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"The Sweet Recourse of Reason": Elite Women's Education in Colonial Philadelphia

ONE DAY IN MAY 1761, Susanna Wright received a box of books from her friend Charles Norris. As Wright unpacked the parcel, she must have been pleased with the array of new reading materials that quickly piled up in front of her. In an enclosed note, Norris offered a packing list of sorts, explaining he had included copies of Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts*, John Serle's *Plan of Mr. Pope's Garden*, George Anson's *Voyage round the World*, Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* and *Letters*, Pliny's *Letters*, James Thomson's *The Seasons*, Archipresyter Leo's *History of Alexander's Battles*, *Several Prospects of . . . the City of London*, and numerous volumes of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Norris promised Wright that Jonathan Swift's *Works*, Robert Dodsley's *Poems*, and *The Rambler* would soon be on their way as well.[1] This one box thus held samplings of geography, natural

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[1] Charles Norris to Susanna Wright, [May 1761], misc. vol., box 12, folio 38, Norris Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

philosophy, poetry, architecture, classics, literature, and history. While most colonial women in the Philadelphia area probably did not borrow books by the boxful, other upper-rank women there would have heartily approved Wright's choice of reading materials: that one box neatly encapsulated a British curriculum for elite women's education that had become extremely popular among wealthy Philadelphia families over the mid-eighteenth century.

In the early eighteenth century, British prescriptive literature written for the gentry classes began promoting a new educational model for elite women. This new standard encouraged women to embrace a substantive—rather than an ornamental—curriculum, calling on them to read widely in the arts and sciences and then to employ and expand their book knowledge by exploring the social and natural worlds around them. According to the prescriptive literature, this sort of education would not only enable gentrywomen to build knowledge and skills, but also help solidify British elite identity in general. Far more than just genteel creatures, educated gentrywomen would show themselves to be persons possessed of reason, rationality, and taste. Such qualities would distinguish gentrywomen and men alike from the lower and middling sorts, in ways less tangible but more effective than material finery or luxuries.

Women in Philadelphia's wealthy families took this British educational model to heart. In the mid-eighteenth century, they followed its prescriptions by reading widely in the arts and sciences. They also found hands-on ways to enhance and display this knowledge, for instance by undertaking scientific experiments, conducting historical research, and engaging in intellectual conversations. Through such pursuits, they not only gained new knowledge and experiences for themselves but also made an important contribution to the metropolitan elite identity that upper-rank Philadelphians, like so many other wealthy British Americans, were cultivating in the colonial era.

Among historians, the conventional wisdom about women and education in eighteenth-century America has long been grounded in two important assumptions: that the only model of education available to women beyond basic literacy or arithmetic skills was ornamental and that women's educational opportunities were very different from those offered

to men.[2] The first assumption received an important modification in the 1970s when Linda Kerber argued that substantive education was a critical component of "republican motherhood" in the 1780s and 1790s.[3] According to Kerber, women's responsibility for "mothering" the next generation of republican citizens gave them claim to new educational opportunities. While Kerber's work helped illuminate the substantive nature of women's curricula in the early republican period, it obscured the nature of female education earlier in the eighteenth century.[4] By portraying the early years of the new Republic as a watershed for women's education, Kerber's notion of republican motherhood served to hide from view the advances elite women had made even before the Revolution. In her analysis, it was only the need for an educated citizenry in a new republic that finally gave American women access to substantive education. The implication was that earlier education for women had been strictly ornamental, a paradigm reinforced by more recent work.[5]

[2] See for example, Sheldon S. Cohen, *A History of Colonial Education, 1607–1776* (New York, 1974); James Mulhern, *A History of Secondary Education in Pennsylvania* (1933; repr. New York, 1969); and Robert Middlekauf, *Ancients and Axioms: Secondary Education in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven, CT, 1963).

[3] Linda K. Kerber's work on women's education was first published as "Daughters of Columbia: Educating Women for the Republic, 1787–1805," in *The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial*, eds. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick (New York, 1974), 36–59, and "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 187–205. A fuller explication of the concept of republican motherhood then came in *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980).

[4] While republican motherhood has been remarkably resilient over the last thirty years, women's historians have critiqued and modified the model in important ways. For a direct critique of Kerber's links between education and motherhood, see Margaret A. Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (1997): 171–92. For modifications to Kerber's argument, see Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs* 13 (1987): 37–58, and Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 44 (1987): 689–721.

[5] Recent work on women and elite identity in the South in particular has emphasized the ornamental nature of upper-rank women's education in the colonial period. Kathleen M. Brown, for instance, argues that beyond domestic skills, the education of elite girls in colonial Virginia extended only to "genteel subjects such as singing, French, and dancing." See *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), quote from p. 297. Likewise, Cythnia A. Kierner argues that "For young women, even more than for their brothers, the objectives of education were more ornamental than intellectual." See *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700–1835* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), quote from p. 59. An important counter to this trend is Kevin J. Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf* (Knoxville, TN, 1996); Hayes argues that colonial-era women's reading was quite broad and included subjects like science.

Given the general acceptance of this paradigm, it is not surprising that most historians have assumed that women's education was quite different from men's education in eighteenth-century America.[6] And certainly there were very important distinctions, especially in terms of formal education. Elite and professional young men had access to colleges and other kinds of educational training outside of their homes.

Yet the case of Philadelphia complicates this conventional wisdom about women and education in the eighteenth century. The activities of Philadelphia women suggest that, in fact, wealthy women had access to substantive as well as ornamental education in the days of empire, well before any republican stirrings. It was, indeed, the very allure of old, aristocratic identity, the desire to make themselves part of a colonial gentry, that enabled women of means to claim such an education. And upper-rank women in Philadelphia used a British substantive model that called on them to pursue learning much like their male counterparts. Under this model, both sexes read widely in the sciences and arts and furthered their studies through fieldwork and critical observation of the world around them.

There is little doubt that wealthy Philadelphians were attracted to the markers of elite identity in eighteenth-century Britain. Like other upper-rank British colonists, they imported clothing styles and luxury goods, emulated town and country culture, and generally tried to stay up to date with a wide variety of social and cultural practices.[7] Educational models figured prominently in this larger cultural borrowing. It was fairly easy for

[6] These fundamental assumptions about gender and education reveal important weaknesses in conventional historical explanations of women's education in early America. As a whole, the historiographical literature has tended to leap from a preoccupation with women's achievement of literacy in the colonies to one with women's education in the new Republic. These trends have left the history of women's education in most of the eighteenth century largely assumed, rather than studied.

[7] On colonial American emulation of English elites, see Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1992); Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA, 1994); and David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997). On Philadelphia elites specifically, the classic account is Carl Bridenbaugh and Jessica Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin* (New York, 1942); for exploration of women's roles in this process see Sarah E. Fatherly, "Gentlewomen and Learned Ladies: Gender and the Creation of an Urban Elite in Colonial Philadelphia" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000). For a view of colonial emulative practices as part of an empire-wide phenomenon focused around a metropolitan culture centered in London, see Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989).

wealthy Philadelphians to acquaint themselves with elite British ideas about education. Discussions about education and its importance to class identity abounded in prescriptive literature specifically geared to upper-class readers, which was widely available throughout the empire. Offering readers detailed advice on everything from dress to morals to leisure activities, the ultimate goal of this literature was to show readers how they could mark themselves as upper-class persons and thus distinguish themselves from those of lower and middling social status.

