

"Like A Being Who Does Not Belong:" The Old Age of Deborah Norris Logan

THE "WOMAN'S SPHERE" in early nineteenth-century America was a complex phenomenon: it was not merely the flowering of a "cult of true womanhood" nor only women's obligatory retreat from days of former glory. Young women during this period, while often better educated than most women before the Revolution, faced prospects which were simultaneously more challenging and more restrictive. Recent studies examining this dilemma have concentrated heavily upon the responses of young women as recorded in diaries and letters. The evolution of the feminine sphere may also be understood, however, by considering the reactions of old women within the new republic. As "Liberty's Daughters" moved through "republican motherhood" into "republican *grand* motherhood," the full impact of women's changing status was personally known to a small number of aging women. One such woman, Deborah Norris Logan, described vividly in her old age the rewards and frustrations of survival in a changing world. By examining Logan's seventeen-volume diary, we can trace one woman's personal response to growing old in a complex domestic sphere which had been reinforced and reinterpreted in the early nineteenth century.¹

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¹ Deborah Norris Logan Diaries, 17 vols., Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. This manuscript diary, spanning the years 1815-1839, is available on microfilm from the HSP, Rolls 873.1-873.4. For brevity's sake, only volume and page number for individual entries are cited here, as entries can be found easily without month or date. Quotations are noted in the order presented, followed by additional citations.

While historians disagree as to the extent of change experienced by women in post-Revolutionary America, most agree that women's options narrowed by the early nineteenth century. At the same time, an enhanced domestic sphere served increasingly as the source of moral power and authority for women within a rapidly changing society. Mary Beth Norton, whose examination of women and the Revolution reveals an ambiguous legacy, maintains that women,

Deborah Logan was not *EVERYWOMAN*. In fact, as a proud descendant of Philadelphia's Quaker elite as well as an intellectual with numerous publications, Deborah led a life not experienced by most women of the time. Yet, because of her many special qualities, she provides unusual insight into the private landscape of women's lives. Deborah Logan, indeed, is symbolic of women's changing status over the years. As a daughter of the Revolution, Deborah not only espoused the sentiments of patriotism, but actively sought to rekindle those sentiments through the next fifty years. As a wife and mother during the early republic, she supported her ardently republican husband and her sons with the strength of her own domestic virtue and economy. In her old age, as a grandmother and widow, Deborah's long-established reputation as a model of morality and piety entitled her to increased favor and esteem within the "cult of domesticity." Yet, as she discovered in her old age, these roles did not mesh smoothly. In her attempts to resolve this struggle of identity—as a mature model of domesticity and virtue, as a republican wife and mother, and as a daughter of the Revolution—we can trace not only the complexity of her own position as an aging woman, but also the equally complex and fluid status of women during this period.²

nonetheless, exhibited a growing intellectual and political identity during this period. See Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980), 256-294. Linda K. Kerber, on the other hand, emphasizes the threat that intellectual women posed to the notion of "Republican Motherhood" which promoted women's roles as wives and mothers of virtuous citizens. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 269-288. Nancy F. Cott argues that the evolution of a distinct "woman's sphere" by the early nineteenth century enabled women to see themselves as "different" rather than "inferior." *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, 1977), 197. See also Joan Hoff Wilson, "The Illusion of Change: Women and the American Revolution," in Alfred E. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, Ill., 1976) 383-445; Ruth H. Bloch, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815," *Feminist Studies*, 4:2 (1978): 101-126; Barbara Walter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-174.

² To more fully understand Deborah Logan's position as an aging woman in Jacksonian America, it is critical to consider the impact of changing age relations and the perceptions of old age during this period. David Hackett Fischer, *Growing Old in America* argues that the Revolutionary period (1770-1820) marked a critical turning point in the history of age relations. After that period, Fischer contends, a new, youth-oriented society replaced the "hierarchy of age" which characterized earlier times. W. Andrew Achenbaum maintains, on the other hand, that republican ideology actually promoted equality between age groups. Recent articles generally support the view that there was never a "golden age" for old people. See David Hackett Fischer,

Deborah Norris was born in Philadelphia in October, 1761, the daughter of the wealthy Quaker merchant Charles Norris and his wife Mary Parker. Young Deborah attended Anthony Benezet's Friends Girls' School for a number of years and she continued her own studies in history and belles-lettres through much of her life. At age twenty, she married Dr. George Logan, a physician eight years her senior who had recently returned from his medical studies in Edinburgh and London. Like Deborah, George Logan traced his ancestry to many of the founders of early Philadelphia. In order to restore the Logan family estate at Stenton in Germantown after the Revolution, Logan gave up his medical practice, devoting the remainder of his days to the life of a gentleman farmer. He also pursued an active career as a Republican politician, culminating in his tenure as U.S. Senator from 1801 to 1807. At Stenton, Deborah supported her husband's work though not always agreeing with his political actions. She instead concentrated on raising three sons: Albanus, Gustavus, and Algernon. George Logan died in 1821, eighteen years before Deborah's own death at age seventy-seven.

Despite the domestic orientation of her world, Deborah Logan enjoyed an intellectual life which brought considerable pleasure and reward. Having discovered in the attic at Stenton hundreds of decaying letters written by William Penn and James Logan, Deborah undertook the enormous task of transcribing, copying, and annotating this valuable correspondence in 1814. When completed after many years work, she presented it to the American Philosophical Society. The Penn-Logan Correspondence was eventually published by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1870-72. This collection, as well as her *Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton*, (published 1899) confirmed Mrs. Logan as one of the leading chroniclers of early Pennsylvania history. She was elected to honorary membership in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1827, its first woman member. She also contributed material to John F. Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia* (1830). In addition, she derived much pleasure from writing poetry and essays,

Growing Old in America (New York, 1977), 77-112 and 234-269; W. Andrew Achenbaum, *Old Age in the New Land; The American Experience Since 1790* (Baltimore, 1978), 5 *et. al.*; Peter Laslett, "Societal Development and Aging," in *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, eds., Robert H. Binstock and Ethel Shanas (New York, 1976), 87-116.

some of which were published by her friend Robert Walsh, editor of the *National Gazette*.³

Deborah's diary, however, may be her greatest historical contribution. She began her diary in 1815 and maintained it diligently for the remainder of her life. Spanning twenty-four years, the diary contains entries of daily activity, historical reminiscence, and self-examination. When Deborah first undertook the diary at her husband's urging, her heavy-handed descriptions of political and social events indicate little love for the form or process of keeping a diary. But as the years passed, she came to rely strongly upon the diary as an outlet for her emotional as well as literary needs. In both respects, it appears to have served her well.

Although it was a private journal, Deborah's diary was clearly intended to be passed down to later generations of the family. Because she understood that future readers would judge her as a result of her daily entries, the diary often reflects Deborah's perceptions of appropriate responses rather than spontaneous and heart-felt reactions to daily events. The historical value of both, however, is especially evident when trying to determine not only how women perceived their lives but also how they constructed those perceptions.

