Johanna McElwee

The Nation Conceived

*Learning, Education, and Nationhood in American Historical Novels of the 1820s*
Abstract


This study explores the role of learning and education in American historical fiction written in the 1820s. The United States has been, and still is, commonly considered to be hostile to scholarly learning. In novels and short stories of the 1820s, however, learning and education are recurrent themes, and this dissertation shows that the attitudes to these issues are more ambivalent than hitherto acknowledged. The 1820s was a period characterized by a political struggle, expressed as a battle between intellectuals, represented by the sitting president, John Quincy Adams, a Harvard professor, and anti-intellectuals, headed by the war hero Andrew Jackson. The battle over the place of scholarly learning in the U.S. was played out not only on the political scene but also in historical fiction, where the themes of learning and education become vehicles for exploring national identity. In these texts, whose aim is often to establish an impressive national history, scholarly learning carries negative connotations as it is linked to the former colonizer Britain and also symbolizes social stratification. However, it also stands for civilization and progress, qualities felt to be necessary for the nation to come into its own. The conflicting views and anxieties surrounding the issues of learning and education tend to center on a recurrent character in these texts, the learned person.

After providing an overview of how the themes of learning and education are treated in historical narratives from the 1820s, this dissertation focuses on works of three writers: Hobomok (1824) and The Rebels (1825) by Lydia Maria Child, The Prairie (1827) by James Fenimore Cooper, and Hope Leslie (1827) by Catharine Maria Sedgwick.

Key words: United States, education, learning, historical fiction, antebellum literature, national identity, anti-intellectualism, Lydia Maria Child, James Fenimore Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick

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To mamma and pappa
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Introduction

The peculiarly intellectual character of the present age, the high mental excitement which pervades all classes of society, and of which the child partakes in its very infancy, render it more important now, than has ever been before, for men, and particularly for the inhabitants of the United States, to possess correct views upon this subject. In this country, where the Government and Institutions are of the most liberal character, where the highest honors and distinctions are put into one common market, and made the rewards of personal merit, men are constantly stimulated to mental industry. The accidental circumstances of fortune, parentage, or the favor of the great, have here but little control; the power to gain high and desirable stations is to be derived from knowledge; and nobility and dignity of character belong only to those who possess enlarged and cultivated minds.

–Amariah Brigham, Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health, 1832 (37-38)

It is time to leave off books and moanings and to be doing.

–James Fenimore Cooper, The Prairie (247)

One of the more memorable scenes from Michael Moore’s film Fahrenheit 9/11 is the clip where President George W. Bush sits in a classroom holding a children’s book as he has just been informed that two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City. What most people probably do not notice is the sign on the wall behind the President. It says: “Reading makes a country great!” To a person who has been raised in Sweden this is an odd message. Is the primary goal of learning to read to serve one’s country? In what way will the act of reading make a country better? While the message seems strange to someone from Sweden, it has deep roots in American nationalism. As the United States took shape after the Revolution, education was believed to be the means by which a democratic republic could be realized and, as the sign behind Bush indicates, education, or at least reading, is still considered important for the well-being of the nation.
This study investigates the role of learning and education in historical fiction written in the 1820s. As I will show, learning and education are common themes in these novels, and these issues are often used as instruments for creating and exploring national identity. The United States has been, and still is, popularly considered hostile to intellectual, or scholarly learning, a notion upheld not only by foreigners, but also by Americans themselves. However, as this study will show, in historical novels of the 1820s, which are narratives that frequently seek to establish a glorious and coherent past for the new republic, this negative view of learning and education is complicated and sometimes even refuted as these elements are considered necessary ingredients to gain the status of nationhood. For example, having studied the plays of Shakespeare, Mary Blaxton, the heroine of Ezekiel Sanford’s historical novel The Humours of Eutopia: A Tale of Colonial Times (1828), has gained insight into human nature, as well as established “a fund of colloquial English” (1:48). Using these assets, Mary exposes the conceited ignorance of the British spy Ebenezer Van Vacuum, who has disguised himself as a schoolmaster in order to collect incriminating facts about the colonials. In this case, then, Mary’s knowledge of British literature becomes essential in protecting national security. Whereas Andrew Jackson, the war hero and eventual president who has given his name to the era stretching from the 1820s and into the next decade, the Jacksonian era, pronounced scholarly pursuits as foreign to American ideals (Ward 67), the historical novels of this time convey a different picture. In these texts, “bookish l’arning,” as the Jacksonian hero Natty Bumppo in Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels calls it, rather than being a tool of the enemy, is often necessary for the survival and future glory of the nation.

The aim of this study is, then, to explore attitudes to learning and education as they are discussed in historical novels written in the 1820s. On the one hand, book studies, as we will see, are considered necessary for the prosperity of the nation, while, on the other, they are a symbol for ideas considered foreign to the republican ideals of democracy and social equality. Carolyn Karcher maintains in The First Woman in the Republic that historical novels at this time were “[d]esigned specifically to forge a nationalist consciousness and cultural identity in the newly independent United States” (18). Being a site for establishing national identity, these novels also expose tensions and paradoxes involved in its formation.

As I will show, the learned person is a recurring figure in these texts. Anxieties surrounding the issues of learning and education tend to focus on the learned person who becomes a catalyst for bringing the inconsistencies characterizing these issues and their place in the new republic to the surface.

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1 See Richard Hofstadter’s Anti-Intellectualism in American Life for a discussion of this issue from the Revolution up until the 1950s.
2 See chapter two for a more thorough discussion of this figure.
It is no coincidence that when Van Vacuum in The Humours of Eutopia goes undercover he chooses to disguise himself as a schoolmaster, since this role allows him to “worm . . . himself into the recesses of society” (1:83), while still remaining a “transient visiter . . . a kind of foreigner” (1:135). The learned person tends to be a marginal figure, both in the sense that he is not a major character in the narrative and that he deviates from social norms. Being situated on the margin, the learned person confirms, but also challenges, these norms, whether they are in terms of gender, class, nationality, or race.

If, on the one hand, learning and education can be circumscribing as they lead to marginalization, on the other, they can become tools for challenging and transgressing boundaries. For example, in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s historical novel Hope Leslie the education of the eponymous heroine allows her to “soar . . . above the limits by which each man fences in his own narrow domain” (123), which is something that the narrow-minded Puritans in the novel are unable to do. Using concepts commonly employed within postcolonial studies, such as boundary, site, and displacement, I want to highlight the process through which nation and national identity are created in these narratives and the roles that learning and education play in bringing this about. In its aim to establish a national identity, which is done by engaging with British national identity, both by opposing and imitating it, the nineteenth-century historical novel becomes a vehicle for exploring concerns of a postcolonial nature, such as the proper relationship to the former colonizer, the question of how to become recognized as a real nation, and the creation of an independent national character.

I will closely examine four historical novels written in the 1820s: Lydia Maria Child’s Hobomok (1824) and The Rebels (1825), James Fenimore Cooper’s The Prairie (1827), and Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie (1827). In addition to these close readings I will provide complementary illustrations from a broader material published in the same decade, including Cooper’s The Spy (1821), Sarah Ann Evans’s Resignation (1825), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Fanshawe (1828), Sanford’s The Humours of Eutopia (1828), John Neal’s Rachel Dyer (1828) and the anonymous short story “New Oxford” (1828). By combining close readings of a few texts with an overview of a wider material, I want to uncover ways in which the themes of learning and education are employed to explore and imagine national identity. My aim is not to offer an exhaustive description of this issue. Instead, I want to point out some recurring characteristics as well as map the multi-faceted and contradictory nature of this discussion. In historical fiction of the 1820s many voices and opinions on learning and education mingle, and together they impart an image of the debate as more ambivalent and

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3 Since most learned persons in these novels are men, I employ the male pronoun whenever I am discussing this character in general terms.
fraught with tension than has hitherto been seen. The four novels that are the focus of my discussion are set during the Puritan settlement (Hobomok, Hope Leslie), the Revolution (The Rebels), and in the early nineteenth century (The Prairie). By studying these particular texts in detail, I want to examine different ways in which the debate about learning and education was expressed at this time. Depicting different historical epochs, these texts still share a common interest in their discussion of learning and education, but, as we will see, they also illuminate different aspects of the contemporary debate on these issues. The focus in Child’s two novels lies on the difficult relationship between learning, education, and class, but they offer different solutions to this problem. Class is relevant in Cooper’s The Prairie as well, but here the anxieties surrounding the issue of scholarly learning center not so much on the issue of social standing and pedigree as on the figure of the naturalist Battius, who, despite his silliness, turns out to be integral to western settlement. The clownish Battius has a twin in the equally ridiculous Master Cradock in Hope Leslie, the novel that will be discussed in chapter five. I will focus on the education of the heroine in the novel, Hope Leslie, whose all but perfect upbringing ensures her development into a self-sufficient and independent republican.

Rather than tracing the ways discussions of learning and education changed over time, I will focus on their expression in a limited time period, the 1820s. There are several reasons for my choice of this period. As Philip Gould points out, historians label the 1820s a “watershed decade” (“New England Witch-Hunting” 62) and the fact that it constituted a break with old traditions was felt by its contemporaries. Michael Kammen suggests in A Season of Youth that “[t]he decade of the 1820s appears as a fairly sharp point of demarcation in the shaping of national tradition.” He mentions the fact that the Fourth of July celebration had by then become “a formulaic and distinctive American occasion,” the development of local variations of the anthem sung on July 4, and the first translation of an account of the Revolution by a foreigner, Carlo Giuseppe Botta’s History of the War of the Independence in 1821, as events that helped shape American national consciousness. Other contributing factors include the many autobiographical reminiscences by veterans of the Revolution that were published, as well as the state and local historical societies that were created at this time (26). Also, in the 1820s James Fenimore Cooper wrote what would be considered the first historical novel depicting the Revolution, The Spy (Kammen 24).4

4 With this novel Cooper initiated what would become a major trend in American literary history. As Baym points out, the Revolution is by far the most popular theme in nineteenth-century historical fiction by women (American Women Writers 160) and it is a popular theme in male-authored narratives, as well. Michael Kammen maintains that “[h]istorical novels have undoubtedly been the single most important source of information about, and awareness of, the American Revolution” (145).
Another reason for my focus on the 1820s is that, even if learning and education were topics for discussion before this time, these issues gained new urgency as Andrew Jackson and his supporters entered the political arena. Richard Hofstadter explains in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* that while scholarly learning and intellectualism had been criticized as early as the Revolution, it was in the 1820s that this critique led to a new kind of political leadership where the President, rather than accentuating his extensive education, flaunted his ignorance of scholarly learning (158-59). In the 1820s the United States underwent a political shift, as the older generation, who had adhered to the legacy and values of the Founding Fathers, left the scene for a younger set of politicians with ideals and priorities that in many ways differed from those of their predecessors. The power struggle preceding this shift focused to a large extent on the issues of learning and education. In the presidential election of 1828, which was won by Andrew Jackson, the sitting president, John Quincy Adams, was accused, because of his academic studies, of being an incompetent leader as well as having acquired British and aristocratic manners. Jackson, on the other hand, was rumored to lack formal schooling, something that the Jacksonians turned to their advantage as they promoted it as a sign of Jackson being uncorrupt and rational (Ward 52). The fact that the discussion of learning and education was concerned with the question of national character is obvious in the Adams-Jackson mud-sling, as Jackson accuses Adams of being like a foreigner while Adams worries about British reactions should Jackson be elected. The 1820s was, then, a decade when different views of learning contended, and it was felt that the outcome of this struggle would have implications for the kind of country the U.S. would become in the future.

While the historical novel is not unique in addressing the issues of learning and education—they are found in novels dealing with contemporary times as well—the fact that writers of historical fiction aimed to create national history brings the troubled role of learning and education in the new nation to the fore and highlights the close link between learning, education and national identity. Since this genre addressed a middle-class audience, a

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5 According to Cathy Davidson, “[v]irtually every American novel written before 1820 . . . at some point includes either a discourse on the necessity of improved education (often with special attention to the need for better female education) or a description of then-current education (typically satirical . . . ), or, at the very least, a comment on the educational levels and reading habits of the hero and even more so the heroine” (66). As we will see, education remains a hot topic in novels written after 1820, as well.

6 On a campaign pamphlet the supporters of Adams asked “What will the English malignants . . . the Edinburgh and Quarterly reviewers,—who have hitherto defamed even the best writings of our countrymen, say of a people who want a man to govern them who cannot spell *more than one word in four*?” (qtd in Ward 64).

7 See for example Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Redwood* (1824) and *What is Gentility?* (1828) by Margaret Bayard Smith. I will sometimes use examples from non-historical novels to illustrate my discussion.
social class that, as Richard Bushman shows, was torn between its allegiance to republican ideals and its aspirations for gentility (xvi), the themes of learning and education become fraught with tension as they symbolize the middle-class’s wish both for social equality and for aristocratic refinement. Aiming to find a compromise, the historical novel tends to condemn all expressions of extremism and promote a moderate education where the hero or heroine is not a specialist, but possesses versatile learning that allows him or her to move in genteel society without being overly refined or intellectual.

Aside from the fact that questions regarding national identity are integral to the genre, another reason for my choice of historical fiction is the fact that history was a popular subject in the 1820s. According to Philip Gould, over 85 percent of all bestsellers of the time were books on history and numerous historical societies were established at this time (Covenant and Republic 9). Aside from the publication of historical novels and texts about the nation’s past, this decade also saw the republication of the writings of famous Puritans, such as Cotton Mather’s Magnalia Christi Americana and John Winthrop’s History of New England (Gould, Covenant and Republic 17). In the 1820s, history became required reading in school in several states and, as Gould points out, the study of history was felt to have the “capacity to inculcate virtue in republican citizens” (Covenant and Republic 10). While history was considered an important subject for both women and men, it was especially recommended for women. As Nina Baym maintains in American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860, proponents of women’s education saw history as an alternative to novels since, due to its narrative form, it conveyed factual information in an appealing way. Unlike the romantic and misleading plots of novels, history, it was felt, provided sheltered and inexperienced women with true depictions of life (15).8

Having thus set up the frames for what this dissertation will deal with, I want to mention some issues that largely fall outside the scope of my investigation. Since the focus of this study is the creation of national—that is, hegemonic—identity, the emphasis will rest on the white characters in the historical narratives. Even if other groups of people living in America at this time figure in the texts, they usually represent an opposite against which national identity is formed.9 As a result, my discussion will be limited

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8 Elaborating on the importance of history in women’s education, Baym writes that “for more than half a century, and from different ideological perspectives, educational reformers labored to unite charm with intellect in the ideal of an educated woman. As she contributed to the well-being of her social circle, her sex, and her country, this ideal woman also enjoyed the personal sense of achievement and the gratifying approbation of her associates. And to all this, history was the passkey, for history was what she knew” (28).

9 The Indian is an almost ubiquitous figure in these novels. As regards the black slave the situation is different. Although there are occasional slaves, especially in novels set in the South, the character is not a common one. One possible reason for their absence is that these novels tend to be nationalistic and slavery was a precarious issue at the time since it was felt (primarily in the northern states) that it was ill fitted to the ideals of the republic. Even if
mainly to their function as Others in the texts. Another issue that will receive little attention here is geographical setting. As the reader will notice, this project has a New England slant in the sense that the majority of the texts discussed both are set and were written there. Out of the four novels on which my close readings will be based, three are set in New England and all three authors called the East Coast their home. The most obvious reason for this focus is the fact that the vast bulk of historical novels at this time came out of New England and New York. There are exceptions, of course, such as Sarah Evans’s Resignation and Eliza Lanesford Cushing’s Yorktown, both of which are set in the South.\textsuperscript{10} There is little difference as regards subject matter between Northern and Southern writers, and the Revolution and the Indians remain popular in both locations. One difference is, not surprisingly, that in historical fiction in the South black characters are more common and slavery is not criticized, as it tends to be in novels by Northern writers.

Learning and Education

Learning and education are two key words in this project, and even if their meanings overlap to some extent—a learned woman and an educated woman usually mean the same thing—their definitions, as they are employed in the primary texts and as they are used in this study, carry different meanings. According to Noah Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language from 1828 the word “learning” refers to “[t]he knowledge of principles or facts received by instruction or study; acquired knowledge or ideas in any branch of science or literature; erudition; literature; science.” Webster also lists two additional definitions: “[k]nowledge acquired by experience, experiment or observation” and “[s]kill in anything good or bad.” The emphasis, however, remains on the first entry, where the word refers to knowledge acquired through instruction or study, rather than through personal experience. This is also the sense in which the word tends to be used in the historical narratives that will be discussed in this study, and it is the definition I will adhere to unless I have indicated otherwise. However, even if the definition of the word “learning” seems straightforward enough, it can be problematic since, as will be seen in the discussion of the literary texts further on, the word carries different connotations. As has been mentioned, “learning” for the middle-class reader did not always simply

\textsuperscript{10} William Gilmore Simms who was active in the 1830s and onwards is today the most well-known nineteenth-century Southern writer of historical fiction and has been referred to as the Southern Cooper. His novels include The Yemassee (1835), The Partisan (1835), and Woodcraft (1852).
mean “knowledge . . . received by instruction or study;” it carried implications of class and pedigree.

Compared to “learning,” the word “education” is easier to define, even if its nineteenth-century definition is somewhat different from the way in which we understand the word today. Webster defines “education” as “[t]he bringing up, as of a child; instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations.” Rather than being limited to the tuition provided in a school setting, then, “education” encompasses all the different aspects involved in the raising of children and molding them into useful members of society.

Even if “education” and “learning” are not synonyms, they are closely related, since education is the means and the process by which learning is obtained. “Learning” corresponds to “higher education.” Whereas higher education today typically denotes academic studies at college or university level, this designation works less well in an early nineteenth-century context, since, although women were sometimes described as “learned,” they were barred from the universities. Instead, in accordance with the general usage in the primary texts, I employ the term “learned” and the corresponding “higher education” to describe any (more or less) formal education based on book studies beyond the three R’s—Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. Even if not all of the characters who are described as “learned” in these narratives possess the same type of education, some degree of education beyond the most basic skills is generally needed for this designation to be employed.

The Historical Novel

In the introduction to Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront America’s Past and Each Other, Mark C. Carnes describes the historical novel as “inescapably a contradiction in terms: a nonfictional fiction; a factual fantasy; a truthful deception” (14). In many ways the historical novel of the 1820s is a compromise between different genres. Reading novels was considered frivolous, dangerous, and a waste of time, and, as Cathy Davidson points out, “until well into the nineteenth century, virtually every American novel somewhere in its preface or its plot defended itself against the charge that it was a novel” (Revolution and the Word 40).

Novels, then, seemingly posed a threat to the very qualities that the American republic was felt to rest on, such as frugality, equality, and common sense. Polemicizing against novel reading, Thomas Jefferson

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11 Ironically, a number of novels, defining themselves as “true tales” rather than novels, warn of the dangers of novel reading. See, for example, William Hill Brown’s The Power of Sympathy (1789) and Tabitha Tenney’s Female Quixotism (1801).
warned that “[r]eason and fact, plain and unadorned, are rejected. Nothing can engage attention unless dressed in all the figments of fancy . . . The result is a bloated imagination, sickly judgment, and disgust towards all the real business of life” (qtd in Bell, The Problem of American Realism 34). If the seduction novel twenty years earlier claimed to be “a tale of truth,” the historical novel, although often disclaiming any connection to truth, played on the same expectations. By incorporating real historical figures and depicting events that had actually taken place, the historical novel escaped some of the critique leveled at novels. In his seminal study The Historical Novel, Georg Lukács emphasizes the realist aspect of the historical tale. Lukács sees the novels by Walter Scott as the first real historical novels because they depict characters shaped by “the historical peculiarity of their age,” whereas previous “so-called historical novels” “are historical only as regards their purely external choice of theme and costume” (19). Other scholars of historical fiction have concurred with Lukács in emphasizing historical specificity. In The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf, Avram Fleishman circumscribes the definition further as he argues that in order for a novel to be historical it is “necessary to include at least one ['real' personage]” (3). George Dekker offers perhaps the widest definition of the genre as he maintains that all novels from Moll Flanders and onwards are “implicitly or potentially historical” since “[t]he world of all our vulgar communities is likewise the world of historical relation in which characters are so engaged, embroiled, and encumbered that they think, feel, and act differently than they would in some other conjunction of time and space.” This tendency, Dekker claims, becomes explicit in Scott’s Waverley and onwards as novels “acknowledge and demonstrate the shaping power of the forces of historical causality over character, attitude, event” (24).

In this study I will employ a definition of historical fiction that falls somewhere in between those offered by Fleishman and Dekker. Firstly, in what may be a more conservative version of Dekker’s definition, in order to be a historical narrative the text should be set in a time that is clearly distinguished from the present era in which the tale is written. Secondly, I take into consideration whether or not the narrative was seen as historical fiction by its writer and contemporary audience. In the cases of Child’s Hobomok and The Rebels and Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie, few would object to their being defined as historical novels. As regards The Prairie the situation may be different. Unlike the novels by Child and Sedgwick, which are played out in historical eras that were considered landmark events in the

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12 In the preface to Hope Leslie (1827), Catharine Maria Sedgwick warns that the novel is “not offered to the public as being in any degree an historical narrative, or a relation to real events.” Nevertheless, she goes on to say that “[r]eal characters and real events are, however, alluded to” (5).
history of the nation, Cooper’s novel is set closer in time as it depicts events taking place a mere twenty-three years before its publication. However, *The Prairie* is part of the Leatherstocking Tales, a series that was seen as historical fiction by Cooper’s contemporaries, who compared his works to the historical novels of Walter Scott.\(^{13}\) Also, as the events of the novel take place in 1804, the historical setting is clearly distinguished from the time in which it was written.\(^ {14}\)

**Previous Research**

In many ways Richard Hofstadter’s *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, which is one of the best known studies of the intellectual climate in the U.S., has served as a point of departure for my project. Hofstadter, whose book covers the years from the Revolution up to the 1950s, maintains that the roots of American anti-intellectualism can be found in evangelical sentiments and egalitarian ideals, and that it has become integral not only to politics, but also to education (23). Perry Miller’s study *The Life of the Mind of America from the Revolution to the Civil War*, which investigates three phenomena in American culture, the revivalist movement, the legal profession, and the field of science, draws conclusions similar to those of Hofstadter. In the last, unfinished section of his book, which deals with the development of science, Miller finds that after having been characterized by contemplation and cosmopolitanism in the Revolutionary era, science became increasingly marked by utilitarian, but also nationalistic, interests. These utilitarian and nationalistic interest are also found in the historical narratives discussed in this study.

Even if intellectuals have been viewed with suspicion, education has been a subject of great concern in America, which is reflected in the scholarly interest in this subject. There are numerous studies describing the history of education in America, and the essays and lectures of early educators, such as Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster, have been reprinted. In his 1960 essay *Education in the Forming of American Society*, Bernard Bailyn criticizes what he argues is the main trend in studies of the history of education from the late 1800s onwards, where education is discussed as being separate from society (8-9). Perhaps as a response to Bailyn’s essay, studies of the last few decades often examine education in relation to society and nation. Lawrence Cremin’s comprehensive two-volume study *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* and *American Education: The National

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\(^{13}\) The fact that Scott and Cooper were frequently compared to each other is reflected in the collection of contemporary reviews of Cooper’s works edited by George Dekker and John P. McWilliams, *Fenimore Cooper: The Critical Heritage*.

\(^{14}\) The sense of times past is strengthened by the fact that the travellers’ trek West in *The Prairie* is also a symbolic journey back in time. For a further discussion of this theme in the novel see Edwin Fussell, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West* (46-47).
Experience, 1783-1876 is a good example of the present direction in the history of education.15

While scholars in the 1950s and 1960s were primarily concerned with the education and intellectual character of men, the focus in the last two decades has shifted to include women. In Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America, Linda Kerber maintains that women—mothers—were given a political role in the young nation as guardians and inculcators of republican ideals. Despite its anti-intellectual strain, the so-called ideology of Republican Motherhood spurred the development of female education as it was important that young women were taught how to become good role models and teachers for their children.16 Awareness of the political significance of women is also reflected in the scholarly interest directed at genres previously dismissed or ignored, such as advice books and sentimental fiction, which often address female readers. Scholars like Sarah Robbins, Richard Bushman, and Shirley Samuels have examined the ways in which these genres, traditionally seen as dealing solely with love, romance, and domestic matters of little relevance outside the four walls of the home, also engage with national and political concerns.17 One of the more recent developments in this movement towards an integration of issues previously seen as belonging either in the feminine domestic sphere or the masculine public sphere is the challenging of the validity of the doctrine of separate

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16 Following Kerber, scholars have extended and modified her findings. In “The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic,” Jan Lewis suggests that the republican wife is the promoter of republican values, and Judith Fetterley sees Hope Leslie, the heroine in Sedgwick’s eponymous novel, as a republican sister (“‘My Sister! My Sister!’: The Rhetoric of Catharine Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie”).
17 In Managing Literacy, Mothering America: Women’s Narratives on Reading and Writing in the Nineteenth Century, Robbins studies the domestic literacy narrative, a genre concerned with promoting Republican Motherhood. Richard Bushman argues in The Refinement of America that the sentimental novel is an arena where paradoxes and tensions within middle-class ideology are played out. In Romances of the Republic: Women, Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation, Shirley Samuels looks at how women and family represent the nation in sentimental novels.

Much of the focus regarding women and learning concentrates on women as teachers. Mary Kelley shows, however, that women were able to establish arenas for intellectual pursuits outside the role of the maternal teacher. In several articles Kelley has written about the ways in which nineteenth-century women constituted themselves as intellectuals through reading and also discussing books in letters, with friends, and in reading circles. See for example “Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of the Learned Women in Antebellum America” and “A More Glorious Revolution”: Women’s Antebellum Reading Circles and the Pursuit of Public Influence.” See also Nina Baym’s American Women of Letters and the Nineteenth-Century Sciences, where she examines women’s writings about science and how they viewed the role of women in relation to science.
spheres, a construct that has been integral to the understanding of nineteenth-century gender politics from the 1950s onwards.18

Cathy N. Davidson also points to the political significance of novels and reading. In her book *Revolution and the Word*, Davidson deals with the period immediately preceding the era which is the focus of the present study, the years between the Revolution and 1820. Davidson maintains that novels during this time became educational tools advancing values that were sometimes different from those promoted by schools and the establishment. She claims that “[f]or all the censure of fiction, the novel served as a major locus of republican education” (70), especially for unprivileged readers, such as women and the poor. While this dissertation is mainly concerned with the role of learning and education in historical novels, Davidson is interested in how novels became instruments of education. Another study that borders on my investigation is Philip Gould’s dissertation *Covenant and Republic*. Focusing on historical fiction, Philip Gould argues along the same lines as Davidson as he suggests that “historical fiction theoretically instructed readers in republican behavior” (10). Discussing historical novels such as Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*, Child’s *Hobomok*, Cooper’s *The Wept of Wish-ton Wish*, and John Neal’s *Rachel Dyer* in conjunction with contemporary historiographical works, Gould maintains that the evasive nature of the concept of virtue allowed alternative ways of imagining republican citizenship. Here, too, the focus lies on the way in which novels functioned as educational tools in shaping loyal citizens, rather than on the attitudes to education in these texts. Like Gould, Nina Baym deals not only with historical fiction, but also with other texts on history, in her case textbooks. In her study *American Women Writers and the Work of History*, Baym offers quite a comprehensive overview of women writers of history and studies both well-known writers and those who have succumbed to the test of time. As it focuses on the evangelical strain that more or less explicitly pervades many of the female-authored historical texts in the nineteenth-century, *American Women Writers* deals with a theme that is not given much space in my own investigation. Baym argues that an important aim of these texts was to promulgate the role of the United States as the most advanced nation in a world that would, following the U.S., become “progressively more Protestant and republican.” As a result, “[t]his nationalist narrative had internationalist implications” (7).

As regards previous research about my primary material the situation differs widely for the texts included in this study. Whereas some texts, like Sanford’s *The Humours of Eutopia* and Evans’s *Resignation*, have received

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18 See the collection *No More Separate Spheres!*, edited by Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, for a further discussion of this trend. I will return to this issue in chapter one.
the case is different for the three authors whose works form the basis of my dissertation, Child, Cooper, and Sedgwick. Cooper has held a secure place in the literary canon from the nineteenth century onwards and has been the object of many scholarly studies. Child and Sedgwick have received a rather different treatment through the years compared to Cooper. After having been well-known and respected authors in their own time, their place in the literary canon has declined, a fate they shared with many women writers of the time. Both Child’s *Hobomok* and Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* were published as part of the Women Writers Series by Rutgers University Press in 1986 (*Hobomok*) and 1987 (*Hope Leslie*), after which they received more scholarly attention. As all three writers were active during an era greatly concerned with the need for (and presumed lack of) a national literature and they all contributed to a genre felt to be especially suited for the creation of such texts—the historical novel—it is not surprising that much of the scholarly interest has focused on issues related to this topic. While the present study joins previous studies in its interest in national identity in works by these three writers, it also adds a new perspective through its focus on the role of, and attitudes to, learning and education in their works.

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) supposedly wrote his first novel *Precaution* (1820) on a dare. Whether or not this is true, this first novel was followed by a steady stream of novels written throughout his life. Aside from his most famous novels, the Leatherstocking series, which consists of five novels depicting the frontiersman Natty Bumppo, Cooper also wrote Revolutionary novels, sea adventures, and travel narratives. His works were read and celebrated not only in the U.S. but also in Europe, where they were reviewed by writers such as Balzac, George Sand, and Joseph Conrad (Dekker, McWilliams ix-x). Despite accusations of being tediously longwinded, Cooper’s novels have attracted not only scholarly, but also public attention ever since they were first published. The Leatherstocking novels have received the vast bulk of attention and the scholarly interest in these narratives tends to focus on certain themes. From the mid-twentieth

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19 Several of the female-authored historical narratives I will discuss are included in Baym’s study *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860*.

20 According to Susan K. Harris, American women writers were part of the literary history before World War II but lost their canonical standing in the 1950s (43). Barbara Buchenau suggests in “Comparativist Interpretations of the Frontier” that Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* and Cooper’s *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* were excluded from the literary canon because they did not fit in the “myth-and-symbol school” promoted by, for example, Henry Nash Smith and Richard Slotkin in the 1950s and 60s (2). In the introduction to *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*, Joyce W. Warren writes in the same vein that “[m]uch of the literature that has been excluded from the canon—almost from the American consciousness—is the literature that, either implicitly or explicitly rejects . . . [the] construction of American life . . . [as] the assumption that the white male individual occupies center stage and that all ‘other’ members of the cast are only supporting players—if they are even allowed on the stage” (3).
century onwards many studies have been devoted to the role of the frontier, the frontiersman, and civilization versus savagery in these texts. These themes are addressed by for example R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam* (1955), Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), Edwin Fussell, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West* (1965) and Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973). Whereas these studies tend to discuss Cooper’s texts in conjunction with those of other male canonical writers, primarily Hawthorne and Melville, the focus today has shifted somewhat to include non-canonical works, such as those by Child and Sedgwick.

Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) made her debut as an author at the age of twenty-four, when *Hobomok* was published. Throughout her life she wrote profusely and was a well-known figure in the public debate. Besides novels, Child wrote short stories, poems, articles, and books on domestic advice. She also served as editor for *The Juvenile Miscellany*, a popular children’s magazine. Child was involved in several radical movements of the time. She protested against Jackson’s removal of Indians in the 1820s, advocated women’s rights (later women’s rights icons Sarah Grimké and Elizabeth Cady Stanton named her as a foremother [Karcher, *The First Woman* 3]), and worked to abolish slavery.21 When it comes to critical attention, *Hobomok* stands out among Child’s work. Ever since it was published in its new edition in the 1980s, there has been a steady stream of articles about the novel. Many of these articles deal with questions concerning women’s history and canon formation, and the novel has been important in attempts made in recent years to create a more diversified picture of nineteenth-century literature to counter the traditional, male-centered, canon.22 The character of the Indian and attitudes toward Indians in the novel have also generated interest.23 Another much-discussed topic is the subversive potential of *Hobomok*.24 Whereas *Hobomok* has attracted critical attention in recent years, *The Rebels* has remained largely unknown.25 One obvious

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21 For a detailed description of Child’s life and work, see Carolyn L. Karcher’s extensive study *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child.*

22 For a discussion of canon formation and early American women writers, see for example Buchenu and Warren.

23 See for example Harry Brown, “‘The Horrid Alternative’: Miscegenation and Madness in the Frontier Romance,” Mark G. Vasquez, “‘Your sister cannot speak to you and understand you as I do’: Native American Culture and Female Subjectivity in Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick.”

24 Karcher suggests in *The First Woman in the Republic* that the novel, by presenting an alternative history compared to the well-known Puritan sources, offers a revision of the “patriarchal script” (24). In her article “Lydia Maria Child, James Fenimore Cooper, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick: A Dialogue on Race, Culture, and Gender,” Susanne Opfermann, although agreeing that the text criticizes patriarchy, points to the fact that the narrative also expresses a wish for reconciliation with the fathers (33).

25 Karcher’s chapter about *The Rebels* in *The First Woman in the Republic* is to my knowledge the only extended discussion of the novel made so far. Karcher offers a different
reason is the fact that, unlike *Hobomok*, *The Rebels* has not been reprinted and is hard to get hold of. Another important reason for its present anonymity, I believe, is the fact that it is decidedly less radical than *Hobomok*. If Child’s first novel deals with the transgression of boundaries of gender and culture, her second novel establishes them.

Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789-1867) made her literary debut with *A New England Tale* in 1822 and she wrote six novels and over one hundred short stories. In her fiction Sedgwick deals with a range of issues, both political and social. While not as radical as Child, who was disappointed with her for not taking a firmer stand against slavery (Karcher, *The First Woman* 192), Sedgwick’s was a strong voice in the public debate. Coming from a renowned Federalist family—her father Theodore Sedgwick was not only a member of the Massachusetts state legislature but also served as Speaker in the House of Representatives and as a senator—Catharine Maria Sedgwick managed to become known and respected not only for her family connections, but for her own writing. Today Sedgwick is known primarily for *Hope Leslie*, even though two additional novels, *A New England Tale* and *The Linwoods*, have been published in new editions in the last decade. As with *Hobomok*, much of the scholarly interest in *Hope Leslie* has been concerned with canon formation and the Indian characters in the novel.

When she published her third novel, *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick was an established author who was compared to, but also confused with, James Fenimore Cooper. In fact, Sedgwick’s second novel *Redwood* was attributed to Cooper, an error that, as Patricia Larson Kalayjian points out, was speedily rectified in the U.S. but persisted in foreign editions of the work (9-10). Also, Cooper’s Puritan novel *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829) led to accusations of his having plagiarized *Hope Leslie* (Buchenau 5). The view of Sedgwick and Cooper as rivals continues in scholarship today, where Child, too, has been added as a contender of Cooper’s. Considering that he has been the dominant figure of the three in the twentieth-century version of nineteenth-century literary history, the fact that Cooper is often pitted against Sedgwick and Child comes as no surprise. The comparisons of the three authors commonly center on their depictions of the frontier and on Indian-take on the novel compared to my analysis. She suggests that the novel explores “whether the new order ushered in by the Revolution would be any better for women—whether it would confer liberty on them, as well as on their menfolk” (41).

26 See Sedgwick’s journal and autobiography, which are published jointly in *The Power of Her Sympathy*, edited by Mary Kelley, for more information about her life.


28 For example, the copy of Sedgwick’s *Redwood* in the library at Uppsala University, names Cooper as the author.
white relations. For example, in her article “How Men and Women Wrote Indian Stories,” Nina Baym suggests that Cooper’s “The Last of the Mohicans” may be seen as an attempt to disparage Child’s novel [Hobomok] as a juvenile and potentially harmful fantasy” (72). Baym maintains that while Cooper’s novel could be seen as a repudiation of Hobomok, Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie, which was published the year after The Last of the Mohicans, in 1827, was a retort to Cooper’s novel (68). As Baym shows, Cooper felt that women writers were ignorant about Indians and had better spend their money buying books than writing them (Baym 81). Carolyn Karcher suggests a similar scenario, but she also extends Baym’s argument as she adds Cooper’s novel The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, which she suggests is a retort to Hope Leslie (The First Woman 35-36). Carol J. Singley argues that unlike Cooper’s “American hero [who] can thrive only outside the constraints of civilization . . . Sedgwick addresses questions of both culture and nature, criticizing the ‘Law’ of the Founding Fathers” (42). Although I agree that Child’s and Sedgwick’s depictions of the frontier often differ from that of Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels, I am hesitant to interpret their dissimilarities as critiques of each others’ work. Rather, I agree with Susanne Opfermann who modifies the proposition made by, for example, Baym, by suggesting that Child, Cooper, and Sedgwick may have been stimulated by each others’ writings, but that they employed the theme of Indian-white relations for different reasons. She also argues that the three writers had a common goal, which was to create and define American national identity and, as she points out, “it was by excluding the savage Other that ‘American’ society historically defined itself” (31).

If the trend has been to see the three writers as contenders or rivals, recent research, I believe, points in a new direction. The move towards studying Cooper’s works in new contexts, such as together with women writers, has opened up for new perspectives on these well-known texts. For example, while scholars in the 1950s, 60s and 70s considered the recurring romantic plots in the Leatherstocking novels unimportant, despite their central position in the texts, today these elements are seen as quite as significant as the much-hailed male flight from civilization that Fiedler writes about. The shift in Cooper scholarship to include themes previously considered flawed or uninteresting has also opened for new ways to study Child, Sedgwick, and Cooper together. Whereas much of the research viewing the three authors as

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29 In his article “Romancing the Puritans: American Historical Fiction in the 1820s,” Stephen Arch criticizes feminist scholars who pit Hobomok and Hope Leslie against Cooper’s novels and considers their readings to be “overdetermined” and dependent on “antihistorical premises” (109). Arch mentions Sandra Zagarell and Carolyn Karcher as examples of such scholars.

30 Jane Tompkins is perhaps the best known example of a scholar who has shifted the focus to aspects of Cooper’s work that have been previously frowned upon or ignored. See chapter four, “No Apologies for the Iroquois: A New Way to Read the Leatherstocking Novels” in Sentimental Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860.
contenders has focused on the alternate ways in which Child and Sedgwick
deal with the traditional themes of Cooper—the Indians and the frontier—I
want to suggest that the new interest in how Cooper approaches, for
example, domesticity also opens for new ways to view the writers together.31
In my focus on issues related to learning and education I want to see the
three writers not as contenders or rivals but rather as contemporaries battling
with similar issues, who, in doing so, reach different, but sometimes similar,
solutions. As my readings of the three authors will show, they share the
concern for establishing national identity, and for all three this can only be
done by embracing “bookish l’arning.”

Outline
Chapter one, “Exploring Space, Making Place,” will provide the theoretical
framework on which this study rests. After presenting some theories
developed within new historicism, which influence my approach to historical
research, I will discuss ideas developed by Foucault, Bhabha, and by cultural
geography scholars which will guide my investigation. In chapter two,
“Learning and the Learned: Education, Gentility, and the Making of History
in the Republic,” I will describe and discuss the historical context of the
1820s and situate the issues of learning and education in this context. This
chapter will also give a broad overview of the role of learning and education
in historical fiction written at this time, identify different types of learned
characters that can be found in these narratives, and discuss what their
functions are in these texts. Having thus described the frames and context of
this dissertation, I will devote the following three chapters to close readings
of selected historical novels by Child, Cooper, and Sedgwick. Chapter three,
“Ambivalent Dispositions: The Making and Breaking of Boundaries in
Lydia Maria Child’s Historical Fiction,” is a close reading of Child’s
Hobomok and The Rebels. I will show how learning and education become
vehicles for discussing the character of the new republic and for establishing,
but also undermining, the cultural borders of the nation. Whereas the focus
of chapter three lies on national borders, that of the following chapter will be
on borders within the nation. There, in chapter four, “(B)ordering society, or,
The Failed Attempts of Nat and Dr. Bat to Create Order on the Prairie,” I
will explore the figure of the learned person as he is presented in Cooper’s
The Prairie. I will show how Natty Bumppo and his erudite opposite Dr. Bat
engage in a struggle over the authority to define and organize the nation. In
chapter five, “Rebels with Permission from their Fathers: The Education of
Saints and Insurgents in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie,” the focus
will be on the education of the heroine, Hope Leslie. Having been raised by

31 See for example Signe O. Wegener’s James Fenimore Cooper versus the Cult of
Domesticity.
three indulgent teachers, Hope Leslie has become independent and open-minded and, as a result, she is able to transgress cultural boundaries that confine her contemporaries, the narrow-minded Puritans. The conclusion will tie together the threads of the previous chapters by pointing to some common themes regarding learning and education that can be found in the novels dealt with in this study.

As the chapter outline reveals, this dissertation is a rather eclectic (or versatile) investigation as it deals with many different, albeit related themes, such as national identity, gender, class, and, to some extent, race. However, all these issues come together in the themes that form the focal point and thread of the study, the role of learning and education in historical novels of the 1820s.
CHAPTER ONE

Exploring Space, Making Place

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality.

–Renan, “What Is a Nation?” (1)

The “true” is always marked and informed by the ambivalence of the process of emergence itself, the productivity of meanings that construct counter-knowledges in medias res, in the very act of agonism, within the terms of a negotiation (rather than a negation) of oppositional and antagonistic elements.

–Bhabha, The Location of Culture (22)

In the 1820s, a monolithic history emerged in England as the official version of the nation’s past, and around 1830 a monolithic literary canon was established. The creation of a single history and canon was seen as a means to raise national consciousness (Butler 67). In other words, this decade saw a process of establishing boundaries in order to define what belonged, what was valuable, and what should be suppressed or discarded. A similar process took place in the former British colony in the west. Here, too, the 1820s was characterized by the desire to establish a glorious past for the nation, together with a coherent body of national literature, as is illustrated by the oft-expressed concern with the supposed lack of a national literature and the frequent promptings for the creation of such.¹ As has been mentioned, in the U.S. the historical novel played an important role in the creation of a national literature, as well as in formulating and challenging ideas about the new republic.

¹ One of the ways in which this concern is expressed is the frequent allusions to a British reviewer who disdainfully challenged the readability of American novels. For example, in the preface to Rachel Dyer John Neal writes that after hearing "the insolent question of a Scotch Reviewer, repeated on every side of me by native Americans—"Who reads an American Book?"” he decided to pick up a pen and contribute to the creation of a national literature (ix-x).
Traditional historiography, too, has its roots in the early nineteenth century, and many of the assumptions that came to characterize historical research well into the twentieth century, challenged only in recent decades, were developed at this time. These assumptions include the notions that historical process represents progress and should be interpreted within a teleological framework, that we can determine causes for different phenomena, and that it is possible to convey an objective and true picture of the past.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of recent developments in historiography, with a focus on some aspects of new historicism and on Michel Foucault’s ideas on history relevant to my later discussion of historical fiction. I will then move on to a discussion of ideas of space and place, concepts that became increasingly important in the early nineteenth century, as countries sought to establish themselves as separate, defined, as well as confined, nations. This discussion will focus primarily on ideas and theories brought forward by Foucault, Homi K. Bhabha, and cultural and feminist geographers. In the following chapters these theories will be employed in my discussion of historical fiction to illustrate the struggle that took place in the U.S. in the early nineteenth century to determine what belonged, and what was alien in a certain place, whether this place be geographical or socio-cultural. As we will see, ideas concerning learning, education, and the learned person were central to this struggle, as these issues often figured as markers denoting the limits, but also contents, of American national identity.

History, Historicism, and New Historicism

The first academic chairs in History were established in 1810 in Berlin and 1812 at the Sorbonne (Anderson 194). Thus, History emerged as an academic discipline in continental Europe around the same time as Walter Scott began publishing his immensely popular historical novels in England. As is revealed by the vast number of books about history that were published in the United States at this time, Americans shared this interest in history (Gould, Covenant and Republic 9).

Becoming an academic discipline, History had to conform to norms established in the natural sciences, where research was based on, for example, objectivity and the idea of a contingent relationship between cause and effect. However, the scientific methods of the natural sciences influenced the writing of history even before its admittance into the academy. In his article “Fiction as History or History as Fiction,” Michael Carignan maintains that objectivity, the “founding myth” of the historical

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2 According to John MacQueen, Waverley (1814) was the first major novel that was classified as historical (84).
profession in the U.S., became relevant to history writers during the Enlightenment (396). Before then, “questions of historical method were often questions of narrative style and presentation” (398). Early nineteenth-century history writers responded in two ways to the new problem of objectivity, as they either followed the German and Romantic idealists and treated history as a form of literature, or applied to it the same methods as those employed within the natural sciences. The latter was the most common approach toward the end of the Romantic period (398), and this was the method that dominated historical studies for much of the twentieth century.