Local Philadelphia booksellers regularly stocked upper-class advice tracts directly from London booksellers and printers. Rivington and Brown, for instance, carried such popular prescriptive literature as *The Female Spectator*, *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, *The Ladies Library*, *The Guardian*, and *The Young Gentleman and Lady Instructed*, among others.[8] The city's subscription libraries, which drew many of their borrowers from Philadelphia's leading families, also owned copies of elite British advice literature. As early as the 1730s, the Library Company of Philadelphia circulated volumes like François Fénelon's *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, Charles Rollin's *Method of Teaching and Studying the Belle Lettres*, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *Tatler*, *Guardian*, and *Spectator*, as well as both *The Gentleman's Library* and *The Ladies Library*. Even the major Anglican parish in Philadelphia, Christ Church, kept copies of upper-class British advice literature in its library and made them available to parishioners.[9]

Women in many wealthy families also obtained volumes of elite advice material through male relatives who had purchased the tracts in London. Francis Hopkinson, for example, bought James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* and sent them back to his sister Anne in Philadelphia, noting the volumes "are much approved of here & have a great Run."

[8] *A Catalogue of Books, sold by Rivington and Brown . . .* (Philadelphia, 1762), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See also David Hall's advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 11, 1762. Booksellers typically imported copies straight from London. Although Philadelphia boasted several printers of its own, it was cheaper and easier for booksellers to import many British tracts than to print American editions of them. See Robert Winans, "Bibliographic and Cultural History," in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William L. Joyce et al., (Worcester, MA, 1983), 174–85.

[9] For inventories of subscription libraries' holdings, see *A Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Library Company of Philadelphia . . .* (1741; repr. Philadelphia, 1956), and *A Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Union Library Company of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1754), Library Company of Philadelphia; and the Thomas Bradford Library Register, 1771–1772, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On Christ Church's holdings, see Christ Church Library Record drawer at the Library Company of Philadelphia.

Although he had not had time to read the volume thoroughly, "as far as I have read," he noted, "I think them very pretty," and he hoped Anne would like them.[10] Benjamin Franklin also shipped prescriptive tracts from London to his family in Philadelphia. Sending his daughter, Sally, copies of *The World* and *The Connoisseur* (derivative successors of *The Spectator*), he enjoined her to read them closely. He also hoped she would read *The Ladies Library* "over and over again."[11] Hannah Logan Smith got an array of tracts from her brother William in a different way: she inherited them. In bequeathing his rather large library, he decided to give Hannah twenty-three volumes of British gentry literature, including *The Female Spectator*, *The World*, *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, *The Tatler*, and Elizabeth Rowe's *Works*.[12]

While it is often difficult to know how upper-rank Philadelphia women first acquired their copies of elite British prescriptive literature, acquire them they did. Cousins Peggy Emlen and Sally Logan, for instance, shared a copy of James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*.[13] Mary Norris owned her own copy of volumes like *The Gentleman's Calling*. Another female member of the Norris family (probably Mary's niece) owned and took notes on Elizabeth Rowe's *Letters Moral and Entertaining*. Sarah Logan Fisher did the same with her copy of *The Spectator*, and also owned a copy of *The Female Spectator*. Hannah Callender likewise had a copy of *The Spectator* and another tract, *The Accomplished Woman*.[14] And while Margaret Morris may or may not

[10] Francis Hopkinson to Anne Hopkinson, Jan. 12, 1767, Signers, vol. 1, Dreer Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Scholars of eighteenth-century America have repeatedly treated James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* as a key prescriptive tract of the period reflecting the general tone of advice literature for women. As a result, scholars have emphasized the dominant prescriptive message for women's education to be a conservative one. Fordyce's tract, however, was published after a host of works that advocated a substantive curriculum for women and so should be seen as one of the pieces reacting against the emerging trends of advice literature for the time, rather than as a reflection of the dominant messages of that literature. Kevin Hayes is one of the few historians to articulate this view of Fordyce and other prescriptive writers of his ilk: see Hayes, *Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, chap. 3.

[11] Benjamin Franklin to Deborah Franklin, Feb. 19, 1758, *The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. John Bigelow (New York, 1887–1888), 3:9.

[12] Hannah Smith's husband, John, received six volumes of *The Rambler* and two volumes of Joseph Addison's *Works*, and her brother James received thirty-two volumes of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. See William Logan's Catalogue of Books, June 1768, Library Company of Philadelphia.

[13] Margaret Emlen to Sarah Logan, 4th day [no month given] 1768, box 1, folder 1, Marjorie P. M. Brown Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[14] Hannah Callender Diary, 6th day 3 mo. [Mar. 6], 1758, 7th day 10 mo. [Oct. 7], 1758, and 7th day 4 mo. [Apr. 7], 1759, George Vaux Collection, American Philosophical Society.

have owned the original works, she certainly had a copy of *The Mottoes of the Spectators, Tatlers and Guardians.*[15]

From this literature, these wealthy Philadelphia readers learned that education could help them secure elite status through a set of personal qualities that could not be easily mimicked or acquired by people of middling or lower rank. While "inferiors," the author of *The Gentleman's Library* argued, might often put on an "Air of Quality," true taste, reason, and intelligence could not be so easily assumed.[16] *The Female Spectator* agreed that the fashions in "eating, drinking, apparel, furniture, and diversions, so prevalent among us" could be copied by anyone, but good breeding and personal traits could not.[17] While it would be simpler, as one writer argued, to just outlaw any "illegal aspiring into a forbidden Station," realistically elites needed to uphold their status through personal attributes and behavior as well as material goods.

The sort of education that advice authors prescribed to secure these intangibles, however, meant nothing short of fundamental reform for elite women's curricula in particular. Traditionally, upper-class female education in Britain emphasized ornamental studies, focusing on genteel skills like embroidery, dancing, and painting. The problem with this model of education, prescriptive authors argued, was that it had reared generations of women who lacked basic skills like spelling and arithmetic. More than one writer lamented that "Learning is not thought a proper Ingredient in the Education of a Woman of Quality and Fortune."[18] *The Female Spectator* wished that instead of dress and vanity, the gentry might "bring learning in to fashion."[19] And the sharp-tongued author of *The Manners of the Age* satirized the upbringing of young gentlewomen, remarking that too often "she who does excel / In dance, and musick—was not

[15] See entries in the Library Company of Philadelphia's Provenance Index drawer under each woman's name. The anonymous notes of a Norris family member on Elizabeth Rowe's work are in a female hand (probably that of Hannah Griffitts) and can be found in the margins of "On Solitude. A Poem," [n.d.], misc. vol., Norris Family Papers. Sarah Logan Fisher's notes are in her copy of *The Spectator,* vol. 8, Library Company of Philadelphia.

[16] *The Gentleman's Library: Containing Rules for Conduct in All Parts of Life*, 3rd ed. (London, 1734), 53–54.

[17] [Eliza Haywood], *The Female Spectator*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, bk. 3 (London, 1750), 127.

[18] *The Guardian*, vol. 2, no. 155 (London, 1714), 265. This exact phrase also appears in the later published *The Young Gentleman and Lady Instructed in such Principles of Politeness, Prudence, and Virtue, as will Lay a Sure Foundation for Gaining Respect, Esteem, and Satisfaction . . .* (London, 1759), 1:205.

[19] *Female Spectator*, 5th ed., vol. 2, bk. 20 (1755), 206.

taught to spell."[20] Ultimately, this frivolous kind of education produced women who lacked reason and were therefore prone to vanity and luxury because they did not have the discernment to regulate their own conduct. As a result, too many gentrywomen were apt to fritter their time away in idleness or in material luxury, what *The Ladies Library* called a "circle of idleness" in which a woman scheduled her day around lengthy primping followed by a circuit of plays, concerts, and tea-, chocolate-, or gaming-houses.[21] In the view of gentry advice writers, the ornamental emphasis of female education encouraged frivolous and materialistic behaviors that, if anything, served to elide the distance between aristocrats and people of the middling classes; when elite class markers consisted of material luxuries or public social activities such identity indicators were available to anyone with sufficient economic wherewithal.