In an 1829 diary entry, Deborah openly speculated how posterity would wonder "to-what small purpose has this old Lady lived?" This was almost certainly a question directed inward, as well. In her perpetual struggle for self-improvement, in her striving to record recollections of past events and notable people, during her deep and protracted grief after the death of family members, Deborah looked to her diary for the reassurance that her life had validity and direction. During her old age, when change and instability threatened from without, Deborah used her diary to help confirm her place in the world she knew. By attempting to integrate, however awkwardly, her past and present roles into a framework she understood and appreciated, Deborah faced issues familiar to many of her contemporaries and younger generations as well.⁴

³ A brief biographical description of Deborah Logan by Frederick B. Tolles can be found in Edward T. James, ed., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge, 1971), 418-419. In addition, see Mrs. O.J. Wister and Agnes Irwin, *Worthy Women of Our First Century* (Philadelphia, 1877), 279-328.

⁴ Logan, *Diary*, 12:272. Also see 8:137; 11:77; and 12:191. Obviously, the task of the historian is to differentiate between spontaneous and contrived entries. To some extent, Deborah

In 1791 Sarah Logan Fisher described her sister-in-law Deborah Logan as the epitome of post-Revolutionary femininity: "My sweet Sister," she wrote, "is the humble Diary maid, the domestic housewife, the Affectionate Wife, the tender Mother, the improving Companion and Friend, and when in publick Company, the most accomplished Lady that ever graced a circle." Deborah, then twenty-eight, was indeed a symbol of domestic virtue in the new republic. Modest yet accomplished, virtuous as a wife and mother, and instructive as a friend, Deborah Logan excelled in those qualities considered most appropriate for "republican motherhood." As a helpmate and companion to George Logan, Deborah devoted herself entirely to her role within the domestic sphere, only undertaking non-domestic activities (editing the Penn-Logan correspondence) in 1814.⁵

Within her domestic roles, Deborah accepted fully the prescribed behavior she felt suitable to her sex and class. Submissive and passive in her relationship with her husband, Deborah expected to be under George Logan's protective wing in her old age. Widowed when she was nearly sixty, however, Deborah entered old age alone and lonely. Logan's death left Deborah unprepared for the enormity of her loss and unprepared as well for an independent existence. By becoming the

assists the reader by amending her entries with responses she considered more appropriate. Yet the scholar cannot overlook the writer's obvious intention to present herself in her best light. The individual revealed within the pages of this diary is no doubt more pious, more modest, and more exemplary in many ways than the "real" Deborah Logan. As she became accustomed to recording her thoughts within the diary, however, Deborah grew more free in its usage. Her hopes and fears about great and small events are all present within her journal. In fact, she maintained that her entries were recorded "just as thoughts occur," (11/26/1825) and she seemed to appreciate the value of such spontaneity. It is evident that over time she grew to consider her diary as her friend, recording much that she acknowledged was trite and mundane but such things, nonetheless, that one would confide to one's friend. It is within this seemingly superfluous material that historians often find their richest deposits.

Beyond an analysis of what is in the diary, it is incumbent upon the historian to acknowledge what indeed is not. Any serious misgivings which Deborah may have had about her husband and sons, for instance, are largely missing from the diary. Her disappointments (like those in Elizabeth Drinker's diary) are alluded to but often not clearly defined. More frustrating are the considerable number of diary entries crossed out, leaving the reader not only devoid of useful material, but also curious as to who initiated the censorship and why it was undertaken. Derogatory remarks about family members, for instance, appear frequently to have suffered this fate. Yet the sheer volume of this diary and the introspective nature of many of its entries outweighs many of the obstacles which are evident. See Wister and Irwin, *Worthy Women*, 322 for one interpretation of Deborah Logan's self-censorship in her diary.

⁵ Sarah Logan Fisher Diary, 19:21 (1/7/1791), HSP.

consummate widow, however, Deborah sought to continue her wifely role. "Republican Motherhood," indeed, expanded its range and focus as Deborah's household grew to include grandchildren and close female friends. Over time, Deborah learned to draw upon the most positive elements within women's traditional sphere while also unobtrusively attending to her own intellectual needs.

George Logan's death in April, 1821 marked an obvious turning point in Deborah's life. Diary entries made during Deborah's first years of widowhood reveal a lonely, often melancholy aging woman who glorified the past and feared the future. "I am now in the world almost like a being who does not belong to it," she wrote in 1821. Nevertheless, she considered it her duty not only to remain faithful to Logan's spirit, but also to do her best to see that his name lived on in the proper light. If she were to remain his widow for the remainder of her life, it was crucial that George Logan be remembered appropriately. The biography of Logan, which she completed a year after his death, was conceived as a tribute to his life's work, and concentrates, as one would expect, on his accomplishments rather than his failures. But in Deborah's eagerness to complete his biography so soon after his death, she revealed her own need to confront the many sides of Logan's life, and to piece together a completed biographical recollection with which she could live out the rest of her life. With that task completed, she could go on to carry out the requisite functions of traditional widowhood.⁶

Deborah perceived widowhood as a time for introspection and self-sacrifice and well-nurtured pain. But as time passed, the pain slowly subsided. During the 1830s, entries concerning George Logan appeared much less frequently in Deborah's diary. Although she still had bouts of depression, Deborah was no longer preoccupied with sacrificing her happiness for the sake of her widowhood. With the death of her son Algernon in 1835, her comments on Logan ceased almost altogether, and she devoted herself entirely to a new and equally intense

⁶ Logan, *Diary*, 4:105 (quotation also used in title); 4:64; 4:70; 5:70-71. Deborah Logan believed that women should marry only once, and never seriously considered remarriage. In fact, as late as 1833, she held staunchly to her viewpoint. "I would as soon commit suicide," wrote 72-year-old Deborah when she learned that a neighbor was considering remarriage. The 31-month interval between her neighbor's widowhood and remarriage did not comfort Deborah in the least. See 14:177; 4:137. For Quaker attitudes toward remarriage, see J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America* (New York, 1973), 161-162.

period of mourning for her son. But whereas widowhood had provided her with certain prospects, however melancholy, her son's death was unexpected and outside of the predictable order of things. The rationality of widowhood could not be applied to the death of one's child.⁷

Deborah considered her maternal role of prime importance, both as a young mother and later as an aging woman as well. Like other mothers in the post-Revolutionary period, Deborah raised her two surviving sons with the hope that they would become capable, productive citizens. At the time of George Logan's death, Albanus and Algernon Logan had already experienced the shifts in familial duties and responsibilities which come with adulthood. Albanus, married and living near Stenton with his wife and children, no longer shared in Deborah's daily routine, although he visited frequently. Algernon, however, was unmarried and living at home, constituting the strongest point of continuity in Deborah's daily life after her husband's death. She relied on both her sons, yet she depended most heavily on Algernon for emotional support and affection.⁸

Like most aged mothers, Deborah Logan did not anticipate outliving her grown children. When such a prospect fully dawned upon her in 1834 at the onset of Algernon's fatal illness, she could not relate the pain she felt; instead, she described herself as being "old, helpless, feeble, and dependent." She identified totally with her son's well-being. The state of mutual dependency which had characterized her relationship with Algernon had become an essential element of her life. When he died in 1835, Deborah's sense of loss was nearly overwhelming. "I shall

⁷ Logan, *Diary*, 5:121, 156:6:187; 7:30; 9:125; 11:97.

