

## *Selling Gentility and Pretending Morality: Education and Newspaper Advertisements in Philadelphia, 1765–75*

ABSTRACT: In the decade before the American Revolution, advertisements for education commonly advanced appeals to gentility while simultaneously promising that instructors oversaw appropriate moral development of students. As the consumer revolution unfolded and greater numbers of colonists possessed goods formerly reserved primarily for elites, all kinds of educators (schoolmasters and -mistresses, language tutors, dancing and fencing masters) marketed manners, morality, and comportment—their own and that learned by their pupils—as means of distinguishing the truly genteel from pretenders. In so doing, they fashioned impressions of exclusivity while simultaneously selling their services to any who paid their fees. Advertisements concerning schoolmasters who duped others demonstrated the cultural fragility inherent in pretenses of gentility and morality.

WHEN SAMUEL BLAIR PROPOSED opening a boarding school near Philadelphia in 1771 to provide young men with “an advantageous private education,” he assured parents of prospective students that “those who are inclined to trust him with their children, may expect that all due care will be taken of their morals, their manners, and their persons, as well as their instruction” in reading, writing, arithmetic, Greek, and Latin at his “convenient house . . . where a considerable number may be comfortably and decently accommodated.”<sup>1</sup> Blair informed Philadelphia residents of his intentions by inserting a notice in the advertisement section of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Like others who placed advertisements concerning education during the decade prior to the American Revolution, he emphasized several ancillary goals, especially shaping the “morals” and “manners” of his charges. Tapping into a

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Blair, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 13, 1771.

more general public preoccupation with self-presentation and social status, schoolmasters and other colonists who placed these notices presented, as Lawrence Cremin puts it, “learning as a road to gentility.”<sup>2</sup> They resorted to concepts of gentility to sell their services in the midst of a consumer revolution that increasingly placed “genteel” goods in the hands of the middling sorts (and even, to a lesser extent, the poor) in addition to the gentry, though the former certainly did not purchase fashionable clothing, decorative housewares, and other markers of status to nearly the same extent as the latter. Still, colonists from all backgrounds had greater access to all kinds of consumer goods, frequently described as genteel in newspaper advertisements, by the second half of the eighteenth century.

Simply possessing items associated with refinement, however, did not make one genteel. True gentility, Richard Bushman argues, required a “transformation of personality” that “lifted properly reared persons to a higher plane.”<sup>3</sup> Many colonists believed that education facilitated this transformation. Accordingly, schoolmasters, tutors, and others who provided some sort of instruction incorporated promises of genteel learning, supplemented with additional attention to moral rectitude, into marketing appeals aimed at both elite and middle-class colonists. Families among the former, presumably, already ranked among the genteel, but the rising generation needed instruction to cultivate certain knowledge and skills to maintain their status. Rather than limit themselves to teaching the upper classes, however, schoolmasters and other instructors seized on the social mobility that characterized eighteenth-century America to encourage middling families to engage their services. Depending on the concerns of the reader, advertisements for educational opportunities simultaneously addressed status anxieties experienced by the elite and offered paths for social advancement to middle-class colonists.

This essay examines connections between education, gentility, and morality in advertisements placed in Philadelphia newspapers during a period of rapid population growth accompanied by expanding opportunities for students to obtain instruction from schoolmasters and other instructors between 1765 and 1775. It focuses on two major categories of newspaper notices.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607–1783* (New York, 1970), 367.

<sup>3</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1992), 25.

<sup>4</sup> I examined 140 notices appearing in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Journal* between 1765 and 1775. Schoolmasters attempting to attract new students placed ninety-three of these notices; another twenty notices advertised employment opportunities for schoolmasters. The

Instructors advertising their classes or lessons placed the first type. Both the men and women who ran boarding schools and Latin academies and the tutors who offered such special subjects as foreign languages, dancing, or fencing emphasized that they conducted their lessons in an atmosphere of politeness and morality. They also promoted their services by suggesting that refined individuals possessed the skills that they offered to teach. In so doing, they presented potential students and their parents with a strategy for asserting their own social status by acquiring skills and pursuing activities associated with metropolitan elites. The men and women who placed advertisements for education crafted their notices to be read in multiple ways, delivering different messages to potential students and their families from different backgrounds. They played on the anxieties of the gentry, who observed the lower classes increasingly dressing like them, owning similar housewares, and consuming foods and beverages previously considered luxury items as both groups participated in the consumer revolution. In response, schoolmasters and tutors implied that the refinement achieved through educational endeavors would continue to distinguish the elite from the upstarts. Yet they also encouraged patronage from those upstarts, offering tantalizing promises that their instruction would produce transformations in character and comportment that would help their students achieve true refinement, not just the material trappings of wealth. These advertisements had a dual purpose: they preserved an aura of hierarchy in educational pursuits by associating certain subjects and activities with high-class gentility, and they simultaneously opened up learning opportunities to prospective students who did not necessarily come from elite backgrounds. They sold—or attempted to sell—gentility to a broad reading public. Thus, they highlighted a tension between popularizing goods and services and the continued association of codes of gentility with elite social standing.

Although these notices suggest what might have occurred in classrooms in Philadelphia in the late colonial period (or, at least, what the advertisers wanted readers to imagine took place under their tutelage), their greater significance lies in the ideas about the purpose and value of education that schoolmasters and tutors advanced as they marketed their services. These advertisers believed that gentility, although a fluid and contested concept,

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remaining twenty-seven notices featured devious schoolmasters and runaways posing as schoolmasters. These notices come from a sample consisting of every third issue published by both the *Gazette* and the *Journal*. Some notices appeared in multiple issues; the figure of 140 does not include second and subsequent notices.

would effectively resonate with prospective students and their parents. These advertisements must be read on their own terms, acknowledging the intentions of the advertisers while recognizing both that they may not have delivered on all their promises and that readers may have been skeptical of the claims they advanced. With those caveats in mind, appeals to gentility constituted a central component of advertisements for various forms of education in Philadelphia's newspapers during the decade before the revolution. By that time, the prosperity created by the Seven Years War permitted greater numbers of Philadelphians to participate more actively in the consumer revolution. When the ability to acquire an array of imported goods was no longer confined as exclusively to the affluent, many turned to educational pursuits to distinguish themselves from their social inferiors who merely made purchases.

This essay also examines a second set of notices about schoolmasters accused of immoral or criminal conduct and runaway servants who falsely posed as schoolmasters. These advertisements underscore that the pursuit of gentility was a precarious undertaking in late provincial society and suggest that it could be hard to tell feigned gentility from the real thing. Thus, the items highlight the anxieties present in the milieu of mobility—geographic and, especially, social—in eighteenth-century America. Even the schoolmaster, who was meant to embody respectability and morality, could easily misguide patrons. The comportment that supposedly signaled gentility and learning could also, it seemed, be easily mimicked by men of obscure social origin. The advertisers in the first set of notices went to great lengths to demonstrate their own gentility or to offer assurances that their pupils would achieve true refinement in part because the scandalous actions of the schoolmasters and runaways in the second set of advertisements revealed the problematic nature of gentility itself. Individuals could strive for gentility as they nurtured their inner character and exhibited proper comportment, but achieving gentility also depended on the assessments of others—verdicts achieved through careful observation. Schoolmasters, tutors, and other instructors realized that they were under scrutiny by both prospective patrons and other colonists, even as they implied that their services would prepare their charges to withstand similar scrutiny. Notices warning against schoolmasters accused of improper conduct and runaway servants masquerading as educators appeared alongside advertisements placed by teachers who emphasized genuine gentility as one of the most substantial benefits of the services they sought to sell.

