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# "A Circle Form'd of Friends:" Candor, Contentiousness, and the Democratic Clubs of the Early Republic

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“A CIRCLE FORM’D OF FRIENDS:”  
CANDOR, CONTENTIOUSNESS, AND THE DEMOCRATIC CLUBS  
OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

The Department of History

by  
Andrew L. Hargroder  
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## Acknowledgements

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## Theoretical Note

Over the last thirty years, historians have advanced the study of the public sphere and social refinement in the early modern and Revolutionary eras. My own argument fits within the context established by two of those works: Michael Warner's *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* and Lawrence Klein's *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England*.<sup>1</sup> Drawing heavily from Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere,<sup>2</sup> Warner and Klein examine the role of public performance and print discourse in expanding the English and American polities of the eighteenth century. At the heart of this development was a cultural paradigm that encouraged public criticism of the state, established standards of social interaction compatible with that criticism, and expanded the accessibility of knowledge.

Despite the thematic similarities of their work, Warner and Klein offer different interpretations of public performance, criticism, and social relations. Lawrence Klein's study of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, attempts to link his philosophy of social refinement – “the paradigm of politeness” – to the alteration of English society at the dawn of the eighteenth century. Shaftesbury's philosophy, Klein argues, possessed both traditional and revolutionary elements. Shaftesbury's idealized vision of the social and political order, shared by

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press,

<sup>2</sup> Beyond Warner and Klein, scholarship on the late eighteenth-century American public sphere includes: Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch & Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

other contemporary writers like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, focused on human interaction at close quarters. Within the “discursive world of the Town,” gentlemen and ladies would gather in coffeehouses or drawing rooms of private homes to elegantly discuss political and “urbane” matters, all “presided by the spirit of good taste.” Because the “spirit of good taste” applied only to the social world of ladies and gentlemen, the culture of politeness closely resembled exclusive “gentlemanliness.” Limiting the beneficiaries of this ideal to a single sex and class reasserted the elitist principles of the English aristocracy.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, “politeness” served as an art of sociability, encouraging self-presentation and expressions of “self love.” Shaftesbury’s culture of politeness helped to eradicate the notion that social status was granted through birth or wealth; rather, it was “something up for grabs.” In this way, previously marginalized English subjects could perform “politeness” in order to find “new institutions and media through which to exert themselves.” Shaftesbury’s concept of refined sociability expanded the public sphere on a personal level.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Warner’s *The Letters of the Republic* focuses on the literary realm of the public sphere in eighteenth-century America: the “republic of letters.” By the 1720s, Warner argues, the process of writing and publishing books, broadsides, pamphlets, and newspapers in early America developed a political purpose, “involving new ways of defining the public.” The emergence of a new political language in the American colonies (republicanism) facilitated this development. Words in this republican vocabulary like “virtue,” “simplicity,” and “candour” articulated visions of a new political order that would extinguish Old-World aristocracy and transform the behavior of American society. The new republican order relied on what Warner

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, 3, 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12, 13, 20; Lawrence E. Klein, “The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1984), 191.

calls the “impersonalization” of print. “Impersonalization” refers to the process that altered the meaning of publishing and reading into acts of sociability through the use of republican discourse in print. By the onset of revolution in the American colonies, the “impersonalized” transformation in print discourse created opportunities for the middling classes to engage in civic participation.<sup>5</sup>

Working against the republican value of participation, Warner claims, was the ever-pervasive English culture of “politeness.” By the 1780s and 1790s, words in the lexicon of politeness (“courtesy,” “delicacy,” “civility,” etc.) signaled one’s attachment to the old social order. According to Warner’s assertions, Shaftesbury’s culture of refined sociability privileged liberal aesthetics over republican simplicity, and artificial self-regard over collective understanding at the expense of virtue. One of the long-standing implications of polite culture’s continued influence into the nineteenth century, Warner concludes, was the erosion of the republican sphere and the subsequent rise of nationalism and liberal society.<sup>6</sup>

Warner and Klein’s focus on performative styles and the expansion of the public sphere serves as the theoretical foundation for this project. Though I am less concerned with public sphere theory, this project operates on a similar premise to Klein and Warner’s works. Differing interpretations aside, Klein and Warner operate on the same premise and within similar terms of discourse that I have adopted for this project. By the late eighteenth century, Americans held tightly to the concepts of English politeness, but applied different meanings to those concepts through republican discourse. “Candour,” as a form of behavioral discourse, served as one among the many qualities once displayed and judged as marks of gentility. By the late eighteenth

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic*, xiii, 35-39, 120-121.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-136, 138, 149.

century in America, the culture of republican sociability encouraged an environment within which Americans could profess and display qualities like “candour” in a democratic fashion.

One of my tasks in pursuing this project was to expand scholars’ understanding of refined sociability beyond the activities of a single sex. “Politeness,” synonymous with “gentlemanliness,” generally excluded women from its standards. So how did women apply new meanings to old status-forming terms in order to exploit opportunities for advancement in the late eighteenth century as American society moved away from deference? It is imperative to recognize that women increasingly moved to participate in the American polity after the Revolution.<sup>7</sup> One of the challenges of this project is to illustrate some of the ways in which women maneuvered in the post-Revolutionary era in order to participate in the realm of politics.

Secondly, as Warner notes, there is a surprising lack of historical scholarship on “status-forming categories” and their “corresponding dispositions toward...social relations” that emerged within republican discourse by the 1780s and 1790s. As I will examine, candor served as one of these “status-forming” categories. Candor was “status-forming,” or self-elevating, in the sense that individuals professed candor as a social expectation within club settings to better position themselves. Club culture in the early republic adhered to larger social relations as generally perceived by Americans in the 1790s.

Although, theoretically, I draw mostly from Warner and Klein, my thesis most resembles two recent works on aspiring, middle-class writers in New York and their various club activities:

Bryan Waterman’s, *The Republic of Intellect: The Friendly Club of New York City and the*

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<sup>7</sup> For more scholarship on women in the early republic, reference: Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Rosmarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Nancy Isenberg, *Sex & Citizenship in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 1998).



*Making of American Literature* (2007), and Robb K. Haberman's "Magazine, Presentation Networks, and the Cultivation of Authorship in Post-Revolutionary America" (2008). Waterman and Haberman offer thorough examinations of how aspiring authors exploited opportunities for authorship through various outlets, or "presentation networks." Just as tavern going, club membership, and authorship often provided male artisans with "a way out" of the drudgery of working-class life, (Benjamin Franklin, for example) these activities also provided opportunities for them to engage in political expression.<sup>8</sup>

I support their positions, but press them further by arguing that the same may be said for women. Women like Hatton, self-educated and hailing from modest backgrounds, also sought opportunities for political expression through authorship and club association. Hatton's fascinating case is attributed to her overt activity within one of New York's political clubs, considered a primarily male-driven culture in the late eighteenth century. Demonstrations of candor allowed Hatton to engage in the public sphere with a relative sense of security at a time when political expression was still overwhelmingly considered an act of manhood. For men and women, candor held a revolutionary potential to upset traditional notions of who belonged in the public sphere and how they ought to act within it.

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<sup>8</sup> Bryan Waterman, *Republic of Intellect: The Friendly Club of New York City and the Making of American Literature*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Rob K. Haberman, "Magazines, Presentation Networks, and the Cultivation of Authorship in Post-Revolutionary America," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Biography*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2008), 141-162.

## Abstract

From 1792 to 1794, a confluence of frightening events created an environment of profound distrust and apprehension in the United States. Anxieties over the future of the American and French republics prevailed over sentiments of friendship and Union. Moreover, inflamed language in the partisan press, rising tensions between emerging political parties, and the centralization of federal (but seemingly monarchical) power rendered the public sphere a hostile place for all but the most secretive and cunning of participants. The tense and impassioned setting posed the following questions for Americans to contemplate: who were the true friends of the Union? What constituted trustworthy information? What value do we place on human association?

At this pregnant moment, a democratically inclined, imaginative, and ambitious segment of the American population provided answers. Candor served, in part, as a protective shield from the grave uncertainties of the era. Yet, as a form of political expression, candor empowered non-elites, and was thus never far removed from the contentiousness of the 1790s. Middle and working-class men and women professed candor to express themselves publically in ways that would justify and safeguard their inclusion into the political conversation over the republic's future. Further, by appealing to sympathy and friendship through literary demonstrations of candor, these same individuals disrupted traditional, hierarchal relationships. At various levels of social interaction, but especially within political clubs, a new class of citizen was taking shape, one that espoused a more inclusive understanding of public engagement and an expansive meaning of democracy.

## Introduction

On Monday evening, March 3, 1794, the curtains of New York City's John Street Theater opened for a democratic audience. Artisans, aspiring writers, Revolutionary War veterans, and urban professionals of the Tammany Society, the largest of New York's political clubs, gathered for the premier of an opera composed by their friends, Ann Julia Hatton and Richard Bingham Davis. Hatton began writing the native-themed libretto for *Tammany; or, The Indian Chief* in the late summer of 1793 with Davis's encouragement. Davis, an active member of Tammany and other societies, brought Hatton into his circle of friends. Benefiting from club participation, Hatton conveyed evolving standards of public behavior through her authorship – standards wrought from the anxieties of a Revolutionary world and embodied in literary demonstrations of candor and good intentions.<sup>9</sup>

In the early American republic, non-elite men and women professed candor to engage in public expression. Candor, or “candour,” was both a quality and a learned behavior demonstrated through frankness and impartiality in the public sphere.<sup>10</sup> Most commonly, non-elites<sup>11</sup> imparted candor through print by providing voyeuristic glimpses of their shortcomings or by unburdening

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<sup>9</sup> T.B. Thorpe, “The Old Theatres of New York, 1750-1827,” *Appletons' Journal of Literature, Science, and Art*, November 23, 1872.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher and sociologist, theorized and articulated the concept of the “public sphere” in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962). The public sphere serves as a mediating space “between the monarchical state and the civil society” in which the general public engages in rational political debate within community structures. Community structures of the eighteenth century included city halls, meeting houses, taverns and coffeehouses. Habermas's public sphere theory compelled a host of scholars of the Revolutionary and early republic eras to examine the ways in which disenfranchised Americans participated in politics.

<sup>11</sup> I use the term “non-elite” to identify those who remained disenfranchised after the ratification of the Constitution and who lived outside the circles of America's leadership class. This encompasses a broad spectrum of post-Revolutionary America, but I refer mostly to those who belonged to the “middling sort.” Hatton and Davis represent this largely talented and ambitious portion of the American population who poised to occupy an expanding public sphere in the late eighteenth century.

deep-seated sentiments, liberating their conscious from guilt or bias. But similar to our contemporary notions of transparency or humility, an individual's possession or display of candor may *only* be affirmed by others. This reciprocal behavior, a form of sociability, encouraged trust and sympathy between individuals and groups; candor was expressly powerful for those who joined or associated with the Democratic-Republican societies of the 1790s. As they searched for spirited others within these clubs, non-elites demonstrated candor to encourage friendships and, more importantly, to inject themselves into an expanding public sphere.

Whether non-elites physically displayed or performed, through dress or manners, their candor is not a concern of this project. I limit my analysis of candor to a literary form of behavioral discourse within American society and the “republic of letters.”<sup>12</sup> So when I say that Hatton “displayed,” “professed,” or “demonstrated” candor, I use the terms to illustrate her literary expressions conveyed from New York newspapers or on the stage. The use of rhetoric was equally as productive as exhibiting polite manners in garnering respectability, especially at a time when print as a trade and a venue for public engagement was expanding rapidly. But Hatton's candor did not sit lifeless on the page. In *Tammany's* case, actors and actresses of the Old American Company, principally John Martin and Charlotte Melmouth, performed the opera, thus conveying Hatton's candor from the page to a viewing and listening audience. Candor was a real, sensible phenomenon in the evolving standards of behavioral discourse.

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<sup>12</sup> Not an actual government or state, the “republic of letters” refers to the circulation of letters, pamphlets, newspapers, broadsides, and etc., that constituted a literary sphere of public discourse throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The “republic” represented the Enlightenment ideal of a network of lettered men whose purpose was to cultivate knowledge and to engage in public criticism through the circulation of printed materials. However, by the late eighteenth century, with the continued spread of literacy and the expansion of printing, the republic of letters incorporated more participants than lettered men. For the purpose of this project, I have expanded the definition of the “republic of letters” to incorporate both the literary and personal (or club) spheres.

