

colorful anecdote: particularly memorable is the story about British lieutenant governor Henry Hamilton, who commanded the Detroit garrison, and the scalp-buying allegation that prompted American settlers to refer to him as “Hair-Buyer” Hamilton (96). Brown also offers a lucid explanation for the three-cornered battleground, filled with conflicted aims and disparate groups that characterized the Americans, Indians, and British in the Ohio Valley of the 1760s and 1770s. A marvelously detailed chapter on the siege of Boonesborough—and Boone’s notorious court martial for apparent disloyalty—stands as one of the book’s highlights.

Amid all the bloodshed and fighting, Boone sometimes gets lost in the details, as Brown occasionally closes a chapter devoted mainly to frontier clashes by simply reasserting—without truly developing—his theme that “Boone played a key role in the fighting in Kentucky” (103). Much of Brown’s story about the wide mix of settlers and conflicting goals on the frontier cries out for deeper treatment of class and ethnic conflict in the middle ground of frontier Kentucky, but the narrative rarely stops to examine such issues. In a largely carefully researched biography, a few missteps stand out: drawing on outdated notions of historical demography, Brown mistakenly suggests that Boone’s very youthful marriage and large family were, in fact, the norm among British colonists. The narrative occasionally lapses into odd, folksy language—“there were weddings aplenty,” he tells us, in Boone’s Yadkin Valley neighborhood (21). More troublesome is Brown’s tendency to see Boone as pivotal for nearly every critical theme in the trans-Appalachian West: “the entire way of life in Kentucky and Missouri” was undergoing fundamental change, and Boone, he asserts, was at the center of it. There’s more than a little overreach in some of these claims—Boone’s pivotal role in these movements is largely asserted rather than proven—but readers will still profit from this lively new take on Daniel Boone.

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Gentlewomen and Learned Ladies: Women and Elite Formation in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia. By SARAH FATHERLY. (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2008. 244 pp. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$47.50.)

In an article published in this very journal in 2004, Sarah Fatherly introduced us to the learned women of eighteenth-century Philadelphia. “‘The Sweet Recourse of Reason’: Elite Women’s Education in Colonial Philadelphia” identified a British model of schooling adopted by the city’s privileged families. Daughters in these families accumulated the cultural capital encoded in history, natural philosophy, literature, and the classics. They took lessons from British prescriptive literature, which circulated widely in colonial America. *The Female*

Spectator, the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, and the *Young Gentleman and Lady Instructed* advised them on the cultivation of taste, another form of cultural capital that distinguished them from the lower sorts. Rehearsing this newly acquired knowledge in letters, in journals, and in conversation, they sharpened their reasoning and rhetorical faculties, both of which were also markers of privilege. As an anonymous reviewer, I remember thinking that the larger project from which the article was drawn might well make a signal intervention in the scholarship on class formation in British America. *Gentlewomen and Learned Ladies* does exactly that.

Focusing on Philadelphia's leading merchant families, Fatherly highlights the degree to which these urban elites modeled themselves and their strategies for social distinction on London's gentry. Not only did they adorn themselves and their homes with luxury goods, but they also emulated the social mechanisms—including dancing assemblies, subscription concerts, and learned institutions—of their transatlantic counterparts. They added to their imitative practices a provincial version of British town and country leisure life. Most strikingly, Fatherly brings to the fore the critical role played by elite women in this process of class formation. With only a few exceptions, historians have argued that gender was the primary determinant in colonial women's experiences and identities. Fatherly shows us that class imperatives were at least as important for Philadelphia's women of means. And, as she argues, the city's ladies acted on those imperatives, crafting, performing, and capitalizing on the markers of elite status.

As prominent families sought to consolidate their status in the 1720s and 1730s, women led the way in defining the boundaries of their circle. Their strategies were two-fold—initiating dynastic marriages and consuming luxuries. Through these “alliances and adornments,” as Fatherly aptly labels them, women empowered themselves. Carefully orchestrated marriage patterns among selected families and households filled with Windsor chairs, mahogany tea chests, china and silver sets, and costly textiles testified to their success in marking social distinction. In deciding among suitors, women privileged mutual affection and companionability over economic considerations and, in acting on deeply felt sentiments, demonstrated that emotion's force, amply documented in Nicole Eustace's *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (2008), had a decisive impact on the most intimate of decisions.

Engagement with an expansive course of study, which required that they read widely in the arts and sciences and apply their knowledge to the social and natural worlds, proved still more empowering. Told by prescriptive writers that the “Fair Sex are as capable as men of the Liberal Sciences,” elite women took to their studies and emerged with an enhanced sense of confidence. Commanding reason and rationality, taste and refinement, they were ready to take the next step—participation in local, provincial, and imperial politics. The Seven Years' War height-

ened their political consciousness, and the Revolution moved them to action. “Daughters of Liberty,” as Hannah Griffitts hailed them, they answered her call to boycott British goods and turned instead to homespun production. The Revolution itself and the political divides within their own social rank threatened the entire project of elite consolidation. Like their male counterparts, women of means took positions that ranged across the spectrum from patriot to loyalist. However, as *Fatherly* shows, the rising power of the middling and lower sorts trumped sharply edged partisanship.

Acting together in the 1770s, elite women continued to pursue two markers of exclusivity—sociability and advanced education. In the next two decades, they successfully revived the social and cultural practices that had set them apart. *Fatherly*’s telling conclusion reminds us that as much as these women labored on behalf of elite status, they also “reaped the benefits of being gentlewomen and learned ladies in a society that was profoundly predicated on social inequality” (184).

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Prodigal Daughters: Susanna Rowson’s Early American Women. By MARION RUST. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 328 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95.)

Novelist, playwright, actress, poet, author of textbooks, and proprietress of a well-regarded female academy, Susannah Haswell Rowson was quite the public figure in postrevolutionary America. In this world that lauded public men but equated public women with prostitutes, she and other like-minded women carefully scripted their public personas to maintain their respectability. Many of them contributed to public life without directly challenging the fundamental tenets of a republican order that denied them most basic civil, political, and economic rights.

Rowson is known today mainly as the author of *Charlotte Temple* (1791), the hugely popular tale of an innocent young woman who was seduced and impregnated by a seemingly honorable man, only to be abandoned to die penniless, disgraced, and alone. In *Prodigal Daughters*, Marion Rust argues persuasively that Rowson’s most famous creation is not representative of her larger body of work and that Charlotte, the passive victim, was atypical among her female protagonists. Rust encourages readers “to attend to the activist dimensions of early American gender practice via a thorough investigation of Rowson’s multifaceted narrative and wide-ranging life experience” (23). She contends that “Rowson’s project was to qualify white middle-class women for the influence and tolerance accorded to those whose own corporeal profile—also white, but male, and with a