Several related factors contributed to Philadelphia's emergence as a center of educational opportunity, to the status consciousness of many of its residents, and to the appeal of codes of gentility. A commercial port city, Philadelphia experienced a high rate of population growth, expanding from eighteen thousand residents in 1765 to twenty-five thousand by 1775. Commerce and population growth, in turn, contributed to increased social mobility and heterogeneity. By the 1760s, according to Lawrence Cremin, Philadelphia had become a center of educational debate and innovation due to a "continuing influx of men and ideas from all over the Anglo-European world."<sup>5</sup> As the city's overseas connections intensified, Philadelphia residents developed an interest in presenting their city as a cultural rival of European cities. Status consciousness emerged especially sharply during the 1760s in the wake of the Seven Years' War. For several decades, commerce had allowed certain families to amass great wealth; the war accelerated this process. The conflict reshaped the social structure of port cities by presenting new possibilities for profit to merchants who provided military supplies and by demanding greater sacrifices from the poor in the form of higher taxes. Thomas Doerflinger cautions, however, against "confusing [increasing] stratification with rigidity and lack of mobility" and convincingly argues that Philadelphia's bourgeoisie had numerous opportunities for upward social and economic mobility, a prospect that provoked some concern among the upper classes.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1760s the consumer revolution had accelerated and expanded to include just about every segment of colonial society. Middling colonists purchased greater numbers of imported wares, but even some of the poor occasionally obtained tokens previously reserved for the upper crust. Advertisements for various forms of education appeared alongside even greater numbers of advertisements for consumer goods, often in the form of extensive lists of assorted merchandise that merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans described as "genteel," "fashionable," and available at "low prices." Low prices increasingly put supposedly genteel goods within the grasp of middle-class colonists, even if elites continued to engage in the most conspicuous consumption. As Richard Bushman suggests, new habits of

<sup>5</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, 378.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), 45. Doerflinger suggests that social mobility depended on "contacts, capital, or experience." I propose that education also acted as a means of advancement. See Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit*, 57.

consumption, social mobility, and aspiring cosmopolitanism among the city's population contributed to a near obsession with gentility.<sup>7</sup>

The gentry experienced other challenges in the 1760s and 1770s. Stuart Blumin notes that “artisans and other middling folk fought for and gained political recognition during the Revolutionary era.”<sup>8</sup> The erosion of deference politics began in the 1760s, as colonists across the social spectrum responded to perceived abuses by Parliament. Even as the rabble gained some degree of political power through their protests in the streets, the elites deployed gentility as a means of continuing to distinguish themselves from the inferior ranks. Some middle-class colonists, on the other hand, saw opportunities to enhance their overall position in colonial society by wedding aspirations to gentility with new modes of political participation. Amid the consumer revolution and political upheavals, educators believed that appeals to gentility offered a powerful marketing strategy to attract both students from elite families concerned with maintaining their status and at least some middling students with ambitions for social mobility.

The opportunities for conspicuous consumption in an increasingly well-integrated commercial empire played a major role in the deployment of gentility in Philadelphia; print culture and advertising, in particular, helped publicize the possibilities made available by an “empire of goods.”<sup>9</sup> As Julie Williams notes, “advertisements helped strengthen the image of the New World colonies as connected to Europe, as prospering, as offer-

<sup>7</sup> On population growth and the effects of the Seven Years' War, see Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 257–58, 310, 313. On social stratification, see Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit*, 20–36. On social mobility, see Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit*, 45–69. On gentility, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 61–62. See also Lynn Matluck Brooks's comments on an emerging American gentry that “sought to match European models of cultivation in behavior, dress, and style of living,” a trend reinforced among Philadelphia residents as many began to receive professional training in medicine or law abroad. Lynn Matluck Brooks, “Emblem of Gaiety, Love, and Legislation: Dance in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 115 (1991): 63.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760–1900* (New York, 1989), 62.

<sup>9</sup> T. H. Breen, “An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690–1776,” in “Re-Viewing the Eighteenth Century,” special issue, *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 467–99. Shortly after the revolution, Rosemarie Zagari indicates, printers targeted readers “who were consciously fashioning themselves into proper ladies and gentlemen.” Rosemarie Zagari, “The Rights of Man and Woman in Post-Revolutionary America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 55 (1998): 206. See also Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York, 2004); Breen, “‘Baubles of Britain’: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 119 (1988): 73–104; and Breen, “Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 50 (1993): 471–501.



ing all the accoutrements of civilization and ease.”<sup>10</sup> During the second half of the eighteenth century, Blumin indicates, “Philadelphia and other cities had acquired an affluent upper stratum that rather successfully emulated the opulent lifestyles of the European upper class.”<sup>11</sup> Ridding the city of its image as a rustic pretender required more than purchasing luxury goods and fashionable clothing or altering the appearance of streets and buildings by importing carriages and building mansions. In his examination of the emergence of the American middle class, Blumin devotes a lengthy section to careful examination of “the material lives of middling folk” in the last third of the eighteenth century in order to contrast their conditions with the privileged elite. He concludes that limited abundance existed in Philadelphia, “reflected most clearly in the cramped and modestly furnished homes of the middle stratum of the urban population—homes that resembled those of the poor more closely than those of the rich.”<sup>12</sup> Material circumstances, however, do not tell the entire story of class formation or of the attempts of the elite to ward off threats to their privileged positions.

According to their advertisements, schoolmasters and tutors recognized gentility as a powerful talisman for promoting their services both to the gentry who sought to protect their status and to the middling sort who wanted to join their ranks—or at least distinguish themselves from the poor. In that regard, schoolmasters who placed advertisements in the 1760s and 1770s offered a precursor to what Bushman has called the “vernacular gentility” of respectability among the middle class in the early nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> In their efforts to attract students, schoolmasters and other instructors anticipated a modified form of gentility that began to coalesce much more broadly a quarter century later. Similarly, J. M. Opal identifies a “democratization of gentility” that resulted from the curricula and competition among students of humble origins within academies established in the rural northern states from the 1780s through the 1820s.<sup>14</sup> Opal indicates that advanced learning in the early national period was often disruptive; it alienated children from parents as the

<sup>10</sup> Julie Hedgepeth Williams, *The Significance of the Printed Word in Early America: Colonists' Thoughts on the Role of the Press* (Westport, CT, 1999), 228.

<sup>11</sup> Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–58.

<sup>13</sup> Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 208–9.

<sup>14</sup> J. M. Opal, “Exciting Emulation: Academies and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1780s–1820s,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 456.

younger generation aspired to new stations and eschewed responsibilities within the household economy. Even if they anticipated such unfortunate outcomes, educators never gave voice to such concerns in advertisements intended to lure the middle classes to their academies in the 1760s and 1770s. From a marketing perspective, gentility offered only possibilities, not problems. Yet it is important to remember that these instructors did not target middling readers exclusively. Newspaper notices for educational opportunities indicated that achieving urban elegance required certain residents to modify their behavior, but, in efforts to garner as many students as possible, they stopped short of specifying which residents. They left it to their upper- and middle-class audiences to make their own determinations about how they saw gentility operating in their lives.

Tutors often recommended instruction in such genteel activities as dancing, fencing, or speaking French, but there was no definitive checklist of which or how many of these skills an individual must acquire to achieve gentility. Just as colonists acquired consumer goods that simultaneously exhibited personal taste and familiarity with current fashions, individuals also chose (as their finances permitted) to cultivate a variety of genteel skills and pastimes. Material goods, proper comportment, and the ability to dance, fence, or speak French complemented each other. Possessing material goods did not necessarily mean one had attained mastery of manners or other markers of gentility; colonists capable of demonstrating they had acquired several of these attributes diminished the possibility of observers suspecting their outward appearance of refinement was possibly artificial rather than an authentic and intrinsic quality. Members of the gentry were expected to exhibit as many of these genteel skills as possible, but newspaper advertisements from this period suggest that instructors left it to students of middling means to choose which they wished to pursue.

Philadelphia residents enjoyed greater access to newspapers and their advertisements than did most colonists. Two English-language newspapers ran continuously in Philadelphia during the decade before the revolution. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Journal* each offered their readers a weekly selection of editorial letters, poetry, and items extracted from other newspapers as well as space for commercial advertisements and other notices placed by the public. The *Gazette* and the *Journal* not only served the city of Philadelphia and surrounding villages but also the remainder of Pennsylvania and the nearby colonies of Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland. Accordingly, colonists from throughout the



mid-Atlantic submitted notices to newspapers published in Philadelphia, touching on everything from runaway servants and slaves to business and educational opportunities.<sup>15</sup>

Advertisers who placed notices in newspapers played an active role in the process of cultural transmission, a role sometimes overlooked by historians who in their examinations of colonial newspapers place most of their emphasis on the goals and authority of printers. In contrast to other newspaper items (letters, editorials, extracts from other newspapers) selected by the printer for inclusion, advertisements appeared as the result of a business transaction between printer and advertiser. Since printers exercised little editorial prerogative in excluding proffered notices or shaping their content, advertisements generally are a good index of the interest and outlooks of a broad social constituency in Philadelphia and its hinterland. Moreover, Philadelphia newspapers printed between 1765 and 1775 regularly devoted at least one-quarter of their space to advertisements and frequently distributed half-sheet supplements devoted almost entirely to notices of all kinds, bringing the proportion of advertising between half and two-thirds of the issue on such occasions. Thus, editors ceded a fair amount of space to people with viewpoints potentially different from their own. Some historians have dismissed these advertisements, regarding them as “irrelevant commercial notices” full of details pertinent only to a few or as items that list “information in a straightforward manner, and nothing more.”<sup>16</sup> I hold, however, that the advertisers who placed them implicitly incorporated their understanding of culture and society into the texts of these notices. The notices *were* full of miscellaneous details, such as which shop had just received a new shipment of millinery goods from London or when and where an estate auction would occur, but they also featured a subtext of status values. By reading between the lines, subscribers became aware of the status distinctions implicit in many notices. From

<sup>15</sup> Four other English-language newspapers ran in Philadelphia during a portion of the period, most of them starting publication in the three years before the revolution. According to Richard Brown's tally, only eighteen weekly and biweekly newspapers appeared in the colonies (all in port towns) in 1760. Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1770–1865* (New York, 1989), 111.

