to the power of fiction as a cultural transmitter. The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines the term as "[a] cultural element or behavioral trait whose transmission and consequent persistence in a population, although occurring by non-genetic means (esp. imitation), is considered analogous to the inheritance of a gene" (Draft Revision, June 2001). Daly explains: "Writing through the conventions of her day, ... Sedgwick had to educate her readers beyond those conventions without offending them so much that they simply ceased to read her or, worse yet, kept others from reading her. Writings unread do no cultural work" (146). The Linwoods, therefore, becomes a book that models good critical reading and learning skills. Sedgwick's strong characters "pause, misinterpret, and suffer. But they don't romantically kill themselves or die of broken hearts." Rather, "they secure their own agency, neither by subsumption within a single hegemonic discourse nor by rejection of it, but by selective alliances with many discourses. Indeed, they frequently seek out multiple alterities in order to learn more in an active form of cultural shopping" (152). In the heroine Isabella, Daly sees "an agent of the new America," who can look beyond herself to unite with various states of being just as the United States is being founded (153).

[20] Barnes looks at the shift from the dangerous identifications of the 18th-century

seduction novels to the safe identifications found in 19th-century domestic fiction (12-13). She shows, however, that the split is false. States of Sympathy "consider[s] both the ways in which aspirations of 'domestic' union (and the conflation of political and private spheres implicit in this concept) work to organize narrative of seduction and the extent to which seductive practices inform domestic stories" (13).

[21] Weyler agrees with Barnes's reading: "The sentimental novel of the early Republic era is not at all about female power turned outward in order to effect change...; rather it is more likely to be about female energies turned inward, in order to discipline the self" (19).

[22] See Shirley Samuels, ed., The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America (1992). In her introduction to the collection, Samuels writes: "One question about how the critical gaze constitutes but also appropriates and controls its objects of scrutiny involves whether the sentimental gaze acts to conservative ends (what can even appear as a form of social control) or seeks to produce radical reform" (5).

[23] In her article "Black Gothic," which also discusses the first decades of the nineteenth century, Smith-Rosenberg focuses on "questions of *creolité*" (268) and notes numerous tensions in "two novels produced by the new middle class." She studies Charles Brockden Brown's Arthur Mervyn (1799-1800) and Leonora Sansay's Zelica (1820) with its earlier version Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo (1808) "[t]o explore more fully the contradictions embedded in the construction of a Euro-American, middle-class identity in the opening decades of the new nation" (248). Smith-Rosenberg concludes: "The print culture of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century

America apparently could offer no clearer a resolution to the moral dilemmas that the fusion of slave labor and free trade, of black and white, or of male and female presented to the new American bourgeoisie than that press could posit a coherent, unified white American subject" (269).

[24] Leverenz cites "William Charvat's still indispensable book on American authorship in the nineteenth century," The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870 (1968), which "argues that classic male American writers tend to come from a patrician class on the ropes at the hands of Jacksonian entrepreneurs" (14).

[25] I have only borrowed from a few aspects of Leverenz's larger point. He writes:

> One of my central arguments is that American Renaissance writers did not liberate their voices from their class background and "polite" English models until they began to struggle with, rather than dismiss, the middle-class ideology of manhood taking hold in American public life. They made a potentially hostile or indifferent audience, men preoccupied with competing for money and property, part of their rhetorical strategies.... Another inducement to alienation and nonconformity for male writers was their awareness that the audience for serious literature was shifting from patrician men of public affairs to middle class women, from men in power to women at the leisured margin of power. (15)

The writers must deal with their "hapless *characterized* reader (female)" while preparing "the way for a truculent appeal to [the] *implied* reader (male)" (19). Thus the writers of the American Renaissance take on the entrepreneurial combat of manhood by looking beyond their female audience to that implied "limited reader," who is "the forceful,

practical, ambitious, hard-working American male" and who "has been driven into social bondage by his work" (21). This man must be battled with through the use of "rhetorical strategies of self-refashioning and reader-refashioning." According to Leverenz, the writers of the American Renaissance, turn to these strategies to

> transform various feelings associated with deviance and male rivalry. The discovery of the inadequate reader as an implicit or explicit rhetorical device helped to liberate male American writers from upper-class British conventions of taste, wit, and polish to address an American audience without feeling fettered to American readers. Exuberant, yet alienated idiosyncrasies of self-refashioning build from tensions between "I" and "you." (41)

[26] American literary independence or the lack thereof is a major concern of Neal's--although not a major concern of this dissertation. Seven years later in 1824, Neal, writing as a pretended Englishman for Blackwood's Magazine, asserts that with few exceptions "there is no American writer who would not pass just as readily for an English writer" (29). In this sense, although he praises Brown for his American originality, he can still be characterized as "the Godwin of America" (65)--although "altogether superior to Godwin, in the [appalling] distinctness of that manner, by which he made trifling incidents of importance enough to occupy your whole heart and soul, for many pages" (238). In a less flattering comparison, Neal ironically labels Cooper "'the Sir Walter Scott of America!'" (206). He does much of this type of comparative work between British and American writers in the Blackwood's series, and, at the end of that period, Neal develops his point more fully in his "Unpublished Preface" when he picks

up the subject again, calling Washington Irving "the American Addison" and "the American Goldsmith" and referring again to "Mr. Cooper's imitations of Sir Walter Scott" and "Charles Brockden Brown's imitations of Godwin" (xi-xii). Regardless of his own previous work, Neal states:

> to succeed, I must imitate nobody--I must *resemble* nobody.... I must be unlike all that have gone before me.... Nor is it necessary that I should do *better* than all who have gone before me. I should be more likely to prosper, in the long run, by worse original productions--with a poor story told in poor language, (if it were original in spirit and character) than by a much better story told in much better language, if after the transports of the public were over, they should be able to trace a resemblance between it and Walter Scott, Oliver Goldsmith, or Mr. Addison. (xii)

Taken seriously, it is actually Brown who already fits this American author's profile that Neal wants to embody. Despite Brown's lack of "natural powers"--"no poetry; no pathos; no wit; no humour; no pleasantry; no playfulness; no passion; little or no eloquence; no imagination--and, except where panthers were concerned, a most penurious and bony invention"--Neal argues that he has that original talent with which "to impress his pictures upon the human heart, with such unexampled vivacity, that no time can obliterate them: and, withal, to fasten himself, with such tremendous power, upon a common incident, as to hold the spectator breathless" (American Writers 57). Neal concludes that, "after his countrymen shall have done justice to the genius that is really among them," none of Brown's stories will be remembered; however, he should be used as a launching point: "It would be well for his countrymen to profit by--not imitate--

we despite [despise?] imitation even of what is excellent--it would be well for them to profit by his example. We want once more, before we die, to look upon the face of a real North American" (65).

[27] Neal would, perhaps, agree with the following assessment: in retrospect, all of these novels' characterizations, incidents, and themes compare with those in Jane Austen's works from the same period. Moreover, Cooper was reportedly "reading an English novel to Mrs. Cooper" when "he suddenly laid down the book, and said, 'I believe I could write a better myself'" (Bryant viii).

[28] Baym allows for some variation as well. In her Introduction to the second edition of Women's Fiction, she makes this ideological connection: "Novelists tended to describe protagonists as innately womanly, but in writing novels of education, they assumed malleability of character." She continues:

> Most of the novels assume, however, that women will perform most of their life activities in the household and strive to give women traits that would make them emotionally content with comparatively limited space and mobility. But none of them insist that all women are equally formed for domestic content, and although in virtually all woman's novels the heroine's trajectory ends with a happy marriage, there are many examples of contented single women of all ages. Moreover, the marriage form advocated is egalitarian rather than hierarchical. (xxvi)

[29] On New Jersey's atypical suffrage extension, see Judith Apter Klinghoffer and Lois Elkis, "'The Pettycoat Electors': Women's Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776-1807." Marylynn Salmon's summary in "The Limits of Independence, 1760-1800" led me to

their study (157-160).

[30] See Baym, "Between Enlightenment and Victorian," in which she points out that the "enabling claim that women are capable of an intellectual training 'equally' demanding with men's assumes the Enlightenment (more precisely, Cartesian) precept that the mind has no sex" (22). The later "Victorian ideology of woman's intellect rejects the Enlightenment notion of a sexless mind while installing the value of spirituality above that of intellect.... Women are not less intellectual but differently intellectual, *qualitatively* different from men (38, emphasis Baym's). In the Victorian biological formulation, Baym says, "Woman's body, no longer comparable to man's body along a continuum of physical strength, became an essentially different body manifesting the reality of an essentially different interior universe" (39).

[31] As Kerber notes in Women of the Republic, "The prescription rang shrill. So long as the literature of domesticity persisted, it would always embody an anti-intellectual connotation, a skepticism about the capacity of women's minds" (231).

[32] I have combined Cott's terms here to come up with this convenient phrase. From this point forward, I will use the expression without additional attribution.

[33] Rebecca Rush (b.1779), John Neal (1793-1876), and Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789-1867) were all born after the beginning of the Revolution and came of age in the two decades encompassing the turn of the century; they had all achieved majority by 1820.

[34] Davidson makes this point in Revolution and the Word and reiterates the connection between text and reader in her Foreword to Kelroy: "Rebecca Rush's readers would have recognized the social world in which the fictitious Mrs. Hammond operates,

for Rush's representation emphasizes the limitations governing the lives of all women (regardless of race or class) in the early American republic" (vi). As I indicated above, these texts function within a bourgeois social realm in which natural gentility plays an important role. In her Introduction, Nelson points out that in Kelroy "the aristocratic classes are depicted as better *people* living better *lives*," and, therefore, "the novel articulates a logic of 'manners'--those who are gentile and those who are not--that reduplicates the economic boundaries of class" (xx). This comment also applies to Keep Cool and Redwood, though Neal's and Sedgwick's narrators are less exclusive than Rush's.

[35] In The Culture of Sensibility Barker-Benfield draws attention to the fact that the moralist label is a common one. Wollstonecraft, for example, calls herself "in the Rights of Woman a 'philosopher' and a 'moralist'" (xxviii): "Like her predecessors in Enlightenment sociology, Wollstonecraft aligned her view of progress with her wish for a reformation of manners" (xxix).

Chapter 2

Feminine Intellectual Equalitarianism and the Moral Elite in Rebecca Rush's Kelroy (1812)

When working with Rebecca Rush's Kelroy, a Novel, we are inclined to wish for biography. Given the astute complexity of the social observations contained in her novel of manners,[1] we want to know about this novelist-niece of Benjamin Rush and her life in Philadelphia in the early nineteenth century. However, as Dana D. Nelson has demonstrated in her Introduction to the Oxford edition of Kelroy, beyond her seemingly nonspecific birth date (1 January 1779) and the names of her parents and siblings, we simply cannot locate Rush's personal history. Nelson went "through literally thousands of pieces of Rush family correspondence" and read "volumes of contemporary newspapers and church registers," but she "was unable to ascertain much more about Rebecca herself than what we already know" (xiii). Considering the basic anxieties about integrity and identity that Rush's text explores, the fact that she cannot be made into an identifiable figure of early American female authorship is discouraging and yet, perhaps, fitting.[2] We have to content ourselves with Rush's narrator's self-assessment of her credentials: she is essentially a "pensive moralist" (7).

Regardless of what has been preserved in the biographical record, this author of Kelroy had sufficient knowledge at the age of thirty-three to produce a text that forcefully exposes the limited range of possible roles for women facing the machinations of the Philadelphia marriage market.[3] As Rush's narrator describes a social situation that values superficiality over substance, she also critiques contemporary notions of feminine

agency, education, and power. In this novel, Rush presents the wife/mother as a monstrous figure: Mrs. Hammond is an anti-republican maternal aberration, both manipulative and duplicitous, who ultimately kills rather than nurtures her daughter Emily. As Kelroy's tragic plot unfolds, however, we realize that Mrs. Hammond has absorbed the basic principle of republican motherhood--i.e., that a woman attains her value through her children--without accepting this ideology's required undertone of selflessness. There is paradoxical contradiction in Mrs. Hammond's situation that implies an instrumental-equalitarian critique of women's contemporary position: even as Mrs. Hammond shows that she has the practical ability to take care of herself and her daughters, she ultimately demonstrates that she is not equal to the challenge because she does not have the education or moral sense to back up her natural competence. From this point of view, as Kelroy focuses on a clash between the moral and the immoral, it also expresses intense frustration in the face of a system that denies women an instrumental role even as they demonstrate their equal capacity to men. The novelist-as-moralist does not, however, have any sympathy for Mrs. Hammond's shrieks of frustration; instead, Rush's narrator encourages her readers to look beyond this mother/monster and her daughter/victim to an alternate heroine, Helen Cathcart, whose instrumental-equalitarian characteristics present a model of feminine behavior that moves beyond gothic sentimentality into a more seriously rendered and realistically balanced portrait of American womanhood.

Despite Kelroy's intriguing thematic content and sharp cultural commentary--and analogous to the scarcity of biographical information on the author herself--Rush's novel has received little critical attention since it was registered with the Clerk of the District of

Pennsylvania on 3 April 1812. According to Nelson, Kelroy was advertised by Bradford and Inskeep in Philadelphia papers, but it "seems to have received virtually no critical notice when it was published" (xv).[4] Until scholarly interest was raised in the 1990s when it was republished, the novel had been rarely studied but it also was never fully lost in terms of the literary-historical record. Allibone includes a short entry on Rush in his mid-nineteenth-century Critical Dictionary, which reports the novel was "[p]urchased by Bradford & Inskeep for $100" (1893). In addition, various twentieth-century bibliographies and surveys of the early American novel have offered brief accounts of the author and her text.[5] Loshe's early twentieth-century study, The Early American Novel, set the tone for many subsequent mentions: in Kelroy, "the didactic novel, while retaining its moralizing tone, shows the influence of the novel of social manners. Kelroy owes, perhaps, to its later date, its comparative freedom from the naïve absurdities of many of its predecessors. Its style also, while still studied, has lost the excessive 'elegance' of diction characteristic of [Sarah Wentworth] Morton's time" (15).[6] Quinn, in American Fiction (1936), comments similarly: the novel--which demonstrates Charles Brockden Brown's "influence upon later writers" (37)--"stands out ... definitely from its contemporaries. It has no seduction to its discredit, and the character of Mrs. Hammond ... is a real person" (39). For Loshe and Quinn Kelroy is to be lauded, however faintly, for its relatively realistic aspects.

Shortly after Quinn's treatment, Brown cites Kelroy for evidentiary purposes in The Sentimental Novel in America (1940) and, as a result, begins to open Rush's novel for critical interpretation as he points to a number of potential areas for exploration. In Brown's estimation, the villainous Mrs. Hammond is an exception to the Richardsonian,

passive mother typically portrayed in early sentimental novels (37), and Emily's "deathbed journal, written Clarissa-like, in justification of the victim's conduct" represents another "favorite device" of the genre (65). Brown notes that Rush satirizes the "absurdities as well as the evils of a boarding-school education" in her chapter about the Gurnet family (115) and that the author mocks critics of William Shenstone when a ridiculous character places the English pastoral poet and natural landscaper "near the head of the list of writers responsible for the sober moods of American women" (124). Brown's last remark about gender is not actually supported by the novel. It is the hero Kelroy's melancholy and poetic nature that is being debated in this scene, not the character of the female sex. Regardless of this minor inaccuracy--and despite his prefatory assertion that "[m]any of the titles of these faded favorites ... deserve to appear on any list of the world's worst fiction"--Brown's study is an early appeal for critics to think about sentimental novels as more than the sum of their plots, and he asserts their cultural value:

> the secret of their wide appeal is not entirely obscured by their feverish sentiment. They provided a welcome compensation for the emotions, activities, and ideals which life denied to countless readers. They contained an amazing vitality which often transcended their preposterous plots. Frequently they voiced the genuine aspirations of their age.

For Brown, novels such as Kelroy offer "a cross-section of the national imagination," and "they represent a wide level of taste" (vii).

After Brown's remarks on Rush's novel in his work, Kelroy was largely ignored until Petter's The Early American Novel asserted its significance in 1971. In his

"descriptive and critical survey of the American novel up to the year 1820" (ix), Petter offers a five-page textual analysis of Kelroy as well as a synopsis of the plot in his Appendix. His assessment of Rush's work is mixed: "Although Kelroy is an uneven production, the book nevertheless possesses sound qualities and offers reading both pleasant and interesting enough. The author was especially successful in her creation of Mrs. Hammond, a noteworthy step toward the conception of a fictional character which is both memorable and plausible." Petter also praises the novel for its restraint in the face of "the elaborate manner favored by the minor writers of the age" (205). Ultimately, he recommends the novel, with Hannah Foster's The Coquette (1797) and Neal's Keep Cool, as one "which emerge[s] slightly above the contemporary average"--although these authors do not achieve the level of Tabitha Gilman Tenney, Royall Tyler, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Washington Irving, or Charles Brockden Brown (401). Six years after the publication of Petter's survey, Meserole, in "Some Notes on Early American Fiction: Kelroy Was There," generally challenges literary scholars to "a reassessment of the early American novel" (4). He credits Petter for leading him to Kelroy and adds that he is "indebted" to Petter "for a most interesting and rewarding experience." Meserole particularly emphasizes the need for examination with republication in mind: as critics begin to delve into the texts, they will discover those that have "been undeservedly overlooked and that once examined can well convince a publisher to make a modern text available" (5). Kelroy is Meserole's "candidate" for just such a new edition (5).

Since Petter and Meserole's attention, the novel has generated a decent amount of scholarly interest. In the 1980s, Derounian-Stodola and Davidson drew attention to Kelroy's significance. In her article "Lost in the Crowd," Derounian-Stodola "singles it

out" and then analyzes Kelroy as a "novel of manners which not only meets but fulfills generic possibilities" (117).[7] Davidson discusses the novel in Revolution and the Word, praising Rush for "address[ing] important narrative problems ... with a remarkable facility, deftly interweaving comic and tragic scenes to ground a convincing gothic disaster in an astutely observed novel of manners" (231). Davidson's reading focuses on Kelroy as an expression of female frustration in the face of economic powerlessness:

> The Gothic here lies partly within the avaricious soul of Mrs. Hammond and partly within the immediate source of that soul's defects, the rigid class requirements of Philadelphia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.... Rush displays a keen understanding of her society and particularly of its patriarchal power beyond the reach and machinations of Mrs. Hammond.... Mrs. Hammond understands that affluence (not female virtue) is what is rewarded in America. (232-33)

Davidson draws attention to Kelroy as a comment on American hypocrisy in calling itself a "classless society" and as an exposé on the objectification of women, who are "mostly objects of social exchange" (234). In is important to note that Davidson's work led Oxford University Press to publish a new edition of Kelroy in 1992--fifteen years after Meserole's call and the first reissue since its original publication in 1812--as a part of its Early American Women Writers series. In the wake of that publication, scholars have produced a number of articles on Kelroy in the past ten years.[8]

Although divers topics have been addressed in the current critical arena, no one has yet taken up the manner in which Kelroy engages with various early nineteenth-century debates about American women's capacity for self-control and moral judgment.

In fact, by positioning herself as a "pensive moralist," Rush's narrator classifies herself literarily with other contemporary novelists, and in Kelroy she attempts an accurate depiction of and commentary on the morality of the culture she inhabits. Moreover, although many twentieth-century critics comment on the realistic portrayal of Mrs. Hammond's character, Rush's novelist-as-moralist presents Mrs. Hammond as a hyperbolic and ridiculous product of whim and chance whose lack of self-control propels her and her daughter to their tragic end. She does at times demonstrate her equal potential to her masculine counterparts; however, unlike such instrumental-equalitarian heroines as Keep Cool's Mrs. Granville or Redwood's Ellen Bruce, Mrs. Hammond's personal imbalance of temperament marks her as inhuman and ultimately unfit for survival.

Marshall Foletta's description of faculty psychology in Coming to Terms with Democracy offers useful insight into the manner of imagining this system of self-control, which "posited within mankind a series of faculties [of the mind] arranged hierarchically from the 'rational' to the 'animal' and the 'mechanical.'" He further explains:

> The rational faculties are the most important. They consist of the conscience, or moral sense, and prudence, or self-interest. The mechanical faculties, involuntary actions over which individuals exercise no control, are the lowest. In between are the animal. These include "appetites" (hunger, thirst, sex), "desires" such as curiosity, and "affections." These affections can be benevolent--gratitude, pity, friendship--or malevolent--envy and resentment.... It is the primary task of the individual to order his faculties properly, to make the dictates of the rational faculties direct his

> behavior.... Therefore, what the individual strives to do is to make the lower serve the higher, to enlist the assistance of emotions on behalf of the conscience, to manipulate one's affections so that they become servants of the moral sense. (69)[9]

This taxonomy of faculties is a universally accepted psychological system at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries. For example, in The Culture of Sensibility Barker-Benfield notes that in 1792 Wollstonecraft worried about her animal senses overwhelming the rational: "She recognized that she had been educated into an exaggerated sensibility.... She wrote to her friend and publisher, Joseph Johnson, 'I am a mere animal and instinctive emotions too often silence the suggestions of reason'" (xxx). Similarly, a disaffected John Adams divides the various kinds of sensibility along faculty psychological lines in one of his 1809 letters to Cunningham:

> You say your sensibilities were exquisitely touched by my last letter to you.... The word sensibilities has a very extensive signification. There are sensibilities of pity, compassion, and sympathy; sensibilities of fear, terror and horror; sensibilities of resentment and revenge; sensibilities of anger, wrath and fury; sensibilities of contempt, disdain and scorn; sensibilities of ridicule and humor; and lastly sensibilities of love and tender affections. I will not descend to sensibilities of a lower and more brutal kind. (113)

Adams's defining catalog of sentiments reflects his frustration with Federalist "leaders [who] are, and have long been, [his] enemies" (114). It also eloquently demonstrates the variety of sentiments straining to burst forth in response to any given situation--and the

need to control the more "brutal" or animal aspects of emotion. Adams places "pity, compassion, and sympathy" at the beginning of his list and "love and tender affections" at the end, thus surrounding such sensibilities as fear, resentment, anger, contempt, and ridicule with sentiments of a higher order. His language encases the brutal elements between sympathy and love, thus indicating the strength of his own moral sense by reminding himself to keep his own disillusionment rationally in check.

In terms of the fiction, this manner in which the interior sensibilities are ordered enables a better understanding of the various characters' struggles in Kelroy and allows for a deeper understanding of Rush's characterizations. Walsingham and Helen Cathcart survive the plot because they are endowed with strong moral sense, which enables them to balance their emotions and thus to repress their animal natures. Alternatively, the tragic characters are out of balance and incapable of good judgment: for example, Mrs. Hammond consistently howls in frustration; Kelroy descends into misinformed jealousy; and Emily, a sentimental heroine, martyrs herself in the face incurable disillusionment. Such characters cannot achieve that necessary balance of faculties that will allow them to enjoy what Foletta describes as the "personal satisfaction and emotional delight" that comes from equilibrium. It is not simply a matter of doing one's duty: "the person who achieves this balance, the person who not only perceives right but cultivates his affections so that he takes an emotional pleasure in it, is the person of moral taste" (69). "The responsibilities of this moral elite are profound," Foletta explains. "Not only can they sort out the more complex questions of morality, and in so doing provide direction and leadership for those less skilled, they also can work to order the forces of society..." (70).[10] By identifying herself as a "pensive moralist" at the beginning of Kelroy, Rush's

narrator places herself within the seemingly masculine realm of the "moral elite" and indicates to her readers that she has the "moral taste" requisite for presenting a variety of characters for their consideration and edification.

In terms of the fiction, Mrs. Hammond pretends to be a member of this moral elite, but ultimately she does not have the capacity to be a true leader because she lacks moral sense to the point of monstrosity. Most of Kelroy's plot revolves around her antagonistic character and her selfish manipulation of the marriage economy. When her husband dies, leaving her with few resources, Mrs. Hammond develops a decisive strategy to secure her welfare and that of her two daughters, Lucy and Emily. She plans a "hazardous scheme" (4) to conceal her financial circumstances and to manage her funds so that they will last through the marriages of her daughters to affluent men, who she in turn will exploit for her future support. Mrs. Hammond believes that her daughters are her only real assets, and she attempts to educate them to appreciate "the pleasures of wealth" above all other concerns (5). Her ability to manipulate "the giddy multitude" (11) is all the more offensive to Kelroy's narrator because Mrs. Hammond impersonates a moral leader when she is actually devoid of moral sensibility: "The good-natured world, ignorant of her real motives, gave her immense credit for her pretended ones and praised with disinterested candor the delicate respect of Mrs. Hammond for the memory of her husband; whilst she ... pursued without interruption those measures by which she hoped to continue to her benevolent friends the appearances of undiminished affluence" (4). A corrupt leader and educator rather than a member of the moral elite, this impostor abuses the benevolent credit extended to her by the good-natured world.

The narrator pointedly comments on Mrs. Hammond's bankrupt concerns: "These

unworthy counsels, warmly urged, and frequently repeated by a mother who appeared to be actuated merely by a wish to promote their happiness, produced a lasting effect on the mind of one of her children; but to the other, young as she was, they seemed, in a great measure, the result of extreme parental solicitude." Lucy, whose "heart was cold" and who has "a mind originally selfish," becomes "the very counterpart of her mother" (6); Emily, however, does not buy into Mrs. Hammond's ideas. The narrator explains that the younger daughter's

> mind was of the highest order, and her quick feelings, and keen perceptions so happily blended with sweetness and equanimity of temper, as to produce none of those unpleasant variations which are usually attendant on strong sensibility.... She felt that she had a heart, nor could all the sage assurances she had heard to the contrary, prevent her from believing that excellence was not always the companion of prosperity.... (6-7)

These narrative descriptions of the two daughters illustrate the conflicting perspectives on human motivation evident in the novel. Emily, on the one hand, has a fledgling moral sense, a fine mind "and a soul which expanded itself to all the generous emotions of innocence and youth" (7); she, therefore, is able on some level to discern beyond her mother's false education. On the other hand, Lucy only values "fortune, fashion, or connexions," and she, like her mother, has a deformed moral sense--or, an "understanding warped by the pernicious principles" promoted by Mrs. Hammond (6). This novel's plot, however, ultimately ends in tragedy, and Emily's superior nature is condemned to be overcome by the forces of her mother's anti-republican educational

system and by her own inability to see through Mrs. Hammond's façade.

Superficially, Mrs. Hammond's marital plan works at first. Lucy lands Walsingham, a sensible (in most cases) "Englishman of fortune" who falls for her artifice (15). However, when Walsingham's friend Kelroy meets Emily, and they fall deeply in love, Mrs. Hammond's strategy goes astray. Kelroy has lost his patrimony due to his father's participation in a "wild speculating scheme" before his death (36), and--although he plans to reestablish himself financially as an east Indian merchant--Mrs. Hammond will not allow Emily to marry such a man. The doomed romance unravels because Walsingham, with good intentions, coerces Mrs. Hammond into allowing Kelroy and Emily to become engaged before Kelroy leaves for his year-long trading excursion to India. While Kelroy is gone, Mrs. Hammond joins forces with an evil character named Marney--who wants revenge on Emily for repulsing his advances (134) and on Kelroy for treating him with contempt (78)--and the two of them produce "one of the most diabolical schemes that envy ever planned, or malignity executed" (186). Mrs. Hammond intercepts her daughter's letters as well as Kelroy's dispatches from his voyage, and together she and Marney forge two letters--one for Kelroy and one for Emily--indicating that each wants to break off the engagement with the other. The plan works, and, though broken-hearted, Emily is eventually convinced to marry another worthy man, Dunlevy. Mrs. Hammond suffers a stroke right as she is on the verge of her great triumph and dies without being able to destroy the evidence of her crime. Emily finds the lost letters from Kelroy and her mother's drafts of the fakes. The depravity and betrayal are too much for her good nature to bear, and Emily dies--"sacrificed to the inhuman machinations of her own mother" (189) and "a martyr to incurable grief" (191). Meanwhile, Kelroy "had

become a gloomy wanderer" (191), but he eventually makes it back to Philadelphia to learn the truth from Helen Cathcart, Emily's trusted confidant and friend. In the last line of the novel, the narrator reports that Kelroy perishes in a shipwreck and that he "and his sorrows were hushed to rest in the depths of the ocean" (194).

As this summary of Kelroy's plot indicates, Emily is completely deceived by Mrs. Hammond's artificial maternal show. As "a woman of fascinating manners, strong prejudices, and boundless ambition," she demonstrates her awareness of fashionable parenting and educational techniques (3); however, Mrs. Hammond is only a good mother to her daughters because she must be to attain her own selfish ends. The narrator says that Mrs. Hammond "was conscious that unless a parent possesses the respect and confidence of a child, all expectations of unlimited obedience must be in vain; and she laboured with unwearied assiduity to obtain such an interest in the affections of both her daughters as would subject them in future solely to her direction and enable her to realize the notions of splendid happiness which were eternally floating in her brain" (5). Therefore, Mrs. Hammond instills maternal bonds of affection within Lucy and Emily because she plans to earn interest from her investment in her daughters. In that sense, Mrs. Hammond is incapable of disinterested love for her children: she can only love her daughters as reflections of her own self-interest, as projections of herself. Her method makes sense, but her motives are corrupt. She recognizes the importance of her role as parent as expressed in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century notions of republican motherhood. She does nurture her daughters; her purposes, however, are perverse because, as she shapes her daughters' education, her lessons reflect her own mercenary worldview. When this mother contemplates her daughters' accomplishments, she enjoys "the idea of the consequence

which she should one day derive from the brilliant endowments of these lovely females. Her affection for them was founded, not on their merits, but their charms and acquirements..." (5). Emily is endowed with a moral sensibility or good nature, but Mrs. Hammond "lamented as a serious evil, those bewitching traits of victorious nature in the youngest of [her daughters], which delighted every eye except her own" (6). Emily's "victorious nature" shines through her mother's interference, but the daughter's moral sense cannot penetrate Mrs. Hammond's armor, which is strenuously reinforced by an exterior demonstration of dedicated motherhood.

By emphasizing presentation over substance, therefore, Mrs. Hammond fails as a republican mother. In Women of the Republic, Kerber specifically defines the republican mother's function: "within families, the crucial role was thought to be the mother's: the mother who trained her children, taught them their early lessons, shaped their moral choices" (200). "The model republican woman," Kerber continues, "was to be self-reliant (within limits), literate, untempted by the frivolities of fashion.... Her political task was accomplished within the confines of her family" (228). Mrs. Hammond, with her "unabated relish for show and dissipation" (4), clearly does not fit this profile. Kerber describes the social situation thus: "How, it was asked, can women's minds be free if they are taught that their sphere is limited to fashion, music, and needlework? Fashion became an emblem of superficiality and dependence. It was distasteful in a wife, inappropriate in a republic. The Philadelphia Lady's Magazine [August 1792] criticized a father who prepared his daughters for the marriage market" (203). Although those daughters could handle the superficial aspects of social engagements, the magazine condemns their achievements: "Placed in a situation of difficulty, they have neither a

head to dictate, nor a hand to help in any domestic concern" (qtd. in Kerber 203).

Kelroy enacts this point. Lucy, as the successful product of her mother's superficial educational system, is simply an ornament of the type described in the Lady's Magazine, and she survives because she manages to entrap a good man, Walsingham. Emily eschews the "mercenary purposes" of adornment (13), but she cannot survive when confronted with a "situation of difficulty." Her superior nature notwithstanding, her education has been neglected, and without Walsingham and Kelroy there to protect her, she cannot outwit her mother. Even more interesting, Mrs. Hammond herself is trapped by her own bad education. Kerber uses Benjamin Rush's "Thoughts upon Female Education" (1787) to explain viewpoints such as Mrs. Hammond's:

> Teaching young girls to dress well was part of the larger message that their primary lifetime goal must be marriage; fashion was a feature of sexual politics. "I have sometimes been led," remarked Benjamin Rush, "to ascribe the invention of ridiculous and expensive fashions in female dress entirely to the gentlemen in order to divert the ladies from improving their minds and thereby to secure a more arbitrary and unlimited authority over them." (203-04)

The logic of Mrs. Hammond's tactics comes from the fact that she is one of those "ladies" described by Rush. She sees artificial fashion as her daughters' only means and imagines a lucrative marriage as her daughters' only end. And yet the internal workings of the system have an ironic undertone: Mrs. Hammond is a victim of these invisible "sexual politics" even as she is an aggressor against Emily. Her emotional outbursts draw attention to her actual powerlessness, and the novel demonstrates that such anti-

republican mothers as Mrs. Hammond are the dark outgrowth of a society that offers females so little education and so few economic options. She does not have the cultural capital to succeed in an inherently patriarchal economy. The novel's audience identifies with Emily and wants Mrs. Hammond to fail; therefore, when Walsingham catches her in her various lies about her own solvency and her daughters' inheritance, and when she in turn recognizes that his authority outranks hers, the reader is presumably happy to see patriarchy in action because Walsingham's hope for Emily and Kelroy momentarily supersedes Mrs. Hammond's. However, as a result of Walsingham's power play, he forces Mrs. Hammond to come up with a more irrational and ultimately destructive scheme than her original plan to keep Emily and Kelroy apart.