⁸ Deborah shared with most others during this time the belief that adult children owed a special duty to their aging parents. Like others, Deborah acknowledged that a reversal of roles was wholly appropriate as aged parents grew to rely upon the care and support of their children. See 7:140; 9:65; 12:94; 13:262; Deborah Logan to Mary Parker Norris, 27 September 1793 and December, 1796, Maria Dickinson Logan Family Papers, Box 2, HSP. The sense of responsibility which adult children should bear for their aging parents is evident within the letters and diaries of many women, both young and old, during this period. See, for example, the letters of Elizabeth Murray Smith Inman in the James M. Robbins Papers, and the letters of Catherine Maria Sedgwick in Catherine Maria Sedgwick I Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Ma. and the journal of Elizabeth Pierce, Poor Family Papers, Schlessinger Library, Cambridge, Ma. as illustrations of how this notion continued basically unchanged across several generations.

never be as I have been," she sadly predicted shortly after his death. "I have lost my son."⁹

Her prediction proved accurate. Deborah never did completely recover from the spiritual and physical decline she suffered from Algernon's death. When she became very ill in late 1838, Albanus urged her to consider a live-in companion for the winter, but she adamantly refused. As her illness continued, however, she eventually agreed to turn over management of Stenton to Albanus, arranging for him and his family to move in with her at the family homestead. Such a plan was in keeping with her long-held assumptions concerning filial duty to aging parents. Nevertheless, Deborah had maintained Stenton, with Algernon's help, for seventeen years, often with great difficulty and much indebtedness. Only with the onset of fatal illness did she agree to relinquish her independent existence. In this respect, her compliance with normative values, by which children assume the nurturant role in their relationships to aging parents, signalled her loss of control and power. Death struck one month later in February 1839 when Deborah was seventy-seven years old.¹⁰

As Deborah had served and been rewarded as a "republican mother," she later reaped the benefits of "republican grandmotherhood" as well. Although less demanding in its expectations and involvement, grandmotherhood evolved to become for Deborah an especially enriching aspect of her old age. Providing her grandchildren with a direct connection to their Revolutionary heritage, Deborah also served as an important model of feminine virtue, particularly valuable to her two granddaughters. In return, Deborah received the filial devotion of yet another generation of Logans. And for the first time, she experienced the special ties between older women and their younger counterparts, bonds which were enhanced and drawn tighter with the affirmation of the "cult of domesticity."

Deborah's expectations as a grandmother were considerably different from those of motherhood. Refuting in 1826 the observation that "people usually prefer their grandchildren to their children," Deborah declined to make the comparison. "The sentiment of affection towards my own children is unbounded and not be measured at all. . . ."

⁹ Logan, *Diary*, 15:9, 256, 266; 16:19; also 16:6, 17, 19, 27, 263.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17:2, 31-32.

Whereas other grandmothers of the period often considered their grandchildren as extensions of themselves and indeed as the purpose for their continued existence, Deborah viewed her grandchildren with an objectivity she could never apply to her own children. In her old age, however, Deborah realized a growing need for attention and affection and looked to her grandchildren to supply that emotional sustenance. Although always a tender and caring grandmother, Deborah found the significance of that role increasing sharply over time.¹¹

When Deborah began her diary in 1815, she already was a grandmother with Albanus' and Maria's four children living nearby. Deborah found it easy to share in their young lives, caring for them in times of illness and entertaining them and their friends frequently at Stenton. Although Deborah enjoyed her young family, she appreciated them more fully as the years passed, preferring the companionship of young adults to small children. She grew to rely more heavily upon her granddaughters who seemed especially able to provide her with love and affection in her final years. In her last year of life, Deborah described her favorite grandchild, Elizabeth Betton, as "a cordial in the cup of Life, to delight and exhilarate my Old Age." In her old age, Deborah attached herself to the female sphere of her own family for support and comfort.¹²

The close tie which grew between Deborah and her granddaughter

¹¹ The observation that people preferred their grandchildren, Deborah added, was "most ridiculously accounted for by saying that there is not the same rivalry subsisting between them." *Ibid.*, 10:142. See, for instance, the letters of Margaret Bayard Smith to her sisters Maria Boyd and Jane Kirkpatrick as an example of the dependence grandmothers could place upon the arrival of a third generation. Margaret Bayard Smith Papers, v. 13, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (LCMD).

Deborah's entries concerning her grandchildren must be read with a certain wariness, of course, as she fully expected these later generations of Logans to read and pass down her diary.

¹² Logan, *Diary*, 16:225; 16:200-201; 1:236; 16:134, 161. Although Deborah was also fond of Lisse's sister Mary, she seemed to prefer Lisse's vivacity to Mary's "stability of character." "She has a slow, but *sure* mind," Deborah concluded about Mary, a dubious compliment at best. Nevertheless, Deborah took comfort in Mary's simplicity and assumed that Mary would be "useful to her family" in their old age. *Ibid.*, 13:97. Despite the fact that Deborah's grandson Gustavus came to live with her at Stenton after Algernon's death, Deborah never realized from him the same satisfaction she derived from his sisters. Her other grandson, Dickinson, spent considerable time at Stenton, however, and was always well-favored by his grandmother. See 11:35, 13:349; 14:59; 15:186; 16:134. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg discusses the impact of separate spheres upon families in "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Signs*, 1 (1975), 1-29.

Elizabeth was just one of a number of strong bonds she enjoyed with younger women. Although she undoubtedly appreciated the admiration of young men who visited her at Stenton, Deborah depended most heavily upon her young female friends for the intimacy and affection she needed. While her own cohorts continued (while they survived) to be important ties to the past, Deborah found in her relationships with younger women the opportunity to receive affection, even deference, while offering direction and guidance at the same time.

Deborah's close friendship with her "amiable young friend" Sarah Miller Walker illustrates the importance of inter-generational ties in Deborah's late life. Unmarried and residing with her father, Sarah Walker made regular extended visits to Stenton, often staying as long as a year. Sarah served as both friend and daughter to Deborah, and devoted herself to her increasingly as Deborah grew older. Sarah's unwavering love and steady devotion to Deborah became an essential ingredient in the older woman's happiness. When Sarah was away, Deborah missed her greatly. "She understands me. . . .," wrote Deborah in 1832, "letting me have my own way, and if I am a little humoursome, avoiding contradiction." Deborah appreciated both Sarah's attention and her deference, but beyond that, shared with her an intimacy indicative of true friendship.¹³

Although Deborah's social intercourse remained largely familial and accordingly Quaker, the number of young visitors to Stenton provided the necessary diversity which Deborah continued to appreciate. Despite her penchant for modesty, Deborah offered counsel and direction to a number of young women and occasionally mediated between generations. Young Becky Smith, whose violent acts within her own family forced her removal from home, stayed with Deborah during the initial weeks of crisis. Despite the fact that Deborah was seventy-six at the time, she helped resolve the dispute. Although she was as appalled as others at the direction and force of Becky's violence, she implied that the problem stemmed, at least in part, from the way in which Becky was raised. Her support for this young woman indicates not only her compassion for needy young women, but also her willingness to respond to those needs, even in late life.¹⁴

¹³ Logan, Diary, 14:25; 3:91; 13:240; 16:126 and 260. Although Deborah's own children were male, she helped raise two orphaned nieces and closely supervised the development of many "damsels" who worked and lived at Stenton.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10:54; 16:88, 89.