In recent decades we have seen a reaction against the emphasis on objectivity, progress, and a universal approach to the historical process. Instead the focus has been moved to that which is local, unique, and diversified, which reflects ideas developed in poststructuralism. Within historical studies, the new historicists have been groundbreaking in developing new methods for historical research. Nevertheless, as Paul Hamilton points out in Historicism, it is often within postcolonial and feminist theories that the full implications of this new approach to history are brought out (5). My discussion in the latter part of this chapter will illustrate this, since postcolonial, but also to some extent feminist, theories provide the tools for the coming analysis of historical fiction. However, since many of the tenets of new historicism guide my reading of historical novels as well as my approach to historical research, I want to discuss these ideas before I move on to a discussion of my analytic tools.

In The New Historicism Reader, H. Aram Veeser argues that new historicism is difficult to define because it is characterized by diversity and lack of boundaries. New historicists take pride in, and emphasize the fact that they do not have a unifying theoretical framework (1). However, as Veeser goes on to point out, there are certain ideas that new historicists tend to share, despite their eclecticism (2). For example, as opposed to other, earlier, methods of historical research, new historicism takes into account the fact that our interpretations of the past are shaped by the present we live in. In Paul Hamilton’s words, “[o]n the one hand . . . historicism is suspicious of the stories the past tells about itself; on the other hand, it is equally suspicious of its own partisanship. It offers up both its past and its present for scrutiny” (3). Even if the present study will be limited to post-Revolutionary America, as I will not bring in either my personal history or contemporary issues, it is guided by the awareness that any historical inquiry

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3 See the introduction to Practicing New Historicism by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt for a discussion of the new historicist struggle with, and against, the establishment of a common platform for new historicism.

4 Sacvan Bercovitch’s article “Investigations of an Americanist” provides an example of how this type of critical investigation, where personal and public histories intermingle, can be done in practice.
is colored by the time in which it is made as well as the experiences and beliefs of the person performing the investigation.

New historicists, then, challenge the traditional dichotomy between researcher and object of research, as well as that between past and present. Another dichotomy that is undone in new historicism is that between text and context, or rather, between material and aesthetic approaches to a text. Far from the New Critical tenet that the literary text itself should be the sole object of investigation, new historicists juxtapose material from a variety of sources in their research. Juxtaposing fiction with historical events and personages, nineteenth-century historical novels invite an investigation along new historicist lines of treating a text as a part of its culture, since they occupy what Veeser refers to as “the shifting ground between history . . . and literature” (7). Also, since these novels tend to deal not only with historical events, but also (often primarily) with contemporary issues, they actively engage with social and cultural issues of their time.

The new historicist claim that all texts are historical and all history is textual challenges traditional disciplinary boundaries, many of which, as we have seen, were developed in the early nineteenth century, around the time when the novels discussed in this study were written. Since the historical novel aims to create, but also explore, national identity, the process of setting up—and tearing down—boundaries, whether they be cultural, national, or gender-based, is central to the discussion in these texts. By paying heed to the new historicist refusal to comply with traditional dichotomies and boundaries, such as that between public and private spheres, I hope to expose the ways in which these boundaries came about in the first place.

As the new historicists point out, the creation of boundaries and structures always involves power, and an important aspect of challenging dichotomies and boundaries is to expose the ways in which these structures have come into being. According to Hamilton, new historicism “recasts history as a battle over fictions, a battle of communication . . . The winners in historical conflicts are those whose version of events is accepted” (171). Here new historicism echoes Michel Foucault—a major influence—who argues that “we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (Power/Knowledge 93). What we perceive as knowledge, or truth, has become so by a struggle for power, and success in this struggle. When the monolithic history and literary canon mentioned in the introduction to this chapter became the only national history and canon, they did so at the expense of other histories and literatures.

To counter this power, Foucault encourages investigations into forgotten or ignored aspects of history, so-called “local knowledges” (Power/Knowledge 85). In Practicing New Historicism, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt express a similar sentiment when they point out that the idea of culture as text dramatically increases the number of objects available to be read and investigated. While major works of art remain
important, they are joined by other texts and images that were previously considered uninteresting and insignificant. The employment of this type of contextual method will not only provide insight into new areas of research, but the addition of new texts also allows a fresh approach to canonical works, since they are placed in a new context or setting (9-10). Even if the present study privileges literary texts, I will use examples from non-literary texts to illustrate my discussion of historical fiction. Also, by investigating works that have different positions in relation to the literary canon, such as Cooper’s Leatherstocking tales that have held a secure place in national literature, alongside texts that either have been expelled from the canon, like the works of Child and Sedgwick, or have never been part of it, such as the works of Ezekiel Sanford and Sarah Ann Evans, I hope to add new insights into our understanding of these individual works, as well as into the social and literary climate of the 1820s, thus complementing the master version of history.

One of the consequences of a diversified, as opposed to a monolithic, approach to historical research is that the traditional progressivist perspective, where events are explained within a teleological framework, becomes problematic, since the past becomes more multi-faceted. Whereas the teleological perspective allows the historian, through establishing a cause-and-effect pattern, to shape the past as a staircase where we constantly move up to higher steps, or stages, of development, the study of history as an archive of “local knowledges” means that there will be several possible causes and effects, and also that it will be more difficult to determine what is indeed a cause or an effect. Yet, even if this will open up for new interpretations of the past, severing the link between cause and effect also creates problems for the historian as it becomes difficult to draw any conclusions about the past. To solve this dilemma, new historicists emphasize “contingency,” a word which, as Veeser points out, has two, somewhat contradictory, meanings. Contingency refers to “that which may or may not happen,” which is chancy, aleatory, and uncertain. However, “contingency” also refers to a causal connection, that which happens because of something else. There is, then, a tension between two definitions of the same word, one of which points to an arbitrary relationship, the other to a conditional one (4). This same tension can be found in Foucault’s work. In an interview Foucault describes himself as “flabbergasted” at hearing himself described as “a philosopher who founds his theory of history on discontinuity” (Power/Knowledge 111). Quite the opposite of doing away with the connection between cause and effect, Foucault is very much concerned with finding the underlying sources of various phenomena. However, rather than assuming that the process from cause to effect is harmonious, regular, and bound by set rules, he suggests that history moves through skips and bounds, and that each transfer is unique and needs to be treated as such rather than confined to an overarching assumption of
development. “How is it [Foucault asks] that at certain moments and in
certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these
hastenings of evolution, these transformations which fail to correspond to the
calm, continuist image that is normally accredited?” (Power/Knowledge
112). History, then, cannot be treated as a straight timeline beginning down
in the dim past and stretching up to our own time. Rather, it changes through
irregular twitches and jumps, and these movements are not always forward.
(Indeed, how could one posit one direction as forward?) In this sense we
need to consider the new historicist concept of “contingency” as well. The
contingent relation between two events may or may not be conditional. It
could be the case that they are two events that just happened around the
same time. What is important to both Foucault and the new historicists is
that we do not assume that events are connected or that the historical process
represents a constant evolution to higher stages of development. Seen in the
context of the present study, this awareness is especially important since the
attitudes to learning and education in historical narratives of the 1820s tend
to be ambivalent and even contradictory, thus making impossible any
attempt to shape them into an evolutionary version of the past.

Another challenge to historians caused by the shift from a master
narrative of history to an archive of histories is the question of
representativity. If history is not an evolutionary process ending in present
time but many “local knowledges,” then who represents the past? Speaking
of a current “crisis in representation” (xiv), Brook Thomas points out that,
while this absence of a stable master narrative of the past enables new
historicists to bring in new, previously unacceptable texts into their
investigations, it also creates problems as it is no longer evident what texts
should be considered representative:

Finally, the question of representation turns back on the new historicism
itself. How representative is the evidence employed in its analysis? And if it
is representative, what does it represent? One of the claims of the new
historicism is that literary history cannot be seen in isolation from other
historical forces. But moving from the concrete analysis of particular texts,
events, and concepts to claims about shifts in, for example, global power or
the construction of subjectivity is extremely tricky. There is an ever-present
risk of letting evidence speak for more than it should. (xv)

In order to counter this problem, and also to determine whether contingency
is arbitrary or causal, new historicists employ the Geertzian concept of
“thick description.” The anthropologist Clifford Geertz borrowed the term
thick description from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle and it has been described
as a way of distinguishing a wink from a blink. The “difference . . . between
a twitch and a wink is vast,” Geertz writes. “The winker is communicating
. . . Contracting your eyelids on purpose when there exists a public code in
which so doing counts as a conspiratorial signal is winking. That’s all there
is to it: a speck of behavior, a fleck of culture, and—voilà!—a gesture” (6).

While thin description refers to the contracting of one’s eyelids—that is, the physical exercise involved in blinking—thick description attempts to integrate the blink/wink in a cultural context and so determine its import within this context (7). In other words, thick description refers to the practice of analyzing phenomena—objects, events, acts—within a specific, and limited, context. Ethnographic investigations should be, according to Geertz, “microscopic” (21). Thick description does not describe processes that cover vast areas, or long periods of time. Rather, it describes local, limited occurrences and behaviors. With the words of the new historicist Marjorie Levinson, text and context are folded “into a variegated but homogeneous batter” (56). Through the employment of thick description one is able to investigate whether a contingency is indeed causal or arbitrary and, furthermore, it makes it possible to find connections where none were believed to exist (Hamilton 155). Also, as the area of investigation is restricted, the danger of drawing far-reaching conclusions is reduced. By focusing on specific phenomena—learning and education—within the limited context of historical narratives of the 1820s, I want to investigate their complex roles in these texts. As these issues tend to be treated with ambivalence, their functions are often obscure and in order to determine their multi-layered meanings—whether they constitute a wink or a blink—it is necessary to restrict the scope of the investigation.

The study of details and local phenomena not only invites an investigation into material from a variety of sources, it also involves a shift of focus from a diachronical approach to history to a synchronical one. Restricting the field of investigation to a limited time period, and to the investigation of what is sometimes hardly more than details in the texts studied, I follow Gallagher and Greenblatt, who describe their historical method as picking “up a tangential fact and watch[ing] its circulation,” which illustrates their desire to create a “sense of history’s unpredictable galvanic appearances and disappearances” (4). In other words, rather than tracing the transcendence of an idea, an object, or any other phenomenon, the emphasis lies on its circulation. Foucault expresses a similar idea when he characterizes his historical method, his genealogy, as

a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (Power/Knowledge 117)

By locating the contexts—persons, locations, occasions—where learning and education emerge, but also where they are (sometimes conspicuously) absent, I want to explore how these concepts, tied as they are to social
stratification and foreignness, but also to civilization and progress, are employed in these narratives.

The shift from studying the transcendence of objects or other phenomena to their circulation at a given point in time involves a focus on spatial relations. Where do the “galvanic appearances and disappearances” (4) that Gallagher and Greenblatt speak of occur? Similar to Gallagher and Greenblatt, and highlighting the link between the shape of history and power structures, Foucault maintains that “[p]ower must by [sic] analysed as something which circulates . . . It is never localised here or there” (Power/Knowledge 98). An investigation of the contexts in which learning and education emerge, but also where they are absent, will tell us about the power structures at work in these texts. In the context of the present study an important question would be: Where is learning and education located, and why? Also, what happens when these issues are displaced—when the learned person appears on the frontier, for example? Since the “galvanic appearances and disappearances” (4) mentioned by Gallagher and Greenblatt do not happen randomly, but depend on structures of power, the ways in which space is allocated for specific individuals and/or activities are significant.

The shift from a temporal to a spatial approach becomes especially pertinent when discussing issues related to colonialism and postcolonialism, which, as we will see, are deeply embedded in the debate on learning and education in the historical novels of the 1820s. Benedict Anderson suggests in Imagined Communities that the colonial situation encouraged people to imagine their place in the world synchronically in America in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, as “substantial groups of people were in a position to think of themselves as living lives parallel to those of other substantial groups of people—if never meeting yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory” (188). One example of this new synchronic perspective has to do with the naming of places, where New London is not a replacement of the older London, but rather its younger rival sibling. In colonial America, then, due to technological innovations such as shipbuilding, cartography, and navigation, but also to the fact that the colony was distant from the mother country, people imagined themselves in a spatial context (187-88). Although Anderson discusses the American situation up until the eighteenth century, the fact that the U.S., retained strong, albeit ambivalent, ties to Britain, suggests that the synchronic worldview still existed in the early nineteenth century.

This “new synchronic novelty” (Anderson 188) did not preclude a temporal perspective, however. After all, New London was given the epithet new, and the New World was felt to be exactly that—new—even if these places did exist alongside the older London and the Old World. In other words, the synchronic perspective of the world intersected with a temporal approach. Cooper’s The Prairie provides an example of this meeting, or
crossing, of the temporal with the spatial perspective. As Edwin Fussell shows in *Frontier: American Literature and the American West*, the adventurers’ journey West in the novel represents not only a trek into the wilderness, but also a trip back in time (46-47). Here, then, time and space coincide as different geographical locations represent different time periods.

Space, Place, and Interstitiality

The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.

–Benedict Anderson (7)

[T]he hero seems to take his start outside time, or on the very outer edges of it, so that his location is essentially in space alone; and, second, his initial habitat is space as spaciousness, as the unbounded, the area of total possibility.

–R.W.B. Lewis (91)

In his article “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault speculates that our time “will perhaps be above all the epoch of space . . . [It is] a moment . . . when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.” In contrast to our own era’s emphasis on space, “[t]he great obsession of the nineteenth century was . . . history” (22). However, Foucault also stresses that “it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space” (22), as the dichotomous relationship of the two has served to uphold power structures. “Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic” (*Power/Knowledge* 70). As space has commonly been treated as transparent, empty, and static, Foucault maintains, power relations have been effectively hidden behind a veil created by the emphasis on temporal relations. The fact that time becomes a cloak for space is illustrated by the way in which the word “new” is employed by the colonial Americans discussed by Anderson, since this word, rather than representing a substitution for something old, or even gone, stands instead for a better, competing version that exists parallel to the original. The usage of adjectives like “old” and “new” suggests a temporal relation when, in reality, that relation is spatial. In the anonymously written short story “New Oxford” (1828), which describes the schooling of the children in a colonial village, the narrator claims not to know why the villagers “preferred for their
settlement the appellation of New Oxford to some of the more romantic ones which the recollections of their native clime might have furnished” (63). However, the name of the village is not randomly picked, as it sets up this New Oxford as a better, more democratic version of the old Oxford. In New Oxford all children, regardless of their backgrounds, are allowed to attend school (even if only those who the teachers, Father Daillé and his aristocratic wife, deem promising may continue to higher education). The inhabitants’ choice of name is quite understandable, then, as it allows them to present their village as an improved version of one of the most famous and admired towns in England. Even if the English Oxford is barely mentioned in the tale, the comparison of the two places is obvious by implication of their shared name.

To Foucault, the investigation of space is a strategy for unveiling power relations that have been hidden behind the focus on time and history. As he points out in *Power/Knowledge*, “[o]nce knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power” (69). The investigation of spatial relations is especially pertinent in texts from the early nineteenth century, since, as Foucault shows, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were devoted to the imposition of power through the means of incarceration and surveillance, methods where space and place play important roles (38). The symbol for this new mode of power is the Panopticon, which is a prison built in a circular fashion with individual cells, so that the guard can see all prisoners from a single point of observation. Since the prisoners never know when they are observed, they must always behave as if they are watched. However, the Panopticon is “a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised” (156). Since the prison guards are interchangeable, they, too, are part of this system of observation, and no one party has complete control over the situation. As opposed to the monarchy, where all power is centered in one individual, in the Panopticon “power is arranged as a machine working by a complex system of cogs and gears, where it’s the place of a person which is determining, not his nature, [and, thus,] no reliance can be placed on a single individual” (158). In this system “each person, depending on his place, is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust, because there is no absolute point” (158). Rather than controlling groups of people, the Panopticon works on an individual level, as it “gives ‘power of mind over mind’” (*Discipline and Punish* 206). In addition to being controlled though the observations of other people, the individual also becomes her own guard as she internalizes this controlling gaze.

Since the Panopticon is not so much an instrument of power in itself, but rather, has “a role of amplification” (207), as its aim is “to strengthen the
social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply” (208), it can be found throughout society, as new institutions, such as hospitals and mental asylums, emerge and are organized, along with existing institutions, like schools, according to the same principle. Being situated within the social body, rather than above it, this structure emerged to fill the void when monarchies ceased to be sources of power (Power/Knowledge 39). It is, then, a phenomenon that can be tied to the revolutions in the late eighteenth century.

The model of observation suggested by the Panopticon was in operation not only in public institutions, but also on the domestic, or private, level. As Richard Bushman points out in The Refinement of America, towards the close of the eighteenth century individuals became increasingly aware of being observed and of the importance of behaving correctly in the eyes of their peers. As a result, there was a great demand for books on manners, which dictated their readers’ behavior down to the smallest details—such as the correct way in which to knock on a door (inferiors should scratch rather than knock) (39). In post-Revolutionary America, then, individuals aspiring to cut a figure in society became each other’s judges, thus illustrating Foucault’s point that the “synaptic regime of power” (Power/Knowledge 39) was one in which everyone was caught and no one the master.

Due to the construction of an apparatus of surveillance, “figures of internment”—patients, madmen, criminals, proletarians—were created (Power/Knowledge 73). In Discipline and Punish, Foucault describes how the division of individuals into categories leads to a system of control, which he names “discipline.” Discipline, Foucault explains, is exercised by means of “a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets” (215). By way of classification, specialization, and characterization, individuals are hierarchized in relation to one another along a scale (223). This procedure is carried out by institutions, such as schools and hospitals, but also by other types of authorities (215). According to Foucault, “discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space” (141), of which the Panopticon, with its cells and guard tower, is an example. By creating spaces for specific activities and individuals who fit these spaces, it is possible to establish a certain order and, thus, to uphold control.

In an interview Foucault was asked whether one should not add to the figures of internment the “national internment of the citizen soldier. Wouldn’t we have here a space of confinement which is both infinitely vaster and less hermetic?” Foucault thought this “a very appealing notion” (Power/Knowledge 73). Considering that ideas about nation and national identity developed around the same time as the new “synaptic regime of power” and were, just as this new regime, a consequence of the Age of Revolutions (Hobsbawm 19), the idea of the nation as a space of confinement becomes even more interesting. While the notion that national
boundaries are necessary for the protection of citizens tends to be fundamental in most discussions of national identity, the suggestion that these boundaries are not only keeping outsiders out, but are actually confining, or even imprisoning, those who are inside, offers a new perspective of the situation. Is it always desirable to define oneself as belonging to one nation? What happens when one refuses to limit oneself to one national identity? How does this approach affect the characterization of the learned person, who, as we will see, tends to traverse boundaries other characters find uncrossable and who is frequently deemed an outsider? Such questions are raised, often implicitly, in some of the fictional texts discussed in this study, issues I will explore further in the coming chapters.

The notion of space and the consequences of different spatial relations are central in Foucault’s theories, but, as Robert J. C. Young points out in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, while Foucault employs concepts that are related to space and geography, such as site, field, position, displacement, interstice, and territory, he never explicitly discusses colonialism or race (395). Considering his commitment to the uncovering of power structures, this is surprising. However, while Foucault failed to address these questions, other scholars, such as Homi K. Bhabha, have employed his concepts in their investigations of these issues. Bhabha is interested in the reciprocal relationships between the metropolis and the colony, the colonizer and the colonized, and in the ways these relationships are confirmed, but also unsettled, by the colonizer’s need to be different from the colonized in order to know himself. Employing the term mimicry, which can be seen as an extrapolation on Foucault’s theory of surveillance, as it deals with the same type of unsettled power structure where the guard and the prisoner are both caught up in a system of observation, judging, and performance, Bhabha explores the ways in which the colonized is expected to imitate the colonizer, while at the same time remaining different. As in the case of Foucault’s Panopticon, the power structure described by Bhabha depends on, and is described in terms of, spatial relations. Whereas the colonizer positions himself in the center, the colonized is banished to the edge, or margin.5

The idea of center and margin as a dichotomous couple often rests on the presupposition that these two positions are stable and unchanging. The same assumption guides the way in which we think about borders separating

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5 Any world map will illustrate this. The prime meridian runs through Greenwich, England, which is located in the center of the map while the other meridians have higher degrees the further from England they are positioned. It is no coincidence that cartography became increasingly important in the nineteenth century, as the British empire put much of the world under its rule. That the positioning of the prime meridian was considered to be significant for nationalistic purposes is illustrated by the fact that early nineteenth-century cartographers in the U.S. placed it in Washington D.C. or Philadelphia (Short 15). The writer of *American Geography* (1792), Jedidiah Morse, places the prime meridian in Philadelphia due to “the size, the beauty, the improvements, and the central situation of that city” (vi).
different cultures. While it is necessary for cultures to appear as originary and solid, with distinct borders separating them from their others, there are in fact no stable borders between them. Bhabha compares the connection between different cultures to a stairwell and writes that “the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (4). For Bhabha it is important that the existence of this stairwell is recognized in order that old hegemonic structures may be undermined and challenged. Unless one acknowledges the stairwell connecting cultures, one will confirm rather than challenge the hegemonic structures that have led to the assumption that nations are isolated and autonomous territories unaffected by any outside influences.

In a similar vein, Bhabha points out that “[c]ultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other” (35-36). For Bhabha it is the “‘in-between’ spaces” where cultural differences are articulated that “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular and communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1-2). The in-between space is the place where “the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (2). While Bhabha’s interest in cultural difference lies in its potential as a vehicle for thinking “beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities” (1), the novels studied here attempt to do

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6 This is highly pertinent to American literary history. As Lawrence Buell points out in his article “American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon,” throughout the twentieth century scholars tended to present nineteenth-century American literature as coherent and autotelic. As a result, he argues, “we find ourselves practicing de facto a kind of cisatlantic hermeticism” (413). Because of this isolationist approach to American literary history, writers who failed to write according to “a criterion of emerging indigenousness” were excluded from the canon (412). As Buell points out, treating nineteenth-century American literature as postcolonial is controversial and may be perceived as hypocritical since the United States at that time expanded and could be seen as proto-imperial rather than postcolonial (411). However, as he goes on to say, at this time Americans felt themselves to be culturally dependent on Britain (415) and the country was looked upon by Britain as a cultural Other (417). In other words, in cultural matters the U.S. was a postcolonial nation, despite Manifest Destiny, and the literature written at this time often employs devices commonly used in postcolonial works, such as creolization and hybridity (427-31). See also “Postcolonial Anxiety in Classic U.S. Literature” which is a follow-up to the article discussed above, where Buell counters some of the criticism leveled at the first article. In “Postcolonial Anxiety,” Buell argues that the view of the American canon as separate and indigenous has been fortified by the focus of twentieth-century scholars on the Puritan heritage, the American Adam, the jeremiad, the captivity novel, etc., all of which are seen as original American creations (197-98).

7 See also Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies, edited by Malini Johar Shueller and Edward Watts, and Peter Hulme’s article “Including America” for discussions of the U.S. and postcolonialism. In The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, who look at eighteenth-century literature, argue that rather than seeing British and American texts as involved in a one-way relationship, where the English texts affected those written in America, this relationship was reciprocal (215).
the opposite, to use cultural difference as a vehicle for establishing national identity. Nevertheless, in attempting to define the nation’s borders, its gaps and inconsistencies are revealed. As a result, studying the ways in which these borders are created or explored in historical novels of the 1820s provides an opportunity to move beyond “originary . . . subjectivities,” as these novels, by attempting to set and define these boundaries, expose the process by which they came into being. Paradoxically, the creation of boundaries and categories paves the way for opportunities to explore that which lies beyond this rigid system as there are events, individuals, or other phenomena that fail to fit in. Even in cases when established borders and categories are upheld, as when the hybrid Charles Hobomok in Child’s *Hobomok* becomes an Englishman, thus foregoing his interstitial position, the existence of these incongruent figures exposes their constructedness and points to alternatives to a system that is promoted as natural and originary.

If boundaries for Foucault signify power structures, Bhabha offers a more idealistic image, as he emphasizes not so much the way in which boundaries separate and categorize, but their potential as meeting points and points of departure for new constellations. As a result, Bhabha portrays the meeting between cultures in terms of negotiation, intersection, and hybridization. Bhabha’s theories have led to new insights about cross-cultural meetings, but as Amy Kaplan points out, the recent focus in American studies on the frontier as “a site of contacts, encounters, and collisions that produce new hybrid cultures” risks downplaying the imperial vision that shaped the American expansion in the West, as well as the violence and abuse with which the West was won (“‘Left Alone with America:’ The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture” 16). In order to counter this sometimes deceptive portrayal of benign cultural meetings, without ignoring the cultural exchanges that actually did take place, these encounters need to be regarded in terms of both struggle and negotiation. This approach will also take into consideration the double role early nineteenth-century Americans inhabited, as they were both postcolonial subjects and colonizers, together with the ambivalent relationship between the U.S. and its former mother country.

While the general move in the historical novels investigated here is to establish a solid national identity, thus the opposite of Bhabha’s celebration of interstitiality, in-between spaces are deliberately created as a means to explore and establish borders. As we will see, the insertion of the learned person in the narrative often provokes a cultural clash that creates an in-between space. In this sense, then, the learned person acts as a catalyst and his interstitial position either confirms cultural and national values, in that he becomes an Other who highlights existing norms, or it challenges existing and emerging cultural values. Again, the location of learning and education and of the learned person becomes highly significant. For example, when Master Cradock in Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* has great difficulties in climbing
Mount Holyoke, thus demonstrating his displacement on the frontier, the clash between him, the effeminate scholar, and the wilderness opens for questions about national identity, such as: Who belongs in this new country? What is the role of education and learning in America? The combination of elements felt to be incompatible—such as the wilderness and bookish scholars—not only highlights their discordance, but also leads to new, sometimes unexpected, insights and questions.

If it is in the in-between spaces that meaning comes about, what is the significance of space itself? As mentioned before, Foucault argues that the focus on temporal relations has rendered space benignly empty and devoid of any meaning in itself, thus deceptively concealing its important role in the imposition of control over individuals. According to the anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization is inscribed” (7). As seen in the epigraph above, for R.W.B. Lewis space is “the unbounded, the area of total possibility” where the hero is able to move freely because he is not encumbered by history (91). Before it becomes tainted by civilized society, then, space represents freedom, transparency, and opportunity.

While space is imagined as empty and devoid of meaning, a place is characterized by what it contains, as well as by its boundaries. Gillian Rose argues in *Feminism & Geography*, that “[p]laces’ are not transparent like . . . ‘space’ . . . but are laden with meanings” (43). Rose also holds that space tends to be imagined as masculine, while place is seen as feminine (62). Lewis’s statement above demonstrates this, since the unbounded space he is referring to is the frontier, which is perceived as a masculine arena, while the civilized, and feminine, settlement which the hero has turned his back on is a place characterized by rules, borders, and droves of people and houses. Another distinction between the two terms is that we tend to imagine a place, as opposed to space, as part of a historical, or temporal, setting. In order for space to become a place, then, it has to become limited, as well as equipped with meaning, with an identity, which means that a place is characterized by what is included in it as well as what is excluded from it. In other words, “place” corresponds to the “disciplinary space” discussed by Foucault as both depend on borders and a specified—and specialized—content. However, as Linda McDowell maintains in *Gender, Identity and Place*, despite their reliance on borders and a defined content, “places are contested, fluid and uncertain.” Since “socio-spatial practices” characterize places and “these practices result in overlapping and intersecting places with multiple

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8 See also Doreen Massey’s article “Politics and Space/Time” where she discusses different ways of describing space.
9 Since the word “space” in Foucault’s concept “space of confinement” would be place” according to the present definition, I will from now on refer to it as “place of confinement” in order to avoid confusion.
and changing boundaries” (4), the borders girding places are not as stable as they pretend to be.

Just as the sitting room, the home, the school, and the town, the nation is a place, and as such it depends on its borders and its (ostensibly) defined—and confined—characteristics for its identity and status as a place. As Benedict Anderson points out in the epigraph above, “[t]he nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (7). While Bhabha’s theory of interstitiality shows that it is the “in-between space . . . that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (38), the nation, as well as any other place, depends for its existence on the idea that it is autonomous, isolated, and unique. As a parallel to McDowell’s discussion of “place,” Gupta and Ferguson point out that the “distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy ‘naturally’ discontinuous spaces” (6). The idea of uniqueness, then, conceals the paradoxes and arbitrariness that go into the creation of place. As we will see, the historical novels investigated in this study are instruments used to confirm the new nation’s status as a place, but they also expose the arbitrariness and constructedness of the process of place-making, since they reveal the strategies of negotiation and struggle that characterize the making of place and, not least, the creation of the individuals that inhabit and, thus, characterize that place. That is, in struggling to convey an image of place as natural and indigenous, these texts show that it is anything but that. Using as a point of departure the idea that a place is defined by its content, but also by that which is absent from it, I want to examine the location of learning in these texts. What sites are appropriate for learning and for learned characters? Where is learning foreign? Since historical novels of the 1820s generally aim to describe the United States, the nature of the places in which learning exists or is missing is often related to the character of the nation and its people.

Despite the fact that borders and nations change, succumb, or are contested on a daily basis around the world, we rarely question the sectional way in which we imagine the world. In her article “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees,” Liisa Malkki maintains that the “world of nations is . . . territorialized in the segmentary fashion of the multicolored school atlas” (26). As Malkki goes on to show, the fact “[t]hat the world should be composed of sovereign, spatially discontinuous units is a sometimes implicit, sometimes stated premise in much of the literature on nations and nationalism,” and she cites Gellner, Giddens, and Hobsbawm as examples (26). However, even if many scholars who deal with questions concerning nations and nationalism fail to acknowledge that the segmentary way in which we imagine the world is deceptive as the borders are arbitrary, most of
them would agree that nations are constructed, which would mean that their limits—both cultural and territorial—are created as well.10

Whereas today national identity is generally felt to be based on, for example, language, ethnicity, and cultural traditions, in the Age of Revolutions, Erich Hobsbawm asserts, “there was no logical connection between the body of citizens of a territorial state on the one hand, and the identification of a ‘nation’ on ethnic, linguistic or other grounds or of other characteristics which allowed collective recognition of group membership” (19). Thus, considering the before-mentioned criteria for a place, where distinctiveness, uniqueness, and separateness were prerequisites, we find that few of the characteristics that make a space into a place were present in the late eighteenth-century nations. However, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the criteria had changed and elements that would render the nation separate and unique, such as ethnicity, a common language, a capacity for conquest, and common historical memories, were cited as required components in the nation (38). In other words, during a period of roughly seventy years, the definition of what a nation was changed dramatically and, as a result, so were the standards for what constituted a citizen. While being a citizen of a nation state in the late eighteenth century meant that one was part of a collective sovereignty that represented the common good, seventy years later citizenship would involve questions concerning, for example, ancestry and language. During this seventy-year period, then, there was an ongoing process of defining boundaries and determining what should characterize the nation, what should belong, and what should be foreign to it. What is more, seen in the context of the present study, the previously mentioned notion of the nation as a space of confinement becomes especially interesting since the grounds for national identity changed from being a voluntary commitment (theoretically, if not always in practice), to becoming based on inheritance.

As feminist scholars have shown, notions about gender are deeply embedded in the ways in which we imagine nations and the land. Not only are men asked to go to war to defend the women and children of their “mother” country, countries and their peoples are also described in gendered terms. According to Nira Yuval-Davis “[w]omen often come to symbolize the national collectivity, its roots, its spirit, its national project. Moreover, women often symbolize national collective ‘honour’” (405). The figures of Columbia, representing the United States, and Marianne, symbolizing France, are examples of this. As Anne Mc Clintock points out in “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Gender, Race and Nationalism,” “the representation of

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10 Erich Hobsbawm for example, stresses “the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations” (Nations and Nationalism Since 1780 10).

11 This article can also be found as chapter ten in McClintock’s study Imperial Leather.
male national power depends on the prior construction of gender difference. All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men” (409). Gender, then, plays an important role in the process of defining the nation and in determining what belongs to it and what is alien in it. As we will see, by labeling certain phenomena and figures, such as learning and the learned man, as feminine, it is possible to mark them as alien in the nation, despite its appellation “motherland.”

The nation is not unique in being described in terms of gender, since, in fact, all places tend to be gendered. In Space, Gender, Knowledge, Linda McDowell and Joanne P. Sharp argue that

"[the spaces in which social practices occur] affect the nature of those practices, who is “in place,” who is “out of place” and even who is allowed to be there at all. But the spaces themselves in turn are constructed and given meaning through the social practices that define men and women as different and unequal. Physical and social boundaries reinforce each other and spatial relations act to socialise people into the acceptance of gendered power relations—they reinforce power, privileges and oppression and literally keep women in their place. (3)"

In other words, places where women are perceived to belong are labeled feminine and persons who inhabit feminine places are seen as feminine. Nevertheless, as Liz Bondi points out, it is important to distinguish between “the coding of space as feminine and the existence of women in geographical space” (79). Linda Kerber writes in a similar vein that “the separate women’s sphere can be understood to denote the physical space in which women lived but [the picture is more complicated] . . . Courtrooms in which women appear singly as plaintiffs, defendants, or witnesses are male spaces; streets on which women are afraid to walk are male spaces; universities that women enter only at male invitation are male spaces” (“Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place” 53-54). 12 Seen in the context of the historical novels discussed in this study, the distinction between feminine (or masculine) sites and the location of men and women is crucial since the novels’ learned men are frequently portrayed as belonging in places labeled as feminine, such as Britain, the civilized settlements, or the sitting room, despite their male sex.

During the last decades, the doctrine of separate spheres, where women are seen as belonging to the feminine domestic sphere located in the home, while men are situated in the masculine public sphere outside it, has been one of the major devices for studying and understanding gender in the

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12 These quotes from Bondi and Kerber may seem confusing considering that what they call space would be place as defined above. Neither scholar seems to distinguish between space and place in their present discussions.
nineteenth century. In the last few years, however, its usefulness has been challenged as critics have realized that these two spheres are anything but separate and that rather than being each other’s opposites, they are intertwined. The fact that some men are perceived to belong in sites that are labeled feminine points to the limitations of the doctrine of separate spheres as an instrument for explaining gender structures. In a special issue of American Literature calling for “No More Separate Spheres!,” Cathy Davidson argues that “the binaric version of nineteenth-century American history is ultimately unsatisfactory because it is simply too crude an instrument—too rigid and totalizing—for understanding the different, complicated ways that nineteenth-century American society or literary production functioned” (445). In the introduction to a collection of essays that also bears the title No More Separate Spheres!, Cathy Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher set up the frames for “post-separate spheres criticism” (12). Showing their debt to Foucault and the new historicists, Davidson and Hatcher call for studies that move back and forth between high and low culture and that are aware that also the present era has blind spots that shape our interpretations of different types of texts, such as tracts, newspapers, and letters. Rather than focusing exclusively on gender, as has generally been the case in studies of the separate spheres, Davidson and Hatcher argue that gender must be discussed alongside issues like race and class. As a consequence of the focus on gender, together with the fact that “woman” only refers to white, middle-class women (8), race and class have not been taken into account in studies of the two separate spheres. Thus, the oppression of women in the nineteenth century has been assumed to be similar for everyone belonging to the female sex. As Davidson and Hatcher point out, however, a white middle-class woman who is excluded from public politics may still be a tyrant to her servants (12).

In her article “Manifest Domesticity,” which is included in the above-mentioned special issue of American Literature,13 Amy Kaplan illustrates the reductiveness of the separate spheres paradigm as she traces the shifting definitions of the word “domestic.”

When we contrast the domestic sphere with the market or political realm, men and women inhabit a divided social terrain, but when we oppose the domestic to the foreign, men and women become national allies against the alien, and the determining division is not gender but racial demarcations of otherness. Thus another part of the cultural work of domesticity might be to unite men and women in a national domain and to generate notions of the foreign against which the nation can be imagined as home. (582)14

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13 This article is also included in No More Separate Spheres!, edited by Cathy Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher.
14 See Philippa Levine’s article “Erotic Geographies: Sex and the Managing of Colonial Space” for a similar discussion of domestic space in the context of the British colonization of the Far East.
The way in which Cooper’s, Child’s, and Sedgwick’s depictions of the frontier have been treated by scholars as opposites (see the introduction) illustrates, I believe, Kaplan’s discussion of domesticity. Whereas Cooper’s frontier is perceived to be situated far away from the confines of society, Child and Sedgwick are seen as being concerned with frontier settlements. While this interpretation is true—Cooper’s frontier is often (but not always) further away from civilization than those of Child and Sedgwick—this approach risks concealing the similarities that the three writers share. If we shift the focus to domesticity, including both the home and the nation, it turns out that the frontiers of the three writers are quite similar as they all share an interest in questions concerning the boundaries and content of national identity and the unit that provides a model for it, the family. When the domestic sphere involves not only the home, but the nation too, the narratives of the three writers suddenly reveal similarities where only opposites have been seen before.

Whether or not men and women belong in the same or in separate spheres depends on the context. Assumed binaries, such as that of domestic and public, tend to intersect, mix, and emerge in new constellations, depending on the angle from which they are approached. This brings us back to the Geertzian thick description. What is the significance of the blinking eye? By taking into account different descriptions, or versions perhaps, of this event we may be able to tell whether the blink is a message or an attempt to remove a grain of sand. In the same manner, my study traces the ways in which ideas concerning learning and education in historical novels in the 1820s emerge, merge with other concepts and ideas, become submerged, and resurface in new constellations. Reading these novels alongside each other, and together with other contemporary texts, I hope to uncover the roles, or functions, these issues played at this time. By using spatial concepts, such as space, place, in-between, location, displacement, and border, I want to explore the ways in which learning and learned persons function as catalysts in articulating ideas about the new republic, as well as about the places—geographical, social, and cultural—it contains. Where does learning belong? In Britain? On the frontier? In the drawing room? What happens when it is displaced, which, as the following chapters will show, is frequently the case? My aim is to demonstrate the ways in which the learned person, who is often portrayed as being out of place, comes to symbolize that which is foreign, but also how his displacement serves to problematize and, sometimes, to critique emerging cultural and national values.
CHAPTER TWO

Learning and the Learned:
Education, Gentility, and the Making of History in the Republic

The people of the United States ought to become the most vigorous and powerful race of human beings, both in mind and body, that the world has even known. Living in a climate which permits the fullest development of all the powers of human nature—enjoying entire freedom—possessing an abundant supply of the best nutriment, and of everything necessary to promote the increase and healthy action of their physical powers,—exempt from those influences which tend to repress the mental and physical improvement of the people of most other countries, they certainly ought to reach the highest perfection of which humanity is capable. But to effect this, all that belongs to human nature should be regarded in education; the whole man should be improved. And not only should all his powers be developed, but they should be developed harmoniously, and at the proper time.

--Amariah Brigham, Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health, 1832 (xiii)

Education is and must be the foundation of the virtue and well-being of society.

--Smith, What is Gentility? 1828 (166)

Even if the role and location of learning were contested in the 1820s, few challenged the importance of education in the creation of a democracy. In The American Magazine from the late 1700s, virtually every issue has a section on “Education,” where public figures, such as Noah Webster, together with less famous contributors, give their views on the topic. Education continues to be a burning issue throughout the antebellum period, and the key question debated is what type of education will best serve the future survival and prosperity of the young republic. While it was generally agreed in the early decades of the republic that the citizens of the nation
ought to be educated, there was less consensus on what this education should consist of. When considering whether or not higher education had a place in the new nation, the issue became even more inflamed, as this type of education was often seen as linked to English aristocracy, and thus something that could threaten the newborn American democracy. As noted, the idea that intellectual activities and learning are treated in a stepmotherly fashion in America is a well-established notion that has been promoted by, for example, Richard Hofstadter. In his study *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, Hofstadter describes the American attitude as “a dark and sullen suspicion of high culture, as a creation of the enemy,” and he sees this discrediting of learning as a phenomenon with roots in the early days of the nineteenth century when “the rights of the common man took form” (154). However, while Hofstadter is right in that there exists a deep-seated suspicion of learning in American culture, the issue is more complicated than it may first appear. This becomes apparent when we look at how the issue is treated in historical fiction written in the early nineteenth century. Rather than expressing hostility toward learning and intellectualism, these texts tend to treat these issues with ambivalence. Despite the professed connection between learning and the former mother country, the texts also voice a belief that it is necessary to embrace it in order for the United States to come into its own. This chapter will explore the various attitudes to learning and education in the 1820s, as well as give a general overview of how these issues are treated in historical fiction of the time.

Learning and Education in the Colony, the Early Republic, and the Antebellum Era

As soon as he opens his lips, he [the American child] should rehearse the history of his own country; he should lisp the praise of liberty and of those illustrious heroes and statesmen who have wrought a revolution in her favor.

–Webster, “On the Education” 65

In the 1820s, many of the men who had shaped the republic, among them Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, passed away, and the political scene became peopled with politicians with backgrounds and values different from

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1 I will adhere to the period designations employed by Lawrence Buell in *New England Literary Culture*. Buell suggests the year 1815 as an approximate breaking point between the “early national” era and the antebellum era, since this was the year that saw the end of the War of 1812, as well as the time when the Neoclassical style was succeeded by Romantic styles of writing in New England literary culture. Even if, as Buell goes on to point out, period designations are to some extent arbitrary and never all-encompassing—after all, the Neoclassical era was hardly eclipsed by Romanticism over the course of one year—they are necessary for the sake of clarity (11-12).
those of the intellectual Founding Fathers. One of the most well-known and influential of these new men was the great hero of the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson. Losing the presidential election of 1824, Jackson became president in 1829 after defeating the son of John Adams, the Harvard professor of rhetoric John Quincy Adams, in a dirty campaign, where Jackson was accused of being illiterate, while Adams was portrayed as incompetent due to his learning. As John William Ward points out in his book, Andrew Jackson—Symbol for an Age, in “running against an ex-Harvard professor, Jackson embodied a rejection of the intellectual” (64). Rather than trying to conceal his lack of education, Jackson flaunted it, and it was said that, besides the Bible, he had read only one book (The Vicar of Wakefield) in his life (Remini 6). However, as Ward goes on to show, the Jacksonian repudiation of learning did not mean that they hailed ignorance as the ideal state of existence. Rather, they argued that, while the learning Adams represented was “the corruption of real intelligence,” Jackson possessed natural “wisdom” that had not been spoiled by education (65-66). Thus, the struggle between Adams and Jackson should be seen as a struggle between Enlightenment values that emphasize learning and improvement through study, and Romantic ideas that idealize intuition and “natural intellect,” rather than a battle between learning and ignorance (67). As Ward maintains, the Jacksonians rejected the “reason of the university . . . in behalf of the higher reason of nature” and he also notes that “[t]o express his ‘genius,’ nearly every characterization of Andrew Jackson eventually came to such words as ‘natural’ or ‘native,’ ‘instinctive’ or ‘intuitive’” (53). In addition, the Jacksonian campaign was also a challenge to increasingly dominant middle-class ideals that saw learning as a means to acquire gentility.

That the contest between Adams and Jackson became focused on questions concerning learning and education shows how central these questions were at the time. However, while the Jacksonian repudiation of learning brought the issue to the fore, the concern with learning and education dates back to the seventeenth century when the first Puritans arrived and had, since the Revolution, been a central issue. As Samuel Eliot Morison points out in The Intellectual Life in Colonial New England, the Puritan interest in learning and education did not only involve the concern that all members of the congregation should learn to read in order to be able to read the Bible, but also included scholarly pursuits. Several founders of

2 Jefferson and Adams died within hours of each other on July 4, 1826 (Kammen 18).
3 Ward points out that the Jacksonians actually had much in common with the Transcendentalists, who also put intuition, or Reason, before “‘Understanding’ or methodical thought” (50).
4 In 1647 a law was passed that proclaimed that all Massachusetts towns consisting of fifty or more households were required to establish a reading school; and, if there were more than one hundred families, the settlement should have a grammar school. With the exception of Rhode
the Puritan settlement had attended Oxford or Cambridge (Morison 242) and
in 1636, only six years after the settlement of the Bay Colony, Harvard, the
first college, was founded. While this college, as were those in England, was
established primarily to educate clergymen, it also offered courses of a more
secular nature (Morison 28-31).5

Most historians agree that on the eve of the Revolution the majority of
white men and roughly fifty percent of all white women in New England
were literate (Perlmann and Shirley 51).6 In the South, the literacy rates were
lower for both women and men, since, as Southerners often lived far apart, it
was difficult to establish schools. After the Revolution, the new leaders were
presented with the challenge of forging a nation out of the former colonies,
and it was quickly realized that education was a key element in this process.
Benjamin Rush, the famous doctor, educator, and signer of the Declaration
of Independence, wrote in 1787 that American citizens “must be fitted to
each other by means of education before they can be made to produce
regularity and unison in government” (“Thoughts” 17-18). Noah Webster
expresses a similar idea in his 1790 essay “On the Education of Youth in
America,” where he argues that

[our constitutions of civil government are not yet firmly established; our
national character is not yet formed; and it is an object of vast magnitude that
systems of education should be adopted and pursued which may not only
diffuse a knowledge of the sciences but may implant in the minds of the
American youth the principles of virtue and of liberty and inspire with just
and liberal ideas of government and with inviolable attachment to their own
country. (45)7

For both Rush and Webster, then, education is primarily a tool for
inculcating a sense of belonging and loyalty in the population and so create

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5 Bernard Bailyn suggests an additional reason for the Puritan interest in education. In
Education in the Forming of American Society he argues that by establishing schools the
Puritans sought to inculcate and maintain “cultural standards” that were threatened, it was felt,
as families failed to uphold discipline (26-27).