Tract writers argued that with a different sort of elite female education, however, women could become important agents in maintaining (rather than endangering) class distinctions. They themselves could truly claim and enact their own elite class status. The status of a father or husband only reflected so much; according to this view, women could and should claim their own place in their social class. How they behaved and claimed that status had broader implications for the stability of their class. If gentrywomen emphasized material fashions and merely ornamental activities, then they would damage the gentry's ability to maintain its exclusivity. If, on the other hand, they claimed high status by cultivating and demonstrating qualities like reason or taste, then they would make it harder for middling-rank people, in particular, fraudulently to claim elite status.[22]

In suggesting a new model of female education, prescriptive authors envisioned a system that would enable women to cultivate two key attributes: reason and rationality. In this view, nothing was more important for defining a person as elite. These were the qualities that enabled upper-class people to be discerning in everything from spouses to clothes to leisure. Reason was considered an intellectual quality, a clarity of thought

[20] [Thomas Newcomb], *The Manners of the Age: In Thirteen Moral Satires* (London, 1733), 120.

[21] *The Ladies Library*, vol. 1 (London, 1714), 41 and 60.

[22] On the relationship of the British gentry and the mercantile and professional ranks, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, 1995); Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley, CA, 1996); James M. Rosenheim, *The Emergence of a Ruling Order: English Landed Society, 1650–1750* (London, 1998); and Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England, 1540–1880* (Oxford, 1984).

or mental discipline unswayed by emotion or material considerations. Rationality was the process by which a person applied his or her reason.[23] A prescriptive tract entitled *The Guardian*, for instance, gave specific examples of how reason and rationality could guide gentrywomen's behavior in beneficial ways. With reason at a woman's side, the tract's author argued, she would rationally weigh a suitor's true strengths and not be taken in by the gallant figure with "the Gilt Chariot, the Diamond Ring, the Gold Snuff-Box and Broccade Sword Knot," which were not true marks of "a Fine Gentleman."[24] In other words, reason and rationality could help women see past the superficial allure of material trappings and thereby make decisions that would protect the status of themselves and their families. Elizabeth Rowe, author of the popular *Letters Moral and Entertaining*, echoed this argument, contending that people of high social status "act[ed] against their reason" when they became preoccupied by material goods in order to be thought "fashionable."[25] The "discipline of reason," another writer agreed, could lead gentrywomen to "true taste."[26] In their emphasis upon reason and rationality, these prescriptive writers certainly were reflecting the general currency of Enlightenment thinking in British intellectual circles. More specifically, though, by positing reason and rationality as markers of elite identity, these tracts claimed the fruits of these new theories for the upper ranks alone regardless of gender.

Advice authors placed reading at the core of their new educational model. Many of them suggested that reading was, in fact, the single most rewarding activity in which gentrywomen could engage, especially during their leisure hours. As *The Female Spectator* noted, "Reading is universally allowed to be one of the most improving, as well as agreeable amusements."[27] *The Ladies Library* agreed that reading "gives solidity to our thoughts, sweetness to our Discourse," and, in Enlightenment terms, it "finishes what Nature began." Yet, not all reading was equally desirable; frivolous novels and scandalous plays only made women vain, silly, and irrational. Prescriptive authors argued women should focus on "books of

[23] For a discussion of a similar argument made in other European elite circles, see Monica Bolufer Peruga and Isabel Morant Deusa, "On Women's Reason, Education and Love: Women and Men of the Enlightenment in Spain and France," *Gender and History* 10 (1998): 183–216.

[24] *Guardian*, vol. 1, no. 34 (1714), 137. Thomas Marriott made the same argument is his *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing* . . . (London, 1759), 219 and 283.

[25] Elizabeth Rowe, *Friendship in Death: in Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living. To which are Added, Letters Moral and Entertaining* . . . 5th ed., pt. 1 (London, 1738), 190.

[26] Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts*, 11th ed. (Oxford, 1720), 43.

[27] *Female Spectator*, vol. 1, bk. 1 (1750), 7.

Knowledge," such as history or science texts.[28]

It was therefore specifically a "*good* Taste of Books" that tracts like *The Ladies Library* advocated for women.[29] *The Ladies Diary* championed poetry and history books as good material for female readers; such texts promoted "a serious and methodical Way of thinking on many Subjects, which by all is allow'd no small Advantage to the Mind."[30] Charles Rollin, author of *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres*, agreed. He promoted poetry, history, and philosophy for women.[31] Thomas Marriott, the author of *Female Conduct*, recommended the new Enlightenment scientific texts for elite female readers. In his estimation, if women read this kind of material:

> Tales, and Romances, will delight no more,
> To Themes sublimer, Female Taste will soar;
> It will disdain Smollet's insipid Pickle,
> No more shall Roderic the Fancy tickle;
> Tom Jones no longer will inchant the Fair,
> Nor Betsy Thoughtless fascinate the Ear,
> The magic Charms of Science can subdue
> The Love of Masquerades, and Gaming too.[32]

Marriott made a clear distinction between aristocratic pursuits fraught with frivolous values and sexual danger (popular novels, masked dances, and gambling) on the one hand, and activities of enlightened taste and intellectualism (science and reading) on the other. And he claimed the latter category, with its power to counteract frivolity and shallowness, as most appropriate for elite women to pursue.

In order to insure that women read appropriate material, prescriptive authors outlined a particular curriculum as part of their new female educational model. This curriculum was broad in scope. It encompassed the arts, including history, literature, moral philosophy, and classics, among other subjects, and the new Enlightenment sciences, including natural philosophy, astronomy, botany, biology, and more. Moreover, it

[28] *Ladies Library*, 1:20–21 and introduction, respectively.

[29] *Ladies Library*, 1:20; italics added.

[30] John Tipper, comp., *The Ladies Diary: or, The Women's Almanack, For the year of our Lord, 1718* (London, 1718), [no pagination].

[31] See Charles Rollin, "On the Education of Girls," chap. 2 in *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres . . .*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (London, 1737).

[32] Marriott, *Female Conduct*, 197.

strongly de-emphasized ornamental accomplishments like dancing, fancy embroidery, and painting. Prescriptive tracts proposed this curriculum as early as 1708, when François Fénelon started advocating knowledge of law and history in addition to religion and housekeeping in his *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter.*[33] Other advice tracts published in the 1710s, including *The Guardian*, *The Spectator*, *The Ladies Diary*, and *The Ladies Library*, expanded on these instructions. *The Ladies Library*, for example, recommended not only that upper-class women read law and history but also that they study moral philosophy and learn foreign languages, in addition to perfecting spelling, grammar, and arithmetic skills.[34] By the middle of the eighteenth century, a broad curriculum was a common feature of British prescriptions for upper-class women's education. *The Female Spectator*, for instance, written by Eliza Haywood in the 1740s, urged upper-class women to pursue studies in history, literature, natural philosophy, astronomy, classics, poetry, geography, and mathematics. *Dialogues Concerning Education* (1745; 1748) by David Fordyce also suggested that women should study history, moral philosophy, astronomy, and natural philosophy. Fifty years after its publication, François Fénelon's *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter* was itself recommended reading for upper-class female students along with political theory, history, and astronomy in Thomas Marriott's *Female Conduct.*[35] In this proposed model, a gentry woman needed enough competency in domestic skills in order to manage (or help manage) her household, but in the estimation of these prescriptive authors, such skills were no more important than intellectual study. In those tracts written for gentry-class women, authors argued that while housewifery knowledge made a woman a better household manager, it did not help her attain elite status.[36]

This curriculum for elite women's education was more than just an expansive reading list. Reading broadly was the foundation of the model, but women were also expected to build upon their book knowledge through experimentation and observation in the world around them.

[33] François Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter . . .*, 2nd ed. (London, 1708), 210, 235–40.

[34] *Ladies Library*, especially 1:18–22.

[35] Marriott, *Female Conduct*, 77, 102, 187.