By the 1830s, Deborah had been living alone long enough to acquire some new perceptions about women, reflecting changes also in the way she had come to view herself. Increasingly, as she became known as an historian and writer in her own right, she acknowledged that she admired women who were well-read and knowledgeable. In 1827 when she suggested that women, like flowers, were "the most embellished part of creation," she revealed a compassionate but not liberated view of her own sex. By 1834, however, she was decrying the "artificial and sedentary" lives of women, preferring her own "eccentricities" which, she believed, had procured for her both good health and unsophisticated pleasure. She conveyed a growing distrust of men when she urged her niece and other women to take possession of their own property before marriage. In her own strong determination to keep Stenton after George's death, Deborah showed the importance she attached to such ownership. In the year before her death, Deborah observed with new insight the subtle machinations of sexual politics. "Many [men] that are not deficient in affording us protection," she wrote, "nevertheless make us feel our dependence." Though certainly not a feminist, she had come to acknowledge—in her seventy-seventh year—that women paid a price for their protection. Such new perspectives, however, did not diminish the traditional values she attached to her roles, particularly those of mother and grandmother.¹⁵

As wife, widow, and mother, Deborah Logan served to exemplify both the strengths and weaknesses of the "woman's sphere." Never complaisant or idle, Deborah conducted her domestic duties actively and wholeheartedly. Although her own intellectual productivity was at a standstill during years of childraising, she devoted those years to her children's intellectual growth, waiting until old age (and her husband's approval) to combine both domestic and literary spheres. Yet the ambivalence with which she regarded her dependency upon men was never satisfactorily resolved. As a consequence, she enjoyed a loving though passive relationship with George Logan and continued after his death to rely upon Algernon for direction and leadership. In her widowhood Deborah continued to enforce the structure of a male-headed household through Algernon's negligible presence, despite the reality of her own strength and ability.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11:188; 15:47; 16:308-9. Also see 4:127, 5:158, 15:162.

¹⁶ With her grandson Gustavus' residence at Stenton after Algernon's death, Deborah continued to reveal her dependence upon the image of male authority.

At the same time, however, Deborah had come to expand her appreciation of women during this period and occasionally revealed an awareness of the virtues inherent in women's independence. Although she loved women best within the domestic sphere, her admiration often extended to women with wider interests. Yet Deborah was unable to appreciate the work of suffragists and others who openly challenged women's position within society. Despite her Revolutionary heritage and her own active intellect, Deborah was entrapped by a past which glorified a generation of men, and a contemporary society which esteemed women within an increasingly restricted sphere. It is little wonder that Deborah looked to the future for resolution and ultimate peace. But there, too, she would encounter ambivalence, frustration, and even fear.¹⁷

Beyond the rewards of daily domestic activity, the affection of family and friends, and stolen moments devoted to intellectual pursuits, Deborah Logan expected that her greatest satisfaction in old age would derive from the spiritual fulfillment which she had long associated with old age and death. This quest for spiritual completion, while intense and deeply personal, had larger ramifications as well. As women's power became increasingly associated with moral strength in the early nineteenth century, Deborah and other older women found themselves promoting and exemplifying the values of "true womanhood." Because their own moral quest was most ardently pursued during old age, older women such as Deborah reinforced the concept of feminine virtue and, as seen above, functioned as models of piety and morality for younger women.

To promote the religious and moral standards to which she had long adhered, Deborah endeavored to serve as a living example of Quaker virtue, hoping to instill among young people the "practical truths" which years of experience had provided. She sought to promote among the young "all that is virtuous and good, as alone leading to true satisfaction," and urged other old women to follow her practice. In this

¹⁷ Despite these apparent changes in attitudes toward women, she never approved of aggressive women, particularly such abolitionists as Lucretia Mott who, though a Quaker, was depicted by Logan in 1838 as being a "Fanatical woman." On the other hand, she had great admiration for her neighbor Fanny Kemble, though greatly dismayed by her writings. *Ibid.*, 16:268; plus numerous entries, January—May, 1835.

role of moral protagonist, Deborah served as both exemplar and proponent of traditional virtue. In this way, she and other older women in similar positions promoted not only their own ideals, but strengthened as well the underpinnings of a separate woman's sphere.¹⁸

Because of the depth of her Quaker faith, Deborah's personal struggle for salvation was a life-long experience. The constant self-scrutiny and soul-searching appraisals which characterized her entire diary were typical of the introspection required of Friends in their efforts towards perfection. The nature of the Quaker religious experience demanded honesty and self-criticism in early life and old age as well. But in old age the struggle against "worldliness" became more acute as time grew shorter. Having witnessed a lifetime of declining influence of the Society of Friends, Deborah resolved to conduct her life within the framework of Quaker values and traditions. The schism between Hicksite and Orthodox Quakers and, as she saw it, the rampant increase in materialistic pleasures both within and outside the Society, further strengthened her determination to uphold traditional standards.¹⁹

Deborah's support for traditional Quaker values, however, was manifested through quiet personal example rather than active participation in public Quaker works. Although she continued to attend meeting regularly, she was often unable or unwilling to convince other family members to follow suit. Her husband and son Algernon, in fact, were disowned from the Society of Friends. Deborah's reticence to discuss or justify these actions within her diary no doubt attests to the sensitivity with which she viewed these matters. Nevertheless, when

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11:144-45; 7:6, 204; 11:77.

¹⁹ Deborah remained a devout Quaker throughout her life, shunning parties and large social gatherings and avoiding ceremonies. Over time, she did adopt standard dating techniques in her diary, dropping the Quaker form only reluctantly. In 1827, at the time of the separation of the Philadelphia Meeting, Deborah initially voiced admiration for Elias Hicks, comparing him to Martin Luther. But as the schism created havoc among Friends, Deborah altered her opinion of Hicks, and wished only that peace would return to the Society. See J. W. Frost "Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1783-1860," in John M. Moore, ed., *Friends in the Delaware Valley* (Philadelphia, 1982).

It should be noted that the introspective nature of Deborah's religious experience was not merely the result of her Quaker heritage. As Barbara Welter has noted, religious women were "encouraged to be introspective." See her article, "The Feminization of American Religion," in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, Ohio, 1976), 83-102.

her granddaughter Elizabeth married out of meeting and later accepted her husband's Presbyterian faith, Deborah quietly if reluctantly accepted this turn of events and continued to regard Elizabeth as her favorite grandchild. Although Deborah regularly attended Yearly as well as weekly meetings, she did not actively participate in the additional activities often undertaken by Quaker women.

The impact of Deborah's Quaker background remained strong through late life. While her training at Anthony Benezet's school did not of itself qualify her as an intellectual, she gained the academic tools necessary for an active intellectual life. Although not a reformer, Deborah continued to espouse the traditional Quaker values of non-violence and opposition to slavery. Most importantly, perhaps, the prominent role which women played within the Society of Friends created in Deborah an awareness of her own value. As Mary Maples Dunn has noted, Quaker women "took themselves seriously." Although Deborah at times doubted her own inner strength, she never questioned the integrity of her beliefs or the value of her convictions.²⁰

As a devout Quaker, Deborah had struggled to achieve that state of serenity where, removed from worldly concerns, she would be prepared to enter God's kingdom. During times of great trial, as well as during her quiet, reflective moments, Deborah searched for consolation and perspective from the sense of resignation which she cultivated. She believed that resignation to God's will was the critical key to successful preparation for death and rebirth. At earlier points of crisis, she was often consoled with the belief that she understood God's plan. But in her last years, when she had expected to achieve that ultimate clearness of vision which would signify her readiness for "that place the world denies," no such clarity occurred. With increased anxiety she realized that time was running out, yet peace was not forthcoming. Her deep disappointment at what she considered to be her own spiritual failure at the end of life cast a pall across what was otherwise a productive and successful old age.²¹

²⁰ Mary Maples Dunn, "Women of Light," in *Women of America: A History*, eds. Carol R. Berkin and Mary Beth Norton (Boston, 1979), 132.