Hatton professed her candor publically and frequently before *Tammany's* premier, which I examine further. But I open with *Tammany*, specifically the epilogue, because Hatton's demonstration of candor is particularly striking and relevant to the focus of my project to follow. My brief examination below serves as a teaser to the kinds of rhetorical and literary analysis that I frequently conduct throughout this work. As a form of behavioral discourse, Hatton's expression of candor in *Tammany* conveys evolving, proto-democratic standards of social interaction from within the Tammany Society outward to the public at large. Hatton's authorship not only legitimized her personal engagement in the public sphere, it affirmed a collective sense of purpose in the Democratic-Republican society – and in her friendship with Davis – that fostered her ambition. Hatton and Davis's activities indicate a larger transformation underway in the early American republic.

While most of *Tammany's* libretto oozes throughout with Native-American imagery and language steeped in revolutionary optimism, Hatton's focus in the epilogue shifts from the story's principals to own her sentiments and authorship. One facet of particular importance in the epilogue is its content, which illustrates Hatton's public display of candor through a series of personal revelations. By exposing her sentiments and intentions, Hatton hoped to gain her audience's trust and to engage in a political dialogue.<sup>13</sup>

After *Tammany's* final scene, the actor John Martin emerged center-stage to deliver the epilogue. Alternating between first and third person, Martin began with an admission of timidity and apprehension: "Pale with fear, our timid Author cries, / From me, good faith, all wit and fancy flies...If they will let this first attempt go down, / I promise, their plaudits lur'd to write, / To give next time some pleasant hum'rous flight." The "timid Author" is not Martin, but Hatton;

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<sup>13</sup> Ann Julia Hatton, *The Songs of Tammany; or, The Indian Chief. A Serious Opera*, 1794, New-York Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.

the intriguing switch from third to first person indicates that she is the true messenger behind Martin's performance. But Martin plays more than the middleman as he directs the audience's attention from his performance to Hatton's frank timidity, affirming her candor. Hatton's indirect apologia illustrates that, though candor encouraged trust between friends in the privacy of clubs, candor also encouraged good faith between performer and observer in the public exchange of ideas that she sought.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond the admission of foibles, Hatton's candor is best illustrated through her full disclosure of political intent and female identity. After questioning the audience (directly addressing both male and female observers) of the "scribbler's savage plot," Hatton removes the veil: "You will applaud (tho' from a female pen) / The scene that points to view the *Rights of Men*... For you she wrote, and tho' expression fail, / Let the intent upon your hearts prevail." Hatton's reference to the "*Rights of Men*" alludes to the "rights of man,"<sup>15</sup> a concept tied to the theory of natural rights upon which the Americans, the French, and rebellious states the world over have justified revolution.<sup>16</sup>

Americans who identified themselves as "democrats" or "republicans" in the 1790s, those most inclined to join democratic societies like Tammany, generally believed that their Revolution remained unresolved. Their continued faith in the "spirit of '76" and their participation in the universal struggle for the rights of man, also unfolding in France and

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<sup>14</sup> *Greenleaf's New York Journal*, March 5, 1794; *New York Magazine*, April 1794.

<sup>15</sup> The "rights of man" appears almost ubiquitously in all manner of printed materials throughout the late 1780s and into the 1790s. Most notably, the "rights of man" titled a variety of profound political documents to include Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1793), France's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (1789), and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790).

<sup>16</sup> *New York Magazine*, April 1794; Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 16-17, 20-21.

throughout Europe, would empower the revolutionary concept and status of the “citizen” in a world of indifference and social equality. By referencing the “rights of man,” Hatton positioned herself as a friend of this revolutionary impulse and as a partisan operative of New York’s Democratic-Republicans. Further, she revealed her political intent and female identity as prerequisites for public expression. Beyond a simple gesture or curtsy, her display of candor served as a tool of political power.<sup>17</sup>

*Tammany*’s premier held a personal significance for Hatton, as it launched her authorship into the public’s purview. But as an event, the premier of a politicized opera written by a woman and sanctioned by a political society speaks to the enthralling moment of the mid-1790s, and the larger significance of democratic clubs in that particular time and space. The Tammany Society’s formidable presence on the evening of March 3, 1794, illustrated its commitment to prevailing notions of friendship and sociability by boosting Hatton and Davis’s literary respectability and their value as political participants. Reciprocally, Hatton’s candor affirmed the productivity of club friendship as a legitimate form of public expression. Her appeals for sympathy, friendship, and good intentions refined the Tammany Society’s image as an instrument of the public good at a time when private interest seemed to threaten the republic’s survival. Benefiting from their political association within democratic clubs, Hatton and Davis channeled patriotic sentiments of universal, democratic friendship in competition with a transatlantic obsession with conspiracy and faction.

### **The Revolutionary Moment of the 1790s**

It would be difficult to exaggerate the impassioned moment of the early-to-mid 1790s in which Hatton and Davis lived. Like in the tumultuous 1960s, polarized visions for the republic’s

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<sup>17</sup> Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution*, 11, 187.

future inspired a prevailing mood characterized by both a revolutionary optimism for humankind, and an abrasive paranoia of state power and partisan conspiracy. On the one hand, the historical triumph of (relatively) popular government in America by 1789, immediately followed by the French Revolution, fostered a general optimism in the United States. The French Revolution began in 1789 as a political and social struggle to uproot the ancien regime and to institute a constitutional government. Initial success during this early, republican phase of the Revolution signaled the increasing possibility of representative government in France, affirming for Americans a sense of purpose in their newly established Union and fulfillment in their own Revolution, not ten years passed.<sup>18</sup>

Yet on the other hand, the uncertainty of the French Revolution's outcome and the growth of party spirit, the partisan press, and Democratic-Republican opposition at home triggered a seemingly inexhaustible paranoia of aristocratic or democratic excess. A series of frightening events in 1793-1794 fundamentally challenged American perceptions of who ought to be trusted and how information might be justified in the new republic. Such concerns pressured evolving standards of public conduct and behavioral norms that emphasized, above others, demonstrations of candor and appeals for democratic friendship as prerequisites for political expression.

News of revolutionary violence in France reached the United States as early as October 1792, capturing Americans' full attention. In the April 1793 issue of the *New York Magazine*, coincidentally the same issue that showcased Richard Davis's skillful prose, a short paragraph titled "Paris, January 22" delivered an alarming update on the Revolution: "Louis was beheaded

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2010) 208; Robert W.T. Martin, *Government by Dissent: Protest, Resistance, and Radical Democratic Thought in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 83-84.



yesterday at the Place de Louis XVI at a quarter past ten o'clock in the morning.” The matter-of-fact report suggests a popular sense of restrained objectivity (or apathy) shared by many Americans, even the “monocrats,”<sup>19</sup> according to Thomas Jefferson. Yet, the final sentence reveals a different tone: “This it is feared is but the beginning of a scene of bloodshed, which will not be soon terminated.” Though initial news of Louis’s execution signified for Americans a necessary step - not to be repeated – in France’s transition, news continued to trickle in from the East that would only disturb and polarize the American population.<sup>20</sup>

After King Louis’s beheading, the French Revolution descended to a level of unprecedented state violence at the hands of a single faction. After gaining control of the National Convention in the fall of 1792, the Jacobin Club, led by the radical and deranged Maximillian Robespierre, instituted a purge of all individuals and factions whom it accused of conspiring against their cause. Among the first put to death was the King. The blade of the guillotine, stained with fresh blood and sharpened by Jacobin paranoia, mocked the aspirations of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The single-most polarizing event of the Revolution for the United States occurred when France declared war on Great Britain, America’s major trade partner. Far more controversial than Louis’s beheading, France’s war with Britain further grounded two distinct political camps that had already begun to pitch their tents as early as 1790: the largely pro-British Federalists, and the Francophile Democratic-Republicans. Much to the disbelief of Federalists like President George Washington, Americans were easily obliged to ally with a party more so than any

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<sup>19</sup> “Monocrat,” a term coined by Jefferson, served as a perjorative to describe the supporters of Alexander Hamilton’s centralized financial system while he served as Secretary of the Treasury.

<sup>20</sup> “Paris, January 22,” *New York Magazine*, April 1793; Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*, 238, 253-254; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

concept of the “nation”; the formation of political parties in the United States was a merely matter of managing public opinion based upon issues.<sup>21</sup>

By the time of *Tammany*'s premier in March 1794, the Jacobin's Reign of Terror lingered with alarming tenacity, and the fear of conspiracy that consumed Revolutionary France had engulfed the United States. Apprehension seized the minds of many Americans, particularly those within the governing party, the Federalists, who contemplated the collapse of the American republic's experiment, orchestrated and conducted by traitors from within. The Jacobins' rapid ascent to power and their implementation of the Terror affirmed the politically conservative notion, a view held throughout the Atlantic world in the eighteenth century, that institutionalized parties existentially threatened political order. The Jacobins and their own network of clubs throughout Paris thus provided Federalists in the United States with frightening, unequivocal evidence that popular government could *only* lead to social strife, internal faction, and mob rule.<sup>22</sup>

Federalist fears of a Terror at home only worsened as a dissenting “party”<sup>23</sup> rose to challenge George Washington's Federalist administration and its pro-British policies. The prospect of an American-Jacobin conspiracy, inspired by the revolutionary fervor in France, preyed upon the minds of Federalists like Alexander Hamilton and John Adams. Responding to

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<sup>21</sup> Robert W.T. Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 84; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America*, 59-60; Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*, 254; Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 355; Jeffrey S. Sellinger, “Rethinking the Development of Legitimate Party Opposition in the United States, 1793-1829,” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 127, No. 2 (Summer 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Robert W.T. Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 83-84; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> I quote party to underscore that the Democratic-Republicans (a.k.a Madisonians, Jeffersonian Republicans, Anti-Federalists) resembled more of a loose national coalition than a single distinctive and structured political party that we would recognize today.

Philadelphia's joyous reception of the new French minister, Edmond Charles Genet, in April 1793, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton decreed that the republican organizers of the celebration resembled, "with *very few exceptions*, the same men who have been uniformly the enemies and the disturbers of the government of the U[nited] States." Hamilton's libel may strike as hyperbole, but the critique illustrates that the fears of domestic subversion prevailed over sentiments of friendship and unity upon which the Union might survive.<sup>24</sup>

Hamilton's "enemies" and "disturbers," self-identified Democratic-Republicans, drew their collective strength from a national amalgam of political elites (James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr, etc.), middling rural farmers, urban-dwelling professionals, and working-class artisans of all trades. It is from this widespread opposition that an articulate network of dissident clubs emerged, altering the American political system and fashioning, perhaps, the nature of modern popular government.<sup>25</sup>

The formation of the Democratic-Republican societies was an impulse, a consequence of the increasing possibility for democratic revolution in the United States. Reacting to the preceding course of events, middling and working-class Americans formed the societies and declared their right to dissent against government policy – a radical notion for a generation still attempting to shake off the colonial experience of British subjecthood. From 1793 to 1795, no less than forty of these clubs sprang up from Georgia to Maine. Though their presence

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<sup>24</sup> Letter by Alexander Hamilton, May 18, 1793, as cited in Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, 360 n169.

<sup>25</sup> Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 51, 82; Philip S. Foner, *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 8; Matthew Schoenbachler, "Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution: The Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 1998), 238; Robert W.T. Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 84.

strengthened Republican opposition against the Federalists, the societies also represented a separate phenomenon. They were not the forerunners of Madison and Jefferson's Republican Party, but rather a system of self-conscious, independent vehicles of popular will. Collectively, in the words of historian Johann Neem, the societies "articulated a new conception of civil society based on voluntary associations and the existence of multiple, competing interests." In this light, the Democratic-Republican societies represented a significant portion of non-elites in America in ways that the current system under the Constitution seemed incapable; they politicized a host of ordinary and extraordinary individuals within an expanding polity.<sup>27</sup>

The societies' incorporation of largely middling and working-class men drew vicious and elitist attacks from the Federalist press. William Cobbett, in an Edmund Burkean fashion,<sup>28</sup> dismissed the societies' members as "butchers, tinkers, broken hucksters, and trans-Atlantic traitors." The insult suggests a hint a class antagonism and certainly elitism, but Cobbett's emphasis on "trans-Atlantic traitors" underscores Federalist perceptions of the clubs as French-influenced, unelected insurgent networks. Linking them to the Jacobins clubs, Federalists began to use a pejorative, "self-created," to describe the democratic societies as extralegal and rogue organs, anatomically "*detached from* the body of the people." Federalists understood the structural imperative of manipulating the societies' expressions of "popular will" and disseminate them in the press as ploys of the "subterranean gentry." By portraying the societies

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<sup>27</sup> Johann N. Neem, "Freedom of Association in the Early Republic: the Republican Party, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the Philadelphia and New York Cordwainers' Cases," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 127, No. 3 (July 2003), 259-260; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 41-42.