[36] For example, *The Ladies Library* refused to say how much upper-class women needed to know of the "business of the kitchen" or of medicine; the author categorized these activities as "casual only" for gentlewomen, see vol. 1, p. 20.

Authors encouraged women to explore the natural world, to pursue deductive reasoning and practical scientific investigation in order to sharpen their reason and rationality. *The Female Spectator*, in particular, was a strong advocate of this practice. Author Eliza Haywood argued upper-class women had ready-made opportunities for such study: their periodic retreats to country estates could easily become scientific field trips. She instructed women to take magnifying glasses with them on walks, so they could observe the principles of natural philosophy in actual flora and fauna.[37] To demonstrate the utility of her suggestions, Haywood gave a detailed account of a nature walk she took with friends while in the country. Starting out the walk with "microscopes" (magnifying glasses) in hand, she and her friends found caterpillars and snails and observed their behavior and physical characteristics, thus comparing actual observations to their book knowledge of insect anatomy and species classification. Haywood also described an opportunity she had to conduct astronomical fieldwork while she was in the country. Visiting at a nearby estate, Haywood and several female friends discussed astronomy with a gentleman and his other guests. She also used his telescope to view the moon's surface. Discussing her observations with the male guests, she learned about current debates over the "plurality of worlds" theory, which held that the moon and other heavenly bodies might have life on them. Even an interruption in this night viewing and discussion proved instructive. When the telescope outing was interrupted by a storm, Haywood and friends used the poor weather to discuss the phenomenon of lightning.[38]

By detailing her own experiences, Haywood hoped to encourage other women to engage in scientific observation. The point of "giving this account of what little observations we were able to make, in our short excursion from London," she explained, "was to shew the female subscribers and encouragers of this undertaking, how much pleasure, as well as improvement, would accrue to them by giving some few hours, out of the many they have to spare, to the study of natural philosophy." Recognizing that science could often seem abstract, she hoped that by relating her own experiences in a "familiar way" she could help shed some light on current scientific studies.[39] Many of Haywood's contemporary readers evidently agreed that her scientific discussions were both instructive

[37] *Female Spectator*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, bk. 15 (1748), 135.
[38] *Female Spectator*, vol. 3, bk. 17 (1748), 249–72.
[39] Ibid., 271–72.

and enjoyable.[40]

One letter from "Philo Naturae" praised Haywood's microscope and telescope exercises as models for elite men as well as elite women. Assuming fundamental similarities in elite men's and women's educational needs, "Philo Naturae" expressed his hope that many people, "not only of her own, but our sex likewise," would follow the advice that Haywood offered.[41] All elites, he argued, should learn more about the natural world, and in his opinion *The Female Spectator* offered an excellent model for how women and men alike might accomplish that task.

While Haywood's scheme, which was advanced in the 1740s, was unique in its depth and detail, it was not singular in its suggestions. Many other prescriptive authors promoted women's pursuit of science as early as 1714, when *The Ladies Library* offered women examples of how knowledge of natural philosophy could enhance their understanding of the world and their place in it.[42] David Fordyce's *Dialogues on Education* likewise extolled the virtues of astronomy and natural philosophy for women's education.[43] Thomas Marriott's *Female Conduct* provided further support for women's investigation of the natural world. Convinced that scientific studies would greatly benefit women, Marriott instructed young women to study everything from planets to insects. He instructed the female student: "Thro' Telescopes, sublime now lift your Eyes, / To Globes immense, that shine in distant Skies; / Now downward, in the Microscopic Glass, / The slender Fabric of small Insects trace."[44]

Tract authors argued that investigating scientific subjects would benefit gentrywomen—and, by extension, their social class—in many ways. A number of tracts, like *The Female Spectator* and *The Ladies Library*, posited science as a way in which women might learn about the order of the world and their relationship to it. Women's pursuit of science also helped mark them as members of Britain's upper classes by showing that they had access to the many privileges required to carry out such investigations, including literacy, education, money, and equipment. Most importantly, however, writers believed that practical experimentation

[40] See Ann Messenger, "Educational Spectators," chap. 5 in *His and Hers: Essays in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lexington, KY, 1986) for a detailed comparison of *The Spectator*'s and *The Female Spectator*'s discussion of British women's education.

[41] *Female Spectator*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, bk. 19 (1748), 29–39.

[42] *Ladies Library*, 1:219–31.

[43] David Fordyce, *Dialogues Concerning Education*, vol. 2 (London, 1748), 125–30.

[44] Marriott, *Female Conduct*, 194.

would help women cultivate their mental faculties in rational and reasonable ways. The exercises of considering a new problem, theorizing about how to explain it, and deducing conclusions from available evidence, authors argued, were skills or mental habits that provided women with rational ways of thinking that could be applied to many situations outside the world of science. One writer argued that through work in science women learned a set of four basic criteria that they could use in social, as well as intellectual, circumstances. Their intellectual pursuits encouraged them to acquaint themselves "thoroughly with the Question," to focus on the issue at hand and cut off all "needless Ideas," to organize their thoughts "by order," and finally, to examine all parts of the subject at hand.[45] They could then apply this kind of disciplined thinking to selecting husbands discerningly, for example, picking those with intellectual spirit, healthy bodies, and polished manners, over those who had only the trappings of wealth to recommend them. Scientific, rational thinking would even affect their choice of wardrobe. Thomas Marriott encouraged women to "Let your apparel manifest your mind, / Not ostentatious, simple, yet refin'd."[46]

British prescriptive authors contended that women's investigations into the arts, as well as the sciences, should also involve more than just reading. Many authors agreed that women should converse with others of their class standing on intellectual topics, engaging in discussions about the literary, historical, or artistic subjects they had read about.[47] The benefit of this activity was twofold. Women would learn new information about the subject at hand, and, at the same time, they would learn how to construct and defend their own points of view in a logical fashion by observing the conversation of others. Through these kinds of activities, women marked their elite status both by demonstrating familiarity with intellectual and artistic subjects and by showing their ability to discourse in a rational, ordered fashion. According to advice tracts, correspondence was also a useful way of improving on book knowledge, since the act of committing one's thoughts to paper would force women to organize and explain their ideas.[48] It would also help them polish other aspects of

[45] *Ladies Library*, 1:490–91.

[46] Marriott, *Female Conduct*, 202.

[47] For example, this was advocated by *The Ladies Library*, 1:22 and Fordyce, *Dialogues Concerning Education*, vol. 1 (London, 1745), 146 and 171.

[48] See for example, Fordyce, *Dialogues Concerning Education*, 1:170. In encouraging women to become discussants, authors carefully emphasized that the goal was for elite women to practice

language skills, like grammar, spelling, and penmanship. Certainly correctness in speech and writing had long been a popular way of distinguishing upper-class persons from middling- and lower-class ones.

Other advice for elite women's educational experimentation and observation varied. One author suggested that tutors or family members take young women to view statues of Greek and Roman women. Interestingly, the bounds of women's knowledge did not, however, extend beyond modesty—the author did not encourage women to see male figures.[49] Several writers suggested that women enhance their education by going to the theater. The author of *Young Gentleman and Lady Instructed*, for example, characterized the playhouse as an "entertainment of reason and of all our faculties."[50] *The Female Spectator* agreed that theater was useful to women's education. This tract connected it to the mind: it was "truly pleasing to a thinking mind"—and to behavior—it had the ability to "reform our manners and correct our errors." Even more to the point, plays would complement a woman's book studies in history, geography, and many other subjects. At the theater, *The Female Spectator* explained, women could "see the most remarkable passages of antiquity, the various manners of the far distant nations, exhibited in the touching scenes of well-wrote tragedy!"[51]

In emphasizing the development of reason, rationality, and taste through education, writers were suggesting that women should claim their class status by essentially the same means that men did. For both sexes, prescriptive authors argued, it was the "Qualities of the Mind" that were the critical marker of superior class status.[52] Reason, rationality, and taste were the qualities that separated upper-class people from middle- or lower-class ones, not elite men from elite women.[53] Not surprisingly, then, the reformed curriculum for elite female education that prescriptive writers laid out had much in common with elite male education in Britain. Both sexes studied a liberal curriculum, reading in the arts and the sciences, and both sexes took their book knowledge into London's natural, social, and cultural worlds. Certainly men of Britain's upper classes

organized thinking and be capable of informed, rational conversation with peers, not to become public debaters or speakers.