The unnatural artifice of Mrs. Hammond and Lucy are displayed in opposition to the natural talents of Kelroy and Emily. For example, Charles Cathcart and Walsingham --both presented as reliable social commentators--champion Kelroy's poetic art as well as his practical projects. Kelroy is introduced to the reader at "an entertainment at the house of Mrs. S.," who says that he is "a man of fine sense, and a poet" (26). After being harassed by the standard interactions of a superficial social gathering, an unaffected musical performance of a ballad about lost love prompts a deeply emotional reaction in Kelroy: "the contrast between [the music] and what he had been tormented with for the last hour altogether so powerfully affected him, that the tears sprang into his eyes, and finding it impossible in the present high wrought state of his feelings to remain a moment longer in society, he abruptly retired" (29). Kelroy's departure creates narrative space for a five-page discussion about poetry and genius, and the various reactions among the party-goers offer a vivid picture of that very society.

The discussion begins when "[o]ne of the misses whose efforts to captivate [Kelroy] had failed" calls him "an animal" and another labels him "a fool." A card-playing "dowager of fifty" says that he is "singular" and that his reaction is "very odd." At this point, Charles steps in to set the record straight. He explains that Kelroy's behavior simply comes from the fact that he "possesses a brilliant imagination, and strong feelings, and is of course peculiarly susceptible to the power of music" (29). The dowager is not impressed with Kelroy's "fine sense" or "*refined understandings* as they are called" and then adds, "If these are the fruits of *genius*, commend me to *common sense*." Charles argues in return that "moralists [e.g., our novelist] tell us, and our own experience hourly confirms the truth of the assertion, that happiness is not attainable in this life"; Kelroy, therefore, is in a superior position to the rest of the group. Charles says, "those persons whose chief pleasures arise from abstract enjoyments ... have the advantage over the generality of mankind in two instances. First, as approaching nearer to the nature of the divine essence, and next, as possessing a remedy against natural and unavoidable evils, which nothing, except the loss of intellect can deprive them of" (30). A bachelor jumps in to point out that such persons are usually "imprudent" and that they make "themselves miserable by their own conduct, and then quarrel with the world because it is not disposed to tolerate a parcel of wild freaks and fancies, which few understand and nobody cares for." Plus, he "add[s] poverty into the bargain; --shew me one of these bright headed chaps that is rich if you can?" (31). The argument eventually ends when Charles exits the discussion--after ridiculing the "old half-souled wretch" (33) who has argued for mediocrity over genius on the scale of happiness ("a limited capacity is by far the best adopted to our limited comforts")--by sarcastically conceding to the

bachelor that Kelroy "does not belong to that despicable class who trust to their genius for support," as he "is preparing ... for a voyage to the East Indies" (32).

This conversation is important because it foregrounds many of the novel's major subjects. First, readers are introduced to Kelroy, his strong sensibility, and his natural inability to dissemble. In addition to that characterization, the narrator provides a realistic vignette of an early nineteenth century "entertainment." Through the characters' comments and her descriptions--including some realistically rendered vernacular--Rush's narrator offers a witty presentation of various stereotypical members of her society. Lucy and Emily, not in attendance at this particular gathering, are not unique among the many marriageable girls. In a momentary conversation with Mrs. S., Kelroy, in response to a challenge to practice his physiognomic abilities, compliments "the lady opposite to [him] in a white veil" for having "harmonious" features that "breathe the sweetest of all melodies--that of the heart" (27). The scene indicates that the social group keeps revolving regardless of the specific players. Other young women, who approximate Lucy (the beautiful one) and Emily (the musical one), demonstrate the generic nature of this social climate--and, perhaps, show that Mrs. Hammond has good reason to worry about competition. The machinations of the various guests as well as the insults aimed at Kelroy testify to the artificiality of the group. Moreover, through Charles's interactions with the others in the scene, the narrator demonstrates her own elite standards and her qualifications as a novelist as well as her expectations for her bourgeois readers. For example, in addition to the debate about artists and the value of their art, Charles jokingly connects Kelroy with Werther and cites "Swift, Johnson, Pope, [and] Congreve" as examples of poets "whose portion of wealth was far from contemptible" (31).[11] The

discussion of genius devolves into one of material comfort and ultimately emphasizes Kelroy's practical side. The fact that he is heading to India fits with his middle-brow romanticism: "Wealth he had never despised, but he coveted not an excess of it...." Therefore, in the face of his father's financial ruin, Kelroy "refrained from useless repinings at an evil which a few years might probably repair; and resigned himself to the prospect of labours untried, and climes unknown with the calmness of a practical philosopher" (44). Kelroy feels deeply, but he also has his own share of common sense.

Such scenes as those presented in the argument about poetry are also significant because they introduce American expressions and settings that give the novel an authority based in verisimilitude. For example, the dowager and various other characters in Kelroy tend to refer to common sense when they are exasperated, and the multiple references connote a popular American phrase (cf. 30, 127, 142). Like the use of the vernacular, mentions of common sense give the novel an American flavor as do a wide variety of other allusions to American ideas and situations. The novel is set in Philadelphia and its general environs, and there are many conscious references to this geographical and social setting. Mrs. Hammond's country home is located along the banks of the Schuylkill river, for example, and Lucy and Walsingham meet at an annual Washington's birthday ball in the city (12), where Walsingham observes disapprovingly American pretentiousness: "He willingly accorded to the sons and daughters of Columbia genius and beauty; but of all pretensions to *family*, in the general sense of the word, he considered them utterly void; and was at once amused and disgusted to observe in many of the natives of this land of liberty and equality, where titles are unknown, and distinction arises only from merit, a species of emulation which made them regard it as a

mark of consequence to belong to the very fag end of any family that could boast of a peer at its head" (19). In addition, Rush develops specifically American characters such as Dr. Blake and records their homespun expressions and colloquial speech. For example, Blake uses the expression, "In the name of Christopher Columbus, I wonder why?" (21). And, when he realizes that he is being ignored by the majority of those at the ball, he says, "I was just fancying myself the owner of a bushel, or so, of diamonds, all stuck about me from head to foot, as grand as the great Mogul; and wondering what effect it would produce on the visual and mental organs of the body-politic here assembled" (22). Much later in the novel, the narrator comments that Marney, the blatant gossip and social climber, describes his phaeton as "the handsomest in the United States" (151). Such references as these recur throughout the novel and point to the fact that Rush is consciously writing a novel that engages in American social commentary.

Although the novelist-as moralist tempers her romantic hero and sentimental heroine with practical American know-how and familiar American settings, Rush's Kelroy pushes its readers beyond conventional Crèvecoeurean optimism as she, like Charles Brockden Brown, expresses contemporary American anxieties about the quality of man's innate nature.[12] Emily and Kelroy have natural talents that steer them in the right direction; however, external social forces in the form of Mrs. Hammond and Marney's false empirical evidence override their better instincts. The latter pair, through their ill-natured actions, illustrates the point that not every human being has moral sensibility. In Kelroy Walsingham most clearly draws this "frightful picture" of the world of self-interested, social manipulation. He says to Emily that once she, as a virtuous individual with a benevolent character, begins to understand the "real characters

of the beings who chiefly compose [her] species"--i.e., once her "sensibility" or "inefficacious tenderness" has finally been disabused of its optimism--she will learn to be skeptical. Experience teaches that humanity is composed of "a set of harpies, absurd, treacherous, and deceitful--regardless of strong obligations, and mindful of slight injuries." Walsingham warns Emily that

> when your integrity has been shocked, and every just, and native feeling, severely tried, the sensibility which you now so liberally bestow on others, will then be absorbed in lamenting its own cruel disappointments, and inefficacious tenderness; and you will gladly consult the dictates of your understanding, to prevent being preyed on by continual depravity. (86)

As the action of the novel demonstrates, Emily becomes a victim of this depraved world. For Emily, however, given the artificial nature of the universe her mother has constructed, intelligent self-management is an impossibility. She cannot heed Walsingham's warning about human nature and its manipulative systems because the person on whom she most relies, and to whom she must defer, is one of those absurd harpies that he describes. Mrs. Hammond's management of the end of Emily's engagement to Kelroy and of her ensuing marriage to Dunlevy foreground such anxieties about the possibility for informed self-government.

When compared to such other tragic heroines as Rowson's Charlotte of Charlotte Temple or Foster's Eliza Wharton of The Coquette, Emily is a good, obedient daughter. Even though she does fall in love with a man Mrs. Hammond will not sanction, the narrator explicitly indicates that Emily should be excused for that crime because self-selection has become a norm of the marriage market: "in a single instance, one in which

she was authorized by the example of millions, [she] acted contrary to the admonitions of her mother" (172). When Mrs. Hammond sends her daughter the false letter from Kelroy indicating his fickleness--she cites the romantic "principle" of "the *mutability of human nature*" as his reason for breaking their engagement (169)[13]--Emily's self-recrimination is devastating. She expresses her guilt "in tones that might have penetrated with compassion the soul of a demon" (but not her mother), and she accepts personal responsibility for her misery: "Mother, you warned, you besought me to renounce the man who has at last made me so wretched, but I refused to listen to you--and I am punished for it.--He had renounced *me*!--Left me with all the bitterness of contempt and scorn!--and--I am punished as I deserve!" (168).

Thus Rush's novel provocatively presents the mother as the manipulatively false Lovelace figure of a typical Richardsonian fiction. It is Mrs. Hammond and her co-conspirator Marney who, after all, control the letters sent between the novel's tragic pair, Emily and Kelroy. Although Emily is not precisely an "American Clarissa," her natural talents are outmaneuvered by the machinations of her unnatural enemies.[14] Emily reacts with the deep remorse that the reader expects from the disobedient daughter; however, when Mrs. Hammond's schemes are revealed at the end of the novel, we realize the dramatic irony of Emily's situation. She reads her own narrative as Richardsonian when, in fact, she has done nothing to warrant the punishment. She sees her own story as a straightforward illustration that daughters should obey their mothers; whereas the novel itself shows its readers that such simple dictates should not be accepted uncritically. Emily immediately accepts Kelroy's faithlessness as truth, and "this now irresolute girl, who bewildered between an invincible repugnance to the proposed marriage [to

Dunlevy], and the dread of being again misled by adhering to her own judgment," cannot hold out against the combined assault of three authority figures, Mrs. Hammond, Dunlevy, and Helen: "Sick of remonstrance and weary of opposing where she wished, but dreaded to comply; but most of all distrustful of herself, and her own weakness, she at last yielded to their united persuasion" (181-182).[15] Against her better judgment, Emily relents because every external indicator undercuts her natural judgment.

In Kelroy, therefore, Rush's narrator, a subtle teacher, warns her readers to resist the "unworthy counsels" of a false elite. The characters in Rush's novel consistently demonstrate that those who have an underdeveloped moral sense will be defeated by their own animal natures. Optimism about human nature, therefore, is unviable: the good characters are manipulated by those who are immoral and then punished along with their evil counterparts. In fact, Rush's universe is seemingly ruled by serendipitous chaos: for example, at one point, Mrs. Hammond loses everything in a house fire (121) only to have her fortunes reestablished by a lottery win (126) and then to die of a sudden "stroke of the palsy" at the height of her triumph (182). To survive in such a universe, as the novel indicates primarily through negative example, women and men alike must be skeptical observers, or critical readers, of moral character.

In the face of all of this pessimism, however, the narrator presents an alternative instrumental-equalitarian world view for her readers to consider. For example, although they are entirely opposite representative types, both Emily, the angel, and Mrs. Hammond, the monster, are endowed with useful characteristics that hint at women's capacity in the face of adversity. Moreover, Rush's novel also demonstrates the power of the educated woman, the "pensive moralist," who can calmly allow her "imagination [to

turn] from the cold lessons of philosophy, to contemplate with delight that semblance of impassioned feeling which adorns the narratives of love" (3). When we consider the fact that Rush's moralist narrator defines her story as a delightful "narrative of love," we must reassess the tragedy that unfolds at the novel's end. It is, after all, Helen Cathcart who finds love, and, unlike the sentimental heroine Emily and the romantic hero Kelroy, Helen is her own agent and as such demonstrates her equal membership among the masculine moral elite as represented by Walsingham. In fact, Helen proves herself superior to this British gentleman, who has been so quickly conquered by Mrs. Hammond's battle plan. The initial "conquest" causes him to lose "his heart" (20), but within weeks of his marriage to Lucy he begins to understand that he has lost his innocence as well because he has been duped in terms of "pecuniary advantages" (88) and in "the qualities of her heart," which reflect "a total absence of sensibility" (105). Helen's story, in contrast, ends in a marriage with Dunlevy, who also finally finds a worthy partner--their marriage has "the tenderest friendship on both sides" as its foundation (191).

Like Helen, both Emily and, to a greater extent, Mrs. Hammond demonstrate personal agency, or instrumentality, at various points in the novel. Emily typically intends to stand up for herself, but then finds that she is unequal to the task. For example, as she sees her sister Lucy "in possession of the undivided affections of an amiable man, whose worth she was incapable of appreciating," she recognizes the sadness of her own situation: "whilst Walsingham was thus cheated into a union with one whose deficiencies she feared would be too easily displayed to him, Kelroy and herself might waste the bloom of life in pursuing hopes, which if unsuccessful, would embitter the remainder of

their days" (43). As Emily faces her mother's opposition to her connection with Kelroy, she attempts "to submit composedly to a disappointment which seemed inevitable" (47), but she cannot regain her equilibrium:

> Unused to these internal conflicts, her appetite failed and her colour faded; and in the sorrow of her heart she would have shut herself up in constant solitude.... --A severe cold with which she was attacked, afforded her an unquestionable excuse to indulge this melancholy propensity, and confined her wholly to her chamber; where in a few days, indisposition and anxiety produced a change in her appearance that was seriously alarming. (47-48)

Emily's "internal conflicts" have an external expression that she cannot control; or, to borrow Foletta's phrasing, she cannot find the wherewithal "to order [her] faculties properly, to make the dictates of the rational faculties direct [her] behavior" (69). Emily is not truly cured of her physical condition until, through no agency of her own, she has a private meeting with Kelroy, which affords him the opportunity to declare "his attachment in the most impassioned language." After their "[m]utual inquiries, and explanations" (51), the narrator explains that, with "the certainty of being beloved by Kelroy, half her difficulties seemed to have vanished, as if by the touch of magic; she nevertheless felt extremely adverse to encounter [her mother's] sarcasms and reproaches which she presumed would inevitably follow, unless prevented by the mediation and good offices of her brother-in-law" (53). Although she insists on a marriage based in love and eschews Mrs. Hammond's mercenary concerns, Emily also declines her own instrumentality and relies on Walsingham to stand up to her mother

Later in the novel, when she faces the (false) catastrophe that Kelroy has abandoned her, Emily demonstrates a more strenuous engagement of her rational faculties. Unlike the betrayed heroine of sentimental fiction, Emily survives the perceived perfidy of her lover, and eventually she even achieves a certain level of equilibrium in her marriage to Dunlevy (182). After she receives the forged letter from Kelroy breaking off their engagement, Emily takes a twenty-four hour period for personal reflection and emerges with her integrity intact and "with no cause for self-reproach." The narrator reports, "Left to herself as she had desired, Emily spent her time not in weak, and fruitless lamentation, but in reviewing her past conduct, and forming resolutions for the future" (171). In this grieving period, Emily demonstrates that she has a strong mind:

> her pride ... had received as deep a wound as her love, and combined with her reason to teach her that it would be an unpardonable weakness to suffer her happiness to be destroyed by the remembrance of one who had proved himself worthy of her scorn.... During the night she did not once close her eyes, but when morning came, she felt that she had acquired a share of serenity which was astonishing even to herself.

She decides that she must "conquer her passion, or perish in the attempt" (172), and, as she delivers to Helen a box of Kelroy's remembrances, Emily proves that she has learned the lesson about the depravity of human nature that Walsingham has attempted to teach her earlier in the novel. She says, "if ever you should feel inclined to doubt the falsehood or dishouour where nature seemed to promise better things, let one look at what is here convince you that no appearances, however fair, can be a security against evils like mine"

(174). Given the end of the novel, this is an ironic lesson: she is absolutely correct, but she is focused on the wrong deceiver. Everything natural teaches Emily to trust her mother, and she cannot survive that ultimate disillusionment. She thinks she has learned her lesson, but then she is duped again.

After being forcefully persuaded into her marriage with Dunlevy--who genuinely loves her though she cannot reciprocate--Emily has just begun to reclaim "her departed peace" and to feel affection for her husband when her mother dies:

> in losing her parent, she first began to be sensible of the value of her husband, whose tenderness prevented her from knowing a wish or want which he had power to remedy; and as time softened her grief, gratitude seemed to inspire her with something like affection for him and she had ceased to lament her marriage as a misfortune, when an accidental discovery revived at once the flames of her smothered passion, and fixed her fate forever. (182)

When Emily finds her mother's secret stash of Kelroy's letters (183), her "fainting heart" does her in for good (184). Although the narrator has consistently indicated that Emily's "mind was of the highest order" (6), she cannot contain her animal grief. In this characterization, Rush's "pensive moralist" presents a young woman who defies convention when she survives abandonment, but who does not have the strength to refuse a loveless marriage. The only role she can imagine for herself is that of wife/mother--and, as a result, she seals her fate when she marries Dunlevy. After all, Emily discovers Kelroy's proofs of fidelity and her mother's forgery only six months after her marriage and Mrs. Hammond's death (182). The instrumental-equalitarian novelist-as-moralist

implies that, if Emily had asserted her own agency and refused the default marriage, she may have earned a different ending.

Emily's example models the idea that women have the rational capacity to be agents for themselves; her mother, however, teaches Rush's readers about female agency only through negative example. Mrs. Hammond illustrates the fact that that women have the capacity to act as forceful instruments, but this female antagonist has too many animal appetites to achieve anything useful beyond serving her own selfish needs. Rush's novelist-as-moralist, therefore, has created this character, "who beheld her whole species with disdain" (8), as a cautionary exploration into moral depravity and its consequent misanthropy. If Emily's example warns readers that a young woman must act with instrumental self-interest to preserve her future, then the example of Mrs. Hammond proves the converse: ambitious self-interestedness indicates a lack of moral sensibility and results in self-destruction. Intriguingly, Mrs. Hammond has good, rational ideas but bad, animal instincts. For example, when her self-serving but rational plan to marry her daughters to rich men to preserve her own financial well-being begins to work, she quickly loses control of her situation:

> Buoyed up with hopes which Lucy's marriage had tended to confirm, she had forgot the restrictions by which she meant to be regulated, and yielding to the suggestions of that intemperate pride which binds its votaries to all beyond the vain splendor of the moment, she had since her return to the city expended on a new equipage, and various modern articles of furniture and ornament which she deemed absolutely necessary, the sum of six hundred pounds.

In addition to these perceived household necessaries, Mrs. Hammond has wasted her "ready money" on a variety of other indulgences, including her "passion for cards, by which she oftener lost than won," to the extent that she falls "deeply in debt" (98). When Walsingham forces the Kelroy/Emily union, she reacts with "regret" that "she had squandered in a few months sums sufficient to have supported her for years in comfort, and competence." She also wonders at her passionate opposition to Emily's marital choice, and "deeply still did she lament the fatal oversight of suffering herself to be controuled by Walsingham, and thus rendered the instrument of destroying effectually her own scheme." Given her partial success, Mrs. Hammond now wishes that she had followed through with her original initiative, and the narrator reports that "she grieved that she had not, in the first instance, promoted their marriage, and left them to their fate, by insisting on accompanying Lucy to England" with her husband (100).

This pendular aspect of Mrs. Hammond's character seals her fate. She consistently realizes what she needs to do and plans accordingly, but then such animal instincts as "pride," "temper," "rage, and consternation" force her in an unintended direction (100). In Adams's words, she cannot avoid "descend[ing] to sensibilities of a lower and more brutal kind" (113), and yet Mrs. Hammond also shows us that, if she just had the moral capacity to control her appetites, her rational nature could have sustained her. In fact, as her bills begin to pile up and she finds herself on the verge of public humiliation, Mrs. Hammond devises a "wise resolution" to sell all of her "expensive baubles and ornaments" and to return to the country where she can live more affordably "upon the rent of her town house." The narrator then comments:

> To adopt a plan of this nature required the whole force of her mind, but

> having once completely formed, she determined strictly to adhere to it; and resolutely bent on beginning to put it in practice the next morning, retired to rest with a spirit considerably humbled, yet upon the whole better satisfied with herself than she had been for a length of time.... (120)

Thus the narrator seemingly approves of Mrs. Hammond's practical solution to her financial desperation; however, by placing this turning point on the night of a disastrous house fire that engulfs all of those possessions that were going to enable Mrs. Hammond's plan for financial reform, Rush's novelist-as-moralist does not allow any respite for her antagonist, who must instead face and fail another test of her character.

This turn of events is a "blow so overwhelming, that she sunk beneath its pressure, and was carried to bed, where she lay in a state of alternate delirium, and insensibility, which soon made her life despaired of" (122). Although she quickly recovers her health and learns that no lives have been lost in the fire, the misfortune brings Mrs. Hammond's character into stark relief:

> But no ray of gratitude, no expression of thankfulness marked this escape from death, and restoration to reason. Stern, and ferocious, her nature seemed to have changed as much as her countenance, for the one had become as grim, and haggard, as the other was tempestuous. Her mind was of that stamp on which no excess of misery can effect permanent insanity; and the renewal of feeling and memory presented a prospect so fraught with wretchedness, that dissolution or madness would have been comparatively blessings. (124)

Mrs. Hammond is too strong to fall into madness, but, because she is "[t]ortured by the consciousness of the degrading exposure of her past deeds," she indulges her misery and torments everyone around her with her "horribly perverse and irascible" behavior (125). In this moment of unraveling, when we are beginning to believe that this hypocrite will get what she deserves, Mrs. Hammond is suddenly rewarded on the next page with a chance lottery win that ensures her financial security--and, as the "exhilarating effects of this piece of good fortune quickly manifested themselves in [her] disposition" (129), she reestablishes her air of haughty superiority and reclaims her assumed attitude of moral authority.

Just as the fire exposes Mrs. Hammond's perverse character, so does the lottery win reconfirm her utter lack of sensibility. Although she uncharitably does nothing with her winnings to effect Emily's happiness by enabling Kelroy to forego his merchant's journey to India, she holds court in the Cathcart's

> parlour, where she received with grave politeness the congratulations of her acquaintance, who flocked to her in crouds when they were informed that she was well enough to see them; and were one and all deceived by her specious manner, and fine moral reflections on the wisdom and equity of providence in dispensing both good and evil; of which she considered herself to be a striking example. (130)

Mrs. Hammond's hubris here reaches a new height: she is indeed "a striking example," but Rush's novelist-as-moralist reserves providential justice for later in the novel after her selfishness and resentment have arrived at a more vicious termination. When Mrs. Hammond is revealed as the instrument of Emily and Kelroy's destruction, the narrator

offers no more explanation than that of Mrs. Hammond's ambitious, hateful nature. She simply wants revenge on the two of them: she hates Kelroy for foiling her original "hazardous scheme" (4) and, as a result, for "the share which he had unwittingly contributed towards the increase of her troubles"; meanwhile, "[h]er regard for Emily had sensibly diminished, yet she still loved her too well not to scruple to entering into measures which she feared might be the ruin of her happiness, although at the same time she despised her for her want of ambition" (185, cf. 116). When the instrumental-equalitarian novelist-as-moralist strikes down Mrs. Hammond at her moment of triumph, divine justice is dispensed, and the weapons that she has used against Emily and Kelroy are denied her:

> She lived two days after [the stroke], in possession of her senses, and piteously anxious to be understood in some communication which she repeatedly tried to make to those about her; but as she could neither hold a pen, nor articulate a syllable, her struggles were without effect, and her signs quite incomprehensible, the consciousness of which seemed to rack her with horror and she expired at last in convulsive agonies too shocking for description. (182)

If Mrs. Hammond had asserted control over her "reigning foible" and used her "good sense, and no inconsiderable share of discernment" (72)--i.e., had she fulfilled her capacity to be a responsible agent--she, like her daughter, may have earned a different ending. Instead we are left with Kelroy's assessment of her fate: "she is now where the punishment is proportioned to the crime" (193).

Unlike Emily, who relies on others to act for her, and unlike Mrs. Hammond,

whose misanthropic free-agency leaves her "without a human being in whom she durst confide" (120), Helen Cathcart demonstrates the appropriate balance of rational faculties --conscience and prudence, moral sense and self-interest (Foletta 69)--required of the capable, instrumental-equalitarian female agent. Helen and Emily are confidantes because, despite Mrs. Hammond's general disdain for others, she treats the Cathcart family as her intimate friends. Her purpose, as usual, is mercenary: "Mrs. Cathcart had long been her associate in prosperity, and [Mrs. Hammond] selected her when a change took place, as one whose want of penetration might, with a little address, be rendered extremely useful" (9). The narrator indicates that Mrs. Cathcart is a kind person, but one with little intellectual penetration or depth of character, who "pursued the common routine of life without inquiring into its origin.... [H]appy in her own approbation and the enjoyment of the pleasures she preferred, she envied not the most fortunate mortal breathing, but was always ready to bestow praise in full measure wherever it was required" (8). Her twin daughter and son, on the other hand, have benefited from good education and by "the determined measures" of sound paternal parenting.

To introduce Helen Cathcart, the narrator first gives us a brief description of her twin Charles as "a young man of excellent morals, and sound abilities, and he had been bred to the bar, where he was considered a rising character" (9), and then she moves on to a more complete characterization of his female counterpart. At twenty-four,

> Helen was not handsome, but she was perfectly agreeable. Her understanding was good, and had been improved by an extensive education; and her constant intercourse with society, had endued her with a degree of ease, and intelligence which prevented the gentleness of her

> disposition from becoming prejudicial to her.... She was fond of reading, and well acquainted with literature in general; and books, and music would have constituted her chief amusements, had not her mother kept her constantly immersed in a round of engagements, which she complied with because she knew it gratified her.

Helen prefers to be at home, but indulges her mother's love of social entertainment because, although "her respect and confidence were involuntarily acceded to her father and her brother," Helen's "heart forbade her to acknowledge even to herself the foibles of a parent who had treated her from infancy with uniform tenderness." Her education, taste, and sense of humor combine to support her against the "sneers, and petty malevolence" of the superficial social scene (10). Finally, as might be expected, Mrs. Cathcart worries that her daughter will become "an old maid" (71, 191), but Helen understands that she must choose carefully. In fact, the narrator reports, "She had had several admirers, but none was so fortunate to meet with her approbation; and she frankly dismissed them as soon as their pretensions became known to her" (10). Helen has high standards and good judgment.

In terms of the narrative, Helen acts as a type of Horatio for Emily. She counsels her younger friend as they try to understand Mrs. Hammond's irrational behavior, and she survives Emily's death to deliver the acquittal of her wounded name to Kelroy. Earlier in the novel, Helen has high hopes for the pair: "she had studied the character of Kelroy with scrupulous attention; and believing from the result of her observations, that he was in every respect calculated to render her happy, she had earnestly hoped that he might meet with the approbation of Mrs. Hammond." Helen is so competent at character

study, however, that she is not surprised by Emily's mother's seemingly inexplicable aversion to the match because she has experienced her "well-known opinions in similar instances" (67). When Mrs. Hammond suddenly relents and gives her permission to enter into an engagement, Helen is "astonished" and asks Emily if she is "sure she has given it" and whether she "did not misunderstand her." Helen operates in a logical universe, and, "with only such facts as she was possessed of, the whole appeared to her perfectly incomprehensible." Because she and Emily do not know about Mrs. Hammond's real financial status and, therefore, the power that Walsingham has asserted by calling her financial operations into question, Helen simply cannot "account for Mrs. Hammond's sudden consent to a measure which was evidently detestable to her ... for that the mere advice or persuasion of Walsingham could have had that effect she was convinced was impossible." What is most notable here is that she has the discernment to realize that something is rotten in Mrs. Hammond's "sullen caprice which sometimes actuates haughty spirits," and Helen's "wonder, simple and unalloyed" forebodes the later tragedy (107).

In addition to presenting her as a model of good education and judgment, Rush's novelist-as-moralist presents Helen to her readers in situations where she shows that she has the power to stand up for herself and others. As I mentioned above, she refuses suitors who are poorly matched to her accomplishments, but Helen also gives such characters as Doctor Blake--who pursues her so relentlessly that her brother finally must step in (59)--their due respect. When Emily asks whether the smitten doctor is a "fool," Helen responds, "No, far from it.... He neither speaks, nor acts like one, except in this single instance; and there he behaves like a perfect idiot" (16). Helen's comment here is

particularly informative because, like her, Doctor Blake sees the cruel side and the more mercenary aspects of the marriage market and his comments on the social scene offer entertaining pictures to the reader. Helen is not coy; she is strong, clear-sighted, and witty. For example, when Marney, a handsome but "vile scandal-monger" (69), forces himself into their presence on various occasions, Helen defuses his cruel insinuations with her smart, "ironical air" (76) and "great good-humour" (113). And, when Mrs. Hammond calls Helen's mother clumsy and abuses her to the point of "burst[ing] into tears"--thus taking her various frustrations out on Mrs. Cathcart after the house fire--Helen offers a strenuous defense of her mother. The narrator describes the scene:

> Helen incensed, and disgusted beyond endurance at such unbridled insolence, replied with spirit, "You forget yourself, Mrs. Hammond, and it is the duty of your friends to remind you that it is not incumbent on them to submit in silence to such language as this!--If my mother, madam, should feel herself disposed to speak of obligations, she will not be at a loss to recollect a sufficient number...."

Helen's "tart reply" actually surprises Mrs. Hammond into making the only apology she ever offers throughout the course of the novel: "she condescended to apologize for what she had said, by ascribing her irritability solely to the *disorder of her nerves*, and requesting that it might be pardoned as an involuntary, and unintentional offence" (128).

Through such demonstrations of agency, Helen embodies the instrumental-equalitarian model of feminine behavior. Unlike the heroines in Sedgwick's Redwood, her actions do not cross beyond the boundaries prescribed by the ideals of republican motherhood, but Rush's novelist-as-moralist indicates Helen's equality with her

masculine counterparts in a variety of ways. First, as a twin to Charles, a successful lawyer, the two of them are presented as standing on equal intellectual ground throughout the novel. Second, though her own mother is not characterized in the republican vein and clearly does not have the skill-set to educate her daughter, Helen herself has been guided by the masculine influence of her father, "a man of plain manners, and large property" (8). Third, like a well-educated lawyer or property owner, Helen relies on her own experience and turns to rational thought when she is confronted with interpreting a problem or an illogical situation. These characteristics place her on that same plain with the moral elite that Rush herself claims through her own narrative persona of "the pensive moralist" (7).

Moreover, when the novel's catastrophe occurs and Kelroy seemingly deserts Emily, the reader is encouraged to identify with the more realistically rendered Helen, who, as an observer of the scene, is "grieved to be compelled to regard [him] as a villain, yet [she] was so thoroughly convinced of it, that she would not attempt to defend him" (167). Like the "not handsome" but "perfectly agreeable" Helen (10)--who "wept at the thoughts of what her friend must suffer"--the reader only has the power to sympathize with the sentimental heroine's broken heart and ask with Helen, "If Emily Hammond, ... possessed as she is of every charm which renders her sex attractive, has failed to meet with constancy in a lover, who shall dare in future to think of herself assured of faith, because it has been sworn to her?" (171). Again, like Helen, readers are left with this "pathetic little narrative of [Emily's] misfortune" (190) as well as Kelroy's letters and Mrs. Hammond's forgeries, "the heart rending proofs that she had died a martyr to incurable grief." And, finally, the narrator encourages her readers to react, like Helen,

with both horror and hope: "whilst she shuddered at the perfidy of Mrs. Hammond, and her confederate, mournfully rejoiced that her devoted child was so providentially released" (191). The instrumental-equalitarian novelist-as-moralist ultimately teaches her readers that, if they assert their own agency as Helen does, they may, indeed, earn a happy ending.