<sup>28</sup> Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was an Irish statesman and political theorist who vehemently opposed the French Revolution and espoused, at times, ultra-conservative views of the masses. He once infamously referred to the poor, laboring classes as the "swinish multitudes."

as factions of irate and poor Jacobin sympathizers, the Federalist press propagated the dangers of “democracy” as mob rule, all the while exacerbating American obsessions of conspiracy.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 1 - "A Political Portrait" – 1793

The societies’ efforts to counter Federalist “self-created” charges proved all but impossible after Whiskey Rebellion.<sup>30</sup> With the introduction of a federal excise tax on whiskey

<sup>29</sup> William Cobbett, *Porcupine’s Works*, 12 vols. (London: Cobbett and Morgan, 1801), 1:110 as cited in Robert W.T. Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 85 ;*Gazette of the United States*, April 4, 1794 as cited in Albrecht Koschnik, “The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere, circa 1793-1795”, 627 fn 44; Eugene P. Link, *The Democratic Republican Societies, 1790-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 91.

<sup>30</sup> “*The Times; a Political Portrait - Triumph Government: perish all its enemies / Traitors be warned: justice though slow is sure.*” <http://theamericanpoliticalsystem.blogspot.com/2012/06/w-613-hamilton-and-jefferson.html>

The political cartoon above, from an unidentifiable Federalist newspaper or broadside in 1793, illustrates Federalist hysteria over the prospect of Jacobin conspiracy within the United States. George Washington, sitting high and martial upon a carriage and surrounded by U.S. volunteer infantry, repels an invasion of French Jacobins. The mighty eagle and shield are depicted in the

(with Alexander Hamilton's proposal) in 1791, protests erupted in western Pennsylvania. Even after repeated federal attempts to assuage the situation by amending the excise law, the protests continued and reached a tipping point in early 1794 when an angry mob attacked one of the western district's tax inspectors. In September, Washington ordered the mobilization of Federal troops and militiamen to stomp out the insurgency. A force of over thirteen thousand marched to western Pennsylvania to quell a rebellion composed of perhaps a few hundred distillers, farmers, and rabble-rousers.<sup>31</sup>

Whatever their connection to or their influence of the Pennsylvania backcountry insurgency, the democratic societies suffered relentless attacks and blame for the rebellion, even from President Washington. In a candid attempt to prove their friendship with the Union, many of the Democrat-Republican oppositions' more vocal leaders like Albert Gallatin, Hugh Henry Brackenridge (a democratic society member), and William Findley published condemnations of the rebellion. However, these proclamations accomplished little in the end to better the public's image of the democratic societies. The Whisky Rebellion not only intensified hysteria over the possibility of a homegrown insurgency among Federalists, but for the Democratic-Republican opposition, federal mobilization to suppress a small uprising challenged a sense of "popular will" that the larger movement, and especially the societies, shared and espoused.<sup>32</sup>

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clouds, raining lightning bolts upon the invaders. As the "Cannibals" approach, Thomas Jefferson urges a man, possibly Thomas Paine, to "stop the wheels of the government." Lying underfoot, behind a dog urinating on a pamphlet labeled "Aurora," might be Benjamin Franklin Bache, the printer of the democratic-republican *Aurora General Advertiser*. Bache had, within the previous months, stirred controversy over his newspaper's attacks on Washington. For more on Bache, see Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic"* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 86-90.

<sup>31</sup> Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 135-136; Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*, 289-290.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*; Robert W.T. Martin, *Government by Dissent*, 39.

The preceding confluence of events from 1792 to 1794 created an environment of profound distrust and apprehension in the United States. Anxieties prevailed over the future of the American and French republics. Moreover, inflamed language in the partisan press, rising tensions between emerging factions, and the centralization of federal (but seemingly British) power rendered the public sphere a hostile place for all but the most secretive and cunning of participants. The tense and impassioned setting posed the following questions for Americans to contemplate: who were the true friends of the Union? What constituted trustworthy information? What value do we place on human association?

At this pregnant moment, a democratically inclined, imaginative, and ambitious segment of the American population provided answers. Candor served, impulsively, as a protective shield from the grave uncertainties of the era. Middle and working-class men and women professed candor to express themselves publically in ways that would justify and safeguard their inclusion into the political conversation over the republic's future. Further, by appealing to sympathy and friendship through literary demonstrations of candor, these same individuals disrupted traditional, hierarchal relationships. At various levels of social interaction but especially within political clubs, a new class of citizen was taking shape, one that espoused a more inclusive understanding of public engagement and an expansive meaning of democracy.

### **Task and Justification**

Most historical scholarship on the democratic societies has focused only on the societies' contributions to the development of the two-party system. Since Eugene Link and Philip Foner's classic works on the Democratic-Republican societies, scholars have tended to stick with a traditional narrative of the societies as having greatly facilitated the coming of the American two-party system, but then conducting a "strategic retreat" from American politics. Among other

contemporary scholars of the early American republic, Johann N. Neem, Matthew Schoenbachler, Albrecht Koschnik, and Robert Martin have correctly placed the significance of the democratic societies within the context of radical and transatlantic political change of the 1790s. Their works have greatly contributed to recent historiography concerning the societies' impact on providing "ideological and organizational focus" to a yearling Republican Party and helping to fashion "the very nature of a modern popular government."<sup>33</sup>

However, a historical problem has persisted. There remains a lack of scholarship examining the full extent to which the Democratic-Republican societies fundamentally transformed behavioral discourse in American political culture. Within the limited scope of my thesis, I hope contribute to the larger conversation and to provide an answer. My central argument is that the Democratic-Republican societies fostered changing standards of public behavior that stressed, above all, demonstrations of candor. Candor, as a form of behavioral discourse, helped to politicize a generation of Americans who continued to adhere to an expansive understanding of the public sphere long after the societies faded from the scene.

My task in this project, then, is to examine "candour" as a radical performative style, fostered within club settings and projected outward through literary demonstrations of frankness and impartiality. Candor was the mechanism, the behavior through which non-elites could safely engage in the public sphere, but the clubs served as the arenas in which they rehearsed candor as a form of behavioral discourse. My work compliments scholarship on the rapidly expanding republic of letters among Americans of the "middling sort" residing in New York City

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<sup>33</sup> Eugene P. Link, *The Democratic Republican Societies, 1790-1800*; Philip S. Foner, *The Democratic-Republican Societies*; Robert W. T. Martin, *Government By Dissent*; Matthew Schoenbachler, "Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution," 239; Albrecht Koschnik, "The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere."



throughout the 1790s. It also expands upon historical scholarship that has examined concepts such as “sympathy,” “honor,” and “magnanimity” in the context of republican discourse. I hope that by reframing “candour” and identifying its larger significance within the democratic upsurge and tumult of the 1790s, we can understand how those living outside of the elite establishment seized upon an enlarged role in the polity and paved the way for future generations of rights-endowed Americans.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Subjects**

Why Ann Hatton and Richard Davis?

Ann Hatton’s presence on New York’s political stage, her partnership with Davis, and her affiliation with democratic clubs attest to her fascinating case. The extent to which Hatton participated in the democratic societies is uncertain. What is unequivocal, however, is that her friendship with Richard Davis, an active member of at least three clubs, brought her into the circles of democratic society members. Participation within the societies, for Hatton and Davis, fit comfortably in the trajectory of their pursuit for literary respectability, and professing candor was essential to both processes. The importance of candor as a status-forming, or self-elevating, quality allows us to better understand the impulses that drove people like Hatton and Davis to join or lend their efforts to democratic clubs.

The following underscores the significance of these two extraordinary people and the pivotal moment in which they lived. Their short-lived but fascinating friendship reveals, among many

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<sup>34</sup> The following comprise only a few works of relevant scholarship within a vast historiography: Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Julia A. Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Andrew Burstein, *Sentimental Democracy: The Evolution of America’s Romantic Self-Image* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1999).

things, the possibilities in store for the ambitious and expressive class of men and women who maneuvered in a Revolutionary world. Men and women of the “middling sort” like Hatton and Davis used candor to inject themselves into and justify their presence within an expanding polity. They professed candor, first, as a means to facilitate friendships; second, to secure respectability among their peers, and lastly to assert their legitimacy as participants in an expanding republic of letters. Davis and Hatton could have only accomplished the preceding through their participation in voluntary associations that courted civic-minded men and women. In the face of the rancorous environment of the 1790s, before the two-party system had fully formed, the Democratic-Republican societies encouraged participatory politics of a democratic character.

## Chapter One: “Candour” in Context

Before I delve into the narrative of Ann Hatton and Richard Davis, I must elaborate on this project’s central term: candor. Linked to the widespread transformation in ideas and manners that accompanied the general experience of the American Revolution, Americans applied different meanings to traditionally British concepts, articulating their newfound hopes and expectations. Central to the process of exchanging knowledge, candor served among the traditional concepts to which Americans understood in different ways. Most notably, Americans perceived “candour,” related to our modern concept of “transparency,” as an ideal for their free society and its new republic.

My assertion moving forward is that the late eighteenth-century use of “candour,” most synonymous with frankness and impartiality, pertained to the manner in which individuals participated in the exchange of ideas. When someone initiated conversation with another or addressed an audience, they typically did so with the intention of either forming friendships or gaining an enlightened perspective through the friendly exchange of knowledge. In the context of a volatile political and social environment, Americans needed to establish trust for these exchanges to occur. More than a mere curtsy, candor served as the best means of securing the necessary trust that bound friendships within club settings.

As a tool for securing the *bonds* of friendship, candor was not tied to the republican virtue of disinterestedness. Although “candour” existed within the context of republican vocabulary, often marking a “true” republican, candor transcended the republican discourse. As a form of behavioral discourse for middling non-elites, the reliance on candor signals a turn away from republicanism towards an alternative form of political expression. Candor’s implication for

non-elite men and women held a revolutionary potential to destabilize traditional notions of hierarchy, encouraging, instead, democratic comity.

### **Defining “Candour”**

The English use of “candour” derived from the Latin “candor” and the French “candide,” meaning whiteness, brilliancy, or purity. As a noun, “candour” served as a descriptive quality. The Oxford English Dictionary cites the earliest use of “candour” from 1395 by John Trevisa in his translation of Bartholomew de Glanville's *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, in which he explains that “candor is passynge whytnesse.” This early use of “candour” implied a purity *of* character, or whiteness (brilliancy) *of* composition. I emphasize *of* to underscore that candor, in this context, was passive. Thomas Tyron illustrates this meaning in *The Good House-Wife* (1692), when he identifies milk, with its silky whiteness, to be “the Emblem of Innocence, deriving that amiable and pleasant Candor from a Gleam of the divine Light.” Though the milk’s candor may be divinely inspired, it is merely descriptive; it is an inactive quality, something only to be observed. Candor as a passive quality appeared in that context well into the seventeenth century.<sup>47</sup>

But by the beginning of the eighteenth century, “candour” enjoyed a remarkably popular invigoration. Scholars, printers, satirists, and other writers began to use “candour” to imply open-mindedness and impartiality as the defining characteristics, rather than whiteness or purity. In Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), the meanings of “candour” are listed as “sweetness of temper, purity of mind, openness, ingenuity, [and] kindness.” Though not

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<sup>47</sup> Mary Claire Randolph, “‘Candour’ in XVIIIth-Century Satire,” *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 77 (Jan., 1944), 45-46; “Candour | Candor, n.” OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27009?redirectedFrom=candour> (accessed April 07, 2015).

all-together contrary, the preceding meanings are not entirely synonymous. Johnson's dictionary not only reveals "candour's" varied use, but its ongoing transformation in the middle of the eighteenth century. While "candour" maintained its earlier meaning as a description of purity, by the late eighteenth century writers mostly used the word to refer to one's impartiality in the diffusion or exchange of knowledge. "Candour" began to function as both a verb and a noun.<sup>48</sup>