<sup>16</sup> For “irrelevant commercial notices,” see Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*, 128. For “information in a straightforward manner,” see Williams, *Significance of the Printed Word*, 200. For an extended consideration of the role of notices in the context of colonial newspapers and readership patterns, see chapter 10, “The Printed Word as Advertisement,” in Williams, *Significance of the Printed Word*. For a balanced depiction of the agency of both printers and readers, see Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665–1740* (New York, 1994), 249–50.

this perspective, advertisements played an important role in circulating—and challenging—conceptual frameworks of social hierarchy and mobility.

Due to the city's size and diversity, Philadelphia residents enjoyed a relatively large selection of educational opportunities during the decades prior to the revolution. Formal schooling became available to greater numbers of students in the latter half of the century. The number of teachers working in Philadelphia nearly quadrupled, with an average of at least twenty-two offering their services each year between 1765 and 1775.<sup>17</sup> In the ensuing competition for students, several teachers established reputations that allowed them to cultivate a substantial clientele that filled their classrooms for more than a decade. Others, less fortunate, closed their doors and pursued other occupations after only a season or two of teaching, their students readily absorbed by other schools.

Schoolmasters hoping to attract students from the upper echelons of society to their "Latin" schools modeled colonial education after classical curricula in European schools. Children from more humble backgrounds learned to read and write from their parents or attended small "English" schools that provided instruction in basic skills. Although a large portion of the colonial population received some instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, fewer colonists attended schools where they learned history, geography, natural philosophy, or the classics. Male scholars outnumbered female students, in part because Latin schools did not accept girls and young women. Some instructors, however, did open boarding schools for girls in Philadelphia shortly before the revolution. In addition to attending various types of schools, students received private instruction from tutors who taught pupils at home. Despite these differences in curriculum and clientele, schoolmasters running every type of school attempted to fill their classrooms by placing advertisements in Philadelphia's newspapers.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> On the increase in the number of teachers, see Cremin, *American Education*, 538–39. This represents a fairly reliable minimum number of teachers in Philadelphia. Others may not have appeared in advertisements and other records.

<sup>18</sup> On using European schools as a model, see Malcolm S. Knowles, *A History of the Adult Education Movement in the United States* (Huntington, NY, 1977), 7. On including the classics in the curriculum, see Dennis Barone, "Hostility and Rapprochement: Formal Rhetoric in Philadelphia before 1775," *Pennsylvania History* 56 (1989): 15–32; Robert Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition: The Classical Curriculum in Eighteenth-Century New England," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 18 (1961): 54–67; and Meyer Reinhold, "Opponents of Classical Learning in America during the Revolutionary Period," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 112 (1968): 221–34. On English schools, see David D. Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600–1850," in *Printing and Society in Early America*, ed. William L. Joyce et al. (Worcester, MA, 1983), 18. On educational opportunities for women in the mid-Atlantic, see Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750–*

*Selling Education: Social Status through Gentility*

This section singles out for special attention three features of notices placed by instructors announcing new schools, classes, and private tutoring services: the explicit association between morality and gentility as a central feature of both schoolmasters and classroom education, the emphasis on the spatial segregation and elegance of the classroom setting, and the close association of gentility with certain ancillary skills, especially dancing and foreign languages. These features all reveal how advertising encouraged an association between instruction and elite gentility: prospective students were extended an open invitation to acquire gentility for a fee. As with any marketing endeavors, the claims made in the advertisements reflect ideas that the advertisers expected would resonate with potential customers. They do not necessarily reveal the realities of what occurred in any particular classroom, nor how readers interpreted or reacted to the appeals advanced in the advertisements. Still, the emphasis on gentility as a selling point suggests a broader cultural preoccupation with refinement.

Schoolmasters and tutors describing classes and academies typically stressed education as an opportunity to inculcate morality as well as refinement, closely associating moral education with the cultivation of manners and gentility. The emphasis on moral training was reinforced by Lockean educational theory, which posited that since a child's mind was formed by experience, it was imperative, as Jay Fliegelman writes, to "properly" shape that mind before it became "corrupted by exposure to the wrong set of influences and impressions."<sup>19</sup> Samuel Blair, who promised to teach children the basics of reading, writing, Latin, and Greek, also assured parents "that all due care will be taken of their morals, their manners, and their persons."<sup>20</sup> Mr. A. Grinshaw, who said that he "genteelly boarded and diligently instructed" young gentlemen at his academy in Leeds, likewise assured parents that he paid "Due regard" to his "young Gentlemen's . . . morals and behavior."<sup>21</sup> Female instructors also yoked together morality and gen-

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1850 (New Haven, CT, 1986), 170; and Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY, 2000), 46–50. For educational opportunities available to black residents of Philadelphia, see Nancy Slocum Hornick, "Anthony Benezet and the Africans' School: Toward a Theory of Full Equality," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 99 (1975): 399–421.

<sup>19</sup> Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority* (New York, 1984), 15.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Blair, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 13, 1771.

<sup>21</sup> A. Grinshaw, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 25, 1770.

tility. In her notice advertising instruction for young children, Sarah Hay promised to “implant the principle of religion and virtue in the minds of the children” and assured that her instruction would yield a “proper manner of speaking and genteel behavior.”<sup>22</sup> None of these advertisers elaborated on how they would achieve those ends; instead, they asked parents to trust that such lessons would indeed be incorporated into their curricula. They did not specify the extent of this instruction, but they did seek to make a favorable impression by acknowledging that moral instruction should be a part of genteel learning.

Schoolmasters and those advertising vacant positions for schoolmasters also emphasized instructors’ characters, stressing that their instruction and interaction with students would, or should, reflect their own morality. This, too, was in accord with a Lockean pedagogy in which learning occurred in part through the study of exemplars, starting with the tutor. Instructors advertising their boarding schools, as well as those seeking employment as schoolmasters, touted their own reputations for moral integrity along with their competence in the relevant subject matter. One hopeful young man “of good character” informed prospective employers that he “may be depended upon for his honesty and sobriety.”<sup>23</sup> The public certainly expected as much from individuals entrusted with educating children. In February 1766, Joseph Garner and John Todd offered “Unexceptionable Recommendations, respecting Morals,” for another schoolmaster, who intended “to open a School in the Country.”<sup>24</sup> Ten of the fourteen notices announcing employment opportunities for schoolmasters explicitly included “moral behavior and unexceptionable character” among the applicants’ necessary qualifications.<sup>25</sup> In short, advertisers promised that

<sup>22</sup> Sarah Hay, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, June 16, 1768. When Mrs. Roger proposed to open a boarding school “for the Education of young Ladies” in Philadelphia in 1773, she wrote that “she flatters herself, that the Attention she shall pay to the Health, Morals and Behaviour of the young Ladies committed to her Care, will entitle her to the Favour of the Public.” Mrs. Roger, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1773. See also Matthew Maguire, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 17, 1769; Mathew Maguire, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 4, 1770; Honore L’Angier, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, June 21, 1770; and Thomas Powell, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 5, 1772.

<sup>23</sup> “WANTS A PLACE,” advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 18, 1767. See also “WANTS EMPLOY,” advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 6, 1770; and “A Young Man,” advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, July 20, 1774.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Garner and John Todd, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 27, 1766.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 21, 1766. See also “Lower Ferry on Sasquehanna,” advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 3, 1770; “Salary of ONE HUNDRED,” advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 4, 1772; James Hunt, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Mar. 17, 1773; and John Ward, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1773.

students would learn the codes of gentility and morality from instructors who were genteel and moral themselves.