Notes

[1] Kelroy is a novel of manners just as Jane Austen's novels are; however, as Nelson points out, critics and literary historians have determined a range of classifications for Kelroy because it "defies any easy categorization of plot or character" (xv). Loshe touches on the novel briefly in her chapter on "The Didactic and the Sentimental" and comments that it "shows the influence of the novel of social manners" (15). Derounian, in an article specifically focusing on Kelroy's genre, determines that it is a novel of manners. Similarly, both Richards and Hamelman identify it as a novel of manners. In addition, several critics place Rush's novel within the sentimental tradition: Brown refers to Kelroy in The Sentimental Novel in America; Devon White examines it in her bibliography of five early American sentimental novels; Fluck categorizes it as a novel of transition (from sentimental to domestic). Several others focus on the darker aspects of the text. Meserole describes Kelroy as "a narrative" in which "[t]he dominant mode is tragic" (5, 11). Petter deals with the novel in his section on "The Love Story" in a chapter entitled "Cruel Parents." Davidson includes Kelroy in her chapter on the "Early American Gothic" and assigns the text a variety of generic labels in her sub-section on "The Gothic Within": it is a "novel of reform" and "a novel of manners" that "prominently employ[s] the cruel-parent motif" (231). In a different vein, Parks discusses Kelroy in her chapter entitled "The Emerging American Economic Novel."

[2] Hamelman, in "Aphasia in Rebecca Rush's Kelroy" (1997), calls the author a "mystery woman" and points out that "[w]e are left speculating not only about what happened to Rebecca Rush and the extent to which her frustrated ambitions may be embedded in Kelroy (Nelson's two concerns), but also about Rush's sources for her

characters and other autobiographical concerns that might help to open up the text" (89).

[3] In her chapter on Rush's novel in her dissertation, Owens looks at the marriage market and its economic effect on women. Her larger work compares Tenney, Foster, Rush, and Murray to Austen and Wollstonecraft. In her abstract she says that "Austen and Rush complicate their representations of the status quo by highlighting the economic realities of the system's operation while negatively or ambivalently depicting characters who recognize these realities and tailor their behavior accordingly." Kerber describes the "marriage market" in Women of the Republic:

> In the marriage market, beauty, flirtatiousness, and charm were at a premium; intelligence, good judgment, and competence (in short, the republican virtues) were at a discount. Because it seemed appropriate for women in a republic to have greater control over their own lives, "the *dependence* for which women are uniformly educated" was deplored [in the 1790s in such periodicals as the New York Magazine]. The Republic did not need fashion plates; it needed citizens--women as well as men--of self-discipline and of strong mind. The contradiction between the counsel given to young women and their own self-interest, as well as the interests of the Republic, seemed obvious. In theory the marriage market undercut the Republic. (204)

[4] In an attempt to find mention of the text, I looked in the bound Volumes 1-17 of the Index to APS II (1989) and found no listings for Kelroy. In addition, I searched the online Index to Early American Periodicals and encountered the same negative result. In both of those sources, I also searched without effect for references to Rebecca Rush;

however, considering that Bradford and Inskeep credited the author as "a Lady of Pennsylvania," it is fairly futile to hope for references to Rush in the American Periodicals Series.

[5] Barbara White's bibliographic reference guide records nine references to Rush and her novel. In addition to Allibone, Loshe, Brown, and Petter, White lists Fullerton, Orians, and Martin as sources. Fullerton's Selective Bibliography (1936) offers a brief critique as he condescends to the novel's qualified worth: Kelroy is "one of the first novels of social manners written in America. Though not devoid of the moralizing tendencies of its predecessors, it is a definite advance over the extreme didacticism of the earlier feminine literature" (235). Orians's Short History (1940) simply includes a quick summary in his discussion of the "War of 1812 Decade" (72). Terence Martin footnotes Kelroy in an article in American Quarterly in 1957 and points to the novel as an example of the type of plot in which "a heartless parent may also be the villain" (74). White's other two bibliographic citations for Kelroy are general literary reference sources: American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present (currently includes Rush in its second edition) and The Oxford Companion to American Literature (currently includes Rush in its sixth edition). Along similar lines, Dana Nelson wrote an entry for the 1999 edition of the Dictionary of Literary Biography, V. 200: American Women Prose Writers to 1820.

[6] This mention of Morton refers to The Power of Sympathy (1789), now attributed to William Hill Brown, which Loshe identifies as the first American novel--or, the first effort at "the moral regeneration of the youth of America, through the persuasive art of fiction" (7).

[7] Derounian-Stodola also worked on Kelroy at Pennsylvania State University, where Meserole served as her adviser. Entitled Genre, Voice, and Character in the Literature of Six Early American Women Writers, 1650-1812, her dissertation provided the basis for the article on Rush's novel in ATQ.

[8] In addition to Nelson's Introduction, see, for example, Parks's "'Some People Just Don't Belong': Rebecca Rush's Kelroy and Conservative Sensibility" in Chapter 3 of her Capitalism in Early American Literature; Hamelman, "Aphasia in Rebecca Rush's Kelroy"; Richards, "Decorous Violence: Manners, Class, and Abuse in Rebecca Rush's Kelroy"; and Fluck, "Novels of Transition: From Sentimental Novel to Domestic Novel." In addition to the previously noted studies by Derounian-Stodola and Parks, Kelroy has been featured in three other dissertations: Rombes, "Dark Reflections: The Terrors of The Enlightenment in Early American Fiction"; McCoy, "Angels in the Architecture: The House of Representatives and the House Represented in American Women's Fiction, 1791-1812"; and Owens, "Sister Novelists: A Comparative Study of Selected Fiction by American and British Women, 1797-1813." In Chapter 3 of Intricate Relations, Weyler briefly discusses Kelroy to illustrate "the cultural value it propagates: that economic ambition is neither becoming nor acceptable for women" (130).

[9] The idea comes through Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith. Fliegelman's Declaring Independence (in addition to his Prodigals and Pilgrims) elucidates connections between Smith and Jefferson (41-42, 115). In addition, he mentions that Adams "in his Discourses on Davila [1791] reproduces key passages from Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments" (171). Fleigelman credits Garry Wills for his work on Jefferson and Hutcheson in Inventing America (Declaring 1, 191). In an 1814 letter to

Thomas Law, for example, Jefferson writes that "nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and succor their distresses.... I sincerely, then, believe ... in the general existence of a moral instinct. I think it the brightest gem with which the human character is studded, and the want of it as more degrading than the most hideous of the bodily deformities" (542-43).

[10] Foletta discusses this concept of moral elitism within the context of the founders of the North American Review (first issue published in March 1815), which he calls "the voice of the rising generation of Boston Federalists" (73). He looks at such men as Joseph Stevens Buckminster, William Tudor, Willard Phillips, and Richard Henry Dana and ties the idea of moral elitism to Unitarianism. Of course, Rebecca Rush is not connected with the later generation of Boston Federalists who are the subjects of Foletta's study; her novel does, however, reflect the fact that it was written in the same period that they were developing intellectually and conceiving of their magazine. These men and Rush were living at the same time, even if geography, gender, and genre differentiate them from one another.

[11] The allusion to Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther begins after Kelroy poetically comments on the musical features of one of the ladies (27). When Mrs. S. advises him to "listen no longer, for she is soon to be married," Kelroy responds, "You are very good to apprize me of it, but I am in no danger." Mrs. S. counters, "I hope not, for you would certainly be obliged to hang your harp on the willow." At which point Charles joins them to add, "And himself too in the end perhaps." Shortly after Charles's observation, the narrator reiterates the point: "Kelroy who watched in vain for an

opportunity of escaping, felt ready to hang himself without having experienced the pangs of despairing love" (28). The banter between the three does foreshadow Kelroy's own ending as a victim of love--although, at the end of the novel, the narrator reports that he dies in a shipwreck, thereby altering the romantic paradigm and saving him from "the guilt of that self-destruction to which he felt himself unceasingly inclined" (191). Note the last line of the novel: "Kelroy and his sorrows were hushed to rest in the depths of the ocean" (194).

[12] Thus echoing a popular refrain from the period. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg points out in her comparative reading of Edgar Huntly and Reuben and Rachel, "Using the trope of the family as an allegory for the nation, Rowson illustrates how, through marriages and births, Columbia's progeny accrued the basic characteristics of late eighteenth-century America" ("Subject Female" 498). Reuben and Rachel--"the twinned Euro-Americans" (498)--represent the Crèvecoeurean ideal in which "that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country" (69) leads to a "continent for men of middle stations or labourers" (81). Smith-Rosenberg notes that, at the conclusion of the novel, Reuben and Rachel are

> each happily married and comfortably settled (as Huntly never would be) on land along the Delaware, [and they] emphatically reject (as Huntly only covertly could do) further British connections. Refusing the titles and estates left them by a distant British relative, the younger Reuben explains his own and his sister's actions: "Our sons are true-born Americans and while they strive to make that title respectable, we wish them to possess no other.... Of the immense property of which we are become possessor, we

shall retain no more than will set our sons forward in business, and give our daughters moderate portions...." (498)

[13] There are many allusions to romantic thought in the novel and mutability, in particular, does play a large role in the plot. It is interesting that Mrs. Hammond can copy Kelroy's romanticism--can pull out the romantic ideas she needs to trick Emily into believing the false letter. Usually, in her case, the changeable nature of human existence is presented as chance. On both the small and large scale, Mrs. Hammond is a gambler. At one point, she almost loses her game when her money has run out and then her house burns down with all of her remaining property destroyed (124). Within a few pages, however, her fortunes change again when she wins "the fifty thousand dollar prize" in a lottery (126). Rather than teaching her anything beyond the fact that she must be careful with her money, this near miss is added to the plot to again demonstrate her cruelty toward Emily and her own selfishness. As Emily herself recognizes, Mrs. Hammond could bestow some of her windfall on Emily and Kelroy to facilitate their marriage, but she refuses to consider that plan (130-131).

[14] This expression comes from a variety of sources. Brown talks about Pamela and Clarissa in The Sentimental Novel in America. Martin uses the expression "American Lovelace" (79) and Davidson uses "New England Clarissa" (149)--both in the context of Foster's The Coquette. Tennenhouse's article, "The Americanization of Clarissa," discusses "what might be called the American Richardson" (183) and, among other arguments, compares British and American editions of Richardson's work. He says, for example, that "the American Clarissa may be distinguished from her English counterpart by her minimal expression of emotions, and she spends even less time writing

personal letters" (187-88).

[15] Fluck discusses such issues of self-esteem in her article on "Novels of Transition."

Chapter 3

Dueling with the Female Reader:

The American Fair and John Neal's Countrywomen in Keep Cool (1817)

In Keep Cool, A Novel. Written in Hot Weather, John Neal presents a battle of the sexes for his readers to enjoy while he satirizes gender relations through the antagonistic relationship that his male characters and his male narrator have with female characters and the implied female audience. In this comic novel of manners, Neal's narrator reflects an instrumental-equalitarian point of view: although the female characters are patronized and even chastened by their male counterparts, the heroines, like the heroes, are clever and largely independent. In terms of Neal's narration, he offers a combination here of sensibility and ridicule, and there is a disguised battle going on between the heavy-handed, didactic tradition of such narrators as Rowson's in Charlotte Temple and Neal's narrator who looks to his audience as being capable of critical judgment and of understanding his humor.[1] In contrast to a typically officious narrator--that is, one who parses her morals as she writes them in an attempt to keep her readers' responses in check--Neal's narrator imagines his female readers as jurors able to judge the characters and as fully competent in terms of differentiating between fictional effect and life itself.[2]

To promote this view of feminine agency, Neal's narrator reminds his readers of their duties as thinkers, jurors, and citizens. At the beginning of chapter three, he warns:

> Have a care then, that your mind be clear from bias, or prejudice, against the characters whose indictment you have seen in the last chapter. They

> are put upon their country:--you, reader, are one of the jury, and it is your duty to hear the whole of the evidence, so
>
> "JUDGE NOT FROM FIRST APPEARANCES." (1: 31)

This ironic narrator acknowledges his role as a moral guide by presenting conventional models of behavior as negative and positive didactic examples, but he also imagines female readers as jury members who can handle the effect of a passionate, fictional scene without succumbing themselves. He draws a line of distinction between the women to whom novels are conventionally dedicated and his own readers: those women who are in on his joke. For example, in his parody of a typical novel dedication, he writes that, while searching for an appropriate dedication,

> At last I thought of the "AMERICAN FAIR," and I filled a whole sheet of paper with the most exquisite compliments I could collect from all of the dedications of the age; but here again, it was my fate to alter my purpose. I had, according to the most approved method, declared this, my little offering to be "*totally unworthy*" of their acceptance; when it happened to come into my head that they might think me serious; that the 'American Fair' might be so very polite as to acquiesce in my opinion, and therefore, I dedicated it as you see, to my 'country-women.' And if that doesn't *take*, the deuce is in it. (v)

Mild oaths aside, Neal's narrator engages with his equalitarian countrywomen, while his novel offers typical, thematic messages for the "American Fair," that is, those who require such heavy-handedness. Weyler, in Intricate Relations, notes the "coded language" implied by such a label:

> During the early national period, when enforcement of laws governing sexual behavior declined just as the rates for premarital pregnancies climbed to a level unmatched until the 1960s, fiction offered a forum for exploring the consequences of extramarital sexual behavior in a republic anxious about the virtue of the American "fair," coded language for middling and elite white women, who were increasingly assuming the burden for symbolizing the nation itself in the national imaginary. (24)

Neal invokes the "coded language" and then goes on to imply that he has another audience in mind in addition to those supposedly vulnerable female readers.

These women are his fellow citizens, his countrywomen, and they have the critical skills to interpret--for example, "sharp nosed" or "smart girl[s]" (1: 37, 38) and widows who "understand *trap*" (2: 96)--the "she-gladiators" of the republic, as he later terms Fuller (qtd. in Sears 100). Such readers are not naïve precisely because they do understand "trap"--that is, they have their own best interests at heart.[3] For them, passionate representation will not be corruptive, and he offers his book to them without contempt: "TO HIS COUNTRY WOMEN, THE AUTHOR, WHO IS AN AMERICAN, RESPECTFULLY DEDICATES THIS WORK" (iii). Neal's narrator in Keep Cool enjoys this struggle with his implied reader's gentility as he engages with her instrumentality. Ostensibly, and in its main plot, the novel pursues the evils and miseries of dueling: in this storyline, a jealous American, Charles Percy, challenges an honorable Englishman, Colonel Sydney, to a duel and both men suffer horribly as a result of the outcome. That is, the fop Percy dies a long, slow death; whereas the hero Sydney tortures himself emotionally while traveling through the wilderness and fighting

alongside Indians. Eventually he does earn his marriage to the heroine, but not until the very last page of the book. In addition, although Sydney emerges as the novel's flawed hero, Keep Cool does not maintain a single focus; rather the narrator jumps from one contemporaneous characterization to another as he describes the various personalities and interactions within a New York social "circle" (1: 150). In this realm of New York drawing rooms, a major secondary plot emerges: in this subplot, Neal focuses on the marriage market, and these storylines provide good examples of Neal's clever engagement with his female audience. In particular, Louisa Courtly and Laura St. Vincent form a contrasting pair of young American female characters while Elizabeth Granville, Sydney's sister and a self-sufficient widow with a young son, functions as a moral guide for the reader to follow. The novel concludes in two significant marriages--one between Laura and Sydney; and one between Mrs. Granville and her long-lost love Echo, otherwise known as Eustace St. Pierre--and neither of these unions results from a conventionally sentimental storyline. To narrow the scope of an engaging but otherwise sprawling text, in this chapter I will focus on this battle-of-the-sexes/marriage-market subplot while relegating the Percy-Sydney duel and its dire consequences to the background.

As indicated by his various contemporaries as well as by his editors, biographers, and bibliographers, Neal has been positioned in American literary history as something of an idiot savant--a "wild fellow" and "genius," who never quite disciplines himself enough to achieve greatness--and his first fiction, Keep Cool, A Novel, has thus been "blamed for its haphazard structure and its incoherence" (Petter 177) or dismissed for "its immaturity and digressiveness" (Lease 83). Edgar Allan Poe, for example, evaluates

Neal's corpus in this manner in his 1842 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales: "Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigor and originality; but in general, his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art" (523-524). In his own 1845 article "P.'s Correspondence," republished in Mosses from an Old Manse, Hawthorne's P. filters his depiction of Neal through his own "partially disordered reason" (113): "How slowly our literature grows up! Most of our writers of promise have come to untimely ends. There was that wild fellow, John Neal, who almost turned my boyish brain with his romances; he surely has long been dead, else he never could keep himself so quiet" (130). In 1849 Poe adds that he "should be inclined to rank John Neal first, or at all events second, among our men of indisputable *genius*. Is it, or is it not a fact, that the air of a Democracy agrees better with mere Talent than with Genius?" (qtd. in Lease and Lang iii).[4]

In his 1937 introduction to an edition of Neal's "American Writers" series, originally published in Blackwood's Magazine (1824-1825), Fred Lewis Pattee enlarges upon Hawthorne's and Poe's assessments with the following sketch of the author: "No figure in American literature more startling than John Neal.... Energy and persistence amazing; conceit, self-consciousness, egotism at every point; ignorance colossal; and with it all a personality that was commanding. At every point in his biography paradox, at every point genius, though genius of a type that must be especially defined" (3). Benjamin Lease follows suit, borrowing Hawthorne's amusing portrait as the title for his biography That Wild Fellow John Neal and the American Literary Revolution (1972) and, like Pattee, emphasizing Neal's contrary nature, his vigor and rebelliousness.

Donald A. Sears, in another biography simply entitled John Neal (1978), also emphasizes Neal's energy and genius. In his concluding chapter, "Romantic Genius as American," Sears imagines Neal as representative of the Emersonian and American "romantic theory of genius [that] was made to incorporate the vigor of moral earnestness." He characterizes Neal as "a true New Englander, essentially moral, painfully honest, and centrally manly" (127). In this estimation, "he had the power of genius and he had it as a natural man, self-educated and self-propelled upon the world.... In strengths and weaknesses, in accomplishments and failures, John Neal was America's natural man, the man of genius in the guise of self-made Yankee" (127-128).

Many of Neal's notable contemporaries similarly remark upon Neal's natural, masculine strength and his surges of genius. The writer Elizabeth Oakes Smith, for example, describes the effect of his oral performance after attending a City Hall lecture: "His manly bearing, readiness, and vivacity fired my enthusiasm. What he said of women responded to what had been so long fermenting in my own mind that I was deeply affected" (qtd. in Sears 100). In another instance, Smith describes reactions to one of Neal's Broadway Tabernacle lectures on women's rights in 1843: "Some enthusiasm was manifested at the fine manly appearance of John Neal, [for] his superior address and thoroughly gentlemanly breeding no less than for the exhibition of original thought and outbursts of eloquence." Smith adds that Charles F. Hoffman, the Knickerbocker editor, thought Neal "an enthusiast, but a right manly man, and thoroughly the gentleman"--although Hoffman viewed Neal's opinions as "dangerous": "I think they would take woman from her throne where she is worshiped, to place her in the furrows to be bespattered" (qtd. in Sears 102).[5] Like Smith and Hoffman, Margaret

Fuller comments on Neal's masculine genius after Neal lectured to her students in Providence in 1838: "Mr. JOHN NEAL addressed my girls on the destiny and vocation of Woman in this country. He gave, truly, a *manly* view, though not the view of common men, and it was pleasing to watch his countenance, where energy is animated by genius.... It was delightful to note the impression produced by his magnetic genius and independent character" (181). Interestingly, as Fuller's description continues, she sees through this polished façade:

> In the evening we had a long conversation upon Women, Whigism, modern English Poets, Shakespeare,--and, in particular, Richard the Third,--about which we had actually a fight. Mr. Neal does not argue quite fairly, for he uses reason while it lasts, and then helps himself out with wit, sentiment and assertion. I should quarrel with his definitions upon almost every subject, but his fervid eloquence, brilliancy, endless resource, and ready tact, give him great advantage. There was a sort of exaggeration and coxcombry in his talk; but his lion-heart, and keen sense of the ludicrous, alike in himself as in others, redeem them. (181-182)[6]

Apparently the sparring nature of Fuller's conversational pattern impressed Neal as well. In an 1846 letter to Smith, he alludes to Fuller's own combative nature: "Remember me to her, I pray you--as to a she-gladiator" (qtd. in Sears 100).

It is important to note that, since Irving T. Richards's recovery work in the 1930s, Neal's works have received consistent attention in the twentieth century.[7] Lease's own interest began in the late 1940s with his dissertation research and the subsequent publication of his article "Yankee Poetics: John Neal's Theory of Poetry and Fiction"

(1953), both of which led to his biographical study. In 1962 Richards's "John Neal: A Bibliography" and Hans-Joachim Lang's "Critical Essays and Stories by John Neal" appeared in the same issue of Jahrbuch fur Amerikastudien. Sears's biography followed in 1978 as well as Fritz Fleischmann's A Right View of the Subject: Feminism in the Works of Charles Brockden Brown and John Neal in 1983. Over time, literary scholars have compared Neal with Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and Edgar Allan Poe as well as within the context of women's rights, the novel's colloquial tradition, Benthamite utilitarianism, American romanticism, and American nationalism.[8] For example, David S. Reynolds significantly credits "the reform-minded John Neal" as one of the original purveyors of a "peculiarly indigenous Subversive style" (199). In Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville (1988), Reynolds says that "the sensational novels and literary manifestoes of John Neal in the 1820s" exemplify "Subversive literature in its earliest phase" when it "was a pugnacious, partly political mode that tried to establish a defiant, quirky Americanness whose excessive irrationalism was intended as a direct affront to what was regarded as the effete gentility of foreign literature" (198). Neal's influence here is particularly important, from Reynolds's point of view, because he "publicly praised Poe," "developed experimental poetic theories anticipatory of Whitman's," and "had a marked affect on Hawthorne" (199)--three "major writers" who moved beyond their progenitor because, ultimately, "they were distressed by the unrestrained wildness and open defiance of extreme sensational writings, such as those ... designated as Subversive" (225).

In addition to Reynolds's attention, Philip Gould includes a section on Neal's potentially subversive side in Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the

Politics of Puritanism (1996). Gould discusses Rachel Dyer (1828) as an example of how "the literary renditions of Puritan witch-hunting in the early republic are permeated by political concerns of the day" (208). Gould's book looks at the "significant cultural tensions between premodern and modern ideologies in the post-Revolutionary era" (6) and, more specifically, at "historical literature about Puritan New England" (1) as "one outlet for cultural dissent" when contrasted with the "generally conservative" leanings of "nationalist history-writing":

> Without overestimating the radical politics of historical romance, one should recognize that the genre engaged, subverted--sometimes participated in--the dominant ideologies of status quo historiography. Indeed, the cultural role of historical fiction as a mediator between novels and histories marks its liminal political position. (13)

In Rachel Dyer, then, we see the author's Bakhtinian "double-voicedness" (28-29): one Neal, "the avowed champion of romantic iconoclasm (the lover of Poe's 'thunder and lightening')," and another Neal, "the republican writer who hopes his reader's 'excitement' over Rachel Dyer is that which involves 'a search after *rational* truth'" (207).[9] The Puritan "evil of fanaticism describes the logical extension of a Revolutionary political ideal in a modern world. These fears in early republican America spanned party, region, and political affiliation" (208).

In his 2001 review article for Early American Literature, Robert S. Levine points out that both Teresa Goddu's Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation (1997) and Dana D. Nelson's National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men (1998) have chapters on Neal's Logan, A Family History (1822). Nelson's

book is a complicated look at "the historical moment when the abstracting identity of white manhood--abstracting in the sense that it works to relocate men's affiliations away from more locally conceived identities--comes into focus as a supraclass ideal for guaranteeing national unity." She specifically analyzes "the processes through which individual 'white' men assume the privileges and burdens of national imperatives, and how middle-class professionalization takes over and is authorized by those imperatives" (ix). Therefore, in "'That's Not My Wife, That's an Indian Squaw': Inindianation and National Manhood," Nelson discusses how "white male power was negotiated through imaginary and actual relations to "Indians" (61). Levine gives an efficient summary:

> Chapter 2 studies the Lewis and Clark expedition, focusing on Jefferson's and Lewis's writings and Nicholas Biddle's 1814 The History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and then links those writings to John Neal's Logan. As Nelson shows, all of these writers worked with the notion of Indianness as an undisciplined, feminized other that demanded taming, managing, and control in the name of the expanding white nation. (100)

Like Nelson, Goddu's Gothic America also considers race, national identity, and social control, arguing that the "gothic can strengthen as well as critique an idealized national identity":

> American gothic literature criticizes America's national myth of new-world innocence by voicing the cultural contradictions that undermine the nation's claim to purity and equality. Showing how these contradictions contest and constitute national identity even as they are denied, the gothic tells of the historical horrors that make national identity possible yet must

be repressed in order to sustain it. (10)

Of her chapter "Literary Nationalism and the Gothic: John Neal's Logan," Goddu says that she investigates Neal's "attempts ... to found a national literature upon a literature of the blood." In her reading, Logan "registers the cultural contradiction of Indian massacre," and Neal himself becomes "a ghostly presence in the canon of American literature" (11).[10]

Goddu's description of Neal's literary-historical reception is useful. Due to a biographic record filled with such character sketches as those I have discussed above--and with the exceptions of Gould's and Nelson's contemporaneously published chapters--she notes that "critics tend to elevate the man over his work." Citing Pattee's evaluation as a representative summary of "the central tenets of Neal's reputation" (70), Goddu writes:

> Lacking control, Neal's creative power fails to be transformed into enduring art. His genius may be original, but his madness reveals it to be uncivilized. The construction of Neal's "genius," then, positions him in America's literary history as a wild precursor who embodies originality and passion but lacks refinement.... Neal, like the Indian with whom he identified, is seen as an immature phase of America's literary nationalism and associated with a dead past. (71)[11]

Goddu then explains that--because Neal is symbolically represented as uncivilized--the author's reputation in American literary history suffers the same fate as the American Indian (his subject) and the gothic (his genre). She says that "as early as the 1820s many critics were arguing that the Indian was inappropriate material for a 'civilized'

literature.... Once assets of America's literary nationalism, the Indian and the gothic quickly became liabilities of a more established canon" (72). Like the others before her, Goddu points to the fact that Neal was a literary nationalist--although he, like Brown, "paradoxically turned to a British form, the gothic novel" (53)--and as such his work as a writer and as a critic and editor consciously responds to Sydney Smith's famous diatribe against American intellectual productivity in the January 1820 issue of The Edinburgh Review.[12] Goddu then provocatively imagines a different canonical history:

> If Neal, rather than Emerson, is taken as the voice of America's literary independence, the roles of the gothic and the Indian in American literature are no longer obscured. Neal also fills a gap in the genealogy of American gothicism that begins with Brown and reaches its apogee with Poe, allowing their careers to be read as part of a continuous tradition rather than as aberrations. (72)

Goddu's point here, touches on my larger argument within this dissertation: regardless of the particular novelistic subgenre, many of the novels of the early decades of the nineteenth century have been skipped over. For example, in addition to a canonical taste for American romanticism, narratives of sentimental suffering--an emerging canon running from William Hill Brown's The Power of Sympathy (1789) to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) and beyond--have been privileged over a tradition that includes early American novels of manners. In this alternative line, such novels as Kelroy, Keep Cool, and Redwood become members of a tradition that includes such early realistic fiction as Fern's Ruth Hall or Davis's Life in the Iron Mills and that "reaches its apogee" in the novels of Henry James and Edith Wharton at the turn of the century.

Keep Cool has never been studied in any substantive way.[13] Henri Petter includes a brief reading in The Early American Novel (1971), and he ranks the novel with The Coquette and Kelroy as "emerg[ing] slightly above the contemporary average" (401): "there are, at least, hints of an ability in Neal to see his way into his heroine's emotional ways which is superior to that of most of his American colleagues. This cannot be entirely obscured by Neal's uneven expression of his insights and conceptions, skirting the trite and the sentimental as often as it does" (179).[14] Lease and Sears both look briefly at Keep Cool in their Neal biographies. Lease, who relinquishes approximately three pages of That Wild Fellow to the novel, bases his discussion upon the premise that the "gulf between Neal's prophetic vision of a native literature and his own capacity to fulfill that vision is painfully apparent in his first novel" (81). Regardless of his distaste for Keep Cool, Lease's understanding of Neal's "Yankee Poetics" offers an interesting insight into Neal's literary criticism:

> Neal's enthusiastic reception by Blackwood's Magazine [in 1824] ... stems in part from the fact that he brought to the journal a point of view to a considerable extent derived from it. A. W. Schlegel's principle of effect was enthusiastically adopted by J. G. Lockhart at the time he joined the editorial staff of Maga in 1817; Blackwood's was widely read and contributed significantly to the spread of Schlegelian doctrine in Baltimore and Philadelphia. (72)

Lease uses this idea of the principle of effect to call into question "the didacticism of [Keep Cool] or any other Neal novel or tale": "Neal's fictional characters bristle with ideas and opinions, frequently Neal's own, but the consequence--when they have bristled

successfully--is sympathetic identification of the reader with what Hans-Joachim Lang has called the 'moral energy' of the character, not an acceptance of his view" (83). Lease points out, therefore, that the "numerous causes set forth so passionately in Neal's first novel and in the works that follow are far less important than the effect--the moral energy generated among the characters who argue them" (84).[15]

Sears offers a more extended close reading of the novel than Lease does. According to his preface, to differentiate his biography from Lease's, Sears calls attention to Neal as reformer, critic, and patron to complement and add to Lease's study of Neal as literary nationalist (9). He emphasizes that the novel is "an experiment in treating American themes and scenes in an American way" (34), but he also notes Neal's "self-conscious playfulness" and "ambiguity of tone" in the novel: "the shifting of tone from arch attempts at wit through mock seriousness to concern for social issues confuses the reader.... Keep Cool is too rich a pudding; individual plums can be savored only when abstracted from the seething mass." As plum instances, Sears points to an "accurate description of the varied crowd on a Hudson River boat" (37), observing that "Neal developed a similar setting in The Down-Easters, [thus] making it the scene of a comedy of national manners and an expose of sharpers" (133n6); to "the Byronic poet Echo" (37), noting that the "name may be intended to satirize The Echo, publication of the Connecticut wits" (133n7); and to discussions of "social issues ranging from arguments against capital punishment to defenses of the noble Indian" to his "sincere abhorrence of the *code duello*" (37, 38). Sears adds, "if Keep Cool fails of greatness, as it does, it is eminently American in its individuality that achieves eccentricity, in its brashness, in its flashes of earthiness puncturing pretension, and in its moral earnestness regarding social

reform." However, Sears also believes that, though Neal takes the social concerns seriously, "one senses less of the social reformer than the novelist in the work itself." For example,

> In retrospect, after he had been made notorious for his antiduelling stance following the publication of Randolph [1823], Neal increasingly felt that he had written his first novel in order to strike a blow as a social reformer: "In writing this story, I had two objects in view: one was to discourage duelling; and another was--I forget what" ([Wandering Recollections] 197). But even here the playfulness of the last clause undercuts the seriousness of the first statement. (38)

Given the types of destabilizing maneuvers the narrator relies on in Keep Cool, for Sears, the novel "is finally a confused and confusing book" (39). It looks toward a later time in Neal's biography when he becomes "the embattled reformer" (98).

An 1817 review of Keep Cool--published in The Portico, a Baltimore literary magazine to which Neal himself was a consistent contributor--hints at another reason why this author may fail to find an audience. It is his apparent "design to furnish a picture of genuine, *American* manners" (165) and "to show the wickedness and absurdity of *duelling*" (168); the author and his characters, therefore, are not dressed "in their *Holiday clothes*" (163). The author of Keep Cool, according to this reviewer,

> has studied the philosophy of the passions, and is enabled to dive into the *motives* of human action; with a truth and precision, which rarely fall to the lot of modern Novel writers. He has failed, however, in most of the essential qualities that give *popularity* to a Novel. He has introduced no

> impenetrable mystery to keep alive the anxiety and terrour of his readers--his incidents have nothing in them of the miraculous--they are such as have occurred within the knowledge of almost every reader.... (162-163)

Neal's contemporaneous reviewer is onto something here. Like many of the novels in the period, Keep Cool defies categorization as it experiments with realism. In addition, as Reynolds and Gould have noted in some Neal's other works, there is a competitive dialogism in this novel: a tension between the conventional operations of the novelist-as-moralist and the more radical voice of the novelist-as-comedian in partnership with his clever readers. Edward Watts suggests that such competing voices can be read as postcolonial or second world and that these challenges to "received systems of representation" (18) are common in the texts of this era when the "basic republican premises of authorship and passive readership had abjectly failed to represent the politics and power dynamics of post-Revolutionary literary exchange" (20). Despite the contemporary reviewer's claim that the novel's incidents are commonplace--"within the knowledge of almost every reader" (163)--and, therefore, precise, truthful, and monolithic, what he fails to note, or chooses to gloss over, is the fact that Keep Cool's informally dressed narrator--this philosopher of the passions--has a dual engagement with his implied, female, novel-reading audience. As a moralist, Neal's author-narrator provides his reader with an appropriately clear moral about the danger of hotheaded decision-making; however, any secondary didactic concerns about proper social conduct become clouded by the narrator's banter with his audience as well as by the deportment of his independently minded female characters.