What compelled this profound shift in meaning? The expansion of the public sphere in English society by the early eighteenth century may explain the sudden popularity of "candour" in the English language. Referring again to Shaftesbury's vision of polite society, the culture of politeness provided a new context within which polite ladies and gentlemen could use "candour" as a quality to describe others who acted frankly within the public sphere. Since the language of candor belonged to English high culture and politics, "candour," at first, applied solely to members of the English aristocracy. Candor served among other terms like "taste," "sincerity," and "virtue" as a gentlemanly trait. In 1744, Corbyn Morris, a London customs commissioner and social commentator, explained in an essay on manners that the qualities of "Arrogance, or insolent Pride" were intolerable "in a *British* Minister." Instead, a British gentleman ought to exhibit "Humility, Moderation, and Candour" in "every Instance of his Conduct." To be a gentleman meant to be a public figure, thus "*British*" gentlemen were at all times expected to act with candor.<sup>49</sup>

Ideas, and the language that articulates them, are fluid and often transcend the established boundaries of human institutions. By the middle decades of the eighteenth century the ideas of

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<sup>48</sup> Mary Claire Randolph, "'Candour' in XVIIIth-Century Satire," 46; OED Online

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury's Culture of Politeness*, 13, 195-196; B. D. Barger, "Lord Dartmouth's Patronage, 1772-1775," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (April, 1958), 196; Corbyn Morris, *An Essay Towards Fixing the Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, and Ridicule* (London, 1744), as cited in Mary Claire Randolph, "'Candour' in XVIIIth-Century Satire," 47-48.

polite society, heralded by English philosophers, aristocrats, and cultural commentators, resonated through print to a rapidly growing literate audience. The notion that *only* aristocrats or landed gentry could possess candor survived only until the first middling or working-class English subjects began to read about and, eventually, mimic polite manners. “Candour’s” utility expanded vastly, becoming accessible to a wider array of English society domestically, and abroad in the American colonies. The expansion of the public sphere consequently made high-culture ideas more accessible and allowed the very possibility of candor amongst non-elites. The continued growth of the public sphere in America, fueled by the experience of the American Revolution, encouraged a slight but profound alteration in the use of candor. “Candour” in American society joined other words like “virtue” and “patriotism” in the vocabulary of republican discourse.<sup>50</sup>

### **Caleb’s Candor**

Candor was linked directly linked to the political power of knowledge. By the late eighteenth century “candour” fit comfortably within the language of social refinement and republican discourse. Beyond the lofty language of republicanism, encouraging a knowledgeable population made plain sense. In 1798, the printer Alexander Addison commented that as “politics, legislation, or the art of government” are sciences, their understanding requires constant and increasing circulation of knowledge. Terms, like “candour,” that had once marked a polite gentleman later signaled a virtuous republican. In Adam Smith’s sixth edition of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), he notes that “the real, revered, and impartial spectator...excluded by his own candour,” does not indulge in the spirit and “prejudices” of

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic*, 36-37, 118, 120-121.

parties and interests. Again, candor serves as a liberating quality, emancipating one's self from the "general contagion" of faction that seemed to permeate the air.<sup>65</sup>

To further illustrate "candour" in action, I turn to influential novel of the late eighteenth century by William Godwin, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). William Godwin published *Caleb Williams* as a fictional follow-up to his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). Considered one of the leading radical thinkers and supporters of the French Revolution in England, Godwin endorsed the democratic (even anarchical) values of the revolutionary era. After articulating his moral and political convictions in his *Enquiry*, Godwin sought to provide a complimentary work that would further illustrate his faith in a man's individual capacity to develop reason and benevolence with other men, but without the various institutions of oppression that the state creates. For Godwin, "candour" played an integral role in the process of an individual's moral development.<sup>66</sup>

His novel *Caleb Williams* traces the story of a young and curious Caleb, trapped in a world of state-sanctioned injustice, who is made a fugitive by his former guardian and employer, the tyrannical Mr. Falkland. Caleb, who characterizes himself as a curious "natural philosopher," inquired too deeply into his employer's affairs, uncovering the secret of a murder. Mr. Falkland had, in years past, murdered a tyrant, Mr. Tyrrel, but covered his tracks to avoid the law. Now Falkland, transformed into a tyrant himself, turned fortune against Caleb, framing him as the murderer. The rest of the story unfolds with Caleb on the hunt, subject to both physical torment

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<sup>65</sup> Adam Smith and Knud Haakonssen, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 8, 2015), 180-181; Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 122.

<sup>66</sup> Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson's Secrets: Death and Desire at Monticello*, (New York: Basic Books,, 2005), 105; William Godwin and David McCracken, *Caleb Williams*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), viii, x.

and a “nightmare of irrationality” from his pursuer. Caleb spends his days and nights on the move, tortured by the secret he hides of Falkland’s murderer.<sup>67</sup>

The final scene of *Caleb Williams* depicts Caleb in a courtroom, prepared to take his revenge against his tormenter, the man who now maintained “the appearance of a corpse.” Mr. Falkland’s tyrannical impulses, which Caleb prescribes as a disease of the mind, had eroded his body. Upon the sight of decrepit man, Caleb felt inspired to “throw my share of this wretchedness from me...such as an impartial spectator would desire.” Caleb stood and began to speak openly before the magistrate and the man who drove him “from place to place, deprived of peace, of honest fame, even of bread.” Caleb recounted “a plain and unadulterated tale” and engaged in self-scrutiny, condemning his withholding of truth, thereby prolonging the suffering of both the hunter and the hunted. “I came to accuse...[but] I proclaim to all the world that Mr. Falkland is a man worthy of affection and kindness, and that I am myself the basest and most odious of mankind!” Caleb’s self-deprecation, he expected, would turn the magistrate against him, and wipe clean the slate of Mr. Falkland.<sup>68</sup>

Instead all who heard Caleb affirmed his candor. All in the court “manifested their sympathy in the tokens of my penitence...[and] melted into tears.” Mr. Falkland himself was overwhelmed. Affirming Caleb’s candor and sincerity, Mr. Falkland rose from his chair, lunged forward, and “threw himself into my arms! Williams, he said, you have conquered!” Caleb’s exercise in candid self-scrutiny emancipated his mind from the “nightmare” he had endured, relinquished his falsehoods, and revealed the truth. His candor not only freed himself, but

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<sup>67</sup> Nancy Isenberg, *Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 280-281; Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson’s Secrets*, 106; William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 4.

<sup>68</sup> Nancy Isenberg, *Aaron Burr*, 281; Andrew Burstein, *Jefferson’s Secrets*, 108; William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 319, 323.



“conquered” the room, liberating Mr. Falkland and company from the pains they had suffered under the terrible episode they had experienced.<sup>69</sup>

The way in which Caleb Williams relinquished his foibles and falsehoods demonstrates the social value in candor. Candor, in this sense, not only elevated himself, but those around him. The court scene from the end of *Caleb Williams* plays out time and again throughout the United States in the early republic. Through print, men and women exhibited candor as a liberating and elevating quality that positioned themselves to best facilitate friendships and pursue respectability. Candor was essential to the exchanges of knowledge that took place within the republic of letters.

Moving forward, I intend to focus on open-mindedness and impartiality as the central definitions of “candour.” Unlike the earlier and passive meanings of “candour,” impartiality and openness imply acts of liberation. To possess candor required one’s freedom *from* bias and freedom *from* reserve. The eighteenth-century change in emphasis from “purity *of*” to “freedom *from*” signals a profound transformation of the social and political context in which people used “candour.” Hatton, Davis, and others used candor in the public sphere routinely to codify the preceding change. In the late eighteenth century, its use held political implications, elevating an individual to the position of the candid observer, separating them from the conspiratorial environment of the 1790s. For one to profess candor was to surrender one’s biases and their reserve in the name of a higher cause: the pursuit of knowledge on behalf of the public good.

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<sup>69</sup> William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 323-324.

## Chapter Two: “The Tuneful Daughter of the Wye”<sup>70</sup>

In early January 1793, the ship *Montgomery* belatedly arrived at its destination. The fully rigged vessel, stowing passengers and elegant clothing accessories, departed from London in late October 1792 and continued its regular crossing of the Atlantic to New York City. After navigating a winter storm that destroyed the *Montgomery*'s mast and punctured the hull, Captain J. Bunyan, the ship's master, docked the ship in Boston for repairs. Once the *Montgomery* was adequately restored to complete the voyage, Bunyan steered the vessel for New York. One of the passengers was Ann Julia Hatton.<sup>71</sup>

Within one month of her arrival in New York, Hatton submitted at least four poems under the pseudonym “Julia” to various magazines. She hoped to find a new “circle form'd of friends...to share the pang, or joy that fills the mind.” As a stranger, Hatton needed to project certain personal qualities, political sentiments, and literary skills that would best guarantee acceptance into the community that she sought. Despite the many individual qualities and literary styles that Hatton revealed in her series of poems, her display of candor was the most important. Hatton's impulse “to share” her mind implies self-awareness. The next step for her was to join a group of like-minded individuals and to engage in candid self-exploration to share and deepen that awareness. Candid exploration served as a kind of liberating exercise of self-scrutiny illustrated in *Caleb Williams* and linked to our modern understanding of transparency. By expressing her deepest sentiments and sharing her mind, by acting with candor, Hatton secured the friendships she sought, and with them created a shared sense of community. Relying on her

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<sup>70</sup> “*Julia's Bard*,” *Weekly Museum*, 22 June 1793

<sup>71</sup> *Weekly Museum*, 26 January 1793; *Lloyd's List*, No. 2447, Tuesday 23 October 1792; *Lloyd's List*, No. 2478, Friday 8 February 1793; *Lloyd's List*, No. 2480, Friday 15 February 1793; *Weekly Museum*, 12 January 1793.

literary display of candor, Hatton wrote prolifically to fulfill a sense of belonging that others had denied her while she lived in England.<sup>72</sup>

Hatton's calculated attempt to lure the attention of like-minded individuals succeeded. On March 2, Richard Davis, using the pseudonym "Lycidas," published a flattering poem, feeling it necessary to illustrate "the impressions made upon [his] mind by the polished pen of JULIA."<sup>73</sup> His stanzas were so gracious that they merited the following response from Hatton on March 9:

"What Star art thou that thro' this northern sky,  
Pour'st the bright rays of sacred poesy?  
What tuneful bard whose soft Orphean strain,  
Charms from my aching heart its savage pain?  
Tell me, enchanter, tell me art thou,  
Th' *Muse's fav'rite Son?* – full well I know thee now."<sup>74</sup>

Over the next four months they built a friendship through the exchange of inquisitive and colorful poems in the *Weekly Museum*, much to the irritation of at least two subscribers who complained of their rather conspicuous flirtatious behavior.<sup>75</sup>

Hatton attracted Richard Davis's full and immediate attention, and they intrigued each other. The continued exchange of poems initiated a dynamic and fascinating friendship that resulted in Hatton's introduction to democratic-republican opposition, and assimilation into the theatrical and literary circles of New York. As young adults attempting to maneuver in a post-

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<sup>72</sup> "VERSES, Written by a lady on her landing at New York, Jan. 7, 1793," *The Columbian Museum; or, Universal Asylum, 1793*; "Address to a Lark," *Weekly Museum*, 19 January 1793. To date, only a handful of articles or books provide short biographies of Hatton's life. For the sake of time, I draw both from her own writings and those of others to trace the story of her life before moving to New York.

<sup>73</sup> *Weekly Museum*, March 2, 1793.

<sup>74</sup> *Weekly Museum*, March 9, 1793.

<sup>75</sup> Rob K. Haberman, "Magazines, Presentation Networks, and the Cultivation of Authorship in Post-Revolutionary America," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Biography*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2008), 147.

revolutionary era, Ann Hatton and Richard Davis relied on and displayed candor to establish footing within these circles of political friends.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the impulses that compelled Hatton to lend her efforts to democratic clubs, and to examine the literary displays of candor that facilitated Hatton and Davis's unique friendship. Hatton's calculated move to establish networks through her use of candor illustrates her resolve to secure friendships and to fulfill a sense of belonging. Given Hatton's particular circumstance as a disabled woman, she was denied opportunities for a professional and successful performing career afforded to her older siblings while she still lived in England. Hatton turned to literature and attempted to associate with England's more transgressive and controversial figures. The development of Hatton's literary career, the unfortunate circumstances of her disability, and her acquaintance with England's radical political and social figures conditioned her to help shape a new culture of friendship and respectability.