Tutors also stressed their own respectability and social status, often by listing other occupational and social affiliations. Francis Daymon opened two notices by introducing himself not only as “Master of the French and Latin Languages,” but also as “Librarian to the Library Company of Philadelphia.”<sup>26</sup> This granted him additional authority as both a scholar and a supporter of the genteel Library Company. Paul Fooks followed a similar path when he reported that he had “been appointed Professor of the French and Spanish Languages in the College of this City.”<sup>27</sup> He further underscored his reputation by indicating in three notices that he served as a notary.<sup>28</sup> Such affiliations portrayed tutors as appropriate role models and instructors by placing them in the context of polite society and attempted to eliminate questions or doubts about their backgrounds.

Many instructors also noted that the gentlemen and ladies of Philadelphia endorsed and sponsored their activities. William Linn, for instance, proclaimed that his plans for teaching the classics and other subjects at his boarding school had already received the approval of a “few Gentlemen in this city, who have fallen upon this plan.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Mr. Pike, a dancing instructor, stated that he opened his school “agreeable to an Invitation from several respectable Families in this City.” Recently arrived from South Carolina, where he had been “Ten Years a Teacher in Charlestown,” Pike assured Philadelphia residents unfamiliar with his reputation that many “respectable Gentlemen” visiting Philadelphia from the southern colony could vouch for him.<sup>30</sup> In July 1774, dancing master Peter Sodi announced that his “Intention was to open a School next September, but is obliged, at the Desire of a Number of Gentlemen and Ladies, to open it immediately.”<sup>31</sup> By establishing the enthusiasm of respected community members, instructors implied that their acknowledged gentility and social connections could, in turn, enhance the status of their students.

Many instructors, especially those providing learning experiences traditionally associated with the elite, positioned their potential students within

<sup>26</sup> Francis Daymon, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, June 15 and Nov. 2, 1774.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Fooks, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 3, 1766.

<sup>28</sup> Fooks, advertisements, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 16, 1768, and *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 8, 1767, and Aug. 18, 1768.

<sup>29</sup> William Linn, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 19, 1773.

<sup>30</sup> Mr. Pike, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 7, 1774.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Sodi, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 6, 1774. See also John Baptist Tioli, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Feb. 6, 1766; and Lucy Brown and Ann Ball, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1771.

genteel circles. Thirty-two of the thirty-eight notices for language or dancing instruction addressed would-be students as “ladies” and “gentlemen.” Nearly half of the advertisements for boarding schools and Latin academies addressed either prospective students or their parents in these terms, including Matthew Maguire’s solicitation of “Gentlemen or Ladies, who shall be pleased to intrust their Children to his Care.”<sup>32</sup> In contrast, schoolmasters overseeing English schools with less advanced and less refined curricula nearly always blandly announced their classes without addressing readers directly, using neither the polite “ladies” and “gentlemen” nor the plain “pupils” and “parents” found in some advertisements for academies.<sup>33</sup> One typical advertisement simply stated “ON Monday . . . will be opened an EVENING SCHOOL, where will be taught Writing and Arithmetic, by LAZARUS PINE.”<sup>34</sup> The differing terms of address suggested that a student’s choice of subjects and learning environment determined his or her entitlement to respect and deference. Advertisers like Maguire left it to readers to decide if they ranked—or aspired to rank—among the “Gentlemen or Ladies” of Philadelphia.

In port cities like Philadelphia, B. Edward McClellan argues, genteel families “feared outside influences and tried to isolate” their children.<sup>35</sup> Many instructors attempted to fend off fears about the dangers of contamination by plebian culture by emphasizing that their classrooms pro-

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Maguire, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 27, 1769. The remaining instructors who ran boarding schools and Latin academies did not address their potential patrons as “ladies” and “gentlemen” but instead used language similar to advertisements for English schools, often placing shorter notices that succinctly described the curriculum. See Richard Harrison, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 14, 1765. Other instructors who did not explicitly refer to their patrons as “ladies” and “gentlemen” used other strategies to assert their gentility, such as lengthy elaboration of the curriculum and learning environment. See J. Witherson, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Mar. 16, 1769.

<sup>33</sup> I located only two instances, both attributable to the same teacher, of a schoolmaster promoting his English school to “Young Ladies” and one notice from a “*Writing Master*” who proposed “to attend YOUNG GENTLEMEN or LADIES.” See John Reid, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, June 20, 1765; Joseph Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 6, 1766; and Christ-Church School-House, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 20, 1766. For examples of schoolmasters addressing “pupils” or “parents,” see Joseph Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 21, 1766; Moles Patterson, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 19, 1767; Thomas Powell, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 5, 1772; and Alexander Power and William Power, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 30, 1772.

<sup>34</sup> Lazarus Pine, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1770.

<sup>35</sup> B. Edward McClellan, *Moral Education in America: Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1999), 7. Similarly, Irish instructors (usually teaching Irish students) boarded their students “to better supervise and protect them from the temptations of city life.” Elizabeth Nybakken, “In the Irish Tradition: Pre-Revolutionary Academies in America,” special issue, *History of Education Quarterly* 37 (1997): 175.



moted a closed and controlled learning environment.<sup>36</sup> William Linn, for instance, presented his boarding school for “Twelve young Gentlemen” as “a medium betwixt domestic and public education, the former affording too little stimulation, the latter dangerous to the morals of youth.”<sup>37</sup> Linn promoted his “PRIVATE ACADEMY” as a center of study that provided insulation from the moral disorder associated with the diverse social backgrounds of students enrolled in English schools. In addition, he suggested that his academy could provide students with opportunities superior to those enjoyed by the elite who received their education exclusively from tutors in their own homes. Rather than suffering from “too little stimulation,” he claimed, his students participated in an active academic environment that prompted them to enhance their learning through both competition and social interaction with other young men of a similar age and social position. Linn’s advertisement implied that his pupils, when properly educated, would be able to interact safely with friends, acquaintances, and strangers in public venues.

Like Linn, other schoolmasters of boarding schools and private academies emphasized that their schools would sequester children from the vices of the city. Joseph Garner stressed that his academy had “a large Yard, fit for the Relaxation of Youth after School Hours, well inclosed, and probably more agreeable . . . than the Liberty of the Streets, where Vice is only too often so predominant, as to render the Care of the Parent or Guardian, and Vigilance of the Teacher, both abortive.”<sup>38</sup> Garner similarly acknowledged that neither parents nor tutors could adequately supervise children and youth throughout the entire day; he proposed that his “well inclosed” academy provided protection for his pupils from the attitudes and behaviors of the lower castes they would encounter on the street. Garner implied too that his academy could better preserve the morality and gentility of his students than a common day school that forced students to navigate the streets between school and home on a regular basis. Ultimately, parents had to make that determination for themselves, but Garner crafted his advertisement to guide readers toward just such a conclusion.

<sup>36</sup> As opportunities for formal schooling expanded throughout the eighteenth century, some responsibility for maintaining social order shifted from the household to the classroom. Cremin, *American Education*, 485, 519, 537.

<sup>37</sup> William Linn, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 19, 1773.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Sept. 11, 1766. Garner placed this notice on at least three occasions. See also Garner, advertisements, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 21 and Sept. 4, 1766.

Similarly, Mary McCallister emphasized the benefits, especially protection from disorder, of attending a boarding school rather than an English school easily infiltrated by students of low social status. In May 1767, she informed the residents of Philadelphia that she intended to open a boarding school “for the education of young ladies,” as none existed in the city at that time. Offering her students a complete education in one location eliminated “the disadvantage and fatigue of transversing the streets to different schools, whereby their attention to learning must be greatly interrupted and hindered.”<sup>39</sup> Her students could, therefore, more easily attain “the more polite part of education.”<sup>40</sup> Only in a later announcement did McCallister enumerate the courses available at her school. She placed far more importance on the cultural advantages associated with attending a boarding school, an appeal that she likely hoped would resonate with both the elite and middle-class students who aspired to social mobility.