²¹ Logan, Diary, 14:n.p. (January 1834); 13:12; 1:142; 5:101-102; 15:152. Such "clarity of vision" so earnestly sought by Deborah can be understood within the Quaker search for the Inner Light. George Fox, shortly before his death, observed, "Now I am clear, I am fully clear." See A. Neave Brayshaw, *The Quakers: Their Story and Message* (New York, 1938), 176.

As she grew older, Deborah equated her own moral strength with her ability to achieve a sense of resignation. "I humbly acknowledge the duty of resignation," Deborah wrote in 1837, a comment made frequently throughout her last twenty years. Resignation in old age involved not only the willingness to give up pleasures of the past, but also to accept the infirmities and hardships which could accompany growing old. Beyond this, however, the development of a sense of resignation was necessary for all women who sought to live within the confines of the domestic sphere, and was critical for women such as Deborah who had ties with the world beyond hearth and home. By resigning herself to God's will, Deborah would not only prepare her soul for its final journey, but prepare herself as well for the disappointment and frustration of limited opportunity.²²

According to Deborah's interpretation of her personal religious responsibility, one could complete spiritual preparation through serene contemplation of the world to come. Such preparation, of course, was essential to spiritual fulfillment at any age when death was imminent, but was critical during old age when the likelihood of death was so much greater. Deborah anxiously anticipated "the certainty of death and its awefulness [sic]" at least fifteen years before her actual demise in 1839, feeling sure that she would never be fully prepared for it.²³

Despite her recurring doubt, Deborah always rebounded optimistically, seeking to understand God's design while trying to withdraw further from the material into the spiritual world. She prayed that she would be ready when the time came. "May my Lamp be found trimmed and burning," she wrote in 1822, a message reiterated often over the years. To prepare herself, Deborah strove to cultivate "the right feeling" so that serenity of mind could be achieved. The quiet retirement at Stenton, she hoped, would provide the peaceful setting in which her soul's preparation would take place.²⁴

Neither the tranquillity of Stenton nor her earnest desire for spiritual fulfillment seemed able to bring Deborah to that point of calmness and serenity she so eagerly pursued. Despite her frequently cited desire for quiet and solitude, she often found herself lonely, wishing for company

²² Logan, Diary, 16:152; 5:153; 12:140-141; 15:53; 16:140.

²³ Logan, Diary, 6:193 (16 May 1824); 5:153; 6:165; 12:140-141; 14:208; 14:396; 15:53; 16:57. See Frost, *Quaker Family*, 41.

²⁴ Logan, Diary, 5:57; 11:174; 12:140-141; 14:363.

on days when no one came. Increasingly, she appeared to feel cheated that her years of forbearance were not paying off. Like those "who live a life of care and penury in order to put up something of a store for Old Age," she wrote in 1837, she had dedicated herself to spiritual preparation. "Old age may never be ours," she continued, "but if it does come, care and disappointment and difference from what we expect attends it. . . ." Yet she continued to devote herself to her "most important work." "My day of Life nearly at a close," she wrote in 1838. "Much to do." There is no indication within her diary that she ever achieved the calmness and serenity which she expected in old age. "I sadly want to 'set my House in order'," she wearily recorded one month before her death.²⁵

Deborah Logan's life-long commitment to Quaker principles and practices established her as a model of piety and virtue during a period of crisis and change both within the Society of Friends and within the female sphere itself. Her hopes for spiritual fulfillment in old age may have been heightened by the perception that few others represented traditional values as she did. These expectations were reinforced by the growing emphasis upon women's moral strength and the identification of women as the standard bearers of righteousness within an increasingly amoral society.

In reality, however, Deborah's expectations for spiritual serenity in old age were at odds with the active, vital way in which she conducted her life. Craving intellectual stimulation and love and affection as well, Deborah could never comfortably relinquish those aspects of life which had given her so much happiness and reward. Despite her ardent desire for calmness and tranquillity in preparation for "life's last journey," Deborah's vibrant spirit would not settle down.

Deborah Logan appeared in many respects as representative of early nineteenth-century womanhood. Industrious within her domestic domain, committed to family and female friends, pious and devout, Deborah epitomized those values and convictions considered most appropriate to her sex and class. As an old woman, however, Deborah experienced not only the doubts and insecurities imposed by old age but

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16:155; 16:292; 17:33; 4:105; 5:138; 6:46; 7:203; 10:31; 11:278; 16:55; 16:113; 16:143; 16:160; 16:245.

also the frustrations of modifying her Revolutionary heritage to conform to a more restrictive woman's sphere.

In many ways, Deborah Logan was an archetypical daughter of the Revolution. Born in the year of George III's ascension to the throne, Deborah grew into young adulthood as the American colonies themselves developed and matured. A witness to many of the Revolution's great events, Deborah overheard the reading of the Declaration of Independence from her father's garden wall and came to know personally many of its signers. Over the years, she rekindled those memories with increasing fervor and frequency. Yet in other ways too she symbolized the changes experienced by "liberty's daughters." While never losing her domestic orientation, Deborah maintained an active interest in reading and writing and developed a lively fascination in the political activities of her husband and other leading republicans. Her devotion to intellectual pursuit, nurtured during this early period, continued throughout her life, as did her attachment to the Revolutionary generation with which she strongly identified.²⁶

Yet as she grew older, the legacy of her Revolutionary heritage which sanctioned women's intellectual and political interests was not always comforting or salutary. While gaining a positive sense of identification with her own obviously remarkable generation, Deborah steeped herself within the heritage and traditions of days past, often failing to appreciate contemporary events and achievements. Her intellectual stamina, which continued unabated until near death, often conflicted with her equally ingrained sense of domestic virtue. In her old age, she hoped to secure her own place in history, yet recoiled from the prospect of treading beyond her sphere. The Revolutionary legacy, which had enhanced the intellectual and political spectrum of women's lives in the late eighteenth century, had an ambiguous effect upon its feminine legatees who survived in Jacksonian America.