Intriguingly, Neal argued with real readers over the content of his novel, and both

of Neal's biographers assert that Keep Cool was too racy for 1817. Sears remarks upon Neal's "too pert" female characters (35) and explains that Keep Cool "had for novel readers of the day too many characters who relish their sins" (36). In fact, Neal had trouble getting the novel published and rewrote his original version to make it more acceptable. Lease says that Neal ran into trouble when his friend John Pierpont--who had had modest success with his own Airs of Palestine in 1816--"attempted to find a Boston publisher" for the book. While shopping the novel to Ezra Read, Read's wife "complains that 'there is not quite *love* enough in it to suit the ladies,'" and, Lease adds, "both Read and Pierpont agree that the female characters are too earthy and susceptible." Pierpont writes to Neal: "You must not ... doom to the bar-room a book which without those defects might and would grace the toilet of beauty and be read and listened to, and applauded in the drawing room" (qtd. in Lease 25). Neal reworked the novel, but Lease says that "the revised version was still unacceptable to Read (or his wife) and was eventually bought out by a Baltimore publisher" (25), where Neal had some fledgling literary clout as a member of the Delphian Club and contributor to The Portico.

Throughout his career, Neal aggressively pushed back against such fastidiousness as that evinced by the Boston publisher and his wife. For example, in a later incident involving an altered version of his story "The Phrenologist" (1835) in The Token and Atlantic Souvenir, he accused the editor of "emasculat[ing his] youngest born" and then republished his original story in Boston's The New England Galaxy, which he co-edited with Henry F. Harrington. In his front-page introduction to the restored version--after noting The Token's "prettily managed request that we would just play the devil with the whole story, by the alteration of some two or three passages in the body of it--and by

leaving out the catastrophe!"--Neal exclaims, "Just think of that! ... Gad-a-mercy--man! *did* you think I would be guilty of such a thing? What! emasculate my youngest born to please the babies that delight in emasculated Tokens! no, thank ye." He concludes: "Oh but these gentlemen who cater for young ladies are getting to be so squeamish--we wonder if butter would melt in *their* mouths!--or if they ever allowed a pretty woman, with a neat [ankle], to go upstairs before them in all their lives" (1).[16] In another manifestation of this antagonistic relationship between Neal and his publishers--and his hoped-for audience--one of Neal's literary stand-ins in the roman à clef Randolph: A Novel (1823) provides a passionate critique of such seemingly protective gestures.[17] Imagining a censorship of Byronic proportion, Neal's Molton writes:

> For my part, I have no such apprehension concerning the influence of Don Juan. By permitting it to be read; or, at least, by not making any particular fuss about it, you will permit it to die a natural death. Prohibit the cup; and, though it were known to be drugged with delirium, you excite a burning thirst.... So with Don Juan. By interdicting it continually, you have made it familiar to the thought of your women. But why interdict at all? Are you afraid of your daughters and wives? What! have you so little confidence in the virtue and discretion of your dear ones! Depend upon it, that the woman, who could be corrupted by reading Don Juan, could never be prevented from reading it; or from doing worse, on a fitting opportunity.... (2: 164-165)

Molton pushes across the line of propriety when he takes his argument one step further to exaggerate his point: "I know women well.... I have a higher opinion too, of their virtue.

I am willing to expose them--and confident of their resistance.... I, for my part, have learnt that, *that* is not virtue, which has not been tempted; and that many a fallen woman is more pure--because she has withstood more temptation, than many, who are yet upright" (2: 165). Despite this crude twist at the end of Molton's argument, the hyperbole itself is part of his joking interaction with his reader. The Ezra and Mrs. Reads of the world are naïve: daughters will read their Byron regardless of their parents' objections. With his overstated, let-them-read-Byron solution to the over-hyped problem of women's reading and their moral susceptibility, Neal's Molton winks at his readers about the futile absurdity of such censorship.

In Keep Cool, then, Neal chooses to introduce just such a woman as the able counterpart to Henri Sydney's hero. We meet Laura when another character, the enthusiastic James Earnest, falls in love with her--or, at least, with what he imagines her to be. In a conversation with Percy, Earnest says that Laura is a "lovely Italian," whose "parents are American. She was born in Italy. Hang it, Percy, I could have sworn that such a creature must be *almost* an American, at first sight; she has the most eloquent countenance; it absolutely breathes feeling. I have sat by her, man, and read to her about Blue Beard, Childe Harold, and Robinson Crusoe, and such cut-throat heroes, in tragedy and poetry, and such stuff; and I have seen her bosom heave, and tears stand in her eyes..." (1: 64). Earnest's effluence continues until he rhetorically inquires, "Charles, were you ever in love?" He continues:

> Let me describe Laura St. Vincent to you. There's a name now; upon my soul, I'd forgive a man for falling in love with the bare name--sound it, ye nightingales, cauliflowers, and zephyrs! She is neither too tall, nor too

> short; neither ugly nor handsome; witty nor stupid; dull nor quick.... There is an odd sort of something, that I cannot describe; something that comes home to the heart, when she speaks or moves; something that seems to claim protection. She is a woman, perfect woman--helpless, lovely, and shrinking as a sensitive plant, at a breath--that is, she is what a woman *should be*. (1: 66)

And yet, when Percy suggests that Earnest loves her, he replies, "I *do* almost love her," and then characterizes Laura as "undisciplined, so ardent, enthusiastick, imprudent.... She is eternally doing wrong, and always means to do right. She is fiery--and you know that I am not the mildest person in the world; with these convictions, you know, I could not address her as a man of honour" (1: 71). In addition, Earnest cannot marry Laura because he has principles that forbid the match. To wit, he says, "she is rich--I am poor.... I would not marry the girl I loved if she were *rich*; it is this: I should always distrust myself; the world would distrust me; I should reverse the order of nature; I should lead the life of a slave, dependant on my wife for bread, and dignity, and consequence" (1: 71-72). Until a later scene, when Laura's name is reintroduced in a conversation between Mrs. Granville and Louisa Courtly, we are left with this contradictory introduction to Laura's situation--gossip, really, that reflects the mixed reputation of an independent and thus unprotected young woman.

When Elizabeth Granville enters the novel, the narrator describes her as an unattached but capable woman, "a widow, in a strange country, and unprotected, with one child." Despite the fact that "[n]obody knew her history," unlike Laura, she commands respect with a mind that "was the legitimate breathing of the Deity; chained to

earth; but never groveling; a mounting spirit, like flame, forever struggling to ascend. Her resources were inexhaustible" (1: 56). In fact, the "elegant widow" has an impressive back story to match her demeanor (2: 4). The daughter of bankrupt English petty nobility, she flees an exploitative step-mother when her father dies. Her brother, Henri Sydney, has previously left home to pursue his military career. On her way to Quebec, where she plans to live with her father's sister, Elizabeth falls in love with a lieutenant in the British navy, who coincidentally knows and respects her brother. They marry, and she has a happy two years with her husband until "he was shot through the heart in *preventing a duel*," thus dying a "martyr to his principles" (2: 14). When the action of the novel begins, Mrs. Granville has inherited her aunt's fortune, and she has come to New York to arrange to travel home to England (2: 21).

While awaiting appropriate passage, she has been living "with Louisa, who offered [her] apartments with her, from friendship" (2: 22-23). Mrs. Granville has a reputation for impeccable propriety, and she councils the younger Louisa in matters of feminine etiquette. Louisa is a conventional heroine about whom the narrator comments: "Nobody ever left the company of Louisa Courtly without thinking or declaring, that she was perfectly the lady. You understand her character now, reader, and are at liberty to proceed" (1: 88). She is the oldest of

> a family of sisters so extremely alike, that they not only seemed to be children of the same parents, but children of the same birth; all wore a rich light brown hair, blue eyes, and complexions so delicately tinged with the rose that the tint seemed rather a reflection than a color; lips ripe and pouting as cherries, and every feature in perfect symmetry. (1: 87)

Although the narrator notes that "when she smiled there was something of soul in her smile that the others wanted," Louisa functions in the novel as one of the generic American fair, and, as such, she is in need of generalized moral guidance from her older companion.

In an effort to educate her young friend, Mrs. Granville expresses conventional concerns about Laura St. Vincent. She worries that a particularly brazen older woman carries too much sway over Laura, and she warns Louisa about such influences: "My dear girl, I know Nancy Harwood. She is not *naturally* bold, forward, or indelicate; but by education she is all this. She is a finished romp on *system and calculation*.... Louisa, she is a very improper companion for any lady; by lady, I mean, any woman who knows what best befits her character" (1: 90). Mrs. Granville can forgive the occasional indiscretion that comes from "youthful spirits," but, she continues, "I can never forgive the vociferous hoyden, who forgets age, sex, respectability and dignity, to be a companion for wild young girls" (1: 90-91). Accordingly, she is willing to judge Laura less harshly because she is young and naturally vivacious. In addition, Mrs. Granville grants her some leeway due to the Italian influence and her orphan status. As an Englishwoman, she herself is a long way from home. "I feel for her," she says, "--among strangers, with such a person, and such a heart; she has all the glow--the fire of that ardent climate. I think she is too romantick, too tender, too passionate; but I cannot pronounce decidedly. I have observed her frequently, but not satisfactorily" (1: 93). Mrs. Granville may judge Nancy quite harshly, but she reserves judgment of the younger woman because she does not know her well. Our moral arbiter, therefore, does not fall into the trap of judging from first appearances.

After these initial introductions, readers learn more about Laura's character and her connection with Colonel Sydney. First, the narrator reports that Laura has a sadness about her: "She appeared unhappy; but there was so much of heart in all she said and did; so much of a desire to put her visiters entirely at their ease; so much of a wish to please, rather than shine, that she won every heart" (1: 94). Later, when Laura is conversing with her friend Harriot, she offers this admission: "'I have known unhappiness, sorrow--' her voice deepened and trembled.... 'Yes, dear Harriot,' she added, '*sorrow*, but never, never, did I see the time when a genuine American smile could not make me forget it'" (1: 102). Couched between these two hints at Laura's deeper nature, we are introduced to Henri Sydney and his "sorrows," about which the narrator comments, "his sorrows were holy.... No one dared break into his secret pain, and [o]ne of his fellow officers, ... who was most intimate with him, had been once known to touch on that subject, but he was silenced forever; --he never was hardy enough to repeat the attempt" (1: 100). In addition, when Percy meets Laura he recognizes her "very countenance; Sydney had worn it on his bosom in an exquisite miniature." Percy, "who had once occupied the same sickroom" as Sydney when the Englishman was a prisoner of war, remembers that "night after night he had seen Sydney arise from his bed--look anxiously at the old nurse, as if even her dim eyes might discover his emotion--then press that miniature to his lips as if there had been life in it" (1: 98). With this setup in place, Neal's narrator is ready to present the first scene in his battle-of-the-sexes subplot.

Their first reencounter occurs in Louisa Courtly's drawing room. When Sydney arrives, he and Laura both exclaim each others' names and then participate in a brief exchange about their surprise at meeting again in New York. After initially

demonstrating that they know one another intimately, Sydney pulls back. "Suddenly his hand was returned," the narrator reports, "and he spoke in a low, hurried, convulsive tone, in Italian, 'Laura, Laura, where am I to find rest!' then instantly changing his whole manner--he threw a rapid glance around the room, and found every eye fastened upon him" (1: 142). He takes on an unemotional tone and jokingly greets Earnest and Laura together. "Well, my old friend, ... how have you been? You are acquainted *here*, I perceive, ... *I* knew her abroad--aye, and loved her abroad--did I not, Laura?" The onlookers all wonder at Sydney's "recognition.... The delicious spirit of romance peeped from every eye, and danced on every flutter of the breath: then he was a *lover* unquestionably; a mad, mad lover, all passion, gesture and emotion." As the reader joins in anticipation, the narrator interjects: "KEEP COOL, reader; --now they all thought he was a *relation*." He continues:

> All had expected a *denouement*, a catastrophe. Many a pair of scissors has been grasped, ready to snip the riband that bound the lovely waist of Laura, the moment she should faint. All were prepared to throw themselves into different "attitudes," and form a "group" around the stranger as he supported the fair creature on his bosom. But this steady, extraordinary composure of his, restored them all to their senses like the touch of a --torpedo. (1: 143)

The assemblage as well as the reader expects a novelistic convention, but instead we are treated to a more realistic anticlimax as the story moves on to a discussion of Sydney's recent travels, his arrival in New York, and his reunion with Louisa, an old friend and his actual reason for arriving at the Courtly home.

Meanwhile Earnest decides that he has fallen in love with Laura and decides to propose marriage regardless of his previous scruples. The narrator explains that Laura "listened to his passionate avowal till her heart throbbed audibly. She was '*so surprised!*' Her feelings were unutterable; but she gave him no hopes" (1: 156). Unfortunately for Earnest, her refusal becomes public knowledge: "The story got wind directly--nobody could tell how. Earnest was the sufferer, the pigeon--and of course he wouldn't mention it *you know*--Laura was the only person who knew it besides him, and she was a *woman*, and it is impossible *you know*, reader, that she should have ever mentioned such a thing--therefore, the getting abroad of that same story was really miraculous." Earnest becomes an object of public mockery when Laura's friend Harriot creates a "caricature" of the proposal with Percy eavesdropping in the next room, and the poet Echo attaches "an elegy--called 'the hopes of youth'" (1: 157). Earnest decides that Laura "could never mean to entrap me for amusement: her *principles* would never permit it," but the narrator adds, "*Principles*, in a young and beautiful, and passionate girl--poor Earnest!" (1: 158). Neal's audience, however, knows that Earnest has actually been ensnared in a universal revenge plot against men that has been instigated by Laura and Harriot. Earlier in the volume, when Harriot's cousin George is attempting to give her some advice--"your heart is excellent Harriot; but your manners; indeed--indeed, they are not worthy of you"--she avers, "I detest sentiment," and adds,

> You must know George that a very dear friend of mine has lately suffered: keenly, exquisitely; she has been trodden in the dust; she scarcely survived such humiliation. You know the cause; male coquetry--and now George, tho' I am not revengeful, yet if I can do the dear creature some vengeance,

> I will. The Italian is the girl after all; she says that heaven has given me some power, and it is my duty to try it upon some of these lords of creation. She has made many a fine fellow's heart ache.

Though Harriot says that their plan is hatched in defense of a "sweet girl by the name of Elenore," we also understand that Laura's own experience must provide some fodder for their scheme.

The public humiliation of Earnest actually causes Laura to feel some guilt, and she is "dissatisfied and humbled--she began to feel that she had sported with the devotion, the suffering of a great heart; aye, and she felt, too, a dreary foreboding, that she should live yet to repent it." Her intuition is correct, and Sydney arrives on the scene to fire a new shot in a private but ongoing volley that began when Laura was very young and still living in Italy. Sydney uses the occasion of their first private encounter since his arrival in New York to chastise her cruelty: "you made a *fool* of him Laura," he charges. The narrator comments that "Laura smiled triumphantly; but it was not all triumph, there was a shading of sorrow in it, which Sydney observed" (1: 171). The Colonel continues, "It is true Laura, you are neither a prude nor a coquet; but you are infinitely more dangerous than either--from that very inconstancy of yours." Laura replies that she thought she loved Earnest, but that her feelings shifted--and she picks up on his theme when she teasingly adds, "who can answer for the constancy of woman? Besides, Henri, it is not I who change, but the *object*. This Earnest is not the same Earnest that I loved--at least he does not appear the same to me--" (1: 172). As they face off, the reader realizes that both characters in Neal's dueling universe are, in fact, correct. Laura's (and Harriot's) plan to punish male coquetry is cruel in its universality, but Earnest has also

changed by the time he proposes to Laura. First of all, he has abandoned his principle about marriage and wealth, and, before his actual marriage proposal, he puts Laura through a series of odd "stratagem" that "play tricks" with Laura's emotions (1: 155).

Laura continues, "You look serious Sydney, have I offended you?" Sydney replies, "No, ... not offended me, Laura, but you have wounded me. These are not the feelings, the expressions, or the tones of the Laura St. Vincent at sixteen, the Italian-- ... How strangely you are altered" (1: 172). At this point, the American Laura has had enough, and she mounts her defense. I quote her at length here because her speech sets up a number of plot points that the narrator reveals as their battle ensues:

> ... I thank you for your advice--there *was* a time, and *you* will never forget it, when I could have given you credit for disinterestedness; ... but *now* I am roused--I shall not be silenced easily--Sydney--now I can, and will do myself justice.... [I]n single life--in the unmarried, inconstancy is only a weakness--coquetry a crime--coquetry--and I think I understand it.... Coquetry is the despicable intriguing of one who has no heart--whose feelings can never be reached--one who fights cowardly, Sydney. The coquet *appears* fairly and openly, but in fact, wears, conceals, an impenetrable defence--an armour beneath the outside, of carelessness and profession--she gains hearts but to trample on them. Colonel Sydney, hear me! --I do think the coquet the most unfeeling creature under heaven--the least deserving of its mercy.... There is no punishment so severe, so terrible, as the female coquet should suffer: but think of *man*--man being a coquet; a wretch with all the icy calculation of the woman; and infinitely

> less responsible--possessing, ten thousand times the opportunities--the powers of destruction. (1: 175)

As the novel unfolds, we learn their complicated history and begin to understand this outburst. Sydney has previously proposed to Laura, but at sixteen she is too young to appreciate the gravity of his proposal and his feelings are damaged as a result (2: 169). The Earnest situation is, therefore, an echo of their previous experience. At that earlier time, Sydney decides to teach the young woman a lesson by wooing her again simply to reject her in the same manner that he perceives himself to have been rejected. The narrator explains:

> He determined to be revenged. But even his revenge should have mercy in it; he wounded her but to restore her.... Long and secretly he sought the hidden avenues to the heart of her who had smiled upon his throes; and he sought successfully.... He triumphed, and his heart bled while he triumphed. He felt that he had loved too suddenly, too madly. He felt that his revenge was unmanly. She, she that he loved was a coquet, and he had condemned her; and yet he himself, her accuser, her judge, was then guilty of the same detestable conduct. He never forgave himself. She had banished him; now, he fled from her. (2: 170).

As Sydney flees from Laura in shame, various military actions, including the War of 1812, intervene to keep him occupied. They have been apart ever since he took his revenge; hence Sydney's emotional reaction when he discovers that Laura is in New York. Given this history, we also understand Laura's irritation and anger when he accuses her of uncharitable conduct toward Earnest. She regrets her earlier conduct with

Sydney--"the only man she could care for"--but she resents his reaction to her inexperience. "I was young," she thinks after their second courtship when he casts her off, "and surely he should have pardoned me; he called me a coquet! am I one? Do I not feel all I profess? Is it my fault if my *feelings* change. Henri, Henri! you have wronged a heart that loved you; that was worthy of you. But I cannot stoop to beg return; it must come unsought; unenticed to me, or I never will receive it" (2: 177). Therefore, to return to Laura's passionate speech about coquetry, her attack is aimed at Sydney personally. After all, who is he to accuse her of coquetry? When he hatches his punishment plot against her, he is a full-grown man and Laura is merely a girl of sixteen. He should have judged not by first appearances, as the novel itself constantly reminds its readers, and given her a second chance. Now that she has achieved her majority, Laura can defend herself and her sex with the full benefit of experience.

Not only that, but--as is indicated by her pact with Harriot to exert their power over male coquets--Laura has gone on the offensive. The narrator points out that the reunion with Sydney has affected Laura deeply: "Again her passion worked strongly and successfully; she yet loved him, and would do all *but tell her love*, to gain him. She could not stoop; and after some of the first struggles were over, her continual effort to command herself gave her conduct an appearance of coldness and restraint, a something of the artificial, that nearly alienated Sydney" (2: 181). For example, in a later visit, Henri "found her, as he entered unexpectedly once, busy over a miniature; it was his. She painted with all the spirited elegance, and richness, and strength of the Italians." The narrator continues:

> She blushed with apparent sincerity, as a smile played on her

beautiful lip--

"There, how do you like it?"

It was exquisitely correct, and Sydney was about to express one or two tumultuous "thank'ye's" when she stopped him, and cried--

"Oh, I see your error; but I have heads of all my old beaux.... Every passion of the heart, I have a head for, among the collection." (2: 182)

Though "Sydney could not forbear laughing at the ridiculous exhibition" of decapitated love (2: 182-183), he must use this moment to once again correct her behavior, and he criticizes her playfulness and warns her of its "consequences." In self-defense, Laura comments, "what is there so terrible in thus representing a few of those innumerable shoals who harrass my life out; fools who assail me wherever I appear.... This heart of mine will not be easily caught by such trumpery; it shall be sated with success before it yields" (2: 183-184). If men will harass her, then she will wear coquetry as armor in her own disguise. "The lords of creation shall ache yet," Laura asserts. "I will even proclaim my purpose: I will publish myself a coquet. Dare they resist? I shall only become more fashionably notorious. They call us coquets! Heaven help their simple pates! They are a thousand times more contemptible, importunate, and mischievous." Moreover, she says, "Whenever one of these wretches chooses to divert himself with the agonies of a new victim, he leaves the old one without decency or apology, and the *world* does the poor woman the charity to believe, that *she* alone was to blame" (2: 184). Laura and her "coälition" against male coquetry are on the move, and, she adds, "we will all perish ere we shrink: we shall yet tame some of these male gossips" (2: 185). Sydney cannot face

this new Laura and her portfolio of heads, and, he retreats to a wary distance. Her current actions may seem extreme to him, but, in Neal's equalitarian social universe, blame radiates in a variety of directions.

In terms of the structure of the novel, the narrator relates the first scene in the real time of the first volume; whereas he offers up the encounter with the miniatures as he approaches their reconciliation at the novel's conclusion. It is a memory that justifies Sydney's momentary interest in and then rejection of Louisa as a marriage partner. After the volleys in his private battle with Laura, Sydney decides that he loves Louisa instead. He does not actually realize that he has feelings for her until after his duel with Percy, and he discovers his love right at the moment in which he determines he must punish himself for the crime of dueling by "leav[ing] all his friends--his sister--her he loved, *forever*." The narrator reports that he feels this last penalty in particular: "He felt the sacrifice of Louisa greatly; but his love was so unexpected; *here* was no maddening enthusiasm; none of that boyish, extravagant, uncontrolable frenzy of love, in his passion for Louisa. It had come like the dew of the evening, and was felt before it was seen" (2: 70). As one of the "American Fair," Louisa represents everything that the equalitarian Laura cannot be. This love is not meant to be, however, because "as an atonement to Heaven, to punish himself to repentance, he determined to abandon her" (2: 71). Though neither Percy nor his friends blame Sydney for the duel or its outcome--the challenge came from Percy and originated in that character's bad nature and petty jealousy--the Colonel decides such sacrifice is necessary. Louisa realizes that Sydney loves her, and she "felt she was beloved by an honourable and great heart, and she felt more exalted by that conviction than she would have been in the absolute possession of any other heart in

the whole world" (2: 138). This development, however, is too new to sustain her through the intervening two years while Sydney disappears into the wild.

In fact, when Sydney finally returns, he finds that the social patterns of all of their lives have shifted while he has been away from New York. The narrator reports, "He inquired for Louisa; she was already *married*, and he wished himself back again among the Indians. He asked for Laura; little was known of her; her reign was over. She was almost forgotten. Nobody knew him" (2: 163). Sydney learns that Louisa has happily married a Colonel Fitz George, and, when he sees "the girl of his soul married and to a noble fellow," he suddenly realizes that he had never been in love with her in the first place. Fickle coquetry? Apparently not, and Neal's narrator attempts to explain Sydney's logic:

> He never had loved the retiring, perfect Louisa; she was too gentle, too coldly correct--the girl never spoke an ungrammatical sentence in her life. No *reasonable* being could complain of her; and no *unreasonable* being could love her; now, all *lovers* are unreasonable--*therefore*--but no matter.... When he first saw Louisa, he believed that all his *romance* had left him; he believed that love could be a much more *reasonable passion* than he has previously supposed, and he felt *reasonably in love!* (2: 167)

Sydney recognizes, as a result, that there is really only one woman with a heart "as elevated as his own" (2:167), but "she had deceived him" (2: 168), and his pride will not allow him to bow down once again to Laura.

After all of this equivocation, it is finally left to Mrs. Granville, the truly reasonable arbiter, to take charge of the situation. When Sydney finally asks about

Laura, his sister reports "that Laura for a long time after he had disappeared, had amused herself with a multitude of new admirers" (2: 186), but that since then she has matured. Mrs. Granville says that the behavior for which Sydney condemns her can be explained and forgiven, and she slyly lays the blame where it correctly lies: "I believe ... that Laura has somewhere known an unfortunate attachment; she has an unbounded capacity for loving, and a sensibility that I do not doubt has been *uncontrolable*.... I believe she has acted from some deeper motive than vanity" (2: 187). As Sydney betrays his continued interest in Laura, Mrs. Granville exclaims, "Have a care brother! your heart is your tyrant; it must be watched narrowly" (2: 188). She then pushes Henri with her most important information about Laura's current state. She suggests that his resolve to never see her again might be put to the test: "If you should see this lovely girl and find her much improved in person, and mind.... If you should see her own, and find, instead of the melting aerial visionary that you left; the matured, fine, correct and intelligent woman.... You could not love her, Henri?" (2: 189-190). As Mrs. Granville's continued goading has its intended effect, Sydney finally relents and says, "If she be worthy of me, I will marry her, and one hour since I should have ridiculed such a suggestion. How we can deceive ourselves! Yes, by heaven I will marry that girl if she is worthy of me." His sister responds with arch awareness: "Very *modest*," she deadpans (2: 191).

Immediately thereafter Sydney has his consummate reunion with Laura. As he awaits her appearance in her parlor, he once again sees her portfolio of miniature heads with Charles Percy's settled atop the pile. When Sydney is once again confronted with the face of his moral failure, he falls to his knees in shame,

> but what was his emotion! a pale lovely form was drooping over him; so

> disordered--so ethereal; he could not be mistaken. A form breathing such a testimony of affection; of hope deferred; of suffering, and of sensibility! *It was Laura.* He spoke not; breathed not; but extended his arms; a faint smile played upon her lovely lip; danced for a moment in her glistening eye, and she was clasped to his bosom. . . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . . . They knelt in speechless gratitude to Heaven. (2: 195)

What is omitted Neal leaves up to his reader's imagination; his narrator, however, does offer this conclusion to their truce and this concession to his more gentile audience:

> Fair Reader, before I bid thee farewell and a sweet sleep, to which I have contributed to the utmost of my power, I must add, for truth compels me to do it, painful as it is, "The Hero and Heroine were married! aye, married like downright men and women; and as downright men and women are very apt to do, they have succeeded in blessing the world with a brace of as beautiful cherubs as ever shook their curling heads in the sunshine. The Lord have mercy on them!" (2: 196)

Though we do not see the evolution, apparently time has been all that Laura and Sydney needed to effect their permanent union. Laura's smile might imply that she has won the battle; on the other hand, Neal's mockery of the conventional ending suggests that they both have lost their heroic status as well as their passionate independence.

While depicting this battle between his male and female protagonists, Neal presents another dueling couple for his readers to consider. In a provocative imagining of the widow's social position, Mrs. Granville finds herself negotiating the dangerous but

transformative effect of long-lost-love-returned while balancing the social concerns of mannered etiquette. Mrs. Granville is, indeed, dressed in her "*Holiday clothes*," but the disguised, former lover of her youth, the poetic Echo, pushes the boundaries of propriety. For example, consider the following interactions between Mrs. Granville and Echo as contrasting instances of Neal's sparring stance and humorous engagement with his female readers. In the first scene, Neal's narrator operates as a perfect moralist: he protectively censors his text for the American fair; he offers a model of behavior for them to follow; and he provides a moral or brief lesson at the conclusion. In this incident, while reporting to Mrs. Granville and Colonel Sydney some recent gossip about two other characters and a marriage proposal, Echo comments that the woman involved has refused the marriage offer. Echo elaborates upon the story:

> "Thus, you shall have it. He loved her with all his might and main...; visited, proposed, and was *refused*; but between you and me, there is something very suspicious; she abuses him whenever she has the opportunity. When that's the case, you know, *mum*-- ...that they are either on the point of elopement, or," opening his eyes, "or--why bless me what is the matter! You look as if you would bet they are absolutely married. Well, I say nothing Colonel; you know more of the world than I." Echo said something else, at which Sydney frowned, and said--
>
> "My *sister*! You will lose her good opinion, if you make such remarks."
>
> Mrs. Granville withdrew.
>
> "I would rather lose my own," said Echo, but she is getting

squeamish. I thought *she* was above that."

"So she is," cried Sydney; "but no modest woman can ever be insensible to indelicacy, or *above* showing her displeasure. There is no insult so poignant, so humbling." (2: 26)

According to her brother, Mrs. Granville can handle the rough talk, but she chooses to leave the room to demonstrate her displeasure. What is more interesting is the narrator's censorship of the scene itself. Echo implies illicit sex ("elopement, or--") and then "said something else," presumably more risqué, that offends the Colonel and Mrs. Granville. Sydney expresses his dismay, prompting Mrs. Granville to follow his conventional lead by silently withdrawing from the situation. The American fair are safe for the moment, and they have learned how to show their displeasure in such situations.

And yet later, in a twist on this social interaction, Mrs. Granville herself is induced to stay in the room and listen to Echo as he relates the story of his former love, who was seduced and betrayed. In this scene, Echo speaks and Mrs. Granville listens freely. Meanwhile, the female reader, Neal's countrywoman, has moved with Mrs. Granville into a more provocatively sexual level of representation. As Echo works toward revealing to Mrs. Granville that he is actually Eustace St. Pierre, the long-lost love of her youth, he tells her the story of another lover in his more recent past. Assuming the conventional discourse of unspoken love in that relationship, Echo says, "I had never professed how much I loved, according to the established rules of rhetorick, syntax. I had never *said*--woman! I am yours body and soul." At this revelation, Mrs. Granville grows "pale" and Echo continues: "She whom I loved, with that distracted self-abandonment; she who had seen me tremble when I approached her--she--was a woman,

Lady, *she fell*.... --Another won her heart, and then--*threw it carelessly away*!" (2: 98). Ultimately, Echo admits that "there is even a lurking malignity in the apparent frankness of this unqualified disclosure" to Mrs. Granville. He adds, "you have distinguished me with something like preference. If you are sincere, you must sympathize with me, and you must suffer! ... You are no woman if you do not feel flattered by this confidence, just in proportion to the freedom with which it is yielded" (2: 99-100). With Echo's dramatic departure, Mrs. Granville is left to ponder where she stands in a dialogue with herself: "I cannot admire these second loves, said she; he has loved, and *he loves yet*; but I am a widow.... She felt a sense of that widowhood come over her like the flapping of desolation--it was a chill, dark breathing" (2: 101). In the past, when her loving, but dying, husband has suggested that she should eventually remarry, "she had shuddered. It came like a death bed prostitution--she never forgot it, and hardly ever forgave it" (2: 101-102). When Echo finally reveals to his Elizabeth that he is, in fact, her Eustace (2: 104), the disclosure causes her to exclaim, "True, true!"--and then, as the narrator reports, she "fainted in his arms--the first words she uttered as she began to recover, were 'Who was *she*? who was that woman that deserted you, St. Pierre? Not me? oh, it was not me!'" (2: 105). Echo then offers the convoluted explanation that it was, in fact, another woman who betrayed him and not Mrs. Granville: "I almost loved another for resembling you. I felt for you all that I have said I felt for another. For you, Elizabeth, I have suffered all I have described as having suffered for another.... I have loved you long, Elizabeth, and *truly*. Now I claim reward." At this point, the narrator says, "He embraced ardently, but respectfully"--an embrace for which Mrs. Granville "felt no shame" because "St. Pierre was the *husband of her heart*" (2: 105).