Despite many notices’ claims to offer a genteel education in serene settings, it is certain that the realities of the classroom were sometimes considerably different than advertised, as harried teachers sought to make their living in a competitive environment. Some instructors resorted to a strategy of issuing tickets to their lessons in order to restrict the number and regulate the social heterogeneity of their students. For example, in addition to his boarding academy, in the evenings Joseph Garner and his wife ran an ordinary English school with a practical curriculum that attracted students from various social backgrounds. Increased accessibility apparently led to chaos in the classroom. “Recently,” he stated, “Numbers of genteel Persons either can[n]ot gain Admittance, from the Throng of Children, or, if admitted, are so incommoded, as to be under a Necessity of quitting the School.”<sup>41</sup> In yet another notice, Garner was forced to state, “No Persons whatsoever will be admitted but Scholars, except Parents or Guardians.”<sup>42</sup> This situation prompted Garner to inform the public that “Tickets shall be delivered . . . to Persons of Credit” in order to gain entrance to his schoolhouse.<sup>43</sup> The schoolmaster intended for the ticket system to eliminate the “Inconvenience” of this disruptive “Throng,” the better to

<sup>39</sup> Mary McCallister, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 7, 1767.

<sup>40</sup> McCallister placed a second notice to respond to questions and requests for additional information that arose from her first advertisement. McCallister, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 4, 1767.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 6, 1766.

<sup>42</sup> Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 14, 1765.

<sup>43</sup> Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 6, 1766.

appeal to “genteel Persons” whose patronage he was in danger of losing. More so than most other educators who placed advertisements, Garner indicated that he wished to actively exclude some potential students; he did not elaborate on what qualified those who received admission tickets to their status as “Persons of Credit,” but in distinguishing them from the “Throng” he extended some sort of validation to those invited to continue under his tutelage. After all, he asserted, he wanted to make sure that “genteel Persons . . . gain Admittance” to his school. Like other schoolmasters who made appeals to gentility in their advertisements, Garner left room for readers from a variety of backgrounds to decide that his notice was aimed at them. Students from elite families who subsequently received tickets would consider admission an entitlement due to their status, while students from middling families graced with tickets could interpret the gesture as acknowledgement that they exhibited some qualities or characteristics that the schoolmaster recognized as belonging to the ranks of the genteel. Either way, Garner flattered his pupils and their families even as his new policies allowed him to more closely monitor his students and to exclude any who did not conform to the polite expectations he wished to enforce. That this problem arose at all, though, indicated the fragility of inclusive, broad-based attempts to link education and gentility.

To strengthen their claims to offer a genteel education, many schoolmasters also emphasized the luxury and refinement of the classrooms and living spaces at their schools. In addition to sequestering his students away from the vices of the street, Joseph Garner claimed that his “commodious House” was “very extensive, the Rooms very elegant, and so well adapted to the Design of carrying polite Literature into Execution, as to admit of many Boarders, without interrupting each other in their private Studies.”<sup>44</sup> William Linn’s boarding scholars resided in the house of Elizabeth Montgomery, which Linn described as having “a very convenient and pleasant situation for the purpose, free from the noise of the city.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, when Thomas Powell advertised his boarding school he specifically described his house as “considerably enlarged, for the Accommodation of Boarders; he has several commodious Apartments adjoining his House, well adapted to instruct Youth in.”<sup>46</sup> While the schoolmasters may have exaggerated these conditions in their advertisements, they likely conjured

<sup>44</sup> Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 11, 1766.

<sup>45</sup> William Linn, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 19, 1771.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Powell, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 5, 1772.

images of elegant classrooms and spacious living quarters to remind prospective students and their parents of urban mansions and the refinement with which they were associated.

In addition to promising to sequester their students from the disorder of the streets and common schools, instructors alleged that they carefully supervised classroom interaction, especially by regulating contact between students of the opposite sex. Not surprisingly, many enrolled only students of their own sex. Of the seventy-six notices that indicated the sex of prospective students, thirty-three followed this pattern, including all eleven notices placed by female instructors. When both sexes did congregate in the same classroom, the notices usually assured the public that “the strictest Decorum among the Youth of both Sexes” was “duly attended to.”<sup>47</sup> When male teachers elected to offer their services to both male and female students, they more often imposed sexual segregation by scheduling separate classes for male and female students. Matthew Maguire adopted this strategy, stating that through experience he “discovered sundry inconveniences to result from teaching Youth of *both* Sexes” and thus planned to enroll “YOUNG LADIES only” in the daytime lessons at his English school. He invited young men to attend evening classes at the same location.<sup>48</sup> Most instructors who boarded students accepted only students of their own sex, even if they allowed students of both sexes to attend daytime lessons. In June 1774, for example, Francis Daymon advertised that he continued “to teach Ladies and Gentlemen the French language” but would only “take young gentlemen to board.”<sup>49</sup> By taking these precautions, instructors suggested that their schools not only protected students from the external vices of the street but from improprieties that might arise internally. In their advertisements, schoolmasters pledged that they

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Garner, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 14, 1765. Twelve notices indicated that instructors taught male and female students in the same classroom. Of the remaining thirty-one notices, five were placed by male instructors who offered classes for girls only and twenty-six by male instructors who taught students of both sexes but at different times.

<sup>48</sup> Matthew Maguire, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 4, 1770. Peter Sodi did the same, informing the “Ladies and Gentlemen of this City” that he was about to open a dancing school “where he will attend . . . in the Mornings upon young Gentlemen, and in the Afternoons upon young Ladies.” Sodi, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 6, 1774. For examples of others using this strategy, see Paul Fooks, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 3, 1766; John Baptist Tioli, advertisements, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Sept. 7, 1769, and Nov. 15, 1770; and Martin Foy, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Sept. 12, 1771.

<sup>49</sup> Francis Daymon, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, June 15, 1774. Matthew Maguire was among the rare exceptions. When he attempted to open a boarding school for children of both sexes, he assured parents that the “young Gentlemen and Ladies are accommodated with separate apartments.” Maguire, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 27, 1769.

provided careful oversight and direction for students to learn their lessons in an environment of social and sexual order, though parents likely suspected that disorder sometimes reigned when working with cohorts of enthusiastic children or willful youths.

Dance and foreign language instructors had the additional option of providing classes in the students' homes. Many ran small academies and went to great lengths to stress the genteel features and comportment experienced in their classrooms, but, acknowledging that their potential customers might prefer home instruction, they almost always offered private lessons. Thus, Monsieur Duvernay informed prospective French students that "If any Gentlemen or Ladies, have a mind to be taught privately, he will wait upon them at any time at their respective dwelling places."<sup>50</sup> Mr. Pike, a dancing master, set aside three days each week so that he too could "attend on Ladies or Gentlemen . . . at their own houses."<sup>51</sup> Teaching students in their own homes preempted the possibility of inappropriate interaction between students of the opposite sex, an especially salient matter for dance instruction, which required physical contact with partners, and even for foreign language instruction that involved conversation that might be considered unseemly or awkward in mixed-sex settings. An instructor visiting the student's home also granted additional cachet and prestige to the lessons.

Ancillary aspects of education, including instruction in dancing, music, fencing, and foreign languages, had a close association with metropolitan refinement.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, these subjects suffered from the taint of immorality, especially in this provincial city so recently dominated by Quakers suspicious of cosmopolitan entertainments. In this context, many notices sought to convince the public of the social advantages of dancing and French lessons and to free them from the possible suggestion of corruption and decadence.<sup>53</sup> Such strategies worked to the benefit of both upper- and middle-class students who hired language tutors and dancing masters.

<sup>50</sup> Monsieur Duvernay, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, July 7, 1773.

<sup>51</sup> Mr. Pike, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1774.

<sup>52</sup> According to Lawrence Cremin, colonists followed many of Locke's suggestions for structuring education. In addition to academic knowledge derived from books, he encouraged accomplishments in the performing arts (including dancing, music, and fencing) and the manual arts (such as gardening, joinery, metalwork, and bookkeeping). Except for classes on bookkeeping, newspaper advertisements suggest that colonists interested in social status eagerly embraced the former category while virtually ignoring the latter. Cremin, *American Education*, 362.

<sup>53</sup> Many dancing masters taught students of both sexes to dance but also provided fencing lessons for male students. Adding the short sword to the male curriculum allowed them to differentiate between male and female students, reducing the risk of men becoming effeminately genteel by engaging in dancing and language lessons that merely reflected the specialized skills taught to their sisters.