### **The "Genius"**

Ann Julia Hatton, later known to the literary world as Ann of Swansea, lived her entire life on the edges of respectability and destitution. In 1793, Ann Hatton arrived to New York leaving behind in England an unfulfilled career in theatre and literature. Born into the famous and theatrical Kemble family on April 29, 1764, Ann Julia Kemble could have expected the same successful acting career that her older siblings enjoyed. Sarah (Kemble) Siddons, John Phillip Kemble, and Elizabeth (Kemble) Whitelock all rose to near-legendary fame early in their acting careers. As a theatrical family, frequently on the road, Hatton's parents, Roger and Sarah Kemble, provided enough education to their children to make use of acting careers. According to Thomas Campbell, a friend and admirer of Sarah Siddons, the Kembles' education "could not be expected...to be very accomplished; but included instruction both in vocal and instrumental

music.” There was a problem for Hatton. Born with what she called a “congenital disability,” Hatton was denied an education beyond “five months at a writing school.” Already limited as a woman, Hatton’s disability further complicated the prospects for a fulfilling life in theater.<sup>76</sup>

Most of late eighteenth-century Anglo-American society still believed that the realm of politics belonged only to men. The education required for a successful career within the arena of politics... With the exception of girls raised in the highest classes of society, most women received frivolous schooling, limiting them to roles within the household. Barred from reading books on political or religious discourse, discouraged from learning foreign languages, and tasked to learn “practical” occupations, girls were reared to be obscure in the political life of the modern nation.<sup>77</sup>

However, the experience of the American and French Revolutions brought the issue women’s education, citizenship, and their larger role in maintaining free societies to the fore. Injecting themselves into the republic of letters, Judith Sargent Murray and Mercy Otis Warren in America, and Mary Wollstonecraft in England, published diligently throughout revolutionary era into the 1790s. As Nancy Isenberg notes, despite never having “crossed the threshold into the highly visible world of public deliberation,” these women succeeding in expressing both their unyielding optimism and great frustration with the revolutionary ideals that ought to have been brought to fruition. Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) principally took up the issue of expanding women’s educational and economic opportunities. As Wollstonecraft acknowledges, the issues of class was intertwined with politics and women’s

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<sup>76</sup> *Ann Hatton to J.P. Collier, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1832*; Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 26; Jim Henderson, “Ann of Swansea: A Life on the Edge,” *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2006), 1, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 7, 24-25.

education. The lack of educational opportunities afforded to women often pressured them to occupy working-class professions and crafts. In Ann Hatton's case, convinced that she was unfit for the same theatrical education provided to her siblings, Roger and Sarah Kemble intended to apprentice Ann to a mantua (or hat) maker.<sup>78</sup>

Hatton's political and social sentiments grew from a myriad of experiences from her childhood and young adulthood. Perhaps the most influential experiences were the ones that she suffered as a lame woman. Despite her resiliency, Hatton remained bitter about her parents' total disregard for her education, and recognized her strabismus and awkward gait as the principle sources of her lifelong woes.<sup>80</sup> Hatton's regular exposure to eighteenth-century cultural attitudes towards the marginalized groups of British society fostered sentiments that later compelled her to lend her efforts to the democratic-republican clubs of New York City. By coming to terms with these cultural attitudes, we can best understand Hatton's sentiments.<sup>81</sup>

English print culture portrayed the lame as awkward nuisances to society, immobile and incapable of life's most necessary and simple activities. Through poems, epigraphs, essays, and joke books, the refined classes of English society mocked lameness and deformity as physical manifestations of a person's moral or rational condition. Seventeenth-century Platonist philosopher Henry More explained that attractive human forms "gratify our sight as having a

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<sup>78</sup> Nancy Isenberg, *Sex & Citizenship in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 16-17; Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 40-41; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 189; Jim Henderson, "Ann of Swansea," 5.

<sup>80</sup> Strabismus is the medical term for a condition of the eyes in which one or both of them are unaligned or not oblique. The British colloquial term "squint" will be used hereafter. For further analysis of deformity in eighteenth-century English society and politics see Roger Lund, "Laughing at Cripples: Ridicule, Deformity and the Argument from Design," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Fall 2005), and Shearer West, "Wilke's Squint: Synecdochic Physiognomy and Political Identity in Eighteenth-Century Print Culture," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Fall 1999).

<sup>81</sup> *Ann Hatton to J.P. Collier, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1832.*

neerer cognation with the Soul of man, that is rationally and intellectually.” John Locke noted in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) that the human form, “as the leading Quality,” defined the presence of one’s “Rational Soul.” If the “Rational Soul” was inseparable from the natural human design, Hatton’s deformity was simply antithetical to “Nature” and “Reason.”<sup>83</sup>



Figure 2 - "Ann of Swansea" 1835<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Roger Lund, “Laughing at Cripples: Ridicule, Deformity and the Argument from Design,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Fall 2005), 92-93, 94-95, 96.

<sup>84</sup> The above portrait of Ann Hatton is just one of the two that have survived the past. The painting, by William John Watkeys, was completed in 1835 in Swansea, Wales, just three years before Hatton’s death. Her striking appearance resembles that of her sister, Sarah Siddons, who also possessed a large frame. In the last years of her life, as William Dunlap notes, no longer able to walk she became “corpulent.” Perhaps most striking about the image is the manner in which Ann is dressed. For a woman who once espoused anti-aristocratic sentiments, her headdress and jewelry suggest regality. Perhaps in an attempt to avoid upsetting the elderly Hatton, Watkeys

Hatton's physical infirmity and squint also offended popular notions of beauty. According to the historian Martin Battestin, by the eighteenth century many English intellectuals understood that "beauty was objectively founded in a principle of Nature as firmly fixed as the law of gravity: namely, the principle of symmetry and proportion."<sup>86</sup> In a letter from August 1775, Henry Bate detailed the appearance of a pregnant Sarah Siddons on the stage at Drury Lane in London. Despite her "big belly," Bate identified Siddons's beauty with her "remarkably fine" figure and "whole shape." Despite the significance of Henry More's claim that symmetry and proportion were "the discernment of *Reason*, not the Object of Sense," the English wondered at beauty precisely because it pleased the eyes. In contrast to beauty, symmetry, and proportion, deformity and lameness alarmingly offended what historian Lennard Davis calls the "sensory field of the observer." The cultural emphasis on the body as the theatrical vessel of beauty perhaps best explains why Hatton could have never expected to gain professional respectability quite like her siblings. Hatton was therefore physically theatrical in the disturbing sense. Her awkward limp and non-oblique eyes drew ridicule in the place of admiration and wonder.<sup>87</sup>

Despite Hatton's position as a younger sister of the Kemble dynasty, members of her family, the theatrical community, and the London press frequently ridiculed her misfortunes. As a child, her siblings routinely teased her infirmity and "called [her] by way of reproach the

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diminished the effect of her squint. He illustrates her condition in another way, by slightly shading the right side of her face

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/ann-of-swanssea-17641838-224909>

<sup>86</sup> Martin C. Battestin, *The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 23 as cited in Lund, 96.

<sup>87</sup> Lund, "Laughing at Cripples," 95; Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, 20, 255, 260; Lindal Buchanan, "Sarah Siddons and Her Place in Rhetorical History," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn 2007), 414, 431; Lennard J. Davis, "Dr. Johnson, Amelia, and the Discourse of Disability in the Eighteenth Century," in *"Defects": Engendering the Modern Body*, ed. Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 57, 56, as cited in Lund 94-95 fn 9.



Genius.”<sup>88</sup> Historian Lucy Delap asserts that the eighteenth-century use of “genius” mostly identified or praised an individual for their astounding gifts or talents.<sup>89</sup> As with other professional artists, actors and actresses needed to sharpen and refine their “genius” as a means of gaining success and respectability. In 1795, the actor turned theater critic, William Lewis, published his *Secret History of the Green Room*, examining the careers of England’s five most accomplished performers. Two of Lewis’s “top five” included Hatton’s older brother and sister, John Phillip Kemble and Sarah Siddons. In volume two of the *Secret History*, Lewis defines a “Performer’s” genius as their “latent powers...generally ripened by gradual encouragement.” In the eyes of Hatton’s family and critics, her deformity rendered her “latent powers” incapable of encouragement of any sort. Thus, their use of “genius” evoked mockery, stressing Hatton’s physical limitations as the defining characteristics of her untapped potential.<sup>90</sup>

Adding insult to injury, critics frequently exploited the unfortunate circumstances of Hatton’s condition throughout her young adulthood to memorialize the success of her already-eulogized siblings. During a moment when women’s presence on the stage resembled a social battleground, theatrical critics and aristocrats praised Siddons as the ideal actress as a means to preserve their vision of a woman’s proper place in politics and the arts.<sup>92</sup> Siddons’s phenomenal oratory and striking appearance brought her into the highest circles of the arts and English aristocracy. According to Lindal Buchanan, Siddons drew the attention of “luminaries” such as William Pitt the Younger, Charles Fox, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and even King George III and

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<sup>88</sup> *Ann Hatton to J.P. Collier, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1832.*

<sup>89</sup> Lucy Delap, “The Superwoman: Theories of Gender and Genius in Edwardian Britain,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (March 2004), 103.

<sup>90</sup> William Lewis, *The Secret History of the Green Room: Containing Authentic and Entertaining Memoirs of the Actors and Actresses in the Three Theatres Royal* (London, 1795), 2; Deirdre David, *Fanny Kemble: A Performed Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 38.

<sup>92</sup> Lord Byron referred to Sarah Siddons as the “beau idéal of acting.”

Queen Charlotte, who later appointed her the official Reader to the Royal Family.<sup>93</sup> Beyond her masterful performances and the publicity they attracted, Siddons avoided composing or writing opera, an intellectual endeavor only undertaken by men. A woman who participated in a field traditionally reserved for men earned her the stigma of a “public” woman, or publically “available.”<sup>94</sup> Siddons’s contribution to the arts was limited to acting, or interpreting, not writing or creating drama.<sup>95</sup>

The image of Siddons as the jewel of the empire rested upon the public’s appetite for theatrical scandal. What scandal would be complete without a villain? To perpetuate the image of the virtuous Siddons, writers in London juxtaposed Hatton as the stereotype of the immodest and licentious public woman. In the second volume of Lewis’s *Secret History*, he recounts an episode wherein a “paragrammatical assassin” criticized Sarah Siddons for being “extremely avarice and uncharitable.” The “assassin’s” charge followed in the wake of an ensuing emotional and financial controversy involving Siddons’s sister, Ann Hatton (then Ann Curtis.)<sup>96</sup>

From 1784 to 1792 Hatton suffered from a series of damning misfortunes, leaving her in dire financial straits. Within three years of her first marriage, Hatton discovered that her first husband, one “Mr. Curtis,” was already married. The incident shamed Ann Hatton and alienated her from her friends and family. Unable to encourage sympathy or aid, Hatton abandoned what little performing she had dabbled into, and turned to the quack sexologist Dr. James Graham for employment as a lecturer in his Temple of Health and Hyman. Dr. Graham’s pseudo-science of electro-sexual therapy and his Temple soon after collapsed, once again leaving Hatton

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<sup>93</sup> Lindal Buchanan, “Sarah Siddons and Her Place in Rhetorical History,” 418.

<sup>94</sup> Amelia Rauser, “The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire: Between Caricature and Allegory in 1784,” *Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Fall 2002), 29.

<sup>95</sup> Deirdre David, *Fanny Kemble*, 37.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, 260; William Lewis, *The Secret History of the Green Room*, 19.

unemployed and publically shamed. She thereafter attempted suicide by ingesting poison in Westminster Abbey. The suicide attempt at Westminster, a public place, attracted considerable attention from London newspapers, drawing both sympathy and loathing for Hatton's suffering.<sup>97</sup>

Returning to a *Secret History*, William Lewis identified Hatton's presence to be a "subject of detraction against her sister." Describing Hatton as a "vicious woman...at which decency would blush," Lewis acknowledges the Westminster suicide attempt, a matter of human suffering, and simply concludes that Hatton's principal motive was to shame Sarah "to accede to her demands" for financial support. Like other contemporaries, Lewis portrayed Hatton as two familiar stereotypes: first, as the token cripple, a nuisance and an obstruction to society and to the development of the pure Sarah Siddons; and second, as the "vicious" and immodest public woman. By illustrating Hatton in both negative images, through slander, Lewis elevated Siddons and strengthened her public image as the politically uninvolved (i.e. "virtuous") and modest woman of the stage.<sup>98</sup>

Siddons is remembered precisely for the reason that Hatton is not: she embodied the contemporary perception of female virtue, and epitomized the exception to the dominant view of actresses as leading immoral lives. She also avoided the realm of public discourse, sparing herself from the dominant stereotypes of the "public" woman.<sup>99</sup> Hatton's continued public attention (intentional or not) framed her as the gendered stereotype of the "public," licentious woman. But despite her hindered efforts to pursue theatrical respectability, she gained a unique perspective of the social and cultural woes of the times. Abandoning the stage, she embraced her

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<sup>97</sup> Jim Henderson, "Ann of Swansea," 10-12; Deirdre David, *Fanny Kemble*, 37-38.