For Deborah, the leaders of the Revolution were figures larger than life and, like others of her generation, she identified fully with them. In her 1820 poem *Recollections*, inscribed to her husband, Deborah eulogized the past, revealing not only the passing of a noble generation, but also placing herself firmly as a witness, if not a participant, in the great event. "I have marked an empire's birth," she wrote. "I saw the eagle

²⁶ In a 1799 letter to her mother from Philadelphia, Deborah found it notable that she had "scarsly spoke a Political Sentence." Quoted in Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 189.

mount the skies." Her close association with many leading Revolutionary figures and her subsequent role as wife of George Logan, an ardent if not great Republican, reconfirmed her loyalty to the past and had considerable impact on her old age. As one of the few remaining spokespersons for the Revolutionary generation during a period of heightened national enthusiasm, Deborah realized a sense of duty and responsibility to define and promote her inheritance.²⁷

Deborah's identity with the past was not limited to the Revolution, however. She coveted any link with Philadelphia's founders, and her enthusiasm went far beyond a mere determination for historical accuracy. Living at Stenton, James Logan's family seat, added to the ease with which she could retreat to earlier times, and it pleased her when others sought the same experience when visiting her. "People seem to think when they get here and view the remains of the olden time which I have about me, that they are transported into the times themselves, and think and talk differently from what they are wont to do in the world, which, to be candid, suits me very well," she confided smugly after a busy day of company in 1836. Having lived at Stenton longer than any previous family member only added to her sense of participation with the past.²⁸

Being part of the Revolutionary generation colored and sometimes distorted her view of contemporary events. The qualities of greatness she ascribed to the patriots were not to be found in subsequent generations. In her later years, she became fascinated with the notion of great leadership and its general decline throughout the world. She was particularly distressed with the policies and actions of "that violent old man" Andrew Jackson, who seemed to symbolize the extent to which quality leadership had fallen. At all levels of government, she saw corruption or incompetence, all of which added to her sense of disillusionment with contemporary America and her eagerness to withdraw to earlier times. "I live in two worlds," she acknowledged in 1829, "and the ideal one is by far the happiest."²⁹

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:17-23. Despite the traditional reticence with which Quakers greeted the Revolution, Deborah Logan grew up as an ardent young patriot whose mother introduced her to many of the country's leading statesmen. She parted company with other Quakers on this issue, saying "they were too Toryfied." (*Ibid.*, 11:79).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15:384; 12:9, 274; 13:199, 213.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15:48; 12:269; 1:136; 12:259 (13 November 1830); 13:29-30.

Deborah's devotion to the past was often accompanied by a fear of change in the future. To a person dedicated to the "progress" of the Revolution, Deborah nevertheless began steadily to relate change to loss as she grew older. The coming of the "odious railroad" through her property in 1831 symbolized for her the intrusion of a technologically rabid society upon her peaceful retirement. Although she assumed, with some accuracy, that speculative gain influenced railroad expansion, Deborah never acknowledged the obvious advantages of a quick, direct link to Philadelphia from Germantown. As she grew older, change of any kind became annoying. A new coat of paint in the dining room in 1834 was necessary, but still distressful to her. "Oh how disagreeable it is to put a new Coat on an old Back!" As time went on, her demanding exactness was doubtless irritating to her household help who left with increasing frequency. "I hate my things to be meddled with," she moaned in 1837. "I hate change of almost any kind." By this time, she was often sick and uncomfortable and wanted few reminders of a changing world.³⁰

Deborah's fear of change was reflected, too, in her sense of frustration over the swift passage of time. As a true daughter of the Enlightenment, Deborah had long perceived the importance of regulating time, of harnessing the moment. During her life, she had observed deep and rapid change, and was aware of a sense of discontinuity between the past and present. Holding fast to her fixed set of traditional values while living in a rapidly evolving society, Deborah sometimes had trouble understanding contemporary events. Old age seemed to signal the start of a new and separate state of being in which time ran faster and became more difficult to control.³¹

In her diary, Deborah acknowledged the "rapid flight of time" so often that, in 1832, she apologized for the redundancy, "but what forceably strikes you, is hard of rejection." Her sense of time's ever-increasing pace continued. During her last years of life she appeared almost overcome with its swift passage, unable to establish correct

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13:124; 15:85; 16:105; 13:326; 14:66; 16:206.

³¹ David Hackett Fischer notes in *Growing Old in America* (12, n. 13) that old age is a "stage within a life continuum," having always been understood within this framework of continuity. But as an aging woman in the early nineteenth century, Deborah Logan clearly differentiated between her past and present selves, particularly after she became a widow. The degree with which she tried to cling to past time seems to indicate that she no longer felt a part of the contemporary world.

dating in many of her entries. Not surprisingly, she related this acceleration of time's passage to the technological changes which increasingly infringed upon her quiet retirement at Stenton. "It seems, of late, as if all things went by Steam altogether," she lamented in 1838, four months before her death.³²

Although Deborah could not alter the swiftness of time's passing, she was very adept at charting its course, and in so doing, attempted to give significance and permanence to the transitory nature of human life. Such attempts included her writing and editing of family papers in an effort to preserve their place in history. More privately, however, through her own diary she was able to establish the record of her place in time. Birthdays, for instance, were dutifully recorded and served as vantage points for annual self-analysis and review. On her sixty-fourth birthday, for instance, she took stock of her life's situation, noting the "comparisons between my former and present self. . . ." Deborah tirelessly recorded anniversaries of births, marriages, and deaths. Having witnessed many such events during the course of a long lifetime, she preserved such data for recollection. The importance she attached to recalling and recording this material indicates not only her passion for historical accuracy, but also her desire to establish a personal pattern of time which would remain unaffected by changes in the world without. By creating through such recollections a "connecting link between generations," Deborah was in fact attempting to insure a kind of immortality which would withstand the vagaries of time. In her strong desire to be remembered, Deborah revealed the anxiety of a woman growing old in a society that might be changing too fast to notice.³³

"I am certain true happiness is only intellectual," observed Deborah in an 1827 entry, revealing a characteristic much more typical of her own generation than later ones. Deborah was well pleased, in fact, with the way her mind "expands and plumes herself." Her confidence in her own intellectual abilities was not unjustified. An avid reader as well as a poet and historian, Deborah continued to read a wide range of poetry, prose and historical writings throughout late life. She freely analyzed the material she read, and offered advice to a number of aspiring

³² Logan, *Diary*, 13:347; 16:388; 14:364.

³³ *Ibid.*, 9:164; 14:184; 7:195.

historians and writers. Beyond the literature of historical Pennsylvania on which she was a recognized expert, Deborah was familiar with many contemporary literary works as well as the classics. From this solid literary foundation, she gained not only a broader conception of the world itself, but a more accurate perception of her place within that world.³⁴

Despite the disfavor with which she often viewed contemporary events, Deborah maintained an active interest in the politics of the day. She never tired of berating the actions of President Jackson or his cabinet, eagerly read political news from abroad, and anxiously followed the progress of the British Reform Bill of 1832. Though she claimed in her seventy-second year to "dabble very little" in politics, she continued to extend her natural curiosity to national and world events.³⁵

As an aging woman with strong intellectual inclinations, Deborah Logan would quite naturally turn to standard classical interpretations of old age for support and guidance in her final years. Her familiarity with the precepts offered by Cicero in his essay *On Old Age* (*De Senectute*), for instance, is discernible throughout her diary. As Cicero's message stressed the transference of physical to intellectual strength in old age, accompanied by a loosening of earthly bonds while preparing for everlasting life, it provided an especially useful guide to growing old in a country which was itself young and in which physical strength and endurance were often preferred to intellectual stamina.³⁶

Deborah not only reflected the Ciceronian view of aging in her increased intellectual activity during old age, but she also emphasized, as did Cicero, the natural qualities of growing old. Cicero's metaphors of ripened fruit and natural decay (which would permeate the literature of aging for centuries) are evident throughout Deborah's diary. While she acknowledged Cicero's useful instruction, she was aware too of the limitations in his essay. Noting that Cicero had ignored the problems of

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11:154; 15:16; 13:349; 17:190. Deborah's reading continued to serve as a primary source of pleasure and satisfaction into old age. She daily read several papers plus current reviews, historical discourses, biographies or histories. She preferred above all else to be in her library and read only those works which she felt were instructive or enlightening. "Heavy reading in light works is abominable," she observed in 1829. (6 December 1829).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15:1, 6, 8; 13:301; 17:114.