Many dance and language instructors explicitly associated their classes with gentility by using phrases such as “polite and useful” and “that genteel part of polite education” in their advertisements.<sup>54</sup> One language instructor, Paul Fooks, described French and Spanish as “polite and useful,” elaborating that he could assist students to learn to read, write, and speak these languages “with Propriety” and “with the utmost Purity and Elegance.”<sup>55</sup> Some punched home the gentility theme by emphasizing the difficulty and social value of their teaching. A French dancing instructor named Viart, for instance, cautioned, “It is not every one, who pretends to teach this delicate art, who will take pains to instruct their pupils, in those rules of decorum and politeness, which are so absolutely necessary to be inculcated into them, before they can step abroad, into the world with elegance and ease.”<sup>56</sup> As Lynn Matluck Brooks indicates, dancing provided opportunities to “display proper breeding, manners, and bearing.”<sup>57</sup> Dancing academies, according to C. Dallett Hemphill, became “schools of good manners in their own right,” rivaling attendance at boarding schools as markers of social status.<sup>58</sup>

Dancing masters and foreign language tutors further attempted to publicize the advantages of their classes by emphasizing their own ties

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Fencing matches also provided a means for young men to exhibit and defend a genteel code of honor. In November 1769, Michael Bontamps Fartier proposed “to open his Fencing Room, where he will be glad that all the connoisseurs in that science, who may have leisure and inclination, would be pleased to honour him with their presence.” He then extended a specific invitation to Martin Foy, challenging the rival fencing instructor to a friendly wager and duel. Concerns with reputation and status prompted him to make the challenge in response to “aspersions, propagated by Mr. Foy’s partisans, to the great disadvantage of Mr. Bontamps and family.” Participating in a duel allowed the two fencing instructors to work through masculine aggressions through simulated violence. Such rituals gave the two participants, as well as any of their pupils who observed the match, a common masculine identity, an identity that focused on genteel honor and symbolic protection of their personal and family reputations. Michael Bontamps Fartier, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Nov. 2, 1769.

<sup>54</sup> For “polite and useful,” see Francis Daymon, advertisements, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Apr. 7 and Nov. 24, 1773. For “that genteel part of polite education,” see Alexander Russell, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 25, 1773; Alexander Russell, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Sept. 8, 1773; and Mr. Francis, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Dec. 1, 1773. In total, sixteen of thirty-eight notices for dancing or language instruction explicitly described such activities as genteel pursuits.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Fooks, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 3, 1766. Fooks made similar claims in two later advertisements. See Fooks, advertisements, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 8, 1767, and June 16, 1768.

<sup>56</sup> Viart, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 15, 1773. See also Paul Fooks, advertisements, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 3, 1766, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 8, 1767, and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 16, 1768.

<sup>57</sup> Brooks, “Emblem of Gaiety,” 65–66. For a lengthy description of dancing and genteel culture in Philadelphia during the eighteenth century, see Brooks, “Emblem of Gaiety.”

<sup>58</sup> C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620–1860* (New York, 1999), 91.



to Europe. French tutor Charles Raboteau, for instance, guaranteed satisfaction by emphasizing that his qualifications derived from European connections: “he is descended of French Parents, was regularly educated in London, and has travelled and resided some Years in France.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Martin Foy introduced himself to Philadelphia as a “Dancing-Master, Just arrived from EUROPE; HAVING acquired from the most eminent professors the true movements of a Minuet, with proper graces and most exact time, in the newest and politest taste,” as well as other dances “in the genteelest manner.”<sup>60</sup> Female instructors also considered a European background an asset. Thus, schoolmistresses Lucy Brown and Ann Ball stressed that they could successfully teach French, as they were “lately arrived from Paris, having acquired, by 14 years study, the French language in the politest taste.”<sup>61</sup> Many Philadelphians desired to portray their city as the cultural equivalent and cosmopolitan rival of European cities. In this context, some advertisers sought to emphasize that receiving dancing and foreign language instruction from masters trained in Europe was superior to, and more stylish than, those classes offered by tutors educated in the colonies.

Even as dance and language instructors emphasized the prestige conferred by the skills they taught, their notices also made appeals to a fairly broad audience as they attempted to popularize their subject by emphasizing its ease of acquisition when properly taught. This is certainly true of a notice placed by Francis Daymon in November 1774, when he informed readers of the *Pennsylvania Journal* that

The French Language by its beauty and facility to learn has become universal in all Europe, and is now so prevalent in England that it is looked on as a very essential and necessary piece of education; besides, it is so much in vogue among the modern writers, that it is impossible to read a News-Paper, magazine, or even a Novel with pleasure and profit, without a proper knowledge of it. The *American Youths* have long thought the study of it difficult, and not to be attained without an HERCULEAN labour,

<sup>59</sup> Charles Raboteau, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 5, 1765.

<sup>60</sup> Martin Foy, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 14, 1767. Even the simplest notices indicated some sort of connection to Europe. One sparse notice read in its entirety “GENTLEMEN and LADIES may be taught the French Language at their own Houses, by a Person educated in France. Inquire for Mr. Clarke at Mrs. Henderson’s in Front-street, two doors below Walnut-street.” Mr. Clark, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Nov. 19, 1767. See also Paul Fooks, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 3, 1766; and Monsieur Duvernay, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, July 7, 1773.

<sup>61</sup> Lucy Brown and Ann Ball, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1771.

great fatigue, and immense expence: but this ill grounded notion seems to have proceeded from the uncouth and disadvantageous manner in which some ignorant and unskilful masters have communicated their instructions. . . . As for the pronunciation in particular, to teach it by grammatical rules is a practice altogether absurd and ridiculous; besides, all the grammars are defective in this article; and to support my opinion, I shall only say, "*Pronunciato enim nec scribitur, nec pingitur, nec eam hauriri sas est nisi viva voce.*"<sup>62</sup>

This notice demonstrates the tension between elite associations and broad appeal. Daymon's reference to magazines and novels assumed that prospective students could read at a relatively sophisticated level and had sufficient leisure to enjoy reading for pleasure as well as funds to purchase books or connections to borrow and share them. Alternately, it might have invoked feelings of inferiority and self-consciousness among prospective students who did not already easily read newspapers, magazines, and novels "with pleasure and profit," thus implicitly encouraging them to remedy that situation by enrolling in his courses as quickly as possible. Furthermore, by including a Latin quotation, Daymon framed his advertisement to appeal to those valuing a classical education. On the other hand, he argued that instruction need not entail "immense expence," indicating that non-elite students could afford his lessons. And, as he competed with others to catch his readers' attention, he presented himself as a superior instructor whose expertise could confer sophistication on any student who chose to study with him. Daymon managed, then, to present a portrait of exclusivity designed to appeal to readers of different backgrounds and statuses.<sup>63</sup> Even as he placed foreign language instruction in the context of European elegance, he appeared to address upwardly mobile readers aspiring to gentility as well as to elites among the gentry.

<sup>62</sup> Francis Daymon, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Nov. 2, 1774. The Latin quotation translates as "Since the pronunciation is neither written nor represented, it is not right to draw it up unless by direct testimony."

<sup>63</sup> Readers of various social positions probably read, or at least noticed, this advertisement since it was situated among notices from shopkeepers and estate executors. Although most dancing masters did not offer such lengthy justifications, some followed Daymon's lead by implying that the quality of their instruction would permit any individual to learn appropriate genteel conduct both on and off the dance floor. Mr. Pike offered a special class "for such persons as may have forgot, or had not an opportunity to dance very young," promising "they may be taught a genteel address, with a proper carriage" in addition to dancing. Mr. Pike, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1774. See also Viart, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 25, 1773.

In order to promote this appeal among readers, tutors often attempted to make their courses sound popular, prompting students to enroll so they could possess the same genteel learning as their neighbors. In a notice seeking students for a “Ladies only” class, Daymon indicated that he had “a number already engaged.”<sup>64</sup> In September 1771, he suggested that prospective students apply “speedily” or risk not receiving a place in his class.<sup>65</sup> Three years later, Daymon again used the same device, advising new students to “apply soon, the advertiser having very few hours disengaged.”<sup>66</sup> Paul Fooks claimed that he offered a particular class in French and Spanish “at the request of several young gentlemen, who are desirous of learning those polite and useful languages,” indicating that genteel colonists realized the value of such instruction without needing prompting from their tutors.<sup>67</sup> This implication also alerted those who had not sought instruction that they needed to develop similar tastes in order to assure their social position among the genteel. Charles Raboureau restricted the numbers in his French class, stating, “I do not intend to take above a Dozen for this Winter, that so I may be able to perfect them; and there are some already engaged.”<sup>68</sup> Martin Foy also encouraged parents to quickly enroll their students in classes to learn the newest and most fashionable dances “or it cannot be expected that they will be capable to perform them with any approbation this winter.”<sup>69</sup> He played on readers’ insecurities, warning that those who could not dance the most recent steps would be easily spotted and publicly embarrassed. As instructors competed to sell their services, they made their classes sound popular and necessary for both gaining and maintaining recognition as a member of refined circles. As a widening array of consumers purchased goods described as “genteel,” schoolmasters and tutors peddled refinement through learning experiences to any clients who wished to engage their services. These advertisers played on social anxieties and aspirations as they simultaneously addressed both those who already ranked among the gentry and those from the middling sorts who aspired to join the company or earn the recognition and respect of the elite.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Daymon, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Apr. 7, 1773.