<sup>98</sup> William Lewis, *The Secret History of the Green Room*, 18-19.

<sup>99</sup> Jacqueline Letzter and Robert Adelson, *Women Writing Opera: Creativity and Controversy in the Age of the French Revolution*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3, 68.

skills as a writer, and turned to the pen and the public sphere. But to continue injecting herself into the public sphere, she needed to profess candor as a way to liberate herself from the poisonous image of the “public” women prescribed to her. She also needed inspiration from a friend.

### **“To Her Grace, the Duchess of Devonshire”**

Although Hatton’s condition as an infirmed woman made her an easy target for the London papers, what alarmed and antagonized Hatton’s family and critics more so was her continued association with the more transgressive figures of English politics society. Throughout the years of her youth, Hatton displayed public admiration for the Duchess of Devonshire, a controversial icon of British femininity. Hoping to secure some measure of notoriety, Hatton attained the Duchess’s patronage and hoped to further exploit the opportunities provided her support. Hatton’s admiration for and acquaintance with individuals like the Duchess reveals her developing political sentiments and attempts at belonging, and presages her later association with the democratic-republicans of New York.

Georgina, the Duchess of Devonshire, lived to stir the waters. Born into the highest echelons of English aristocracy in 1757, Georgina would have been expected by her family and peers to uphold classical tastes, both in manners and fashion, and to exemplify feminine virtue. However, before her twentieth birthday, the Duchess of Devonshire fashioned herself as an icon of dissenting British femininity. The Duchess associated with a group of England’s upper crust (perhaps another informal club) who were known as *le ton*. As Jim Henderson remarks, members of *le ton* were notoriously renowned for their frivolity, extra-marital sexual adventures, outrageous fashion, and frequent gambling. Falling into this group by the mid-1770s, the Duchess quickly ascended to status of fashion icon and trendsetter, most notably for starting the

craze of placing ostrich plumes in her hat or hair. Such absurd behavior disturbed many in English society, including the writer William Combe, who equated women's increasing frivolity with the decline of British morals.<sup>100</sup>

The most disturbing aspect of these ladies' presence was their insistence on direct political engagement. The Duchess of Devonshire brought this engagement to new heights during the Parliamentary elections of 1784. During what many historians consider to be a "watershed" election, the 1784 election pitted Charles James Fox, the Whig libertine, and William Pitt the Younger, supported by none other than King George III. The Duchess, whose support for Fox was grounded on political convictions rather than family ties, traveled Westminster and canvassed voters to support Fox by allegedly blessing them with kisses. The specific details of the Duchess's soliciting methods remain contested, but her canvassing certainly helped to secure for Fox a decisive win in the election.<sup>101</sup>

It did not matter whether or not the Duchess actually walked the streets of Westminster, kissing butchers as she passed. Her and her group of friends' soliciting drew remarkable attention; the rumors were sensational. Printers in London exploited the chance to publish provocative caricatures similar to "The Devonshire Amusement," pictured below. Art historian Amelia Rauser suggests that at least eighty-nine cartoons and caricatures satirizing the "butcher-kissing" scandal were produced in April 1784 alone.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Amanda Foreman, *Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire* (New York: Modern Library, 2001); Amelia Rauser, "The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire," 30; Jim Henderson, "Ann of Swansea," 7. The "buzz" word in eighteenth century Anglo-American society for this kind of overt, sexual swagger was "licentiousness." Such unharnessed behavior was typically attributed to decaying morals.

<sup>101</sup> Amelia Rauser, "The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire," 24, 28.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

One particularly nasty account of the election published by “Lovers of Truth and Justice” complained: “no neighborhood was ever *so-beverminated* as Westminster is at present... as is generally the case, the bitch Foxes are by much the greatest nuisances to the *honest* and *decent* inhabitants.” Degrading women’s bodies to that of vermin, the author illustrates general fears concerning women’s involvement in the public sphere. What about the Duchess’s actions warranted such a volume of shock? As the preceding passage and the image below suggest, the Duchess’s direct involvement in soliciting votes for a political campaign struck a deep nerve, a fear of gender inversion.<sup>103</sup>

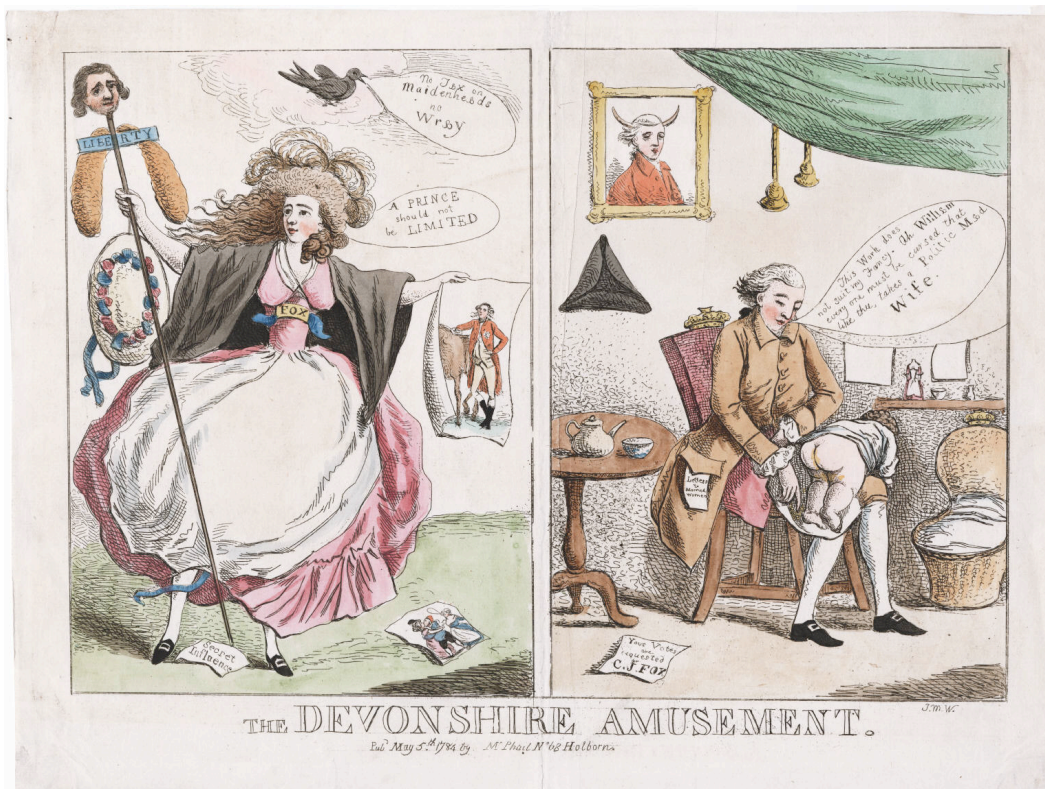


Figure 3 - "The Devonshire Amusement"

<sup>103</sup> Lord Hood and Sir Cecil Wray, “Queries,” as seen in, Lovers of Truth and Justice [pseud.], *History of the Westminster Election; Containing Every Material Occurrence from its Commencement on the First of April to the Final Close of the Poll, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May*, (London, 1784), 249. Google Books: <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=UOJJAQAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA86>

The above caricature from May of 1784 depicts the Duchess (left) campaigning for Charles James Fox, and her husband William (right) at home changing their child's diaper. Even at first glance, the inversion is clear. While the inspired and revolutionary-looking Duchess, ostrich plumes in hair, directly engages in a political campaign for the libertine Fox, William remains at home and complains. "This Work does not suit my Fancy. Ah William everyone must be cursed that like thee, takes a Politic[ally] Mad Wife." The reverse in gender roles, instigated by the Duchess's political activity, not only perverts the prevailing English understanding of who ought to participate in politics, but disturbs the life of her own family.<sup>105</sup>

Perhaps the most revealing, yet subtle, detail of the cartoon is the rogue page that lies between the Duchess's feet entitled "Secret Influence." Intentionally placing this sheet between the Duchess's legs and underneath her skirt, the author illustrates contemporary fears of the source of a public woman's influence. The dominant understanding in English and American societies in regard to women in the public sphere deemed that it was a woman's natural tendency to wield her political influence in secretive ways. Through gossip, behind-the-scenes maneuvering, and the author's suggestive "Secret Influence," women manipulated the workings of the public sphere. If secrecy was a public woman's natural tendency, relinquishing that stigma, through displays of candor, proved more difficult for women than for men.

If the preceding images and accusations were attached to the Duchess, why would Hatton want to emulate such a figure? Perhaps most importantly, the Duchess possessed the pedigree, wealth, and connections to bestow patronage to Hatton's literary endeavors. Beyond the immediate concern of securing patronage, Hatton desired to emulate the Duchess because of her standing as a public woman. As a politically active figure, socialite, and fashion icon, the

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<sup>105</sup> "The Devonshire Amusement," May 1784, *History and Other Thoughts*.  
<http://historyandotherthoughts.blogspot.com/2012/10/the-devonshire-amusement.html>

Duchess surrounded herself with like-minded individuals who also lived on the fringes of English society. Recognizing the community (*le ton*) linked to the Duchess's lifestyle and convictions, Hatton yearned for a sense of belonging in the Duchess's world. We can discern this because of Hatton's direct participation in democratic-republican activities while in New York, perhaps directly inspired by Georgina's political stunt in 1784.

The nature of Hatton's relationship with the Duchess of Devonshire is unclear. Conflicting sources suggest that Hatton only knew the Duchess at a distance, while others hint at a tangible friendship.<sup>106</sup> What is clear, however, is that Hatton greatly admired the Duchess for her bravado, "good sense," and "sparkling wit."<sup>107</sup> At the age of nineteen in 1783, Hatton published *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, a collection she compiled on her birthday. Just a year before the Duchess's provocative "butcher-kissing" scandal, Hatton dedicated *Poems* to the Duchess, hoping secure recognition (and perhaps avoid sharp criticism) from London's literary circles. Another notable on Hatton's list of subscribers was one "Mr. Fox," perhaps Charles James Fox. Catching on to Hatton's move, a commentator for London's monthly *English Review*, commented that her "precaution, though modest, was not necessary." He continued: "Her poems are natural, unaffected, and elegant. They discover a species of sensibility which is peculiar to the female heart." Hatton's genius was not so far gone after all.<sup>108</sup>

Hatton's 1783 collection may have been an attempt to flex her literary capabilities, but they also reveal her developing political leanings and her attempt to associate with the Duchess's circle of influence. The opening poem of the collection, "Peace, A Poem," serves as a panegyric

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<sup>106</sup> Jim Henderson, "Ann of Swansea," 10.

<sup>107</sup> "An IMPROMPTU on the Duchess of Devonshire," *The Edinburgh Weekly Magazine*, 17 July 1783.

<sup>108</sup> Ann Julia Curtis, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, (London: Millan & Rae, 1783), v; "Art. 24, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects, By Ann Curtis, Sister of Sarah Siddons*," *English Review*, March 1784, 229-230.



of the British officers who died in the American Revolutionary War. Though Hatton's language illustrates national pride and solemn reflection for the British dead, she carefully injects small passages that hint at her disapproval of the war and of the political divisions within Parliament that prolonged the suffering. "Full many an orphan mourns a father's fate, / Who might have liv'd to bless their later days, / Had deadly Faction, and contending hate, / Ne'er led him thro' Ambition's fatal maze." Hatton's subtle jab at the war and "deadly Faction" fell in line with Whig opposition to Britain's war in America, sentiments that the Duchess shared, as evident from her support for Fox.<sup>109</sup>

A second poem worth noting from the *Poems* is "An Impromptu." Full of the language and imagery of Greek mythology, Hatton's poem praised the Duchess for her "pure mind," "good sense," and "sparkling wit." Hatton went so far as to crown the Duchess as the great "PROTECTRESS OF THE ARTS!" Hatton's flattery may have just been a curtsy, but it nonetheless shows that she wished to tactfully position herself in favor with a public woman as politically involved as the Duchess. By maneuvering to associate with, and not just hide behind, the charismatic Duchess of Devonshire, Hatton asserted herself as an aspiring public woman.<sup>110</sup>

It is important to note that, from the Duchess, Hatton drew the model of a public woman, not of the impartial spectator. The ideal of the impartial spectator traditionally applied to men who operated in the both the literary and physical public spheres. Men relied on their social activities (clubs) and their displays of wit and candor to attain respectability in public life. Women, even at the end of the eighteenth century, were generally considered incapable of candor in public life because it was their "natural tendency" to rely on gossip and covert

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<sup>109</sup> Ann Julia Curtis, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, vi, 2; Amelia Rauser, "The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire," 29-30.