When we consider Mrs. Granville's various sympathetic identifications in this scene, the narrator's winking sense of humor becomes broadly apparent. First, Echo woos the widow by delivering the story of his other lover's betrayal thereby demanding sympathy and suffering from Mrs. Granville. However, Elizabeth is instead moved to think about her previous husband and then fleetingly figures herself as a prostitute. Moreover, when St. Pierre finally uncloaks himself, Elizabeth views herself as the unnamed, fallen woman who has deserted him. It is this perverse empathetic projection, in particular, which calls attention to Neal's thesis about the harmlessness of fictional interplay. St. Pierre makes it clear to Mrs. Granville that the woman in question remains unreformed:

> Even now, lady, even now, that girl, for whose slightest wish I would have sacrificed myself, even now she loves him:--with all of the withering consciousness of his villainy--of the injuries that he has inflicted upon her. Even now, she loves him better than me. She would fly to his arms and again be thrown from them with contempt, with insult; while she would shun me as a pestilence--and I could kneel to that girl yet, lady, if she loved me. (2: 98-99)

Yet, somehow, Mrs. Granville sees herself in that portrait because there is something universal in its effect. Echo relates this story to induce a sympathetic response, but, in fact, he has created a fictional, composite woman, and there is enough emotional realism in Echo's story to appeal to a mutual, sentimental history. He says,

> By chance, I met one who much resembled you in person. I loved her; but in her I loved you.... She disappointed me, and I thought I forgave her for

> what I suffered, yet, could I never forgive her for having wronged your resemblance.... That she, dear woman, was but the body, thou, the soul. It was thou I heard, and thou I saw. She was unfaithful; do you think I did not *feel* it? O, yes, this heart will feel it to its last pulse; but it will feel it only as having dishonored a shrine which contained what I so much loved--thy resemblance. (2: 113)[18]

The woman is partially Elizabeth and partially Echo's emotional response to two failed attempts at love. Moreover, she is every woman's guilty conscience.

Elizabeth awakens with a guilty reaction because she, in one sense, has betrayed Eustace previously. Circumstances kept them apart when they were young lovers. St Pierre was poor and "*headstrong*" (2: 108), and, when he disappeared to make his fortune, rumors circulated that he was dead. Elizabeth "persisted in an obstinate belief that he was *alive*, and would yet return." Her belief manifests in her dreams--her "blissful visions" of his return to her:

> She dreamt of him, night after night.... How the heart clings to such illusions! How it doats upon them! Night after night to feel yourself locked in the arms of some loved one that report has long since sepulchred--to feel their warm breath, their tears, their murmurs, their extacy. Oh there is an elysium in dreams.... The innocent will meet and embrace in that ethereal intercourse. (2: 115-116)

Her dreams eventually fade, but, because "*she had not seen him dead*, or buried," she continued to hope that he may be alive until common sense and time erased "the absurdity of her waking visions." Like Echo, she moved on to another; however, "she

had *worshipped*, but never had she *loved* the lordly heart of her husband.... Never, never had her heart made for that husband that indescribable, unconditional surrender of all its world, that it had once made for a boy--a boy all feverish impatience, all devotion, Eustace St. Pierre" (2: 116-117). In becoming another's wife, Elizabeth has betrayed her Eustace and their previous intercourse--a term that in Neal's time has taken on its double meaning in such a context.[19] On the one hand, she has communed with Eustace in her dreams; on the other, they have made an imaginary sexual connection when "night after night" she has been "locked in the arms" of her love.

Finally, when the reunion is complete, the reader sees the transformational power of these passionate encounters. When left alone again at the end of the scene, Mrs. Granville recognizes that the embrace and reunion have a thrilling effect:

> Her heart throbbed. She felt a kindling consciousness that make her look around for relief; her eye fell on the reflection of her own person in the mirror, and her heart throbbed louder, and her cheek blushed still more deeply.
>
> "Astonishing!" she exclaimed aloud, but involuntarily. "Love *is* a wonderful magician!" (2: 117-118)

The narrator adds, "And she was right. The names of Echo and Widow Granville had not only become Eustace St. Pierre and Eliza Moreland, but their whole persons, aye, their whole souls were transformed" (2: 118). Neal's joke is complete. The reader has followed her moral guide into a hotter place where women can imagine being prostitutes, unrepentant deserters, and sexually active without harm. Just as Elizabeth is improved rather than corrupted by her momentarily adopted identities, neither will Neal's audience

be corrupted through its identification with her actions as a character in the novel. Although Sydney's experience demonstrates that keeping cool is clearly the better path when faced with sixteen-year-old girls or hot-headed dueling challenges, the less measured narrative voice has won the duel within the realm of love and reversed the primary narrative message: Elizabeth Granville, Laura St. Vincent, and Neal's countrywomen are free to imagine the heat.

Notes

[1] Neal's biographers agree. Like Lease, who believes that Neal cares more about effect than meaning, Sears posits the idea that in Keep Cool the narrator does not make his didactic messages a priority: "as elsewhere Neal seems to be using the didactic mainly to illustrate the towering intellect of his titanic heroes" (38).

[2] I am thinking here about the fact that Rowson's narrator judges her characters for her various imagined readers--from "the young and thoughtless of the fair sex" (5) to the "dear Madam," who contracts her "brow into a frown of disapprobation" (67)--and divvies out aggressive punishments to the transgressing characters. It is as if she will punish the readers themselves if they do not come to the same two unavoidable conclusions as the narrator: (1.) Charlotte must be punished along with the other guilty parties; (2.) the reader must sympathize with Charlotte.

[3] In the fifth definition for the first listing of the noun "trap," the Oxford English Dictionary Online defines the term as colloquial or slang expression: "Deceitful practice; trickery, fraud. *to understand trap*, to know one's own interest; *to be up to trap*, to be knowing or cunning" (2nd ed., 1989).

[4] Emphasizing Poe's understanding of Neal's generally unappreciated originality, Lease and Hans-Joachim Lang entitle their anthology The Genius of John Neal: Selections from His Writings (1978).

[5] It is important to note that in the years subsequent to the publication of Keep Cool Neal became a dedicated activist for women's rights and suffrage. See Fritz Fleischmann, A Right View of the Subject: Feminism in the Works of Charles Brockden Brown and John Neal (1983).

[6] Sears discusses Neal, Smith, and Fuller in his biography (100-102). In addition, both Lease (195) and Fleischmann (143-144) cite Fuller's brief sketch of Neal in her memoir.

[7] Irving T. Richards initiated twentieth-century interest in John Neal. Both Lease and Sears cite Richards's importance to their own scholarship. For example, in a "Communication" to the editors of The New England Quarterly, Lease calls Richards "an eminent authority on Neal" (140), and Sears--noting that Neal's "reputation has suffered from the unavailability of his works and from a scarcity of studies of them"--observes that the "four-volume dissertation of Irving T. Richards ["The Life and Works of John Neal" (1933)] has remained in a single copy in the archives of Harvard University" (9).

[8] See Richards, "John Neal's Gleanings in Irvingiana"(1936); Joseph Jay Rubin, "John Neal's Poetics as an Influence on Whitman and Poe" (1941); Boyd Guest, "John Neal and 'Women's Rights and Women's Wrongs'" (1945); Harold C. Martin, "The Colloquial Tradition in the Novel: John Neal" (1959); Peter J. King, "John Neal as Benthamite" (1966); Lease, "John Neal and Edgar Allan Poe" (1974); William J. Scheick, "Power, Authority, and Revolutionary Impulse in John Neal's Rachel Dyer" (1976); Donald A. Ringe, "The American Revolution in American Romance" (1977); Ulrich Halfmann, "In Search of the 'Real North American Story': John Neal's Short Stories 'Otter-Bag' and 'David Whicher'" (1990); and John Engell, "Hawthorne and Two Types of Early American Romance" (1992). In addition to these articles, in 1974 Gerald Robert Grove produced a dissertation entitled "John Neal: American Romantic," and, since 1980, there have been three dissertations that include discussions of Neal as a literary nationalist: Edward Alfred Fiorelli, "Literary Nationalism in the Works of John

Neal" (1980); Lloyd George Becker, "Language and Landscape: Essays on the American Search for Self-Definition, from Noah Webster to William Sidney Mount" (1980); and Theo Davis, "Types of Experience: Form and Affect in American Literature, 1828-1856" (2003). Davis, working in a somewhat similar realm as I am, explains his work in his abstract as follows: "Unlike prior assessments of [American] literature's inward psychology, I argue that in it experience is cultural rather than personal, and typical rather than particular and material. Influenced by the Scottish theorists Lord Kames and Archibald Alison, literary nationalists John Neal, James Fenimore Cooper, Edward Tyrell Channing and Washington Irving honed types meant to affect any reader by grafting an alien, neoclassical interest to matter-of-fact accounts of American subjects." His dissertation "define[s] the importance of typical experience as a category of literary analysis" and his chapter on Neal is entitled "John Neal, Nationalist Literature, and Typical Realism." In addition, Philip Gould, writing from a different point of view, completed a dissertation in 1993 that includes a discussion of Neal's Rachel Dyer. That research became the basis for a 1995 article in The New England Quarterly as well as for his book Covenant and Republic.

[9] Citing such historical tensions as those brought about by the Panic of 1819 and the Missouri Compromise as well as arguments over policies of Indian removal and capitalist economic strategies, Gould looks at the historical romance as it becomes known in the 1820s and 1830s "during an era in which traditional meanings of 'republicanism' became increasingly fractured and in which Americans were compelled to adapt traditional ideologies to new realities" (16).

[10] Thinking of these two chapters, and perhaps Gould's work--Levine asks

parenthetically: "Are we in the midst of a John Neal revival?" (93). Maybe. No doubt Logan will continue to resonate with critics interested in racial conflict and representations of the American Indian. And, coincidentally, Rachel Dyer does receive a quick mention as a "popular fiction" that "took quite seriously the persecution of the Quakers in New England" in Anne G. Myles's article in that same issue of EAL (15).

[11] No doubt Goddu has such classic studies as Arthur Hobson Quinn's American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey (1936) in mind. Discussed in his chapter about "Washington Irving and Other Pioneers"--which begins by noting that the "impulse to tell a brief tale in narrative form is one of the most primitive impulses" (40)--Neal "is, above all, representative of the romance of passion, stemming from Rousseau through Byron, and influenced also by Brockden Brown. His first story, Keep Cool (1817), is immature and wandering, with an attack on duelling and a defense of the Indians. Logan (1822), a novel of Colonial and Indian life, is better" (48). In addition, Quinn notes that, unlike Cooper, "Neal is not a follower of Scott. His characters are intense and almost supernaturally energetic, and when they become involved in the activities of the Revolution, as in Seventy-Six (1823), the story becomes at times quite thrilling.... The passionate element is always the uppermost..." (48-49).

[12] In his various prefaces to and in detours within his novels, Neal works to define American literature in terms of his content and his criticism. In his autobiography Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life (1869), he says that his decision to go to England in the mid-1820s--where he writes his "American Writers" series for Blackwood's Magazine--is prompted by a discussion about the subject of American intellectual inferiority: "The conversation turned, I know not how, upon American

literature, and he, being full of admiration for the 'Edinburgh' and the 'Quarterly,' asked, in the language of the day, 'Who reads an American book?'" Neal says that he reacted "more in sorrow than in anger" and then announced that he "would answer that question from over sea." He writes,

> I would leave my office, my library, and my law business, and take passage in the first vessel I could find ... and see what might be done, with a fair field, and no favor, by an American writer. Irving had succeeded; and, though I was wholly unlike Irving, why shouldn't I? Cooper was well-received; and I had a notion, that, without crossing his path, or poaching upon his manor, I might do something, so American, as to secure the attention of Englishmen. (239)

Many Neal scholars note this biographical moment. See, for example, Pattee (12), Lease (43), Sears (70), and Goddu (52). Lease's biography documents the dates: Neal arrived on 8 January 1824, "twenty-three days after leaving Baltimore," and, after some initial traveling, he remained in London for three years (45). In 1827, "on April 14, Neal sailed for home--arranging his itinerary to include a one-month stopover in Paris" (66). At the end of his "Unpublished Preface," included with Rachel Dyer in 1828, Neal writes: "Let these words be engraven hereafter on my tomb-stone: 'WHO READS AN AMERICAN BOOK?'" (xx).

[13] According to his dissertation abstract, Fiorelli considers some aspects of the novel. He focuses on Neal's developing "literary use of the Indian. From his earliest delineation of Indian character in Keep Cool (1817) to a more fully-drawn characterization in such works as Logan (1822) and two Indian short stories, Neal's

treatment betrays contradictory views of the Indian. There is an ambivalence in the portrayals, by which the redman is presented as both Gothic fiend and Romantic noble savage, a creature both morally corrupt and morally innocent."

[14] Petter discusses Neal's novel in part three of The Early American Novel, entitled "The Love Story," in a chapter on "Self-Denial" (177-180), which also includes brief explications of Cooper's Precaution and Brown's Clara Howard among other readings. Although he qualifies his categorization because the novel has "the mixture of heterogeneous elements found in all of [Neal's] fiction," Petter classifies Keep Cool as "a comic novel of manners, with variations on the theme of love" (177). Neal's corpus is too late for Cathy Davidson's use in Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America (1986); she does, however, point to Keep Cool's Baltimore publication site as an exception to the rule that "nearly all of America's novels published prior to 1820 were first published in the North" (22), and she cites Neal's American Writers series in her discussion of Charles Brockden Brown with first "turn[ing] Brown's life into a type of the 'plight of the American writer,' praised abroad, neglected at home" (238).

[15] This "principle of effect" applies more legitimately to Neal's later works. In 1817 he could only have begun to have been exposed to Schlegel's doctrines. See Hanna-Beate Schilling, "The Role of the Brothers Schlegel in American Literary Criticism as Found in Selected Periodicals, 1812-1833: A Critical Bibliography" (1972), which demonstrates the fact that "real insight into the methods and critical concepts of the brothers Schlegel and an intelligent and fruitful discussion of their concepts by American critics of that period *cannot be documented*" (565). Lease, through citing Schilling's article, acknowledges this historical point.

[16] Lease mentions the "volatile relationship" between Neal and The Token's editor, Samuel G. Goodrich, and he cites their battle over "The Young Phrenologist" as an example (160, 180-181).

[17] There was a scandal surrounding the publication of Randolph. Lease explains the biographical connections in That Wild Fellow (30-36) and says that Randolph "was published anonymously and with great secretiveness in Philadelphia" (35).

[18] Echo points to his masculine self-control in his response to the betrayal: "I neither reproached her, nor fought the villain. I neither spoke of her in terms of extravagant praise to prove my magnanimity; nor even requested my friends *never to mention her name* in my presence. No, lady; but I was at death's door, and *nobody knew it*. I was nearly desperate, and nobody knew that I was more than unsocial. When I had subdued my proud heart, then I came abroad" (99). This is the only story of a fallen woman in Keep Cool, and it ends there. Neal's narrator does not pursue her fate nor offer any particular judgment beyond Echo's own hurt feelings. Again, compare with Rowson's narrator's carefully constructed response to the fallen Charlotte. Even as Charlotte is punished for her transgressive behavior--like Clarissa, she must die--the novel simultaneously teaches aggressively against that conventional wisdom of the period that says that a woman who has lost her virginity is worthless. The narrator goes to great pains to educate her readers to the fact that Charlotte must be forgiven for her folly: for example, all the good characters--her mother, her father, her neighbor, her grandfather--are willing to accept and to forgive her one terrible mistake. The narrator even interjects to explain bluntly that "a woman might fall victim to imprudence, and yet retain so strong a sense of honour, as to reject with horror and contempt every solicitation to a second

fault" (73). She asserts:

> Believe me, many an unfortunate female, who has once strayed into the thorny paths of vice, would gladly return to virtue, was any generous friend to endeavour to raise and re-assure her; but alas! it cannot be, you say; the world would deride and scoff. Then let me tell you, Madam, 'tis a very unfeeling world, and does not deserve half the blessings which bountiful Providence showers upon it. (68)

Thus, the narrator works to convince her heartless reader of the necessity for sympathy, even as Charlotte herself does not reap the benefits of her effort. Neal's world is less nurturing. Echo asserts that he has offered his unfaithful lover a path back to virtue--he "could kneel to that girl yet"--but that she does not want it. He has opted to keep his mouth shut about the affair and to move on from there. Considering his effluence with Mrs. Granville, his reticent stoicism in the previous situation is impressive.

[19] In Neal's false start to Keep Cool--chapter 1 introduces a framing narrative to which he never returns--his narrator offers this anecdote about a young man who, "by punning on the word *intercourse*, furnished the amiables of both sexes with an inexhaustible subject of poignancy:--every allusion however distant, or however course, is received with a titter, or an affected frown, from the ladies, and by a loud laugh, or an oath from the gentlemen; to the great annoyance of sundry well behaved people, who have not enough of *refinement*, to understand the full extent of the pun." For the etymology of "intercourse," see the Oxford English Dictionary Online. Definition 2a--"Social communication between individuals; frequent and habitual contact in conversation and action; dealings"--dates back to the mid-sixteenth century. Malthus

uses definition 2d--"Sexual connection"--in 1798: "An illicit intercourse between the sexes." Abernethy uses intercourse in the same sense in 1804: "Propagated by promiscuous intercourse" (2nd ed., 1989).

Chapter 4

Catharine Maria Sedgwick's "Novel of Real Life": Instrumental Action and Equalitarian Agency in Redwood (1824)

Catharine Maria Sedgwick's ideological maneuvers in her early novel Redwood: A Tale offer a effective demonstration of the careful negotiations encompassed within the instrumental-equalitarian model of American femininity. Although the culmination of the novel's plot is familiar--that is, a conventionally virtuous orphan, Ellen Bruce, finds an appropriate husband after a variety of personal trials; while a cruelly selfish daughter of privilege, Caroline Redwood, seals her fate in a marriage to a profligate British army officer--Redwood's heroine and an important supporting character, Aunt Deborah Lenox, act in unconventional ways, thus providing provocative examples of female independence and feminine competence. Sedgwick, however, tempers such feminine agency by carefully demonstrating its practical utility, and thus Ellen and Debby can be most clearly defined as purveyors of an instrumental-equalitarian vision of womanhood. They are entirely useful New-Englanders, especially as contrasted with the antagonistic Charlestonian, Caroline. They are capable of acts of heroism, but do not insist on equalitarian feminism, even though Ellen's and Debby's contributions are not entirely contained within the domestic sphere. Moreover, these characters are not punished for their forays into masculine behavior because such independent agency constitutes constructive engagement with the world and demonstrates personal worthiness as well as inherent moral strength.

Due to its large company of characters and multiple subplots, my discussion of

Sedgwick's carefully hewn novel requires an initial summary for those readers who are unfamiliar with the book. Unlike Keep Cool and Neal's other efforts, which the author says he "threw off" with "marvellous rapidity--'the fatal facility,' another would call it" (Wandering 173)--Sedgwick's text commands a close reading of its plot precisely because it is well-constructed. She balances one character against another to produce a symmetrical effect that comes from narrative consistency and flows to logical closure. As I mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation, Bryant and other critics at the time lauded Redwood and other novels of manners because they are realistic "stor[ies] of domestic life, the portraiture of what passes by our firesides and in our streets, in the calm of the country, and amidst a prosperous and well ordered community" (245). Unlike late nineteenth-century realism, which eschews those contrivances of plot that draw attention to fictionality, earlier in the century readers expect such "plottings and counterplottings, which are necessary to give a sufficient degree of action and eventfulness to the novel of real life" (Bryant 251).

To begin: Redwood tells the story of Henry Redwood and his two daughters by different mothers, Caroline Redwood and Ellen Bruce. The latter character's parentage is not confirmed until the end of the novel, and we are encouraged to identify with Ellen's patience and fortitude as she confronts her status as an orphan of uncertain origin. She carries with her the evidence of her mother's identity, but, in a romantic twist, she has been forbidden to read the papers. Ellen says, "This was her last solemn declaration. The proofs of her marriage and other private documents are in my hands, in a locked casket. It was my mother's dying injunction that it should not be opened" until Ellen reaches the age of twenty-one (1: 215). Like Ellen, Caroline's mother is dead but the

comparison ends there. Raised in Charleston by her doting maternal grandmother, Caroline represents the inutility of Southern aristocratic wastefulness. Ellen, on the other hand, has divided her time between two families in Massachusetts, the Allens and the Harringtons. Mrs. Allen took her in as a baby when Ellen's mother, Mary Erwine, was abandoned by Redwood after a secret marriage--though Redwood does not know that his first wife has had a child and neither Ellen nor Redwood realize that they have any connection. His last contact with Mary was in a "cold and brief" letter: "It was an elevated state of feeling with which no personal considerations seemed to mingle, in which she regarded what had passed, not as offences against herself, but as portending misery to Redwood" (1:74).

Ellen has not suffered materially in her orphanhood because Mrs. Allen, a practical New-England housewife, and Mrs. Harrison, a British-educated Bostonian, have provided her with two good homes and an ideal education. The utility of the one is complemented by the "taste and skill" of the other. The narrator explains, "In this arrangement there was a system of checks and balances that produced that singular and felicitous union of diversity of qualities which constituted the rare perfection of Ellen's character" (1:155). Not only is Ellen a fit model for American womanhood, her character itself reflects with pride "the rare perfection" of the United States government. At the beginning of the novel, both Miss Redwood and Miss Bruce are adults, but they are not yet at the age of majority. Caroline is touring the northeastern states with her father in Redwood's too-little-too-late attempt to influence his daughter's character after years of neglect. In Ellen's case, Mrs. Allen is deceased but Mrs. Harrison remains an important maternal guide, and Miss Bruce has many friends in the extended Allen family, which

includes their cousins, the Lenoxes, and old Mrs. Allen, her adoptive grandmother.

Redwood, Caroline, and Ellen are brought together at the Lenox farm in Eton, Vermont, where Ellen is visiting to provide aid and comfort to old Mrs. Allen in the wake of Edward Allen's premature death. (Ellen has been raised as an older sister to Edward and Emily, who are Mrs. Allen's children.) As the Redwoods are passing through the area on their tour, a storm causes a carriage accident in which Redwood breaks his arm. They take refuge at the Lenoxes, where they must remain until his injury has healed. Here we are introduced to Miss Deborah Lenox, and the narrator informs us that Aunt Debby "was an elder sister of Mr. Lenox; had always resided with his family; and was treated with deference by all its amiable members" (1:32). There is one other major character in the novel, Charles Westall, the son of Redwood's childhood friend, the excellent Edmund Westall, an idealized Southerner, who arranges to disband his plantation and send his son north with his widow upon his death. Mrs. Westall and Charles have been residing in Boston since Charles was a young boy. He is a well-educated, compassionate man and is close to commencing his career as a lawyer in Massachusetts. In order to effect a reunion of their two families--and, as Redwood hopes, a union between Caroline and Charles--the Westalls come to the Lenox farm after Redwood's accident. Once these characters are brought together, Redwood's plot is driven by the reader's interest in learning the history of Ellen Bruce's parentage and then in seeing Charles Westall and Ellen Bruce come together in happy matrimony. The narrator delays that gratification by introducing myriad flashbacks, subplots, and minor characters. It is important to mention that Caroline Redwood stands as Ellen's largest impediment to happiness and that she quickly develops into the novel's antagonist,

thwarting Ellen at every juncture. In addition, Redwood himself suffers a nervous breakdown over the course of the novel as he comes to feel the full impact of his neglect of Caroline and his other irreligious ways--and Redwood's salvation, ultimately achieved by the joint efforts of Charles and Ellen, evolves into a significant secondary storyline.

Unlike Rush's Kelroy and Neal's Keep Cool, Sedgwick's Redwood garnered significant critical notice and approval when E. Bliss and E. White published the novel anonymously in New York in May 1824.[1] On 26 June 1824, Philadelphia's The Saturday Evening Post printed this brief notice of the novel in its "Weekly Compendium" column: "A new Novel, under the title of 'Redwood--A Tale,' has just been published at New-York. Its author, and its scenes and characters are American. It is spoken highly of by those who have perused it" (2). The complier of the "Compendium" followed up in October with the comment that the novel had been received well in Britain: "The London Literary Gazette makes very 'honorable mention' of the new American novel Redwood" (2). In a review in the 26 June 1824 issue of The New York Mirror, George P. Morris declares Redwood an "excellent novel" and pairs the author with "Mr. Cooper," whose "distinguished pen has been among the first to *scratch away* the stain of incapacity so sneeringly bestowed upon us by foreign reviewers." Morris explains: "Among the writers of our own nation, who prefer to linger on this side of the Atlantic, and add to the reputation of their country, by making it the scene of their stories, and the place in which they are composed, is the author of Redwood." Like Cooper's work, the new novel indicates "the increase of literary taste and talent in this country"; moreover, the reviewer particularly commends "the pure spirit of morality which breathes through every page" and approvingly notes that

> its pages breathe the humble beauties of village life, and describe, with admirable feeling, the changes of the human heart; the hopes, the fears, and the joys of secluded virtue; the jealousies, the frauds, and the miseries of fashionable vice, are the subjects of its attention, and they are wrought into a story equally meritorious for the intelligence of its plot, and the feeling, we may say elegant manner, in which it is told. (380)

The novel's American originality and its unimpeachable morality are themes that recur in most of the contemporary evaluations, and subsequent reviewers agree with The Mirror's early pronouncements and similarly praise Redwood's high literary quality.

After the initial June notices, the 24 July 1824 issue of New York's The Atlantic Magazine gives an extended analysis of Redwood,[2] and this review, in particular, introduces themes important to my own discussion of Sedgwick's text. The Atlantic's reviewer begins by comparing Sedgwick's novel to Lydia Maria Child's contemporaneous Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times, much to the latter text's detriment. Referring to his defense of "domestic literature" in the previous issue,[3] the reviewer says that "two works have appeared, illustrating each in a different manner, the capabilities of our own country for the purposes of the novelist" (234). He sees a lack of technical skill in Hobomok--for example, "the plot is bad in its conception, and very inartificially managed" (235):

> There is also much pathos in the many passages of the story... [and] the author has appealed frequently, and not in vain, to the 'sacred source of sympathetic tears.' We regret that, with the same materials, he did not extend his work to the dimensions of the modern novel; and by a little

> more labour, with the abilities he seems to possess, take a fair stand in the ranks of those who are creating for our country a literature of its own. (235-236)[4]

For this reviewer, Hobomok is just another sentimental romance; Redwood, however, "is a novel of a different order. The authoress, while she obviously, indeed avowedly, makes Miss Edgeworth her model, is neither a servile nor unequal imitator" (236).[5] Unlike Hobomok's assumed male author, Redwood's authoress--anonymous, though not gender neutral--has offered a better work of "domestic literature" (235). Her work is "modern" and, as such, appropriately contemporary and realistic:

> She has chosen ground hitherto unoccupied, as the scene of her narratives; and while the moral of her story,--the inculcation of the necessity and excellence of strong and rational religious feeling,--is obviously her chief aim, her materials are purely domestic; and in the delineation of her characters, and the incidents into which the personages she describes are thrown, we recognize what we have all seen and heard and observed, but what no one yet has so faithfully depicted. (236)

What is remarkable here is the reviewer's insistence that Redwood is true-to-life while ignoring some of its more romantic or even gothic incidents. He implies that "the authoress" has not stepped beyond the boundaries of propriety, but he also complains that he is "dissatisfied with some of the conversations, where *smartness* and vivacity are intended to be exhibited" (236), in this manner indicating that he is not as pleased when the female characters join in clever or, at times, sharp repartee.

The Atlantic reviewer is mollified, however, by the moral tone of Sedgwick's

work, and he is excited by the idea of the American woman novelist. He concludes:

> As a mere novel, the correctness of style, the interest of the fiction, and the excellence of the descriptions, would entitle this work to high praise. But the vein of pure moral feeling which runs through it, and the instructive lesson it is designed to teach, demand for the authoress no common place among writers of this class. It has been said that America has never produced a female writer of eminence. If the writer of 'Redwood' is not the only exception, she is certainly the brightest; and we trust, that a long career is before her, of still increasing utility and fame. (239)

Thus the reviewer recognizes the usefulness, the fitness, of Sedgwick's work in terms of an emergent American canon, and, in his gesture toward her "utility," we see instrumental-equalitarian ideas operating in their contemporary context. This "female writer" is instrumental to the creation of a national literature as well as equal to the task--in this case, her work is actually superior to the production of the gendered-male writer of Hobomok--and yet her fiction, regardless of its actual content, is also safely labeled as moral. Here we see the power of Sedgwick's novel and its attendant instrumental-equalitarian model of female citizenship: many of her characters demonstrate their equality to their male counterparts, but their actions are presented on a moral playing field that diffuses any notion that they are acting inappropriately. Such female characters are not subversive; rather they act openly and rightly with no apology for their sex.

The Atlantic's review perhaps reflects a more equalitarian attitude toward feminine capacity than some of its contemporary periodicals. In its 15 July 1824 issue, Boston's The United States Literary Gazette,[6] for example, expresses surprise at the

quality of the text, given that "[c]ommon fame attributes these works--Redwood and the New-England Tale--to a lady; if this be so, we can only say we think it surprising,--not that their pages should exhibit much eloquence and bright imagination, but that the style should be so singularly correct, and that its excellence should be so well sustained." The authoress may be able to construct a decent narrative; the novel, however, "exerts nothing of that witchery over the imagination of the reader, which makes him almost mingle his identity with that of the prominent characters, and suffer and rejoice with them, and look forward anxiously with them, to learn the destiny which time is bringing." The reviewer adds that Redwood "is a work of much talent and excellent taste, but not of high and commanding genius" (101). Later that year, The Port Folio's reviewer focuses similarly on Sedgwick's sex, noting "that the plot is interesting--the incidents are natural and well-imagined, and the sentiments are full of good sense and moral beauty" (66), but also coyly observing that "we should have suspected the authoress to be a lady, from the partiality that is shown to that sex." He continues, "Her females are more virtuous, more active, and more engaging, than her males," and then defends his own sex by pointing out "how numerous are the temptations to which they are exposed in comparison with the former. Perhaps our author would plead as a reason for the prominence of her females, that she was more intimately acquainted with their sentiments and feelings" (67). This reviewer implies a lack here--the woman writer cannot really understand the masculine world and all of its enticements--but then he also attacks Sedgwick for not really understanding female temperament. In this curious critique, he argues that Mary Erwine, Ellen Bruce's mother and an abandoned wife, is unrealistically rendered because her "affection is at once snapped, on the discovery of [her husband's] unworthiness, and his

desertion of herself." The reviewer continues:

> Such sudden, and complete alienation is a rare instance in the history of matrimonial disappointments. Could we lift the veil that conceals the "secrets of the prison-house" we should find that devoted woman clings fondly to that shrine "where she has garnered up her heart," and that she often loves long, and loves fervently, after all the graces with which her youthful fancy had adorned the object of her attachment, have vanished, and even after her whole soul is agonized by personal unkindness. All conquering time, alone, dissolves the charm! (67-68)

One wonders where this admittedly "bachelor-critic" (68) has been gathering his own insights into the nature of true womanhood.

William Cullen Bryant, to whom Sedgwick dedicated her novel "in token of friendship and admiration of his genius" (iii),[7] takes a different tack in his significant discussion of Redwood in the April 1825 issue of Boston's The North American Review.[8] Although he does express some of the same reservations about "deviations from purity of language" (271)--e.g., "Something like pertness and flippancy, not to say rudeness, is detected in [Grace Campbell's] sallies and repartees in the scene, where we are first made acquainted with her" (266)--Bryant does not focus on the author's sex or argue with her knowledge of the human condition. He prefers instead to discuss generally his contemporaries' movement toward realism in fiction and then specifically Sedgwick's successes and failures on that front. Crediting the author for "mak[ing] a more hazardous experiment of her powers" than those who rely on "the strong love of romance inherent in the human mind," Bryant says that Sedgwick "has come down to the

very days in which we live, to quiet times and familiar manners, and has laid the scene of her narrative in the most ancient and tranquil parts of the country; presenting us not merely with the picture of what she has imagined, but with the copy of what she has observed" (246). He chastises his readers for assuming that, because "no highly meritorious work of the kind had appeared" in the United States, "no such could be written," adding that "it is not always safe to predict what a writer of genius will make of a given subject" (248). Like the reviewer for The Atlantic Magazine, who remarks, "Had the Paradise Lost never been written, who would have thought the fall of man a fit subject for an epic poem?" ("Domestic" 133), Bryant comments, "Twenty years ago, what possible conception could an English critic have had of the admirable productions of the author of Waverley, and of the wonderful improvement his example has effected in that kind of composition?" (248-249).