6 However, as Perlmann and Shirley point out in their article “When Did New England
Women Acquire Literacy?,” the percentage of women who were literate at this time has been
much debated. While we know that more women could read than could write, the statistics are
based on the number that could write since it is impossible to measure their reading skills.
Suggesting a new approach to the measuring of literacy, Perlmann and Shirley argue that a
large majority of women born in New England after 1765 were literate since the 1850 and
1870 census records show that all New England women over the age of seventy were so (54).

7 The texts by Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster that I refer to were written in the years
following the Revolution, roughly forty years before the time to which the literary texts
discussed in this study belong. However, since many of the themes dealt with by the two
educators were still important and debated in the 1820s and, what is more, the two men were
famous and widely read, I believe that it is relevant to discuss their works in conjunction with
the historical narratives investigated in this study.

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virtuous Americans. In other words, education is a way of controlling the population. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Foucault sees the school as one of the apparatuses through which individuals are categorized and given a place in society. The essays of Rush and Webster show that this process is not merely one of labeling individuals, but also shaping them to fit a certain category, in this case that of a loyal American.

The emphasis on national order reveals that the primary concern of both Rush and Webster was to develop a system of education for the lower classes in society; the section of the population that, having recently gained the vote, needed to be controlled. As a result, they both focus primarily on what kinds of basic skills were required to shape good republicans. This is not to imply that they were unconcerned with advanced scientific pursuits, however. Dr. Rush gave lectures on the “Mind,” which included, among other things, discussions of “Respiration,” “the Use of the Thyroid Gland,” and “the Nervous System” and Webster explored and developed American English as his famous dictionary, but also his other writings on language, demonstrate.

In accordance with their emphasis on an education that instills loyalty to the new nation, the two educators suggest a curriculum that will further this goal. For both Rush and Webster, the study of “our American language” (Rush, “Plan” 18) is of utmost importance. Webster even suggests that studies in Greek and Latin, which were core subjects at the time, could be dropped for the benefit of studies in the native language (46). Other subjects that should be studied are eloquence, chemistry, commerce—as it is “the surest protection against aristocracy”—and war and legislation, which are tied to math and philosophy (Rush, “Plan” 18-20). Another subject that Webster and Rush see as crucial in the American school is history. According to Rush, the “science of government . . . can only be advanced by a careful selection of facts, and these are to be found chiefly in history” (“Plan” 19).

While Webster and Rush wrote mainly about the education of young white men, they were both interested in the education of white women as well. Because women’s reading habits, together with their behavior in general, were felt to have an impact on the future of the republic, the proper education of women became an important issue in the years after the

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8 Benjamin Rush’s Lectures on the Mind, edited by Eric T. Carlson, Jeffrey L. Wollock, and Patricia S. Noel, offers a collection of his lectures.

9 Even if Rush and Webster often concur in their educational visions, there are some points of dissension in the texts discussed here. For example, Rush considers religion to be “the only foundation for a useful education in a republic . . . Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments” (“Plan” 10). He also promotes the Bible as a schoolbook (12). Webster does not emphasize religion to the same extent.

10 In these essays Rush and Webster limit their discussion to the education of white men and women, that is, those people who were felt to be part of the republic.
Revolution. In addition to the contributions by Webster and Rush, other educators and intellectuals, many of them women, such as Judith Sargent Murray and Mercy Otis Warren, voiced their opinions in the debate. As Linda Kerber points out in *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, the attitudes to women’s education were ambivalent because, while republican ideology demanded sensibly educated female citizens, domestic tradition considered highly educated women as threats to the stability of the family (10). The solution to this dilemma, Kerber suggests, was the development of the ideology of Republican Motherhood. Women, it was argued, should be educated in order to be able to raise republican citizens, as well as keep American men straight. In *A Plan for Improving Female Education* (1819), Emma Willard optimistically suggests that “if the female character be raised, it must inevitably raise that of the other sex: and thus does the plan proposed, offer . . . to elevate the whole character of the community” (8).11 Women, then, should be educated in a manner best to serve their families and their nation, not to pursue the laurels of learning. As Kerber points out, much of the debate on female education was anti-intellectual (10). Women should be taught subjects that were useful, and anything that did not serve a practical function in the raising of little republicans was considered useless and a waste of time. As a result, the pursuit of intellectual accomplishments was often condemned together with ornamental skills, such as needlework and the painting of screens. However, it should be pointed out that the line between intellectual and practical education was anything but definite and, despite the anti-intellectual strain, many of the subjects recommended for women’s study, such as history and geography (Rush, “Thoughts” 29), could be, more or less, intellectual. Another important point that needs to be made is that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries women’s education was irregular at best, and the few female seminaries that existed were generally of low educational standard. At this time, the campaign for a useful, rather than decorative, female education (or no education at all), provided women with increased opportunities for personal development and intellectual improvement, even if the purpose of their education was to become motherly educators and they were still barred from the universities. In fact, intellectual women shared the drive for an education that focused on useful subjects. In her autobiography, Catharine Maria Sedgwick laments the useless education girls generally received, and, as her letters show, she took a stand on the issue early on. In a letter to her mother while away at school, Sedgwick writes that the embroidery she is currently working on will be the last one she will ever do since she has decided to concentrate on more important topics, such as

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11 Rush voices the same idea in his 1787 essay when he suggests that if “knowledge and virtue were generally diffused among the female sex . . . our young men would . . . be restrained from vice by the terror of being banished from their company” (“Thoughts” 36).
geography (*The Power of Her Sympathy* 20). Considering that the subjects generally taught at female seminaries in the early nineteenth century focused on decorative skills such as dancing and music (Kerber, *Women* 203) and that academic subjects were only studied in a superficial manner (Sedgwick, *The Power of Her Sympathy* 72), it is no wonder that intellectuals and anti-intellectuals alike came together in the endeavor to provide useful education for women.

The ideology of Republican Motherhood was not the only model of education available to women at the time, however. As Mary Kelley has shown in, for example, her article “Reading Women/Women Reading,” for nineteenth-century women reading was a “collective practice” as women shared books with each other and discussed what they had read in literary societies and sewing clubs. According to Kelley, through their reading and discussion of books, women found models of womanhood that were different from the conventional ones where women were situated in a domestic setting. Reading about great women in books on history, and in novels and biographies, these women established the learned woman as an ideal (403), and female seminaries and female teachers were important conveyors of this role model (410). Kelley maintains that antebellum America’s ideology of domesticity served more as a point of departure than as a determining end in the lives of reading women. Recoding the ideology to serve more expansive ends, they incorporated it into a discourse that validated women’s minds as equal to those of men, claimed enlarged educational opportunities for women, and looked to academies and seminaries as sites of female learning. (405)

In other words, the ideal of the learned woman and the ideology of Republican Motherhood were not opposites, even if they many times were significantly different from each other.

Books provided readers with role models to emulate, but they also furnished warning examples. The fatal consequences of the wrong education is a popular theme in novels and short stories of the 1820s. The short story “Education” in Stacy G. Potts’s *Village Tales, or Recollections of By-Past Times* (1827) argues along the same lines as Sedgwick as it depicts the tragic consequences of a young girl’s faulty education:

Cornelia was an heiress . . . She was . . . sent to the most fashionable school . . . There she learned a few of the useful, and a great many of the ornamental branches taught in such seminaries; and was finally despatched to a Boarding School to finish her education—a polite, fashionable, elegant education; with which the adjective “useful,” as usual, had very little, if any thing to do.

She was now an accomplished lady. She understood French and painting; was versed in Belle Lettres; knew something of philosophy, natural and moral; had gone to round off the sciences; wrote poetry; kept an Album;
understood music; and was, finally, fitted out at home with a fine parlor, and piano. (115)

After she has finished her schooling, Cornelia marries a man with as useless an education as herself. Since neither of them has learned how to work, they live off their inherited money, and, when they have wasted all their funds, they separate and each leads a life in poverty. Had Cornelia been provided with a useful education, the tale suggests, she would have been better able to pick a sensible husband and also would have been able to provide for herself and her family. As is implied by the fact that Cornelia was sent to school, her failed education is not so much her own fault as that of her parents or guardians. Indirectly, then, this short narrative points to the importance of educated mothers (or maternal substitutes), since, had such a role model been available to Cornelia rather than the vicious teachings at the boarding school, she would have met a happier destiny. Likewise, Isabella in Cooper’s *The Spy* blames her unsought love for Peyton Dunwoodie on her lack of maternal guidance. Dying, she tells Frances Wharton, Dunwoodie’s future wife: “We are both motherless; but that aunt—that mild, plain-hearted, observing aunt, has given you the victory. Oh! How much she loses, who loses a female guardian to her youth. I have exhibited those feelings which you have been taught to repress” (285). A motherly education, then, spells the difference between married bliss and an early grave. The important role played by parents is also emphasized in the definition of “Education” in Webster’s 1828 Dictionary. After explaining the meaning of the word, Webster goes on to point out that “[t]o give children a good education in manners, arts, and science is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.” As the frequent occurrence of negligent parents and young men and women who are the victims of a bad education indicates, this was a problem that attracted much attention at the time. (I will return to the theme of insufficient parenting in my discussion of Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* in chapter five.)

Ellen and Elizabeth in Sarah Ann Evans’s historical novel *Resignation* are luckier than Cornelia as their education is overseen by their wise guardian Mrs. Harlington. Mrs. Harlington combines their traditional education “which would fit them merely for pleasant companions in the parlor, or for elegant writers in the closet” with “domestic accomplishments,” such as cooking. This way, Mrs. Harlington maintains, the girls will become “good housewives, should they ever be placed in situations requiring the practical application of such knowledge,” and they will also possess the ability to withstand “the impositions of mercenary attendants.” The narrator notes that

[b]y thus deviating from the usual course of a Southern education . . . [Mrs. Harlington] had afforded the little girls seasons of healthful and pleasant
exercise; agreeably diversifying their daily routine of engagements, besides giving them the satisfaction resulting from conscious industry, and the pleasure arising from possession of any species of useful knowledge. (1:248)

Aside from domestic accomplishments, the education of Elizabeth and Ellen consists in “a thorough acquaintance with the French and Italian, . . . a respectable knowledge of the learned languages; and in acquiring the lighter and more showy accomplishments of their sex, they had not neglected those branches of education which are considered as belonging more exclusively to the department of science.” As a result, the girls, despite being fittingly “inobtrusive,” can “modestly advance an opinion; and it was manifest that on some subjects they could even reason, and that logically.” In the end, Elizabeth’s and Ellen’s education has “rendered them delightful companions” (1:278) and Elizabeth’s ability “to combine the calm dignity, the lofty firmness of the masculine mind, with all the gentle loveliness of woman” (1:295) wins the hearts of both Ellen’s brother Francis and her neighbor George Percy.

As the description of the education of Ellen and Elizabeth indicates, the acquisition of skills that would make them fit to be “pleasant companions in the parlor” and closet writers is not ignored; rather, pleasant companions are precisely what they eventually become. However, their traditional Southern education has been combined with other accomplishments, some of which are of a domestic nature. In other words, unlike the limited education that had made Cornelia a fine lady, but also unable to fend for herself, the education of Ellen and Elizabeth is versatile and will help them to adapt to whatever situations life will offer. Whereas a purely domestic education (for example, learning to cook and clean) would have been unsuitable for their expected roles as companions in the parlor—that is, for a lifestyle befitting their social class—and an education consisting of only academic subjects would probably have robbed them of “the gentle loveliness of woman,” the acquisition of a wide variety of skills ensures the future happiness of Mrs. Harlington’s young wards.

Another important difference between the education of Cornelia and that of Ellen and Elizabeth is that while Cornelia is educated outside the home, in a boarding school, the latter receive their training in a domestic setting. The location in which the three girls are educated is important as it plays into their future destinies. Rush warns that boarding schools, by “secluding boys from the intercourse of private families has a tendency to make them scholars” rather than “to make them men, citizens, and Christians” and, moreover, that “[t]he vices of young people are generally learned from each other” (16). Cornelia’s unhappy destiny suggests that boarding schools benefit girls no more than they do boys. While the boarding school does not turn Cornelia into a scholar, it does make her unsuitable for her expected role in society, thus making her as useless as the education she has received.
As Rush’s caution indicates, a family setting is an important aspect of education and the location of education contributes to the final result as students either become “pleasant companions in the parlor” or banished altogether from the domestic arena.

The domestic setting of the home also carries another dimension as it constitutes a parallel to the domestic setting of the nation. Rush (“Thoughts” 9), as well as Webster (72-76), promote an education at home, as opposed to one abroad, as it will teach loyalty to the home country. Following Amy Kaplan’s suggestion mentioned in the previous chapter, where the two aspects of domesticity are juxtaposed, the domestic education of Ellen and Elizabeth takes on a new dimension as their training within the family not only makes them good companions for their future husbands, but also shapes them into good, virtuous citizens.

As we have seen, the education of white women was a popular theme in fiction at this time and also a prominent issue in the public debate. If it was considered important for the future prosperity of the republic that both white women and men were educated, however, the situation was different regarding Indians and African-Americans. As Lawrence A. Cremin points out in American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876, “[b]lacks and Indians were excluded from citizenship and hence from education for self-government” (105). Nevertheless, even if both groups were barred from republican education, their status differed. Whereas the black population was considered unassimilable, the view of the Indians in this regard shifted over time. In the years after the Revolution it was generally felt that Indians had the capacity to acquire the ways of Anglo-American society, but this opinion changed. In the late 1820s President Jackson had Indian tribes removed from the East to territories beyond the Mississippi on the grounds that they were deemed unassimilable (Cremin 230, 242-44). This view of the Indians as inherently different and uncivilized prevails in the historical narratives discussed in this study. In cases where Indians are portrayed as knowledgeable and/or wise, their knowledge generally does not encompass Western erudition but involves areas perceived as Indian, such as medicinal herbs or the habits of wild animals. As we will see in chapter five, the Indian Magawisca in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie is an exception as she acquires some English education. However, even if Western knowledge is available to Magawisca, she eventually rejects it for the knowledge and traditions of her tribe.

12 James McHenry’s historical novel The Wilderness initially seems to be an exception as it portrays a wise old Indian, Tonnaleuca, who is the teacher of the white heroine Maria. The fictional George Washington is impressed by the Indian and marvels: “[a] philosopher—a prophet—and a savage!—how can we reconcile the co-existence in one individual of characters so apparently contradictory to each other?” (1:237). The answer to Washington’s question, however, is that these three qualities are not reconciled in the old Indian sage as he is only disguised as such. Tonnaleuca turns out to be the Laird of Mackintosh, a Scottish
Since the aim of the educational visions drawn up by Rush and his fellow educators was to forge a homogeneous national identity, the exclusion of deviating groups of people comes as no surprise. This aim also helps explain why education should not be limited to the schools but saturate the entire society. Education, for both white women and white men, involved more than the development of one’s knowledge on various topics. As mentioned in the introduction, education, in the 1820s, was not limited to the teaching provided in school, but encompassed all the different aspects involved in bringing up a child. For example, when Captain Courtland in Eliza Lanesford Cushing’s historical novel Saratoga; A Tale of the Revolution (1824) decides to withdraw from public life and devote himself to the education of his daughter, it does not merely mean that he will spend his days teaching the young girl mathematics and philosophy. Rather, it means that he will take care of and raise her (9). Education did not end with childhood, however. Educators in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries emphasized the duty of good republicans to continue educating themselves on their own after finishing school, and institutions such as libraries, museums, and, not least, lyceums were formed to meet the needs of adult learners (Cremin 298). According to Cremin, “‘education’... meant the full panoply of institutions that had a part in shaping human character—families and churches, schools and colleges, newspapers, voluntary associations, and, most important perhaps in an era of constitution making, the laws” (2). In addition, novels were an important source of education as the historical novel illustrates, with its mix of historical facts and models of republican virtue to inspire the reader.

The fact that education involved both the improvement of knowledge and the shaping of manners created a dilemma in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While, as we have seen, it was argued that education should focus on that which was strictly useful, the emerging middle class embraced ideals that were aristocratic, rather than republican, in order to distinguish themselves from the lower layers of society. Furthermore, they

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13 Richard Bushman, on whose study The Refinement of America my discussion of the middle class largely relies, defines this social group as consisting of “smaller merchants and professionals, ordinary well-off farmers, successful artisans, schoolteachers, minor government officials, clerks, shopkeepers, industrial entrepreneurs, and managers” (xiii). However, as Bushman shows in his study, the refined lifestyle which became a hallmark for the middle class, was much based on the ability to show off the right attributes, including manners and certain possessions, such as books and china. As Bushman notes, when gentility became available to all who could afford the right attributes, the issue of class became confused: “what did gentility mean when common clerks and small-town farmers lived in houses with parlors, read books, and tried to be mannerly? Were they also ladies and gentlemen?” (xv). In other words, the middle class consisted not so much of that segment of the population that fit a certain income bracket as it was an ideology, or a set of beliefs or priorities. Whereas adherents to middle-class ideology believed in hard work and the
believed that it was through education that gentility could be realized. In *The Refinement of America*, Richard L. Bushman argues that around the turn of the nineteenth century, the middle class began to strive for a genteel lifestyle, and fifty years later “[a]ll who aspired to simple respectability had to embody the marks of the genteel style in their persons and their houses” (xiii). Rather than emphasizing usefulness and practicality, the genteel style aimed at displaying that which was not practical and useful, but indicated luxury, leisure, and taste. To complicate matters further, the genteel style was an adoption of a European, primarily British, aristocratic lifestyle. The fact that the aristocratic gentility that the middle class aspired to was incongruous with republican equality was acknowledged by its adherents. Nevertheless, the paradoxes and tensions caused by the incompatibility of the two systems were never resolved but were constantly present at the core of middle-class ideology (Bushman xvi). As we have seen, Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster argued that young Americans should be educated in America—that is, in a domestic setting in the sense of the nation—rather than sent to Europe, in order to prevent them from adopting a European lifestyle (Rush, “Plan” 9, Webster 72-76). The middle class, however, secured the existence of those European values within the republic.

Even if middle-class ideology in many instances clashed with republican values, it did inherit one of the defining qualities of the ideals of the Founding Fathers. Just as Jefferson and his contemporaries, the early nineteenth-century middle class emphasized personal improvement and believed that the individual was capable of shaping his or her own character through education or, more specifically, through reading.14 The best way to improve what was referred to as one’s “mental culture” was to read (Bushman 282). Whereas novels were frowned upon (yet still widely read), the reading matter, it was felt, should encompass a wide variety of subjects and a truly refined person should be able to converse on the intricacies of Egyptian culture, as well as the writings of Descartes (Bushman 88-89). Conversation was a skill necessary to master in order to survive in refined society, as well as a sign that one was genteel and educated. For example, the fact that the conversation between Elizabeth, Ellen and Francis in Evans’s *Resignation* is “animated, and tended to mutual improvement”

14 One of the most famous of the Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, became a role model for nineteenth-century Americans bent on improving themselves. In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin emphasizes the role of reading in his lifelong quest for improvement, and he proudly mentions that he established America’s first subscription library, which, he points out, did much for the improvement of the minds of Americans (53). Franklin is mentioned as one of the great and good men in Lydia Maria Child’s *Biographical Sketches of Great and Good Men* (1828) and in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Home* (1835) the Autobiography is read aloud in order to inculcate virtue in the children in the family.
signals their gentility as it shows that they master this important skill. Displaying their refinement, the narrator describes their exchange in some detail: “[i]f it turned on subjects literary or scientific, a degree of knowledge sufficient to render it interesting to each had been attained by early application: if on the Christian religion, the capacity of mind, or the affections of the heart, that sympathy which is the soul of human converse, made it delightful” (1:328). The space given to the description of the conversation between the three characters illustrates the importance placed on this skill in middle-class society. It also shows that areas of learning not commonly considered practical, such as the field of Egyptian culture, attain a utilitarian dimension as they serve as tools for advancement in genteel society. In other words, the oft-repeated admonition for useful education is not so limiting as it may seem.

Through reading, one would not only obtain suitable topics for conversation, one would also imbibe those qualities that defined refinement: delicacy, sensibility, and taste (Bushman 80-83). By substituting reading for breeding, or pedigree, middle-class ideology sought to evade the aristocracy dilemma. Since gentility was created through reading, it was (ostensibly) available to anyone willing to seek it, and not only to those who had noble ancestors. However, as we will see, learning was perceived as a British quality as well, and, while the substitution of learning for aristocracy might have made the problem less glaring, it remained a problem.

Another ideological paradox the middle class battled with was the fact that the model of the knowledgeable reader was not compatible with another important middle-class ideal, the professional man of business. Whereas reading and studying belonged in the parlor, the businessman operated in the public world outside the home. Since leisure was a crucial aspect of gentility, the home, or rather the refined part of the home, the sitting room, became a sanctuary where the genteel family upheld a facade of genteel leisure, while, as Bushman points out, “the creation and maintenance of the house was known by all to be the result of intense labor” (262-63). However, in the first half of the nineteenth century, men were increasingly expected to establish a masculine identity through their professions, rather than, as earlier, through their role in the community and as heads of their families (Rotundo 3). The home was more and more becoming a feminine place and so was reading, as it was an activity linked to the domestic sphere. As a result, reading and self-improvement, even virtue, which had been considered a masculine quality a century earlier, became duties for the middle-class woman, the Angel in the House, while her husband was expected to battle in the savage public sphere.15 Yet, it is important to keep in

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15 In her article “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America” Ruth Bloch maintains that the definition of the word “virtue” changed in the Revolutionary era and early republic from referring to a male patriotic ideal to a feminine moral one. See also Philip
mind that, as discussed in chapter one, the separate spheres were never separate, despite their appellation, but overlapped. Also, this ideology developed over several decades, and, while the businessman was to become one of the most sought-after ideals in years to come, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, he was viewed with both admiration and suspicion. Even if commerce was becoming an increasingly acceptable career choice, it was haunted by the eighteenth-century belief that it was a threat to virtue, even well into the next century. Illustrating the persisting prejudices against businessmen, Catharine Maria Sedgwick carefully points out in her autobiography (written in the mid-nineteenth century) that the habits of her father and her brothers were “intellectual” and “[t]heir talk was not of beeves [beef], nor of making money; that now universal passion had not entered into men and possessed them as it does now, or, if it had, it was not in the sanctuary of our home—there the money-changers did not come” (The Power 76).

Margaret Bayard Smith’s contemporary novel What is Gentility? A Moral Tale (1828) offers an example of the struggle for gentility in the early nineteenth century. In the novel, the young Charles McCarthy, who spends his days in his room reading Greek drama, succeeds in becoming genteel, while his two siblings, who are less diligent students, fail to do so. However, it is not until Charles leaves his room, marries a rational and well-read woman, and becomes a clerk, thus having to limit his studies to his spare time, that he becomes truly genteel and is established as the hero of the tale. As is indicated by the fact that he has to venture outside his study in order to become successful, even if Charles's genteel education is acquired in a domestic setting, he cannot reach a social standing that corresponds to his education unless he leaves the domestic sphere. Thus, even if the home, with its books and other tokens of refinement, is the symbol of gentility, for a man, a genteel position in society requires that one enters the world of business. Charles illustrates the middle-class effort to combine, but also keep apart, a genteel life of self-improvement and a professional career. Through his extensive studies Charles has developed high morals and a genteel character, and it is these qualities that recommend him to people in high positions who help him advance in society. It is not the subjects he has studied per se that aid him. Unlike the Jacksonian emphasis on practical skills and its rejection of intellectualism, middle-class gentility was not adverse to intellectual subjects. However, because middle-class ideology also emphasized industry, frugality, and utility, its attitude to intellectual topics remained troubled.

Gould’s Covenant and Republic where he argues that the changing meanings of “virtue” opened for alternative imaginings of this concept in the post-Revolutionary and antebellum eras.
Whereas extensive reading was necessary in order to become refined according to middle-class ideology, Jackson, we remember, bragged that he had read only one book. Seen in the context of gentility, it is obvious that the Jacksonian movement was not merely a challenge to the Enlightenment ideals of the Founding Fathers, it was also a challenge to the middle class that was steadily gaining ground in the early decades of the century. While the Jacksonians claimed to represent the common man (Hofstadter 158-59), the middle class strove to be above the common man. Whereas the Jacksonians rejected luxury items such as books, flower arrangements, and fine clothes as effeminate and British, the genteel middle class saw them as emblems of a civilized and refined lifestyle. In many ways, then, the Jacksonians and the middle class were in opposite camps and no more so than in their views on learning and education. However, as the fact that Jackson had many supporters in the middle class suggests, the appearance of a clear-cut opposition between middle-class ideals and those of the Jacksonians is deceptive. While in many instances opposites, the middle class and the Jacksonians shared a common ideological base in that they both adhered to republican ideals. Like the middle class, the Jacksonians emphasized industry, frugality, and the ability of the individual to elevate himself in society. Furthermore, the Jacksonians embraced and emphasized issues that the aspiration for refinement had rendered complicated for the middle class, such as the rejection of luxury and British and aristocratic ideals. Thus, in a sense, the Jacksonian ideals exposed the inconsistencies inherent in middle-class ideology. Whereas the middle class criticized its own members for being indolent, artificial, and shallow (Bushman 191), Jackson was extolled for having escaped those very character flaws and the Jacksonians claimed their leader was “artificial in nothing.” Also, with a jab at the middle-class love of reading, they praised his “natural sense” that “can never be acquired by reading books—it can only be acquired, in perfection, by reading men” (qtd in Ward 52).

The Jacksonian movement exposed the ambivalence the adherents of middle-class gentility felt toward their own lifestyle. Was it possible to be refined and American at the same time? Should the Americans adopt a European lifestyle or create something uniquely their own? Was England a friend or a foe, an oppressor or a temporarily estranged older sibling? These were questions the middle class wrestled with and, as we will see, the historical novel, which was a genre informed by middle-class ideology, was

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16 As Michael Rogin points out, the voting patterns in Jackson’s three presidential races suggests that his supporters were sectionally divided rather than classwise. Jackson’s supporters were located mainly in the South and the West (265). Jackson was also supported by many writers and intellectuals, such as James Fenimore Cooper, Orestes Browson, William Cullen Bryant, James Kirke Paulding, and Nathaniel Hawthorne (Hofstadter 156).
one of the arenas on which the struggle to reconcile republican and genteel ideals was played out.17

The Historical Novel

As seen in the introduction, the historical novel of the 1820s combined elements from different genres. In their attempt to avoid the stigma of the novel, the authors juxtaposed historical personas and events with fiction. They also sometimes daringly attributed fictional events and character traits to real historical personages. For example, the novel The Wilderness; or Braddock’s Times: A Tale of the West (1823) by James McHenry depicts a young George Washington and explains that it was due to disappointment in love, since the girl he met in the “Wilderness” preferred another, that the future Father of the Nation came to devote his life to the military, which in turn brought him to the presidency.18 In addition to the freedom taken with historical personages, writers of historical fiction frequently added gothic elements, such as witches and sorcery to engage their readers. This strategy, which reveals the affiliation between the gothic and historical genres, is not unique to American writers but was also employed by Scott, who, despite the Lukácsian celebration of his realism, retained the fascination with the extraordinary and supernatural found in gothic fiction.19 Despite the incorporation of actual historical phenomena and the expressed aim to describe the national past, the boundaries of reality are routinely challenged in these texts.

In the 1820s, national history was still in its early stages of development, and, in the case of the Revolutionary War, writers of historical fiction were writing about historical events before historians had established an official, “objective,” version. As Michael Kammen points out in A Season of Youth, the War of Independence was quickly incorporated into the saga of the nation, and the 1820s saw the first wave of historical fiction dramatizing the Revolution (153). The War provided ample material for writers of historical fiction, and, especially among those who were active in the Revolution themselves, there was a concern that historical events would become obscured by historical tales (Kammen 148). This was a valid concern, since the line between historical fiction and “fact” was, as we have seen, often

17 Bushman sees the sentimental novel as the genre in which the middle-class anxiety concerning gentility and aristocracy is enacted (Bushman 289-90). However, the historical and sentimental genres tend to overlap.
18 McHenry’s creative interpretation of Washington’s biography did not pass unnoticed by his contemporaries; the well-known critic N.H. Gardiner, wrote a highly entertaining review of the novel where he sarcastically remarks upon the many anachronisms and other historical inaccuracies in the tale.
19 See Coleman O. Parsons, Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott’s Fiction for a discussion of the role of the supernatural in Scott’s work.
Another example that had more far-reaching implications than the ludicrous liberties McHenry takes with the life of Washington can be found in the case of Lydia Maria Child’s *The Rebels* (1825), where a revival sermon given by the evangelist George Whitefield, together with a speech made by the Revolutionary James Otis, both purely fictional, appeared in nineteenth-century schoolbooks as true artifacts (Karcher, *The First Woman* 41). Here we have, then, a quite literal confirmation of the new historicist suspicion of dichotomies. When it becomes impossible to separate fact from fiction, the very tenet on which History as an academic discipline rests, the assumption that it is possible to distinguish one true (or accurate) history, crumbles. Rather, history is shown to be a web of narratives.

The fact that historical fiction and historiography were written with a similar goal in mind did not make the efforts to keep them apart any easier. The study of history was felt to encourage virtue, in the sense of national loyalty or patriotism in the members of the republic. “Like nationalist history,” Gould maintains, “historical fiction theoretically instructed readers in republican behavior” (*Covenant and Republic* 10). Writing history, then, was a tool for fostering the good republicans Rush and Webster saw as necessary for the survival of the new nation. The study of history also had a place in middle-class ideology as it encouraged qualities necessary for refined gentility, such as sensibility, taste, and virtue, which explains the proliferation of historical societies and books on history in the 1820s (Gould, *Covenant and Republic* 9).

As Gould points out, due to its emphasis on personal and public virtue, together with national destiny, history writing of the 1820s tends to be conservative in the sense that it promotes traditional gender roles and social distinctions rather than equality, and offers celebratory, rather than revisionist, portrayals of the established heroes, such as the Founding Fathers. However, Gould also suggests that, unlike historiography, historical fiction “provided one outlet for cultural dissent” (*Covenant and Republic* 13). Whether or not historical fiction offers revisionist or conservative accounts of the past has been debated. Focusing on novels by women, Nina

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20 In *Koningsmarke: The Longe Finne*, James Kirke Paulding writes that “[c]ertain cavillers, who pretend to be the advocates of truth, have strenuously objected to the present fashion of erecting a superstructure of fiction on a basis of fact, which they say is confounding truth with falsehood in the minds of youthful readers . . . [But it] cannot be denied that such a mixture of history and romance is exceedingly palatable; since . . . truth is the meat, and fiction the salt, which gives it a zest, and preserves it from perishing . . . Hence we find young people, who turn with disgust from the solid dulness of pure matter of fact history, devouring with vast avidity those delectable mixed dishes, and thus acquiring a knowledge of history, which, though we confess somewhat adulterated, is better than none at all. Besides this, many learned persons are of opinion that all history is in itself little better than a romance” (3-4).

21 In fact, historical writing was so dominant that in his review of Sedgwick’s novel *Redwood* (1824), William Cullen Bryant praises her courage in writing about contemporary society rather than the past (246).
Baym argues that, due to its primary goal of constructing individuals not only as national subjects but also as Christians, historical fiction retains the conservative strain found in historiography (American Women Writers 47). Stephen Arch also emphasizes the conservatism of historical fiction. In his article “Romancing the Puritans,” Arch disagrees with what he feels are anachronistic interpretations made by feminist scholars, such as Carolyn Karcher and Sandra Zagarell, who read Child’s Hobomok, Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie, and Lydia Sigourney’s Sketch of Connecticut as challenges to the traditional account of history found in Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels, for example (109ff). In her introduction to Hobomok, Karcher shows how Child subtly alters history by portraying, as the narrator of the tale puts it, “domestic detail . . . already concealed by the ivy which clusters around the tablets of our recent history” (Hobomok 6), but also by presenting alternative portrayals of historical figures familiar to her contemporary readers (Intro, Hobomok xxi). Sandra Zagarell suggests that Sigourney’s Sketch of Connecticut and Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie challenge popular narrative modes by depicting oppressed groups in society, such as Indians and women, in new ways (226, 233).

Even if I agree with Baym that the vast bulk of historical fiction written in the 1820s presents a conservative account of history, I also believe that there are exceptions, such as Hobomok and Hope Leslie. While one of the central aims of historical fiction is to settle national and cultural boundaries through the establishment of a national history, another important goal of many historical novels is to challenge and undermine those very boundaries. Also, as we have seen, the 1820s was a time when the premises for a national history had not yet been established. This, together with the fact that historical fiction is a site where the anxieties and tensions created by the middle-class admiration of gentility are played out, undercuts any attempt to present a coherent and stable account of the glories of the nation’s past even in conservative historical novels. Furthermore, since the discussion of these novels in terms of conservative and revisionist tends to assume that revisionist novels are “good” novels in that they offer solutions that correspond to values of our time—generally they challenge limiting gender roles, and/or promote an anti-racist agenda—I want to avoid such labeling of the novels discussed in this study. Rather, I intend to follow the strategy outlined by Judith Fetterley in her discussion of Hope Leslie, according to which the system of binary oppositions into which texts tend to be organized as racist/non-racist, classist/non-classist etc., is rendered invalid since “what is admirable about Hope Leslie cannot be separated from what is

22 See also Susanne Opfermann, “Lydia Maria Child, James Fenimore Cooper, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick: A Dialogue on Race, Culture, and Gender.”
problematic” (“My Sister! My Sister!” 79). The resistance to dichotomous ways of thinking is in line with the theories of Foucault and Bhabha that inform this study. Similar to Fetterley, Jane Tompkins suggests in Sensational Designs that, rather than singling out novels and stories that are exceptional, we should look at works that “offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment” (xi). Tompkins’s strategy serves as a means to counter the traditional monolithic canon where texts perceived to be exceptional are singled out while those deemed typical (or sometimes stereotypical) are left aside. Thus, Tompkins’s approach serves as one way of studying texts as parts of their culture, in the fashion of the new historicists. It also offers a way to create a Foucauldian archive of local knowledges as the focus is moved from the singular to the typical. By studying a variety of literary works that offer different versions of the past, my aim is to show some of the ways in which the nation was imagined in the 1820s.

The Hermit, the Witch, and the Schoolmaster

It has been said . . . that no woman and no Negro is ever fully admitted to the white man’s world. Perhaps we should add men teachers to the list of the excluded.

—Willard Waller (qtd in Hofstadter 320 n.)

Considering that the shape of the nation’s past was far from a coherent and established entity, historical tales of the 1820s are surprisingly consistent in their subject matter. In an 1822 review of James Fenimore Cooper’s The Spy, W.H. Gardiner writes that “[t]here seem to be three great epochs in American history, which are peculiarly well fitted for historical romance; — the times just succeeding the first settlement—the aera of the Indian wars, which lie scattered along a considerable period—and the revolution” (59-60). Apparently agreeing with Gardiner, most writers of historical fiction at this time deal with these time periods, with the majority of the novels being set either in the early Puritan era or during the Revolution. Also, Indian characters, whether or not as participants in the Indian wars, make frequent appearances in these texts. A common aspect that is not mentioned by Gardiner is that historical narratives, while they are set in the past, tend to deal with, or comment on, contemporary issues.23

23 Nina Baym writes that “all historical novels by women—like those by men—had contemporary agendas as well as antiquarian interests and expressed a variety of political opinions” (American Women Writers 154).
Other recurring ingredients in historical fiction in the 1820s are, as noted, the themes of learning and education. Considering the prominent place education and learning held in the 1820s, together with the fact that these issues were crucial in middle-class ideology, it comes as no surprise that they also found their way into the historical fiction of the time. Historical fiction was aimed at middle-class readers and just as these readers proved their gentility by reading and discussing books, so is the character of the hero or heroine in this type of novel established through the description of his or her education. By describing the protagonist as educated and interested in books, the narrator is able to convey a picture of her as virtuous, sensible, and worthy of the readers’ admiration. Not only does the interest in books reveal the character to be refined, it also establishes her as serious, rather than artificial, and diligent, as opposed to idle. In other words, she escapes the negative qualities associated with gentility, but remains refined. It is frequently the case that, after the education and intellectual interests of the protagonist have been thoroughly described, the issue is dropped, never to be mentioned again.24 Studying the inventories of late seventeenth-century households, Bushman finds that articles that signify gentility were purchased in order to endow the homes with an air of refinement, even if the economy of the families did not allow them to live a genteel life to the full (28). In the same way, tokens of education, which are also symbols of gentility, reflect the virtue and refinement of their owners in antebellum narratives. As Bushman explains, “books, more than any other possessions, came to identify cultivated people, rivaling parlors as symbols of refinement. To own books implied sensibility, taste, even polish. Books placed and defined their owners” (283). In her home, the enigmatic Maude Mansel in *Yorktown* (1826), Eliza Lanesford Cushing’s novel about the Revolution, displays books and paintings, thus manifesting her gentility. Even though she is a depraved and dangerous woman, the initial description of her home with its genteel attributes suggests that she was once a virtuous and refined young girl and this prevents the reader from viewing her as completely fallen. Learning and education—a proper education, that is—are emblems of delicacy, sensibility, and taste, the cornerstones of middle-class virtue. Whereas education and learning, as such, tend to be minor themes or merely mentioned in the novels, they are important in that they serve as markers of the characters’ status and character. Thus, despite the limited space learning and education occupy in the narratives, they actually play an important role. This will be further illustrated in the coming chapters.

As we have seen, however, while education and learning are prerequisites for gentility, they are also closely linked to inequality, aristocracy, and European, primarily British, values and traditions. Even in tales where

24 See for example Lydia Sigourney’s *Sketch of Connecticut, Forty Years Since* (1824). Another, earlier, example is Ann Eliza Bleecker’s *The History of Maria Kittle* (1797).
education and learning are encouraged, they tend to reinforce social disparity and uphold the status quo. For example, if we return to the short story “New Oxford,” which was mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, the very title suggests that we will encounter a type of learning and education different from that of England. In the narrative, which is set in the late seventeenth century, the pious Father Daillé and his aristocratic wife take upon themselves to educate the boys and girls of the American village of New Oxford. However, while all children are admitted to the school, only a few are permitted to continue to higher studies, and it is the teaching couple who determines which students show enough promise to continue their education. Even if these children may have a better chance of social advancement than many of their contemporaries, it is still the man of the church and the aristocratic lady who decide the futures of the young villagers. Father Daillé happily notes that “his influence over their [his students’] opinions and affections was becoming unbounded; and he often thought, as he contemplated his little seminary, ‘are ye not all branches of my planting?’” (66-67). As it turns out, New Oxford is not so different from the old one after all.

In addition to their distinguished backgrounds, the Daillés are foreigners, which reinforces the notion of learning as foreign, rather than American. “New Oxford” is not unique in this respect since in historical fiction of the 1820s characters connected with learning, or, in some cases, other types of (extraordinary) knowledge—learned men and women—are often portrayed as outsiders; thus learning is located outside the borders of the nation. Sometimes the learned persons come from a foreign country, usually Britain. For example, in Child’s The Rebels the learned aristocrat Frederic Somerville, “fresh from the classic schools of Greece and Rome” (30), is a British Tory, and while he lives in Boston during the early days of the Revolution, he remains loyal to the British Crown. Rather than being a foreigner to the country, the learned person is sometimes an outsider to the place he is currently situated in. In Cooper’s The Prairie (1827), the naturalist Battius is completely out of place on the prairie where he has gone in the hope of finding new species. Personifying the bookish scholar who, according to the Jacksonians, was unfit for the “real” world, Battius is unable to function in a world with real animals and Indians rather than with books describing these fantastic creatures. At the end of the novel Battius returns to his sheltered academic life on the East Coast. A third type of foreignness found among learned characters is other-worldliness. Unlike the selfish Somerville and the comic Battius, the eponymous protagonist in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel Fanshawe (1828) is goodness personified. Fanshawe is kind, sensible, and gentle. However, due to his studies, his true abode is in the world of ideas and, unable to survive in the real world, he
dies and the novel ends proclaiming that “[h]e left a world for which he was unfit” (217). In fact, Fanshawe is not the only character in the novel on whom studying has a physically debilitating effect. Rather, this seems to be a fate shared by his fellow students. While the young men enter the college with “brown cheeks . . . [having] but recently left the plough,” they graduate with “paler cheek . . . less robust form . . . [and] . . . spectacles of green” (76). In other words, due to their studies, the young men have lost their muscles and eyesight and are no longer fit for the manual labor they used to perform or the world of farming to which they formerly belonged. As the young men have moved up on the social scale they have also moved from the outside world to the domestic world of the parlor.

The teacher, or schoolmaster, is a recurring character in historical fiction and, like the learned men above, he tends to be an outsider. Whereas Noah Webster argued that the schoolmaster should be “the most reputable and well informed man in the district,” as he was a key figure in inculcating virtue and patriotism in American youth (“On the Education” 67), the teacher in historical fiction tends to be of a different cast. Not only is the schoolmaster frequently a foreigner to the country, he is also out of place in his current abode and unfamiliar with the ways of the world. In other words, in the teacher, the different types of outsiderness mentioned above often merge. As mentioned in the introduction, the schoolmaster in Ezekiel Sanford’s historical novel The Humours of Eutopia, Ebenezer Van Vacuum, is an English spy who describes himself as a “transient visiter . . . a kind of foreigner” (1:135). Like his namesake Ebenezer Crane in Washington Irving’s short story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” Van Vacuum is dull, awkward, and ignorant. Neither able nor willing to fit into the community, Van Vacuum holds himself to be above the American villagers, whom he considers to be only one small step above the savage Indians (1:194-95). Unlike Battius and Fanshawe, who have studied intensely, Van Vacuum, as well as Ebenezer Crane, are uneducated. Attempting to explain the etymology of the word amphitheater, Van Vacuum finds himself undone by the relentless logic of the American heroine Mary Braxton, whose extensive reading of Shakespeare has furnished her “with a fund of colloquial English which set her above every person, she was likely to encounter in Eutopia” (1:48). As Mary’s reading has provided her with genuine knowledge, she is able to show that Van Vacuum’s mind is as empty as his name implies and that being English does not automatically mean that one is more learned than

25 James N. Mancall offers a rather different characterization of Fanshawe in “ Thoughts Painfully Intense”: Hawthorne and the Invalid Author, as he sees him not as a dying effeminate scholar, but as a man who conquers his passion for the heroine, Ellen, and whose name is the only one that will be remembered by posterity (23).
26 Although Battius is dimwitted, he has received an extensive education, as his reliance on intricate theories, rather than his own eyesight, reveals. I will discuss Battius in detail in chapter four.
an American. While Van Vacuum believes he is above the Americans due to his being English, Mary is “set . . . above every person” because of her own efforts and accomplishments.

The fact that Van Vacuum is outdone by a young girl not only puts his erudition, but also his manliness, into question. Like most schoolmasters in historical fiction, Van Vacuum is feminine rather than masculine, which accentuates his inability to fit into society. Another example of a feminine schoolmaster is Master Cradock in Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* who is “a man rather acted upon than acting” (29). Due to his extreme awkwardness, Master Cradock is in constant need of being rescued by his student, Hope Leslie. While Hope does not seem to have suffered from her studies—her tutor Master Cradock proudly pronounces her to be as knowledgeable as he is—Cradock himself, the fictional Governor Winthrop condescendingly concedes, must be pardoned, since he is an “old man, whose original modicum of sense was greatly diminished by age, and excess of useless learning” (342). An awkward, inactive, and feminine man, Master Cradock has no place in the frontier world of seventeenth-century America.

Despite his foreignness and femininity, the schoolmaster is not the most extreme example of an outsider in 1820s historical fiction. The ultimate outsider is the hermit. The hermit is a recurring figure in these tales and is typically described as a wise man living in a hut or a cave. Notwithstanding his apparent poverty, the hermit’s humble abode is often furnished with books. In *Hobomok*, the stern Puritan Mr. Conant disapprovingly says of Mr. Blackstone, who lives a secluded life at Tri-Mountain, that “those who have been within his dwelling, say that he hath many books, forgetting the excellent advice of Pliny, ‘*Multum legendum est, non multa*’” (96). For Mr. Conant, the mere possession of books other than the Bible makes Mr. Blackstone a suspect figure. While the hermit sometimes takes an active part in the narrative, he is generally situated on the margin and more often than not does not interfere with the events taking place in the tale. Rather, he is mentioned as an example of extreme wisdom, a curiosity, and then disappears from the tale. In other words, not only does the hermit stand outside society, he also has no place in the tale in which he figures. The character of the recluse is familiar in literary history and his frequent appearance in historical fiction shows the genre’s affiliation with gothic fiction, where he is a common figure. However, even if he is a formula character, his role, or apparent lack of a role, in nineteenth-century historical fiction is interesting since it reveals contemporary attitudes to learning. Whereas the hermit, unlike the schoolmaster, is commonly described as good and wise, he is not a heroic figure. Since, according to middle-class ideology, one of the purposes of acquiring learning is to cut a figure in

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27 *The great* should be selected, not *the many.*
society, not stand outside it, the hermit is a failure and his erudition worthless.