<sup>110</sup> Ann Julia Curtis, *Poems*, 28-29.

participation. For Hatton, the Duchess represented an alternative model for participation in the public sphere, one that actively engaged in the public sphere and relied on displays of candor to liberate herself from the loaded title, “public” woman.

Sometime in 1792 Hatton and her second husband, Mr. William Hatton, decided to “jump ship” for New York. Crossing the cold Atlantic in the winter of 1792-1793, Hatton carried with her the burdens and joys of her life in England as it faded on the horizon. But she also held tightly to strong convictions. Anxious to find a “circle form’d of friends,” Hatton prepared a series of poems to publish immediately upon arrival to New York. Contained within them were vignettes of her past life and present conditions. Like the fictional Boston widow, and by extension the Spectator, Hatton professed candor by revealing certain sentiments in the hopes of emancipating her name from the image of the “public” woman, and of acquiring like-minded friends and the respectability to follow.<sup>112</sup>

### **Julia and Lycidas**

Hatton’s first poem, which she wrote on board the *Montgomery*, was published in the *Weekly Museum* on January 19, 1793. “Address to a Lark” details Hatton’s encounter with a caged bird and reveals her intent to secure the attention of New York’s literary community. In the opening lines, Hatton questions the bird and laments its condition as a prisoner, bound for an unknown future: “Why did’st thou vent’rous skim the main, And dare th’ dangerous flood?...Thou shalt no more at ‘Heaven’s gate sing’...But in a wiry prison pent, Thou shalt thy little sorrows vent.” Hatton’s compassion for her caged friend reflects a ubiquitous literary current of the day: feeling as literary subject. Impassioned excess dominated late eighteenth-century literature in the transatlantic world, cultivating the expression that the era of the early

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<sup>112</sup> Henderson, “Ann of Swansea,” 16-17.

republic was “an age of passion.” Hatton’s display of sympathy and use of melodramatic language convinced her readers that she was in touch with, what the literary scholar Julia A. Stern calls, “the less rational post-Revolutionary ‘Enlightenment.’”<sup>113</sup>

Beyond Hatton’s ability to show off her literary skills, there is more at play. Hatton’s second poem, “Verses, Written by a Lady on Her Landing at New York,” was published in the January 1793 edition of Philadelphia’s *Columbian Museum* and shared a page with Thomas Paine’s “Epistle to the King of England.” Unlike in “Address,” Hatton channeled her sentiments to her new home and neighbors in New York. “Verses,” at once, displays Hatton’s self-scrutiny for venturing far from home, and joy for safe arrival to “the seat of sacred liberty.” Despite the degree with which Hatton yearns for home with “tearful eyes,” she fills the poem with expressions of ardent patriotism and revolutionary fervor:

“Ne’er in this land shall freedom’s blaze expire,  
The son shall catch it fervid from its fire;  
From shore to shore the glorious flame shall roll.  
‘Till all are free from ‘Indies to the pole...’  
Glowing with virtue, shall be taught to feel  
No more for private ease, but public weal.”

Hatton’s powerful imagery of “freedom’s blaze” and her tying of “virtue” to the “public weal” reveal her political support, or patriotism, for the universal struggle for the rights of man. The political flavor that Hatton displays in “Verses” illustrates her intent to attract New York’s French Revolutionary sympathizers and to lend her support to democratic-republican operatives as political allies.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> “Address to a Lark,” *Weekly Museum*, 19 January 1793; Julia A. Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1-3.

<sup>114</sup> “VERSES, Written by a lady on her landing at New York, Jan. 7, 1793,” *The Columbian Museum; or, Universal Asylum*, 1793.

Hatton probably intended “Address” and “Verses” to be complimentary pieces, for each reveals a great deal more of her sentiments and intentions in the context of the other. Consider Hatton’s expression of loneliness in “Verses:” “Unknown, alas! I must wonder here; / No tender band of relatives I find / To share the pang, or joy that fills the mind.” For Hatton, loneliness represents a form of captivity, secluded from the bonds of friendship and association. She, indeed, may have escaped the Atlantic’s “deaf’ning roar” and gained the “wish’d for shore,” but journey took its toll. The apprehension of seclusion from home and relatives illustrated in “Verses” mirrors the precise form of bondage that Hatton introduces in “Address to a Lark.”

Hatton’s play on the theme of captivity is dynamic and impressive. First, Hatton, with subtlety, acknowledges the paradox of slavery and freedom in American life:

“E’en on that shore where Freedom’s shrine  
Is rear’d on principles divine,  
Thou wilt a captive dwell...”

After briefly lamenting the lark’s fate, Hatton charges the bird to “no more repine.” She continues: “the smiles of beauty will be thine... Thou shalt forget thy native land, and live a *happy* slave.” Hatton’s emphasis on the possibility of “*happy*” bondage suggests a hint of sarcasm. Conditioned by time and distance away from home, the lark’s physical bondage yields to an emotional kind of captivity, eventually corrupting the bird to “bless the hour” when fate carried it “across the western wave.” In this context, another glance at Hatton’s language of her native land in “Verses” reveals the captive’s true identity in “Address:” herself.

Captivity served as a powerful theme in late-eighteenth century women’s discourse. Hatton may have drawn inspiration for “Address” directly from a passage of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In Wollstonecraft’s chapter on “Observations on the State of [Women’s] Degradation,” she uses the analogy of the caged bird to

illustrate women's marginalization in modern society. "Confined then in cages like the feathered race, [women] have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch." Linking this major theme in the discourse of women's literature to the experience of her own life, Hatton intended to place herself alongside leading women in the advancement of the Rights of Man and Woman. Hatton, perhaps, wondered too whether her voyage to New York would fulfill her aspirations, or serve as just another perch.<sup>115</sup>

The caged-bird metaphor affirms Hatton's sentiments and intentions upon arriving in New York, and illustrates her attempts at candor. Despite the opportunities her new home may afford, she felt captivated by her failed attempts at gaining respectability in England, and by the prospect of an unfulfilling future. Will she forget her native land? Will she remain a captive? Or will a new "circle form'd of friends" liberate her from the wiry prison of doubt? These uncertainties prayed upon Hatton's mind as she made the journey across the Atlantic. To alleviate these concerns, while maintaining her standing as a public woman, Hatton needed to project her candor. Hatton's display of candor in the preceding poems was calculated for effect – a means of exploiting an opportunity to secure literary reputation as a form of political participation.

Her ploy worked. After Richard Davis first inquired more of Hatton in early March 1793, the two continued to exchange a series of poems under the pseudonyms "Julia" and "Lycidas." From March until August, they wrote melodramatic pieces that revealed their talents to each other, but also of their intentions. Though no smoking gun confirms the following claim, I speculate that Davis and Hatton met at least once before August 1793. He recognized in her, and she in him, complementary talents that they could, together, exploit to gain further

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<sup>115</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Carol H. Poston, (New York: Norton & Company Press, 1975), 56.

respectability. They teamed up, and by November Davis had drafted what became the prologue, and perhaps the inspiration, for Hatton's opera, *Tammany; or, The Indian Chief*.

Hatton's immersion into New York's political, literary, and theatrical circles occurred with surprising speed and success. She had carefully positioned herself as a candid public figure, facilitating friendships that would allow opportunities for social advancement in her new home. More important than any of the friendships she gained while living in New York was with Davis. By the waning days of 1793, Davis had brought her into the circle of literary and democratic clubs who would eventually support her activity in the public sphere and legitimize her station as a public woman.

### Chapter Three: “The Muse’s Favorite Son”

In October 1792, while Hatton prepared for her journey across the Atlantic, Richard Davis published a critique of a close friend. By the age of twenty-one in 1792, Davis had failed to secure patronage to complete his studies at Columbia College, forcing him to take up carpentry. But Davis held tightly to his pen and pursued literary respectability through his association with other aspiring writers in New York. Davis’s article, “The Drone – No. VIII,” marked his second appearance in the *New York Magazine*. The subject of Davis’s critique, “Mr. Martlet,” was a fellow member of a literary club called the Calliopean Society. Its founders, including Martlet and Davis, organized the club in 1788 “for the express purpose of improving Education” for members and, more broadly, enlightening the inhabitants of New York City. The Calliopean Society thus positioned (and projected) itself as a component of the republic of letters operating on behalf of the public good.<sup>116</sup>

On the surface, Davis’s critique of Martlet seems to have little to do with enlightening the public. After introducing the “timid” Martlet, Davis mocks his shortcomings: “[Mr. Martlet] has found himself circumvented in business by the illiterate, eclipsed in company by the buffoon, and frustrated in his hopes of female favour by the more brilliant qualifications of the coxcomb.”<sup>117</sup> Taken at face value, Davis’s language suggests an attempt to slander Mr. Martlet. As an expression of deceit, slander disrupted harmonious relationships between individuals and the republic at large. However, Davis’s tone reveals more of an attempt at humor than slander,

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<sup>116</sup> “The Drone – No. VIII,” *New York Magazine*, October 1792; *Poems by R.B. Davis*, (New York: J. & T. Swords, 1807), vii-viii; *Proceedings of the Calliopean Society, Thursday, 24 November 1788*, New York Historical Society.

<sup>117</sup> Davis’s use of “coxcomb” in this context refers to an eighteenth-century dandy.

suggesting a hint of lightheartedness in his candid criticism. Davis's playful treatment of Martlet's foibles underscores the significance of literary criticism as a value of friendship.<sup>118</sup>

Despite Mr. Martlet's flaws and his "self-conceited" manner, Davis attempted to redeem the "old bachelor" by illustrating the "good qualities of his heart." In the company of his closest friends, Davis observes, "[Mr. Martlet] is entertaining, communicative, and desirous to please." Eclipsing the other desirable qualities, it is Mr. Martlet's sincerity towards the notion of fellowship and his lack of "*self-interest*" that most inspires Davis: "Our little society is never so happy as when he is present." Davis's italicized emphasis on Martlet's impartiality and his "more generous motive than that of *self-interest*," reveals his candor. Martlet's display of sincerity in the bonds of friendship reflected an inner-appreciation for his place within the "little society;" it was candor that best alleviated "the *somber* cloud of his external manner." Davis's emphasis on candor reveals what he and many others considered to be a central quality of democratic behavior.<sup>119</sup>

As other members of the Calliopean Society knew, "Mr. Martlet" did not actually exist. After Richard Davis's untimely death from yellow fever in the fall of 1799, his friends in the society began compiling all of his works and drafted a short biography. It was not until 1807, when Davis's friends submitted the compilation for publication, that they revealed Martlet's true identity. Mr. Martlet was, in fact, Richard Davis. Though Davis's piece maintained the appearance of one man's thoughtful critique of his peer, it was instead an exercise in candid self-scrutiny.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> "The Drone – No. VIII," *New York Magazine*, October 1792.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Richard Davis, *Poems*, xi.



The purpose behind Davis's use of the fictitious "Mr. Martlet" was not only to entertain, but to profess candor as a performative style. As an expression of open-mindedness, impartiality, and projection of knowledge on behalf of the public good, "candour" served as a status-forming quality. Americans with political or literary aspirations like Davis's professed candor as a means of asserting their civic value in the new American republic. It is important to note at this point that candor didn't always imply being perfectly truthful. Davis intentionally concealed his identity to *New York Magazine's* subscribers. But by concealing his literary identity to the public, Davis displayed humility to his fellow club members. "Humility" was another behavioral quality associated with "candour" in the lexicon of republican discourse.

Davis's literary exercise served a two-fold purpose. First, on a personal level, his display of candor best advanced Davis's respectability among his literary peers in the Calliopean Society. His externalization of a purportedly revealing self was equally an exercise of enlightened self-understanding, and a search for community. Second, by describing Mr. Martlet as a member of the society and his commitment to the genuine pursuit of knowledge and friendship, Davis sought to legitimize the Calliopean Society as an instrument of the public good. His multiple audiences not only expected candor of Richard Davis, but of the association that he represented. Club members and aspiring writers, like Davis, professed candor as a means of securing respectability for himself amongst his peers, and for the democratic clubs within which he so actively participated. Displays of candor allowed Davis and his friends to exercise behind the scenes in less-than-candid ways to fulfill personal ambitions.