[49] Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, 208.

[50] *Young Gentleman and Lady Instructed*, 2:127.

[51] *Female Spectator*, vol. 1, bk. 4 (1750), 213.

[52] *Gentleman's Library*, 51.

[53] *Female Spectator*, vol. 4, bk. 23 (1748), 254.

had important educational advantages over their female counterparts. They could attend formal schools and colleges, among other things. Prescriptive authors, however, argued for elite women's and men's intellectual parity. While some authors were more enthusiastic than others about women's faculties, on balance they agreed that "there is no very good Argument against the frequent Instruction of Females of Condition this way," especially since the "Fair Sex are as capable as Men of the Liberal Sciences."[54] In the eyes of prescriptive writers, the goals of women's and men's education were fundamentally the same—the inculcation of reason, rationality, and taste—and thus elite female education owed as much—if not more—to class imperatives as to gendered ones.

François Fénelon, for one, explicitly noted the strong similarities between his prescriptive instructions for educating upper-class women and upper-class men. Although his main design was to address women's education, he thought that the plan he laid out "with very little Alteration" could be used for young men too.[55] At least one Pennsylvanian reader of Fénelon's tract agreed. In instructing his son to get a copy of Fénelon's text for him, Edward Shippen referred to the tract as "Instructions for the education of daughters (as proper, I think, for sons), by Monsieur Fenelon."[56]

As Shippen's comment suggests, this new British prescriptive model of female education was popularly circulated among wealthy Philadelphians in the mid-1700s. Of course, the fact that upper-rank women, or men, read British prescriptive literature does not necessarily mean that they accepted all the advice it offered. Some female readers, for example, criticized the British advice tracts they read. When Peggy Emlen read James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women*, she complained that his ideas about female friendship were wrong. To her close female friend and cousin Sally Logan, Emlen wrote, "How can my Foredyce say there cant be friendship between Girls?" "If it is not true love and friendship," she continued, "what is it I feel for thee—nothing less I am sure."[57] Eliza Stedman criticized an English version of some French advice literature; regarding the work of British playwright-turned-translator John Dryden,

[54] *Guardian*, vol. 2, no. 172 (1714), 335.

[55] Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, preface.

[56] Quoted in Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen*, 48.

[57] Margaret Emlen to Sarah Logan, 4th day [no month given] 1768, box 1, folder 1, Marjorie P. M. Brown Collection.

she deemed him "very old but not very good."[58] In contrast, however, Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker in her later years went back to the advice tracts she had read and followed in her youth and found that she still admired them. Rereading *The Female Spectator*, she noted what a "useful work" the volumes were. The original *Spectator* volumes also still met with her approval; she reflected she had "read in them at times for 40 years."[59]

Certainly the actual activities of wealthy women suggest that many of them accepted and emulated the British prescriptive model for elite identity and its centerpiece—a substantive, rational education. The reading habits of wealthy Philadelphia women certainly had close parallels with the curriculum of subjects that British advice writers prescribed for upper-class women's education. The reading regimens of Elizabeth Graeme and Hannah Callender, for example, which are particularly well documented, show a strong correspondence with the British substantive reading program. Graeme's reading ranged from classical works by Tully, Virgil, and Ovid to texts on ancient and modern geography, history, and natural philosophy to the poetry and prose of Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Pope, and Thomson. Diarist Hannah Callender provided a clear window onto her intellectual journey through a broad series of works that included *The Iliad*, Horace's *Satires*, the works of Socrates and Tacitus, Paul Rapin de Thoyras's *History of England*, Pope's *The Dunciad* and *Essay on Man*, Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved*, and the memoirs of the King of Prussia.[60] Surviving book provenance for other women, while more fragmented, also reveals an adherence to the British model of reading broadly and substantively. In the Pemberton family, for instance, Phebe Pemberton owned a treatise on John Locke, while Mary Pemberton not only perused her own copy of a history of New Jersey but also lent the volume to her niece Hannah Griffitts.[61] Three sisters in the Hill family circulated books among themselves, including a copy of William Whitehead's *The Roman Father, A Tragedy*, while Susanna Wright lent

[58] See the frontispiece of Eliza Stedman's copy of John Dryden, trans., *Familiar Letters of Love, Gallantry and Several Occasions . . .*, vol. 2 (London, 1718), Library Company of Philadelphia.

[59] Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* (Boston, 1991), May 7 and Sept. 14, 1806, 3:1996–97.

[60] See Elizabeth Graeme [Fergusson], Poemata Juvenilia, 1752–1772, Library Company of Philadelphia, and Elizabeth Graeme, "Sunday Matters," 1779, vol. 1, Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and Hannah Callender Diary, 1758 and 1759 entries.

[61] Provenance Index drawer, Library Company of Philadelphia; Hannah Griffitts to Mary Pemberton, Aug. 14, 1767, vol. 19, folio 109, Pemberton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

out her copy of John Potter's *Ancient History of Greece*.[62] Mary Cadwalader Dickinson owned and lent enough books that in her account book she made a column just for "Books lent"; one entry in this column was for her copy of Homer's *Iliad*.[63] Other Philadelphia-area women likewise possessed volumes of history, geography, philosophy, and literature; for example, Mary Crozen inscribed her *Naval History of Great Britain* by John Barrow, Anne Willing had the *Works of Pope*, Deborah Lloyd owned John Smith's *Horological Disquisitions concerning the Nature of Time*, and Sally Logan held a copy of Rousseau's *Emilius and Sophia: Or, a New System of Education*.[64] Women whose families belonged to one of the city's private libraries could and did also borrow the texts necessary to the new model of female education. Margaret Morris, for one, used the stacks of the Union Library Company to broaden her reading options.[65]

In addition to reading books ranging across the arts and sciences, many women also owned and read texts in foreign languages. A number of women studied French, the language of gentility in Britain. Elizabeth Sandwith and Hannah Callender studied French together as they worked on developing their language skills.[66] Sarah Logan (Jr.) took to reading texts like Fénelon's *Telemachus* to develop her skills in that language.[67] But some young women even learned Latin and Hebrew—languages typically taught only to upper-rank young men. Margaret Hill Morris used Latin in the diary she kept.[68] And Sarah Logan (Sr.) knew Hebrew

[62] Margaret Hill to Sally Hill, Mar. 11, 1757, box 4, folder 9, Gulielma M. Howland Papers, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania; Isaac Norris Jr. to Susanna Wright, Sept. 4, 1746, vol. 2, folio 45, Norris Family Papers. The actual title of Potter's book is *Archæologia Græca, or, the Antiquities of Greece*.

[63] Mary Dickinson Commonplace Book, box 11, Robert Restaling Logan Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[64] These volumes, their provenance records, and many other women-owned volumes are all located at the Library Company of Philadelphia.

[65] Margaret Hill Morris to William Morris Jr., [pre-1766], box 7, folder 1, Gulielma M. Howland Papers. Hannah Callender used the Library Company of Philadelphia's collections and at one point even described herself as "much displeased with the Librarian, who hinders me from going on with the History"; see Hannah Callender Diary, 12 mo. [Dec.] 1758. The collections of the Library Company, in particular, were extremely well suited to the reading program laid out in the prescriptive literature; see the Library Company's *Catalogue of Books* (1741; 1956).