³⁶ Cicero, *De Senectute*, XXIII, 82; VI, 17. Deborah's interest in Cicero was enhanced, no doubt, by the fact that its first American translation was completed by James Logan in 1744, published by B. Franklin.

aging women, Deborah recorded her own practical guide for successful aging, describing it as "a Treatise on Old Age for the benefit of my own sex. . . ." Her suggestions, which stressed the "contemplative and reflective pleasures" of life as well as "innocent gaiety and cheerfulness," reveal the formula she found most appropriate for aging. Sanctioned by her Quaker background and reinforced by Cicero, reflection and contemplation in old age were critical elements in preparing for approaching death. Deborah's life-long concern for feminine propriety and demeanor, however, underscores her advocacy of an "unfeigned" innocence and gaiety as women grew old. The behavior of good little girls, indeed, was deemed most appropriate for good old girls as well.³⁷

Deborah's willingness to amend Cicero's classic essay, if only within the pages of her diary, reflects the ease and comfort of a well-seasoned writer and commentator. Although Deborah's most significant historical contributions, aside from her diary, were written more than fifteen years before her death, she continued to research and record a wide variety of materials of historical interest throughout her old age. While some of this data was used by other antiquarians and historians, Deborah herself often planned to turn her biographical sketches and Revolutionary recollections into full-scale works. Increasing doubts about her ability to rely on the accuracy of her memory, however, prevailed against her completing such projects. Nevertheless, through her numerous essays, letters, and personal writings, Deborah continued to express herself actively and sometimes eloquently as the years passed.³⁸

Like other women writers of this period, Deborah conducted her literary exercises *within* her domestic sphere, sandwiching her talents amid a full and busy household regimen in which she fully participated. Despite having numerous young "damsels" to assist with the household chores, Deborah worked actively in both the house and garden until late life. Deborah deplored the inactivity and idleness of upper class wom-

³⁷ Logan, Diary, 11:144-45; 4:138; 16:174; 12:212; 5:161; 14:353; Deborah Logan's 1830 poem, "October," at conclusion of volume 12; Cicero, II, 5; XIX, 70-71.

³⁸ Deborah wrote numerous essays and memoirs of leading figures in Pennsylvania history, as well as practical articles on raising silkworms, many of which were published (often anonymously) over the years. She also planned a series of biographical sketches of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, but grew dissatisfied with her ability to accurately portray them. Some of these sketches are in the diary.

en, and regretted when her failing health forced her to reduce her participation in such annual rituals as whitewashing. Yet within this busy domestic scene Deborah found time to both read and write. Rising before dawn, she would work in her library before breakfast and later in the day as time permitted.

Deborah's skill at deftly balancing both her domestic and literary worlds, however, sometimes eluded her. When making curtains in the winter of 1831, for example, she decided to drop her needle and begin writing a newsletter. "I got the paper and ruled it fantastically and began my head work in spite of the warning voice that told me I ought to work at the Curtains," she wrote. "Who says so?—No, I had rather scribble. The curtains will not be done this week. . . I have turned Editor." The satisfaction which Deborah derived from writing, whether the object was a chatty newsletter or a melancholy sonnet, did not diminish with age. In fact, freed from earlier domestic pressures, Deborah allowed herself in old age to indulge in literary pleasures long repressed. Such undertakings, however, seldom superceded the duties of home and hearth. But the struggle, so obvious in the battle of the curtains, continued throughout Deborah's late life.³⁹

Deborah's literary activities doubtless provided a necessary intellectual outlet for this gifted woman. But her own quest for posterity, too, may have contributed to her love affair with the written word. Posterity was notoriously haphazard in selecting its honor roll, and Deborah frequently expressed fears that many deserving patriots would be destined to obscurity. She worried incessantly that such men as Charles Thomson and John Dickinson, both relatives by marriage, would be forgotten by later generations. Her biography of George Logan was no doubt undertaken to secure her husband's place among Revolutionary heroes. But as a woman Deborah's personal position regarding posterity was much more ambivalent. Not having participated directly in the extraordinary events of her time, she could hardly expect a place among the pantheon of her generation. Yet her own sound accomplishments as a compiler and interpreter of historical material earned her considerable respect and praise. She was sensitive, too, to the fact that previous mistresses of Stenton left nothing to be remembered by. "Their short existence has passed," she wrote in 1822, "and like the track of an arrow

³⁹ Logan, *Diary*, 13:317; 15:47; also 17:309.

thro' the air has left no path behind it." Deborah was determined that such oblivion would not be her fate.⁴⁰

To insure her posterity, Deborah had only to look towards her son Albanus and his family, knowing that her children and grandchildren would preserve her memory and certainly many of her values. This kind of posterity, however, did not of itself offer the hope of lasting recognition, as witnessed by her female predecessors at Stenton. Deborah's respect for the written word and her appreciation for historical records demanded that she be remembered through her writings. Despite frequent denials to the contrary, Deborah revealed herself to be anxious for future recognition, once even comparing herself to the classical writers who were either neglected or forgotten. Still, she was unwilling to have her major works, the Penn-Logan Correspondence and her biography of George Logan, published during her lifetime. In 1825, when the Historical Society of Pennsylvania wanted to publish her collection of manuscript letters, she balked. "I dread blame, and I want not praise," she wrote, which was no doubt at least half accurate.⁴¹

The following year Deborah revealed similar reticence about the prospect of becoming the first female member of the Historical Society. Writing to her friend Sarah Walker, Deborah denied that the Society would want women, "and thee, my dear, knows my sentiment on the retirement and modesty which I think we ought never to lose sight of." Deborah was torn between her desire to be justly remembered and her need for anonymity as an aging Quaker woman who believed that woman's sphere should remain discrete and separate. In part, she resolved her dilemma through posthumous publication of her works, but in addition she resorted to the more traditionally feminine literary outlet of the diary. Yet such compromises were typical for mature daughters of the Revolution whose literary and professional aspirations were out of line with the narrowing expectations of those committed to a woman's sphere.⁴²

Because she understood the necessity of an active intellect not only to insure one's posterity but also as an essential ingredient for happiness,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5:90; 5:98; 9:130; 12:109; 13:199.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8:87.

⁴² Deborah Logan to Sarah Walker, 1 June 1826, Maria Dickinson Logan Family Papers, Folder 5, HSP; Logan, Diary, 5:90; 12:109.