Like Milton and Scott, therefore, Redwood's author is doing the important work of founding a national literature. Her "novel of real life" (251) demonstrates that she is "well aware of the extent and value" of the American "resources" for her fiction, and the author's "delineations of character are generally striking and happy, and the national peculiarities are hit off with great dexterity and effect" (256). Just as The Portico's reviewer comments that John Neal's characters in Keep Cool are not dressed "in their *Holiday clothes*" (163), so does Bryant observe that in Redwood "the actors in the plot do not come upon the scene in their stage dresses, ... but they are made to look and act like the people in the world about us" (256). In fact, Bryant so insists that realism be the primary feature of modern literature that he must then criticize Sedgwick for such romantic plot points as "Emily's escape" (266) and for "the want of perfect verisimilitude

in the means by which the catastrophe is brought about" at the end of the novel (268). As he continues to consider his point, Bryant modifies his charges against the author by granting a certain amount "of *licentia poetica*" to novelists and by admitting that "extraordinary" resolutions have "been too long and too universally enjoyed to be taken from them at this day. Even the rational, sober, practical, and authentic Miss Edgeworth has not disdained to employ them" (269). In addition, he credits Sedgwick with moderation in terms of the presentation of her religious message: "We had some apprehensions ... that the moral would be too anxiously and obtrusively brought forward, and pressed with a wearisome frequency and perseverance.... We must say, however, that we see few if any traces of this fault in Redwood. The moral is well wrought into the texture of the work, but never officiously presented" (270). Sedgwick may rely occasionally on romantic conventions, but her quality shows in that she does not resort to religious enthusiasm or heavy-handed didacticism.

As these contemporary reviews demonstrate, Sedgwick's novels were appreciated in her own time and, as is indicated by the publication record, throughout the mid-nineteenth-century (Damon-Bach 295-313). After 1875, however, interest in her work waned. As was the case for many early American novelists, it took the canonical expansion of the 1970s to reignite curiosity in Sedgwick and her corpus (Nelson, "Rediscovery" 287).[9] Mary Kelley led the recovery work with her initial 1978 article in New England Quarterly, "A Woman Alone: Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century America," and then her 1987 edition of Hope Leslie; or Early Times in the Massachusetts for Rutgers's American Women Writers series initiated the process of modern reissues of Sedgwick's works, including A New-England Tale; or Sketches of

New-England Character and Manners and The Linwoods; or "Sixty Years Since" in America.[10] In addition, Kelley's 1993 edition of Sedgwick's autobiography and journal has added valuable biographical context to our understanding of the author's life. The most significant scholarly work to date is contained in Lucinda Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements's Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives (2003), which includes sixteen critical essays chosen to represent and elucidate Sedgwick's "extraordinary range and output" (xxiv). The collection also contains extensive supporting materials, including a chronology and bibliography as well as excerpts from the author's works and from contemporary reviewers. In her Foreword, Kelley writes that the "multidimensional volume" connotes "the coming of age in what we can now call 'Sedgwick studies'" (xii), and she adds, "This series of essays not only builds upon earlier scholarship but reassesses and revises that scholarship" (xiii).[11] Damon-Bach and Clements have provided an invaluable initiation to a wide-open field. Although Hope Leslie and A New-England Tale have received a decent amount of critical attention, Sedgwick's lesser-known works have received little consideration at this point, and this gap in critical coverage opens up space for my own discussion of Redwood.[12]

In the section dedicated to Redwood in the Critical Perspectives collection, Damon-Bach notes some of the same elements in the novel that have inspired my own thinking. Her essay, derived from her dissertation, similarly credits Baym's work on representations of women in Woman's Fiction: "Sedgwick uses [her] characters to explore both the limits and possibilities of life for women in antebellum America, exploring in particular the ways that women's lives could be lived more freely and fully within the conventions of the time" (57). Damon-Bach also briefly comments that "the

novel challenges romantic notions with moments of realism" (58). Her reading, however, differs from my own because she chooses to enter the text through focusing on "the Shaker episode" and "Grace Gampbell's story" (57), thus she "accounts for the narrative attention paid to these two plot elements and ... continues Nina Baym's examination of the roles of women of the novel" (58).[13] Moreover, Damon-Bach uses the various characters to concentrate on a "pattern of reading" (61): "As does all of Sedgwick's later work, Redwood schools its audience in the reading process--ultimately the process of interpretation and reinterpretation--encouraging readers to become participants in the creation of cultural meaning" (58). I do not argue with Damon-Bach's perspective; in fact, my own readings of Rush's Kelroy and of Sedgwick's novels of manners second her point in some ways. I do, however, take a different tack in this chapter by using Ellen Bruce and Aunt Debby as the focal points for my discussion of their adherence to and representation of what I have labeled instrumental equalitarianism.

In addition to the themes that I have delineated above, most of Redwood's contemporary reviewers particularly laud the heroine Ellen Bruce's goodness and, more emphatically, the originality of the author's creation, Aunt Deborah Lenox. In The Mirror Morris says that Ellen may, perhaps, be "too good for reality," but he also adds, "The character of Debby is drawn with a masterly pen. It is replete with sound, but uncultured sense, and Yankee peculiarities" (380). The Atlantic's reviewer notes the Southern "indolence" of Caroline (237) and says, "The contrast between the sisters, is finely preserved; and the character of Ellen, who ... had enjoyed the double advantage of learning what was practically useful, and cultivating highly her intellectual powers, is drawn by the author in a manner which evinces the pleasure she took in its description"

(238). At the end of his review, he says that he has omitted "a character ... that cannot be passed over, bring the most original of the work. It is that of Deborah, a Yankee maiden of a certain age.... Her decided, though, not course vulgarity, is more than redeemed by the shrewdness of her judgment, and goodness of her heart" (239). Aunt Debby may be "rather too active and efficient a personage," adds the reviewer in The Port Folio, but he also offers a small concession to her sex: "Nothing, however, supernatural, is attributed to the all-sufficient old maid, in our American tale; and we do sometimes see, that an uneducated woman, whether married or single, may be gifted with a head to devise, and a heart to perform" (67).

Bryant, too, appreciates Sedgwick's creation of Miss Deborah Lenox--"a great favorite of ours, an ancient maiden of Amazonian stature, and a very strikingly drawn and original character" (260)--and he does not think Debby is "too active":

> Her mixture of intelligence and simplicity, of good nature and decision, of masculine habits with those of her sex, of strong feelings and attachments, with a strong understanding, and great warmth of imagination, at times highly poetical, but never leading her astray, and only throwing a stronger light on the object her unfailing good sense points out, altogether from a striking and novel combination. She has much to do with the course of the plot, and we are always glad to observe her agency. (266)

Other reviewers mention the character as an afterthought or as peripheral to the novel as a whole, whereas Bryant sees her centrality and points to her leadership. In fact, though Henry Redwood gets the title credit and Ellen Bruce is our heroine, it is Deborah Lenox who causes much of the main action to occur. Both Ellen and Debby have the capacity to

act for themselves, but Deborah's passion for independence is deeply rooted in an earlier, equalitarian feminism that is out of fashion in the present day of the novel. For example, she wears "a string of gold beads" in memory of "a veteran soldier, who, at the close of our revolutionary war, was captivated by the martial air of this young Amazon" (1:31-32); however, Deborah was never married because she "was so imbued with the independent spirit of the times, that she would not then consent to the surrender of any of her rights" (1:32). Sedgwick's narrator does not ridicule Debby's "independent spirit," but she does neutralize any potentially dangerous egalitarianism that such an attitude might encourage by characterizing her behavior as anomalous. Miss Deborah "preferred it should be understood that she did not walk in the solitary path of celibacy by compulsion," and she calls her choice "a whim of my own," adding that "there is no danger of such whims being catching--sooner or later everybody slides off into the beaten road of matrimony" (1:229). This character's equalitarian feminism is a benign quirk and represents an older vision of womanhood that has been supplanted by the instrumental equalitarianism for which the novel as a whole advocates.

From the beginning of the novel, Deborah and Ellen work together as they demonstrate their practical capacity and moral stamina in contrast to Caroline Redwood's frivolousness and Henry Redwood's literal incapacity as well as his more figuratively broken spirit. These heroines are instruments of correct conduct, and their strength derives from their religious principles; Sedgwick, however, is not interested in sectarianism, and she makes a point of saying so in her Preface to Redwood. She writes:

> We have not composed a tale professedly or chiefly of a religious nature.... Still we are conscious that the religious principle, with all its

> attendant doubts, hopes, fears, enthusiasm, and hypocrisy, is a mighty agent in moulding human character, and it may therefore, with propriety, find a place in a work whose object it is to delineate that character.... Our anxiety is only for the great truths of our common religion, not for any of its subdivisions. (ix-x)

By placing these equalitarian, New-England women in the foreground, Sedgwick indicates her "deep and heart-felt pride--thank heaven a just pride--in the increasing intelligence, the improving virtue, and the rising greatness of our country" (xi), and, like Rush's novelist-as-moralist in Kelroy, Sedgwick positions herself as a member of the moral elite whose duty it is to educate those less enlightened members of ascendant American society. In her Introduction to Sedgwick's autobiography and journal, Mary Kelley describes Sedgwick's perspective:

> "In this country," she succinctly informed her friend Louisa Minot, "we must do everything for the *majority*." Elaborating upon her responsibilities to those who were numerically dominant, Sedgwick expressed her opinion to the clergyman William Ellery Channing that "there is an immense moral field openly demanding laborers." She, of course, defined herself as one of those laborers: "neither pride nor humility should withhold us from the work to which we are clearly 'sent.'" (31)

These two comments are made in letters in 1836 and 1837 respectively when Sedgwick was in what Damon-Bach and Clements label "an exceptionally productive decade" (xxv).[14] A New-England Tale (1822)--which, in fact, was "a tale professedly or chiefly

of a religious nature"[15]--and Redwood indicate that Sedgwick had her eye on such productive moral modeling from her career's inception.

In the novel, therefore, Sedgwick's narrator reports on Ellen and Deborah's various instrumental actions as they model realistic, moral, equalitarian behavior. However, as Bryant implies, because the novel is generically experimental, Sedgwick's reading audience cannot have yet adapted to the new, more realistic form. As a result, Redwood's readers need "that intrigue, those plottings and counterplottings," which are the stuff of romance (Bryant 251); even so, Ellen and Debby are unique because they face incidents that might occur in any fiction with an awareness that comments on the contrast between themselves and other fictional characters. In addition, Sedgwick's narrator leads her audience through a series of foreshadowing events that allow readers to puzzle out the primary mystery of the plot--that is, the question of Ellen's parentage--before its official unraveling in the final chapters. Thus Sedgwick's use of conventional elements and dramatic irony entertain while the realistic descriptions of the social scene and the heroines' unconventional equalitarian agency inform and educate.

Sedgwick's narrator presents Ellen Bruce as both practically independent, and yet mysteriously connected to Henry Redwood, from the beginning of the novel. Through the haze created by his pain resulting from the carriage accident that has brought them together, and with "his imagination stimulated by a large dose of laudanum," Redwood is haunted by his conscience as he sees in Ellen an image of the dead Mary Erwine, though we cannot yet identify Ellen as an important character because she has not been formally introduced to either Redwood or to the reader:

> The light and graceful figure of the young female as she gently moved to

> awaken the amazon seemed to touch some secret spring of his imagination, and once, as he fell into a dreamy state, the wife of his youth was near him, but cold and silent, as the dead form he had just closed his eyes upon, and when he started and awoke and saw the young female standing like a statue in the door-way, he identified her with his vision and exclaimed, "For God's sake, speak to me." (1: 84)

Portentously, it is Ellen who is performing a daughter's duties, watching Redwood thought the night while Caroline sleeps, "too much unaccustomed to scenes of this kind to be of any use to him" (1: 37). Aunt Debby has already demonstrated her utility after the accident--her brother says that she "was as skilful as the run of doctors" (1: 25)--and she has stepped in to lead the night watch because, in her words, Caroline "is a dumb fool" (1: 36), but the older woman's propensity for "profound sleep" requires that Ellen stand by "to act as a prompter to Deborah" (1: 83).

Though the narrator informs her readers about Ellen's early history and her connection to the Allen and Lenox families, her ambiguous status and moral character interests Redwood in her favor and, especially, engages Caroline's poorly educated and overly active imagination. In a long letter to her grandmother in Charleston (1: 117-128), we learn about Caroline's quality of mind and her various machinations. She mentions a Captain Fitzgerald and her meeting with him in Montreal (1: 119); she suggests that Redwood is in love with Ellen (1: 121); she reports that Lilly, her companion slave, has overheard that Ellen will be married to "a young parson," a son of the Lenox family (1: 121-122); she quotes her father's comments about respect for the Lenoxes and yet "the disparity between them and Miss Bruce" (1: 122); she characterizes Debbie as "a hideous

monster--a giantess" and adds that "she has spellbound Papa. The wretch is really quite fond of him..." (1: 123); she reports that Debby thinks she is a "useless piece" compared with Ellen, "who had been brought up to business" (1: 123); and, worst of all in Sedgwick's universe, she insults Edgeworth (1: 125).

Then, after all of this gossip, Caroline's mean-spiritedness begins to emerge. "I should certainly die of ennui," she writes, "if it were not that this Ellen Bruce excites my curiosity to such a degree: who can she be? I suspect that she is a natural child of somebody's, for whenever I have asked her questions about her connexions, she is evidently troubled, and the people of the house affect to be quite ignorant of her parentage.... She is an orphan, and without fortune..." (1: 125-126). Caroline also reports that Ellen slips out every morning at dawn and before breakfast and implies that Ellen is participating in some sort of secret assignation because, when she "proposed to be her companion," Ellen "politely declined without assigning any reason" (1: 126). Near the end of the letter, Caroline again returns to the idea of Ellen and Redwood ending up in "A Sentimental Affair! papa fifty, and Miss Bruce nineteen or twenty" (1: 127). Caroline reminds Mrs. Olney, as if she they have already discussed the subject, "do not fail to let me know whether papa has the control of my fortune, so that if I should marry contrary to his wishes, he could deprive me of it" (1: 127). In a postscript she adds that Mrs. Westall and Charles are on their way to Vermont to join the Redwoods. She is happy because she assumes they will appreciate her: "I have a prospect of seeing two civilized beings, who will probably think me quite equal to this prodigy, Ellen Bruce: and I do not despair of finding a tolerable beau, *pro tem.* in Charles Westall; though I think he will scarcely drive Fitzgerald out of my head and heart" (1: 128).

Unlike the reader who has the benefit of flashbacks and the narrator's descriptions of Ellen's quality of character, Caroline is rarely given good information and does not have the ability to discern good from bad information when she is. For example, she characterizes her father's belated attempts at reeducation as "prosing away" at her (1: 176) even while she collects poorly informed gossip from Lilly: "Nothing could be more indefinite than Lilly's information; however, it was more satisfactory than none" (1: 178). From Lilly Caroline learns that Ellen is off to see Doctor Bristol and infers a secret meeting. Lilly also reports that Ellen has refused George Lenox, which leads Caroline to return to her suspicions about Ellen and her father and to conclude that "Ellen indulged hopes of a more splendid alliance than that with George Lenox"--though, to her minimal credit, "Caroline really had too much sense to allow much force to this extraordinary conclusion" (1: 179). After Ellen returns from one of her mysterious outings and refuses explanation, "Caroline with the transmuting power of jealousy, had converted Ellen's simplest actions into aliments for her suspicions, and now ... exulted in the expectation of a triumph over her father" (1: 180). Redwood's growing admiration for Ellen has been to the detriment of his daughter Caroline, and she resents the comparison. She attempts to imprecate Ellen in her father's eyes, and, even though Redwood is disturbed by Caroline's information that Ellen was out all night, he reminds his daughter (and himself) that there is probably a simple explanation (1: 181).

Against all of these suspicions--and to reinforce Ellen's capable agency contrasted against Caroline's superficiality--Sedgwick here inserts an incident that exemplifies the nature of an instrumental-equalitarian heroine. On the evening of the Westalls arrival, Caroline and Ellen take a walk together on the shores of Lake Champlain, and when

Caroline sees some "wild flowers ... growing close to the water's edge," she decides that she would like "to dress [her] hair against the Westalls arrive" (1: 187). When Ellen points out that the flowers are not within reach, Caroline insists that she must have them and jumps into "a fisherman's canoe" to achieve her end--even after Ellen has warned her that "these canoes require ... much skill to guide them" (1: 188). Caroline loses her balance and, in her fear, ends up clinging to a "pendant vine" as "the canoe passed from under her. It drifted a few yards, and then remained stationary at the base of the rock" (1: 189). Now it is up to Ellen to save her companion:

> The rock was perpendicular, and too high for Miss Redwood to reach its summit. Ellen perceived, at a single glance, the dilemma in which Caroline's fears had involved her, and perceived and adopted the only mode of extricating her from her awkward situation. She ran around the curve of the shore, ascended the rock where the ascent was gradual, and letting herself down as gently as possible into the canoe, she rowed immediately to the relief of the distressed damsel.... (1: 189-190)

Once Caroline is safely in the canoe, Ellen picks the flowers for her--Ellen jokes, "These flowers ... were the cause of all the mischief, and they shall die for it"--and they return to shore. As Ellen is "tastefully arranging the flowers in Caroline's hair," Charles Westall and little Lucy Lenox arrive on the scene (1: 190):

> He had, as he said, just arrived at Mr. Lenox' with his mother, and had been sent by her with his little guide in quest of Miss Redwood; that while descending the hill he had been a witness of Miss Redwood's danger, and had hastened on in the hope of being so fortunate as to assist at her rescue;

> but fate had been unkind to him, for the pleasure of playing the hero on this occasion was not only wrested from him, but he was forced to witness and admire the celerity with which the rescue has been effected without his aid. (1: 191)

The narrator's (and Charles's) mock heroic tone--e.g., "distressed damsel," "quest," "rescue," "hero"--draws attention to the revision of conventional romance. Caroline has not been captured by banditti, rather she is the agent of her own distress and has behaved foolishly. In addition, the conventional hero is not on site on time, but rather he is being led on his quest by a little girl and is "forced to witness" the rescue from afar. In fact, Charles is pushed so far into the distance that Sedgwick's narrator does not record his point of view directly but rather summarizes and filters his reactions for him. The narrator transfers the rescue to her instrumental heroine, who jumps into efficient action thus negating any need for the hero. Sedgwick rewrites the damsel-in-distress motif into a realistic incident refocusing the attention onto the equalitarian damsel-as-hero.

Charles Westall may be irrelevant in the canoe rescue; his arrival in Vermont, however, marks an important turning point in the action of the novel because the narrator has finally introduced a character worthy of pairing with Ellen Bruce. First, though, Charles must discern the difference in quality between the two young women, and it is here that Deborah Lenox becomes an important agent in the novel and for this union. For example, soon after the Westalls have arrived, Debby plants the seed for an alternate courtship. As Charles and Caroline prepare to depart on a carriage ride with Redwood and Mrs. Westall, Deborah observes, "that since the girl's sweetheart had come, she was bright as a September day after the fog was lifted; but for her part she liked to see people

have sunshine within them like Ellen" (1: 197-198). The narrator then reports, "Deborah's comment fell on [Charles's] ear, and probably gave new direction to his thoughts, for during the ride Caroline rallied him on his extraordinary pensiveness" (1: 198). As they walk toward "an uncommonly neat" cottage (1: 200), Caroline's physical beauty coalesces with the natural beauty of the afternoon, and this combination of effect overwhelms Charles's intellectual nature and overcomes "certain doubts that had sometimes obtruded on him, that all in Caroline was not as fair and lovely as it seemed." Charles is so moved by the moment that he almost proposes to her. In fact, the narrator reports that he "forgot Miss Deborah's hint--forgot every thing but the power and the presence of his beautiful companion, and only hesitated for language to express what his eyes had already told her" (1: 199).

Just then, a little girl runs from the cottage and interrupts his reverie by breaking down in tears because she thought Ellen was approaching. Peggy, according to her Aunt Betty, has "just got the use of her eye-sight" through the extraordinary effort of Ellen and an operation by Doctor Bristol (1: 201). In an echo of the story of Redwood's first wife--as well as a seduction plot and an interesting variation on the Charlotte Temple story--Peggy's mother is the abandoned and deceased wife of a British soldier, who followed her husband from "old England" to Canada and then onto Vermont when "he deserted and came off to the states." She now "lies in the grave-yard there in the village, far from her own people" (1: 202). Betty has accompanied her sister from England and is responsible for the child, who at the age of one lost her eyesight when she came down with the measles while her abandoned mother lay dying. At that time, Betty was also "sick of a fever, and the child, God forgive me, was neglected" (1: 201). Betty, though,

has a "practical philosophy" about her situation with her niece: "I must own, when I found Peggy was blind, and the doctors told me nothing could be done for her, I had my match. --It was the bitterest sorrow I ever felt when life was spared, but I thought to myself, what can't be cured must be endured; so I went to work" (1: 203).

Just as Peggy and Aunt Betty prepare to describe Ellen's instrumental role in the story of the child's regained eyesight, Caroline attempts to leave the cottage, but Peggy calls her back because she assumes "they'll like to hear about that best of all." Five weeks earlier, as Betty says, "the very morning after young Mr. Allen's funeral" (1: 203), Peggy found Ellen as she was "picturing on her paper this little hut and the half withered tree." Since then, Ellen "came every morning and sate here three or four hours, teaching Peggy to sew, and learning her hymns and songs" (1: 204). She also arranged for Doctor Bristol to assess Peggy's eyes, and, due to his "new fashioned ways that other doctors in the country knew nothing about," he realized that "one of the eyes might be restored" (1: 205). Betty explains that Ellen held Peggy's head during the operation, and then--although the exertion and, presumably, Doctor Bristol's horrifying "long needle" caused her to faint "like a dying person into [Betty's] arms" immediately following the procedure--Ellen later returned to "sit the night with Peggy, for she would trust no one else for the first night, for the doctor said all depended on keeping her quiet" (1: 207).

In terms of the narrative, Ellen's good deed, in the form of the character of little Peggy, has literally intervened in the moment between Charles and Caroline and forced an instance of her exemplary character upon them both. Due to "the minute and excursive style of the narrator" (1: 206), Betty's story goes on for quite a while (1: 199-208). During the narration, Redwood and Caroline play out a different drama in the

background. As it becomes abundantly clear that Caroline's wild conjectures about Ellen's nighttime sojourns have been entirely misguided, Redwood interjects the narrative with significant looks and comments to his daughter. In a desperate attempt to compete for attention, Caroline herself breaks in at one point to purchase some calico bags that Ellen has taught Peggy to sew, "for which she paid her most munificently" (1: 205). We realize that Caroline has imposed her own novel-bred reading onto Ellen's actions--e.g., first imagining a possible liaison with her father and then a rendezvous with Doctor Bristol--and that her bad education has provided her with few narratives beyond those of seduction and coquetry. In fact, in an earlier letter to her grandmother in which she impugns Ellen's character, Caroline has indicated her poor taste in literature: "There is a village library, and as much eagerness for the dull histories and travels it contains, as you and I ever felt to get a new novel into our possession. As to novels, there is no such thing as obtaining one, unless it be some of Miss Edgeworth's, which scarely [*sic*; misprint or Caroline's misspelling] deserve the name of novels" (1: 124-125). Unlike the seduction narratives that Caroline favors, Betty's story causes everyone in the party to respond with "compassion and sympathy" for Peggy and evokes great curiosity in Charles, "who had drawn the little girl close to him, asked a hundred questions in relation to Miss Bruce, and expressed by his caresses his pleasure in her simple expressions of gratitude and love" (1: 208).

The scene concludes when Redwood "abruptly" reiterates to Caroline "that the 'simplest characters sometimes baffle all the art of decipherers,'" thus, from his point of view, working toward her reeducation or, from her perspective, gloating over her erroneous judgments (1: 208). The narrator, however, is not done punishing Caroline for

her gossipy and uncharitable assessment of Ellen's motives--"fate seemed determined not to suspend its persecutions" (1: 209)--and a series of events unfold that sever Charles's attention away from Caroline and attach him to Ellen Bruce. Just as Debby's initial comment began the process of Charles's turn from Caroline to Ellen, she also plays an instrumental role in helping along Charles's affectional adjustment.

This realignment begins when Deborah comes to ask for reimbursement for a boy's lost fishing tackle as a result of Caroline's earlier "frolic in his canoe." Redwood hears that story for the first time and offers "a most liberal compensation" (1: 209), of which Debby wholly approves. When he asks about the accident, Caroline says that she forgot in all of the excitement "of seeing Mrs. Westall" and adds a "sparkling glance to Charles" that indicates her delight in the son's arrival as well. Unsatisfied, Westall reminds her, "I hope Miss Redwood has not forgotten her friend's presence of mind on that occasion?" To which Caroline responds, "Miss Bruce's? --certainly not--though it deprived me of the romance of being rescued by you, Mr. Westall, which you know would have been quite an incident for a novel." Debby, "who was arrested as she was leaving the room by the allusion to Ellen," cannot depart without chastising Caroline: "I don't know about incidents, ... but I think if any body had saved me from the accident of being drowned or ducked, I should not have left it to other folks to tell of it" (1: 211).

Second, to Caroline's further frustration, the conversation turns to the subject of Ellen's recent separation from the group in the service of old Mrs. Allen, who, according to Deborah, has kept to her room, "broke to pieces with her troubles, ... though there was never a nicer reasonabler woman than she has been in her day." Caroline "languidly" expresses surprise at the "labours these New-England women perform," and Mrs. Westall

replies that it is "all in habit." This downplaying of Ellen's sacrifices for old Mrs. Allen is too much for Deborah, who inserts herself again to set the record straight: "'New-England women--habit!' exclaimed Deborah, 'I'll tell you what--it is not being born here or there, it is not habit; it is not strength of limb, but here,' and she struck her hand against her heart, 'here is what gives Ellen Bruce strength and patience.'" While Debby defends her favorite, Charles listens "with an interest that had manifestly nettled Caroline" and then asks "what relation Mrs. Allen bore to Miss Bruce?" To which Deborah offers the answer, "none," as she leaves the room (1: 212). Charles is impressed by Ellen's "uncommon devotion" and comments that "there is something singularly pure and lovely in her whole expression and manner, in perfect unison with her disinterested conduct" (1: 213).

Finally, to Caroline's ultimate detriment, when the conversation then turns to whether Ellen is related to the Lenox family, she cannot contain her scorn and jealousy any longer. She says that Ellen "seems to be quite as mysterious as the man in the iron mask.... I have finally come to the conclusion, that she is, as you know, papa, old colonel Linston used to call such people, of the Melchisedeck family."[16] Caroline's crude comment implies that Ellen is perhaps unorthodox--that is, unapproved, a fake or an impostor--and the "harshness, a levity bordering on impiety in Miss Redwood's reply," casts "a sudden light in upon Charles Westall's mind," which motivates him to leave the room in a decidedly un-"lover-like manner" (1: 213). As Charles flees from Caroline, he runs directly into Ellen in the hallway who--as an "unsuspected and most unwilling auditor of this conversation" (1: 211)--has overheard the praise as well as the attack. At this moment it is Ellen's eyes that speak fluently to Charles rather than

Caroline's: "her eye met Westall's: a single glance intimated the suffering of the one and the indignant feeling of the other--their fine spirits had been kindled by the same spark--it was one of those moments when the soul sends its bright illuminations to the face, and does not need the intervention of language." The narrator adds, "Ellen's first impulse had been to pass to her own apartment, but Westall's look had changed the current of her feelings--such is the power of sympathy." Therefore, Ellen chooses to remain to fight for herself and, as she says to Caroline, "to shield the memory of my mother from your reckless insinuations" (1: 214). She says, "My mother died while I was still an infant. I only know that my father survived her--and that he was--her husband." Ellen then explains about the papers she possesses and about her "filial duty" to observe her mother's "dying injunction" that she not open the casket until she reaches the age of majority (1: 215). Redwood responds to the incredible story by saying that Ellen is being "too scrupulous" in her duty to "so irrational a restriction"; Charles, however, has a different reaction as he "listened with breathless interest." The narrator reports, "he now advanced involuntarily, and seizing Ellen's hand, 'admirable being!' he exclaimed, 'your enthusiasm cannot be taken from you--persevere--and,' he added, in a softened and tremulous voice, 'God shield you from the shafts of the careless, the cruel, or the envious'" (1: 216). The transfer of affection is complete.[17]

For Caroline, this is all too much. One "riddle" has lead to another "puzzle" from her point of view (1: 219). When she finds Ellen engaged in "secret meditations" over her casket (1: 220), Caroline interrupts her reverie and tells Ellen that her scruples about opening the box are "quite silly" (1: 221). Ultimately, "the demon of curiosity" and "the fires of envy" overtake Caroline's better judgment because, although she has "the

passions of a strong character," she has "the habits of a weak one" (1: 222). After Ellen has replaced the casket in her drawer and rejoined the others, Caroline breaks into the box and discovers "a miniature laid on the top of it." The narrator describes her reaction: "Caroline started at the first glance as if she has seen a spectre--she took it out and examined it--a name legibly written on the reverse of the picture confirmed her first impressions." She apparently recognizes the picture in the miniature, and the careful reader must begin to suspect Redwood for two reasons: Caroline's "first impulse was to destroy the records" (1: 223), but then, though she wavers for a moment, she decides to keep them for herself and to show them to her grandmother. She replaces the miniature frame in the box, but removes the portrait and the papers, deciding that "the articles might be safely retained in her own keeping--future circumstances should decide their destiny" (1: 224).

As the story progresses, Redwood begins to discern that Caroline "had in some way possessed herself of his early history," and, in a moment of moral vulnerability, "he had suddenly resolved to obtain from her all she knew, and to disclose to her all of which she was ignorant" (1: 250). Already weakened by his injury, Redwood's conscience has been activated by Ellen's emotional confession about her mother. At this point, he looks for someone to whom to confess his early sin against Mary Erwine, but Caroline's "coolness which bordered on insult" puts him off (1: 250). As he questions her, Caroline deflects his inquiry. She says, "I am not accustomed to have so much importance attached to my expressions. Miss Bruce may walk in mystery, and talk enigmas with impunity, while my poor simple phrases are received like the dark sayings of a sybil." Caroline's audacity here is wonderful: her access to Ellen's mother's papers has, in fact,

given her a certain sibylline power over her father's future should she choose to expose him; Redwood, however, avoids the main issue and decides "that she had accidentally touched the secret spring which he alone commanded" (1: 251). Although he originally wishes to turn to his daughter for "a kind tone, a single expression of gentleness, of affectionate sympathy," instead, he suppresses his urge to confess. Her cold responses elicit wonder but cannot encourage intimacy: "Strange girl! ... what has so suddenly given you the power to torture me?" (1: 252).

The dramatic ironies are piling up. The reader knows that Redwood has abandoned Mary and that she is dead (1: 72-73). Redwood knows of no child from that clandestine marriage, and none is ever mentioned by the narrator. As far as he is concerned, his first wife never existed--but the reader remembers Mary Redwood/Mary Erwine and the disappearance of that "obscure young girl" from Virginia as well as from the novel (1: 68). The reader is also aware of Ellen Bruce's connection with the Allen family--and that Ellen is the daughter "of a young friend of [Mrs. Allen's] who had died within the first year of her marriage, and had bequeathed the child to her" (1: 129)--but the narrator makes sure that Ellen's origins remain murky. She comments that "there were bitter recollections associated with the memory of Ellen's mother, and especially with her death, that clouded Mrs. Allen's brow whenever she spoke of her" (1: 130), and the narrator admits that there has been some equivocation involved: "Ellen had been told by Mrs. Allen that she had no father.... The impression she received was that he had died at nearly the same time with her mother" (1: 131). Given these various hints, the reader can puzzle together the information: judging from Caroline's reaction to the contents of Ellen's casket and from her behavior thereafter, she has discovered that

Redwood is Ellen's father, and her exclusive access to this information is what has given Caroline "the power to torture" him (1: 252). Therefore, to the reader, Redwood's various lamentations about his failure as a parent to Caroline are compounded by the irony that Ellen, his other daughter, has done quite well without him. Redwood has knowingly deflected his duties to one daughter by abandoning her to an aristocratic Southern grandmother; whereas Mary Redwood chooses compassionate New-Englanders to raise her daughter without any knowledge of her Southern father. The narrator implies that it is possible that Caroline would have been a better woman if Redwood had remained active in her life; however, the other implication is that Ellen, like Westall, has been much better off in the North regardless of her orphan status.