While the hermit is the most extreme outsider among the learned men in 1820s historical fiction, the witch fills the same role among the learned (or, rather, knowledgeable) female characters. Just like the hermit, the witch tends to occupy a position on the fringe of the tale and she, too, is a character the historical novel has inherited from gothic fiction. Unlike the hermit, the witch often takes part in the ongoing events. She usually serves a minor function in the narrative, however. Whereas the hermit possesses academic learning, the knowledge of the witch is generally of a different nature. In the anonymously written *The Witch of New England* (1824), the figure of the witch is defined as “a person that having the free use of reason, doth knowingly and willingly seek and obtain of the Devil or any other god beside the true Jehovah, an ability to do or know strange things which he cannot by his own human abilities arrive at” (13). A witch, then, is someone who possesses extraordinary knowledge or powers that have been obtained from a non-Christian source. Unlike the learning of the hermit, the knowledge of the witch is evil. Furthermore, since the learning of the hermit has rendered him unfit for society, he is powerless. The witch, however, has gained power through her knowledge and despite (or rather due to) her marginal role, she poses a threat to society.

The powerlessness of the hermit is shared by the other learned men. Thus, despite his aristocratic background and high connections, Somerville, in Child’s *The Rebels*, is forced to leave the country, as well as the woman he loves. The clownish Master Cradock in Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* is both pitied and laughed at, and Fanshawe, as we have seen, is “unfit” for this world and literally studies himself to death. Unlike the languishing effeminate Fanshawe, the witch tends to be tall, big-boned, and masculine. For example, the witch Molly Bradstreet in *The Rebels* is described as having a “masculine figure, of such uncommon height and rigid outline” (73). In *The Witch of New England* (1824), the witch Annie Brown, who has a “masculine and daring spirit” (93), is “tall, raw-boned and much bent in the body; her limbs large and muscular giving promise of great strength” (37).

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28 The figure of the witch is so common in these tales that the narrator of Garrit Furman’s historical novel *Redfield* (1825) ironically apologizes for not having been able “to procure a single witch wherewith to embellish our story” (154). The story does contain a hermit, however.

29 While most witches are female, there are male witches as well. George Burroughs in John Neal’s *Rachel Dyer* is accused of being a witch and sentenced to die. Also, not only white women but Indian and black women as well were suspected of witchcraft. Tituba, one of the most well-known of the accused witches in the Salem witch trials, has been described as both an Indian and a black slave. In the narratives discussed in this study, the suspected witches of black or Indian descent include Nelema and Magawisca in Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* and the Frizzled Head in Paulding’s *Koningsmarke, the Longe Finne*.
The “witch-like” (83) Maude Mansel in Cushing’s *Yorktown* not only wrestles with soldiers, she also dresses like one and takes part in battles.

If the “true” witches in the narratives are not heroines, the learned heroines, although not explicitly witches, are often connected with witchcraft. In the anonymous “The Witch” (1828), Ann Jones, a girl with “a remarkable faculty of learning” (191), is forced to flee for her life after being accused of witchcraft because she speaks a language no one in her village understands. The language, it turns out, is Latin. The learned heroine in *Hobomok*, Mary Conant, flirts with witchcraft as she performs a magic ritual in order to find out who will be her future husband.30

While learned men often acquire feminine traits, a slight stature, and weak health, learned women, both witches, such as Molly Bradstreet and Annie Brown, and heroines, like Hope Leslie and Mary Braxton, grow strong, self-sufficient, and vital.31 Hope and Mary both take on the role of the rebel—which is commonly assigned to the male hero—as they challenge authority figures, whether they be in the shape of Puritan leaders, parents, or (fake) schoolmasters, and Molly and Annie not only demonstrate their transgressions of gender conventions in their masculine bodies but also in their independent lifestyles. Another example of the link between extraordinary knowledge—whether it be learning or witchcraft—and masculinity is the gentle Elizabeth in Evans’s *Resignation* whose “masculine mind” (1:295) constitutes one of her chief attractions for her beaux. Learning, then, affects gender roles as it both enables and forces male and female characters to transgress perceived boundaries for masculine and feminine behavior. By challenging traditional gender roles, learning becomes a potentially disruptive force, which is one explanation both for the unease with learning in historical fiction and for the celebration of it.

As the brief description above reveals, despite the celebration of learning and education, which are crucial ingredients in middle-class ideology, the learned characters in historical fiction are often villains, clowns, or enemies. Education, we know, was seen as the ticket—supposedly the only ticket since an aristocratic background could not be acceptable grounds for admission in democratic America—to genteel society. Margaret Bayard Smith insists that “education is gentility” (4), thus excluding any alternative route to that state of bliss. Furthermore, as we have seen, education and learning are emblems of virtue and character in historical fiction. Nevertheless, the learned person, especially if he is a man, is an outsider and, unlike the trapper and the backwoodsman who also stand outside society, the solitariness of the learned man does not make him a hero.

30 For a discussion of the significance of Mary’s dabbling with magic, see Carolyn Karcher’s *The First Woman in the Republic* (26-30).
31 There are examples of learned men who, rather than being slight, are disproportionately large, such as Dr. Sitgreaves in Cooper’s *The Spy*. Sitgreaves’s physique does not render him more powerful, however. Just as Battius, he is clownish.
The fact that the learned persons are outsiders exposes the ambivalence to learning and education inherent in middle-class ideology. While the learned women and men seem to be opposites in that one party is powerful, masculine, and strong, while the other is powerless, feminine, and slight, they have much in common, since both transgress, often against their own wishes, prescribed gender roles. In the preface to *The Female Poets of America* (1849), Rufus Griswold suggests that the switching of gender roles may be necessary for creative genius to develop. “It does not follow, [he argues,] because the most essential genius in men is marked by qualities which we may call feminine, that such qualities when found in female writers have any certain or just relation to mental superiority.” Griswold suggests that since male artists “retain a sensuous cast” (7), their female counterparts may be guided by reason, which is seen as a masculine quality. However, while Griswold speculates that the transgression of gender roles could be necessary in order to develop a creative and intellectual mind, the characterization of the learned person in historical fiction, which, as we have seen, is often ambiguous, indicates that this may also be seen in a less positive light. Both learned men and learned women often either refuse or are unable to live up to the roles—both civic and gender roles—expected of them. By failing to rise to the demands of society, they pose a potential threat to social order. Even though a genteel person was expected to possess extensive learning—she should be able to converse upon a wide range of topics, we remember—the example of the learned person seems to suggest that there is such a thing as too much learning. In the portrayal of the learned person, then, many historical tales seem to pay heed to Jacksonian ideals.32

While both men and women were expected to improve themselves, the figure of the dying scholar reflects the fact that, in the early nineteenth century, education and learning were increasingly becoming feminine activities. Women were expected to educate their children, and the number of female teachers increased (Preston 531). Female educators and intellectuals, such as Sarah Josepha Hale and Catharine Beecher, argued that women, rather than men, should teach, since women had higher morals and were better caretakers.33 At the same time, the ideal of self-made manhood prescribed that it was in the world of business and professions, not in the domestic parlor or library, that men should establish masculine identities (Rotundo 3). The Jacksonian celebration of the soldier, the backwoodsman, and the trapper, figures that were decidedly savage rather than refined,

32 The transgression of gender roles is not always portrayed negatively, however. Sedgwick’s learned heroine Hope Leslie, for example, repeatedly oversteps the limits of appropriate female behavior proscribed by the Puritans. As a result, she exposes the schemes of the villainous Sir Gardiner, and wins the heart of the hero Everell Fletcher.

reinforced the ambivalence toward the learned man. Thus, despite the fact that learning and education were the primary vehicles for achieving refinement, they did not constitute a suitable basis for masculine identity.

However, as is indicated by the fact that not only male characters, but female ones as well transgress gender boundaries when they acquire learning or other types of knowledge, the feminization of learning and education is not the sole reason for the abundance of languishing scholars in these texts. Common to the witches, the effeminate scholars, and the silly schoolmasters is that they are either obsessed or demonstrate some other type of excess in their manner and/or person, and that their knowledge is limited to a certain topic or area. This brings us back to the before-mentioned theme of right and, more importantly, wrong types of education. While the right kind of education will elevate one’s character to refined gentility, the wrong kind has a debilitating effect, as the previously discussed case of Cornelia in Potts’s short story demonstrates. As an army physician, Dr. Sitgreaves in Cooper’s The Spy (1821) may be educated, but because medicine is all he knows—his constant search for limbs to amputate proves him to be a monomaniac—he does not live up to the demands for a versatile education required by genteel society. Whereas the ideal middle-class body was delicate and genteel (Bushman 295), Dr. Sitgreaves is “grotesque” (106), “excessive” (79), and “shapeless[ly] form[ed]” (291), thus reflecting his extreme behavior in his appearance. Likewise, the awkward Master Cradock, who has devoted his life to his language studies and to Hope, can barely open his mouth without offending someone, since the acquisition of appropriate manners has been neglected as he has devoted all his energies to his obsessions. With her knowledge of magic and sorcery, the witch, too, lacks the proper accomplishments for refined society. Gentility, it was felt, should entail discipline and good manners (Bushman 64). The witch, however, is uncontrolled, often angry, and not afraid to speak her mind. Rather than encouraging restraint, the knowledge of the witch enables her to be unrestrained and transgress existing behavioral codes. Seen in this context, the witch, together with the obsessed scholars, serves as a warning against the wrong type of education. If the right kind of education allows the individual to develop refined manners and become admired in genteel society, the wrong kind creates individuals who, through their obsessive and unrestrained behavior, pose a threat to the civilized and harmonious society the middle class sought to create.

Discussing changing perceptions of the body, Foucault notes in Crime and Punishment that during the course of the eighteenth century the figure of the ideal soldier changed. From having been based on certain signs of strength, courage, and pride, he became something that could be made, as out of clay, through correction and constraint (135). In other words, if the ideal soldier in the beginning of the century were born as such, his counterpart a hundred years later was trained to fit that role. Foucault writes,
The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, nor at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it... discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, “docile” bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). (137-38)

As the grotesque Sitgreaves, but also models of middle-class beauty, indicate, appearance is acquired through education; and, equally important, appearance reflects the education one has received. The excessiveness of Sitgreaves reveals the deficiencies of his education as it has failed to shape him. Returning to the witches, their large masculine bodies, too, serve as an indication of their faulty education. Far from being “docile bodies,” the witches have developed strengths and abilities that, rather than being of use for society, pose a threat to it.

While Dr. Sitgreaves is “excessive” and “grotesque,” most learned men seemingly fit the middle-class ideal since they are slight and delicate. Possessing a delicate frame and high sensibility, Fanshawe seems the epitome of refinement, yet, despite his attempt to become the knight in shining armor, it is his friend Edward Walcott who claims the bride, leaving Fanshawe to wither away in his study. The figure of the dainty scholar suggests that there might be such a thing as too much learning, even when the objects of study—as opposed to those of the witches—are appropriate. If the goal of education was to acquire delicacy, sensibility, and taste, the scholar is too delicate and sensitive. Although the dainty scholar’s body certainly is “docile,” it does not live up to the social demands for a useful body, as it is weak and sickly. Like the learned men and the witchies discussed above, the languishing scholar is obsessed and, rather than fitting him for polished society, the learning of the scholar has made him unfit for the world. Despite the middle class’s wariness of the “common man,” then, the ambivalent portrayal of the effeminate scholar suggests that there lurked an uneasy suspicion that there might be something to the Jacksonian “natural intellect,” after all. In The Dutchman’s Fireside (1831), James Kirke Paulding describes Sybrandt Westbrook, who manages to recover from the diligent studies of his youth, and the subsequent decline in health, and becomes a sturdy hero. The venerable scholar Dominie Stettinus, who had “Buried every impulse of nature under the mighty mass of scholastic rubbish” (43), “was so zealous in plying ... [Sybrandt] with books that he forgot men, and above all, women, who are as necessary to the formation of mind and manners as they are to the creation of the man himself” (42). As a
result, Sybrandt has become absent-minded and awkward and his back is bent like that of an old man (43). Sybrandt is in love with his cousin Catalina, but, because of his extreme awkwardness, which is displayed through his inability to carry a conversation—the foremost sign of gentility—he dares not woo her, and instead leaves the farm for the frontier. In the wilderness, Sybrandt encounters a mysterious man referred to as “the stranger” (98), who teaches him to act rather than think. Echoing the Jacksonians, who privileged action over contemplation, the stranger exclaims: “Thinking! what has a man to do with thought among the Indians and wild beasts? Action, boy, action is the word here in my empire of shade” (108). When Sybrandt is able to prove his courage, as he refuses to flee from the Indians, his teacher praising says that “you are a fine fellow—something more than a scholar” (112). Having risen from scholar to “fine fellow,” Sybrandt returns to civilization and marries Catalina. The novel ends with a few words of wisdom from “the stranger,” who turns out to be a real historical persona, as well as an aristocrat, Sir William Johnson: “action, remember, action alone can secure the happiness of your future life, by making you useful and distinguished” (287). In *The Dutchman’s Fireside*, book learning not only has a debilitating effect on Sybrandt’s physical health, it has also made him unfit for social interaction. However, it is not learning per se that is the culprit. Rather, it is because he has done little else besides reading that Sybrandt has become a failure. After having spent some time in the forest, Sybrandt is more confident and, now that his awkwardness has been vanquished, he is able to display his learning for Catalina to admire (which seems to be the main purpose of his extensive studies). In other words, as in the case of Charles in Smith’s *What is Gentility?*, Sybrandt’s scholarly studies have not been a waste of time, but they must be combined with practical activities in order for him to succeed and put his learning to use. Unlike the hermit, Sybrandt learns to show off his learning in a social setting and, as a result, he escapes the isolation of the former.

While *The Dutchman’s Fireside* does not repudiate learning in the manner of the Jacksonians, it does suggest that it should be combined with “natural intellect.” Like Cooper’s learned clowns Battius and Sitgreaves, Sybrandt is the victim of a too narrow, or specialized, education. By adding some practical skills, Sybrandt manages to turn out a hero. Despite the heed paid to the “natural intellect” by both Cooper and Paulding, their ultimate goal is different from that of the Jacksonians, however. Whereas the Jacksonian movement, as we have seen, was a critique of middle-class gentility, the heroes of Cooper’s and Paulding’s tales end up becoming just that—genteel. In Cooper’s *The Prairie*, the practical man, Natty Bumppo,
dies an outcast, while Captain Middleton and Paul Hover, who possess both practical skills and manners suitable for the settlements, return to successful lives within the borders of civilization. Sybrandt’s excursion into the wilderness does not turn him into a backwoodsman; rather, it endows him with skills that enable him to shine in refined society. Instead of a repudiation of middle-class refinement, Cooper’s and Paulding’s adoption (and adaptation) of Jacksonian ideals seems to be a strategy to acquire refinement.

If Sybrandt has studied too much and needs to combine his bookish accomplishments with practical skills in order to win the girl, John O'Kelley in Evans’s Resignation has the opposite problem. Having been rejected by his cousin Martha who finds him too unpolished and ignorant, John begins to study in the evenings. John’s studies result not only in increased knowledge but also in a decline in health. While this alarms his housekeeper, it impresses Martha, who notes that “John was indeed pale, and extremely thin; but he had a very gentlemanly look; a certain aspect of refinement, calculated to create a prepossession in his favour; and his manners exhibited an air of polish, which he had certainly acquired since she last saw him” (1:221). John is now able to carry a conversation with Martha that is characterized by “fluency and correctness” (1:221), which is quite different from his previous verbal exchanges with her. As he has become more refined and pious (Martha’s rejection of him made John turn to the Bible for consolation), Martha accepts John’s renewed proposal of marriage. Martha’s appreciation of John’s newly acquired education shows that the focus lies not so much on the content of this education—even if his increased knowledge of agriculture delights his employer—as on its positive effects on his manners and character. John has learned to converse and he has obtained a refined appearance, and these qualities, together with his piety, win him Martha’s heart. Like in the case of Sybrandt, John’s knowledge, or skills, have been too limited, and by successfully combining his practical skills with book studies he becomes an eligible suitor for Martha. Interestingly enough, even if the difficulties of Sybrandt and John seem to be opposites, insofar as one is too learned and the other not enough, their problems are expressed the same way—as the inability to converse with the opposite sex. Acquiring a versatile education, they both succeed in communicating with their prospective wives. Conversation is the final goal, but also proof, of a proper middle-class education.

Through its many portrayals of tragic, sometimes threatening, victims of the wrong types of education, the historical novel of the 1820s emphasizes not only the power of education in shaping an individual, but also the important role education plays in shaping society. Being situated on the fringe of the narratives, learned characters serve as warnings against education gone overboard, as it is too narrow or has the wrong content. In his marginal position, both in the narrative and in society, the learned person
often denotes the limit for what is accepted and exposes the ambivalence to learning inherent in middle-class ideology, despite its celebration of it. While the right education is the ticket to domestic bliss, the wrong education will lead to social incompetence, poverty, and isolation.
CHAPTER THREE

Ambivalent Dispositions: The Making and Breaking of Boundaries in Lydia Maria Child’s Historical Fiction

I was in a new world, whose almost unlimited extent lay in the darkness of ignorance and desolation.

—Child, *Hobomok* (7)

[Learning] is friendly to manners. Learning in all countries promotes civilization and the pleasures of society and conversation.

—Benjamin Rush, “Plan” (4)

When the 22-year-old Lydia Maria Child published her first novel, *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times*, in 1824, critics praised it for its “well conceived” characters and skillful portrayal of Indians and their culture, but they also felt that the novel’s plot was “in very bad taste to say the least” (qtd in Karcher 33). Rather than dying a conventional death because of a broken heart when told that her true love Charles has drowned, the heroine Mary Conant elopes with the Indian chief Hobomok.¹ When Charles returns to Puritan Salem three years later, Hobomok leaves his wife and their son and then Mary marries Charles who raises the boy as his own. Child’s second novel, *The Rebels, or Boston Before the Revolution*, which appeared just a year after *Hobomok*, was admired for the portrayal of its heroine Lucretia Fitzherbert, but the heroine, it was felt, should have died of a broken heart after having left the villainous aristocrat Captain Somerville at the altar, rather than marry the rebel Henry Osborne instead (Karcher 46). In other words, according to the critics, both *Hobomok* and *The Rebels* were too long since they continued beyond the expected, conventional ending for a

¹ In *Yamoyden* (1820), the poem by James Eastburn and Charles Roberts that inspired Child’s *Hobomok*, the Indian-white couple dies in the end (Karcher, *The First Woman* 20-21).
novel. By letting her heroines live, Child defied the established conventions of the novel that prescribed that heroines who were disappointed in love should die (as the other heroine in *The Rebels*, Grace, does), rather than marry their second choice.

The transgression of boundaries that critics found disturbing in her work is an important theme in Child’s first two historical novels. In both tales boundaries, not only of genre and gender, but also of national identity, class, and history, are established and confirmed, but also challenged. In this chapter I will explore the making and breaking of boundaries in *Hobomok* and *The Rebels* and how the themes of learning and education are employed as vehicles for discussing the shape and character of the new republic.

While *Hobomok* revises Puritan history and challenges the heroic status of the Puritan ancestors (Karcher, *The First Woman* 22-24), *The Rebels* adheres to dominant accounts of the Revolution and embellishes the status of its established heroes. It may seem surprising that Child’s second novel, despite being published only a year after her controversial debut, is quite conventional, but one should keep in mind that her position had changed radically. When she wrote *Hobomok* she was unknown and inexperienced. Due to the success of her first novel, she gained a powerful, albeit conservative, mentor in George Ticknor who introduced her into the literary establishment in Boston. *The Rebels*, then, was written and published under rather different circumstances compared to *Hobomok* as Child now had a place in the literary community to defend (Karcher, *The First Woman* 39-40). What was actually at stake becomes obvious when considering the treatment Child received eight years later, when she wrote *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*. While her previous work had made her an adored and praised public figure, *An Appeal* caused her to be heavily criticized, her works to be boycotted, and the Boston Athenaeum to cancel her free library privileges, thus making it difficult for her to do research for her writing (Karcher 44). Also, whereas *Hobomok* deals with Puritan society, the history of which had been fairly well established in Child’s time, *The Rebels* depicts events much closer in time. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was in the 1820s that the history of the Revolution was in the process of being established and it was depicted primarily in fiction, rather than in historical studies at this time (Kammen 148). In other words, while Child in *Hobomok* could rewrite the established history of the Puritans, in the case of *The Rebels* there was no such history to revise. As a result, even if both novels attempt to identify boundaries for gender and

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2 I have borrowed the notion of writing beyond the ending from Rachel Blau DuPlessis, whose study *Writing Beyond the Ending* explores the ways in which twentieth-century women writers have challenged the expected resolution of either marriage or death in the nineteenth-century romance novel.
national identity, *Hobomok* deals primarily with the transgression of boundaries, while *The Rebels* seeks to establish them.

**America and Britain: Drawing a Line—and Breaking It**

Amid this fairy dream, the stern voice of duty was heard commanding her to depart from her country and her kindred, and to go to a land of strangers . . . What was she now? A lily weighed down by the pitiless pelting of the storm; . . . a plant which had been fostered and cherished with mild sunshine and gentle dews, removed at once from the hot-house to the desert, and left to unfold its delicate leaves beneath the darkness of the lowering storm.

—*Hobomok* (78-79)

*Hobomok* depicts a young girl who, when she feels herself trapped in an anti-intellectual prison-like milieu, resorts to desperate measures. After having been raised in the splendid mansion of her maternal grandfather in England, where she had been “the little idol of a brilliant circle” (78), Mary is forced to join her Puritan parents in Salem, New England, where they have founded a wretched colony. At her grandfather’s mansion, Mary met Charles Brown, a learned Episcopalian, whose “lofty forehead, stamped with the proud, deep impress of intellect” inspired her to seek “mental riches, and worship . . . at the shrine of genius” (78). Charles follows Mary to the New World, where his Episcopalian faith makes him an enemy in the eyes of the Puritans. When Charles is believed to have drowned after having been forced to leave the colony due to his religious beliefs, Mary, who becomes “more and more weary of the loneliness of unreciprocated intellect” (91) among the anti-intellectual Puritans, elopes with the noble Indian chief Hobomok.3 In the manner of Shakespeare’s Othello, Hobomok has wooed Mary with exotic tales of strange peoples and faraway places. As a result, fascinated by his stories that, according to her father Mr. Conant, were “abounding . . . with metaphors” (133), Mary has come to admire and respect the young Indian chief. Three years later, Charles unexpectedly returns and Hobomok quietly gives up Mary and his son by her and retreats into the wilderness. Mary marries Charles and is reunited with her father, who is forced to accept her marriage and her Episcopalian faith.

In *Hobomok*, learning is not limited to academic skills, but includes the middle-class virtue of sensibility, which is expressed as an appreciation of aesthetic values, such as, for example, love of poetry, beautiful scenery, and also in refined conversations between the characters. This type of learning, in the novel, is perceived to belong primarily in England rather than in

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colonial America. When the narrator, who is a relative of Mary’s, disembarks in Salem, he describes the place as a “new world, whose almost unlimited extent lay in the darkness of ignorance and desolation” (7). Throughout the novel, the New World is described as gloomy (35), bleak, dark, and stormy (79). England, on the other hand, is endowed with “antique grandeur and cultivated beauty” (73); it is characterized by light and “mild sunshine” (79), and contains the “brilliant circle” that adores Mary (78). In the New World, Mary is forced to dwell in the “stern, dark circle” of Puritan society (36). While England is temperate, enlightened, and devoted to poetry and the Arts, the gloomy and superstitious Puritans, living in the unkempt nature of America, are appalled by English scholars, “who would fain judge of the doings of their Maker by their own reason, and . . . say that . . . [bad omens] are the cunning devices of man’s imagination” (116).

These light and dark shades distinguishing and separating the Old from the New World in *Hobomok* were familiar to antebellum readers. According to *Woodbridge’s School Atlas*, which was used in schools in the 1820s and 1830s, the world could be divided into “degrees of civilization.” The atlas divides the world into five stages, or shadings: “Savage”—the darkest shade—“Barbarous,” “Half-Civilized,” “Civilized,” and “Enlightened,” which is marked by beams of light (Lipscomb 56). Here, then, temporal and spatial dimensions are juxtaposed, since, as David C. Lipscomb points out, “readers are given an imaginative geography that lets them measure when they are, in relation to those peoples living in different stages of social development” (58). When the narrator steps off the ship in America, he has not only traveled to a new continent, he has also traveled back in time. Nor are the Puritans who have settled in this wilderness harbingers of light, but, rather, mirror the gloominess of the place. In other words, despite the fact that the settlers come from England, which in *Woodbridge’s School Atlas* is marked by radiating beams, suggesting its propensity to spread its light (Lipscomb 56), they are no longer representatives of civilized society.

As in *Hobomok*, learning in *The Rebels* is perceived to belong to English aristocrats, rather than to Americans. Here, too, learning encompasses more than academic studies, but the emphasis rests on knowledge obtained through books and expressed in elegant conversations. The heroine of *The Rebels*, the brilliant aristocrat Lucretia Fitzherbert, lives with Governor Hutchinson in Boston. Despite her Tory leanings, her best friend is the rebel Grace Osborne. When Hutchinson’s nephew, the learned Captain Somerville, arrives, both Grace and Lucretia fall for his charm and eloquence. After having flirted with the beautiful Grace and even having made her believe he would propose to her, Somerville becomes engaged to the plain Lucretia, ostensibly for her extensive learning, but mainly because of her name and money. After a triumphant tour of England, during which Lucretia impresses the intellectual giants of the time, such as Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Oliver Goldsmith, and Edmund Burke, she returns
to Boston to marry Somerville. However, when Lucretia finds out that Somerville wooed Grace before becoming engaged to her, she leaves him standing at the altar and moves in with the Osbornes. During her stay there, Lucretia discovers that she was switched at birth and that, rather than being a British aristocrat, she is the daughter of a witch with a significant surname, Molly Bradford, who later becomes one of the instigators of the Boston Massacre. Lucretia sheds her allegiance to the British throne and marries the rebel Henry Osborne, the man she previously rejected for not being as intellectual as she is. Despite receiving “flattering letters from the first literary characters” in England urging her to return to them, Lucretia “now devoted all the light of her understanding, and all the warmth of her affections, to the happiness of her excellent husband.” The novel ends with Lucretia, surrounded by her children, welcoming her husband home after he has “rendered important services in the senate and the field” (304). The former aristocratic intellectual has donned the most patriotic role available to women at the time, that of the republican mother.

By endorsing the familiar notion that learning is foreign in America, both *Hobomok* and *The Rebels* seemingly confirm Richard Hofstadter’s thesis that America is characterized by anti-intellectualism. Learning is located outside the borders of the republic and its alien status is further strengthened as it is linked to aristocracy. Nevertheless, when we consider who the heroes and heroines of the two novels are, the scenario becomes complicated. In *The Rebels* it is not the mindless mob attacking the homes of the Tories who represent the “true” rebels. The real rebels in the novel are instead the genteel Osbornes and the reformed Lucretia. In *Hobomok*, Mary and Charles, the two learned aristocrats, serve as role models. In other words, even if the two novels uphold the common definition of learning as British, they do not thereby deny it a place in America.

The fact that the hero and heroine in *Hobomok* are learned aristocrats is of greater significance in the narrative than it may seem at first glance. As Shirley Samuels points out in her study *Romances of the Republic*, in early historical fiction, the marriages of the characters “produce a founding of the family that founds the state” (17). When Mary chooses to marry the two noblemen Hobomok and Charles, both of whom have impressed her intellectually, rather than an anti-intellectual Puritan, this has implications for the future shape of the nation. Because Mary is the heroine of the novel, the nature of her marriage foreshadows the character of the state, and choosing noble husbands suggests that aristocrats, or rather, nobility, will figure in the future of America.

Since by yielding his right to Mary, Hobomok gives up his role in the future nation, it is the two learned English aristocrats who become symbols
for the future America. Posing Mary and Charles, the very names of whom reveal their close ties to the British royalty, as symbols of America, is controversial. Michael Davitt Bell maintains in *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance* that American historians in the early nineteenth century argued that the Puritan migration to the New World could be “regarded as an early assertion of American liberty, as a type of the American Revolution” (9). In Child’s version of the Puritan experience, however, the heroes are not Puritans, but Anglican aristocrats. This obviously complicates the popular analogy between the first generation of immigrants and the Revolutionaries in the eighteenth century. If the Founding Parents were royalist aristocrats, how could they be seen as forebears of the Founding Fathers, who were fighting English rule? After all, the protagonists in *Hobomok*, rather than advocating a rebellion, favor a return to status quo. On the one hand, the novel challenges the reigning early nineteenth-century myth of the nation’s founding, but, on the other, it also reflects the change this myth underwent over time. As Michael Kammen points out, in the 1820s “many Americans became engaged . . . upon a quest for political order, social stability, and national identity” (43). By relegating the Puritans, the rebels in the novel, to a parenthesis in history, *Hobomok* could be seen as a reflection of the 1820s’ emphasis on order, continuity, and stability over rebellion.

The portrayal of the two intellectuals, rather than the Puritan patriarch, Mr. Conant, as representatives of the future citizens of the United States also undermines the dichotomous relationship between America and learning that *Hobomok* has seemingly constructed. Although learning is employed to set up England and America as opposites, the novel also suggests that this dichotomous relationship does not hold true. Puritan society is hostile to intellectuals as is indicated by Mr. Conant’s suspicious attitude to Mr. Blackstone’s library (96), the Puritans’ disdain of anything relating to aestheticism, and their abhorrence of scholars who “would fain judge of the doings of their Maker by their own reason” (116). However, the fact that the founding parents, Mary and Charles, are learned suggests that in the future learning will be important in American society. In fact, rather than confirming the alien status of learning in America, *Hobomok* not only suggests that it has a significant role there, but that it is the learning of English aristocrats that America has embraced. While learning is seemingly set up as foreign, it is in fact located at the very heart of the republic. In this sense *Hobomok*, despite its clear distinctions between America and England,

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4 Karcher sees “[t]he reliance, for their prime claim to originality, on borrowings from a culture the nation was currently destroying—a culture whose destruction, indeed, the nascent ‘American’ literature had the task of rationalizing,” as one of the central contradictions of the early nineteenth-century historical novel (*The First Woman* 18). Seen in this perspective, Hobomok’s departure relieves Anglo-Americans of any feelings of guilt towards the Indians for simultaneously exploiting Indian culture and causing its destruction. After all, Hobomok nobly leaves on his own accord and Mary is sorry that he does.
resting on the metaphors of darkness and light, illustrates Bhabha’s theory that cultural boundaries are not clear-cut and stable, but, rather, resemble a stairwell that allows a flow back and forth, thus “prevent[ing] identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (4). There is, then, a double movement in the novel as boundaries are, on the one hand, shown to be fluid and unstable and, on the other, the very basis for national identity.

Similar to *Hobomok*, it is the aristocrats in *The Rebels* who possess learning. In Governor Hutchinson’s library tokens of erudition—the library bears “obvious marks of the scholar, the antiquarian, and the man of taste” and contains “the finest collection of books then in the Colonies”—are interspersed with symbols of the glory and power of the Empire: “canvass tapestry, on which was blazoned the coronation of George II., here and there interspersed with the royal arms. The portraits of Anne and the two Georges . . . [and] busts of the house of Stuart” (35-36). Contrasting with the magnificent library of Hutchinson stands the “quiet” library of the Rebel Mr. Osborne, “the republican simplicity of which afforded so striking a contrast to the splendid apartment of Governor Hutchinson” (129). Whereas Governor Hutchinson’s library is opulent and ostentatious, filled as it is with heavy books and manuscripts, the content of the Rebel’s library is, except for Grace’s diary, not even mentioned. The two libraries symbolize their owners’ political views and also their characters. While the library of the British aristocrat indicates luxury, ease, and, obviously, aristocracy, qualities that fit poorly with republican ideals, the American Rebel’s library is its very opposite. Nevertheless, even if the two libraries are opposites, the fact that Mr. Osborne actually owns a library suggests that books and learning do have a place in the republic and the library becomes an important symbol for civilization and gentility.

Sanford’s historical novel *The Humours of Eutopia* provides another example of the symbolic function of the library as a mirror of the personalities of its owners. Mr. and Mrs. Blaxton “set an equal value upon their library; but . . . it was not for the same reason; Mr. Blaxton valuing it as a source of instruction and pleasure, Mrs. Blaxton as an ornament to her house” (1:45-46). The couple’s feelings about their library reveal their characters, as Mr. Blaxton turns out to be a man of sense, while his wife is a silly, shallow, and vain woman.

As is indicated by Hutchinson’s library, non-pragmatic learning—that is, learning that is not guided by principles of prudence and utility—is associated with the aristocratic leaders in the novel. When the mob riots against its Tory oppressors, it is their libraries it attacks. Governor Hutchinson’s library, “which he had been more than thirty years collecting with all the devotedness of antiquarian zeal,” is ruined. “Books were stripped of their covers, manuscripts torn to pieces, the royal portraits rent from top to bottom, and the beautiful swan-like neck of Mary Stuart was all that remained of the proud line of busts” (51). Hutchinson’s friend, the Tory
Doctor Byles, also finds his library broken into by the rebels. The library of Mr. Osborne, on the other hand, remains unharmed. For the mob, then, the Tory libraries and their content represent British rule.

However, the mindless violence that the mob displays as it vents its fury on the libraries is nearly as disturbing to Mr. Osborne and his friends as it is to the Tories. In *The Rebels*, the mob, like the Tories, poses a threat to the future of the republic. When the mob attacks Governor Hutchinson’s library, only two artifacts survive the raid. Lucretia rescues two manuscripts: the original of *Hubbard’s History* and Governor Hutchinson’s own *History of Massachusetts*. In its rage, the mob has nearly destroyed its own past. Considering that the creation of a national history would be seen as crucial in the effort to create a national identity in the early nineteenth century, Lucretia’s feat, but also Hutchinson’s “antiquarian zeal,” are highly significant. Not only is it a Tory who has collected, as well as created, important building blocks for what is to become American History, it is also a Tory who saves it for the future. Thus, though the elitist Tories are criticized in the novel, the uneducated mob poses an even more serious threat to the establishment of the new nation. The sympathetic portrayal of Governor Hutchinson, who cries as he sees the destruction of his library, shows that the attitude to the Tories in the novel is not altogether hostile. Even if they represent tyranny, they also stand for positive qualities, such as civilization and tradition. Here, then, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized becomes complicated, since, even if the Tories and the Rebels in many ways are each other’s opposites, this dichotomy does not hold true. Governor Hutchinson’s library may contain a collection of gaudy symbols for colonial tyranny, but it is also the site for collecting and creating American History.

Unlike the savage ignorant mob, the “true” heroes of the novel, the Osbornes and their friends, are educated and refined. As the unostentatious library of Mr. Osborne indicates, the Rebels are learned but their learning is different from that of the Tories. The learning of the Rebels is pragmatic. Henry Osborne illustrates this when he suggests that “whatever point of character we find the weakest, should be the most sedulously fortified; and for this purpose, the choice of friends and books is equally important” (154). In other words, only those books and friends that serve a specific purpose, such as improving one’s character, should be chosen. As the description of the Rebels’ pragmatic learning indicates, what is at issue is not so much the content of this learning, as the manner in which it is learned and then put to use. The Rebels are not against learning per se; rather, they criticize the type of learning displayed by the aristocrats in the novel as the main purpose of their erudition is to shine in polite society, not to improve their moral character. Lucretia’s transformation from aristocratic intellectual to middle-class Rebel illustrates this distinction. While she, when still a loyal British subject, is described as having a “mind, vigorous as an eagle’s wing, and
rapid as the streams of Chili” (87) and is, moreover, said never to have learned “the important lesson of self-control” (148), as a rebel, “the dazzling brilliancy of [her mind] . . . had become delightfully mellowed . . . In early life, she had bowed too devoutly at the shrine of talents, heedless whether or not, it stood on the firm pedestal of virtue; but experience had taught her that the greatest gifts might be most shamefully perverted” (299-300). Even if the content of Lucretia’s learning remains the same, it changes from being wild and uncontrolled to becoming a tool for inculcating virtue into young republicans.

While *The Rebels* confirms the familiar notion that learning belongs in England and that Americans privilege practical matters rather than intellectual pursuits, the case of the mob shows the importance the novel places on education for the creation and survival of the republic. The uneducated people who make up the mob are ruled by their urges and emotions and, as a result, they cannot be controlled or control themselves. In “Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools,” Benjamin Rush argues that “[a] free government can only exist in an equal diffusion of literature. Without learning, men become savages or barbarians, and where learning is confined to a few people, we always find monarchy, aristocracy, and slavery” (3). *The Rebels* confirms Rush’s argument and also echoes the uneasiness concerning the populace that can be found in the writings of both Rush and Webster. Illustrating Foucault’s theories, the two educators feel that if the mass should be allowed suffrage, the leaders must ensure that the men who vote are educated, otherwise the new nation will have little hope of survival. The regression of the Puritans in *Hobomok*, whose migration from enlightened England to the New World has left them as dark and gloomy as their surroundings, confirms this scenario.

In its lack of discipline, the ignorant mob is similar to the erudite Tories, thus further complicating the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. The Rebels, on the other hand, are characterized by self-restraint. Despite their being rebels, which suggests that they would advocate social uprising, it is the Rebels who seek to uphold order and discipline. The meaning of the word “rebel” is thus inverted to mean what would commonly be considered its antithesis. Illustrating the Tory disregard of prudence and restraint, Somerville claims to “dislike a character formed at all. Give me nature, bold, impetuous, and unrestrained.” Henry, the Rebel, on the other hand, recommends a plan outlined by Benjamin Franklin on how to form a virtuous character, as he prefers a “harmonious, well-adjusted character, be

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5 Michael Kammen explains that in the second half of the 1820s the view of the Revolution grew more conservative and the reluctance of the American rebels to revolt against England was emphasized (47).

6 It is probably the plan Franklin describes in his *Autobiography* that Henry refers to. However, the *Autobiography* was not published until after Franklin’s death in 1790, almost thirty years after the events in *The Rebels* take place.
it formed as it may. He who gives himself up to the absorbing power of any one single passion, may draw the eyes of all mankind toward him; but qualities of a milder and more consistent cast constitute the chief charm of domestic life” (152). The fact that these two character ideals are tied to models for learning and education is illustrated by the transformation Lucretia undergoes when she becomes a Rebel. As an American rebel, Lucretia has learned to check herself and keep within bounds, but she has also given up her genius. The consequence of becoming a self-restrained Rebel, then, seems to be that one cannot reach excellence, but should settle for being well-rounded. Lucretia’s “wild” learning is similar to the obsessive learning demonstrated by, for example, Dr. Sitgreaves in *The Spy* and Master Cradock in *Hope Leslie* in that it is excessive and out of control. As she mellows in order to become a Rebel, Lucretia illustrates the process discussed by Foucault where the individual is molded to fit a certain category and, thus, become useful to society (*Discipline and Punish* 211). For Lucretia, this means the category of the republican mother and wife, a role that, as the novel demonstrates, is incompatible with the unrestrained mind of her Tory-days. The transformation that Lucretia undergoes not only points to the role of learning in establishing national identity, where certain types are clearly incompatible with an American identity, it also shows that in order to become a good American one has to restrain and limit oneself. Becoming an American, Lucretia has to put shackles on her mind. Even if the narrator points out that the reformed Lucretia, as opposed to her former self, possesses a virtuous mind, this still entails that she is less free as a Rebel than as a Tory. However, as excess and lack of restraint are connected to the tyranny of the British and the mob, restraint becomes a prerequisite for democracy. Thus, Lucretia’s transformation from erudite Tory to well-rounded republican illustrates the fact that the two character ideals outlined by Somerville and Henry are linked to national and political identities. In *The Rebels*, the personal is indeed political, as the behavior and morals of the individual have repercussions for the character of the state.

As in the case of the mob and the Tories in *The Rebels*, passion, rather than rational thought, guides the actions of the Puritans in *Hobomok*. Because of their religious zeal, Mr. Conant and his compatriots in *Hobomok* display “a deep mixture of exclusive, bitter, and morose passions” (6). However, unlike the disciplined protagonists in *The Rebels*, Mary’s rash behavior as she elopes with Hobomok suggests that self-restraint is not a dominant feature in her personality. On the other hand, as we have seen, the Rebels’ self-restraint stems from a wish to uphold order, and this is something that they share with the protagonists in *Hobomok*. Mary’s trek into the wilderness is not motivated by a desire to explore the unknown, but, rather, an attempt to escape the misogyny of the Puritan fathers and restore some of the ideals she encountered in her grandfather’s mansion. Also, by supporting the king, Mary and Charles wish to return to a social order that
has been overturned by the Puritans. The overzealousness of the Puritans has resulted in tyranny, which can be seen as a parallel to the unrestrained rule of the Tories in *The Rebels*. In other words, both novels express a fear of the consequences of immoderation. Philip Gould points out in *Covenant and Republic* that the rise of popular politics in the post-Revolutionary era created a fear that demagogic leaders would manipulate the passions of the people. This fear, Gould argues, is reflected in witch-hunting novels, where the Puritan persecution of, for example, Quakers, serves as a metaphor for the political situation in contemporary America, as the ideal of consensus that characterized republicanism was replaced by interest groups (175-76). The antebellum fear of passion, in the sense of extreme emotions, is reflected in the portrayal of the Puritans in *Hobomok* and in the Tories and the mob in *The Rebels*. As we will see in the following chapter, this concern with control and balance is also reflected in the portrayal of the obsessed scholar.

As the emphasis on self-restraint reveals, the focus in the two novels lies on the individual’s ability to control him- or herself. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains that one of the functions of the Panopticon is to separate individuals from each other: “The crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities” (201). As the faceless, violent mob in *The Rebels* indicates, large groups of people become uncontrollable; but when each member of the mass becomes a known and observed individual, he can also be controlled. Being compartmentalized in the Panopticon, this individual never knows when he is being observed by the guard and, thus, he must always behave as if he is. The effect is that “[t]he efficiency of power, its constraining force have [sic], in a sense, passed over to the other side—to the side of its surface of application.” In other words, the gaze of the guard is internalized and the prisoner “inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (202-03). Lucretia’s transformation from an unrestrained Tory to a self-controlled Rebel constitutes not only a personality change, it also illustrates the demands of a democratic society. The Panoptical system came into being after the revolutions, when power was no longer centered in the monarch (*Power/Knowledge* 39), and in *The Rebels* the Tories and the mob represent the old system, where control came from above, while the Rebels, who belong to the new democratic system, have internalized this control. The mindless ravages of the mob in the novel reveal that the internalization of control—when the individual becomes his own prison guard—is necessary for the political stability of the republic.

In *Manhood in America*, Michael Kimmel studies the nineteenth-century concern with self-restraint in the context of gender, primarily masculinity. Kimmel describes self-control as one of “the dominant themes in the history
of American masculinity,” and he explains that “[t]he drive for control, for order, stems from experiencing the world as disordered, as out of control. And to middle-class American men the mid-nineteenth century world often felt like it was spinning out of control, rushing headlong towards an industrial future” (44). Speaking of a period somewhat later than the 1820s, Kimmel’s discussion focuses on the Self-Made Man, whom he describes as a “control freak” (44). Agreeing with Foucault, Kimmel links the concern with self-control to the introduction of a new political system, where the monarch is no longer the center of power. The need for control, Kimmel argues, stemmed from the feeling that “[t]he new, self-made man in the newly formed democracy was embarking on an experiment in social anarchy. With no birthrights, no one ‘knew his place.’ In such a self-made world, control must come from somewhere, and it could only come from within” (46). In its emphasis on virtue, The Rebels concurs in replacing social authority, which no longer exists, with self-restraint. However, rather than seeing the need for self-restraint as a male problem, the novel suggests that the concern with it involves both women and men. Like the male Rebels, Lucretia has to learn to control herself. In Hobomok, however, the lack of self-control is primarily a male deficiency, since it is the immoderacy of the Puritan men, not Mary’s rash behavior, that is considered to be a problem. The Puritan women in the novel, rather than being guided by passion, tend to be characterized by their stoicism. Mary Conant’s mother acts as a restraining force on her husband, illustrating the fact that women in the nineteenth century, paradoxically, considering the emphasis on self-restraint, would increasingly become responsible for the moral characters of their husbands and sons (Kimmel 54).