<sup>65</sup> Daymon, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1771.

<sup>66</sup> Daymon, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Nov. 2, 1774.

<sup>67</sup> Paul Fooks, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 18, 1768.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Raboureau, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 5, 1765.

<sup>69</sup> Martin Foy, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Oct. 7, 1772.

*Morality Undermined: Frauds and Runaway Schoolmasters*

Educators made various appeals to prospective students or their parents to obtain their patronage in a competitive environment. At the same time, members of the public placed notices warning of instructors who committed misdeeds or runaways posing as schoolmasters. These notices provide a glimpse of how the lay public contemplated the relationship between gentility, morality, and education as well as popular concerns with discrepancies between appearances and true character. The advertisers in the previous section advanced conceptions of gentility that by definition incorporated morality as a necessary component. Richard Bushman notes that during the eighteenth century, the members of the upper class blended gentility and morality “into a single system for living,” sometimes depending on the latter to mediate some of the excesses of the former, such as rampant pride and luxury.<sup>70</sup> Educators who advertised their services underscored that they respected and strove to abide by aristocratic understandings of the relationship between gentility and morality. Yet merely asserting gentility gained through learning did not guarantee moral character, as the following advertisements documenting a variety of unscrupulous behaviors demonstrate. Schoolmasters and tutors in Philadelphia provided assurances that their own gentility, as well as the genteel qualities their lessons bestowed on students, rested on a foundation of moral rectitude. They did so in part to compensate for stories of counterfeit gentility performed by schoolmasters. Such accounts raised suspicions about schoolmasters throughout the colony, including those in the crowded urban port, and undermined one of their favorite and most common marketing appeals.

About 5 percent of all newspaper notices for male runaways (excluding slaves) mentioned education in one way or another, usually reporting that a schoolmaster absconded from a particular community or indicating that an absent servant with little or no teaching experience might try to pass himself off as a schoolmaster.<sup>71</sup> Other scholars have suggested that distin-

<sup>70</sup> Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 60.

<sup>71</sup> A systematic sampling of every third issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Journal* between 1765 and 1775 yielded 501 notices about male runaway servants and absconding freemen. Of the twenty-seven notices examined here, eleven concerned runaway servants who masqueraded as schoolmasters, and thirteen more concerned freemen or runaway servants who worked as schoolmasters but fled their community, usually after committing a crime. Three more ambiguous notices concerned freemen who may or may not have worked as schoolmasters, who absconded after committing a misdeed, and who likely sought employment as schoolmasters in their efforts to evade detection. Of the seventy-three notices about female runaways sampled, none indicated that the runaways had ever taught or might attempt to disguise themselves as schoolmistresses.

guishing between truly genteel persons and those who falsely simulated gentility became a major cultural preoccupation in the revolutionary and early national periods. Such analyses connect this preoccupation with high rates of occupational and geographic mobility.<sup>72</sup>

During this period, colonists believed that an individual's comportment ought to correspond to and confirm his or her social status, even as a growing number believed character and talent, rather than birth, should determine that status. Runaways undermined the connections linking education, gentility, morality, and status. Because schoolmasters were entrusted with the moral and cultural education of others, their failure to embody the standards of morality or abide by social conventions could be particularly threatening.<sup>73</sup> In September 1766, for instance, William Beale claimed that runaway schoolmaster George Denson "appears to be a sober, quiet . . . Man," but these appearances merely hid his "deceitful" character. Beale reported that the runaway schoolmaster "artfully obtained a Pass from his Employers" and "did artfully and insinuatingly obtain Goods of me the Subscriber, and others, to a considerable Value."<sup>74</sup> Although the theft angered Beale, he seemed more concerned about Denson's deception. It appears that the schoolmaster earned and then betrayed Beale's trust. Twice describing the schoolmaster's deeds as "artfully" accomplished, Beale gave priority to the schoolmaster's duplicity.

Runaway servants who masqueraded as schoolmasters forfeited the public trust from the moment that they entered a community. Ephraim Moore reported that runaway servant Bryan Feilis might "endeavour

<sup>72</sup> Notices connecting education, runaways, and pretensions of gentility created a framework for expressing the dangers of relying on appearance to assess another's true self, thus encouraging readers to be cautious in their own assessments of others, especially when entrusting their children to the tutelage of strangers. On appearances, character, and reputation during the revolutionary and early national periods, see Steven C. Bullock, "A Mumper Among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 55 (1998): 231–58; Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of American History* 81 (1994): 51–80; Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1999), 111–44; David Waldsteicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," in "African and American Atlantic Worlds," special issue, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 56 (1999): 243–72; and Larzer Ziff, *Writing in the New Nation: Prose, Print, and Politics in the Early United States* (New Haven, CT, 1991), 59–71.

<sup>73</sup> Consideration of these runaway schoolmasters fits well with the existing scholarly emphasis on metallurgists and doctors who engaged in crime and counterfeiting during the late colonial and early federal periods. All three perpetrated their frauds by employing "the behavioral and cultural attributes of gentlemen." Bullock, "Mumper Among the Gentle," 244. On colonists carefully observing each other, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 61; and Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, 114–15.

<sup>74</sup> William Beale, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 4, 1766.

to get into School or Book-keeping, as he is capable of either of those Businesses,” but indicated that although Feilis might possess the necessary technical knowledge, he did not fit the required moral profile.<sup>75</sup> The runaway used an alias, forged a pass, and pretended to understand other trades of which he had no real knowledge. Many runaways committed such misdeeds in the process of absconding. In total, nine runaways forged passes and ten changed their names. Forged passes and aliases facilitated an uneventful departure from one community and a surreptitious entry into the next community under false pretenses.<sup>76</sup>

Often, absconding schoolmasters and runaway servants posing as teachers were also accused of stealing goods, including clothing, horses, and money. For instance, Dennis Salmon, a man who “pretends to be a Schoolmaster, and has been in that Employ,” ran away from East Bradford Township in Chester County in May 1768. Mary Gruen charged that he “clandestinely took with him, a valuable large dark bay Mare.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in March 1774, Thomas Ennalls alerted the public that a Dorchester County schoolmaster, Joseph Anderson, ran away and “took with him about 18 or 20 Pounds in cash, that was stolen.”<sup>78</sup> Runaways with connections to education were accused of committing theft slightly more frequently than others in the notices sampled. Such accusations were leveled at 30 percent of runaway schoolmasters, compared with 27 percent of all of runaways. Theft, along with other misdeeds, undermined popular conceptions of the schoolmaster as a moral and, by extension, genteel individual.

Probably more disturbing to the subscribers who placed these notices was the threat to their reputations and judgment posed by absconding schoolmasters and imposters. In May 1771, Robert Braden submitted a notice describing the activities of Andrew McCalla in Sussex County, New Jersey. Braden explained that he “became security for one ANDREW McCALLA, that he should answer to an action of Bastardy, at our Court of Quarter Sessions. And since the said McCalla has run away, and as it is like to prove very detrimental to myself and family, it is to be hoped that all lovers of honesty and justice will use their endeavours to apprehend him.” He further warned that McCalla “assumes the character of a kind of a schoolmaster, but is no great scholar.” McCalla broke from the code

<sup>75</sup> Ephraim Moore, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 28, 1768.

<sup>76</sup> See Bullock’s analysis of Tom Bell, an infamous colonial confidence man who committed frauds while garbed as a member of the clergy. Bullock, “Mumper Among the Gentle,” 232–33.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Gruen, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 26, 1768.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Ennalls, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 2, 1774.



of morality and gentility on several counts.<sup>79</sup> The bastardy case called his sexual propriety into question. He further violated masculine honor by absconding when another had given security on his behalf, an offense that threatened not only Braden but the welfare of his entire family. Although McCalla misbehaved, Braden suffered the social and legal consequences because he misjudged the schoolmaster's character.