To solidify the various evidence connecting Redwood to Ellen, Sedgwick offers her readers a few closing hints. In a scene in which Caroline is fussing with a "turkish turban on Mrs. Westall's head," she compliments the older woman on the turban's youthful effect and says that she appears "twenty years younger" (1: 254), which allows Mrs. Westall to wax nostalgic about age and to remember her youth of twenty years past. She says to Redwood, "I think it is little more than that since my beautiful friend, Mary Erwine, was staying with me, and you were almost constantly at our house." Caroline jerks in response to Mrs. Westall's comment, thus causing her to exclaim, "bless me, Caroline, you have run that pin half way into my head" (1: 255). Though Caroline excuses herself from the group, the clue dropping continues to the point that Mrs. Westall announces to Redwood, "Upon my word, ... it never struck me before, but I really fancy Miss Bruce resembles Mary--did it ever occur to you?" Redwood responds that he "was struck with it the first time I saw Miss Bruce," and then, to get away from the shame of

his past, Redwood attempts to change the subject by shifting attention to Ellen's reading material (1: 256).

When Redwood asks Ellen what book she is reading, however, we find that it is Maria Edgeworth's The Absentee, the perfect figure for the moment given Redwood's status, and it is Sedgwick's final, definitive, and deeply ironic clue to her reader as Ellen unknowingly faces her absentee father (1: 256). Excepting Caroline, the characters in Sedgwick's novel cannot make such a subtle connection at this point, and so Redwood's question about her book and his request that Ellen commence aloud with her reading changes the subject sufficiently away from his own discomfort, but now Ellen's reading comes at the expense of *her* composure. She reads "with feeling and expression the ever-memorable scene of Colambre's declaration to Grace Nugent, till she came to the passage where Colambre says, there is an 'invincible obstacle' to their union." Ellen momentarily hesitates, but, according to the narrator, "she would have had enough self-command to proceed, had not Mr. Redwood inquired, 'what obstacle could be invincible where a creature so artless, so frank, so charming, was in question?'" Caroline jumps in to draw attention to her own choice of citation: "lord Colambre believed that Miss Nugent's mother was not 'sans reproche'" (1: 257), but Redwood rather hypocritically argues that "a man of sense and feeling" would not let such an insinuation get in the way and includes Charles as "a young man of the class" that could not allow such a petty obstacle (1: 257). At this point, Charles becomes "disconcerted" as Ellen's face flushes "crimson," and "the application that had been made of the fictitious incident instantly flashed across [Redwood's] mind" (1: 257-258). Charles recovers in time to reiterate an earlier point that he has made to his mother about inherited punishment: "it seems to me

to be the decision of natural justice that the fault of one person cannot be transferred to another--that it cannot be right to make an innocent child suffer for the guilt of its parent" (1: 258; cf. 1: 246). Thus Sedgwick introduces another significant theme to the novel. Ellen is saved from the embarrassment of this conversation about the sins of fathers by Deborah who summons her to Mrs. Lenox, and the reading scene concludes with Redwood understanding "that Ellen, the undesigning artless Ellen, might frustrate his long cherished project" to unite his daughter with Edmund Westall's son (1: 258).

And yet with a paradoxical disingenuousness that Redwood has become comfortable living with--and although he can see the current application to Charles and Ellen's situation--he refuses to see his own earlier choices reflected in the Colambre/Grace Nugent story. Sedgwick's reader knows that Redwood has chosen an obscure lover over a mercenary match in his past. His abandonment of that union and his subsequent marriage to Caroline's mother demonstrate that he could not surmount the socio-familial objections to such a marriage. In addition, in terms of Sedgwick's analogous rewriting of Edgeworth's courtship plot, Redwood is really a combination of two characters in The Absentee: Mr. Reynolds, who, after being "privately married" to Grace's mother, dies "leaving her totally unprovided for" (218; ch. 15); and Mr. Reynolds's father, who has willfully rejected his son's marriage and dispossessed his granddaughter because her family cannot produce the official certificate (230-232; ch. 16). Unlike old Mr. Reynolds, Redwood does not know about his daughter from his first marriage, and, unlike Grace Nugent--who actually knows nothing about her true family history and believes that she is the daughter of Mr. Nugent--Redwood's daughter Ellen has always had the "proofs of her [mother's] marriage" in her sealed casket, but "her

mother's dying injunction" has prevented her from reading the information until she is an adult (1: 215). Despite the fact that Ellen instinctively trusts her mother's veracity, the constant implication is that she may not find what she hopes is in the casket. Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Harrison have prepared "her mind for the evils that might await her" (1: 158), and, in an earlier conversation with Mrs. Lenox, Ellen has already acknowledged the "possible disgrace" that is "the crisis of her fate" (1: 173, 175).

At this point, however, in a move that eventually reinforces Ellen Bruce's personal excellence as well as her instrumental-equalitarian heroism, Sedgwick chooses to delay Ellen's coming crisis by picking up on a previous storyline. Earlier in the novel, when Emily Allen is at the Lenox farm to pay her final respects to her twin brother Edward, Sedgwick's narrator has introduced a separate subplot concerning the Allen family. In the wake of their parents' deaths, Emily has joined her Aunt Susan Allen, who has lived happily as a Shaker for many years. Emily has expressed mixed emotions about staying with her aunt among the Shakers, and we know that her cousin James Lenox hopes for a marriage between the two of them. Despite Susan's protestations--she says that Emily is not a "captive" and that they "have neither dungeons, bolts, nor chains" to keep her with them (1: 92, 102)--Ellen is unsuccessful when she attempts to convince Emily to stay with the Lenoxes because the aunt holds too much psychological and spiritual sway over her niece: "Emily felt it too, and was glad to be saved from the efforts of self-dependence" (1: 93). James has managed to pass Emily a note when she departs, but they cannot otherwise retain her (1: 100-102). Using this backstory, Sedgwick now introduces a new adventure plot into the novel. Emily has written a letter to old Mrs. Allen that indicates her unhappiness and demonstrates that she would rather be with

James, who cannot retrieve her himself because he "is afraid of appearing in the enterprise, lest Emily should be persuaded by her spiritual guides that he is an emissary from the arch enemy" (1: 259). James's hesitation allows a space for Deborah and Ellen to step in as rescuers in this captivity narrative. As Ellen explains the situation to Redwood (who is also preparing to depart from the Lenox farm), she says, "Deborah, who looks upon herself as a natural protector of the weak and oppressed, has volunteered a crusade to the shakers, provided I will accompany her. She has an extraordinary confidence in my influence with Emily--and with Susan too, the 'elder sister'" (1: 260-261).

Ellen has been figured as a hero previously in the canoe incident with Caroline, and her new adventure with Deborah focuses this aspect of her character and comments specifically on women's capacity for independent, equalitarian action. For example, when Redwood expresses his concern about the two women traveling alone, Sedgwick incorporates an instrumental-equalitarian ideological perspective through her narrator's report on Ellen's response: "Ellen assured him 'that nothing was more common or safe, than for females to travel from one extremity of New-England to the other without any other safeguard than the virtue and civility of the inhabitants; that where there was no danger there was no need of protection, and that for her own part she should esteem her good friend Deborah's right arm as sufficient a defence for these modern times, as a gallant knight or baron bold would have been in the day of danger and of chivalry'" (1: 261). American women, or at least middle-class, bourgeois New Englanders, are capable of protecting themselves and, therefore, do not require the services of such aristocratic, protective patriarchs. Ellen does express some "squeamishness" when Redwood

characterizes Debby as "a ludicrous chaperone for a young lady," though "a sturdy protector," but she also refuses to allow "a foolish scruple of that kind to prevent [her] from rendering an essential service to the Allens" (1: 261). Sedgwick fully develops these themes of equalitarian female capacity and instrumental female action in the incidents contained within the Deborah/Ellen subplot in volume two of the novel.

First, however, Sedgwick must temporarily shut down the two major storylines that have been developing since Charles's arrival on the scene: the Caroline-Westall-Ellen courtship plot as well as the Caroline-Redwood-Ellen paternity intrigue. To accomplish this momentary closure, Sedgwick returns to the earlier scene in which Redwood wishes to confess to Caroline but instead he is tortured by her indifference. In a reversal of that image, it is Ellen who now faces Redwood and "his melancholy eye." He begins by stating, "I feel an interest almost paternal in the issue of your hopes ... which relate to the development of your own history. Oh Ellen! ... you little dream of the supernatural power your face possesses over my feelings--my memory: there are thoughts that quite unman me...." We recognize that Redwood's unexpected encounter with Ellen's "society" has acted as "a cordial to [his] weary spirit" (1: 262) and that she has forcefully reminded him of his earlier experience with Mary Erwine; moreover, his memory of that time when he momentarily succumbed to Mary's good influences has prompted him to reconsider the battle between infidelity and salvation that he waged and lost as a young man when he turned his intellectual attention and moral devotion to the tenants of skeptical philosophy.

Although Redwood hints at his guilt about Mary, thus reminding us of his earlier resolution to tell Caroline about his past, he chooses instead to confess to Ellen in a

religious sense. Redwood says that "the sweet spirit of contentment ... the obscure virtues which are the peculiar boast of your religion--the virtues of the silent and secret, that neither ask nor expect earthly notice or reward" have inspired him (1: 262-263). He then adds, "I have felt a new influence--I have seemed to breathe a purer, a heavenly air--and I have sometimes hoped...." In his pause Ellen "eagerly" interjects, "What sir, what?" Redwood continues, "That you would make a convert of me, my sweet friend." "Would to heaven!" is Ellen's emphatic response. But Redwood then says that it is "too late" for him and that man "cannot unlearn his philosophy--he cannot forget his experience." To which she replies, "But he can examine if his philosophy be the true one--Oh Mr. Redwood...." As she trails off, the narrator reenters: "Ellen blushed and faltered, her heart was overflowing--but the natural timidity of a woman in the presence of a man, her elder and superior, restrained her: she was frightened at her own daring" (1: 263). Redwood is not overtly offended at her brave, equalitarian presumption, but he does strip Ellen of her authority by shifting the topic away from religious conversion and in favor of a more discomfiting one. He asks Ellen what she thinks of his plan to unite Caroline with Charles Westall--and he says that Caroline "has insinuated in a conversation that we have had together, that she has it in her power to receive or reject him" (1: 264). Ellen struggles to avoid the subject, and Redwood, finally "compassionating her embarrassment," backs off as they wish each other well after this initial volley (1: 265).

When Ellen manages to extract herself from the conversation, she leaves Redwood to consider the fact "that if there were ever two beings formed to make a joyous path over this wilderness world, they were Ellen and Westall," but he cannot give up his

original design. The narrator proceeds with the following characterization: "It had been Mr. Redwood's destiny through life to feel right and to act wrong--to see and to feel, deeply feel, the beauty of virtue, but to resign himself to the convenience or expediency of wrong. His impulses were good--but what is impulse without principle? what is it to resist the eternal solicitations of selfishness, the sweeping tempests of passion?" (1: 266). When he cannot puzzle out the correct course of action, he assuages his guilt by writing Ellen a note in which he asks to be permitted "to act as the representative of [her] father" and in this role "to supply those vulgar wants, from which none of us are exempt." Redwood passes the letter to Deborah to be delivered later, and he includes an initial five hundred dollar payment--in this manner ironically offering Ellen some of the patrimony that she rightfully deserves but that neither of them realizes she is owed--truly good instincts on Redwood's part in that sense. At the same time, Ellen decides to leave her "beautiful little bible with gold clasps" with Mrs. Lenox to be delivered to Redwood once she has departed. The narrator amplifies and explains Ellen's hopeful action:

> Her eye glistened while she kissed [the bible] with an emotion of gratitude at the thought of the solace it had been, and would be to her. Such emotions prove that religious sufferers have a compensation for their trials. A wish suddenly arose in Ellen's mind that she could impart the truths and consolations of that book to Mr. Redwood. The thought seemed like an inspiration. If she was enthusiastic, who can blame an enthusiasm so benevolent? (1: 268)

Ultimately, Ellen emerges on top in this battle between the two. She rejects the money and sends it back the first opportunity; Redwood, however, keeps the bible, and his

conversion is important to the last portion of the novel's action.

These thoughts segue effectively into Ellen being put through a number of trials before she and Debby actually depart from Eton. First, in response to hearing Westall's voice in the parlor and hoping that he will request her presence to say good-bye, Ellen becomes "alarmed at her own agitation," and, as she thinks about what Redwood has said about his plans for Caroline and Westall, she hears Charles exit "the house--and at the last sound of his retiring footsteps she burst into tears...." Ellen is "shocked at the discovery of her own feelings," and, as the narrator reports, "involuntarily, she covered her face with her hands as if she would have hidden from her own consciousness the tears and blushes which the discovery cost her" (1: 269). Second, while Ellen attempts to compose herself in the room she and Caroline have been sharing in the Lenox household, Caroline awakens from a dream with a "shriek" and grabs Ellen's arm with a wild passion. She has seen Ellen and Westall being blessed by "a beautiful spiritual creature" while, Caroline says, "a frightful chasm yawned before me, and my father was hurling me into it" (1: 270). The dream, combined with Ellen's notice that she will be leaving, prompts Caroline's most interesting outburst thus far:

> It is in vain, Ellen Bruce--it is useless longer to conceal my feelings towards you--sleeping or waking they are always the same; from the first moment that we met, you have in every way injured me--crossed my purposes--baffled my hopes--and all under cover of such artlessness, such simplicity. Above all things I hate hypocrisy, and I will have the satisfaction of telling you before you go that I at least have seen through your disguises, and neither set you down for an innocent nor a saint. (1:

271)

Ellen, bolstered by her recent spiritual fortification, replies to Caroline's "insinuations" with spirit: "I know not how I have interfered with you: but one thing I know, that your opinion, determined as you are to misunderstand and misrepresent me, ought not--cannot affect my happiness." To which Caroline retorts, "Lord bless me, how heroic! but there is one whose opinion *may* possibly affect your happiness. Mrs. Westall sees through you as plainly as I do, and if she can help it, I assure you you will not succeed in wheedling her son out of his affections and senses with all your petty romantic devices" (1: 272).

For the reader, this jealous interchange is exciting on a variety of levels because, above all else, we know that Caroline is the hypocrite, not Ellen. As an established coquette, she cannot care about Westall beyond the level of conquest: he is a pro tempore entertainment (1: 128) made more important by competitive resentment. In addition, in terms of the larger narrative, Caroline's accusation is doubly ironic because Ellen's "romantic devices," i.e., her casket and papers, actually exist. Though Caroline has read the proofs that verify Ellen's personal history, she accuses Ellen of creating a series of fictions beginning with, in Caroline's words, "the trumpery story about the box--a fine Arabian night's entertainment, truly." She then denigrates Ellen for her false "benevolence" in her devotion to old Mrs. Allen and in her service to Peggy, which she sarcastically depicts as "the pretty tale of the blind girl." Given her past misinterpretations of Ellen's good deeds, we already know that Caroline has been influenced by the wrong sort of novels rather than the "novels of real life" and that she sees fictional designs where they do not exist; however, Ellen, "bursting into tears" cannot bear the thought that Mrs. Westall and perhaps Charles should see her actions

through Caroline's eyes (1: 272). When Mrs. Lenox knocks to let Ellen know that Deborah is ready to depart, Caroline is forced to cut short the "savage barbarity" of her "tortures" (cf. her previous "torture" of her father [1: 252]), but Ellen gets the last word and demonstrates that she does the right kind of reading. In an echo of her mother Mary Erwine's deathbed letter to Redwood (1: 74), she reverts to Christian retribution as her ultimate defense: "to God, my father and my friend I commit my cause--I have no earthly protector and I need none. We part forever; this *for ever* encompasses the limit of our earthly career, and brings us to that presence where we must next meet, where all injustice will be exposed--all wrong repaired" (1: 273). As Westall has said earlier, God will punish the guilty--but not the guilty by association.

Ellen's twist on Caroline's false interpretations scares her to the point of "cover[ing] her eyes as if to shut out the vision of innocence and loveliness." She is "not yet hardened into the resolution of one inured to the practice of evil" (1: 273), and, as a result, she wavers for a moment and thinks that she should return Ellen's "rifled treasure." However, she cannot act in such a way and retreats "from the train of evils that her busy thoughts suggested: the certain loss of Westall--Ellen's advancement to fortune rank and fashion equal to her own--the exposure of her own baseness, --that she could not brook; and 'I cannot humble myself to *her*,' was the mental conclusion of her deliberations." Ultimately, her decision demonstrates that she is her father's daughter. Just as Redwood shrinks from confession so does Caroline, and she, too, eases her guilt by negotiating with herself: "When she is gone, I can if I choose restore the articles as secretly as I took them; the discovery will then be delayed--Westall secured" (1: 274). Not only do Caroline's thoughts at the close of volume one confirm her poor education

and weak morality, they also offer a definitive confirmation of Ellen's paternity. With this plot point firmly established, the close reader's focus shifts: rather than searching for clues about Ellen's parentage or that connect Ellen to Redwood as we have in volume one, we now begin to anticipate the climactic moment when Caroline receives her just comeuppance and when Ellen and Redwood learn the truth about their connection.

In Caroline's case, therefore, the sins of the father are indeed felt in the next generation; Ellen's story, however, demonstrates a new gloss on that ancient text. As Deborah and Ellen depart southward toward Hancock Shaker settlement in western Massachusetts, they coincidentally run into Westall, "who had gone out on horseback for a morning ride" (2: 5). When he realizes that Ellen is on her way out of Eton, Charles jumps to it directly. "For heaven's sake!" he exclaims, "I cannot, I will not part with you, till I have laid open my heart to you" (2: 6). Due to Redwood's remarks and Caroline's attack, Ellen believes that Westall is already promised in that direction; however, as the narrator explains, "The moments were too few and precious to be wasted in circumlocution. Westall, after saying that he was sure there was some misunderstanding --Caroline Redwood was the last person in the world to whom he should confide any sentiment that interested him, proceeded to make a frank declaration of the unqualified affection which Ellen had inspired" (2: 9). However, though she "had not a particle of coquetry, and she would not have delayed the confession [of her partiality for him] for a moment for the pleasure of feeling her power," Ellen cannot openly return "Westall's affections" (2: 10). In fact, Sedgwick's earlier inclusion of The Absentee has cleverly foreshadowed Ellen and Charles's own "ever-memorable scene" of avowal and denial (1: 257). In an intriguingly equalitarian and American revision of Edgeworth's plot, unlike

Lord Colambre, Ellen's suitor does not care about her parentage, rather it is she who cannot let go of the idea of her illegitimacy even as she reveres and defends her mother's memory. In Sedgwick's scenario, as Charles presses his suit, "Ellen, in a broken voice alluded to the possibility that her name was a dishonored one--'a possibility,' she said, 'which *ought* to set an *impassible barrier* to her affections'" (2: 10-11, emphasis mine). Charles responds, "If ... the worst she could apprehend should prove true, it should he the business, the happiness of his life to make her forget it" (2: 11). Although he firmly stands by his earlier sentiments about inherited punishment, Ellen will not accept Charles's proposal until "the mystery that hung over her parentage" has been resolved (2: 10). Colambre's "invincible obstacle" becomes Ellen's "impassible barrier," albeit modified with a certain room to maneuver given her use of the term "ought."

In this telling moment, Sedgwick's narrator reports that "Ellen felt that her scruples were yielding to the impetuous feelings of her lover," and then she continues by taking the case directly to her reader: "Who can resist the pleadings of tenderness when they coincide with the secret, the strongest, though the resisted inclinations of the heart?" Who? Well, Ellen, actually. She must grasp onto a second impediment to bolster her "dying resolution": Ellen tells Charles that, because his mother--who as Caroline's sycophant does not favor Ellen (1: 217)--would not approve of the match, she "would never obtrude myself on her undesired; no--nor unsolicited" (2: 11). This reason is, in fact, more reasonable in terms of the overarching narrative. After all, Ellen has profound respect for mothers and her various mother-surrogates (e.g., Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Harrison, old Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Lenox, Deborah). Therefore, in her reimagining of The Absentee, Sedgwick chooses to validate individual integrity over inherited sin--even if her heroine

has mixed feelings about her situation. Moreover, Sedgwick's novel provides a critical reading of Edgeworth's novel: Redwood teaches readers that they can think beyond Colambre's conventional equation (mother's reputation equals daughter's reputation) because Sedgwick's hero and her narrator do not necessarily condone such old-fashioned ideas about predestination and inherited sin (mother does not equal daughter; iniquities of fathers are not required to be visited upon their children). In each novel, the heroine's mother is at last exonerated; however, in the case of Redwood's courtship plot, such vindication is nice but not absolutely required. Ellen's value is measured by her competent instrumentality, and, therefore, she consistently demonstrates her equalitarian merit.

Ellen knows how she must act, but in the final moment, as Deborah waits in the distance, she partially gives into Westall's suit. The narrator explains, "her eloquent face (not governed by the law she had imposed on her tongue) expressed anything but insensibility. 'God reward you,' she said, 'for your generous purpose--we must now part.'" With that expression and those words, Ellen encourages Westall while preserving convention: "while he fervently kissed the hand she had extended to him," Charles responds that they will "meet again ... as surely as there is truth in heaven" (2: 12). At the end of the chapter, Sedgwick closes the courtship narrative with an additional scene of Caroline's mean-spiritedness in which Westall is once again repulsed by her envious nature (2: 15). Whether Caroline and Mrs. Westall realize it or not, Sedgwick's readers know that the initially intended Redwood/Westall marriage cannot occur even as another potential union between the families hides in plain sight.

After this momentary conclusion, the narrator embarks on her story of Emily and

Susan Allen. On their way to retrieve Emily to Vermont, Ellen and Deborah become acquainted with another group of travelers, the Armstead party, and, in another instance of heroism, they save Mrs. Armstead's young son from a runaway horse. The scene is a brief reminder of "the manly genius of Deborah" (2: 95) as well as Ellen's quick wittedness, and it also serves to introduce Ellen to Grace Campbell, a cousin to the Armsteads, and another independent young woman. This encounter is brief because both must continue in their travels, but Ellen and Grace hope to meet again at Lebanon springs, where the Armsteads are headed and where Deborah plans to visit after their trip to the Hancock Shaker settlement. Their journey continues uneventfully, but, when Ellen and Deborah arrive at the settlement, they learn of Emily's "clandestine departure" with an unscrupulous Shaker elder named Reuben Harrington. Although Susan initially thinks that Harrington must have "forced her away," she has decided that Emily's emotion the evening before "the event" must mean that the "wiles of Harrington, or rather, she said, the wiles of Satan by his servant Harrington, had been too much for the poor girl; she has been caught in his toils, but she thanked God she had not fallen an easy prey" (2:107). Ellen, though, "would not allow the case to be desperate," thus demonstrating her superior reasoning ability, and discerns that Emily probably left with Harrington because she saw it as "an opportunity of returning to her friends" (2:108). Susan is slightly mollified by the idea that Emily has "fallen innocently" and says that at least then she can "weep for her, but not these bitter hopeless tears" (2:109). Still, the fear is that Emily faces "utter ruin" with Harrington, regardless of the young woman's original intentions (2:108).

Susan's interpretation of Emily's abduction is the third misperceived seduction

plot in the novel: previously Caroline Redwood has incorrectly supposed "a sentimental affair" between her father and Ellen (1:127, 179) and invented a secret liaison between Doctor Bristol and Ellen (1:178, 181). In this instance, Susan's gloss on the events is as faulty as Caroline's--apparently, sober Shakers can be as influenced by conventional novel plots as coquettish young women--the reader knows, however, that Emily has actually been kidnapped by Harrington and that her danger is genuine and not just bad narrative. Due to this momentary setback in their quest, our heroines do not know how to continue their pursuit, but Deborah, who "like a prudent officer, thought it best to retreat before another occasion for action should discover that their strength was exhausted" (2: 109), suggests that they move on to Lebanon springs. Before their departure, the Shakers offer a meal, and the two women, famished after their disappointing travel, gladly accept the refreshment. Sedgwick's narrator gently mocks the impasse by likening their trip to an odyssey of sorts: "If the truth must be told, the spirituelle Ellen Bruce, after her long abstinence, did not regard this repast with the indifference of a true heroine, and Deborah played her part as well as one of Homer's heroes might have done, had he had the good fortune to sit at a shaking quaker tea-table" (2: 111).

Ellen and Deborah depart for the springs, coincidentally taking the same, less-traveled mountain road as Reuben and Emily. Now they must act as heroes once again, and, unlike the previous incidents with the canoe or the horse where "prompt courage" has been the impetus (2: 93), this time their heroism is the result of utter coincidence and Yankee practicality. As they travel up the darkening road, Deborah remembers Redwood's comments about "the dangers of the old countries, and she was thinking it would be pretty risky business for two defenceless women to be travelling alone at night

in any land but our own" (2: 113). Ellen, "whose dejected mind had coloured with a melancholy hue the face of nature" (2: 114), tries to rise above the gothic scene and replies to Deborah as if to bolster herself, "Yes indeed, ... but here, thank heaven, there can be no danger" (2: 115). To their credit, in true equalitarian fashion, neither character will admit irrationally feminine fears into the scene, but there is an advocacy for the safety of the New England countryside here that is ironically undercut by the other facts of the story. After all, the narrator has previously relayed Emily's plight to her readers, and the audience therefore knows that a decrepit Indian, Sooduck, has Emily trapped in his teepee at the request of Reuben, a would-be rapist, who is off attempting to illegally access the Shaker treasury. The careful reader might wonder at their false sense of security, except for the fact that the two male characters are so inept.

When they happen upon Sooduck's dog, Ellen realizes that the animal wants their help, and she supposes that someone has been injured nearby. Ellen wants to follow him into the woods, but Debby does not trust the situation and asks, "in case there should be anybody here, for the Lord's sake, what could you or I do?" She suggests that they "cannot be far from a house" where they can "alarm some men and send them here, which will be much the properest way" (2: 116). However, Ellen's intrepid instincts have kicked in, and despite Deborah's objection she immediately pursues the dog. The action here is interesting to consider. We would assume that Deborah, with her strong arm and masculine characteristics, would be the one to buck convention in such a moment, but it is Ellen who is the driving force behind their equalitarian action. She may look more like a "pretty graceful girl," but Ellen has as much wherewithal as her partner, the "she-grenadier" (2: 81). As they trail the dog "along a narrow foot-path," Deborah comments,

"I don't speak from any fear--I never was afraid in my life, for I never saw danger; if I had I might have been as scared as other people; but I think for two rational women, we are in an odd place, and following a strange leader." Ellen replies, "And that is as it should be, ... two errant damsels as we are, in quest of adventures--danger there is not, cannot be here..." (2: 117). Taking on the duties of errant knights of old, these New England heroines refuse superstition. Though they are acting out their own medieval adventure, they deconstruct the gothic conventions even as they experience seemingly mysterious circumstances. As Sedgwick's narrator puts it, "Ellen's benevolent purpose had conquered her womanish timidity" (2: 118).

The dog leads them to the recently deceased Sooduck, who, Deborah surmises, must have fallen and hit his head on a stone. She says, "he has died indian-fashion, Ellen, his dog and his jug by him; but after all, for ought we know, he may have died of old age, for he looks as old as Methusalem." Ellen expresses compassion for his solitary state, but Debby dismisses her concern because, as she says, "just look at that dog ... there's many a one, Ellen, that dies on a featherbed, and them too that have houses and lands, without so true a friend and mourner as that poor brute" (2: 119). They see Sooduck's hut and hear what Ellen describes as "a low moaning," and, though Debby thinks "it is nothing but a kitten" (2: 120), they investigate and find Emily herself. While Ellen soothes her young friend, Deborah drags Sooduck's body into the hut, compassionating, "An evil creature he was, no doubt, ... an evil creature, but it is all passed to his own account now, poor wretch" (2: 121). All is resolved quickly when Emily fills them in on the particulars "of Reuben's treachery," and they briefly debate the cause of Sooduck's death, the narrator offering that "the verdict of our fair jury was

'accidental death'" (2: 122). Moreover, the bankers in Albany will not cash Reuben's check drawn on the Shaker treasury because they see through his treachery. He flees town only to discover Emily's escape. Harrington is finally captured and returned to the Shakers by "some men" that Debby had notified about Sooduck's body and who are "moved by an intuitive love of justice, as well as by a friendly feeling to the society" (2: 127). Susan receives a message from Ellen just as Reuben is returned, and, "thus relieved from her anxiety," she participates in the decision to banish Harrington, "sent out to wander upon the earth, despised and avoided, enduring all the misery of unsuccessful and unrepented guilt" (2: 128). Due to the combined efforts of the three women, New England is rid of this scourge and the countryside is safe once again.

From this microcosmic tale of captivity, adventure, deliverance, and punishment, Sedgwick's narrator moves on to a portrait of Lebanon, "a favourite resort during the hot months" (2: 129), where a the macro-narrative of redemption and retribution recommences. In fact, there are more subtle forces to be defeated if the New England way is to be truly preserved. Neither Ellen, who is anxious to return to Mrs. Harrison to "unburthen her heart," nor Emily, who wishes to get back to the Lexones, particularly wants to be at the springs; they both, however, give way to Deborah's rheumatism and to their gratitude for "the essential services she had rendered them." As with the first encounter with the Armstead party--who, before she fended off the wild horse, initially reacted to Deborah with "the whispers, the stares and smiles that her oddity excited" (2: 91)--Debby's "appearance and manners" promise to create a stir among the au courant in Lebanon, and so Ellen and Emily gird themselves "to appear with the best grace they could before the gay and fashionable under the conduct of Miss Deborah." Emily faces

additional humiliation "from the possibility that her history might be known" (2: 131). As is the case whenever Debby appears in the novel, we can read the other characters' natures by marking their initial reactions. As a concession to the young women, Aunt Debby has brought along an "orange and purple" dress--"a 'lutestring changeable,' a manufacture of the olden time, in which the colours were skillfully combined, to produce a constant alteration from one hue to another" (2: 132-133). Utterly appropriate to this character, who can be seen at either a level of superficiality or depth at any given time, the changeable dress presents a new challenge to "our heroine, [who] with the courage of a martyr, slipped her arm into one of Deborah's, while Emily, in happy ignorance of the ludicrous antiquity of her friend's costume, took the other" (2: 133-134). Had Deborah been wearing her normal attire, "she would have looked between Ellen and Emily like the gnarled oak, somewhat scathed by time and accident, but still respectable in its hardy age," but the "yellow and purple changeable was irresistibly ludicrous." When the three of them take end of the table with Deborah at the head in "a seat that had been reserved by a gentleman who usually occupied it," "a titter" breaks out and everyone--from 'lively girls" to "grave matrons and staid old gentlemen"--joins in "the mirth" (2: 134).

Unlike all of her previous tests, Ellen's courage in this case abandons her, and, in a moment of human frailty, she too fails this test of decorum. The narrator explains, "Deborah's sagacity was at fault for a moment, but the truth suddenly flashed across her mind, and involuntarily rising and turning to Ellen, 'am I their music?' she exclaimed, when seeing that Ellen too--for the truth must be told--had lost all command of her risibles, and had joined the laughters, her astonishment expressed, 'and thou too? this is the unkindest cut of all....'" Debby, not apt to quote Shakespeare, however, does not say

anything, and the tension is diffused by Redwood and his party as they enter the room. This time it is Deborah and Ellen who are saved when he openly greets them and his status envelops and protects them: "'Miss Deborah!--my old friend--God bless you, I am glad to see you, and Miss Bruce--my dear Ellen,' he said, advancing with the greatest cordiality, and shaking Deborah's hand heartily, and kissing Ellen's 'this is delightful, to meet you again--and so unexpectedly!'" Redwood explains that he was on his way east when he "found [his] strength and spirits unequal to enjoying the society of Boston" (2: 135), hence he has decided to return with the Westalls to Virginia. They have stopped at the springs along their way, "guided hither ... by my good genius" (2: 136). Westall, too, is delighted at the happenstance, and his continued admiration for Ellen becomes quickly apparent, and she is relieved to find that "his attachment to her had not been shaken by Caroline's artifices, nor his mother's distrust" (2: 139).