[66] See, for example, Crane, ed., *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, entries for 1760, and Hannah Callender Diary, entries for 4th day 1 mo. [Jan. 4], 1758, and 5th day 2 mo. [Feb. 5], 1758.

[67] William Logan to Sarah Logan, Dec. 29, 1761, microfilm, reel 4, Robert Restaling Logan Collection.

[68] See inside front cover of Margaret Hill Morris Diary, 1751–1774, Quaker Collection, Haverford College.

well enough to translate selected psalms from the Bible.[69]

Students of this new educational system and their families praised the new reading schema and its benefits. Young Elizabeth Graeme lauded the system in her poetry. In "The Dream. A Poem," she championed the following of "Reasons Torch" and argued that when "Milton, and Locke, and Addison, are read, / Each Page where Virtues lovely Form is spread: / The Tale, the Poem and the Fable may / If manag'd right all useful Truths convey."[70] Sarah Logan, a widely read woman and mother of three daughters, argued that "Reading good Books is very informing and a great advantage." Her son William agreed and pointedly reminded his younger sister that she luckily would not face that "great misfortune of many young Women in our Society, whose Parents have neglected their Education."[71]

Such enthusiasm for the new British model of female education went beyond wealthy Philadelphia women's embrace of the substantive reading component. Their activities suggest that they also adopted the experimentation aspects of that model. Many women became active in scientific work and involved in Philadelphia's burgeoning formal scientific community. The rags-to-riches story of Benjamin Franklin aside, most of the active scientific men and women in Philadelphia came from the city's wealthiest families. The sheer technical requirements of scientific undertakings usually ensured that the upper ranks could, and did, claim scientific endeavors largely for themselves. One typically needed access to equipment of different sorts, which meant either buying needed equipment (which took money and contacts in Britain) or borrowing it (which necessitated having wealthy friends in Philadelphia or the immediate area). Once a person had the needed materials, then he or she still needed literacy skills and a fairly good education to investigate the new sciences.

Upper-rank women often had the opportunity to observe and experiment in the new sciences. Due in large part to the work of Benjamin Franklin, many visiting scientific scholars and lecturers came to Philadelphia. Advertisements for a set of lectures on experimental philos-

[69] James Logan to Thomas Story, Oct. 25, 1724, folio 354, James Logan Letterbook, 1717–1731, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[70] Elizabeth Graeme [Fergusson], No. 82 "The Dream. A Poem," Nov. 15, 1768, Poemata Juvenilia, 1752–1772.

[71] William Logan to Sarah Logan, Sept. 1, 1766, vol. 3, folio 23, Logan-Fisher-Fox Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

ophy, for example, noted a price specifically for "ladies' tickets."[72] Newspaper advertisements for a display of "camera obscura"—described as a "microscope and other machines"—addressed itself to both men and women.[73] A series of electrical experiments and lectures given at the College and Academy of Philadelphia by Ebenezer Kinnersley, a British professor, also welcomed both "Gentlemen and Ladies."[74] When Kinnersley returned to Philadelphia and lectured again, diarist Elizabeth Sandwith was invited by friends to "go, to the Accademy, to hear the Lectures upon Electricity."[75] Women likewise attended a series of experimental philosophy lectures in 1751 that covered "Physicks, Pneumaticks, Hydrostaticks, Opticks, Geography, and Astronomy."[76]

Women also undertook their own investigations into the natural world. Engaging in activities that would have made Eliza Haywood proud, some women conducted scientific observation and experimentation. While summering in the New Jersey countryside with her children, Mary Pemberton and her friend Polly Jordan conducted a set of medical experiments in which they studied the effects of ingesting saltwater on the human body, using themselves as test subjects. When Pemberton first arrived, she complained that she could not find the time to make "Experiment of the salt water nor have I read a line in the treatise wrote on it." Soon, however, Pemberton and Jordan were able to begin a series of experiments, the results of which Pemberton recorded and kept her Philadelphia-bound husband abreast of.[77] While these experiments did not include caterpillars or snails, in all other ways they mirrored Haywood's prescriptions for scientific experimentation. Meanwhile, Mary Pemberton's sister-in-law, Hannah, pursued her own line of scientific inquiry as she got news of the Lisbon earthquake in 1755 and contemplated its nature. In one informal piece that she wrote, she compared theological and scientific explanations of earthquakes.[78] Young Mary

[72] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 29, 1751.

[73] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1744.

[74] See the advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 2, 1751. Ebenezer Kinnersley lectured in Philadelphia on several different occasions; see *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 14, 1752, Mar. 26, 1754, and Dec. 27, 1759.

[75] Crane, ed., *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, Jan. 7, 1760, 1:43.

[76] See *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 29, 1751.

[77] Mary Pemberton to Israel Pemberton, May 24, 1759; see also Mary Pemberton to Israel Pemberton, May 28, 1759, vol. 13, folio 67 and 72, Pemberton Papers.

[78] Hannah Pemberton, "Reflections on the Earthquake at Lisbon, 1755," vol. 11, folio 34, Pemberton Papers.

Flower also noted these geologic events. She too contemplated the Lisbon disaster and copied her thoughts into her commonplace book.[79] Elizabeth Norris pursued astronomical studies and even owned her own telescope equipment, a rarity even for an upper-rank man in colonial Philadelphia.[80] And Elizabeth Sandwith observed "divers objects in a Micrescope" as well as "several expediments in Electricity."[81]

In the arts, as well as in the sciences, women integrated their educational training into their lives. Again showing parallels with British prescription, upper-rank women turned to correspondence and conversation to enhance their book knowledge. When Edward Burd went away to school, his sister decided that his absence would be useful in that they could correspond with one another and thus improve their writing styles.[82] Friends Elizabeth Sandwith, Ann Swett, and Elizabeth Moode consciously used letter writing as a way to cultivate both their writing skills and their language skills at the same time by corresponding to one another in French, a practice they sustained for at least a year.[83] Other women turned to conversation as a medium through which to enlarge their knowledge of literature, history, and the arts and hone their abilities to capably discuss and debate such subjects. While Peggy Emlen read and studied dutifully on her own, she was always pleased when her aunt came to visit, as she felt she gained something very important from the "advantage of the fine Woman's Conversation and instruction."[84] Women also carried on intellectual conversations about literature and related subjects in the more public settings of sociability. For example, one young woman described a social gathering where "the Conversation was chiefly on Books."[85] Traveler William Black observed a similar occasion on which a group of upper-rank Philadelphia women discussed "Plays, and their

[79] Mary Flower Commonplace Book, 1757, Quaker Collection, Haverford College.

[80] For indications of Norris's astronomical equipment, see American Philosophical Society Archives, series I, 5: American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia Minutes, May 20, 1769, American Philosophical Society.

[81] Crane, ed., *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, Feb. 8, 1760, 1:47.

[82] Edward Burd to his sister, Mar. 7, 1765, Yeates-Burd Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[83] See, for example, Ann Swett to Elizabeth Sandwith, May 23, 1755, and Aug. 16, 1755; Elizabeth Moode to Elizabeth Sandwith, [n.d.]; and Elizabeth Moode to Elizabeth Sandwith, Mar. 11, 1753, case 26, vol. 2, box 1, folio 27, 41, and 32, Drinker Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[84] Margaret Emlen to Sarah Logan, Sept. 11, 1769, box 1, folder 1, Marjorie P. M. Brown Collection.

[85] Sarah Logan to Sally Smith, [n.d.], box 6, Gulielma M. Howland Papers.