Hobomok also suggests that the passionate feelings of the Puritans—and, as a result, their tyranny—is founded in hostility to women and fear of women’s power. Repeatedly, the Puritans describe the Anglican church as “the whorish woman of Babylon” (95) and the English king is ridiculed for being ruled by his “papistical queen” (94). The hardworking, careworn, and meek Puritan wives are described by their husbands as “the source of every evil that ever came into the world” (25) and as “being deficients or redundants, not to be brought under any rule whatsoever” (60). As a contrast, the noble Hobomok gazes on Mary with “reverence” (17) and Charles dreams of restoring her “to her original rank, . . . shining amid the loveliest and proudest of the land” (73). In other words, the Puritan tyranny is founded in their fear of women, and their rebellion against the English Church and Crown is also an attempt to restore the patriarchal power they

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7 Michael Rogin also discusses the fear of passions in Revolutionary America. Rogin maintains that the “Revolutionaries insisted that slavery to the passions created political slavery.” This “slavery” involved luxury, ease, and idleness, all of which were encouraged by remaining under British rule (24).
feel has been up-ended. Since America is described as patriarchal, while in English society women are respected, the longing to return to their mother country that both Charles and Mary express is also a wish to restore a, if not feminine, then at least a less masculine, social order.\(^8\)

The treatment of women is also an indication of the level of civilization a particular society has reached. Speaking of the second half of the eighteenth century, Harriet Guest writes that “it became commonplace to claim that Britain was more civilized than other European nations because women were better treated in this culture, and were better educated” (23). Similar claims were raised in the United States. For example, the narrator of Cooper’s *The Spy* maintains that “[t]he good treatment of their women is the surest evidence that a people can give of their civilization; and there is no nation which has more to boast of, in this respect, than the Americans” (351). Emphasizing the importance of women’s education, Lydia Maria Child writes in her advice book *The American Frugal Housewife* (1829) that “[t]here is no subject so much connected with individual happiness and national prosperity as the education of daughters. It is a true, and therefore an old remark, that the situation and prospect of a country may be justly estimated by the character of its women” (91). The portrayal of the Puritans as misogynists, then, emphasizes their lack of civilization; not only does the Puritan society stand for disorder and excess, it also represents regression, which is also implied by their failure (and unwillingness) to bring light to the New World.

Even if both novels describe a troubling lack of social order, they offer different solutions to the problem. Unlike *Hobomok*, which advocates aristocratic and feminine ideals and learning as antidotes to Puritan tyranny,\(^9\) *The Rebels* promotes ancient Greece as a role model for the new republic. By presenting the American rebels as the true inheritors of the classical tradition, the novel suggests that the ancient ideals, which have been corrupted in Europe, are realized in the new republic, thus making America the true cradle of modern civilization. The civilization of contemporary Europe, on the other hand, is merely a corrupt version of the original. As James Otis explains in his fictional speech in the novel, “[t]he flame of liberty is extinguished in Greece and Rome, but the light of its glowing embers is still bright and strong on the shores of America” (48). As it portrays America as the new home of classical learning, *The Rebels* presents an alternative to British learning.\(^10\)

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\(^8\) For a further discussion of the misogynous Puritans in the novel, see Paula Kot’s article “Engendering Identity: Doubts and Doubles in Lydia Maria Child’s *Hobomok*.”

\(^9\) As mentioned in chapter two, learning, virtuous self-restraint, and refinement were increasingly seen as feminine ideals in the nineteenth century.

\(^10\) Child is not alone in her choice of ancient Greece as a role model for the new nation. In the decades after the Revolution and in the early nineteenth century, classical ideals were often held up as examples for the nation to emulate, as for example the architecture from this time.
If *The Rebels* upholds the dichotomy between the two nations, but argues that it is the U.S. rather than England that stands for true civilization, *Hobomok*, as we have seen, remains true to the traditional image of America as a wilderness, the opposite of the “classic ground, . . . antique grandeur and cultivated beauty” (*Hobomok* 73) of England. However, even if *Hobomok* appears to be faithful to convention regarding the structure of the relationship between the two nations, the established boundary separating them is in fact rendered invalid in the novel. Trapped in a society where learning is discouraged, Mary grows desperate and elopes with the only person she feels connected to, the Indian chief Hobomok. Passing the fine line separating civilization from the wilderness, Mary moves from an intellectual desert into a world where she feels her intellectual needs are met. In other words, while Mary feels at home among intellectuals in England and in the wilderness, she feels that that thin sliver of land separating the two worlds, the Puritan settlement, is a place of darkness and ignorance. Unlike *The Rebels*, then, where the traditional dichotomous relationship is upheld, in *Hobomok* there are several boundaries, something that destabilizes the conventional relationship between the two nations. While maintaining the common image of England as enlightened and the American colony as enshrouded in darkness, the novel modifies the picture by suggesting that the wilderness beyond the frontier offers the intellectual sustenance missing in the Puritan settlement. In other words, in keeping with the metaphor of darkness and light, it appears as if the wilderness is more enlightened than the Puritan settlement. *Hobomok*, then, confirms Bhabha’s theory, discussed in chapter one, that there are no stable dichotomies, since the antithetical relationship between wilderness and civilization does not hold true. The novel also unsettles the previously discussed shade theory in Woodbridge’s *School Atlas*, since the land beyond the Puritan settlement is a wilderness, which would suggest that it belonged to the savage stage, yet has more in common with enlightened England than the Puritan settlement does.

The boundary between settlement and wilderness is further challenged by the fact that rather than a haven, the Puritan settlement resembles a prison. Inverting the captivity narrative, Mary is breaking out of the settlement. Her impulsive behavior is not only an act of transgression, it also challenges the common definition of the national border, or in this case the border between settlement and wilderness, as a protective boundary. For Mary, this border connotes confinement, and her jailbreak illustrates Foucault’s theory of the Panopticon as a metaphor for social control. As mentioned in chapter one, Foucault was asked whether the nation state could be a place of confinement, similar to those of the prison and the hospital. His answer was affirmative.

demonstrates. In her novel *Philothea: A Grecian Romance* (1836), Child further explores the parallels between ancient Greece and the new republic. The idealization of ancient Greece was not unique to the United States, however. A similar trend existed in Europe at the time.
Mary’s escape from the settlement suggests the same, as it puts into question the actual purpose of national borders. Perhaps their purpose is not only to keep strangers out, but also to keep citizens in? This question is especially pertinent in the post-Revolutionary era since nationality changed from being a voluntary commitment to becoming an inherent one (Hobsbawm 20-21). Natty Bumppo’s flight into the wilderness in James Fenimore Cooper’s novels constitutes another example of the nation as a place of confinement. Nevertheless, while Natty Bumppo is fleeing civilization, Mary’s escape is motivated by a longing for ideals connected to civilized life. For both Nat and Mary, however, the flight into the wilderness, which as Woodbridge’s *Schools Atlas* shows, is also a step back in time, constitutes a return to the pure ideals of the past.

Illustrating the fact that in *Hobomok*, as in *The Rebels*, the ideal society is reached by moving back, rather than forward, in time, the Indian Hobomok, in accordance with Rousseauan and Romantic thought, is a noble savage, his “nature unwarped by the artifices of civilized life” (121). The fact that Mary shares Hobomok’s spiritual and aesthetic beliefs suggests that aristocratic learning is a return to old, “pure” ideals. The Puritans, however, encouraged by their minister to “[l]eave hidden matters with God” (65), have lost touch with the spirit of nature. As Bell points out, for the Federalists and later for the Whigs, the “American Revolution, unlike French Republicanism or Jacksonian democracy, had not been an attack on the *status quo*. It represented, in fact, a *return* to the *status quo*. The American Revolution had restored the ‘ancient’ liberties initially secured by the founding fathers” (*Hawthorne and the Historical Romance* 40). By turning to the past, Child’s two novels seek to restore the old order that has been disrupted.

### Classifying Americans

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar.

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Mary’s marriage to Hobomok highlights the close connection between learning and class in the novel. Hobomok, who is described as “untutored”

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11 The portrayal of Hobomok is ambivalent, however. On the one hand he is portrayed as a hero, but he is also described as a dark savage. For a discussion of the ambivalent characterization of Hobomok, see for example Harry Brown, “‘The Horrid Alternative’: Miscegenation and Madness in the Frontier Romance.”

12 In his article “The Portable Pulpit: Religious Tracts, Cultural Power, and the Risk of Reading” Mark Vasquez points out that the idealization of the past was a common feature in historical novels of the 1810s and 1820s.

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is not book-learned. He is, however, of noble descent, and, thus, possesses spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities—including an interest in poetry, nature, and beauty—that correspond to learning in the novel. As discussed in chapter two, according to middle-class ideology, sensibility—which is an important ingredient in a refined character—is developed through the right education. However, as the case of Hobomok shows, sensibility is also inherent in persons of noble descent. In other words, Hobomok was born with one of the traits that is the goal and sign of middle-class education, and, as a result, he has the attributes of a learned person without possessing any actual learning. The Puritans, on the other hand, are not ignorant, but they lack sensibility. Mary has been educated, but her sensibility is still, at least to some degree, based on heritage. Having a “native elegance of mind” (35), Mary, like Hobomok, is able to appreciate the beauties of nature. Her peasant friend Sally Oldham, on the other hand, “thought nothing of the stars but of their lucky or unlucky influences, viewed the moon as a well-favored planet, that had much to do with the weather, and saw nothing of the setting sun but a hint to do her out-door work” (36). The rest of the Puritan community appears to be equally pragmatic and superstitious.

Even if the majority of the Puritans are anti-intellectual, there are some exceptions to this rule. Mr. Johnson, who is “a gentleman, a scholar, and nearly allied to a noble family” (100), and his wife Lady Arabella, whose "high forehead, aquiline nose, and the peculiar construction of her mouth, all spoke intellect and fortitude" (107), join the Puritan cause in the New World. Their intellectual attributes and high breeding prove the link between learning, intellect, and class and also illustrate that the anti-intellectualism of Mr. Conant and his compatriots has more to do with their lack of pedigree than with the content of the Puritan creed.

Through its problematical depiction of learning, Hobomok exposes paradoxes inherent in middle-class ideology. As seen in chapter two, the middle class had a troubled relationship to aristocracy as it both coveted and censured aristocratic attributes. The skills that defined refinement and that, according to middle-class ideology, were developed through the right education—delicacy, sensibility, and taste (Bushman 80-83)—become, in Hobomok, inherent, as they belong exclusively to those with pedigree. Only those of noble descent—Mary, Mary’s mother, Charles, Hobomok, Lady Arabella, and Mr. Johnson—possess those sensibilities that signal learning. Quite the opposite of republican ideology, then, the novel suggests that learning, or rather, the attributes of learning, are the property solely of the upper class.

The novel does not do away with education altogether, however. Although Mary is said to have a “native elegance of mind” (35), we are also told that it is at her grandfather’s mansion, inspired by the genius of Charles, that she comes to covet “mental riches, and worship . . . at the shrine of
“genius” (78). In other words, it appears that education plays a role in developing aesthetic and spiritual sensibilities. Yet, despite giving education a role, albeit a small one, in cultivating refinement, the treatment of learning and education remains troubled in *Hobomok*, as in middle-class ideology in general.¹³

In *The Rebels* as well, learning and education pose problems. Here, too, refinement is the main goal and symbol of learning. The refinement of the characters is demonstrated in part through their elegant conversations where they show off their knowledge on various subjects. However, their refinement is also reflected in their appearance. Henry Osborne’s “mild countenance” has a “Grecian outline” (10) and his sister Grace’s “aerial little figure” is exquisitely proportioned and her beauty as “pale and unearthly as Guido has represented his Madonnas” (9). Henry’s mild looks are contrasted with “the open, fearless brow of Somerville, shaded by a profusion of curls, as dark and clustering as the beautiful locks of the Roman Antonious” (10). The comparison of the three characters to classical ideals suggests that they, like the nobility in *Hobomok*, possess native, that is inherent, refinement. As Richard Bushman points out, writers at the time tended to emphasize the refined appearances of their characters. “The description of a sailor boy as having ‘a profusion of rich, dark brown hair; his forehead, broad and intellectual,’ was a sure sign that, being refined by nature, he was destined to figure as a hero” (my emphasis, 294-95). We see the same tendency in *Hobomok*. The “slender figure . . . [and] graceful carriage” (59) of Mary, together with the “elastic, vigorous elegance of proportion” (36) of Hobomok, and Charles’s handsome manliness and “lofty forehead” (78) are contrasted with “the stern hard features of Mr. Conant” (36). As opposed to the elegant looks of Henry, Grace, and Somerville, in *The Rebels*, Lucretia has an “inelegant form and very plain face” (10), which foreshadows the later revelation that, rather than being an aristocrat, she has a simple background. Gertrude Wilson, the girl with whom Lucretia was switched at birth, has an appearance in accordance with her heritage, rather than her plain upbringing: “[h]er forehead was pale and lofty,—her expression proud, but highly intellectual” (117). In other words, just as in *Hobomok*, refinement is mainly a matter of birth, rather than education.

By distinguishing between different social classes through descriptions of the characters’ appearance and disposition, the two narratives suggest that these social distinctions are innate, rather than due to material differences.

¹³ As we will see in chapter five, Catharine Maria Sedgwick seems to offer another view on the issue of nature versus nurture as she argues in the preface to *Hope Leslie* that “the difference of character among the various races of the earth, arises mainly from difference of condition” (6). However, in *Hope Leslie*, as in *Hobomok*, learning, or enlightenment, rather, is tied to pedigree as this quality is mainly found in the “noble” Magawisca (214), who is the daughter of an Indian chief, Sir Leslie’s daughter Hope, and Everell Fletcher, the descendant of Sir William Fletcher.
Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* that

> [t]he ideology of natural taste owes its plausibility and its efficacy to the fact that, like all the ideological strategies generated in the everyday class struggle, it naturalizes real differences, converting differences in the mode of acquisition of culture into differences of nature; it only recognizes as legitimate the relation to culture (or language) which least bears the visible marks of its genesis. (68)

Seen in the context of European class society, Bourdieu’s conclusion is not surprising. Yet, in the early republic, it would seem likely that the notion of taste as inherent, rather than acquired, would be controversial. Child’s two novels indicate the opposite, however. In fact, the novels suggest that despite the emphasis placed on education, class identity is based on the same premises in America as in Europe. That is, rather than describing class as a position one attains through work and education, it is seen as something one is born into. As the example of Gertrude Wilson shows, one’s class belonging is not affected by changed living conditions. A person of noble descent remains refined regardless of her material surroundings. Mary Conant’s mother is still a lady despite being disowned by her father and moving to a village consisting of “six miserable hovels” (7). The converse is also true: even if she has grown up believing she is a lady, Lucretia’s plain looks prove that the descendant of an ugly witch will never become an elegant lady. In other words, class boundaries in *The Rebels*, as well as in *Hobomok*, appear to remain strict and impassable—like those of the old mother country. It seems that in America, too, despite the youth of the republic, distinctions between social groups are what Bourdieu calls “a new mystery of immaculate conception” (68).

By embracing aristocratic pedigree, the novels seem to suggest a rigid class system where social mobility is impossible. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the novels also acknowledge the importance of education. In *Hobomok*, the problem of education is to some extent masked by the fact that learning, which corresponds to the conversations of the intellectuals in grandfather’s mansion, is only available to those with access to high society. In *The Rebels*, however, Lucretia’s false identity as an aristocrat gives her access to learning and, until she leaves Somerville and moves in with the Osbornes, she behaves like an aristocrat and shares the same beliefs and principles as aristocrats do. Lucretia’s plainness reveals her false identity and suggests that she will never be a “true” lady, but, in the end, she is able to position herself several notches above the place her grandmother holds on the social ladder. By marrying the refined Henry Osborne, Lucretia ensures that her children will be genteel. In other words, there seem to be some opportunities for crossing class boundaries, even if they are limited.
The case of Lucretia also sheds new light on the link between learning and aristocracy. Despite her plebeian heritage, Lucretia is celebrated for her erudition, which suggests that learning is not the exclusive property of the aristocracy, as indicated in *Hobomok* and—to a certain extent—in *The Rebels* too, but can be acquired by a person of simple descent. However, even if Lucretia’s learning is proof that it can be acquired, the fact that she gives up her learning when she becomes a rebel shows that, although aristocratic learning can be obtained, it cannot be embraced by an individual wishing to be an American. Thus, whereas aristocratic refinement, taste, and looks are acceptable in the new republic, as the well-proportioned figures of Grace and Henry indicate, aristocratic learning, which is the same as excessive, uncontrolled learning, is not. Unlike aristocratic refinement, aristocratic learning poses a threat to the republic. Instead, as the case of Grace and Henry shows, an aristocratic appearance should be combined with a republican education.

The reason why some kinds of learning are dangerous is that it is through education that national identity and loyalty are established. As opposed to Grace and Henry, Somerville has been exposed to British, aristocratic ideals in his studies and travels and, as a result,

> “[t]he political principles of Frederic Somerville were rather the result of habit and education, than of personal character. He was fresh from the classic schools of Greece and Rome, and his own spirit was as free as the untamed courser of the desert; but he had read gorgeous descriptions of feudal power,—he had gazed on old baronial castles, the massive grandeur of the Gothic, and the more graceful outline of Saxon architecture, till his imagination was wedded to pompous pageantry, and his heart bowed down before the crown, the coronet, and the mitre.” (30)

Although Somerville has studied the ancient democracies that are the role model for the new republic, he has also been taught to admire symbols of royal grandeur and, as a result, he remains true to his king and church. Had he been educated differently, the novel implies, Somerville could have been a Rebel, rather than a Tory. *The Rebels*, then, illustrates the conviction voiced by both Webster and Rush that in order to raise loyal Americans it is crucial that they receive their education at home, rather than abroad. In his essay “On the Education of Youth in America,” Webster writes that a “boy who lives in England from twelve to twenty will be an *Englishman* in his manners and his feelings, but let him remain at home till he is twenty and form his attachments, he may then be several years abroad and still be an *American*” (74). Through education, Americans receive their national identity and sense of national belonging and, as a result, children raised according to the principles of foreign countries pose a threat to the future of the nation. Through education, individuals are molded into loyal citizens, which constitutes another example of Foucault’s panoptical process.
In Hobomok, too, nationality is linked to education. As a three-year-old, the son of Mary and Hobomok, Charles Hobomok Conant, is described as a “fearless young Indian” (148) and a “swarthy boy” (149). After his father Hobomok has left, Charles Hobomok moves with his mother and stepfather Charles Brown to the Puritan settlement. At the request of Mr. Conant, “half the legacy of Earl Rivers [Mary’s grandfather] was appropriated to . . . [Charles Hobomok’s] education” (150). Charles Hobomok attends Cambridge and then finishes his studies in England. “[B]y degrees his Indian appellation was silently omitted” (150), and Charles Hobomok becomes Charles Conant. In other words, Hobomok’s son becomes an Englishman and is able to drop his Indian heritage. The fact that Charles Hobomok can become thoroughly English—Bhabha’s notions of hybridity and mimicry do not apply to him—suggests that national identity does not depend on ethnicity or race, but rather on education. The importance of education in developing national identity is emphasized by the weight given to his education in the sketchy description of Charles Hobomok.

Yet, even if Charles Hobomok’s switch from Indian to Englishman suggests that national identity need not remain fixed, it also points to its limitations. Charles Hobomok is either Indian or English, but he cannot be both. This brings us back to the question whether or not the nation state can be considered a place of confinement. The purpose of the Panopticon is to categorize individuals, to fit them into one slot. The fact that it is impossible for Charles Hobomok, a person of two cultures, to retain both his Indian and English roots, that is, to be a hybrid, to stand in-between, exposes the premises on which national identity rests. In order for Charles Hobomok to be compartmentalized, he cannot belong to more than one nation or have more than one set of roots. The nation, then, becomes a place of confinement as it reduces its inhabitants to one position. While it is possible to cross the borders of national identity, remaining in-between would undermine the notion of cultures as being originary and distinct from each other. Even as the possibility of hybridity is precluded, however, the deliberate omission of Charles Hobomok’s Indian name exposes the process of forgetting on which national history rests. In Ernest Renan’s words, “the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things” (11).

14 Ivan Hannaford argues in his book *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* that the notion of race as tied to national identity developed in the eighteenth century (189-90). As seen here, Charles Hobomok is not encumbered by race, since he is able to switch national identity.

15 John Neal’s historical novel *Rachel Dyer* (1828) explores what happens when this collective process of hiding, or forgetting, is disrupted. Unlike Charles Hobomok, the hero in Neal’s novel, George Burroughs, refuses to limit himself to one culture, but instead moves back and forth between the Puritan settlement Naumkeak, from which his mother came, and the Indian tribe where his father once was a chief. While Burroughs’s exposure to different cultures has endowed him with wisdom, his foreign learning also makes the Puritans perceive him as a threat. In its tragic portrayal of a character who refuses to limit himself to one
The power of education in shaping national identity suggests a volatile quality in nationality that, as we have seen, is missing in class. Whereas class appears to determine the character of an individual from birth, leaving little space for changes later in life, education has the power to shape a person’s national identity entirely. In other words, rather than national identity being inherent and class acquired, as one would expect, it is the other way around: national identity is acquired, whereas class identity is inherent. This definition of national identity accords well with Hobsbawm’s thesis that in the Age of Revolutions, being a citizen of a nation state meant that one was part of a collective sovereignty and that the idea of a nation based on ethnic or linguistic grounds developed only in the nineteenth century (19-20). The emphasis on education suggests that both *Hobomok* and *The Rebels* adhere to the definition of national identity as based on education, values, and loyalty, rather than ethnicity.

In *The Rebels*, however, national identity takes on a further dimension as it converges with class identity. After the Revolution, the aristocrats are thrown out of the country, leaving genteel, but pragmatically educated, members of the middle class as the new leaders. Since the true Rebels, who adhere to middle-class ideology, are also the true Americans, the values of the republic correspond to those of the middle class. To be middle class is to be American. As class identity is transposed onto national identity, the volatile quality of national identity is stabilized, since its vague borders are replaced by the rigid boundaries of the class system, which, as the previous discussion of appearance, or looks, has revealed, are based on descent. By portraying the British as aristocrats, while the Americans belong to the middle class, national identity becomes based on heritage, rather than acquired qualities. Thus, the juxtaposition of national identity with class identity may be seen as an attempt to impose stability and clear boundaries where none are felt to exist.

One of the consequences of this fortification of national boundaries should be that the switching of nationality performed by Charles Hobomok becomes impossible. Yet, *The Rebels* shows that there is still some space not only for national, but also for social mobility. Lucretia chooses both social class and national identity by revealing her plebeian background, giving up her British learning, and marrying Henry. Seen in the context of Hobsbawm’s thesis of the changing basis for national identity in the nineteenth century, the case of Lucretia suggests that, despite the emphasis on heritage, the earlier conception of national identity as based on choice, national identity and culture, Rachel Dyer highlights the (sometimes violent) process of consolidation that characterizes the creation of a nation.

16 Discussing nineteenth-century domestic literacy narratives, such as Child’s *The Mother’s Book*, which promoted the education of children at home by their mothers, Sarah Robbins describes a similar development where middle-class ideals are promoted as the values of the nation (Managing Literacy, Mothering America 4).
rather than birth, still existed. The ambivalent portrayal of national identity suggests that *The Rebels* could be read as an illustration of the shift in definitions of national identity, and the problems this shift caused for a nation without an origin in a dim past, which adhered in theory, if not always in practice, to the ideal of a socially mobile society.

In *Hobomok*, the paradox of national identity takes a somewhat different expression. The case of Charles Hobomok suggests that the novel adheres to a pre-Romantic definition of national identity where ethnicity, or blood, is irrelevant. Nevertheless, just as in *The Rebels*, the inherent gentility, the pedigree, of the representative Americans, in this case Mary and Charles, remains important. Furthermore, while in *The Rebels* the aristocrats are deported, leaving the middle class as the new leaders, in *Hobomok* it is the aristocratic couple who represents the future America. In other words, *Hobomok* presents ideological dilemmas that, to some extent, are solved in *The Rebels*. As a result, the ending of *Hobomok* is quite troubling and ambivalent and it projects a vision of the future poorly suited to republican ideals. *Hobomok* ends with the conventional marriage between the hero and heroine. However, the many parallels between Mary and her mother—they share the same name and they both rebel against their fathers and elope—suggest that Mary’s future happiness is less than certain. Mr. Conant, we are told, was once an idealistic rebel who moved to the New World in the pursuit of liberty, but, because he was disappointed in his dreams, he has become a bitter tyrant. In other words, the young Mr. Conant had much in common with Charles, which suggests that Mary’s husband may become another Mr. Conant, intolerant and overzealous, later in life. Considering that Mary’s fate is also that of America, the ending of *Hobomok* suggests an uncertain future for the nation.

In Child’s novels learning becomes a vehicle for negotiating the emerging myth of the nation. On the one hand, according to republican ideology, learning is acquired through education, which suggests that everyone who chooses to pursue it can become learned and, thus, refined. On the other hand, learning is a sign of nobility, which would suggest that it is inherent. By displaying their learning, members of the middle class are able to prove their natural refinement and elegance. The ambivalence to learning, then, stems from the fact that it is both a sign of, and a tool for, the realization of a civilized and republican society and a symbol for a socially stratified society. By grafting national identity onto class identity, the myth of America as a classless society can be kept intact. As class and national identity merge, American values and those of the middle class become identical, which means that America consists of one class—and so it is classless. The boundaries separating social classes have been moved to the border of the nation, where they replace the former volatile borders of acquired—and voluntary—nationality. To this national border, new borders within
individuals, in the shape of self-restraint, have been added in order to ensure that social stability is upheld in the new (b)orderless society. Learning may be located abroad, but without it America cannot come into its own.

The next chapter will provide another example of the importance of learning in the new republic. While the practical man, Natty Bumppo, dies as a social outcast on the prairie, the silly scientist Dr. Bat returns to an academic career on the East Coast.
CHAPTER FOUR

(B)ordering Society, or, The Failed Attempts of Nat and Dr. Bat to Create Order on the Prairie

Lord, Lord! what a weak creatur’ is man when the gifts of natur’ are smothered in bookish knowledge, and womanly manners!

–Cooper, *The Prairie* (220)

The spaces in which social practices occur affect the nature of those practices, who is “in place,” who is “out of place” and even who is allowed to be there at all.

–McDowell and Sharp, *Space, Gender, Knowledge* (3)

In James Fenimore Cooper’s third Leatherstocking novel, *The Prairie* (1827), “two men, of whom one was so purely practical and the other so much given to theory” (77), meet on the western plains, far beyond the settlements. Throughout the novel, regardless of whether they are fleeing for their lives or waiting to be tortured by Indians, these two men, Nat and Dr. Bat, carry on a tireless discussion about learning and education. Whereas the novel appears to set up the two contenders as opposites, the practitioner versus the theoretician, my reading will discuss similarities between Nat and Dr. Bat, and the fact that, even though they represent two opposing ends of a scale, they both strive towards the same goal: to classify and order America and its inhabitants.

As we have seen, Lydia Maria Child’s two historical novels, *Hobomok* and *The Rebels*, establish, but also challenge, social boundaries. In Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels as well, these boundaries play a central role. However, while Child’s novels mainly deal with national boundaries, Cooper’s main concern is boundaries within the nation. Learning, education, and civilization, issues that in Child’s novels are linked to England, are in the Leatherstocking novels connected to the eastern states of the U.S. Nevertheless, despite the shift of focus, for Cooper, just as for Child,
learning and education are employed as tools for establishing, testing, and discussing social and geographical boundaries.

This chapter will trace the attitudes to learning and education in Cooper’s early fiction and the role these issues play in his texts. The focus of my analysis will be on *The Prairie*, but I will also use examples from the other Leatherstocking novels, together with Cooper’s first historical novel, the Revolutionary tale *The Spy* (1821), to illustrate my discussion.

**Places and Beyond**

Cooper’s five Leatherstocking novels take place on the frontier. While *The Pioneers* (1823) is set in a small town, Templeton, which is an outpost in the wilderness in upstate New York, the other four tales are played out beyond the settlements. *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841) depict the deep New York forests, while *The Prairie*, as its title reveals, describes the wide plains further west. *The Spy* takes place in the Hudson valley, but here, too, the tale is set in a liminal space as it is played out in the “Neutral Ground” which is a no-man’s land between the contending forces in the Revolutionary War. In the Neutral Ground, no laws apply and all is in a state of flux.

The stage of action in Cooper’s novels confirms Edwin Fussell’s theory that the frontier metaphor, which he defines as both a political boundary and the edge of settlement, was “the leading formal principle of early American literature” (16-17). According to Fussell, the frontier in American literature is characterized by “antithetical regressive and progressive readings of the Westward movement,” as is illustrated by the paradoxical synonyms “backwoodsman” and “frontiersman.” Even if the future of the United States lay in westward expansion, the move west also represented a return to earlier stages of civilization and, thus, a step backwards (15).

Orm Øverland points out in his study *The Making and Meaning of an American Classic: James Fenimore Cooper’s The Prairie* that in Cooper’s fiction, “the frontier was a place where isolated members of the social orders in the settlements . . . could meet . . . The American wilderness . . . could be the ideal scene for a novel about American society” (38). Illustrating Bhabha’s notion of the “in-between space” as a site where identities meet, clash, and form new constellations, in ways that “define . . . the idea of society itself” (1-2), Cooper’s frontier is a place for testing and unsettling social divisions as the uneducated backwoodsman sometimes becomes the leader, thus turning the refined army captain into a follower. Yet, it is also a place where established divisions are confirmed. Towards the end of Cooper’s novels, the bourgeois couples usually return to the settlements, while the backwoodsman and the Indians withdraw further into the wilderness.
By portraying and contrasting different types of Americans, Cooper challenges a well-known maxim of the time that claimed that the United States was incapable of creating fiction, since, as a result of the lack of social divisions, everyone was the same, which meant that there was nothing to write about. In his well-known review of *The Spy* from 1822, W.H. Gardiner writes that “we are told that the country whose society contains the most abundant distinction of classes is the chosen fairy land of poetry and romance, and that America can never be such because it contains none” (56). Gardiner agrees that “[t]he characters of fiction should be descriptive of classes, and not of individuals, or they will seem to want the touch of nature, and fail in that dramatic interest which results from a familiarity with the feelings and passions portrayed” (55-56). However, rather than giving up on American literature, he suggests that the United States is indeed divided into classes, despite its apparent lack of a “king, lords, and commons” (56). The classes in America, Gardiner argues, are founded on geographical divisions:

Do any of our readers look out of New-England and doubt it? Did any of them ever cross the Potomac, or even the Hudson, and not feel himself surrounded by a different race of men? Is there any assimilation of character between the highminded, vainglorious Virginian, living on his plantation in baronial state . . . and the active, enterprising, moneygetting merchant of the East . . . ? (56-57)

In *The Prairie*, Cooper puts Gardiner’s theory into practice. Even if social divisions play an important role in distinguishing the characters, the geographical origins of the various figures are equally important.1 Rather than attempting to define one “true” American, Cooper presents national identity as a spectrum.2

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1 As Øverland points out, the importance of place in Cooper’s works is illustrated by the subtiltes of his first three American novels: *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground, The Pioneers: or, The Sources of the Susquehanna; a Descriptive Tale*, and *The Pilot: A Tale of the Sea* (35).

2 Francis Parkman offers an alternative to Gardiner’s model as he bases his map of different types of Americans on educational levels. “[T]he laboring population of the country, not of foreign origin, are marked with strong and peculiar traits. But when we ascend into the educated and polished classes, these peculiarities are smoothed away, until, in many cases, they are invisible. An educated Englishman is an Englishman still; an educated Frenchman is often intensely French; but an educated American is apt to have no national character at all. The condition of the literature in this country is, as might be expected, in close accordance with these peculiarities of its society. With but few exceptions, the only books which reflect the national mind are those which emanate from, or are adapted to, the unschooled classes of the people; such, for example, as, Dr. Bird’s *Nick of the Woods* . . . and, we might add, the earlier novels of Cooper. In the politer walks of literature, we find much grace of style, but very little originality of thought,—productions which might as readily be taken for the work of an Englishman as of an American” (259-60).
In *The Prairie* a motley group of people, representing different levels of society, as well as different regions, meet in the newest part of the country, the western plains, which had been added to the nation through the Louisiana Purchase two years earlier, in 1803. The novel opens as Natty Bumppo runs into the Bush family, a clan of squatters led by the patriarch Ishmael Bush. Although Nat is said to have been born on the Eastern seaboard, his lifelong flight from the settlements has deprived him of both roots and a permanent home. Nat shares his rootlessness with the squatters, who are as eager as he is to avoid the restraints of settlement life. The Bushes, it turns out, are not only heading West, they are also running away from the Law. With them on their journey is a mysterious creature they keep hidden, who is rumored to be a “beast” (103). This “beast” is revealed to be a gentle Creole woman, Inez, from New Orleans, whom they have kidnapped. Close on their heels are two young men who are trying to rescue their women from the squatters. Captain Middleton, who comes from the mid-Atlantic states, is the grandson of Duncan and Alice Heyward, the romantic couple in *The Last of the Mohicans* and he is also the husband of Inez. Paul Hover, a bee hunter from Kentucky, is following his sweetheart Ellen Wade, a distant relative of the Bushes who lives with them since she has no family of her own. Ishmael has also allowed the naturalist Dr. Obed Bat, or Battius, as he prefers to be called, to join the party, since he feels that the services of a “leech” (66) could become useful.

The fact that the characters who belong to the highest social classes come from the oldest European settlements in North America (those on the eastern seaboard and around the mouth of the Mississippi River) is not surprising. Neither is it surprising that the educational levels of the characters are linked to their class status and their geographical roots. The majority of the characters who have made their home on the borders of society, Nat and the Bushes, are illiterate. Middleton highlights the connection between geographical location and social and educational levels when he describes Nat as “a noble shoot from the stock of human nature, which never could attain its proper elevation and importance, for no other reason than because it grew in the forest” (114).

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3 Nat, the simple backwoodsman, plays a rather peripheral role in *The Pioneers* but becomes increasingly more central to the plot as books were added to the series and the readers took him to their hearts. Øverland suggests that “it is doubtful that Cooper had any clear sense of the possibilities inherent in the character of Leather Stocking before he started writing *The Prairie*. It is in this work Natty Bumppo first achieves his mythical stature” (42).

4 It has been suggested that Nat’s last name, Bumppo, is an illustration of his rootlessness as it lacks definite ethnic and class markers. Joel Porte maintains that “[t]here seems to be more than a hint here that Natty, as the democratic American hero, has been endowed with a garden variety name to indicate his necessarily humble origins” (35).

5 Interestingly enough, Nat is here (and elsewhere) described in words commonly used to depict Andrew Jackson. Jackson was described as “one of nature’s noblemen” (qtd in Ward 30). He was also compared to a tree growing in the forest (Ward 31). However, whereas
As opposed to Nat and the Bushes, Paul and Ellen, the Kentuckians, have acquired some schooling. Ellen has an “active mind” (190) and the fact that she is ashamed of Paul for exposing his ignorance not only suggests that she is more educated than he is, but also that she sees education as important, even though Paul is said to have many redeeming qualities that make up for his ignorance (255). Paul Hover’s knowledge is restricted to the art of bee hunting, which is revealed by his constant recourse to bee hunting metaphors. Discussing the sea captain Cap, in The Pathfinder, David Simpson argues that “Cap’s intellectually limited and stubborn view of the world takes . . . the form of a completely closed vocabulary. All things are defined in terms of the sailor’s life” (176). The same is true for Paul. However, while Paul’s vocation makes him limited, it also makes him a forerunner of civilized society. According to Øverland, in the nineteenth century, bees were seen as “one of the harbingers of a more settled way of life” since they were commonly found near settled areas. As a result, the bee hunter, too, becomes a symbol of the settlements (48-49). Unlike Nat and the Bushes, Paul represents settlement society, despite having made his abode on the fringes of civilization.

In contrast to the other characters in the novel, Paul’s educational status changes in the narrative. After his return to the settlements, with the help of the Middletons and Ellen, Paul experiences a “progressive change in fortune . . . accompanied by a corresponding improvement in knowledge and self-respect” and, as a result, “his wife enjoyed the maternal delight of seeing her children placed far beyond the danger of returning to that state from which both their parents issued” (376). Interestingly enough, Paul’s “change in fortune” is tied to a change in geographic locations, as he and Ellen move from the fringes to the heart of the settlements, the South, in order to be close to the Middletons. In The Prairie, geography, social status, and educational level affect and reinforce each other. Rather than portraying some types of learning as foreign to the whole country, Cooper distributes the different educational levels on a national arena, within the borders of the nation.

Although Paul’s improving “fortune” shows that it is possible to acquire higher social status through education, the space for social ascension is restricted in The Prairie. Both Paul and Middleton are involved in “Legislature,” but Paul, “notorious for making speeches, that have the
tendency to put that deliberative body in good humour,” has retained the clownish behavior of his bee hunting days, whereas Middleton “fills, with a credit better suited to the difference in their educations, a seat in a far higher branch of Legislative Authority” (376). Even if they move up several steps on the social ladder, the Hovers remain the inferiors of the couple with pedigree, the Middletons.

Middleton and Inez are the most refined characters in the novel. Although few details are revealed about Captain Middleton’s education, his manners, language, and family background suggest that he has been schooled in accordance with the requirements of the upper middle class. Interestingly enough, the feeble wife of Middleton, Inez, who spends much of her time being more or less unconscious, is the only character in the novel who is described as “intellectual” (189). Yet, it is not Inez’s mind that is intellectual, but her beauty. In addition, Joel Porte points out, the beauty of Inez is not only described as intellectual, but also as “infantile” and her appearance stands in contrast with the “maturer and perhaps more animated beauty” of Ellen (The Prairie 189). Porte argues that the paradoxical description of Inez results from her representing “the fertile carnality and intellect of the Old World, the dangerous knowledge and power of a fallen race” (49). I would like to suggest, however, that the incongruent description of Inez is due to the fact that the word “intellectual,” rather than signifying educational status, refers to her noble heritage. Just as the high intellectual forehead of Gertrude in The Rebels has nothing to do with her mind or education, but is a sign of her aristocratic background, so are Inez’s intellectual looks proof that she is a “true” noblewoman. Since the word “intellectual” denotes aristocratic appearance, rather than qualities of mind, the intellectual and infantile qualities of Inez’s looks are perfectly reconcilable.7

Like the refined Middletons, Dr. Obed Bat comes from one of the oldest European settlements in North America. The exact location of Dr. Bat’s home is never revealed, but we are told that after his excursion on the prairie, “he is established in all the scientific dignity and security of a savan in one of the maritime towns” (202), which suggests that he can be found in a university town on the East Coast. In other words, like the other characters, Dr. Bat’s educational status can be linked to his geographical location and his social position.

7 The 1828 edition of Webster’s American Dictionary of the English Language makes no mention of aristocracy in its definition of the word “intellectual.” However, as discussed in the previous chapter, spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities tend to be linked to learning and intellect. As the fact that the untutored but noble Hobomok shares Mary’s feeling for beauty and poetry shows, these sensibilities, which are linked to learning, are also a sign of aristocratic descent. Hence the intellectual forehead, which is not necessarily a sign of erudition but always indicates high breeding.
As a naturalist, Dr. Bat has devoted his life to his studies and, being “much given to theory,” he is, as pointed out above, set up as the opposite of the “purely practical” Nat (77). However, despite the fact that Nat is contrasted with Battius and describes himself as an “ignorant old trapper” (184), he is not ignorant. As a man of practical learning, with knowledge of life in the wilderness, Nat, in all Leatherstocking novels except The Deerslayer, acts as a teacher, or mentor perhaps, to the young men accompanying him on his treks in the wilderness. When he escorts Cora and Alice Munro to their father’s fort in The Last of the Mohicans, Nat, or Hawk-eye, as he is called in this novel, instructs their male companion Duncan Heyward in the ways of the wild. In The Prairie, Paul and Middleton learn to keep their boyish impatience in check and adhere to the aged wisdom of the trapper. The knowledge Nat shares with his young adepts, which includes shooting skills, insight into the ways and habits of Indians, and the ability to interpret signs in nature, cannot be learned through reading, but is gained through practical experience.

Nat’s extensive practical knowledge and emphasis on rational thought set him apart from the Bushes, who are ruled mainly by their instincts and the authority of Ishmael, who is “incapable of maturing any connected system of forethought, beyond that which related to the interests of the present moment” (14). However, there are also many parallels between Nat and the Bushes. As Øverland points out, Daniel Boone, who is seen as a model for Nat, can also be found in the character of the squatter: “Natty is only one limited aspect of the American frontiersman. To complete the figure, Bush must also be taken into account” (Øverland 71). Nat shares the Bush family’s suspicion of what he calls “bookish l’arning” (100). In words similar to those in which the Jacksonians praised their leader, Nat congratulates himself on never having “passed a day within reach of a spelling book” (184) and, further echoing Jackson, he claims to avoid all books but the Bible. Like the Jacksonians, Nat sees scholarly learning as useless, effeminate, and even dangerous since it corrupts the “gifts of natur’” (220), such as instincts and rational thought, and makes the individual lose touch with the real world. In fact, both Nat and Ishmael feel that bookish learning is “womanish” and belongs in the settlements. Incidentally, when the Bushes turn their wagons around and head back toward civilization, they also, for the first time, seek guidance in the Book. Also, at this point Ishmael relinquishes some of his power to Esther, the only literate member of the family, who painstakingly reads the words in the Holy Book, in order to seek direction for the future actions of the family. The fact that Ishmael’s yielding of authority to his wife and to the printed word occurs as the party embarks on their journey back East emphasizes the link between books, women, and the settlements.

However, as the deed that causes the Bushes to return to civilization, Esther’s brother Abiram’s murder of his nephew, shows, the Bushes need the
protective law of the settlements in order not to become savage brutes. The uneducated sons in the family seem unable to use their minds, which are described as “dull” and “sluggish” (89), and they are controlled by their instincts, together with the strict rule of their father. Fussell suggests that as they travel “[w]estward, the Bushes almost automatically descend from one social stage to the next lower” (46-47). In other words, as the tale progresses, the Bushes become more savage, and they are described as being “scarcely more intelligent” than their livestock (25). This descent is not the result of moral decline in the Bush clan—they were criminals prior to leaving the settlements—but rather the consequence of their travelling further and further from the restraining power of the Law, without having the protection of an education to prevent them from descending to a lower social stage. Like the rabble in The Rebels, the Bushes can be seen as an illustration of the warning, issued by for example Benjamin Rush, that the public must be educated, since education fosters self-restraint. An ignorant population poses a threat to the republic.

Unlike the Bushes, Nat remains a civilized man, despite his long sojourn on the plains. The main difference between the Bushes and Nat is that Nat humbly abides by the word of God (the Law, that is, although not settlement law), while the Bushes are ruled by Ishmael. Nat, the novel shows, remains rational and able to use his mind, because he trusts to an authority higher than man. Nat’s deep religiosity is the basis for his criticism of Dr. Bat’s scholarly pursuits. In a passage Howard Mumford Jones calls the “intellectual center” of the novel (145), Nat and Dr. Bat discuss the limits and potentials of science. While Ishmael assumes the role of God in his family, Battius speculates that “Man . . . may be elevated to a communion with the Great Master Spirit of All by knowledge—nay, I know not if time and opportunity were given him, but he might become the Master of all learning, and consequently equal to the great moving principle” (180). In other words, Dr. Bat, too, pretends to a Godlike (or, rather, Adamic) role, as his naming of plants and animals shows. Nat, on the other hand, sorrowfully warns that “l’arning, though it is man’s boast, is folly in the eyes of him, who sits in the clouds and looks down in sorrow at the pride and vanity of his creatur’s . . . Knowledge! it is his plaything” (181). If Dr. Bat represents an optimistic Enlightenment view of humanity and the abilities of human beings, Nat, in emphasizing human powerlessness, conveys a deterministic view of humanity. “Why,” Nat asks, as they later resume their discussion, “have we not the wings of the pigeon, the eyes of the eagle and the legs of the moose, if it had been intended that man should be equal to all his wishes?” (241). In other words, for Nat, the achievements of an individual (or any living creature) depend on his or her disposition, or nature, which would suggest that skills, including bookish learning, are predetermined. Dr. Bat, on the other hand, argues that “if science could be fairly brought to bear on a whole species, at once, for instance, education might eradicate the evil
principle” (240). According to Battius’s theory, the development of man is dependent on his level of education and, as a result, he can ascend to omnipotence (as his hope of becoming “equal to the great moving principle” [180] reveals, power is the object in the struggle for scientific development), but also descend to a lower rung on the ladder of development, as the Bushes seem to have done. For Dr. Bat, the progress of humanity is volatile and may be reversed.