Thus this happy coincidence reunites the main characters. The situation has changed, however, since they were last together in Vermont. First of all, Redwood suffers from "a sickly, ghastly paleness" (2: 136) that reflects his continued physical and psychological deterioration. In addition, a British officer has joined the party, and we soon learn that he is "the same Captain Fitzgerald of whom [Caroline] had made such honourable mention in a letter to her grandmother" (2: 143). In fact, according to the narrator, "the highly seasoned flatteries of Captain Fitzgerald, gave her a distaste to the tame civilities of Westall, and not three days had elapsed before [Caroline] was vacillating between the gratification of her pride and resentment, and the pleasure of granting the suit which Fitzgerald was already pressing upon her" (2: 149-150). In another important development, Mrs. Westall has become more disposed in Ellen's favor

because, as Caroline's attentions have shifted toward the captain, she has experienced the darker side of Miss Redwood's personality (2: 145-146).[18] Although another subplot, that of Grace Campbell's story, will intervene before we actually get to the climactic unveiling of Ellen Bruce's parentage, Sedgwick now has all of her characters in place to effect the novel's resolution.

In addition to the reunion with the Redwoods and Westalls, Grace Campbell and Ellen Bruce are reunited in Lebanon when the Armstead party arrives on the scene. Grace is delighted to see Ellen as well as her "friend Charles Westall," and she draws attention to Ellen's previous service to the Armstead family at the village inn near Hancock. She says that she has "told the whole story to Mr. Westall" because Ellen, according to Grace, is "too modest to proclaim [her] own heroism," and then adds, "Oh, my dear Miss Bruce, the days are past when one might 'do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame'--this is the age of display--of publication" (2: 152).[19] The attention-seeking Caroline enters the scene after this appropriate introduction to announce her group's plan to visit the Shaker settlement, thus attempting to "mortify" Ellen through her connections with "the elect lady," Susan Allen. When Ellen deflects the barb, Caroline directs her cruel attention to Emily and suggests that she could "go with us as pioneer." Emily, who does not have the experience to understand such sarcasm, "blushed and trembled as every eye turned on her, and edging herself behind Ellen, she whispered in all simplicity, 'do tell her I can't go'" (2: 153). Ellen does protect Emily by replying for her, and Caroline departs for her "chance to quiz some of the old broad brims" after "enjoying the confusion into which she had thrown the simple girl" (2: 153-154). Once again, Ellen has acted as hero to Emily. And, once again, others have taken note of her heroism,

regardless as to whether it is published. In fact, Westall, who entered with Caroline, witnesses Caroline's behavior, and for him the moment becomes a final, definitive comparison in terms of the many differences between the two sisters.

In the scene immediately following this bullying incident, we find Westall meeting with Redwood for a critical discussion. Redwood lays out the fact that the Westalls and he had always hoped for a marriage between Caroline and Charles and that he wishes to promote the engagement. In another sublime irony for Sedgwick's careful readers, Westall "almost wished he had a heart to give to the daughter of Mr. Redwood, but he did not hesitate as to the course he should pursue: after saying he as certain Mr. Redwood had misunderstood his daughter's sentiments in relation to him, he made a manly avowal of his attachment to Ellen..." (2: 155-156). Redwood is surprised by Westall's declaration and falls into desperation as he faces both the young man's lack of selfishness and his own utter failure as a parent. After all, not only has Charles decided to marry a woman with no connections or wealth, he has also rejected a woman with "brilliant advantages" in terms of family and property (2: 156) Charles stands, therefore, in stark contrast to Redwood himself. In lamentations of gothic proportion, Redwood says, "now I suffer the fierce pangs of remorse for the past--of despair for the future," and he finally confesses the story of his life to Westall, including the abandonment of his first, secret wife. In a state of "wild melancholy," Redwood proclaims, "I have destroyed the innocent--contaminated the pure--and my child--my only child--the immortal creature whose destiny was entrusted to me, I have permitted to be nursed in folly, and devoted to the world without a moral principle or influence!" (2: 157). Charles compassionately attempts to assuage Redwood's grief by noting that his "life has been stained but by one

criminal action, and that committed in the thoughtless period of youth" (2: 159); however, Redwood recognizes that his sins carry well beyond what he did to Mary Erwin.

In terms of the larger narrative of Redwood's conversion, his confession to Westall demonstrates that not only has he been reading the bible that Ellen gave him, but that he also sees his own, and perhaps Caroline's, damnation in its pages. Redwood laments his daughter's plight: "With my present feelings, Westall, you will not be surprised at my anxiety to make all the amends in my power for my neglect of her. I am not blind to her faults--they are alas, too glaring not to be seen...." He says that he had hoped that Westall's goodness would have saved Caroline, and adds, "But that is all past --it was my last dream--you have chosen well. I cannot boast my principles--but Ellen suits my tastes; and feeling her loveliness as I have felt it, I cannot now but wonder that I ever should have indulged the extravagant expectation that you would fix your affections elsewhere.... Oh, had I possessed such a child! --poor Caroline!" (2: 160-161). In the ultimate comparison between the two young women, even Redwood admits that he would prefer Ellen over his daughter, and, of course, he has already chosen thusly in the past when he originally married Mary Erwine rather than Maria Manning, Caroline's wealthy mother, who becomes Redwood's second wife. Part of what is killing him now is Redwood's conscious recognition to his personal detriment that Westall has the wherewithal to choose correctly and to stand by his choice; whereas, in his past, Redwood has initially made the correct marriage but then abandons that wife to his more mercenary social concerns. Mary's lack of connections and wealth are indeed "an invincible obstacle" for Redwood as a young man, but Westall once again states that such

matters are irrelevant: "No parentage ... could confer honour on Miss Bruce--none could touch the essential dignity of her character" (2: 162).

Now that Caroline and Ellen have been reunited, their battle continues. Caroline enacts a "ruse de guerre" to rid herself of Ellen by playing "a quiz" on Deborah. She says that she has run into one of the Lenox family's neighbors and that old Mrs. Allen is failing (2: 164-165). The false message from Eton means that Deborah, Emily, and Ellen must depart quickly to attend to Mrs. Allen, but Caroline's trick is foiled when Grace and Mrs. Armstead step in to keep Ellen with them at the springs by offering to take her home to Mrs. Harrison's in ten days when they are traveling to Boston (2: 173-174). In addition, Redwood sends her a note begging her to stay. He implores, "I once mediated an injury against you--it is now my earnest wish to repair the fault of that intention--my life is fast ebbing--do not refuse the last favour I can ever ask of you" (2: 175). Meanwhile, his daughter's hatred for her rival has grown to the point that she, in Ellen's words, "shrinks from me as if I breathed a poisonous influence." Grace hits the mark more fully when she adds, "Or rather, ... as a condemned spirit shrinks from the healthful air of morning" (2: 179). Caroline's theft of Ellen's papers remains hidden from everyone, and, as if they have poisoned her, the pilfered contents of the casket have begun to deform Caroline into something monstrous. Ellen experiences the brunt of Caroline's disease: "her dislike towards me, or rather hatred, for I must give it that harsh name, has no relenting. I never approach her--I never pass her, even in her happiest moods, that her brow does not contract, and every feature becomes rigid, with an expression that it would seem impossible for so young and beautiful a face to wear" (2: 180).

Deborah's farewell speech to Ellen and Grace expresses her admiration for Ellen's solid usefulness and inherent composure: "The truth is, Ellen has been so busy about making other people happy, that she has no time to think of herself; instead of grieving about her own troubles, she has tried to lessen other peoples'" (1: 176). Deborah here expresses one of the operant characteristics of instrumental-equalitarian femininity: it is better to act openly and with conviction than to hide away, over-thinking one's position in the world. Redwood's interior agony comes from his inability to act in the world with moral conviction. His daughter Caroline's secret and bitter envy of Ellen reinforces the estrangement between her father and herself and finally pushes her to a revenge-marriage with Fitzgerald. Both of the Redwoods have bought into the superficial world of, in Debby's words, "the great and the gay, the rich and handsome" (2: 177); whereas Ellen and Deborah value the contentment that comes from genuine action and expresses itself superficially only in the sense that those who subscribe to such a system of self-governance display the confidence that comes from the "consciousness of having acted rightly and nobly" (2: 204).

Before she leaves the springs with Emily, Deborah thwarts Caroline one last time by inadvertently exposing Caroline's hateful joke when she wishes her well and then thanks her for "remembering John Martin's errand" regarding Mrs. Allen. Deborah's expression of gratitude trumps Caroline's cruelty, and, when Redwood--who is delighted to hear that his daughter has done something thoughtful--asks Caroline when she saw Martin, she is left to play her "mortification" off as a joke. With a "careless laugh," she says, "Oh, I have not seen him at all.... Only a quiz upon Miss Debby, papa--a merry thought of mine, which I know you will forgive since it has led to an indefinite

postponement of Miss Bruce's departure" (2: 182-183). With that, Caroline walks off with Fitzgerald, and Redwood is left to apologize for her: "I hope all you good rational people, ... will remember that my child is but eighteen" (2: 183). The narrator then shifts to the more rational daughter who, nonetheless, has been observing a seemingly irrational duty in terms of her mother's last wishes. Ellen continues to maintain that she will not consent to marriage before the time arrives that she may open her cask (upon marriage or majority), but Redwood and then Westall both entreat Ellen to delve into her history and to read her papers. The "zeal" of Westall's "true and well requited love" finally transcends what the men believe to be Ellen's mother's whimsical dictate, and she agrees to "write to Mrs. Harrison--lay the case before her, and abide by her decision" (2: 184).

Meanwhile, Ellen and the readers have been introduced to Grace Campbell's history as well as her worries about her love-interest, Mr. Howard, and her cousin, Fenton Campbell, who is about to join their party. Sedgwick's narrator here inserts a final subplot, and, like the Shaker captivity narrative, Grace Campbell's history and courtship story additionally delay our anticipated gratification in terms of the Westall-Ellen resolution and the Caroline-Ellen intrigue. In this section of the novel, we learn that, although Grace knows about her English-born cousin and describes him as "a genius, a painter by profession, and a man of sense" (2: 191), she has recently fallen in love with Mr. Howard and, therefore, worries about what choices lay before her. Meanwhile, Fenton has taken on a false identity because he is worried that their uncle Richard's recent dictate that Fenton and Grace be married to keep their joint inheritance together will cause her to judge him unfairly. Recently arrived from England, Fenton arranges with William Armstead to disguise his identity until it becomes apparent that the two

cousins are compatible for marriage regardless of their other connections. According to William, due to various letters between Mrs. Armstead in Philadelphia and Mrs. Campbell in England and Grace herself, Fenton has many "prejudices in Grace's favor," but he also "knew enough of his cousin to believe that she would be as averse from giving her heart, as Falstaff was his reasons, on compulsion" (2: 209). William, their lighthearted, witty young cousin, welcomes the challenge to engineer the trick.

Fenton's unmasking comes at a crucial moment when Grace has fallen for Howard but cannot decide what to do because she will be "unportioned" if she disobeys her uncle (2: 204). Grace, who has "been at the very head of society in Philadelphia" (2: 195) is used to a rich lifestyle and worries about the consequences of giving up her social position. This scene acts as an interesting point of contrast between Ellen and another independent young woman. Unlike Caroline who has been ruined by her social life in Charleston, Grace Campbell has been able to maintain a certain balance. People find her to be immanently relatable because, though others exceed her in beauty, wealth, and wit, she "united[s] more than any one of them all." In Grace's words, she "had not beauty enough to be the most insipid of all creatures, a mere belle--nor literature enough to fall into that unhappy class, the blue stockings, the terror of our city beaux, the dread of our fashionables--nor sufficiently brilliant expectations to throw me into the vulgar class of the fortunes; but I had enough of each to attract the votaries of every class." Yet she has managed to operate in this world "with an unscathed heart" until her recent acquaintance with William's friend, Howard (2: 195).

As she reaches her crisis point, Grace exclaims, "How shall I encounter toil and submit to privations? How shall I bear the neglect of those who have courted my favour,

who have felt honored by my slightest attention? (2: 202). Although Ellen counsels her friend to avoid expediency--she says, "If you love Howard, if he deserves your love, he is worth this sacrifice" (2: 202)--Grace is not so sure Ellen's adherence to "the secret consciousness of having acted right and nobly" will suffice in her case. She says, "I am apt I believe to forget *secret* feelings. I have been a gallery picture, you a sweet little cabinet article..." (2: 204). And her cousin William semi-seriously notes that there are important economic issues to consider in this mercenary age: "love matches among people who have lived in a certain style, you know, are getting to be quite obsolete" (2: 205). Luckily she never has to choose because she gets the love marriage and her uncle's money when William's well-intentioned trick comes to its happy fruition (2: 206-207). Unlike Caroline's hurtful schemes and "quizzes," this contrivance operates in a friendly vein, even as the novel itself does. Redwood's narrator plays little tricks and presents delays here and there, but we trust that eventually all will be well. Our narrator is no Caroline; rather she is an entertaining quizzer, not an "insipid" belle nor a malicious member of "the vulgar class of the fortunes"--and certainly not a terrorizing "blue stocking" (2: 195).

In fact, William's small creation of Mr. Howard and then Grace's reference to bluestockings, in addition to the various heroic episodes, points toward the novel as a fictional creation. In her Grace Campbell romance plot, Sedgwick has offered another tale for her reader to consider and to compare with other texts. After all, Grace Campbell shares her name with Grace Nugent in The Absentee, which Sedgwick has thoroughly referenced earlier in Redwood, but their situations are dissimilar, and Sedgwick's Grace actually mentions Ennui, or Memoirs of The Earl of Glenthorn (1809) when she

compares herself to Lady Geraldine: "I am on the verge of three and twenty, an age un peu passé in the world of fashion, and quite unknown in the lives of heroines, for excepting lady Geraldine, the most spirited of Miss Edgeworth's characters, and whom (heaven bless her for it!) she has made, I think, to arrive at the mature age of two and twenty, I do not remember in all romance, a single heroine that had attained her majority" (2: 199-200). Sedgwick offers a small homage to Edgeworth by presenting Grace as a second example to her readers. This romance, too, has a "spirited" character that has reached the age of majority, and her discretion has served her well. In fact, in the past, Grace has seen through a suit from the same Colonel Fitzgerald who is now sniffing around Caroline (2: 169), and her maturity has now been happily rewarded in her union with Mr. Howard/Fenton Campbell.

This exemplary union sets up the conclusion of the novel. All of the various tensions are brought to their climax when Caroline decides to elope with Fitzgerald on the same day that Ellen receives her anxiously awaited letter from Mrs. Harrison. Caroline and Fitzgerald have produced a "hacknied procedure of a clandestine marriage" because he has been recalled to his regiment to be assigned to the West Indies, and Fitzgerald wants to guarantee the marriage before he departs (2: 236). In her rush, Caroline entrusts her dressing case, containing her money and Ellen's papers, to her slave, Lilly, who has her own plan for escape already in action. Rather than delivering the dressing case, Lilly leaves the papers and the case behind but absconds with the funds, having been "assured of the protecting hospitalities of the people of her own colour" in Massachusetts. The narrator adds, "it had even been hinted to her, that in case her retreat was discovered, the white inhabitants would be very backward to enforce her

master's rights" (2: 271).[20] As Caroline and Fitzgerald make for "a village in a few miles from Lebanon" they run into Ellen and Westall, who are reading the letter at that very moment (2: 229). Mrs. Harrison's letter advises Ellen to open the casket, which she and Westall do, but, when Ellen realizes that the casket is empty, her "bitter disappointment" follows (2: 240). She has spent her life revering her imagined picture of her mother, and now she must face the idea that "Caroline Redwood spoke the cruel truth" when she impugned her mother's integrity (2: 241). Westall, who has consistently argued that Ellen's origins are irrelevant, attempts to consol her: "My dear Ellen, do not distress yourself thus--have not your fears vanished with your hopes? this unforeseen result pains you, but is it not better, far better, than much that you have apprehended? and severe as your disappointment is, Ellen, will you not be consoled by the devotion of my life to you?" (2: 241-242). In addition, Westall suspects "some foul play" because "he perceived a fragment of paper adhering to the edge of [a miniature case], on which was written in a delicate female hand, 'From my'--the remainder of the sentence had been torn off" (2: 242-243).

When Redwood realizes that Caroline is gone, he calls Charles to his side and there follows a contrasting back-and-forth between Caroline and Ellen's situations, which culminates in the discovery of Ellen's papers while a servant is searching for a clue to Caroline's whereabouts. When Ralph returns with a "large pacquet" from which falls a miniature, Westall picks up the picture and turns it over there to find inscribed "in the same hand-writing that was on Ellen's fragment, 'beloved husband to his faithful Mary.'" As a "faint light dawned on Westall's mind," Redwood realizes with shock that the packet contains his "certificate of his marriage with Mary Erwine" as well as a "letter

directed 'to my child'"--and, in his demoralized state, he cannot understand the contents or imagine how Caroline could have received the documents (2: 245). The reader, of course, leaps ahead of Redwood with Charles to the fact that these are Ellen's casket papers, and Westall unravels the mystery for Redwood and explains the contents, even "read[ing] aloud some passages of the letter which placed, beyond the possibility of doubt, the fact that Mr. Redwood's wife left a child, and that that child was Ellen Bruce" (2: 246-247).[21] Ellen arrives on the scene, and, as the narrator describes the moment, "a celestial joy shone in her face--she sprang toward her father: he rose, stretched out his arms to receive her, and folding her into them, they wept together" (2: 248). Redwood cannot handle the combination of grief over Caroline's departure with joy over Ellen's arrival, and he falls into "the ravings of delirium" (2: 249).

Our instrumental-equalitarian heroine, on the other hand, rises to the occasion with full composure. While Redwood continues his "a paroxysm of raving" (2: 249-250) and laments Caroline's bad choice and ruined life, Ellen has the wherewithal to protect her sister. She says to Westall, "we may at least ... save Caroline from the disgrace that must fall on her, if it is known that she has deserted her father in this extremity." Ellen takes control of the situation, and, as she notices Redwood finally "sinking to sleep," she determines that "perfect quiet will be best" and charges Westall with finding Caroline. "[N]ow go," she orders, "and God speed you." Like Westall, the reader is left "admiring with enthusiasm ... the self-command of Ellen, and the generosity with which she could forego at this crisis of her life the indulgence of her sensibilities, to consider how she could preserve the honour of one who had so relentlessly inflicted suffering on her" (2: 250). Left alone with her own thoughts, Ellen then settles in to read "the record of the

wrongs of her departed mother to be learned in the presence of her dying father" (2: 251).

Because Redwood's "disease had been more moral than physical," Redwood recovers under "the restorative power of happiness" as well as Ellen and Westall's "moral influences" (2: 273). Once Caroline returns with Westall and reconciles with Ellen, Redwood decides that Caroline will be quietly married to Fitzgerald and sent with him off to Canada and that Ellen will literally take her place. In one of the concluding conversations with Mrs. Westall and Grace Campbell, Ellen says to her friend, "I am to resign the place your aunt kindly offered me in her carriage, and, with your leave, Mrs. Westall, am to occupy that which Caroline vacates in our father's." Charles's mother, of course, declares the idea a "most delightful arrangement" (2: 275). This trade of Caroline for Ellen, however, is odd because, though the circumstances are different, it is as if Redwood is now abandoning his daughter again. In fact, the narrator observes, "There were some indications that it might not have been impossible to persuade the young lady to retract her engagement [to Fitzgerald], but it seems that her friends did not deem it expedient to interfere, for they never spoke to her upon the subject" (2: 278). Redwood and Caroline do forgive one another, and Redwood decides that he has deserved her disobedience because his "parental faults met with their just retribution in [her] breach of filial duty" (2: 279). In addition, Redwood has made an effort to protect Caroline from Fitzgerald's presumably profligate tendencies, by retaining his "right to remain [her] steward during her [his] life" and promising to send the "income of her fortune" to her on a regular basis. He adds that he hopes that Fitzgerald will eventually be able "to perform his promise to resign his commission, and come and reside among us" (2: 280). And yet Caroline has behaved so poorly for so long that no one, not even the generous Ellen, is

willing to step in to persuade her to abandon her bad engagement and to stay with them.

Ellen's final victory comes with the conclusion of Redwood's salvation narrative. Redwood himself turns enthusiast when he gives Caroline the bible, "an inestimable treasure," that Ellen has given to him. He firmly acknowledges his Christian confirmation and asserts that "the dark shadows of unbelief have passed from my mind forever--the terrors that threatened to annihilate my reason are vanquished--the life-giving truths, and immortal hope of that book have translated me from darkness to light" (2: 280). Caroline and Ellen embrace, and Ellen concludes the scene when she imagines their ultimate union: "severed--strangers, ... as we have been here on earth, we may yet be family in heaven." To which Redwood, whose Christian love has enveloped them all, replies, "God grant it, my children!" The narrator confirms the fact that heaven is their only true hope for a reunion because "Caroline received the farewell embraces of her friends, and left them forever" (2: 281). She and Fitzgerald die in the West Indies (2: 288). The narrator rewards Ellen with a much happier fate. Mrs. Westall reports that the "wedding is to be celebrated in Lansdown [with Mrs. Harrison], on the first day of September" (2: 276).

As the novel draws to a close, Grace Campbell comments pointedly on the situation that she and Ellen find themselves confronting: "in romance all the business of life ends with a wedding, but in real life that seems to be the starting point. Now, as I am a little worldly in my views, I should like to know, Ellen, whether you and Westall are going to set up housekeeping in the Harrison mansion, and live upon love and verses, as Miss Debby would say?" The narrator of this novel of real life, however, does not send her heroine off into a romantic future: "Ellen assured Miss Campbell that she has no such

romantic views, that on the contrary all due respect had been paid to their temporal affairs" (2: 277). After the fall wedding, Charles and Ellen will winter in Virginia with Redwood, and then "return to New-England," where Westall plans "to form a partnership which had long been projected with an eminent lawyer, and enter upon the business of his profession" (2: 277-278). Ellen will become an idealized republican mother, but she and Westall will also be active in the real economy of the nation.

In a final realistic maneuver, Sedgwick's narrator enters the novel at the very end to introduce a letter from Deborah to Ellen in which she delineates all of the characters' various outcomes. The letter reinforces the ideas presented in the author's Preface and reminds readers of the immediacy and relevance of Sedgwick's "fictitious narrative" and its "peculiar province ... to denote the passing character and manners of the present time and place" (vii). The narrator lays out the following scene for her readers to imagine:

> We fancied we had finished our humble labours, when by a lucky chance a letter, written by Deborah Lenox, and addressed to Mrs. Charles Westall, ————————, Massachusetts, fell into our hands. As it was written nearly two years subsequent to the date of these memoirs, and contained some interesting notices of the personages that figure in them, we immediately transmitted it to our printer. (2: 281)

The narrator admits that "the composers of the press" sent the letter back to her "that the spelling might be rectified," and, "in reward for all of their patient toil on our behalf, it has been deemed a duty to gratify their fastidiousness" (2: 281-282). She has corrected the "orthography," but has left the rest of the construction intact "for we respect the peculiarities of our honest friend" (2: 282). Through Deborah, we learn that Ellen has

taken charge of young Peggy as well as of Caroline's and Fitzgerald's child upon their deaths in the West Indies. Of that couple, Deborah exclaims:

> I declare Ellen, it was a teaching providence to me when I heard it.... Poor young creature! I am sure, when she was flaunting away here in Eton, I never thought I should have wet my old eyes for her; but for all I did cry like a child when sister Lenox received your father's letter, telling all about her death, and that her last words were to beg them to send her little girl to you, and ask you to make her like yourself.... The dealings of Providence are sometimes mysterious; but he that runs may read this dispensation.... (2: 287)

Thus Debby's "long preachment" (2: 289) serves to emphasize the novel's primary moral message, but it also reminds us that there is more than one imaginable future for American women: the instrumental-equalitarian, single female engaged in the world of her family and community. Given Sedgwick's own single status and social activism as well as her future writings about the institution of marriage--in particular, her final novel, Married or Single? (1857)--we can read Debby as the novel's greatest experiment. Though the narrator describes the character in humorous terms as Amazonian, her strength of character is never ridiculed. As she writes Redwood's concluding letter, we see the figure of the instrumental-equalitarian woman writer, perhaps imagining herself flawed by a certain lack of formal education, but also strenuously writing herself into American literature.

Notes

[1] By 1827 the novel was attributed to Sedgwick. See Melissa J. Homestead, "Behind the Veil" Catharine Sedgwick and Anonymous Publication." Homestead argues that "Sedgwick's anonymity was a market strategy for constructing an authorial persona" rather than a "denial of authorship" (20).

[2] According to the American Periodical Series bibliographic information, The Atlantic Magazine (1824-1825) was edited by Robert C. Sands and published in New York by E. Bliss and E. White, the same publisher as Redwood. Presumably Sands wrote the review, though it could have been another contributor.

[3] i.e., American, or created in the United States. In his antecedent article "Domestic Literature," he writes, "The literature of a nation is its common property, and one of the strongest bonds of common feeling. More particularly does it become so, when the subject is domestic. The fame of an author who is universally admired, is part of the inheritance of every individual citizen of his country. He adds another ligament to the ties which bind a people together; and in so doing, although the immediate object of his efforts may have only been to amuse his readers, he becomes the benefactor of his country" (138).

[4] The reviewer looks at "the modern novel" in his earlier discussion of "domestic literature"; for example, he says that "the scholar here, who would dedicate his time and talents to contributing to the establishment of a national literature, which should be characterized by simplicity and strength, must begin by making himself familiar with the manner of the ancient models, and of the founders of modern literature. The ornate, overloaded, obviously artificial, and often dissolute style of the lighter literature of the

day, with its endless redundance, useless verbiage, and unmeaning allusions, affords no precedent for our primitial classics. It ought not to, and it is pleasant to observe that it does not, suit the genius of our nation; for those writers who have been most successful among ourselves, have been most distinguished for cultivated simplicity" (137).

[5] Lydia Maria Child agrees. In her 1829 discussion of Sedgwick's novels, she writes, "Her claims have ... sunk deeply into the hearts of her countrymen; and her fame is destines to be far more durable than that of any other female writer among us. In America, she deserves the rank accorded to Miss Edgeworth in England; and an hundred years hence, when other and gifted competitors have crowded into the field, our country will still be as proud of her name" (234). In the original, the review is unsigned. Damon-Bach and Clements attribute the article to Child.

[6] According to the American Periodical Series bibliographic information, The United States Literary Gazette (1824-1826) was edited by James Carter and published in Boston by Hilliard Cummings and H. Gray.

[7] In one of her explanatory notes to Sedgwick's autobiography, Kelley says that Bryant and Sedgwick "became friends shortly after he published *Thanatopsis* in 1817. The support and encouragement she and her brother Harry offered were important in the early stages of Bryant's career as a poet and editor" (56n15).

[8] In The North American Review, the article is unsigned. In Variety of Attempt: British and American Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century (1976), a discussion of generic innovations in the period, Neal Frank Doubleday assigns authorship to Bryant. As an aside, Doubleday's work provides another example of teleological reading and its accompanying denigration of early American novels (see chapter one of this dissertation).

He appreciates Bryant's ideas about fiction, but downplays their effect, and then denigrates Sedgwick's ability to live up to Bryant's critical standards:

> Bryant's review for *Redwood* seems prophetic, and the reader today thinks ahead to things Emerson was to say in "The American Scholar" and in "The Poet," to Walt Whitman's celebrations of the diversity of American life, to the realistic movement in the last third of the century.... But Bryant's thinking, so far as it was new, seems to have had no great immediate influence. Miss Sedgwick was not that "writer of genius" whose work could really exemplify Bryant's doctrine, nor were others at hand to do so. (157)

In Doubleday's construction, Redwood inspires Bryant's thinking and provides the occasion for his critical exploration of the genre of the American novel, but Sedgwick's text fails because it does not fit with the late twentieth-century literary critic's definition of realism.

[9] The trend is readily observable in a quick author-as-subject search of the MLA International Bibliography database. Only five studies were published from 1934 to 1978 when Mary Kelley took up Sedgwick as her subject, but the Bibliography lists approximately one hundred entries for Sedgwick that have been completed since 1985.

[10] Oxford republished A New-England Tale in 1995 as a part of its Early American Women Writers series. Hardscrabble Books--Fiction of New England republished The Linwoods in 2002. In addition, both Hope Leslie in 1998 and A New-England Tale in 2003 earned Penguin Classics editions.

[11] I have cited the various scholars' perspectives throughout this dissertation when

relevant.

[12] The MLA International Bibliography database only lists two entries for Redwood: Lucinda Damon-Bach's book article in the Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives collection and her dissertation on Sedgwick and Susan Warner.

[13] In her brief summary for Woman's Fiction, Baym necessarily leaves out a number of subplots and characters. From Baym's point of view, Ellen Bruce represents an idyllic future. Redwood's heroine occasionally rescues others ("Unconventional but unwavering," Baym says, "she is in every sense a 'hero.'"), but she has also "been rescued from the patriarchy" by the "strong, independent, variously talented women [who] have been Ellen's mentors." Baym says, "Ellen gets husband, father, name, and fortune; she repays her father's abandonment of her mother with filial affection.... In this gesture she shows the superiority of the nineteenth-century morality to that of the eighteenth, and of a world managed by women to one ruled by men." She concludes, "The mythos is clear: the modern age is to be woman's age, an age of virtue, family harmony, and love" (58). I don't disagree, but I would add that Ellen's exemplary behavior and her heroics recommend a kind of period-specific realism rather than an idealism.

[14] Between 1832 and 1841, "Sedgwick published not only a lengthy advice manual for adolescent girls, but also six more full-length works for adults: her fifth major novel [The Linwoods], her two-volume European travelogue, her first collection of short stories, and three domestic novellas" (Damon-Bach and Clements xxv).

[15] Sedgwick refers to this previous text as a less effective attempt at influencing moral reflection: "We do not think that such attempts have heretofore been eminently

successful; or that narrative sermons are of a nature to be particularly interesting" (ix).

[16] The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines the term "Melchizedekian" as a noun found chiefly in church history: "A person holding heretical or gnostic beliefs which accord an unusual importance to the figure of Melchizedek; esp. a member of a sect founded around A.D. 210 by Theodotus the Banker, who taught that Melchizedek was a heavenly being superior to Christ" (Draft Revision, June 2001).

[17] In a nice parallel, the narrator has mentioned previously that Charles has his own filial devotion to "his father's private papers," which his mother gave to him when he was young; "thus the son was admitted into the sanctuary of his father's heart, and held, as it were, a spiritual communion with him. These papers act as Westall's "external conscience" (1: 196).

[18] In a drawing room conversation, we learn that Grace harbors scorn for Fitzgerald due to her previous experience with him, "a mere parade-day officer" (2: 169). She comments to Mrs. Westall that Caroline "has certainly made a conquest of Captain Fitzgerald," but she also worries that "she is too young and too beautiful to be sacrificed to a mere fortune-hunter." Mrs. Westall's newly realized assessment of Miss Redwood becomes clear when she responds, "She is heartless, ... and therefore fair game for a fortune-hunter" (2: 167). Moreover, she privately apologizes for her previous indiscretion: "if my feelings or wishes have ever done you injustice, forgive me, Ellen--believe me, there is now but one other so dear--so interesting to me a you are" (2: 173).

[19] In her essay about Sedgwick's anonymity, Homestead says, "At the dawn of the age of self promotion and publicity, Sedgwick appeared in public without appearing to seek publicity." She notes Grace's comment and sees it as a fit description of the author:

"both Sedgwick and her heroines manage to 'do good by stealth' and thus achieve fame without appearing to seek it" (24).

[20] The maidservant Lilly and the tortured Africk--his history is related in letters early in the novel to show why Charles Westall's father disbanded his plantation--are the only two African American characters in the novel, and both characterizations reinforce stereotypes. Africk is a noble savage not unlike Aphra Behn's Oroonoko. Lilly is a sneaky and servile, and, except when one of the young Lenox children is offended by the idea of "that black girl" sharing Ellen's room with Caroline (1: 41), we only encounter her character when she is being ordered around by Miss Redwood. At the end of the novel, however, the narrator discloses that Lilly has been "carrying on a snug affair of her own with the servant of a West India planter" (2: 270) and that they have escaped into Massachusetts. The narrator uses this plot point to acknowledge with slight sarcasm, "it must be confessed, that our northern people are quite careless of the duty of protecting slave property, and that they manifest a provoking indifference to the rights and losses of slave-holders." She suggests that southerners "make their northern tours attended by white servants" (2: 271). The tone is a pointed jest, but four years after the Missouri Compromise the comment has the ring of practical advice as well.

[21] In another rewriting of Edgeworth's novel, and all of Columbre's hard work and travel in search of the truth about Grace Nugent's mother's past, Westall himself becomes the agent of the absentee father's first acquaintance with his lost daughter as he runs back and forth between the rooms at the resort.

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