A Nation of Speechifiers: Making an American Public after the Revolution. By CAROLYN EASTMAN. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. 304 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. $37.50.)

Atlantic history, hemispheric history, global history: recent scholarly shifts in scale have shown that the Revolution, far from creating a distinctive national identity, instead marked a political transition in a society that remained defined by transcultural contacts, exchanges, and affinities. In the context of the ever-expanding geography of our discipline, Carolyn Eastman's account of the early republic is striking because it questions the nationalized mythology of the Revolutionary War from within. *A Nation of Speechifiers* draws entirely on evidence from the United States to demonstrate that a shared national identity did not emerge for decades after independence, much later than the nationalistic rhetoric of the era would suggest. Eastman argues that ordinary Americans "learned to think of themselves as members of a public" before they could inhabit a sense of national belonging (4). The contentious practices that produced such thinking—in the schools, in debating societies, in performance, and in printed matter of all kinds—comprise the center of her analysis, which considers the fractious nature of a society that, as Trish Loughran has suggested, lacked the communication networks to support national consciousness. Indeed, despite the somewhat Whiggish tone of the book's subtitle, Eastman's main goal "is less to argue that a public had been 'made' by the 1830s than to illustrate the impact of lay individuals in debating the nature of the American public—jockeying for position and authority in the public sphere" (6). The focus on debate makes the book a pleasure to read and allows Eastman to tell a compelling new national story.

Eastman's account depends on two arguments that underpin her point about national identity, one about media and another about gender and class. Learning to become a public involved the use of both print and oratory, two mediums Eastman argues were mutually constitutive. In the book's first part, she describes historical shifts in primary schooling to examine how elocutionary practices were communicated through printed manuals and conducted in public performances. She shows that before 1810 boys and girls were taught surprisingly similar practices that shaped their adult engagement with politics. The book's second part contains three case studies that suggest just how vigorously Americans debated the nature of their inchoate public sphere. Eastman discusses urban debating societies, where young men delivered and printed speeches about politics; trade unions of journeyman printers, where members applauded the importance of print in Fourth of July toasts; and newspaper reactions to the radical British orator Frances Wright, who toured the nation in late 1820s. Eastman brings a refreshing amount of attention to gender in her analysis, and she emphasizes the centrality of ordinary people. Her Americans are nonelites: schoolchildren,

Native Americans, working white men in cities, and rural women who performed their elocutionary prowess in speeches during the 1790s. Such individuals and countless others used print and oratory to formulate ideas about what it means to be a public before they thought of themselves as national subjects.

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Philadelphia Stories: America's Literature of Race and Freedom. By SAMUEL OTTER. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 408 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $29.95.)

The central theme of Samuel Otter's *Philadelphia Stories* is the idea that the one-time capital city of the United States was conceptualized from the outset as a social laboratory, the site of a large-scale social experiment. The idea of an experiment, which of course suffused much of the way early Americans thought about their new government and evolving social structure, drives an analysis that repeatedly emphasizes the self-consciousness that informed Philadelphians' willingness to try new approaches to old problems, or, in some cases, their appetite to tackle the new problems that had been created and were emerging out of the new circumstances of race and democracy in the early United States. Although literary history forms the central axis of Otter's analysis, he weaves together a diverse range of materials, including novels, social theory, politics, art and architecture, and social history to offer a fascinating account of the cultural, social, and intellectual history of Philadelphia from the American Revolution through the Civil War.

The book is divided into four substantial chapters, each of which is organized around a different strand in Philadelphia's history, but is also roughly chronological, albeit with significant overlaps in each section. The first section, "Fever," focuses on the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, the second, "Manners," begins in the 1790s but traces a narrative of "conduct and character" that concludes in the 1830s and 1840s. "Riot," the third chapter, is organized around the series of race-, religion-, and ethnic-motivated "disturbances" that shook the city between 1829 and 1844. Finally, in "Freedom" the book focuses on the debates around abolition and slavery that gained momentum in the city in the 1840s and 1850s. The crucial articulations of these themes are found, in Otter's study, in written and visual texts that range the generic gamut from political pamphlets to social theory, histories of the city, and, of course, novels. By tracing thematic continuities across texts from diverse genres and across several decades, Otter is able to find coherence in the cultural and literary life of the city where others have often insisted on an absence of such unifying or temporal continuities in the intellectual narrative of Philadelphia's history.