Similarly, Michael Simson, a schoolmaster in Upper Dublin Township in Philadelphia County, absconded in February 1770, taking "sundry Recommendations with him from the Inhabitants where he has kept School."<sup>80</sup> For a time, Simson, "a likely Fellow," apparently managed to meet the academic and personal expectations assigned to schoolmasters; several residents granted him their recommendations. In the end, however, this outward appearance disintegrated, and Simson revealed his true character. Robert McDowell, who placed the advertisement, did not elaborate on the specifics of Simson's crimes, indicating only that the residents who recommended him had been hoodwinked. McDowell may have been embarrassed that he and the others who had vouched for the schoolmaster could not easily distinguish between pretenders and men of true morals. The advertisement was designed to give public notice of their initial misjudgment.

Many of the advertisements concerning errant schoolmasters highlighted objectionable behaviors and character traits closely associated with deceit and trickery. Prominent among them was glib or excessive talking and bragging. George Hadams, a schoolmaster who had absconded from Strasburg Township in Lancaster County, was a "perpetual Talker" and "a great bragger."<sup>81</sup> Another runaway schoolmaster was "remarkably talkative."<sup>82</sup> Deceivers also betrayed themselves via impudence or ingratitude. Hadams was, for instance, "impertinent," while the runaway schoolmaster William Bailey had behaved "in the most ungrateful manner to the subscriber."<sup>83</sup> Such traits, in retrospect at least, were the visible signs

<sup>79</sup> Robert Braden, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 30, 1771.

<sup>80</sup> Robert McDowell, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 8, 1770.

<sup>81</sup> Strasburg Township, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 15, 1770.

<sup>82</sup> William Fitzhugh, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 24, 1766. Similarly, runaway servant and schoolmaster Robert Watson was "apt to boast much of his learning." William Parrish, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 8, 1766. For further examples of schoolmasters who boasted or bragged, see Benjamin Craige, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 27, 1769; and John Garwood and John Hover, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, July 7, 1773. For other "talkative" schoolmasters, see Craige, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 27, 1769; and William Laird, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 1, 1770.

<sup>83</sup> John Shaw, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, July 13, 1774.

through which imposters could be—and should have been—recognized. Their masquerades also extended to the pretended possession of skills. Thus, one notice cautioned that Bryan Feilis, a runaway servant claiming to be a schoolmaster, “pretends to understand navigation.”<sup>84</sup> The advertisement describing the sexual miscreant Andrew McCalla noted that he was, in fact, “no great scholar,” though he had “assumed” the “character of a schoolmaster.”<sup>85</sup> In a similar fashion, the advertisement denouncing Hadams noted that he “pretends to great knowledge.”<sup>86</sup> In short, false schoolmasters sparked social and cultural disruptions that extended far beyond the realm of education.

The case of George Hadams, the schoolmaster from Lancaster County, sums up the clamor caused by deceptive schoolmasters who preyed upon the gullibility of others. Hadams appeared in two notices, one placed by a committee of outraged Strasburg residents, the other by a man Hadams had swindled. In the first notice, the subscribers indicated that the fast-talking and “impertinent” Hadams had presented himself as a former officer in the British navy and an experienced teacher. The subscribers soon “found, by experience,” however, that Hadams was “a notorious cheat, a wilful liar, and a wicked debauched person, unworthy to live among any civilized people.” In addition to deceiving the community as to his true character, Hadams had also secured recommendations under false pretenses. Moreover, he “did also take with him two deeds” after being entrusted to safeguard them while drawing up a third deed, thus depriving one Benjamin Brackbill of his rightful property. The Strasburg men attempted to protect their purses and their reputations as respectable citizens by offering a reward for the stolen deeds and warning others not to trust the unscrupulous schoolmaster. “[W]e think it incumbent on us,” they stated, “to caution the public against such an atrocious villain.”<sup>87</sup> The six men who placed the notice thus attempted to reestablish themselves

<sup>84</sup> Ephraim Moore, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 28, 1768. For others who “pretended” to possess various skills, see William Laird, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 1, 1770; and Robert McConaughy, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 5, 1770.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Braden, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 30, 1771.

<sup>86</sup> For others who “pretended” or “professed” to possess skills applicable to teaching, see Paul Isaac Voto, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Feb. 15, 1770; John McDonald, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, May 10, 1770; Evan Griffith, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 12, 1770; Samuel Lafever and James Wilson, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 29, 1771; Jesse Bonsall and John Pearson, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 30, 1772; and W. Yates, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 28, 1774.

<sup>87</sup> Strasburg Township, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 15, 1770.

as a fellowship of concerned and respectable citizens who could still act as competent moral arbiters.<sup>88</sup>

Less than a month after the Strasburg committee placed their notice, another notice concerning Hadams appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, this time placed by William Laird, another resident of Lancaster County. Laird also wanted Hadams “brought to justice.” The former schoolmaster apparently devoted as much effort to confidence games as he did to teaching school. He sold a silver watch to Laird on credit. Laird maintained his end of the bargain by giving Hadams a bond for the agreed price, but he allowed the schoolmaster to hold onto the watch for a few days. Hadams promptly absconded with both the watch and the bond. Laird admitted that Hadams had initially seemed “much upon the gentleman order” but now rejected this assessment in view of his deceitful and criminal conduct.<sup>89</sup> Outward appearances belied inner character.

Men like Hadams were especially threatening because they managed to insinuate themselves into communities of respectable residents. Through the successful mimicking of skill, industry, and refined manners, they initially appeared to embody the moral and genteel schoolmaster; their ultimate betrayal, as Larzer Ziff writes, “called into question the nature of true identity” and the criteria for judging it.<sup>90</sup> As Peter Thompson states, “Philadelphians, and their contemporaries elsewhere,” wished to believe “that one’s inner self, one’s private or subjective identity, could be properly judged from, and ought properly to be displayed in, public behavior.”<sup>91</sup> The duplicitous schoolmaster cast doubt on this notion that public conduct could be a reliable basis for identifying social status and personal morality. Such figures also prompted many educators to emphasize their own gentility, refinement, and morality as a means of reassuring prospective students and their parents.

Newspaper notices regarding education demonstrate the fluidity of social status in Philadelphia between 1765 and 1775. Many residents attempted

<sup>88</sup> The subscribers further underscored the qualities commonly expected of a schoolmaster by advertising for an honorable schoolmaster to replace Hadams. They placed their request for a new schoolmaster directly between the warning about false recommendations and the description of stolen deeds. This section of the notice first emphasized that any applicant should be “an honest sober person, properly qualified to teach” and later stressed that “Good Encouragement will be given to such a one, coming well recommended; no other need apply.” Strasburg Township, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 15, 1770.

<sup>89</sup> William Laird, advertisement, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 1, 1770.

<sup>90</sup> Ziff used this phrase when analyzing the case of Stephen Burroughs, a confidence man who successfully and repeatedly posed as a schoolmaster and preacher during the years following the revolution. Ziff, *Writing in the New Nation*, 60–61.

<sup>91</sup> Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, 116.

to transform their provincial city into a refined counterpart to European metropolitan centers, calling attention to features—from fashion to luxury goods to architecture to education—that reflected their own polish and gentility. Instructors who placed advertisements in the city's newspapers used the power of print to portray their goods and services as genteel to multiple audiences. They often emphasized their own gentility and morality, indicating that their lessons could transfer these qualities to their students. In particular, they emphasized that their education in gentility could benefit individuals concerned with maintaining their social status or, alternately, aid those interested in enhancing it. Such assertions involved a tension between associating gentility solely with the elite and opening up its acquisition to the general public. Gentility added commercial value to boarding academies, Latin schools, dancing lessons, and foreign language instruction. With assistance, the advertisements implied, members of the reading public could learn to embody refinement, no matter their background.

Packaging morality and gentility as items that could be purchased had its disadvantages in a population that liked to imagine that genteel conduct should be a reliable guide to a person's social origins and refined character. The interest in the duplicitous schoolmaster and other confidence men, however, illustrates the perils of a social world in which schoolmasters and tutors (as well as merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans who marketed and sold an expanding array of "genteel" goods) encouraged greater numbers of colonists to attain and display cosmopolitan sophistication. The suggestion that common readers could purchase their own little piece of gentility reinforced the difficulty of distinguishing truly reputable individuals from those who merely masqueraded as refined. In a geographically and socially mobile society, readers learned, sometimes to their chagrin, that refined appearances did not necessarily provide guarantees of integrity or a clear measure of social standing. Yet, in marketing their services to prospective students, schoolmasters played on both anxieties and aspirations. In the process, they made little effort to distinguish among potential customers, instead brandishing the allures of gentility to both the gentry and the middling sort. Through their advertisements, schoolmasters in Philadelphia sought both to insulate themselves from and to benefit by some of the status confusion they helped to create and perpetuate.

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