Deborah's old age became indeed her most prolific period of literary activity. Her scholarly inclinations were sufficiently strong so that Cicero's proposals for increased intellectual stimulation in old age merely reinforced her own natural propensities. She obviously agreed with Cicero that an active intellect was particularly critical at this last stage of life. As she had always enjoyed the fruits of her intellectual pursuits, Deborah relied heavily upon their continued harvest in old age. She anxiously analyzed the degree of her mind's acuity throughout her diary, the vigilance increasing during her last decade. Lines from her own poem, recorded in 1831, reveal how intensely she wanted to stave off intellectual decline: "I cannot bear to see Decay/Usurp the place where Reason lay." "Time," she wrote, could do as he pleased, "so he would leave my Mind to me."⁴³

During this final period, Deborah continually watched for signs of mental lapse, and tried to distinguish between the mind's normal fluctuations and more enduring incapacities. She continued to write, occasionally still seeing poems and short essays published which gave her great pleasure and satisfaction while sparing her the anxiety which might accompany the publication of her major works. Yet, after her son Algernon's death in 1835, she was never able again to rely completely upon her intellectual faculties for prolonged periods. By 1837, she described herself as living in a "mental fog, dense and heavy," though at other times she found herself "famished as to intellectual food." The next year, though occasionally hopeful that her mind was yet unimpaired despite a considerable physical decline, she admitted to living in a "Dreamy void—a state of mind like Chaos, and Thought must hover for a while over the vast abyss, and see what it contains." During the last months before her death, Deborah's mental decline continued apace with her physical losses. Her strong intellect, upon which she had placed her hopes for a productive and satisfying old age, gave out only with her final illness. Yet the steady decline which she witnessed during her last few years added a frustrating and somber perspective to those final hours.⁴⁴

Although Deborah Logan would not have described herself as either an intellectual or an historian, she in fact depended greatly upon her

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 13:323-324; 6:83; 8:134; 13:303 and 80; 16:361; Cicero, VII, 22-23.

⁴⁴ Logan, Diary, 16:164-165; and 16:65, 224, 212, 217, 233.

literary skills and her historical acumen to give zest and meaning to her old age. Her serious writing did not begin until she was in her fifties, but would continue to serve as both a creative and emotional outlet for the rest of her life, curtailed only by failing memory while in her seventies. Her familiarity with classical literature enabled her to adopt a broad, often comforting view of aging which remained constant over time. She addressed the practical aspects of growing old by offering her own behavioral code for old people to which she tried to adhere. Her mental preparation for old age served her well throughout her last years, only falling short when her own capacities declined as death approached, leaving her doubly aware of how vitally she required an active and vibrant mind.

In many respects, Deborah's Revolutionary inheritance which had expanded the range of opportunity for women's scholarly and intellectual pursuits, enabled her to enjoy an old age both richer and fuller for its literary emphasis. Yet her struggle to balance both intellectual and domestic activities during a period of domestic ascendancy placed a continuous strain upon her and no doubt limited her potential creativity. Clearly, Deborah highly valued her place within the domestic sphere, as made evident by her apparent decision to delay her literary pursuits until after her children were grown. Even though she acknowledged the vital importance of an intellectual life, she never appeared comfortable outside the domestic purview. Nevertheless, her growing concern over her own posterity indicates not only her devotion to her own unique generation but also her increasing sense of self which evolved during late life. Eventually—and no doubt inevitably—Deborah's commitment to the "modesty" she considered most appropriate to her sex ultimately determined the direction of her activities. Raised within a domestic sphere which only increased in intensity over time, Deborah expanded her horizons only to the limits of propriety.

* * * *

"Passing by a looking glass. . . I was perfectly shocked to see myself," Deborah admitted at age seventy-seven. "So old and so Ugly!" The physical changes which age produced were clearly discernible to Deborah Logan, both in terms of physical debility and altered appearance as well. But the more fundamental changes she encountered throughout her last twenty years were not so readily apparent in her mirror. As a model of domestic virtue, Deborah expanded her close ties

to family and friends despite the loss of husband and son. As a symbol of morality and piety, Deborah prepared for her final spiritual journey while providing direction and inspiration for others. And as an aging daughter of the Revolution, Deborah experienced her most active and productive literary period while perpetuating as well the history and spirit of a past generation. The triumphs of her old age, however, belie the ambiguities inherent in each achievement. As the "cult of domesticity" evolved and flourished in the early nineteenth century, old women such as Deborah Logan found themselves serving as both living models of domesticity and as anachronistic remnants from another era.⁴⁵

Like other survivors of the Revolutionary period, Deborah Logan was well aware of the unique contributions of her own generation and shared with others a sense of "lost glory" as time passed. As a *female* survivor, however, Deborah's revolutionary heritage presented a different set of problems and expectations from those known to her male counterparts. While aging men experienced a loss of power and position in the post-Revolutionary era (as David Hackett Fischer contends), older women such as Deborah were regarded with increasing esteem and respect by young members of their own sex. Anxious to secure for themselves models of domesticity and virtue, younger women relied upon older females to provide direction and support. During a period of relatively limited opportunity and diminishing expectations for many women, the model established by Deborah Logan and her peers offered both a pattern of domesticity and a living guide to moral and spiritual fulfillment.⁴⁶

Ironically, however, Deborah's enhanced status as a model of feminine morality was at odds with her own needs for intellectual nourishment and her repressed desires for professional acknowledgement and literary approval. Her frequently expressed concern about the prospects of posterity reveal the frustration of self-imposed limitations

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16:361. Deborah indicated that she was aware of her physical decline throughout her diary. Only occasionally, however, did she remark despairingly about her altered appearance.

⁴⁶ Fischer's contention is based upon his analysis of such factors as church seating arrangements, mandatory retirement laws, costume, and property inheritance patterns. His argument, however, does not focus upon the relative change in status for women during this post-Revolutionary period. See Fischer, *Growing Old in America*, 88-89 and 93 for brief discussions of older women and age-related changes in dress and language.

upon creativity and praise. Determined to uphold her standards of domestic virtue at all costs, Deborah deliberately confined her literary activity and restricted public scrutiny. Her revolutionary heritage, which had awakened her to the prospects of intellectual fulfillment, failed to overcome the restraints imposed upon nineteenth century American women.

Although Deborah's intellectual foundations were laid in the Revolutionary period, her reliance upon male strength and protection revealed an older and more firmly ingrained heritage of domestic relations. Whereas domestic feminists of the nineteenth century would proclaim their separate but equally responsible sphere, eighteenth-century women such as Deborah were plagued by a nagging sense of inferiority established, of course, well before the Revolution and heightened by years of unrewarding comparison to male patriots. Deborah's late-life acknowledgement of women's precarious, occasionally damaging relationship to men reveals the extent of her awareness and growth in old age. It reveals, too, that the impact of early feminism during this period did not entirely pass her by. As a single older woman, Deborah grew more sensitive to her own peculiarly feminine spirit. She was pleased that others had come to regard her as a "singular woman." Although she continued to live—quite literally—within the shadow of George Logan, Deborah learned over time to view herself and other women as well within a larger framework.⁴⁷

Deborah's responses to domesticity, to her literary ambitions, and to growing old, of course, were considerably influenced by her Quaker background and her determination to maintain what she considered appropriate roles for an aging Quaker woman. Her Quaker heritage was evident, too, in her strong resolution to continually examine and identify her own values and achievements. Yet only by considering Deborah's training and background within the context of a rapidly changing society can we fully comprehend the nature of her experience as an old woman in Jacksonian America. Representative of a past era but still responsive to the present, Deborah Logan exhibited both the contentment and anxiety, reward and frustration that characterized her own ambiguous heritage.

University of Cincinnati

TERRI L. PREMO

⁴⁷ Logan, *Diary*, 16:336.