Authors." In this conversation, he observed, "Addison, Prior, Congreve, Dryden, Pope, Shakespeare, &c. &c. were names often in question."[86]

Some wealthy Philadelphia women acted on their arts education in even more creative ways. Mary Hopkinson, for instance, undertook historical research on her family. In doing so, she even enlisted the aid of Benjamin Franklin (who was residing in London at that time) to help her with the part of the research which had to be done in Britain; Franklin and a member of the Royal Society gathered needed documentation for Hopkinson and sent materials to her in Philadelphia.[87] As Hopkinson concentrated her energies on creating history and genealogy, other women channeled theirs into crafting literature. By midcentury, an increasingly wide circle of female poets emerged in Philadelphia who circulated their works publicly in manuscript, and sometimes even published, form.[88] Susanna Wright took on particular prominence in this informal circle by becoming something of a role model for other aspiring female poets. Wright's poetic version of a letter from Anne Boleyn's letter to Henry VIII, for example, was copied down by Hannah Callender, Mary Flower, and Milcah Martha Moore into their journals and commonplace books.[89] Wright also read and critiqued the poetic work of younger women like Hannah Griffitts, who would go on to become an extremely productive poet whose subjects ranged from marriage to religion to politics and who published work in local newspapers.[90] Another of these aspiring poets, Elizabeth Graeme, parlayed her hands-on activities in literature into an even larger-scale project. Having seen London's literary world firsthand, Graeme set about replicating that model in her hometown. She created Philadelphia's first literary salon and eventually built a

[86] R. Alonzo Brock, ed., "Journal of William Black, 1744" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 2 (1877): 40–49. Quote from an entry for June 13, 1744, p. 46.

[87] Benjamin Franklin to Mary Hopkinson, July 6, 1765, Autographs, folio 2, Mrs. Francis T. Redwood Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[88] This group included Nancy Emlen, Elizabeth Graeme (Fergusson), Hannah Griffitts, Elizabeth Moode (Emlen), Milcah Martha Moore, Rebecca Moore, and Susanna Wright. For samplings of their poetry, see Catherine LaCourreye Blecki and Karin A. Wulf, eds., *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America* (University Park, PA, 1997), and Elizabeth Graeme [Fergusson], Poemata Juvenilia, 1752–1772. For further discussion of several of these poets, see Karin A. Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY, 2000).

[89] See Hannah Callender Diary, 7th day 10 mo. [Oct. 7], 1758; Mary Flower Commonplace Book, 1757; and Blecki and Wulf, eds., *Milcah Martha Moore's Book*, no. 3, 121–24.

[90] See Hannah Griffitts to Susanna Wright, Feb. 6, 1763, misc. vol., box 12, folio 45, Norris Family Papers, and for an example of Griffitts's published work, see a poem signed "Fidelia" in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 29, 1761.

reputation for herself as a respected literary figure.[91]

As in science, women studying the arts did not always have to create their own educational opportunities. One summer, a "view of Jerusalem" was exhibited in Philadelphia, and as the advertiser of the display noted, anyone could see it for the shilling admission price, although "the Quality and Gentry may pay more if they please."[92] At least one wealthy young woman, Hannah Callender, saw this model while the craftsman was still working on it. In her diary she noted visiting a house where there were "some models in architecture" that when put together made a "representation of Jerusalem." She made sure to take specific notes in her journal about each model building and its architectural details.[93] Similarly, at several fine homes young upper-rank women and men were allowed to visit and view personal art collections. On one such outing, for example, Elizabeth Sandwith, along with other young people, "view'd the Paintings" at Bush Hill, James Hamilton's country estate.[94] Hamilton's gallery offered visitors such different views as Bartolomé Esteban Murillo's "St. Ignatius," Richard of Paris's "The Atonement" and "Elevation of Proserpine," and Annibale Caracci's "Venus Lamenting over the Body of Adonis."[95] When Hannah Callender undertook that same art field trip to Bush Hill, she demonstrated her interest in evaluating technique as well as subject matter. Struck most by two particular pieces, she judged St. Ignatius's portrait to be "exceedingly well done," while the tableaux of Prosperine evoked Pluto's "horrid joy, over his prey, [and] . . . the horrors of a loathed embrace" perhaps all too well. Callender also visited another country estate whose gardens boasted classical statuary and a Chinese temple.[96] Such trips point to the exclusive nature of these educational opportunities: only women, or men, from the city's wealthy and influential families could trespass on the hospitality of other wealthy Philadelphians in order to see paintings or gardens. This kind of investi-

[91] See Anne M. Ousterhout, *The Most Learned Woman in America: A Life of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson* (University Park, PA, 2004), and Martha C. Slotten, "Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson: A Poet in 'The Athens of North America,'" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 108 (1984): 259–88.

[92] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 4, 1763.

[93] Hannah Callender Diary, 2nd day 6 mo. [June 2], 1762.

[94] Crane, ed., *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, Nov. 1, 1759, 1:37.

[95] For further discussion of elite Philadelphians' art collecting, see Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen*, 212–15.

[96] Hannah Callender Diary, 7th day 9 mo. [Sept. 7], 1758, and 4th day 6 mo. [June 4], 1762.

gation into the arts was only available to members of the city's upper social ranks.

Women's adoption of the British substantive educational model was spurred on by more than just individual initiative and familial suggestion. Local schools in Philadelphia that catered to a wealthy clientele played an important role in helping to circulate and regularize the new trends in elite female education. Colonial Philadelphia schools began altering their traditional instruction of young women, which was typically limited to reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic skills, and reshaping it in light of the new British model. One schoolmaster, David James Dove, explicitly referenced British prescriptive literature and its elite female educational model when he announced his plan to open a ladies' academy in Philadelphia. According to his advertisement, he had designed his school's curriculum so that "the Plan recommended by the Universal Spectator may be exactly pursued." Quoting from that tract, Dove assured prospective students and their families that young women would be "educated in the modern Way. For, hereby, the Mind will soon be stored with useful Knowledge."[97] At midcentury, other area schoolmasters likewise retooled their curricula for female students. Some began offering women instruction in foreign languages, particularly French, Greek, and Latin. Anthony Benezet, for example, head of the Society of Friends' girls' school, started including Greek and Latin as part of his students' instruction. Schools' reading curricula also expanded to include the works of Pope, Milton, Young, and Thomson.[98] In helping to make the new British model of elite female education the norm among the city's upper crust, some schools that adopted these new curricula quickly made a name for themselves and drew in not only local families, but also wealthy families from the surrounding New Jersey and Delaware area.[99]

In their advertisement of new curricula, Philadelphia schoolmasters also hinted at another factor, besides their influence, that likely made this new approach to female education so palatable to Philadelphians. As David Dove's ad suggested, this educational model valued cultivation of

[97] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1751.

[98] See Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen*, 48–52.

[99] See, for example, William Logan to John Smith, Dec. 1759, vol. 5, folio 125, Smith Manuscripts, Library Company of Philadelphia, and Crane, ed., *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, June 3, 1760, 1:60. The pattern of wealthy families boarding their daughters at Philadelphia schools would continue well in the nineteenth century; see Bushman, *Refinement of America*.

"the divine Perfections of the Soul . . . Good Nature, Wisdom, [and] Virtue."[100] Educating oneself or one's daughter using this new system was thus entirely compatible with Protestant desires for the inculcation of traditional religious values. As prescriptive author Thomas Marriot acknowledged, even as a woman studied astronomy and geography, so should she "Sometimes with moral Works, your Soul improve." Fénelon's *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter* took a different tack, suggesting young women learn Latin on the grounds that it would be useful for reading religious texts.[101] And some supporters of substantive education even argued that pursuing this kind of education would in fact make women better Christians. *The Ladies Library*, for one, couched a fairly long disquisition on astronomy and natural philosophy within the context that such knowledge of the natural universe would enable women to better understand the awesomeness of God's powers of creation and the falsity of human pride.[102] Elite Philadelphia women themselves seem to have readily combined religious and substantive training. Their book provenance records show that volumes of natural philosophy, astronomy, history, and geography shared shelf space with *The Book of Common Prayer*, William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*, Thomas à Kempis's *The Christian Pattern*, John Everard's *Some Gospel Treasures*, and *A Collection of Devotional Tracts*, among other religious works.[103]

As much as elite Philadelphia women, with encouragement from family, school, and church, adopted British substantive education, their practice of this model did ultimately include that which London prescriptive rhetoric so strongly de-emphasized and at times even decried: ornamental instruction. Not having all of the British material luxuries of gentility, and not having had many of them for long, ornamental skills were still a popular part of wealthy women's education and upbringing in colonial Philadelphia. As early as the 1730s, tutors in Philadelphia offered lessons in a variety of ornamental subjects to young women. In 1731, Louis Timothee started advertising French lessons for both women and men, and soon after dancing masters also began advertising their services. By the 1750s, tutors offered women lessons in violin playing, languages, painting, singing, and fancy needlework. Lessons in shellwork and wax-

[100] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1751.