Despite Dr. Bat’s clownishness, his theories cannot be easily dismissed, regardless of Nat’s efforts to do so. As Geoffrey Rans points out in his study Cooper’s Leatherstocking Novels: A Secular Reading, the naturalist’s “words do not too seriously misrepresent—if they overstate—some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notions of the capacities of human reason” (149). Referring to the passage Jones sees as the “intellectual center” of the novel, Rans notes that it “oddly conflates Franklin and Jefferson with Emerson and Whitman,” and he warns against dismissing Dr. Bat as mere comic relief, since he “does embody reason and a belief in the power of education” (150). What is really at stake in the Dr. Bat-Nat debates is the age-old philosophical question of nature versus nurture. Interestingly enough, if Nat’s take on the issue—that it is primarily nature that shapes a person—is adopted, the very foundation for an American national identity crumbles, since, as discussed in chapter two, education was considered the primary tool for creating a unified national body.

The reason for Nat’s denial of the impact of environment—nurture—is that by granting the environment—of which education is a part—the power to shape individuals, Nat’s own position as a white man living among savages becomes untenable. As critics have noted, throughout the Leatherstocking series (although perhaps most insistently in The Last of the Mohicans) Nat obsessively distinguishes between himself and his Indian companions and enemies and also between white and red “gifts.” Claiming for example that the mastery of rifles is a white gift, while the use of bows and arrows is a red one, Nat reduces the role of education and implies that even practical skills are based primarily on heritage. As a result, Nat’s own status as a white civilized man remains intact. However, as his constant need to emphasize his whiteness reveals, the question of nature versus nurture is never quite resolved. Dr. Bat’s clownishness undermines his authority, but Nat’s views on this issue carry no more weight than those of his opponent. In

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8 See, for example, Jane Tompkins, Sentimental Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860, chapter four: “No Apologies for the Iroquois” and David Howard, “James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking Tales: ‘without a cross’” (37-54).

9 In The Pathfinder Nat develops his ideas on this issue and explains that “[e]very skin has its own natur’, and every natur’ has its own laws, as well as its own skin: It was many years afore I could master all them higher branches of a forest edication, for a red-skin knowledge doesn’t come as easy to white skin natur’, as what I suppose is intended to be white skin knowledge; though I have but little of the latter, having passed most of my time in the wilderness” (27).
fact, the character who has the most authority in the novel, Captain Middleton, seems to share Dr. Bat’s views, as his description of Nat as a “noble shoot” that has been thwarted in its growth “because it grew in the forest” (114) suggests. In addition, the previously discussed link between geographical location and educational level in the novel supports Dr. Bat’s theories rather than those of Nat.

The ambivalence of *The Prairie* reflects that of antebellum society at large. On the one hand, environmental influence was necessary for the creation of national unity. On the other hand, however, if the environment shaped individuals, what could be the consequences for the citizens of the U.S., living on what was felt to be the edge of civilization? According to the famous French naturalist Comte de Buffon, whose theories are shared by Dr. Bat, the differences between groups of people throughout the world were due to environmental differences. In other words, not only Nat but the entire white American population could become savages if Buffon were right.10

While Nat’s stand on the environment versus heritage issue may make white Americans safe from becoming savages, it also precludes the possibility of Indians becoming civilized. In fact, this is not seen as desirable in *The Prairie*. As Overland points out, the “good” Indians—not only in the novel, but in descriptions of Indians in general at the time—are those who have had the least contact with white people. The “bad” Indians, on the other hand, such as the Sioux, have been exposed to European culture and have frequently acquired some of its vices, such as alcoholism (59). In other words, even if the Indians are able to acquire some of the habits of white people, this will in the long run only have negative effects and it will not make them suitable for civilized life in the settlements. The scenario in *Hobomok*, where Charles Hobomok, a “fearless young Indian” (148) and a “swarthy boy” (149), becomes an Englishman through his education at Cambridge and in England, is not possible in *The Prairie*. In *The Prairie*, racial boundaries have become uncrossable and so has the national boundary. The Indians and their white neighbors may live in the same place,

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10 Buffon also claimed that animals and indigenous peoples in North America were smaller and less energetic than their European counterparts. This met with protests in the U.S. In the first sketch in Washington Irving’s *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819), “The Author’s Account of Himself,” the narrator sarcastically writes that when going to Europe “I was anxious to see the great men of Europe; for I had read in the works of various philosophers, that all animals degenerated in America, and man among the number. A great man of Europe, thought I, must therefore be as superior to a great man of America, as a peak of the Alps to a highland of the Hudson; and in this idea I was confirmed by observing the comparative importance and swelling magnitude of many English travellers among us; who, I was assured, were very little people in their own country.—I will visit this land of wonders thought I, and see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated” (4-5, 337n).
but they belong to different nations, and no amount of schooling can change that.11

By suggesting that human knowledge is predetermined and restricted to that which God wants us to know, Nat limits the power of education and labels science and scholarship as vain and pointless activities. However, despite his dismissal of bookish learning, Nat also betrays a fear of it, and warns that “the gifts of natur’” can be “smothered in bookish knowledge” (220). This would suggest that he fears education has a considerable impact on human nature, despite his previous claims to the opposite. In the next section, I will consider the dangers of a scholarly education and the men who have not paid heed to Nat’s warning, the specialists.

Silly Specialists

What has been overlooked in the effort to protect Cooper from the charge that he relies too much on formulas and stereotypes are the formulas and stereotypes themselves.

–Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs (100)

[T]he more any part of the human system is exercised, the more it is enlarged, and its powers increased, . . . The heads of great thinkers . . . are wonderfully large; and it has been ascertained by admeasurement, that they frequently continue to increase until the subjects are fifty years of age.

–Amariah Brigham, Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health, 1832 (89)

In Sensational Designs, Jane Tompkins identifies two main strategies used by scholars to rescue Cooper from critical contempt, without having to change the criteria for aesthetic value. The first strategy, practiced by for example A. N. Kaul and R.W.B. Lewis, is to apply a “surface-depth dichotomy,” according to which those elements not conforming to the existing rules for “good” literature are discarded as superficial and without meaning. The second strategy, used by Henry Nash Smith and others, distinguishes between center and periphery in order to do away with the main plot and focus on what is seen as truly important in Cooper’s works, “the real center,” located at the edges of his texts (97-98). In her study of The Last of the Mohicans, Tompkins, rather than trying to salvage Cooper’s novels by ignoring perceived flaws, chooses to study precisely these aspects in order to discover their function in the narrative. For Tompkins, it is the

11 See Cremin for a discussion of the shifting views of the potential to educate, and thereby assimilate, the Indians (230-44).
very “features of the Leatherstocking tales that have made them a target either of critical disdain or of critical apology which enable these narratives to treat cultural problems in a manner both comprehensible and broadly intelligible” (95).

One of the proclaimed flaws in Cooper’s novels is the “funny” characters. These figures have been criticized not only by critics in the twentieth century, but also by Cooper’s contemporaries. Honoré de Balzac writes in a well-known review from 1840 that

[t]hat which renders Cooper inferior to Walter Scott is his profound and radical impotence for the comic, and his perpetual intention to divert you, in which he never succeeds . . . To produce what he thinks to be comic he puts into the mouth of one of his personages a silly joke, invented a priori, some notion, a mental vice, a deformity of mind, which is shown in the first chapters and reappears page after page, to the last . . . To this system we owe . . . all the so-called comic figures in Cooper’s work. (198)

In an anonymous review of The Last of the Mohicans written in 1826, the writer discusses the “bores” in Cooper’s fiction, finding that “[t]hey stick too close to their own peculiarity, with a want of variety . . . Their ‘single mindedness’ is unaccompanied with the ‘viridity of intellect’” (Dekker/McWilliams 94). An unsigned article from 1827 complains about “a certain Doctor Bat, or Battius, a naturalist travelling on an ass, who is an intolerable bore wherever he is found, and who proves abundantly that Mr. Cooper has not the least touch of the humorous in his genius” (Dekker/McWilliams 123). As these examples indicate, nineteenth-century reviewers discussing Cooper’s humor figures tend to find them tedious, annoying, and redundant. Cooper’s tales, they feel, could do without Gamut, Dr. Bat, Captain Polwarth, and their likes, and would be the better for it.

This opinion is shared by a majority of critics in the twentieth century as well. Dr. Bat, who will be the focus of my discussion of Cooper’s “comic figures,” is often either dismissed or ignored by critics discussing The Prairie. In The American Novel and Its Tradition, Richard Chase describes Dr. Bat as “a scientist-pedant who has stepped out of the pages of Smollett or Fielding,” and he complains that “[i]n Cooper’s hands this stock figure becomes even more tiresome than usual.” Chase then goes on to say that “[t]he characters who really matter are (besides the Indians) the trapper and the Bush family” (59). In the afterword to the Signet edition of The Prairie, John William Ward establishes a continuum where “the untutored, natural wisdom of Natty Bumppo” is on one extreme, and “the delicate heroine, Inez, and her genteel lover, Captain Middleton” on the other, but fails to place the naturalist as a node on this trajectory (409). In fact, Dr. Bat is not mentioned at all in Ward’s discussion. Orm Øverland writes about the important role the naturalist played in scientific expeditions in the early
nineteenth century (46-47), but Dr. Bat, the naturalist in the book that is the focus of Øverland’s study, is only mentioned in passing.

Not all critics have ignored Dr. Bat, however. As mentioned earlier, Howard Mumford Jones sees the dialogue between Nat and Battius in chapter XXII as the “intellectual center” of the narrative. In this passage, Jones argues, Cooper “satirizes the pretensions of science” (145). Donald A. Ringe also discusses the relation between the trapper and the naturalist. In his article “Man and Nature in Cooper’s The Prairie,” Ringe regrets that “Cooper chose to make this character so absurd that most critics merely dismiss him as a stock character. Despite his absurdity . . . Dr. Bat performs an important function in the novel” (319). Ringe sees Battius, together with Nat and Ishmael Bush, as the three main characters in the novel. The central drama in The Prairie, he argues, is the different relations between man and nature that these three characters illustrate. According to Ringe, Bush and Dr. Bat show similar attitudes to nature as their intentions are mainly selfish: “It is understandable that they have made a compact and travel together, for basically they have no quarrel with each other” (317). Nat, on the other hand, stands as the opposite of both the squatter and the scientist. Rather than being opposed to scientific study, Ringe argues, Cooper criticizes the arrogance exhibited by some scientists as they believe that everything can be understood and controlled through science (319). However, even if Dr. Bat is not dismissed or ignored, neither Ringe nor Jones takes into account the ambivalent portrayal of Nat. Instead they treat him as a mirror of Cooper’s opinions. As a result, they both dismiss Dr. Bat’s views as the opposite of the overall message of the novel.12

The character type Dr. Bat represents fares no better in J. Gerald Kennedy’s article “Cooper’s Anti-Intellectualism: The Comic Man of Learning,” where Cooper’s attitude to learning is described as “ambiguous at best” (70) since he struggled to reconcile his Jacksonian sympathies with the belief that the leaders of the country should be educated gentlemen (69). For, although Kennedy acknowledges Cooper’s inconsistent feelings about learning in his discussion of “the ludicrous man of learning” (70) (where he concentrates on Dr. Sitgreaves in The Spy), he sees the portrayal of this type as unambiguously negative and the message of Cooper’s novels as thoroughly anti-intellectual.

Unlike Jones and Ringe, Anne Perrin takes the ambivalent depiction of the trapper into account in her discussion of Nat and Dr. Bat, thus problematizing the relation between Nat’s views and those of the narrator and thereby also the attitude to learning in the novel. In her article “Opened Frontiers, Closed Deserts: The Contradictions between Source and Text in James Fenimore Cooper’s The Prairie,” Perrin discusses the tension between the nostalgia for the pristine wilderness and the desire to exploit the

12 See also Ringe’s study James Fenimore Cooper.
resources of the vast land that permeates *The Prairie*. Basing his portrayal of the prairie on accounts by explorers whose aim was to map the land for future exploitation and settlement, Cooper attempts to reconcile this view of the land with Nat’s negative view of civilization. Perrin suggests that “[a]lthough Dr. Obed Battius is set up as Cooper’s scientific straw man . . . it is with Battius that Cooper constructs the most extended debate regarding the values of nature vs. those of civilization” (74). As she points out, even if Dr. Bat is ridiculed for the importance he attaches to “monuments,” Nat, too, gives in to the desire to have a monument erected to his memory, as he asks Middleton to put a headstone on his grave. “At the end,” Perrin argues, “Natty essentially joins in the process of cultural transformation of the American prairie” (74). As this brief overview indicates, the scholarly attention Dr. Bat has received has varied greatly. While some critics do not even mention him, others see him as a main character in the novel. Heeding Tompkins’s example, I want to investigate one of the stereotypes in Cooper’s fiction, the “comic figure,” among whom we find Dr. Bat.

Following in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark—in fact, as *The Prairie* is set in 1805 and the Lewis and Clark expedition left St. Louis in 1804, Dr. Bat is not far behind them—Dr. Bat has embarked on a scientific expedition in the hope of finding new species, and pen a “Historia Naturalis, Americana, that would put the sneering imitators of the Frenchman de Buffon to shame” (70). Dr. Bat’s expedition can be read as a response to the general call for original American scholarship, which also included the establishing of a national literature, to which Cooper, “the American Scott,” was an important contributor.

However, despite his participation in the struggle for national pride, Dr. Bat’s research is seen as useless and futile and he is far from a hero in *The Prairie*. With his unconventional clothes, “an odd mixture of cloth and skins” (68), and his clownish behavior, Dr. Bat, as we have seen, belongs to

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13 According to Øverland, Cooper’s two major sources for information about the western plains were *History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and Clark* and *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819 and ’20 ...Under the Command of Major Stephen H. Long* (67). Despite accusations of sloppiness, Cooper was meticulous in his research for *The Prairie* and added details from naturalists’ accounts to the narrative to give his readers an accurate account of a landscape that few, including himself, had ever laid eyes on (Øverland 78, 91). Thus, by an ironic twist that further complicates any presumed allegiance between Nat and the author, Cooper’s description of the prairie is based on the narratives of Bat’s colleagues. If we follow Nat in dismissing Dr. Bat’s scientific endeavors, we should also put Cooper’s account of the prairie into question.

14 Francesca Sawaya also finds the characterization of Dr. Bat to be ambiguous. In her article “Between Revolution and Racism: Colonialism and the American Indian in *The Prairie*,” Sawaya suggests that some of the accusations directed at Dr. Bat, such as his attempts to classify Indians, could be leveled at Cooper as well (130).

15 My discussion will only deal with a few of Cooper’s “comic figures” and I do not claim that all the characters who belong to this category in Cooper’s novels play the same role.
a group of recurring characters in Cooper’s novels—the comic specialists.\textsuperscript{16} In \textit{The Spy}, the specialist is a silly man of science, the surgeon for the rebel troops, Dr. Sitgreaves, who, in his scientific zeal, breaks his own finger in order to “reduce the fracture and watch the cure . . . [and feel] the thrilling sensation excited by the knitting of the bone” (236).\textsuperscript{17} The comic relief in \textit{The Last of the Mohicans} is provided by the psalmist David Gamut, who, with his oddly shaped body and dangerous habit of bursting into song in the middle of flights from hostile Indians, supplies the same type of slapstick humor as Battius and Sitgreaves. Gamut’s devotion to song is reflected in his name, which is also a musical term, that, ironically, considering his limitedness, means an entire range, or scale. The singing master, however, is different from the other two specialists in that, rather than being a man of science, he has devoted his life to music and his chief studies consist of reading the Bible. In other words, Gamut cannot be considered a man of learning, in the conventional sense, but his single-mindedness gives him the same idiosyncratic traits as Doctors Bat and Sitgreaves. As noted, Paul, the bee hunter in \textit{The Prairie}, also exhibits this limited world view. His repeated use of bee hunting metaphors makes him the same quaint, somewhat clownish, character as Dr. Bat, Sitgreaves, and Gamut, as his previously mentioned role as comedian in the “Legislature” shows. In \textit{The Pathfinder}, this role is played by Cap, the stubborn sea captain who is incapable of attributing value to anything not connected to life on the sea.

Although Nat is hardly a specialist in the same sense as those discussed above, he exhibits the same type of idiosyncratic behavior and limited world view. Nat’s comic status is most pronounced in \textit{The Pioneers}, where his similarity to the figure of the fool is established as he is introduced to the reader: “he drew his bare hand across the bottom of his nose, and . . . opened his enormous mouth with a kind of inward laugh” (21). Nat loses much of his grotesque looks and odd behavior in the later Leatherstocking novels, but some traits remain. In \textit{The Prairie}, Nat’s affinity with the comic specialist is suggested by the fact that he is described as being “purely practical,” in opposition to the man “given to theory” (77) and is, thus, as limited as his counterpart. Furthermore, like several of the comic specialists, Nat is described as “single minded” (\textit{The Prairie} 179)\textsuperscript{18} and the charge that he is “dogmatic” (\textit{The Prairie} 242) could be directed at the specialists above as well.

The portrayal of Dr. Bat and his fellow specialists suggests that, as in Child’s novels, it is zeal, or, to be more specific, the devotion to a single

\textsuperscript{16} I will refer to these characters as “specialists” rather than “learned men,” since some of them are not scholars and they all share their obsession for one thing, whether it is singing or surgery.

\textsuperscript{17} See Kennedy for a further discussion of Dr. Sitgreaves.

\textsuperscript{18} The link between Nat and the specialists is obvious in \textit{The Last of the Mohicans} when first Gamut (203) and then Nat, a few pages later (227), are described as “single-minded.”
subject, rather than learning in general, that is ridiculed in Cooper’s novels. Because of their obsession, these clownish specialists have acquired a narrow world view, which has negative consequences both for themselves and those around them. For example, due to his great passion for surgery Sitgreaves obsessively searches for limbs to amputate; and, even if his patients appreciate his medical skills, they also fear that he will deprive them of some part of their bodies. In *The Prairie*, Dr. Bat becomes distracted during the storming of the Bush family’s hiding place and instead of assisting in the rescue of Ellen and Inez, he risks his own life in order to collect a precious flower. The naturalist’s fanatic search for a new species seems to have made him blind, since, not only does he mistake an Indian for a serpent, he also believes his own donkey to be a new species, giving it a Latin name: “*Vespertilio; Horribilis, Americanus*” (71), before his mistake is revealed to him. In other words, like Sitgreaves, Dr. Bat is obsessed with his work. Rather than being a well-rounded scholar, he is a specialist in a limited field of knowledge and, due to his devotion to a single topic, he is unable to relate to the world outside his limited scope of expertise. Battius thus confirms the charge the Jacksonians leveled at John Quincy Adams as they accused him of being incompetent and incapable of leading the country due to his studies (Ward 66).

As a specialist, Dr. Bat illustrates an important trend both in science and in American society in general. Rather than possessing the versatile learning of earlier scholars, such as Benjamin Franklin, who not only excelled in various fields of science, but was also a prominent businessman and a politician, Dr. Bat is a man of a single profession. Furthermore, instead of pursuing his studies as a leisure activity undertaken in a genteel manner in the middle-class sitting room, Dr. Bat’s research is his occupation, his career. Battius, as well as Sitgreaves, also illustrates a general trend in American society. Beginning in the early 1800s, middle-class men’s identities were increasingly based on their professions (Rotundo 167-68), and other aspects that had been important in creating a masculine identity, such as being a father or the head of a household, became secondary (Rotundo 3). Yet, even if middle-class men increasingly established their selves through their work and the man of profession was becoming a role model, middle-class ideology privileged versatility. In other words, by ridiculing the man of profession, *The Prairie*, like many other historical

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20 As Øverland shows, Dr. Bat’s overzealousness reflects accounts of actual scientists exploring the West (47).
novels of the time, highlights tensions in middle-class ideology as it points to a paradox between the ideal of versatility and that of professionalism. As an expert, Dr. Bat may reflect a general trend in society, but he also fails to live up to the middle-class ideal of well-roundedness. Unlike the learned characters in Child’s *The Rebels*, whose learning enables them to converse on a number of topics, the expertise and conversational skills of the naturalist are limited to a single subject. Lucretia’s journey from aristocratic genius to middle-class mother in *The Rebels* suggests a similar scenario, since there, too, excessiveness is criticized.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the opposition between aristocratic excellence and middle-class versatility in *The Rebels* involves the issues of nationality and class, since the intellectual scholars are British aristocrats. In Cooper’s novels, by contrast, the “specialists” are not portrayed as foreigners or even outsiders (although their failure to live up to middle-class roles, such as those of fathers and husbands, to some extent marginalizes them). Dr. Sitgreaves manifests a deep devotion to the rebel cause and, even if Dr. Bat on his journey West becomes an outsider, since, as an explorer, he takes on the role of observer, his status as an American is never challenged. The issue of class is also treated somewhat differently in Cooper’s novels, compared to *The Rebels*. Unlike Child’s aristocratic scholars, Cooper’s experts come from different social classes, albeit mainly the middle class. Nevertheless, just like Lucretia, who, before she gives up her claim to intellectual excellence, fails to fit into the middle class, none of Cooper’s specialists, not even Battius and Sitgreaves who presumably belong to this group, live up to its ideals.

The fact that Dr. Bat does not abide by middle-class standards is demonstrated by his lack of refinement. Since he is not educated according to the middle-class model, Battius has not acquired the gentility that is the result of this type of education, as is demonstrated by his awkward manners.

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21 Cooper is far from alone in depicting obsessed scientists. In his short stories “Rappaccini’s Daughter” and “The Birth-Mark,” Nathaniel Hawthorne describes how the morals of Aylmer and Rappaccini gradually dissolve as they become obsessed with their scientific experiments. Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* undergoes the same development when he becomes obsessed with uncovering Dimmesdale’s secret. Although these scientists, unlike Cooper’s experts, are diabolical rather than funny, they too, I believe, reveal a concern for the effects of the increasing emphasis on professionalism. However, whereas Cooper’s scholars refuse to perform expected male duties, Hawthorne’s scientists are excessively masculine.

22 Dr. Bat is careful to point out that unlike Buffon, who is “a mere compiler! one who flourishes on the foundation of other men’s labours,” he takes after Linnaeus’s student “Solander who bought his knowledge, with pain and privations!” (69). Dr. Bat’s emphasis of the fact that he is doing his own research does not prevent Nat from accusing him of being a “man who has turn’d over the leaves of a book, instead of travelling over the face of the earth, in order to find out the nature’s of its inhabitants” (197). Although Battius’s choice of role model is somewhat unfortunate considering that Solander’s travels produced little result (Koerner 150), he seems to share Nat’s view that practical experience is preferable to learning by reading.
and unconventional appearance. With his odd clothes and slight body (68), Battius falls short of middle-class expectations. Sitgreaves deviates even more from the norm, as he is described as “grotesque” (106) and as having a “shapeless form” (291), which is incompatible with the elegant posture of a man of gentility (Bushman 62-63). The ungainliness that seems to afflict Cooper’s doctors can be found in *The Pioneers*, too, where the country doctor, Elnathan Todd

was commonly thought to be, among the settlers, a gentleman of great mental endowments; and he was assuredly of rare personal proportions. In height he measured, without his shoes, exactly six feet and four inches. His hands, feet, and knees, corresponded in every respect with this formidable stature; but every other part of his frame appeared to have been intended for a man several sizes smaller, if we except the length of the limbs. His shoulders were square, in one sense at least, being in a right line from one side to the other; but they were so narrow, that the long dangling arms they supported, seemed to issue out of his back. His neck possessed, in an eminent degree, the property of length to which we have alluded, and it was topped by a small bullet-head. (71)

The unfortunate Gamut, in *The Last of the Mohicans*, also falls short of the middle-class ideal, since he has “all the bones and joints of other men, without any of their proportions” (18). As the specialists’ odd features indicate, the fear of excess that, as discussed in the previous chapter, characterized post-Revolutionary America is expressed in several different ways in 1820s historical novels. If, as Gould holds, the depiction of Puritan witch hunters is one example of the fear of immoderacy (*Covenant and Republic* 175-76), then Cooper’s odd-looking scholars is another.

The grotesque bodies of Cooper’s specialists highlight their unwillingness, or sometimes failure, to conform to social expectations. Foucault maintains in *Discipline and Punish* that the body is central as an instrument for controlling individuals in post-Revolutionary societies and he explains that “the body is . . . directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (25). The unwieldy bodies of the specialists stand in stark contrast to middle-class ideals, since harmony, rather than variation, signified gentility (Bushman 98). Following Foucault, the unrestrained figures of these

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23 Cooper’s specialists share their lack of proportion with the schoolmaster Ichabod Crane in Washington Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” Crane is “tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew” (295).
characters suggest that they pose a potential threat to social order, despite their silliness.

In her article “Vanishing Americans: Gender, Empire, and New Historicism,” Lora Romero notes that the finely shaped bodies of the “good” Indians, Chingachgook and Uncas, in Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, form a contrast to the disproportionate Gamut. Romero argues that Cooper’s interest in proportion reflects a general fear that American children were becoming increasingly weak and puny. For Cooper, Romero suggests, the harmonious bodies of the Indians represent a phase in history and this body type cannot exist in civilized society (393-94). Civilized bodies, in other words, are doomed to degeneration and Gamut’s utter lack of proportions is a sign of his being highly civilized. However, Gamut’s shapelessness is extreme and not shared by the other white characters in the novel, which shows that not all civilized people suffer from disproportionate bodies. Even if the beauty of Uncas, who is said to be “an unblemished specimen of the noblest proportions of man” (*The Last of the Mohicans* 61), is unsurpassed, Duncan Heyward sports a “handsome, open, and manly brow” (26), and he does not have any of the extreme features that the psalmist has been endowed with. As Romero points out, Gamut’s shapelessness is blamed on his having received the wrong type of education (394). According to Nat, Gamut “has fallen into the hands of some silly woman, when he should have been gathering his education under a blue sky” (*The Last of the Mohicans* 265). It seems, then, that the bodily degeneration that is an unavoidable part of civilization is exacerbated by excessive studies.

While Romero focuses on race in her analysis of the physical proportions of the characters in *The Last of the Mohicans*, I would like to add class as an important factor in this discussion. In *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health* (1832), Amariah Brigham, M.D. warns that children, especially girls, spend too much time studying, which causes them to grow weak and sickly. Brigham sees the emphasis on intellectual improvement as a problem afflicting the United States in particular, due to the fact that the “accidental circumstances of fortune, parentage, or the favour of the great, have here but little control; the power to gain high and desirable stations is to be derived from knowledge; and nobility and dignity of character belong only to those who possess enlarged and cultivated minds” (38). Far from being against studying, however, Brigham recommends a combination of intellectual and physical exercise.

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24 Nat’s hostile attitude to women as teachers clashes with the ideal of the mother as teacher that was promoted by middle-class ideology.

25 I am aware of the fact that my discussion could appear anachronistic considering that Brigham’s treatise was published some years after many of Cooper’s specialists saw the light. However, I see Brigham’s discussion of education as analogous to that of Cooper as they both point to a general concern in American society at this time. Romero also discusses Brigham’s treatise, but in the context of race.
Also emphasizing the importance of finding a balance between studies and exercise, the anonymous author of *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men* (1825) points out that “a certain equilibrium must be kept up between the energies of the body and the mind. Torpor of mind, with bodily exercise, will produce melancholy and consumption, as well as mental labour with sedentary habits” (6).

Excessive studying, Brigham warns, will unsettle the balance in the body since “[e]very employment in which men engage brings into relatively greater action particular parts of the system.” As a result, “the more any part of the human system is exercised, the more it is enlarged, and its powers increased” (italics in original 89). In a similar vein, the writer of *Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men* finds that

\[\text{[a]s . . . every part of the animal system is dependent on use for its growth and development, it is easy to account, in the case of sedentary men, for the disproportionate increase of the mind to the body. The limbs, deprived of that stimulus which would give them vigour, are stinted in their growth; the legs, both from inaction and a continued sitting posture, are prevented from expanding, and the general circulation is sluggish and feeble; while the brain is constantly exercised, and constantly increasing in size and strength. This contrast between the head and the extremities has often been remarked among scholars, but in Rousseau and Lalande it is said to have been peculiarly striking. (18-19)}\]

The ungainly bodies of Cooper’s experts illustrate the dangerous effects of a too literary education. Having devoted their lives to a single pursuit, their bodies and minds are sadly off balance. Among the diseases caused by overzealous studying, *The Remarks on the Disorders of Literary Men* lists “various kinds of inflammation, tumours, dropsy, headach, delirium, convulsions, lethargy or apoplexy” (8).

As Romero points out, educational treatises in the antebellum period “slide easily from the individual to the race” (388). Neglecting to uphold a healthy balance between studying and physical exercise, Brigham implies, poses a threat not only to the individual, but to the whole population and he warns that “[i]f . . . constant mental excitement is ever or in any country dangerous, it is so now in this country, and cannot fail ultimately to have most disastrous consequences, demanding the attention of the patriot and the philanthropist” (139). Just as Gamut’s ill-timed singing puts not only himself, but also his travel companions, at risk, so does the excessive scholar weaken not only his own constitution, but that of the entire nation.

According to Brigham, “[t]he peculiarly intellectual character of the present age” (37) has not only led to unbalanced bodies, it is also the cause of high rates of insanity among Americans, and he claims that the proportionate number of insane persons in Connecticut exceeds that of any European nation (129). As in the case of the puniness of Americans, insanity
is caused by “civil and religious freedom, where every person has liberty to engage in the strife for the highest honours and stations in society.” “There is but little insanity in those countries where the government is despotic,” Brigham continues, because “[t]he inhabitants of such countries possess but little mental activity compared with those who live in a republic, or under a representative government” (130-31). Aside from the fact that Cooper’s specialists illustrate the damage excessive devotion to one topic has on one’s physical appearance, they also show its negative effects on the mind. Although not insane, several of the comic specialists are suspected to be so. Gamut is treated with respect by the Indian enemies, because his odd appearance and behavior make them believe he is out of his mind. Cap in The Pathfinder is suspected by the Indians of being insane.26 Also, even if Dr. Bat is never described as mentally ill, his silly, obsessive behavior certainly suggests that his mind is more or less deranged.

Bearing Brigham’s discussion in mind, Cooper’s specialists, I argue, could be interpreted as an expression of the fearful consequences of freedom resulting from life in a democracy. Rather than being considered foreigners, as the intellectuals are in Child’s novels, Cooper’s specialists are Americans who have become victims of unbridled ambition. Living in a society “where the road to wealth and distinction of every kind is equally open to all” (Brigham 130), but also where “without education such an elevation cannot be attained” (Brigham 38), the comic specialists in Cooper’s novels strive for excellence, but lose not only their physical health, but also their minds in the process.

The goal in the struggle for excellence that Brigham discusses in his treatise is not, primarily, to serve the community or the nation, but rather to improve one’s own social status. In fact, as is seen in Cooper’s novels, the ambitions of the experts often affect the other characters in a negative way. When Dr. Bat ventures into the wilderness, the ostensible goal may be to improve the knowledge of mankind, but, as it turns out, his own dream of glory is at least as important an incentive as altruism. As Porte notes, the name Battius gives his newly discovered creature, the Vespertilio Americanus Horribilis, means “American Bat” (45). In other words, Dr. Bat has named this new species, that is, his donkey, after himself. Another example of unbridled ambition can be found in Dr. Sitgreaves’s constant search for limbs to amputate. As the fear of the potential amputees reveals, Sitgreaves’s urge to amputate is motivated by a wish to improve his own skills rather than concern for the welfare of his patients.27

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26 Their presumed insanity actually serves these specialists quite well since it causes them to go unmolested by the Indians.
27 Dr. Sitgreaves’s whimsical reply to Captain Singleton that “it is presumptuous in you to pretend to tell your medical attendant when you are free from pain: if it be not to enable us to decide in such matters, of what avail the lights of science?” (149) seems humorous, but carries a threatening undertone when one considers the fact that physicians were becoming
Dr. Bat’s refusal to take part in manly “duties,” such as defending women, constitutes another example of his self-centeredness. Rather than participating in the rescue of Ellen and Inez, Battius bags a flower for his collection. Similarly, after an attack by hostile Indians, when Ellen asks him why he did not defend them, he explains that his pistol is “adapted to the destruction of larger insects and reptiles” and that rather than defending them from the Indians, he “recorded the event, noting each particular, with the precision necessary to science” (70). In The Spy, Dr. Sitgreaves expresses similar sentiments. When Captain Lawton asks him why he did not prevent an enemy from escaping, the Doctor answers that “I am not the riding-master of the regiment—nor a drill sergeant—nor a crazy cornet; no, sir . . . I am only, sir, a poor humble man of letters, a mere Doctor of Medicine, an unworthy graduate of Edinburgh, and a surgeon of dragoons; nothing more” (234-35). Both Battius and Sitgreaves are of the opinion that they are not responsible for anything that falls outside their professional duties and, in fact, their less than chivalrous behavior is not so much a failure to conform to the expected gender role as a decision not to do so. Considering that the figure of the professional man was becoming a role model in antebellum society, the unwillingness to participate in manly duties that the two scholars demonstrate is, I believe, a sign of concern for what consequences this new ideal would entail. Anthony Rotundo writes that the late eighteenth century saw a “nascent individualism,” which was incorporated into the Constitution. This individualism was considered a male quality and, since the new republic depended for its survival on the public virtue of its citizens (who were male), women were cast as the “custodians of communal virtue” and charged to instill this quality in their men. Through the doctrine of separate spheres, Rotundo suggests, male self-interest was checked and kept under control (16-18). Dr. Bat’s decision to focus on his research rather than protect and rescue the women in the company could be interpreted as an illustration of the consequences of men devoting themselves to their careers. As is demonstrated by the deference that Charles and Hobomok in Child’s novel show Mary, together with the contrasting Puritan disdain for women, chivalry is a sign of civilization and social advancement. Seen in this context, Dr. Bat’s lack of manners is not only a problem for his fellow travelers, it also carries social and civilizational implications. A man who puts his career first will have little interest in serving the ladies or his community. Since the stability of the republic rests on the civic conscience of its citizens and the level of civilization is tied to the treatment of women, increasingly influential and powerful. According to Foucault, in the second half of the eighteenth century, “[t]he doctor becomes the great advisor and expert, if not in the art of governing, at least in that of observing, correcting and improving the social ‘body’ and maintaining it in a permanent state of health” (Power/Knowledge 177).

28 For a discussion of the role played by women in the early republic, see Linda Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America.
the behavior of career-driven men like Bat suggests a gloomy future for the nation.

Nat, too, derives his identity from his occupation, as his nickname reveals. After having been referred to as “the stranger” for the first few pages, Nat is introduced as “the trapper” and the narrator adds that he will “[i]n future . . . [be] designate[d] by his pursuit” (22). Although Nat readily participates in manly missions to rescue damsels in distress, his hostility to the settlements and his refusal to be part of society suggest that he, like Dr. Bat, chooses to focus on his own interests rather than contribute to the public good.29

As we will see in the next section, the fact that Nat and Dr. Bat derive their identities from their occupations is not the only resemblance between them. There are many parallels between the two characters as their similar names indicate. One letter alone separates the “purely practical” man from “the other so much given to theory” (77).

Mapping the Prairie

[P]eople are chronically mobile and routinely displaced.

–Malkki (24)

What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization.

–Bourdieu (479)

Discussing “thick description,” Clifford Geertz writes that “[t]he thing to ask about a burlesqued wink or a mock sheep raid is not what their ontological status is . . . The thing to ask is what their import is: what it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said” (10). Applying this query to The Prairie, the question would be: Why is Nat, with the occasional assistance of Paul, sabotaging and destroying Dr. Bat’s research? When the mob in The Rebels destroy Hutchinson’s library, not only the Tories, but the Rebels too, are horrified and the raid is seen as an act of barbarism. In The Prairie, the destruction of Dr. Bat’s research causes no such reactions and the event is described in an off-hand manner. When Battius asks Nat for his help in saving the remnants of his scientific collection (that which the trapper has

29 Dr. Bat and, ironically, Nat, share their unwillingness to take part in society with the learned hermit discussed in chapter two. The hermit could be seen as the most extreme expression of the refusal to take on the civic duties of a good citizen.
not already destroyed), Nat hesitates, saying: “I know not, I know not, . . . The vermin and reptiles which you bear about you, were intended by the Lord for the Prairies, and I see no good in sending them into regions that may not suit their natur’s” (322). Similarly, when Dr. Bat, believing that he is about to be executed, asks Nat to relate the details of his passing to “the learned societies of the world,” Nat’s unfeeling response is that “it can matter no one greatly, yourself excepted, whether you live or die” (305). In refusing to help Dr. Bat, Nat is not only challenging the naturalist’s conviction of his own importance in the scholarly world, he is also defining what belongs and what does not belong on the prairie. For him, Battius does not belong on the prairie and the animals he has collected do not belong in the settlements. In other words, by refusing Dr. Bat’s requests, Nat is upholding what he perceives to be the correct order.

Jared Gardner suggests in his study Master Plots that

\[\text{[t]he question that resonates throughout the early national period is: What are Americans going to be? Scarcely hidden behind the question is the fear that in this undiscovered country and under this untested political system, white Americans will be either collapsed back into Europeans or else transformed into something as completely “different” as blacks and Indians. (1)}\]

This question was especially pertinent after the Louisiana Purchase (1803), which, as critics like Orm Øverland, Francesca Sawaya, and Joel Porte have pointed out, is an important theme in The Prairie. Although there were great expectations following this acquisition, there was also a fear that the addition of this vast territory would lead to an increasing sectionalism between the different parts of the country (Øverland 49). Tied to the question of what Americans are going to be is another dilemma concerning who is authorized to provide the answer to this question. Bhabha writes in The Location of Culture that “[t]he question of the representation of difference is . . . always also a problem of authority” (89). In other words, who will define and order society? The question “What are Americans going to be?” permeates the Leatherstocking novels and, as The Prairie makes clear, the answer to this question depends on who is in charge of definitions.

Throughout the novel, Dr. Bat and Nat compete for the honor of defining and ordering the prairie. Acting as a colonizer, Battius attempts to organize the plains under the cloak of science. The naturalist’s role as colonizer is strengthened by the parallel between his journey of exploration and that of Lewis and Clark, as the aim of their expedition was not only to explore Jefferson’s new purchase, but also to map the vast land for future settlement.

\[\text{30 When the Indian chief Hard-Heart shortly before this passage asks Nat to convey a message regarding his death to his tribe, Nat readily agrees, provided it is “a message that a white man may bear” (280). Nat is also concerned about being remembered to posterity himself, as his detailed instruction to Middleton about the inscription on his headstone shows.}\]
Whenever Dr. Bat spots a “new” plant or animal he gives it a Latin name, thus placing it in the scientific system of classification, but also in the civilized world. Referring to Dr. Bat as a “verbal predator” (2), Tony Tanner writes that the naturalist “represents language in its most nakedly (here foolishly) imperialistic, which is to say cannibalistic, guise and manifestation” (3). By mapping the prairie, Dr. Bat contributes to the incorporation of the plains into the United States, as he makes it known, civilized, and, thus, habitable for white people.\footnote{The Bushes are also colonizers of the West, but, unlike the journey of Dr. Bat, their expedition spreads desolation, rather than civilization, on the plains. Nevertheless, even if Battius’s expedition entails enlightenment, it could be argued that destruction of the wilderness will be the final consequence of his journey, since he is paving the way for prospective settlers.}

Nat’s hostility to Dr. Bat’s scientific endeavors can be explained by the fact that he, too, is involved in a similar project, as is made clear by his categorization of people, but also plants and animals, into those who belong on the prairie and those who belong in the settlements. According to Nat, not only Dr. Bat but all white individuals who fail to be masculine belong in the settlements. By explaining to Ellen that she has “venture[d] in a place where none but the strong should come” (27), Nat marks the prairie as off limits not only for women, but also for feeble old men like himself. Nat’s repeated lament that he is “old and useless” (84), together with his sense of displacement, highlights the fact that his categorization makes his own existence on the prairie untenable.

Dr. Bat’s silly mistakes and clownish behavior seem to suggest that his definitions and system of order are dismissed and that those of Nat are favored. While Dr. Bat gets lost in intricate and, as it seems, irrelevant discussions, Nat, acting like the child in “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” punctures his convoluted queries and exposes them for what they are, a mass of words lacking substance. A closer look, however, reveals a more complicated picture: the very things Nat ridicules as useless and foreign on the prairie turn out to be as important there as they are in the settlements. For example, when Nat calls a bison a buffalo, claiming that “Bison or Buffaloe, it makes but little matter. The creatur’ is the same, call it by what name you will,” Battius objects on the grounds that “as classification is the very soul of the Natural Sciences, the animal or vegetable, must, of necessity, be characterised by the peculiarities of its species, which is always indicated by the name” (77). The naturalist’s knotty discussion seems more appropriate for a lecture hall than a camp on the prairie, but it later turns out that he is right. Although Dr. Bat is not given restitution in the narrative, it is pointed out in no less than two footnotes that “the animal so often alluded to in this book, and which is vulgarly called the buffaloe, is in truth the bison” (100), and that “[i]n addition to the scientific distinctions which mark the two species, it may be added, with due deference to Dr. Battius, that a much
more important particular is, the fact, that while the former of these animals is delicious and nourishing food, the latter is scarcely edible” (107). The two footnotes suggest that, as Dr. Bat maintains, using correct names is important, even on the prairie.  

In his article “American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon,” Lawrence Buell suggests that Cooper, together with writers such as Emerson, Whitman, and Twain, attempted to “creolize and neologize American English so that it spoke a voice of the culture distinct from the standardizing mother tongue” (427). Seen in this context, Cooper’s use of buffalo instead of bison, but also his discussion of the two words, serve to distinguish between varieties of English. The fact that Cooper intentionally uses American words is also shown by the many footnotes where he not only explains these words, but also points out that they are, in fact, American.  

As David Simpson notes, out of the footnotes Cooper added to the 1832 edition “eight out of eighteen propose etymologies or translations . . . and two more are about names or naming” (177). For example, it is pointed out in a footnote that “Americans call the autumn the ‘fall,’ from the fall of the leaf” (85). After the Revolution, language became an important tool in forging political and social unity in the former colony (Simpson 30); and in his deliberate use of American English, Cooper takes part in the mission to define American culture and distinguish it from that of Britain. Also, Cooper highlights the importance individual words play in bringing about this distinction.  

Cooper’s discussion of words also sheds light on Nat’s and Dr. Bat’s buffalo/bison controversy as it shows that the choice of name has important implications. On the one hand, Nat’s usage of “buffaloe” is more American than its formal denomination bison (Simpson 178), which could suggest that he is the winner of the battle of names. On the other hand, Nat is also saying that names do not matter, but Cooper’s deliberate use of them proves him wrong, which suggests that it is the naturalist, rather than the trapper, who has the final word.
Nat’s disdainful reply to Dr. Bat that “[t]he creatur’ is the same, call it by what name you will” (77) is also undermined by the example of Nat’s own name. In the different Leatherstocking novels, Nat’s name changes. He himself points out that “I’ve been called in my time, by as many names, as there are people among whom I’ve dwelt. Now the Delawares nam’d me for my eyes, and I was called after the far-sighted hawk. Then ag’in the settlers in the Otsego hills christened me anew, from the fashion of my leggins” (171). As Nat shows, his different names are often tied to a skill in which he excels or to his appearance. Sometimes his names reflect his present occupation, as in The Prairie where he is mainly referred to as “the trapper.” This trend is even more pronounced in the last two novels, The Deerslayer and The Pathfinder, where Nat is the eponymous hero. The fact that his name shifts depending on his current situation suggests that the name of a “creatur’” is indeed tied to its nature. In The Last of the Mohicans, Nat explains his views on names further, as he declares that

I am an admirator of names, though the Christian fashions fall far below savage customs in this particular. The biggest coward I ever knew was called Lyon; and his wife, Patience, would scold you out of hearing in less time than a hunted deer would run a rod. With an Indian ‘tis a matter of conscience; what he calls himself, he generally is. (67)

Nat’s distinction between Indian and English ways of naming suggests that, while Indian names describe their bearer, English names are deceptive. Referring to Nat’s suspicion of names, Tanner writes that “[t]here is always a danger of reality’s ebbing from the thing into the name so that a primary reality is lost in exchange for a fixed, arbitrary secondary reality of nominations and signs” (3). Both Tanner and Simpson maintain that the narrator in The Prairie sides with Nat in criticizing Battius’s naming. I want to suggest that the text is more ambiguous on this issue. Defending his use of the Linnaean system of classification, Dr. Bat argues that “the animal or the vegetable, must, of necessity, be characterised by the peculiarities of its species, which is always indicated by the name” (77). Even if Battius fails in his application of this system, his opinion on how names should be given is the same as that of Nat. As Nat succinctly tells Dr. Bat, “[i]t is only a few hard words that divide us, friend; for I’m of an opinion that, with use and freedom, we should come to understand one another, and mainly settle down into the same judgments of mankind and of the ways of the world” (180).