[101] Marriott, *Female Conduct*, 194; Fénelon, *Instructions for the Education of a Daughter*, 246.

[102] *Ladies Library*, 1:219–31.

[103] See Provenance Index drawer, Library Company of Philadelphia.

work followed.[104] Deborah and Benjamin Franklin, for example, urged their daughter to follow *The Ladies Library* and other advice tracts even as they secured her not only a French teacher but also a "musick master."[105] Deborah Morris was equally determined to secure both substantive and ornamental education for her niece Sarah Powel. While one year Powel studied architecture, for instance, she also learned French, embroidery, waxwork, painting, and shellwork. In one year alone, Morris paid out over fifty pounds to Powel's various instructors not only for their time and expertise but also for materials like "Pasteboard," "wax babes," "paints & gums," and "alibaster dogs."[106] Even as they attended scientific lectures and read history books, then, young upper-rank women in Philadelphia also worked Berlin embroidery and painted.

This was the case because both educational models, in their own ways, helped wealthy Philadelphians set themselves off from their middling or poorer neighbors. Pursuing substantive education helped young women lay claim to the intangible assets of reason, rationality, and taste. But ornamental education also had a purpose. Competence in dancing, painting, and music enabled young women to claim elite status in other ways. These pursuits showed women's leisure time (something only the wealthy had), their acquaintance with current London leisure fashions, and their financial ability to afford an expensive luxury like dancing lessons.

Certainly the experiences of several young women who pursued the model of substantive education suggest that Philadelphia women indeed developed the discernment and taste that the British promoters of the new educational model had hoped their readers would. Hannah Harrison and Elizabeth Hudson, for example, both developed not only a general "love of Books" but a specific taste for "good Books," much as tract authors had suggested.[107] Hannah Callender was even more conscious about becoming discerning in her reading taste. While reading had long

[104] See *Pennsylvania Gazette,* Oct. 14, 1731, for Louis Timothee's advertisement; Aug. 31, 1738, for Theobald Hackett's dancing school; Oct. 12, 1752, and Apr. 12, 1759, for fancy needlework; Oct. 30, 1755, for John Matthias's offer to teach languages, violin, and painting; Oct. 18, 1764, for shellwork and waxwork advertisements.

[105] "Memorandum Book, 1757–1776," reel 1, item 2, Benjamin Franklin Account Books, American Philosophical Society; see entries for Oct. 1758 and Feb. 1759.

[106] Deborah Morris Account Book, 1759–1769, Historical Society of Philadelphia; for fifty pound expense totals see 1762 entries, for entry on architecture, see 1763 entry.

[107] Hannah Harrison Jr. to Sarah Dillwyn, Dec. 20, 1768, box 11, folder 19, Robert Restaling Logan Collection; Elizabeth Hudson Morris Diary, 1743–1778, Quaker Collection, Haverford College (quotes from entries for 1743 and 1744, [not paginated]).

been "one of my most pleaseing amusements," Callender had to admit that she had "some years ago a sort of viciated taste in books." As she got older, however, she began to "discern the Folly of Chimeracal notions, and distinguish the fitt and the unfitt." Having learned the skill of discernment, she now perused Homer, Socrates, Pope, and Milton in lieu of "the fulsome Romance."[108]

In embracing elite British educational ideas, Philadelphia women also learned to covet reason and rationality as prize attributes in themselves and those around them. Hannah Moore explicitly conversed and corresponded with an acquaintance about reason. At one point sounding much like British advice authors, Moore's correspondent agreed with her view that "reason is the great priviledge and blessing of our Nature."[109] In the company of both her social inferiors and equals, Hannah Callender looked for the qualities of reason and rationality. She certainly noted the absence of those qualities while watching the mob activities of lower-rank people in 1758; to her mind, this behavior, which included "the annoyance and disturbance of their Neighbours [by] drinking and ranting," was certainly "not a kin to the rational mind."[110] While socializing one evening with a large group of wealthy men and women, however, Callender was reminded that it was not only the poor who could lack reason and rationality. As she mingled, talked, and listened that night, she realized that only in "the select few dwells the rational pleasure" of being able to converse in an intelligent and reasonable fashion.[111] On a different occasion, Callender was further dismayed by the "behavior of some of the Ladies," which seemed to epitomize the female frivolity and materiality criticized by British prescriptive authors. The behavior of these "ladies" put Callender in mind of "a Satire, cast on the Sex . . . wh[ich] says, the Generallity [of women] are pretty triffling gew gaw things, entirely wronged in their education."[112] Even wealthy people, she thus found, could be irrational and unreasonable and thus—by definition—not elite.

By educating themselves in a broad range of subjects and critically viewing the worlds around them, upper-rank women in Philadelphia learned to mark themselves in immaterial ways as elites and to recognize the success or failure of others' attempts to do the same. Perhaps little

[108] Hannah Callender Diary, 6th day 1 mo. [Jan. 6], 1759.

[109] William Brogdon to Hannah Moore, Oct. 9, 1744, box 1, Gulielma M. Howland Papers.

[110] Hannah Callender Diary, 2nd day 8 mo. [Aug. 2], 1758.

[111] Ibid., 1st day 5 mo. [May 1], 1759.

[112] Ibid., 4th day 7 mo. [July 4], 1758.

captured this development so well as a letter that one young Philadelphia woman wrote to another in 1770. Having encountered two girls and their mother one afternoon, Peggy Emlen penned a letter to her friend and cousin Sally Logan in which she critiqued the girls' behavior and upbringing. Everything about Emlen's evaluation of these other young women, including her choice of language and her observations, resonated with elite British prescription. First, Emlen argued that their behavior was flawed and, therefore, their upbringing was suspect, because it was steeped in "false tastes." The girls' mother, she scowled, cared only that they "were fashionable, [and] frequently went out." Here Emlen pointed to the distinction between true and false taste and cautioned against women's reliance on material luxury and activities as the only avenue to high social status. Again suggesting the messages of British advice tracts, Emlen highlighted the girls' lack of education as a critical problem. She was appalled that they never even "went to School to read or write," and she thought their lack of education was evident in their frivolous and vain behavior.[113]

In the middle decades of the eighteenth century, well before the rising tides of revolutionary change, many upper-rank Philadelphia women like Emlen adopted a substantive educational model promoted by British advice writers. Following this blueprint, women schooled themselves in a broad number of subjects and used the social, cultural, and natural worlds to enhance this knowledge. While engaging in such learning enabled them to emulate metropolitan standards of elite behavior, they found the effects of this substantive education to be transformative. Young women found they prized their opportunities to "read contemplate and lay up a store of knowledge" and to enjoy "solid and rational delights." Above all else, this style of education gave them, in the words of Peggy Emlen, the chance to embrace the "sweet recourse of reason."[114]

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[113] Margaret Emlen to Sarah Logan, July 9, 1770, box 1, folder 1, Marjorie P. M. Brown Collection.

[114] Margaret Emlen to Sarah Logan, Sept. 11, 1769, and July 9, 1770, box 1, folder 1, Marjorie P. M. Brown Collection.