The endorsement of Nat’s naming practices is further complicated in the novel when one considers the negative consequences this manner of naming has for the trapper. In The Prairie, where Nat is feeling old, weak and humbled by his inglorious, and as he believes, unmanly, line of work, his

person of Dr. Obed Battius, Cooper clearly satirizes the learned scientist and the mouther of definitions” (178).
appellation does not even have a capitalized “T.” Nat is, simply, “the trapper.” In other words, the direct relation between Nat and his nomination has, in this case, become a constraint. As Nat’s name defines who he is, and as he feels that being a trapper is humiliating, his whole life becomes a failure. Unlike Patience and Lyon whose names fail to define them, Nat is limited by his appellation. Furthermore, as opposed to Dr. Bat, who names not only everything around him, but also renames himself, Nat lacks the power to name. Joel Porte describes Nat as “Adam the namer” (33), but, as it turns out, Nat cannot even choose his own name. Since Nat believes that the name should reflect what its bearer “generally is” and since all that Nat is, at this point in his life, is a trapper, Nat is forced to carry the name of his despised occupation.

In addition, despite his dismissal of English naming practices, Nat actually values English names quite highly. As Tony Tanner points out, Nat’s troubled feelings about his given name are shown when, after Middleton reveals that his grandparents named their son after a man “of great simplicity of mind, but of sterling worth” (The Prairie 114), Nat, rather than pronouncing the name in question, asks “Do you mean, the actual name itself: spelt with the very same letters; beginning with an N. and ending with an L” (115) (Tanner 3). After it has been established that Nat’s name has indeed been passed on to, as he himself puts it, “the great, and the rich, and the honored, and what is better, still, the just,” his joy knows no limits: “A name, did you say! . . . what, the name of the solitary, un’arned hunter!” (115). Nat’s concern with his name is also revealed in his minute instructions to Captain Middleton about the inscription on his headstone: “Put no boastful words on the same; but just the name, the age, and the time of the death, with something from the holy book. No more, no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on ‘arth; I need no more” (384). On his death bed, Nat is only concerned that his English name, the name that does not reveal anything about his skills or accomplishments, is remembered by posterity.

So far, the discussion has dealt with Nat’s ambivalent attitude to names and classifications. This ambivalence involves not only names, however, but language in general. Like Ishmael Bush, Nat links the use of words to women and the settlements. In her discussion of The Last of the Mohicans, 36

36 Porte is not alone in describing Nat as an adamic figure. The most well-known study that argues along these lines is probably R.W.B. Lewis’s The American Adam.

37 Nat has actually already had his name inscribed on a headstone. In The Pioneers his name appears on the grave of old Effingham. Excitedly Nat turns to young Effingham: “Show me the name, boy, said Natty, with simple eagerness; let me see my own name placed in such honour. ’Tis a gin’rous gift to a man who leaves none of his name and family behind him in a country, where he has tarried so long.” /Effingham guided his finger to the spot, and Natty followed the windings of the letters to the end, with deep interest.” Emphasizing the importance of getting the names right, Nat also persuade Effingham to correct the spelling of the part of the inscription that refers to the Indian chief Chingachgook, who shares the grave with old Effingham (452).
Lora Romero draws a parallel between Hawk-eye’s hostility to language and Rousseau’s *Émile*. According to Rousseau, women’s lack of physical strength forces them to rely on words to make other people perform what they cannot do themselves. When women gain control over their sons’ education, their weak bodies become a problem, since, unlike fathers who can discipline their children through physical punishment, mothers must rely on verbal manipulation. As a result, their sons become loquacious, but physically weak, which is what Hawk-eye claims has happened to Gamut (Romero 394-96). As Romero sums up, “[r]eal men do not need words because they have physical strength. Women and precocious sons, however, require verbal prosthetics to get what they want” (396). When Dr. Bat tries to persuade Nat to join him on the journey eastward, arguing that he has a duty to his “countrymen to deliver up some of those stores of experimental knowledge,” the trapper condescendingly dismisses his invitation, saying that “the Lord has made me for a doer and not a talker” (*The Prairie* 371). His statement is ironic, considering that he has been criticized for talking too much (323)38 and, furthermore, his oral talents are of crucial importance in the novel, as, because of his knowledge of several Indian languages, he serves as the link between the white travelers and the Indians they encounter.

Although Nat’s extensive language skills should presumably count as theoretical learning rather than practical accomplishment, this does not seem to be the case. Instead, Nat’s impressive knowledge of languages is taken for granted both by himself and the other characters. When his many “tongues” are praised by the Sioux Mahtoree, Nat dismissively says, “Ay, there are linguisters in the settlements, that can do still more. But what profits it all. The Master of Life has an ear for every language!” (282). By renouncing his language skills, Nat ignores the fact that not only has this knowledge been crucial in his dealings with Indians, but it has, in fact, saved lives. Nat also scoffs that “Court-Houses are the ‘happy hunting grounds’ . . . for them that are born with gifts no better than such as lie in the tongue” (323), without admitting his own talents in this department. The dismissal of Nat’s language skills is even more obvious in *The Pathfinder*. After breaking off his engagement to Mabel Dunham because he considers himself too uneducated to make her happy, Nat speaks to an Indian girl in a language the narrator feels obliged to translate into English since, whereas “Pathfinder spoke [it] fluently . . . that tongue is understood only by the extremely learned” (463). One reason for Nat’s dismissal of his own accomplishments could be the fact that the languages he excels in are not those commonly taught in school. Another explanation is that Nat, as we have seen, links oral skills to women and the settlements, which means that they are not compatible with frontier life.

38 In *The Pioneers*, too, Nat is described as a great talker (333).
Describing Nat’s death scene, toward the end of *The Prairie*, David Simpson maintains that the trapper is situated in “a space between cultures and between languages . . . Like an Indian, he lies with his rifle and with the stuffed figure of his dead hound, but like a Christian he must qualify the superstition of his pagan friends and request a gravestone” (180-81). Nat’s position between two cultures is highlighted by his constant switch of language “to suit the person he addressed, and not unfrequently according to the ideas he expressed” (*The Prairie* 382). On his death bed, Nat’s oral skills, which he has fervently denied throughout the novel, become the final proof of his in-betweenness, and also the final blow to his model of classification which does not allow this mode of being. Nat’s sad fate as a foreigner both in the settlements and on the prairie shows that there is no space for hybridity as cultures cannot be combined in the novel. Existing between the white world and that of the Indians, Nat belongs to neither and he dies a parenthesis in history.

Jane Tompkins maintains that *The Last of the Mohicans* is dominated by “an obsessive preoccupation with systems of classification—the insignia by which race is distinguished from race, nation from nation, tribe from tribe, human from animal, male from female” (105). In *The Prairie*, two different systems of classification compete, each one containing flaws, and, in the end, neither the blind naturalist nor the practical trapper succeeds in defining and ordering America and its inhabitants. The future of the prairie seems to lie in the hands of the two men who are neither purely practical nor theoreticians, Paul Hover and Duncan Uncas Middleton. Unlike Nat and Dr. Bat, Paul and Middleton are able to combine practical skills and theoretical knowledge, thus demonstrating the type of education recommended by, for example, Amariah Brigham. Also, in contrast to the trapper and the naturalist, the former beekeeper and the captain use their skills to serve the country. While the dogmatism of Nat and Battius has made them limited, not only in their opinions, but also geographically—Nat fears the settlements and Dr. Bat is out of place on the prairie—Middleton and Paul are able to move back and forth between the wilderness and civilization and manage well in both places. In other words, instead of specialization, the novel seems to recommend versatility. Ironically, however, while the purely practical man dies lamenting that he is “without kith or kin in the wide world! . . . When I am gone there will be an end of my race” (383), the other dogmatist, the theoretician, is pursuing a successful career in a maritime town, possibly writing accounts of the plains that form the basis for novels like *The Prairie*. 
CHAPTER FIVE

Rebels with Permission from Their Fathers: 
The Education of Saints and Insurgents in 
Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*

Nothing could be more unlike the authentic, “thoroughly educated,” and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie; as unlike as a mountain rill to a canal—the one leaping over rocks and precipices, sportive, free, and beautiful, or stealing softly on, in unseen, unpraised loveliness; the other, formed by art, restrained within prescribed and formal limits, and devoted to utility.

–Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie* (121)

Looking back on her childhood, Catharine Maria Sedgwick writes in her autobiography that “my school life was a waste, my home life my only education” (*The Power of Her Sympathy* 84). As Mary Kelley points out in her introduction to Sedgwick’s autobiography, the author “sharply distinguished between her formal and informal education” (19). Sarcastically, Sedgwick reminisces that “[a]t eleven I went to New York and had the very best teaching of an eminent Professor of Dancing!” (73). Unlike her time at school, which was spent “reading, spelling, and [studying] Dwight’s Geography,” going “in a slovenly way through the four first rules of arithmetic, and learn[ing] the names of the several parts of speech,” together with the ability to “parse glibly” (72-73), at home, Sedgwick “was reared in an atmosphere of high intelligence.” “My father,” she writes, “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).1

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1 In her short story “The Fashionable Boarding School” (1833) Sedgwick compares two girls, one of whom has been taught at home, while the other was sent to a boarding school for her education. Predictably, the girl taught at home has benefited the most from her education. Poor Sara, over whom “[n]o tender mother had watched” (29) becomes vain, insincere, and foolish as a result of her schooling. A similar example is provided by Stacy G. Potts’s short
Education is a recurring theme, not only in her autobiography, but also in Sedgwick’s fiction. In her third novel, *Hope Leslie; or Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827), which is the focus of this chapter, Sedgwick, I argue, presents a model for educating young republicans. *Hope Leslie* is set in seventeenth-century Boston, but, like many historical novels at the time, it addresses topical issues in its own era. In her novel, Sedgwick takes to task educational models popular in the 1820s, such as the ideal of Republican Motherhood. *Hope Leslie* also challenges the educational theories of the post-Revolutionaries Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster, who saw education as a tool for inculcating the “right” values in the citizens of the new republic, thus “convert[ing] men into republican machines” (Rush “Thoughts” 17). Rather than promoting isolationism and a turning away from what is perceived to be foreign values in the new republic in order to create national unity, *Hope Leslie* advocates a versatile education, where young people learn to make their own moral judgments by being exposed to different ideologies and cultures. Also, instead of insisting on the establishment of firm cultural borders, protecting, and thereby isolating, what is perceived to be American, *Hope Leslie* espouses a multicultural education as the way to inculcate republican values in young Americans.

**Obedient Rebels**

*Hope Leslie* begins with what Judith Fetterley calls a “pre-text” (80), in which Hope Leslie’s future foster father, William Fletcher, who has not yet left England for America, is the subject of a correspondence between his uncle, Sir William Fletcher, and his father. The two brothers plan to have their children, William and Alice Fletcher, joined in matrimony and Sir William offers advice on how his nephew should be educated in order to become a worthy son-in-law:

[T]ake good heed that the boy be taught unquestioning and unqualified loyalty to his sovereign—the Alpha and Omega of political duty . . . Caution Will against all vain speculation and idle inquiries—there are those that are for ever inquiring and inquiring, and never coming to the truth. One inquiry should suffice for a loyal subject. “What is established?” and that being well ascertained, the line of duty is so plain, that he who runs may read. (7)

The main offenders of sovereign authority, Sir William continues, are the young men since

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story “Education,” which is discussed in chapter two. For a discussion of Sedgwick’s education, see Mary Kelley’s *Private Woman, Public Stage*, 62-68.

2 As before, I employ the term “education” in accordance with its broader, nineteenth-century definition as referring not only to school-based teaching, but to child-rearing. See the introduction for a further discussion of the definition of this term.
Instead of such healthy maxims [as those mentioned above], our lads’ heads are crammed with the philosophy and rhetoric and history of those liberty-loving Greeks and Romans. This is the pernicious lore that has poisoned our academical fountain. Liberty, what is it! Daughter of disloyalty and mother of all misrule—who, from the hour she tempted our first parents to forfeit paradise, hath ever worked mischief on our race. (8)

Sir William ends his letter with the admonition to “restrain . . . [Will] from all confederacy, association, or even acquaintance with the puritans,” who, he feels, should be shipped “to our New-England colonies . . . where they might enjoy with the savages that primitive equality, about which they make such a pother.” Rather than obeying his brother, however, young Will’s father “permitted his son to follow the bent of accident, or the natural course of a serious, reflecting, and enthusiastic temper” (8); and Will, after having spent time with the prominent Puritans John Winthrop and John Eliot, joins their cause.

In this “pre-text,” which offers a preview of the drama that will be played out once again in the course of the novel, only then young Will’s children will play the leading parts, Sir William Fletcher views education both as a tool for shaping obedient subjects and as a threat to national stability. According to Sir William, the scientific methods of Enlightenment scholars—“those that are for ever inquiring and inquiring, and never coming to the truth” (7)—are responsible for filial insurrection, and he advocates an authoritarian education reminiscent of medieval scholastic methods, where the object of science is to confirm what is already known to be the truth. The main threat to the authoritarian rule of the king (and patriarchs) is the impulses young men receive from foreign sources. Rather than imbibing “healthy maxims” that teach loyalty to the British sovereign, the young “lads” are inspired by “the philosophy and rhetoric and history of those liberty-loving Greeks and Romans” (8). In other words, through the study of foreign governments, young men may gain new perspectives, which will allow them to, as Sir William puts it, “decline either on the left or on the right hand, from the drawn line limited by authority” (8). Since the novel advocates rebellion against the king and the authoritarian rule instituted by him, however, the overall message of the text is that foreign influences, rather than posing a threat, become the avenue to a new, and better, society.

Even if the text is positive to rebellion against tyrannical kings and patriarchs, it makes an important distinction in that Will’s father is not a victim of his son’s insurrection. Unlike Sir William and the king, Will’s father does not impose an authoritarian rule on his son but lets him follow

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3 Child’s The Rebels provides a parallel since there, too, the study of Greeks and Romans has made Somerville’s “spirit . . . as free as the untamed courser of desert.” Somerville, however, has also read “gorgeous descriptions of feudal power” (30) and, as a result, he remains true to his king.
his own heart and, as a result, Will does not rebel against him. Shirley Samuels maintains in *Romances of the Republic* that “anxiety about disorder within the family is often exhibited in the early sentimental or domestic novel. These novels, which frequently show the family as a model for the nation, demonstrate the ways it has become an instrument of social control” (17). The fact that Will remains loyal to his father, who unlike his tyrannical uncle has deserved his filial respect, indicates that Will’s revolt, like that of the Rebels in Child’s Revolutionary novel, is seen as just and does not pose a threat to the family or the social order. However, as we will see, this family unity rests on uncertain ground and, although the narrator is positive to Will’s rebellion, which is an emblem for the American rebellion against England, the text also reveals a dilemma posed by this scenario. Since the child’s loyalty is dependent on the parent remaining passive, the parent is deprived of any authority over his child. In other words, the attitude in *Hope Leslie* to Will’s, and later on his children’s, rebellion, and thereby also to the colonists’ uprising against the colonial power, turns out to be ambivalent. Since education plays an important role in bringing about this rebellion, the text’s attitude to education becomes ambiguous.

For Sir William, the result of an education based on inquiries is a wish for “Liberty,” which he describes as the “[d]aughter of disloyalty and mother of all misrule” (8). Thus, “Liberty,” the catchword for the Revolution, is directly linked to education and to women. A certain kind of education will lead to liberty, which is a female quality. Interestingly enough, Sir William’s take on liberty actually coincides with that of the rebels in the Revolutionary era. As Michael Rogin points out, “[r]epublicans gave liberty the feminine persona and identified her with America” (24). For a contemporary reader of *Hope Leslie*, then, Sir William’s feminization of liberty would carry familiar, positive, and patriotic connotations. Whereas women, according to Fletcher’s model, represent freedom and the transgression of rules, men stand for obedience, boundaries, and the status quo. Sir William, then, describes women in terms similar to those used by Cooper’s Natty Bumppo to define masculine qualities.

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4 Sedgwick’s Revolutionary novel *The Linwoods* (1835) depicts a family that, torn apart by the War of Independence, manages to overcome political differences. It could be read as an allegory about the war between England, the mother country, and its former colony.

5 The rendering of the Revolution in familial terms was common in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. See Michael Rogin’s *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian*, especially chapter one, for a further discussion of this practice.

6 As critics have noted, *Hope Leslie*, like many other historical novels written by women, also deviates from the scheme set up by, for example, Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, where men flee civilization in order to escape the suffocating control of women. Barbara Buchenau suggests that the failure of novels such as *Hope Leslie* to fit this model explains why they were excluded from the literary canon (2).
Although Sir William criticizes a symbol that would become positively infused in revolutionary America, his negative view of liberty—that it represents anarchy—also strikes a chord as it points to a tension regarding the connotations of the term.\(^7\) As seen in the discussion of Child’s *The Rebels*, there was a fear that citizens in post-revolutionary society would run amok, and the “real” Rebels in the novel are characterized by their restraint and adherence to law. This same fear, I believe, is expressed in *Hope Leslie* when the rebellious children remain loyal to their parents, thus keeping the family unit intact. Seen in the context of Foucault’s Panopticon, where power from above is replaced by control within and throughout the social body (*Power/Knowledge* 39), the power of the monarch is replaced by filial love as an instrument of control.

By labeling “Liberty” a woman, Sir William shows remarkable foresight, for, as it turns out, the real rebel in the novel is not young Will, but Will’s foster daughter Hope Leslie. When Sir William realizes the futility of his attempts to convince his nephew to relinquish his Puritan faith, he forbids him to marry his daughter and Will sails for Boston. After Alice Fletcher and the man her father forced her to marry when Will left, Sir Leslie, die, their two daughters, Alice and Mary, or Hope and Faith as they are renamed in their new home, become the wards of Will. Hope and Faith are sent to the remote Bethel in New England, where Will, or William Fletcher as he is now called, has settled with his wife and children after becoming disillusioned with the Puritan community in Boston. Despite Sir William’s accusations of the Puritans as liberty-loving rebels, the Puritan community in New England turns out to be quite as authoritarian as Old England. Hope, who admits that “I love to have my own way” (114), repeats the rebellion of her foster father as she refuses to follow the rules of the magistrates and prefers to obey her own heart.\(^8\)

\(^7\) For a discussion of the role of allegorical figures in national myth-making, see Antoine de Baecque, “The Allegorical Image of France, 1750-1800: A Political Crisis of Representation.”

\(^8\) Jeffrey Insko describes the “rendering [of] colonial women—rather than the Puritan fathers—as America in embryo,” as “one of the novel’s most powerful subtexts” (190). In a similar vein, Michael Davitt Bell notes in *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England* that in historical novels written in New England it is daughters, rather than sons, who rebel against their fathers. “The conventional role of the hero is almost always subordinate to that of the heroine . . . She, in disagreeing with the intolerance of the fathers, establishes the basis of the new society. The hero becomes part of the new society, not by rebelling himself, but by accepting the heroine’s values” (160). According to Bell, there are “peculiar symbolic advantages of the *female* rebel against authority” (161), because the heroine never disobeys the father. Her revolt, rather, is symbolic, as “her very nature brings about the transformation of society” (161-62). Even if I agree with Bell that the role of the rebel in New England novels tends to be delegated to the daughter, rather than the son, I believe that Hope’s rebellion cannot be characterized as passively brought about by her nature.

Mary Conant’s rebellion against her father in *Hobomok* is even more radical than that of Hope, since her revolt involves disobeying her father. Although she returns to the Puritan community, her return is not that of a humble daughter seeking paternal forgiveness. Rather, it is Mr. Conant who is forced to relent in order to be admitted into his daughter’s family.
Soaring Hope

I consider it as possible to convert men into republican machines. This must be done if we expect them to perform their parts properly in the great machine of the government of the state.

–Rush, “Plan” (17)

[As to authority, I would not be a machine, to be moved at the pleasure of anybody that happened to be a little older than myself.

–Hope in Sedgwick, Hope Leslie (180)

When the power of the monarch is cast off, what will prevent the former subjects from becoming anarchists? In Child’s The Rebels, the answer is to teach the citizens restraint and discipline. In Hope Leslie, too, the key to the nation’s survival lies in education, but, rather than learning to keep herself within bounds, Sedgwick’s heroine Hope learns to follow her heart, or moral conscience, and, while she often acts in defiance of the wishes of the Puritan leaders, her devotion to truth and justice ensures that she is never a threat to the values of the nation.

For Benjamin Rush, the solution to the upholding of order in the new nation is to inculcate the values of the republic in the population, thus turning them into “republican machines.” In order to do so, it is vital that people are not exposed to foreign ideals until their loyalties to their native country have been firmly established. In its emphasis on isolationism, Rush’s vision of a republican machine is similar to Sir William’s educational model. For both Rush and Sir William, the future of the nation depends on the ability successfully to teach its citizens absolute loyalty through isolationism. Rather than allowing citizens to be “for ever inquiring and inquiring” (7) and having their heads “crammed” with the thoughts and ideas of foreign philosophers (8), young men and women (as we will see, the novel includes both women and men in its discussion of education) should learn to accept the laws of the land. The Puritans in Hope Leslie subscribe to the same educational model as Rush and Sir William, but, as it turns out, the result of a limited education is limited citizens.9

In the two epigraphs above, the machine becomes an emblem for the obedient subject. Foucault writes in Discipline and Punish that the late seventeenth century saw a transformation in military strategy as the army,

9 As discussed in chapter two, isolationism was encouraged by Andrew Jackson as well, who dismissed what was felt to be European traditions and urged his fellow citizens to embrace what were seen as typically American traits and values.
which had based its tactics on “the physical model of mass” (162), developed a system based on the position and function of each soldier. Each individual, then, became a cog in a war machine. This system was adapted by other social institutions, such as the school, which, as Foucault maintains, “became a machine for learning, in which each pupil, each level and each moment, if correctly combined, were permanently utilized in the general process of teaching” (165). In this social machine “[t]he individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principal variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements” (164). In addition to the eighteenth-century dream of a perfect society offered by philosophers and jurists,

there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility. (169)

Foucault’s description of the eighteenth-century social machine accords well with Rush’s vision of the republican citizen as an obedient machine, constructed to fill its place in the national machinery, and his emphasis on the important role of education in this process is also confirmed in Rush’s writings. Hope’s assertion that she will not be a machine “to be moved at the pleasure of anybody” (180) supports Foucault’s focus on location and spatial relations in the operation of this apparatus. Refusing to be a cog, Hope is said to “soar . . . above the limits” (123) of Puritan society. As we will see, the disproportionate bodies of Cooper’s specialists, which signal their deviation from social norms and conventions, find a parallel in Hope Leslie’s refusal to limit herself to the manners, traditions, and beliefs of her community.

Before considering Hope, however, I want to discuss two exemplary cogs in the Puritan machinery, Mrs. Winthrop, the wife of Governor Winthrop, and her niece Esther Downing. Both of them are considered models of virtue by the Puritan community in the novel, and they are celebrated by their friends and neighbors for their meek submission to their superiors. Mrs. Winthrop, the narrator sarcastically notes,

recognised, and continually taught to matron and maiden, the duty of unqualified obedience from the wife to the husband, her appointed lord and master . . . [and] like a horse easy on the bit, she was guided by the slightest intimation from him who held the rein; indeed . . . it sometimes appeared as if the reins were dropped, and the inferior animal were left to the guidance of her own sagacity. (144-45)
Esther pays the same heed to figures of authority as her aunt, and her main references on how to act in different situations are the Bible and her uncle, the Governor. When Mr. Fletcher’s son Everell asks her to help him free his childhood friend, the Indian Magawisca, from jail, Esther refuses, saying “that she thought they had not scripture warrant for interfering between the prisoner and the magistrates” (277-78). Also, after her friend Hope, by impersonating a saint, has cleverly escaped being raped by drunken sailors, Esther, rather than congratulating her friend on her ingenious escape, rebukes her for not passively trusting the Lord to get her out of the scrape (272). Esther is a fitting representative of the model of education promoted by Sir William. Having been “bred in the strictest school of the puritans . . . [s]he could not have disputed the nice points of faith, sanctification and justification, with certain celebrated contemporary female theologians, but no one excelled her in the practical part of her religion” (135). Since Esther has never been given the chance to reflect on her faith, but has been taught to accept it as the absolute truth, she is not able to present arguments in its favor. She has no difficulties staying on “the narrow path . . . she doth so steadily pursue” (114), but her obedience is no feat since she is simply following the only route she knows. Esther, then, is a fitting representative of the machine-like citizen promoted by Rush. Even if she is praised by the Puritans for her godliness, the novel shows that her passive behavior is inadequate in the fledgling colony. Had Esther’s advice been heeded, the heroine Hope would have been raped by the sailors, and Magawisca, who once sacrificed her arm to save Everell’s life, would most likely have been executed.

Esther shares her narrow outlook on the world with the Puritan leaders. Even before the narrative has commenced, in the preface, the Puritans are pardoned for their prejudices against Indians, which the narrator/author claims are due to their living in a less enlightened age than the present time. The course of events in the novel shows that this initial statement is ironic, however, since the heroines, Hope and Magawisca, and the hero Everell are able to rise above the prejudices of their age, which suggests that it is possible to overcome contemporary beliefs. The “learned and industrious” (5) Puritans have failed to do so, however. What is more, although the narrator is careful to distinguish between the superstitious populace and the learned magistrates, the Puritan leaders seem unable to take advantage of their superior knowledge. When the old Indian woman Nelema is accused of

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10 It is Hope’s royalist aunt, Lady Grafton, however, who provides the most ridiculous example of absolute obedience to one’s elders, as she defends her Anglican faith by disclaiming any responsibility for it since it was given to her by her father and “he, not she, was responsible for it” (27).

11 As, for example, Judith Fetterley points out, the portrayal of the Puritans in Hope Leslie wavers, and while they are mostly described in negative terms, this is not always the case (86).
being a witch, the leaders imprison her despite the fact that they, unlike the villagers, know that it was not witchcraft but rather the Indian’s superior knowledge of medicinal herbs that saved the snake-bitten Master Cradock. However, despite this, they choose to keep Nelema locked up. When Hope clandestinely releases Nelema, Mr. Pynchon, who was in charge of the prisoner, is secretly relieved since it solves the dilemma of what to do with the old woman. In other words, even in cases when the Puritan authorities are able to distinguish between truth and prejudice they choose to act in accordance with the superstitions of the people. Hope’s respect for and faith in Nelema’s knowledge and skills set her apart from the rest of the community and signal her status as heroine in the narrative.

Even if the Puritan leaders are sometimes able to overcome the superstitions of their age, the opposite is more commonly the case. The limitedness of the Puritans is repeatedly described as a lack of perspective, which makes them fail to see things in their true light. When the villainous aristocrat Sir Philip Gardiner arrives in Boston, the magistrates welcome him as “the selected medium of a special kindness of Providence to them” (249). While Hope’s silly aunt, Lady Grafton, who has little patience with the Puritan creed, is clear-sighted enough to perceive that “Sir Philip . . . had nothing of the puritan but the outside” (167), Governor Winthrop makes him a confidant and gives him access to state secrets that he withholds from his wife. When Sir Philip testifies as a witness in court, his testimony is believed unlike those of Magawisca and Gardiner’s mistress Rosa. Not even after Magawisca has produced evidence of Sir Philip’s lying are the magistrates and the audience prepared to believe her. As Block and Madden point out in their article “Science in Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie,” “[a]ssumptions about natives and Catholics undergird the new evidence that has been presented to them and prevent them from seeing it other than as Gardiner presents it” (32). The Puritan leaders, it turns out, tend to be guided by their beliefs, expectations, and prejudices, rather than the evidence presented to them.

Contrasting with the narrow-minded Puritans, Hope, the heroine of the novel, is of an altogether different mindset. While the limited minds of the Puritans suggest that they actually adhere to a model of thinking similar to that of Sir William, who represents the authoritarian system that the Puritans supposedly rebelled against, Hope, as her name implies, stands for the future hope of the republic and embodies what the novel poses as its ideals, independence and freedom. Hope “was superior to some of the prejudices of

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12 In his article “New England Witch-Hunting,” Gould notes the proliferation of words such as “bigotry,” “superstition,” “delusion,” and “zeal” in connection with descriptions of witch-hunting in literary and historical texts written between the 1790s and the 1830s. Gould argues that “this language of irrationality reflected the political and social anxieties rampant in the early republic,” caused by the development of political parties and “the democratization of politics” (59).
the age,” and “like the bird that spreads his wings and soars above the limits by which each man fences in his own narrow domain, she enjoyed the capacities of her nature, and permitted her mind to expand beyond the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith” (123). As opposed to the Puritans who are immersed in the beliefs of their time and culture, Hope has acquired a bird’s-eye perspective, which allows her to see through prejudices and perceive the true nature of things. Returning to the metaphor of the machine, location becomes crucial as Hope refuses to remain in her allotted place, that is, on “the narrow path” where Esther is said to be found (114), but instead “soars above” (123). Yet, while Rush considers the education of individuals to become “republican machines” as necessary for the social stability of the country, *Hope Leslie* conveys a different view since Hope’s refusal to become a machine is the very basis for her status as an ideal republican citizen.13

Unlike Esther, who the Puritan leaders hope will inspire the novel’s heroine to tread the narrow path, Hope does not passively await orders from her masters, but actively tries to solve problems herself, thus demonstrating her self-reliance. While her ability to act gets her out of many scrapes, the leaders of the settlement consider Hope’s behavior a problem. As Governor Winthrop tells Mr. Fletcher, “the child [Hope] rests too much on performances; . . . she hath not, I speak it tenderly, that passiveness, that, next to godliness, is a woman’s best virtue” (153). For Winthrop, Hope’s defiance of the authorities is a behavioral problem and by putting her under the watch of Mrs. Winthrop and Esther, she, the Puritans expect, will learn to behave correctly.

The Puritans are not alone in complaining about Hope’s behavior. When Aunt Grafton objects to Hope’s plan to climb a mountain, arguing that such behavior is “‘very unladylike, and [it is] a thing quite unheard of in England’ for a young person . . . to go out exploring a new country,” Hope retorts that “our new country developes faculties that young ladies, in England, were unconscious of possessing” (98). In other words, America offers young women the freedom to develop new skills and even assume the (masculine) role of explorer.14 The distinction between the manners of women in

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13 In her reliance on her own conscience and willingness to defy the authorities when they act unfairly, Hope is in fact a worthy representative of the ideal citizen described by Thoreau in “Civil Disobedience,” which was written about twenty years after *Hope Leslie*. Thoreau, too, employs the metaphor of the machine as he writes that “[t]he mass of men serve the State . . . not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies . . . In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense . . . A very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men, serve the State with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated by it as enemies” (224).

14 The fact that Hope takes on the role of explorer is emphasized when the narrator implies that it was in fact Hope who gave the mountain its name as she playfully suggests that it should be named after one of the members of the expedition, Mr. Holioke (101).
America and England is further strengthened when Aunt Grafton complains that “if they in England were to see you walk, they would think you had been brought up here to chase the deer in the woods” (166). As Rosemarie Zagarri points out, for Enlightenment thinkers, “manners” involved more than the “proper etiquette or correct social deportment; it connoted ideas of individual morality and personal character, suggesting a strong connection between private values and public behavior” (201). We see the same tendency in novels of the early nineteenth-century. When Governor Winthrop criticizes Hope’s behavior and Aunt Grafton labels her niece’s manners as foreign to English behavioral codes, this carries deeper implications as it points to Hope’s identity as an American (that is, free, independent, and not British). However, as the case of Esther makes clear, the distinction between British and American manners is not so much dependent on geography as on the type of education the young girls receive. While Esther’s upbringing in a strict Puritan society—both when she was still in England and later on in Boston—has made her passive and meek, Hope’s childhood was spent in an indulgent atmosphere that allowed her to develop new talents, such as exploring. From the time when Hope is sent to Boston to live with the Winthrops, Esther and Hope are compared to each other and found to be “unlike in everything that distinguished each” (139). While Hope is described in terms connoting the breaking of boundaries—her thoughts roam free, her mind expands, her soul is “unfettered” (280), she bounds forward as if chasing deer, and she explores the wilderness—Esther is precise (179), “reserved” (135), and keeps to the narrow path, rather than the unchartered terrain where Hope can sometimes be found. Education is tied to location in the sense that different types of education fit individuals for different kinds of environment. Esther’s education limits her to the narrow path, while Hope’s lenient upbringing allows her to step off this path into the wilderness.

“It may appear improbable,” the narrator admits, “that a girl of seventeen, educated among the strictest sect of the puritans, should have had the open, fearless and gay character of Hope Leslie.” The reason for Hope’s openness is that she has been reared in “an atmosphere of favour and indulgence” (122). Furthermore, unlike Esther, whose childhood in “the strictest school of the puritans” encouraged her already “reserved, tender, and timid cast of character” (135), thus making her even more limited, Hope has been raised by people “of variant religious sentiments” (123). In other words, if Esther has received a domestic education, in the sense that she has been taught complete loyalty to her community and church (which is essentially what Rush means by a domestic, rather than a foreign education), Hope’s education, exposing her to different values and beliefs, is decidedly foreign as it does not harmonize with the values of the Puritan community. Hope Leslie reveals that a mode of education like that promoted by Webster and
Rush, where young citizens are protected from “foreign” cultures, produces narrow-minded citizens far from the republican ideal of self-reliance.

Hope’s ability to cross borders and move outside the limitations set by society makes her similar to Mary Conant in Child’s *Hobomok*. For both heroines, their education is crucial for their ability to cross cultural boundaries, as it has provided them with perspectives that are different from those of their respective communities. Like Hope, Mary has been raised in an environment that is different from the Puritan settlement. Having been brought up in her grandfather’s mansion, Mary has acquired aesthetic sensibilities that the Puritans lack. It is because of her foreign education (in the sense that it does not accord with the ideals of her community) that Mary abandons the settlement and moves into the wilderness with the Indian Hobomok who shares her values.15

The importance of different perspectives is promoted through the narrative structure and also through the use of different points of view. As Quentin Miller puts it, “*Hope Leslie* is clearly a moral novel, but one with no clear moral. Any search to locate the novel’s moral center is frustrated by its shifting emphases” (121-22). The narrator blames “our heroine, whose excursive habits have so often compelled us to deviate from the straight line of narration” (304), for the, at times, disruptive manner in which the story is told. For example, the description of how Hope helps Nelema escape is given several times, each time with additional details. *Hope Leslie* also employs what Carolyn Karcher describes as a “multivocal narrative strategy,” where different characters are given a voice through the letters that are incorporated into the narrative (“Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History” 10). In addition, in its account of history, the novel sometimes takes a stance that is different from the one generally accepted by Sedgwick’s contemporaries. As several critics have noted, Magawisca’s description of the Pequot War deviates from that of Puritan historians, thus offering a new perspective of a familiar event in history. Dana Nelson writes that “Magawisca’s story not only affirms the possibility of dialogized history, but insists on the inherent necessity of it” (72). The importance of historical, narrative, and, not least, personal perspectives becomes obvious when Hope’s description of the massacre at Bethel clashes with that of her sister Faith. “Ask her,” Hope urges Magawisca, “if she remembers the day when the wild Indians sprung upon the family at Bethel . . . when Mrs. Fletcher

15 For Hope, as for Mary, the ultimate goal of their boundary-crossing is not to create disorder, however, but to restore an order that has been unsettled. While Mary restores the aesthetic values of her grandfather’s mansion, for Hope the goal is to reinstitute the now corrupted republican values that the Puritans embraced before they left England. In other words, the rebelliousness of both Mary and Hope carries a conservative strain. The novel is a good illustration of Bell’s claim that the struggle between forces of tyranny and those of liberty was figured in New England romances as a battle between noble and narrow-minded Puritans (*Hawthorne and the Historical Romance* 18-19).

16 See also Gould, “Catharine Sedgwick’s ‘Recital’” (643-47).
and her innocent little ones were murdered, and she stolen away?" Magawisca answers that "[s]he says, 'she remembers it well, for then it was Oneco saved her life'" (229).

While Hope soars higher than any other character in the novel, her open-mindedness is shared by Everell and the Indian woman Magawisca. Before Hope arrives in Bethel, Everell befriends Magawisca who, together with her brother Oneco, has become an inmate in the Fletcher household after the infamous Puritan attack on the Pequots. As a young boy, Everell is captivated by Magawisca's descriptions of "the customs of her people, and . . . their traditionary tales" (32). Later, Everell is sent to England to continue his education. When he returns to New England as a young man, Everell is far too outspoken and frivolous by Puritan standards, proving Webster right in that a "foreign education . . . gives young gentlemen of fortune a relish for manners and amusements which are not suited to this country" (73). Webster goes on to claim, as noted, that a "boy who lives in England from twelve to twenty will be an Englishman in his manners and his feelings" (74). Everell, however, possesses those feelings that republican rhetoric labeled "American," such as a love of liberty, independence, and justice, because of his stay abroad. Unlike Somerville, in Child's The Rebels, who might have been a Rebel had he not been seduced by his British education, which has made "his heart bow . . . down before the crown, the coronet, and the mitre" (30), Everell's exposure to different cultures and belief systems has enabled him to think freely.

In a letter to her husband, Mrs. Fletcher describes how their son Everell and Magawisca teach each other about their cultures. Everell also teaches Magawisca to read and "reads to her Spenser's rhymes, and many other books of the like kind" (32). When Magawisca, years later, is a prisoner, her feelings for Everell remain strong. Everell "had opened the book of knowledge to her . . . had in some measure dissipated the clouds of ignorance that hung over the forest-child . . . but above all, he had gratified her strong national pride, by admitting the natural equality of all the children of the Great Spirit" (263). While Magawisca's feelings of gratitude are predictably ascribed to the honor of sharing the knowledge of the great white man, the final result of her exposure to European erudition—national pride—is more surprising. Refuting the theories of Webster and Rush, Magawisca's patriotism rests on her "foreign" education. Also, Magawisca

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17 See chapter two in Philip Gould's Covenant and Republic or his article "Catharine Sedgwick's 'Recital'" for a discussion of how Sedgwick negotiates with and deviates from the Puritan sources describing this event.

18 According to Block and Madden, Magawisca's refusal to become assimilated into Western culture after having been exposed to it challenges the predictions of phrenology (31).

19 An interesting parallel to Magawisca's patriotism can be found in the example of the Cherokees. Unlike many other Indian peoples in antebellum America, the Cherokees accepted the U.S. government's offer to establish schools and assist in promoting an agricultural lifestyle. However, rather than becoming assimilated, which was the goal of the governmental
shares Hope’s bird’s-eye perspective, as is revealed in Mrs. Fletcher’s complaint that “it appeareth impossible to her to clip the wings of her soaring thoughts” (32).

The parallels between Magawisca and Hope, together with the fact that they have received similar types of education—they have both been exposed to “variant . . . sentiments” (123)—confirm Sedgwick’s claim in the preface to the novel that “the difference of character among the races of the earth, arises mainly from difference of condition” (6). Sedgwick’s assertion seems to suggest the possibility of a society where Indian and white peoples live together, but the narrative defeats this expectation. Magawisca’s exposure to European culture and learning helps her develop certain characteristics that are labeled republican, such as self-reliance and a love of liberty, but it does not make her embrace Anglo-American culture. Rather, it strengthens her identity as an Indian. As a consequence, when Hope and Everell invite her to live with them and “walk in the same path,” Magawisca turns them down, saying that “the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night” (330). Thus, even if Magawisca has the mental capacity to “go white,” she chooses not to do so.

Magawisca’s words, surprising as they seem considering the positive attitude to cross-cultural encounters in the text, shed new light on the discussion of multiculturalism in the novel. Hope’s admiration for the Indian Nelema’s knowledge signals her status as the heroine of the narrative. It is at the same time, however, crucial that her appreciation of Indian culture remains that of an outside observer. Hope never embraces Indian skills and, as her part-excited, part-horrified description of Nelema’s treatment of Master Cradock’s snakebite reveals (104-05), she is not altogether in favor of Indian knowledge. The reason why Hope incorporates European learning, but keeps Indian skills at arm’s length, is that learning, despite occasional connections to aristocratic and undemocratic forms of government, furnished a link to a racial and civilizational identity that early republicans were anxious to retain. Hope’s ambivalence ensures that she remains on the right (white) side of the border separating the two cultures. Another example of the impossibility of mixing Indian and white cultures is provided by Hope’s sister Faith. In the massacre at Bethel, Faith, who is then a young child, is carried away by the attacking Indians and she remains with them and later marries Oneco. Faith’s “going native” seems at first to challenge

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20 For a discussion of Hope and Magawisca as doubles, see, for example, Carol J. Singley, “Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie: Radical Frontier Romance.”

21 As in the case of Hobomok, it is significant that it is Magawisca herself who chooses to reject European society, since this gesture relieves the white people of any feelings of guilt for marginalizing and excluding the Indians.
Magawisca’s gloomy statement, but a closer look reveals a different picture. Faith’s utter alienation from white society suggests that Indian and white traits cannot be combined. It is possible to cross the racial and cultural line, but one has to choose sides. Thus, while exposure to foreign cultures and values is advocated, the novel does not envision a society where persons of different ethnic backgrounds co-exist. As is revealed by the contrasting fates of Hope and Faith Leslie, where Hope, having stayed in civilized society, represents progress and innovation, and Faith, who crosses the racial and civilizational line, remains a child, the choice of European and Indian cultures is also a choice between civilization and its opposite. If the nation is to become on par with other (that is European) states, it needs to be civilized. Although the text, as we will see, is ambivalent regarding the advantages of civilization, Faith’s choice is never considered an option in *Hope Leslie*.23

As Faith’s conversion shows, Bhabha’s notion of hybridity is irrelevant in *Hope Leslie*, since there is no in-between space where cultures can mingle. Faith is not a hybrid, but altogether Indian. Describing Faith, Magawisca says that “the wild flower would perish in your gardens—the forest is like a native home to her” (*Hope Leslie* 331-32). Having faithlessly given up her white heritage, Faith, despite having been born an Englishwoman, is no longer a native to that culture, which suggests that environmental influence overrides inheritance.

Interrace was offered by, for example, Jefferson and Jackson as one solution for how to civilize Indians (Rogin 210). However, Faith Leslie’s Indianization defies the accepted beliefs of the day maintaining that, if Indians were to have children with those of European descent, the Indian heritage would be submerged by the more dominant European one. The half-Indian, half-white George Burroughs in John Neal’s *Rachel Dyer* provides another refutation of such dominance. Unlike Charles Hobomok, who is domesticated, and Faith, who becomes a foreigner, Burroughs moves back and forth between his two native homes as he refuses to give up either his white or Indian heritage. Rather than becoming solely white, Burroughs suggests a more complicated picture of the consequences of intermarriage.

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22 The extent to which Faith has actually become an Indian has been debated, as has Hope’s reaction of horror when she first sees her sister’s Indian appearance. Douglas Ford argues that the novel does not succeed in following through the statement made in the preface, and that “Hope’s difficulty in accepting Faith’s cultural transformation becomes ... problematic, particularly when read in the context of her later actions, which involve her challenges to unjust Puritan rulings against Native American subjects” (83). Insko maintains that Hope’s horrified reaction, which has troubled critics, only points to her racial prejudices, not the overall message of the novel, since it is Magawisca who is the voice of authority in this section (196). See also Fetterley (89-90, 94-95), and Quentin Miller (133) for discussions of this passage.

23 Speaking of Faith making a choice may seem an overstatement if we consider her utter impassiveness. However, I believe that Faith, in her stubborn apathy, is rejecting reintegration into white society.
Since the theory of dominant white heritage rested on the premise that this heritage was stronger and better, as it represented progress and civilization, Burroughs’s embracing his Indian roots unsettles the established hierarchical relationship between Indian and white. It also challenges the widely held belief that, since the Indians were doomed either to extinction or to submersion, their removal west of the Mississippi, in force at the time *Rachel Dyer* was written, was an act of mercy.  

As opposed to the other characters discussed in this study who cross the Indian-European divide, then, Burroughs attempts to combine his two backgrounds. However, while Faith Leslie and Charles Hobomok appear to succeed in their crossings, Burroughs fails to fuse his cultural roots. Refusing to pledge allegiance to either home, Burroughs tells the chief Big Bear that “[a]s a white man, I will not war with white men. As the adopted of the red men … with the blood of a red man boiling in my heart, as the captive and nursling of the brave Iroquois, I will not be the foe of a red man” (171). However, neither his Indian companions nor the Puritans at Naumkeak are prepared to accept his assertion that he belongs in both cultures. While the chief claims that Burroughs “is no longer a pale man—he is one of our tribe” (170), the Puritans worry about his turning on them since he is not altogether white. Rather than having two homes, his double heritage leads to loneliness and ostracism, and Burroughs laments that “I am a traveller from my youth up. I have journied over Europe; I have journied over America—I am acquainted with every people of both hemispheres, and yet, withersoever I go, I am a stranger” (99). Like Mary Conant, Hope Leslie, Captain Middleton, and Paul Hover, Burroughs is not restrained by geographical boundaries and this ability signals his, as well as the other protagonists’, heroic status. However, for Burroughs, geographical mobility leads to homelessness and, ultimately, death. Thus, even if hybridity is embraced, it is not, in the end, considered a viable alternative in *Rachel Dyer*. Burroughs’s effort to be a member of both the Puritan and Indian communities is a failure and he is executed as a foreigner and enemy. 

Burroughs’s failure to straddle national boundaries brings us back once again to the question raised in chapter one in regard to Foucault’s theories: whether the nation could be considered a place of confinement that not only keeps foreigners out, but also confines its citizens. Whereas the examples of Charles Hobomok and Faith Leslie could be considered as refutations of the nation as a place of confinement—after all, they both switch nationalities—their crossings are in fact not so much refutations as evasions. As Charles Hobomok and Faith Leslie show, it is possible to cross national, and racial, boundaries, and, as Mary Conant’s divorce and second marriage reveal, it is even possible, occasionally, to go back and forth. However, these characters’ crossings never challenge the fundament on which the idea of nationhood

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24 See Rogin, chapter seven, for a discussion of the Indian removal of the 1820s.
rests, namely that, as Benedict Anderson puts it, “[t]he nation is imagined as limited[,] . . . even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself as coterminous with mankind” (7). Burroughs, on the other hand, attempts to escape this system altogether, only to end up a foreigner, an Other, as citizen and foreigner are the only two options available. Even if Mary Conant, Charles Hobomok, and Faith Leslie seem to make their own choices when they choose national identity, this choice entails that separate nations and nationalities have been accepted in the first place. Burroughs’s fate suggests that, at least in 1820s America, the notion of the state as a place of confinement is not so much a matter of the possibility of crossing national borders as of being confined in a world that is, to use Liisa Malkki’s words, “territorialized in the segmentary fashion of the multicolored school atlas” (26).

Although *Hope Leslie* does not envision cross-cultural exchanges across the racial line, the scenario becomes different when the values and traditions in question are European, albeit not republican. In the next section, I will discuss Hope’s three teachers, whose shortcomings as role models are crucial for her development into a virtuous republican.

**Teaching Hope**

The business of instruction is one of vast interest, because fraught with such important consequences to Americans. It is necessary that all our people should be instructed, as universal instruction is the main pillar that must eventually support the temple of our liberty. It is therefore a duty sacredly binding on our legislators to provide for the instruction, during childhood and youth, of every member of our republic.

–Sarah Josepha Hale, *Sketches of American Character* 1843 (106)

According to Benjamin Rush, schoolmasters should be “as absolute as possible” because this will teach the young to subordinate themselves to laws and thereby become good citizens. Furthermore, he maintains that

> the most useful citizens have been formed from those youth who have never known or felt their own wills till they were one and twenty years of age, and

25 I believe that it is important to make this distinction here since, as discussed in chapter one, the definition of citizenship changed radically during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, from having been based on collective sovereignty and choice, it became increasingly linked to, for example, inheritance, ethnicity, and language (Hobsbawm 19-20).

26 Mary Conant’s jailbreak when she runs away into the wilderness, together with Hope Leslie’s acts of rescue as she frees Nelema and Magawisca from prison are also examples of how the nation, or society perhaps, can be imagined as a place of confinement.
Noah Webster concurs in the need for “strict subordination” (58) in school, especially in cases where “children have been accustomed to disobedience and a licentious behavior at home” (57). However, Webster adds that “there can be no subordination without principles of esteem and respect in the pupils” (58), and argues that “instructors of youth ought, of all men, to be the most prudent, accomplished, agreeable, and respectable. What avail a man’s parts, if, while he is the ‘wisest and brightest,’ he is the ‘meanest of mankind’?” (57).27

While the model teacher described by Webster and Rush ought to gratify the wishes of Sir William and Governor Winthrop, none of Hope’s three teachers, Mr. Fletcher, her tutor Master Cradock, and Aunt Grafton, fit this description. Even if Mr. Fletcher is respected among the Puritans, he is also a disappointment to the magistrates because he refuses to take part in the community and instead settles in the remote Bethel. Furthermore, Mr. Fletcher is criticized by Governor Winthrop for being too indulgent, and, while a youth, according to Rush, should not know his own will until he is past twenty, Hope is left to follow her own wishes even as a child.

However, if Mr. Fletcher is censured for indulgence, he is also loved and respected by his foster daughter. Although Hope does not hesitate to break the rules of the magistrates if she feels that she has moral license to do so, she does not wish to disappoint her guardian. Hope’s simultaneous rebellion and daughterly respect can be seen as a reflection of views of the Revolution prevalent in the 1820s, in which it was seen as a just revolt against a tyrannical king but at the same time a reluctant rebellion against the mother country (Kammen 47). Nevertheless, even if Hope never revolts against Mr. Fletcher, the novel implies that his power over her is virtually non-existent. As Hope herself points out, “I am perfectly willing to submit to Mr. Fletcher, for he never . . . requires submission” (180). In other words, Hope’s submission is dependent on her guardian’s passivity. Only by not exercising any authority can Mr. Fletcher remain an authority figure. Mrs. Fletcher faces a similar dilemma as she declines to forbid Everell to read novels

well knowing that the appetite of youth is often whetted by denial; and fearing that the boy might be tempted, secretly, to evade my authority; and I would rather expose him to all the mischief in this unprofitable lore, than to tempt him to a deceit that might corrupt the sweet fountain of youth. (32)

27 Both Rush and Webster primarily discuss the education of young men, rather than women, in these essays.
In other words, the virtue of the youth is dependent on the parent’s passivity. While the fact that Mrs. Fletcher abstains from controlling Everell’s reading habits may seem benign in the eyes of a twenty-first century reader, it was not so for Sedgwick’s contemporaries who felt that the choice of books had a vital impact on the character of an individual.28 In his advice book for college students from 1835, Reverend John Todd writes that

[i]t is a law of nature that our minds insensibly imbibe a coloring from those with whom we associate, whether they are brought in contact by the living voice or on the written page . . . Hence the importance of reading good authors . . . A single bad book will frequently give a tone and a bias to the mind, both as to thought and language, which will last during life. (163)

In *The Mother’s Book* (1831), Lydia Maria Child writes that “[w]ith regard to the kind of books that are read, great precaution should be used. No doubt the destiny of individuals has very often been divided by volumes accidentally picked up and eagerly devoured at a period of life when every new impression is powerful and abiding” (144). As the title of her book indicates, Child, like many of her contemporaries, places the responsibility for children’s reading habits with their mothers. By hesitating to control his reading habits, Mrs. Fletcher not only puts her son’s virtue and character in jeopardy, which, ironically, is what she tries to avoid in the first place, she also fails in her duties as a mother as she has no control over her son’s education.29 While the indulgence of Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher is crucial for their children’s future open-mindedness, the text also exposes the possible negative consequences of lenience by pointing to what Sedgwick’s contemporary readers would consider a serious lapse in their duties as parents.

In spoiling his ward, Mr. Fletcher provides an interesting parallel to a shift in views of child raising and discipline that, according to Richard H. Brodhead, was introduced by the middle class in the antebellum decades.30 Rather than being taught correct behavior through corporal punishment, children, it was felt, should learn by being immersed in their parents’ (primarily their mother’s) love. Employing Foucault’s notion of discipline as social control, Brodhead discusses what he calls “discipline through love,” writing that “its aim [was] . . . to center the child emotionally on the loving

28 This belief was established well before the 1820s, as the hostility to novel reading indicates. One example of the disastrous effects of a bad choice of books can be found in Tabitha Tenney’s *Female Quixotism* (1801), where poor Dorcasina’s head is turned after reading too many romance novels.

29 Ironically, Mrs. Fletcher ends the letter where she voices her concern for her son’s choice of reading material and which turns out to be her last words to her husband, with a plea that Mr. Fletcher will agree to send Everell to England for his education.

30 Brodhead sees the 1830s, 40s, 50s as the decades in which this change took place (67). Although *Hope Leslie* was written somewhat earlier, I believe that the impact of this shift can be discerned in the narrative.
parent; then climactically... use this centering to implant the parent known outwardly only as love as an inwardly regulating moral consciousness” (72). The emphasis on feeling that characterizes “discipline through love” accords well with the method employed by Mr. Fletcher as he raises Hope. However, the final goal of this strategy is to install the parent as what could (anachronistically) be described as the superego of the child, and, in this instance, the disciplinary scheme described by Brodhead diverges from that of Mr. Fletcher. Although Hope does not want to disappoint her foster father, she takes “counsel only from her own heart” (120) in all her actions.

If Mr. Fletcher shows loving care for his foster daughter, Hope’s tutor, Master Cradock, employs the notion of teaching through love to an absurd degree. Master Cradock, “at the slightest notice from Hope, [felt] an emotion similar to that of a pious catholic, when he fancies the image of the saint he worships to bend propitiously towards him” (147). Since the tutor’s love is expressed as worship rather than parental (disciplinary) love, he has no authority over his student. The tutor is “a man rather acted upon than acting” (29) and, rather than teaching his student to obey the laws, Cradock, albeit unwillingly, helps Hope to break the law as he aids her in releasing Magawisca from jail. 

Being far from the model teacher presented by Rush and Webster, Master Cradock serves as comic relief in Hope Leslie and his clumsiness and devotion to a single topic (besides Hope)—in his case the study of languages—makes him similar to the silly specialists in Cooper’s novels, with whom he shares many qualities. Like, for example, Gamut in The Last of the Mohicans, Cradock is out of place in the American colony. While Hope effortlessly scales a mountain, Cradock, who has insisted on accompanying her, is exhausted from the climb and, as he vainly tries to uphold the role of a gallant knight, he is bitten by a rattlesnake and nearly dies. Thus, while “our new country developes [the] faculties” (98) of young ladies, it is obviously a death trap for scholars. Furthermore, as in the cases of scholars such as Battius in The Prairie and Sitgreaves in The Spy, the erudition of Master Cradock has not made him refined or well-mannered, as was expected by middle-class ideology. Rather, he has an unfortunate talent for making those around him feel awkward, and Hope is repeatedly forced to smooth over some faux pas committed by her tutor as “he never moves without treading on somebody’s toes” (148). Considering that harmony was a key word and ideal in middle-class society, since “gentility always aimed to form brilliant and harmonious societies” (Bushman xiv), Cradock’s awkward manners highlight his lack of gentility.

31 The fact that Master Cradock’s worship of Hope tends to take the shape of wooing (although he is never a potential lover of Hope’s) suggests a parallel to Rousseau’s Julie, or the New Heloïse (1761), which was popular in antebellum America. Heloise elopes with her tutor and, according to Jay Fliegelman, this became a theme in romantic fiction at the time and could be read as a critique of fathers eschewing their parental responsibilities (50).
Cradock’s extreme devotion to his student provides another parallel not only to Cooper’s specialists, but to the stereotypical image of the scholar in the nineteenth century in general. However, while Dr. Sitgreaves in *The Spy* is obsessed with amputations and Battius in *The Prairie* is devoted to the discovery of new species, Master Cradock’s main obsession does not primarily involve his own area of expertise, although his interest in language is great. Instead, as we have seen, Cradock worships Hope who seems to him “to embody all that philosophers and poets had set down in their books, of virtue and beauty” (123). Although Cradock, like Cooper’s scholars, is ridiculed for his obsession, his extreme devotion is different in that it involves not a vain, worthless object, as is generally felt to be the case with the fixations of (fictional) scholars, but the heroine of the novel. In other words, even though Cradock is censured for his obsession, it cannot be entirely dismissed since it involves a worthy object. What is more, his devotion to Hope is shared by several other characters in the novel, even if their love is not as compulsive.

Cradock’s main offence is not his devotion to Hope, but his great knowledge of foreign languages. As discussed in the previous chapter, language skills tend to be linked to femininity and Master Cradock displays many qualities seen as feminine, such as being overly emotional and physically weak. Echoing Natty Bumppo, Governor Winthrop pardons Cradock’s participation in the release of Magawisca on the grounds that his language skills have made him dimwitted. According to Winthrop, Cradock is “an old man, whose original modicum of sense was greatly diminished by age, and excess of useless learning; for, as he said, Master Cradock not only wrote Greek and Latin, and talked Hebrew like the Rev. Mr. Cotton, but he was skilled in Arabic, and the modern tongues” (342). Yet, just as in Cooper’s *The Prairie*, the attitude to language skills in the novel is complicated. The fact that Master Cradock is characterized as an emotional fool who spends much of his time either in tears or unintentionally insulting someone suggests that Winthrop is indeed right in dismissing his scholarship. On the other hand, the fact that Cradock’s language skills are compared to those of John Cotton, who was admired both in his own time and in that of Sedgwick, undermines Winthrop’s negative comment. Also, Cradock’s erudition actually saves Hope’s life, which indicates that his knowledge is useful. In the aforementioned episode where Hope is threatened by drunken sailors, her knowledge of Italian is crucial since it allows her to give a convincing rendition of a saint. Furthermore, Governor Winthrop himself would have benefited from some knowledge of Italian. When Magawisca’s brother Oneco appears in disguise, Winthrop, not understanding his language, assumes that he is speaking Italian. As a result, he pays him no attention and Oneco is able to escape with his wife, Hope’s sister Faith.
Hope’s encounter with Faith, after many years of separation, also highlights the importance of language skills. After having been brought up in an Indian community, Faith’s skills in English are limited to the phrase “No speak Yengees” (228), and the sisters are forced to rely on Magawisca as a translator in order to communicate. After years of longing for Faith, “Hope knew not how to address one so near to her by nature, so far removed by habit and education” (228). Faith’s ignorance of English is the ultimate sign of her alienation from the English world and her immersion in Indian culture. Despite having been born of the same mother, Faith and Hope have less in common than Hope and Magawisca, who are able to communicate.

The importance of language skills in the novel suggests that, despite his silliness, Master Cradock’s teachings are useful to his student. However, it is important to note that Hope’s education has not made her a so-called “Learned Lady” and the novel does not particularly advocate intellectual pursuits. On the contrary, when Winthrop suggests that Hope should marry the famous historian William Hubbard, Mr. Fletcher warns that his foster daughter “inclineth not to bookish men, and is apt to vent her childish gaiety upon the ungainly ways of scholars” (154). Furthermore, even if Hope cares deeply for her tutor, her attitude toward him is, like that of the Governor, condescending. Hope’s education, rather, is versatile. Although her intellectual skills are praised (primarily, but not exclusively, by Master Cradock), it is by combining these talents with other traits, such as a rational mind, that Hope becomes the heroine in the novel. As the admiring prison guard Barnaby Tuttle puts it, Hope is “an all-witted damsel” (308).

Hope’s third teacher, Aunt Grafton, accompanied her and Faith to America, together with Master Cradock. The aristocratic Lady Grafton is the embodiment of many of the vices associated with England in the rhetoric of the new republic. A vain, shallow, and silly woman, she shares the role of clown with Master Cradock, and her ignorance and limitedness are contrasted to the intelligence of her niece. In addition to being the opposite of the straight-laced Puritans, Aunt Grafton represents many of the ideals nineteenth-century female seminaries were accused of inculcating in their pupils, such as a love of fashion, silly novels, and admiration of fancy titles.32 Hope, however, seems to be impervious to her aunt’s efforts to encourage similar passions in her. Praisingly, the narrator writes that

[nothing could be more unlike the authentic, “thoroughly educated,” and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie; . . . Neither could anything in outward show, be more unlike a modern belle, arrayed in the mode de Paris of the last Courier des dames, than Hope Leslie, in her dress of silk or muslin, shaped with some deference to the fashion of the day, but more according to the dictates of her own skill and classic taste,

32 See for example Bushman (299-301) for a discussion of the critique leveled at female seminaries.
which she followed, somewhat pertinacious in spite of the suggestions of her experienced aunt. (121-22)

While Aunt Grafton fails to impress Hope with the importance of fashion, she affects her in other ways. After having spent her early years with parents of “variant religious sentiments” (her mother was a Puritan and her father “belonged to the established church”), “at a more reflecting age, Hope heard her Aunt Grafton rail with natural good sense, and with the freedom, if not the point, of mother wit, at some of the peculiarities of the puritans, [and, as a result,] she was led to doubt their infallibility” (123). In other words, despite her silliness, Aunt Grafton provides Hope with a different perspective of the Puritans, which allows her to form her own opinions, rather than accept established dogma.33

Regardless of their foolishness, the education bestowed by Aunt Grafton and Master Cradock is—to a certain extent—adopted by Hope. Even if she is not vain, Hope is moderately interested in her appearance and dresses with some deference to the prevailing tastes. Also, while she is not an expert on language, her knowledge in this area exceeds that of most of her contemporaries and she is admired for her intellectual accomplishments. There is, then, a difference between qualities perceived to be Indian, which are admired, but not embraced, and those seen as British or European—fashion and learning—which are to some degree imported by the heroine. Unlike Indian and white, which, as Magawisca maintains, cannot mingle, European traditions have a place in American culture.

Although it concurs with novels like Child’s The Rebels and Cooper’s The Prairie in condoning versatility and censuring specialization (which is expressed as obsession), Hope Leslie offers a somewhat different take on this issue as it shows that the heroine is able to benefit from the peculiarities and fixations of her teachers. In fact, it appears as if the novel goes out of its way to provide Hope, and also Everell, with teachers who fail to meet the standards of antebellum America. Nevertheless, Hope and Everell become virtuous republicans and, what is more, they do so not despite their bad teachers, but rather because of them. By encountering different extremes, Hope is able to develop the well-rounded character that was the ideal of the middle class.34 Unlike her nineteenth-century sisters, Hope learns to use her reason and to judge for herself, which is the most important aspect of her

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33 Aunt Grafton also offers a new interpretation of the famous incident described in John Winthrop’s History of New England, where mice eat the Common Book of Prayer, but leave all other books in the library. Rather than accepting the prevalent version of the story, according to which the mice’s preference for the Prayer Book proves its worthlessness, Aunt Grafton suggests that the mice ate the book that tasted the best (211).

34 Sybrandt Westbrook in Paulding’s The Dutchman’s Fireside (see chapter two) provides an example of what could happen if one’s entire education were left in the hands of a scholar. Having been taught by the Dominie Stettinius exclusively, Sybrandt becomes extremely shy and awkward and cannot function in genteel society.
education. Even if Master Cradock will never become a free, independent republican, the nation can still benefit from his erudition, as Hope’s language skills demonstrate. Aunt Grafton’s superficiality clashes with republican ideals, but her irreverence and independence offer an important alternative to the meek Puritan women in the novel.35

What are we to make of the fact that the characters involved in educating the heroine and hero commit serious mistakes in their teaching efforts? Although class does not figure as prominently in Hope Leslie as it does in Child’s and Cooper’s novels, it becomes an issue, I believe, as Sedgwick discusses an educational model that is a product of middle-class ideology and also a tool for its promotion. Hope’s self-reliance is dependent on her having been exposed to different creeds. In a society where one ideology dominates, this is not possible, as the limited antebellum girls Hope is compared to throughout the novel illustrate. Even if Sedgwick does not condemn middle-class values, her description of the “modern” girls, together with the example of Hope, suggests that she, like many of her contemporaries, was concerned that this ideology promoted superficiality and limitedness (Bushman 191).36

The antidote to the shallow ideals and ornamental skills taught in female seminaries and promoted by Aunt Grafton was, for many nineteenth-century advocates of female education, the ideal of Republican Motherhood. As discussed in chapter two, the preferred purveyor of republican values was the mother. In her study Women of the Republic, Linda Kerber argues that the “Republican Mother’s life was dedicated to the service of civic virtue: she educated her sons for it, she condemned and corrected her husband’s lapses from it” (229). In her treatise A Plan for Improving Female Education (1819), Emma Willard stresses the importance of providing adequate education for women since “[t]he ductile mind of the child is intrusted to the mother” (20), and she goes so far as to suggest that the future prosperity of the nation rests on the ability to provide good education for women. Taking Europe as an example, Willard claims that the women there—who have not been adequately educated—are “[n]ot content with doing nothing to promote their country’s welfare, [but,] like pampered children, they revel in its

35 Sedgwick offers a similar scenario in Redwood (1822), where the heroine Ellen Bruce grows up in two homes. “In this arrangement there was a system of checks and balances, that produced that singular and felicitous union of diversity of quality which constituted the rare perfection of Ellen’s character. Mrs. Hamilton communicated her taste and skill in drawing, her knowledge of French and Italian, and all those arts of female handicraft that were the fashion of the day. Her pupil was taught curiously to explore the records of history, and to delight in the creations of poetry. When she might have been in danger of an exclusive taste for the elegant occupations of those who have the privilege of independence and leisure, she returned to Mrs. Allen to take her lessons in practical life” (131-32).
36 In her novel Home (1835), Sedgwick grapples with and to a large extent embraces middle-class ideology. However, the novel also criticizes perceived vices within this belief system, such as superficiality, and a love of show and luxury.
prosperity, and scatter it to the winds, with wanton profusion” (33). For Willard, as for many of her contemporaries, the virtue of the nation rests with its women.37

Although *Hope Leslie* promotes republican values, the ideal of Republican Motherhood is not a solution in the novel since, as Kerber points out, it excludes women from the realm of public politics (228). In fact, the characters most likely to take on the role of Republican Motherhood in *Hope Leslie* are Esther and Mrs. Winthrop, the Governor’s deputies, since they both promote loyalty to the prevailing values and laws of the settlement. When Hope is sent to Boston, after she has challenged the authority of the Puritan leaders, Mr. Fletcher defends the decision saying that “I have proved myself not fit to teach, or to guide thee—nor is your aunt. Madam Winthrop will give you pious instruction and counsel, and her godly niece, Esther Downing, will, I trust, win you to the narrow path, which, as the elders say, she doth so steadily pursue” (114). In other words, two orthodox women step in to teach Hope proper manners and respect for authorities. The reference to Esther’s ability to keep to the narrow path gives an indication of what is really at stake when one accepts the prevailing rules and values. That is, if we return to Sir William’s eloquent phrase, one should not “decline either on the left or the right hand, from the drawn line of authority” (8). In Hope’s case, this means a clipping of wings and, rather than “soar[ing] above the limits” (123), remaining on the ground of the narrow path.

The distinction between the soaring Hope and the “precise” Esther provides an interesting parallel to Lucretia in Child’s *The Rebels*. As discussed in chapter three, Lucretia, before becoming a Rebel, has a “mind, vigorous as an eagle’s wing, and rapid as the streams of Chili” (87). After assuming the role of middle-class mother, however, “the dazzling brilliancy of [her mind] . . . had become delightfully mellowed” (299). Both novels show, then, that the process of becoming a role model and representative for republican values, which is what the ideology of Republican Motherhood is about, requires women to limit themselves intellectually. It is no coincidence that when Mrs. Fletcher wishes that Magawisca would “clip the wings of her soaring thoughts,” it is in order to “keep them down to household matters” (32).

Rather than being raised to fill the role of a Republican Mother, Hope is a full member of the republic, just like Everell. Although he spent much of his youth in England, their modes of education are similar as they have both been exposed to different cultures and ideologies which have taught them to make their own judgments. Fetterley suggests that by figuring Everell and

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37 Interestingly enough, Amariah Brigham uses a similar example in his *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health*. Rather than seeing contemporary European women as responsible for the disintegration of nations, Brigham casts ancient “Roman ladies” in this role (139). For Brigham, as for Willard, faulty education is to blame for the breakdown of national character and virtue.
Hope as brother and sister, *Hope Leslie* replaces the Republican Mother with a sister who “inhabits the same subject position as her brother,” and this in turn offers an alternative model for including women in the republic (82). The very reason for Hope’s and Everell’s similarities, I argue, lies in their similar education, which, instead of creating them as opposite sexes, has turned them into partners. This partnership, which is far from the equestrian obedience Mrs. Winthrop shows her husband, echoes the ideas of the late eighteenth-century proto-feminist Judith Sargent Murray. Murray argues that male and female infants have the same potential, and that if girls were given the same education as boys, unhappy marriages would be prevented, as men and women would be able to be each others’ partners (6-7). Also, while Sedgwick’s discussion in the preface to *Hope Leslie*, where she claims that the minds of individuals are shaped by their environment, is limited to race, the case of Hope and Everell suggests that this is true for gender as well.

**Hopeless Hope**

Is the present education of young ladies likely to contribute to their own ultimate happiness, or to the welfare of the country? There are many honorable exceptions; but we do think the general tone of female education is bad.

—Child, *The American Frugal Housewife* 1829 (91)

If, as Sedgwick maintains, the environment is crucial in shaping the character of an individual, then the manner in which individuals are educated is decisive, since education—especially in the nineteenth-century sense of the word—constitutes an important part of the environment. However, if the environment is able to shape “character,” a less open society than the one Hope is raised in will produce characters who are entirely different from her. Hope is unique not only in her own time, but, as the narrator repeatedly points out, she is also different—and better—than girls in the antebellum period. While her first name, Hope, evokes expectations of a bright future, her full name, Hope Leslie—hopelessly—suggests the opposite. Hope is like a “mountain rill . . . leaping over rocks and precipices, sportive, free, and beautiful.” The “young ladies of the present day,” on the other hand, are “‘thoroughly educated,’ and thoroughly disciplined.” If Hope is a mountain rill, modern girls are “a canal . . . formed by art, restrained within prescribed

38 In her essay “Observations on Female Abilities,” Judith Sargent Murray agrees with Sedgwick’s claim that character depends on social and material conditions. By describing the hardships women in different cultures and ages endure, she points to “the powerful and transforming effects of education, and subsequent habits” (17).
and formal limits, and devoted to utility.” 39 Furthermore, while nineteenth-century girls care mainly for fashion and appearance, Hope, although she pays some attention to the “fashion of the day,” dresses “more according to the dictates of her own skill and classic taste” (121). 40 When Hope bursts into tears, the narrator ironically asks her readers to pardon the heroine as there was not yet in the seventeenth century “a system of education extant” which has taught modern girls “to prattle of metaphysics—to quote Reid, and Stewart, and Brown, and to know (full as well as they perhaps) the springs of human action—the mysteries of mind” (212). Nineteenth-century education, then, teaches girls to hide their feelings; it restrains them, and makes them artificial. Although Hope embodies republican virtues, such as rationality and independence, the true foremothers of nineteenth-century girls seem to be the fashion-loving Aunt Grafton and the limited Esther. “Modern” girls, the novel suggests, are no more able to scale mountains or allow their thoughts to soar than Esther was two hundred years earlier, and their passion for show would have delighted the shallow Aunt Grafton. The environment, then, may shape figures like Hope, but in a less open society it will produce girls who spend their days worrying about their clothes or employing themselves with superficial conversations. 41

Being restrained, limited, and “thoroughly educated,” the modern girls referred to in Hope Leslie seem oddly similar to the specialists in Cooper’s works. Although the parallel is surprising considering that the modern girls are socialites while Cooper’s specialists are awkward clowns, a closer look reveals their commonality. The critique leveled at Cooper’s specialists is founded on the belief that they are too civilized. Unlike Hope Leslie, who is natural, sportive, and free, the contemporary girls are “formed by art,” suggesting that they too are overly civilized. The distinction between Hope

39 The general emphasis on utility and pragmatism that, as we have seen, prevails in fiction at this time makes the last words of this quote, “devoted to utility,” rather surprising since they carry negative connotations in this context. One possible explanation could perhaps be that these girls have been given an education the aim of which is to turn them into socialites. Even if this education is utilitarian, in the sense that it serves a specific end, it has made these girls limited as it does not enable them to develop intellectually.

40 Murray writes in a similar vein in “On the Equality of the Sexes” that “after an education which limits and confines, and employments and recreations which naturally tend to enervate the body, and debilitate the mind; after we have from early youth been adorned with ribbons, and other gewgaws, dressed out like the ancient victims previous to a sacrifice, being taught by the care of our parents in collecting the most showy materials that the ornamenting our exterior ought to be the principal object of our attention; after, I say, fifteen years thus spent, we are introduced into the world, amid the united adulation of every beholder” (9).

41 Echoing Hope Leslie, Lydia Sigourney advises girls in her Letters to Young Ladies (1833) to “avoid being superficial. It is the danger of females of the present age. Expected to master the whole circle of sciences, with a cluster of the fine arts in a few short years, and those years often injudiciously curtailed by the varieties of dress and fashionable amusement, is it surprising that they should sometimes have the reputation of possessing, what they really do not understand?” (69-70).
and her modern “sisters” suggests that Hope is as much an anachronism and impossibility in nineteenth-century America as Natty Bumppo is.

Rather than banishing “foreign” values from the republic, as for example the Rebels in Child’s novel do when they deport the British aristocrats, *Hope Leslie* shows that exposure to different cultures, including those that clash with republican values, is necessary for the survival of the republic. Having been brought up by different teachers, none of whom is perfect, Hope learns to assume the active and responsible role of a citizen in a democracy. However, since the character of the nation is dependent on the type of education it provides, a less open and indulgent society will produce narrow-minded and shallow citizens that ill suit the ideals of a democracy. While Hope soars, the nineteenth-century girls are grounded and limited to the worldview offered through the sitting-room window. *Hope Leslie* leaves its readers with a dilemma since, while it promotes exposure to foreign cultures as the way to create republican citizens, it offers no solution when ideals foreign to the republic become the dominant values of the nation.
CONCLUSION

Learned Americans

About this time the witches began their gambols in New England, and one of the strongest evidences against them was speaking in an unknown tongue.

—“The Witch” 1828 (194)

Those who give their attention exclusively to one thing, become great in that one thing; and will in all probability be careless and unobserving about everything else. This sort of character is not desirable; for if it makes a man greater in one particular branch, it much impairs his general usefulness. In a woman it is peculiarly unfortunate; for, whether she be rich or poor, the sphere allotted her by Providence requires attention to many things . . . extremes always lie on one side or the other of truth and nature.

—Child, The Mother’s Book 1831 (19-20)

By way of conclusion, I want to point out some common trends in the historical narratives investigated in this study, primarily in those by Child, Cooper, and Sedgwick, concerning the issues of learning and education. Common to many historical narratives written in the 1820s is that the issues of learning and education are tied to national identity, and that the character and health of the nation (any nation) depend on the dominant manner of education. Following, for example, Noah Webster, these texts find that “[t]he education of youth is, in all governments, an object of the first consequence. The impressions received in early life usually form the characters of individuals, a union of which forms the general character of a nation” (43). Thus, in Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie, the narrow-mindedness of the Puritans is the result of their orthodox and intolerant education. In contrast, the heroine Hope Leslie’s indulgent education has taught her to be independent, unprejudiced, and fair, qualities well suited to a member of a republic, even if they cause her to be heavily criticized among the Puritans. When the Tories in Child’s The Rebels are banished from the American republic-to-be, the leaders who replace them are learned, like their predecessors, but their learning is pragmatic, whereas that of the Tories is
mainly for show. The new leaders’ moderation and unostentatious manners ensure the future stability of the republic. In *Hobomok* the anti-intellectual Puritans, who have not carried the light of civilization to their new homeland, have become intolerant, misogynist, and gloomy. The learned Mary and Charles, on the other hand, represent enlightenment and tolerance. In Cooper’s *The Prairie* “l’arning” is perceived to be foreign on the frontier, but here, too, it is seen as necessary for the prosperity of the nation. As these examples convey, learning is generally perceived to be foreign to the U.S., but, even if it is felt to breed inequality, vanity, and pose a threat to the health of those who are too studious, it is necessary for the nation to come into its own. Due to its negative connotations, these narratives are often ambivalent to learning. Even if it is not dismissed in the manner of the Jacksonians, learning is frequently exhibited by characters that for some reason have been marginalized and/or are not quite accepted by the other characters. Learned characters are often silly, stupid, too proud, or dying, thus displaying negative qualities that ensure their all but heroic status in the narrative. However, learning is also a necessary quality in the heroes and heroines, the ideal Americans, of these texts. Hope’s knowledge of languages is not only admired by Master Cradock, it also contributes to her status as a model republican. Mary’s learning, in *Hobomok*, sets her apart from the dark-minded Puritans, highlighting the fact that she is more enlightened than they are. Despite the fact that learning is linked to aristocracy, a connection that is actually promoted in these two novels, since both Hope and Mary are in fact of noble descent, learning is a necessary quality not only in a hero or heroine, but also in the nation, since it also carries connotations of civilization and progress.

What is at issue in the debate on learning and education, as it is expressed in these texts, is not only, or even primarily, the existence of learning and intellectual activities in the republic, but rather, how learning is to be obtained and expressed in a manner best to serve the needs of the nation, as well as the individual when he or she ascends the social ladder. What distinguishes the learned heroes and heroines from the less fortunate silly specialists, dying scholars, stupid schoolmasters, witches, and hermits is the fact that while the learning of heroes and heroines is pragmatic and versatile, that of the latter is obsessive, useless, and limited to one specific area. When Dr. Sitgreaves in *The Spy* refuses to participate in the chase of a suspected spy he does so on the grounds that “I am not the riding-master of the regiment—nor a drill sergeant—nor a crazy cornet . . . I am only, sir, a poor humble man of letters, a mere Doctor of Medicine, . . . and a surgeon of dragoons; nothing more” (234-35). Sitgreaves feels that he is not responsible for anything that falls outside his field of expertise and, as Child points out in the epigraph above, the fact that a person is “great in that one thing” “impairs his general usefulness” (*The Mother’s Book* 19). Similarly, Dr. Melmoth in Hawthorne’s *Fanshawe* “was the author of several works which
evinced much erudition and depth of research; and the public, perhaps, thought the more highly of his abilities from a singularity in the purposes to which he applied them, that added much to the curiosity of his labors, though little to their usefulness” (75). Despite (or rather because of) his impressive erudition, Dr. Melmoth is “one of the most gullible of mortals” (138) and “[h]e was altogether a child in the ways of the world, having spent his youth and early manhood in abstracted study, and his maturity in . . . solitude” (166). In his critique of boarding schools, Rush defines the main aim of education in the republic thus: “I grant this mode of secluding boys from the intercourse of private families has a tendency to make them scholars, but our business is to make them men, citizens, and Christians” (“Thoughts” 16). Having received a scholarly education, Dr. Melmoth is unable to serve the fledgling nation as he is a stranger in the world outside his study.

If Dr. Sitgreaves and Dr. Melmoth are examples of scholars who put their studies before civic duty,\(^1\) Master Cradock in *Hope Leslie* and Sybrandt Westbrook in Paulding’s *The Dutchman’s Fireside* represent another trend in the characterization of obsessed scholars, as neither one is able to live up to the expectations of polite society. Having devoted his life to language studies, Master Cradock is utterly unable to abide by the prescriptions for proper manners and, according to Hope, “he never moves without treading on somebody’s toes” (148). The tutor’s devotion to (or obsession with) his pupil only heightens his awkwardness, and when Hope asks him a question, “Cradock dropped his knife and fork, and erecting his body with one of those sudden jerks characteristic of awkward men, he hit the elbow of a servant who was just placing a gravy-boat on the table, and brought the gravy down on his little brown wig” (147). With his clownish behavior, Cradock stands little chance of cutting a figure in polite society. Sybrandt Westbrook is the victim of a scholarly education which has left him shy, awkward, and physically debilitated. “His shoulders had become rounded like those advancing decrepitude, and he had acquired a habit of stooping which destroyed the manliness and dignity of his figure” (43). Because of his diligent studies Sybrandt has become excessively shy and, although he is in love with his cousin Catalina, he is unable to speak to her. Like Cradock, Sybrandt is unable to behave properly and until he has managed to improve his social skills he cannot address Catalina. After retreating into the wilderness, where he acquires other skills than those conveyed in books, Sybrandt returns a confident man and successfully woos his cousin.

The reason for Sybrandt’s success is that, whereas before his excursion into the woods, his knowledge was limited to one area, afterwards, his

\(^1\) For the sake of fairness, I should point out that neither Dr. Sitgreaves nor Dr. Melmoth are portrayed as completely useless. As has been mentioned, Dr. Sitgreaves is a devoted Rebel and he lovingly nurses wounded soldiers back to health. Dr. Melmoth is a much appreciated teacher to his students.
theoretical studies have been complemented with practical skills and he has acquired the balance and harmony that was missing in his life and that caused his physical deterioration. As we have seen, the importance of combining book studies with physical exercise is a common theme in antebellum advice books, a genre that mainly addressed middle-class readers. Using examples of child prodigies who have died due to their inordinate intellectual talents, and men, driven by the wish to excel, who have gone mad because of their excessive ambitions, Amariah Brigham promotes a balanced lifestyle where studies are combined with physical exercise. On a similar note, the anonymous author of *Remarks upon the Diseases of Literary Men* advises that “a certain equilibrium must be kept up between the energies of the body and the mind. Torpor of mind, with bodily exercise, will produce melancholy and consumption, as well as mental labour with sedentary habits” (6). As Richard Bushman maintains, the aim of middle-class polite society was to create harmonious societies whose members came together to perform for one another (xiv). This emphasis on harmony, where everything is given its place in a larger context, whether this be the life of an individual or the entire society, is reflected in advice books and also in historical novels. Since the need for balance and harmony involved not only the health of the individual, but the entire society, the issue was important for the nation as a whole. The many overzealous scholars in the fiction of the 1820s risk not only their own health, but that of their country since their studious habits and subsequent introversion make them less useful to society than had they been active men who were not confined to their beds or studies. At the same time, however, learning and learned citizens strengthen the position of the United States as a nation on par with other (that is, European) nations. As these narratives seek to navigate between different connotations of “learning,” their characterization of it is frequently ambiguous and fraught with tension.

The balanced lifestyle promoted in the first half of the nineteenth century involved not only a suitable mix of studies and exercise, it also concerned the way in which the education of an individual was put together. With her three unorthodox teachers, each of whom is different from the others, Hope Leslie has acquired a versatile education which has allowed her to think independently and adapt to the situation at hand, skills that highlight her status as an ideal republican. In Child’s two novels it is not so much

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2 Brigham gloomily notes that “in my opinion, mental precocity is generally a symptom of disease; and hence those who exhibit it very frequently die young” (70). He also reports that “I have seen several affecting and melancholy instances of children, five or six years of age, lingering awhile with diseases from which those less gifted readily recover; and at last dying, notwithstanding the utmost efforts to restore them. During their sickness, they constantly manifested a passion for books, and mental excitement, and were admired for the maturity of their minds. The chance for the recovery of such precocious children, is in my opinion small . . . This mental precocity, results from an unnatural development of one organ of the body, at the expense of the constitution” (83).
versatility that is emphasized as its opposite, obsession, or excessiveness, that is criticized, as indicated by the “exclusive, bitter, and morose passions” of the Puritans in *Hobomok* and the genius of Lucretia, which lacks a firm moral foundation. In *The Prairie* the versatility of the romantic heroes, Captain Middleton and Paul Hover, is expressed as geographic mobility. Unlike the obsessed Dr. Bat, whose intense studies cause him constantly to misinterpret everything (and everyone) he encounters on the prairie, and Nat, whose purely practical disposition forces him to move further West, Middleton and Paul are at home both on the frontier and in the settlements.

The ability to cross borders voluntarily, to belong in more than one place, that, for example, Middleton and Paul possess, is a quality connected to learning and education. While characters who have received the wrong education, become limited, both physically and mentally, like Esther in *Hope Leslie*, whose strict upbringing only allows her to tread on “the narrow path” (114), those with the correct education are not encumbered by boundaries, such as those of gender, geography, and culture. For example, while Master Cradock proves himself utterly unable to assume the masculine role of explorer, thus exposing himself as limited, or inadequate, both in terms of gender and geography, Hope Leslie is not held back by conventions prescribing the proper behavior for young ladies, but effortlessly scales a mountain. If the education of Esther has made her mind narrow and that of Master Cradock has caused physical limitations, Hope’s education allows her to transgress boundaries—primarily those of gender—“like the bird that spreads his wings and soars above the limits by which each man fences in his own narrow domain” (123). Likewise, the “intellectual” (35) Mary Conant in *Hobomok* is able to move back and forth between the wilderness and the Puritan community. As the open-mindedness of Hope Leslie and Mary Conant suggests, their education has allowed these heroines to become more tolerant and rational than their superstitious contemporaries. Their border crossings are not only physical, then, but also mental.

If learning and education encourage the crossing of borders, which undermines their stability, these issues are also tools for establishing and highlighting borders, whether they be in terms of gender, class, nationality, or race. After all, while each border crossing challenges the existence of that border on the one hand, it also, on the other, points to its existence. Those characters who are too learned, like Fanshawe and the hermits, or have received the wrong education altogether, like the witches, tend to be marginalized, which means that they denote the limit for what is accepted. Unlike the positive crossing performed by heroes and heroines who have received the right type of education, the transgressions of the marginalized characters are negative and they often occur without any wish or initiative from the characters themselves. If Mary Conant willingly moves into the wilderness, Master Cradock is effeminate despite his efforts to perform the role of gallant knight to his beloved Hope. As is indicated by the effeminate
scholars Master Cradock and Fanshawe and the masculine witches, among them Molly Bradford in *The Rebels* and Annie Brown in *The Witch of New England*, it is often gender boundaries that are transgressed by characters with the wrong education. However, the difficulties of characters like Cradock and Dr. Bat to adjust outside their familiar environment also point to their spatial, or geographical limitations, a fact that not only highlights their deviation from masculine ideals, but also emphasizes the existence of these spatial boundaries.

In *The Prairie*, too, learning becomes a tool for establishing boundaries as Dr. Bat and Nat both try to categorize the frontier: Dr. Bat, by mapping the prairie in accordance with the Linnaean system, and Nat by denying the place or relevance of scholarly learning on the prairie altogether. Even if neither of them fully succeeds in implementing his scheme, Dr. Bat appears to be the most successful since, while Nat dies an outcast, the naturalist enjoys a successful academic career. As a result, despite the novel’s ostensible dismissal of “bookish knowledge” (220), learning turns out to be important in the mapping and organization of the prairie. Since the tension between these two contradictory views on learning is never resolved in the novel, the overall attitude to the issue becomes ambiguous. In *The Rebels*, too, learning, and also education, are employed as vehicles for establishing boundaries. As the erudite and aristocratic Tories are forced to hand over the leadership of the fledgling United States to the pragmatically learned Rebels, both boundaries denoting class and those of nationality are highlighted; the intellectual aristocrats are British, while the Rebels are middle-class Americans. However, if, in *The Rebels*, learning is primarily a tool for establishing stable boundaries, in *Hobomok* it is implemented both for setting up, but also for challenging the notion of a fixed boundary separating America from England, as Mary’s and Charles’s double roles as iconic Americans and loyal royalists reveal.

The exploration of boundaries, together with the implementation of learning and education as tools for this exploration, concern not only borders dividing gender, class, and nations, but also, in connection with national boundaries, race. Unlike English and American cultures, the dichotomous relationship of which is, as we have seen, a chimera since they are inseparable, Indian and Anglo-American cultures are not as easily combined in these narratives. *Hobomok*, *The Prairie*, and *Hope Leslie* all approach the issue of hybridity, only to dismiss it. Faith Leslie in *Hope Leslie* is not a hybrid, but altogether an Indian, since, even if Faith was born an Englishwoman, she is no longer a native to that culture. Charles Hobomok in Child’s *Hobomok* provides another example of the possibilities of crossing the line between European and Indian cultures, but also of the impossibility of belonging to both simultaneously. The infeasibility of combining Indian and European values and skills explains Natty Bumppo’s obsession with his own whiteness. In order to avoid “going native” in the manner of Faith
Leslie, Nat has constantly to remind both the other characters and the readers that he is, in fact, white, and that he only possesses the skills of a white man (that is, he excels in gunmanship but has no ability with bows and arrows).\textsuperscript{3} Even if hybridity is a theme in all three novels, it is never considered a viable option but is, rather, a problem that is eliminated as the potential hybrids are firmly defined as either domestic or foreign.

Toward the end of Sarah Ann Evans’s \textit{Resignation}, Mr. and Mrs. Harlington entertain an old friend from England, and they discuss whether or not the United States could face the same fate as the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, both of which have succumbed to the test of time. Mr. Harlington offers a dissenting opinion as he ventures:

\begin{quote}
I wish to notice but one more point of difference, which strikingly distinguishes us, even in our infancy, from the republics of Greece and Rome, and that is, the almost universal diffusion of knowledge. Who will deny that, notwithstanding the just celebrity of Grecian and Roman literature and eloquence, a vast majority of the people constituting the subjects of those ancient republics, were lamentably ignorant? (1:361).
\end{quote}

Being ignorant, Mr. Harlington goes on to say, the people were easily manipulated by crafty demagogues and this caused the downfall of Greece and Rome. Far from seeing learning and education as foreign to the United States, then, Mr. Harlington considers them as necessary for the existence of a republic. Through learning and education a democratic nation is conceived.

\textsuperscript{3} Annette Kolodny suggests in \textit{The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860} that the popularity of, for example, John Filson’s \textit{The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon, one of the first Settlers} (1784), Alexander Henry’s \textit{Travels and Adventures in Canada in the Indian Territories, between the Years 1760 and 1776} (1809) and Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels was due in part to “these texts’ reassuring response to the gnawing Euro-American fear of Indianization.” Despite their interaction with Indians, the heroes in these texts, Kolodny argues, remained loyal to white society (69).
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