### **"A simple, solitary Bard"**

Unlike Ann Hatton, Davis was not born into a well-connected family. What little details we can discern from his life rests in his own work, published in newspapers, or from others'

observations of him in club minutes, or from the short biography his Calliopean Society friends published in 1807. In the short span of his life, only twenty-eight years, Davis published at least forty-seven pieces of prose and poetry, operated at the cultural epicenter of democratic opposition in New York, edited a newspaper, and co-authored the first native-themed American opera. But in 1799, yellow fever struck down the young Davis, ending the life of a man who poised to join the ranks of Charles Brockden Brown and Washington Irving among America's first generation of great writers.<sup>121</sup>

Davis was born on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1771, into an artisan household. His father, a carpenter, likely intended to apprentice Davis to another artisan in the city after the Revolution, but recognized, from an early age, his son's "sensibility of temper and love of letters." Perhaps in an attempt to propel their son into the higher classes of the "learned professions," the Davis family supported Richard to enter Columbia College in 1785 at the tender age of fourteen. Davis attended Columbia College for three fulfilling years "where he prosecuted his studies with success and reputation." His education, however, produced a peculiar "dissidence," and after the third year "decline[d] preparing for any of the learned professions." Davis's friends identified his "own dissidence" and his family's inability to secure the "greater influence and patronage" as the principle reasons for Davis abandoning the higher occupations.<sup>122</sup>

Davis pursued his father's craft after completing his third year at Columbia College. Though partly as a consequence of failing to secure patronage, Davis's choice to withdraw from the "learned professions" did not equate to a descent into hardship. A humble occupation, the craft of Christ, carpentry emerged as one of the highest paying and fastest growing building

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<sup>121</sup> Robb K. Haberman, "Magazine, Presentation Networks, and the Cultivation of Authorship in Post-Revolutionary America," *American Periodicals* Vol. 18, No. 2, (Ohio State University Press: Columbus, 2008), 143; Richard Davis, *Poems*, vii, viii-ix, xi.

<sup>122</sup> Richard Davis, *Poems*, vii-viii.

trades in New York City. By 1850, historian Sean Wilentz argues, the journeyman carpenters' average wages competed with those of shipwrights and printers, the highest in the city. Although Davis chose to pursue a well-respected artisan's craft, he could not subdue, to borrow Benjamin Franklin's term, his "Bookish Inclinations." Davis held tightly to his pen and indulged in the bounty of New York's social and literary activities as means of escaping the drudgery of working-class life. Club membership, tavern going, and publishing all served as status-elevating activities for working-class men in the early republic.<sup>123</sup>

Perhaps from his experience as a student at Columbia, Davis understood early that a pursuit of letters could best secure one's respectability within a community, even if it couldn't always guarantee upward social mobility. Although literary respectability in the late eighteenth century may have indicated financial stability and honest work, it possessed larger implications. By the 1790s, writing and publishing served as a way for the working and middle classes to inject themselves into politics, thereby assuming a position of power. To publish was to imply one's legitimacy in the republic of letters, a to make known that you had something to gain and lose in an expanding political arena.<sup>124</sup>

But simply submitting a poem or a short essay to a local newspaper or periodical did not guarantee respectability. How then did those with middle class aspirations acquire literary respectability? As I've suggested throughout this work, professing candor served as one of the effective tools of sociability. Candor not only facilitated friendships, but also helped to secure one's literary respectability through displays of respectable behavior. Most effectively, aspiring middling and working-class men in the 1790s like Davis grabbed ahold of traditional concepts of

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<sup>123</sup> Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 133, 405; Jeffrey Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 24-25; Richard Davis, *Poems*, viii.

<sup>124</sup> Jeffrey Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 24, 47.

polite society as attached to gentlemanliness, notably the impartial spectator, and applied these notions in new, self-creating ways.

### **Imitating the Impartial Spectator**

The impartial spectator served as a powerful cultural and political figure throughout eighteenth-century English and American societies. A well-educated socialite (male), tavern goer, and club member, the impartial spectator of the early eighteenth century served as the prototype for the cosmopolitan gentleman. In the early 1710s, two English social commentators, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, produced an enormously popular series of essays called *The Spectator* (1711-1714). Addison and Steele's voluminous essays<sup>125</sup> highlighted genteel expectations within club culture, and illustrated the workings of polite sociability within the modern city, or "Town."<sup>126</sup>

The essays' central figure and narrator, "the Spectator," lived his life as a candid "Looker-on," an open-minded observer, rather than living as "one of the Species." "I endeavour at least to look upon Men and their Actions only as an impartial Spectator, without any Regard to them as they happen to advance or cross my own private interests." To live the part, the "Spectator" needed to observe human society inconspicuously while immersed in various settings. "There is no Place of publick Resort, wherein I do not often make my Appearance...and whilst I seem attentive to nothing but the *Post-Man*, over-hear the Conversation of every Table

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<sup>125</sup> Over 600 essays were printed between 1711-1714 and were later published into bound volumes.

<sup>126</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, 12.

in the Room.” The “Spectator’s” emersion in human society and his silent observation leveled himself to the impartial observer.<sup>127</sup>

As the Spectator suggests, impartiality required freeing one’s conscious from guilt or bias, their “private interests” – a sort of self-discipline. But since discipline is a solitary state of mind, the Spectator had to profess or display impartiality through candor. Acting with candor, therefore, meant to display the impartiality with which one observed the world “out there.” Withdrawing to the comforts and friendship of his club, the Spectator would then relay his observations of life to a candid audience, and all together benefit from enlightened discourse as a means of improving their personal station and legitimizing their place in an expanding public sphere. The “Spectator” epitomized the gentleman of English polite society, and served as a literary role model for aspiring and educated young men for well over a hundred years.<sup>128</sup>

As the embodiment of wit and candor, Addison and Steele’s impartial spectator served as an icon of sociability. Young men of the working, middling, and higher classes of English society thus emulated the impartial spectator to gain literary reputations in social settings. There are two common ways in which individuals emulated the impartial spectator: first, by borrowing passages from *The Spectator* essays directly in their own writing, or by conducting a kind of literary candid self-exploration; and secondly, by joining clubs, thereby affirming their candor amongst peers and taking part in enlightened conversation. These activities persisted as ways to express candor throughout the eighteenth century. By mimicking the literary styles, manners, and activities of the impartial spectator, upwardly mobile individuals hoped to secure respectability and to carve out a place in the public sphere.

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<sup>127</sup> *The Spectator* No. 1, March 1, 1711, (London, 1711); *The Spectator* No. 564, July 7, 1714; Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 21.

<sup>128</sup> *The Spectator* – No. 1, 1st March 1711.

For Richard Davis, Addison and Steele's *Spectator* was a "go-to" reference for respectable behavior. Whether or not Davis owned copies of the *Spectator* essays in his home is uncertain. But in a meeting on April 10, 1792, members of the Calliopean Society appointed Davis and two others to "report such books as they may think proper to the society." Alongside works such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Edward Gibbons's *Decline of the Roman Empire*, eight volumes were listed for purchase on behalf of the society.<sup>129</sup>

Davis emulated the "Speculator" on the page and through his activities. In Davis's "Drone" piece, "Mr. Martlet's" apparent inattentiveness looks remarkably similar to that of the "Spectator," and is worth quoting at length:

"In the midst of conversation, he has a habit of sometimes indulging his own thoughts in silent meditation, during which periods it is impossible to extract a direct answer from him, or even a word to the purpose; tho' when the interval is over, he appears to have perfectly attended to what was passing, and at the same time to have combined it with some of his own thoughts in his own manner, by which he makes ample amends for his silence."<sup>131</sup>

Davis is able to indulge in candid self-exploration, all the while observing his immediate environment. That Davis included this description of himself suggests the importance of emulating the "Spectator," even among close peers. But Davis's self-examination does more than make himself look good. The true purpose of candid exploration, for all those who pursued truth, was to then share their observations within their immediate relationship circles in hopes of inspiring self-knowledge for the group. One's ability to examine their role in society and to profess their findings was to inspire collective self-improvement. Candor therefore was a reciprocal quality, requiring group or club settings for affirmation and encouragement.

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<sup>129</sup> *Proceedings of the Calliopean Society*, minutes, 10 April 1792, New York Historical Society Mss Collection; *Proceedings of the Calliopean Society*, minutes, 1 May 1792, New York Historical Society Mss Collection.

<sup>131</sup> "The Drone – No. VIII," *New York Magazine*, October 1792.

Like the “Spectator,” Davis also demonstrated his commitment to acquiring knowledge beyond his immediate circles. The “Spectator’s” original idea to live as the impartial observer was “laid and concerted in a Club.” Indeed, as I have indicated, the concept of the impartial spectator relied upon the assumption that this individual sought friendship and enlightened discourse within a club setting. Also making concerted efforts to be seen in all manner of places, Davis joined at least three of New York’s largest democratic clubs: the Tammany Society, the Calliopean Society, and the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. Davis’s further club activities illustrate his emulation of the impartial spectator, but they also made practical sense. Joining clubs was a cultural phenomenon in the Anglo-American world that provided men like Davis the means to share a sense of community with others, to inspire moral and intellectual development, and to fulfill personal aspirations.<sup>132</sup>

New York City in the late 1780s boasted a colorful array of societies and clubs within which people could find spiritual purpose, moral reform, intellectual improvement, political networks, working-class solidarity, or just good old fun. However the most important aspect of club culture was friendship. Friendships, then as today, fostered aspirations and secured reputable (or disreputable) networks, but more importantly encouraged a fulfilling life. The concept of friendship also held deeper implications in the late eighteenth century. According to Steven Bolluck, the emerging language of republican discourse placed friendship and fraternity “into the accepted genealogy of learning, giving it a central role in the lineage of progress.” Friendship, in other words, as a facilitator and protector of knowledge, best assured the very notion of civilization. Clubs settings best developed friendships, and poised to serve as the moral and intellectual bastions of society. Though, perhaps, the progress of civilization never served as

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<sup>132</sup> *Spectator – No. 1*; Robb Haberman, “Magazine, Presentation Networks...,” 144.

even a passing thought in Davis's mind when he joined his various clubs, it appears that the kinds of friendships he sought through his club activities would best insure the progress of his own respectability.<sup>133</sup>

As an artisan, Davis most likely first joined the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen as a means of networking and conducting business with other tradesmen. Established in 1785 as an offshoot of the Mechanics Committee during the Revolution, the General Society provided opportunities for artisans of all trades and crafts to influence local and national legislation to favor the working class. Though the New York state legislature eventually limited the society's charter to allowing philanthropic events, the artisan's club embodied, as Sean Wilentz calls, "the ideal of mutuality and craft pride." Such an environment perhaps best provided Davis's needs and interests as a carpenter in-training.<sup>134</sup>

Davis's more intriguing choice of club membership, however, was the Society of St. Tammany, or simply the Tammany Society. Members often distinguished themselves by wearing buckskin or donning their hats with feathers, called their leaders "sachems," and their meeting places "wigwams." Founded in 1786, the Tammany Society grew slowly, attracting (it boasted) more than three hundred members by the end of 1791. Overwhelmingly, the society was composed of artisans and middle-class men. Originally serving as a patriotic society, hosting festivals and celebrations to commemorate national holidays, Tammany rapidly transformed into a partisan organization. By 1792, the Tammany Society harbored New York City's most

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<sup>133</sup> Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 143-144; Bryan Waterman, *Republic of Intellect: The Friendly Club of New York City and the Making of American Literature*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>134</sup> Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 38.



dedicated and ambitious democratic-republicans. Davis stood among them, and no doubt gleaned political sentiments from their commitment.<sup>135</sup>

Davis's multi-club activities allowed him the opportunities to seek respectability as both an artisan and a developing political operative. As literary scholar Bryan Waterman notes, Davis and his contemporaries "demonstrated that their places in civic society were structured not simply by individual station or reputation but by their positions in the multiple groups and networks of civic life." Despite the impact of the Tammany and General societies upon Davis's future, neither accelerated Davis's development as a writer, and thus a participant of the republic of letters, than the Calliopean Society. Within the Calliopean Society, Davis was able to most easily profess candor and emulate the impartial spectator as a way to secure reputation and upward mobility.<sup>136</sup>

But beyond this, the Calliopean Society established profound and fulfilling friendships for Davis that would affirm the candor he professed. After his death, his friends, caring for the memory of their beloved friend, illustrated his candor to the public. One passage from the short biography in *Poems* is worth quoting at length:

"A lover of truth, he detested falsehood in every shape, and considered the policy of using it for any purpose, or to accomplish any end, but a miserable justification. Frank and generous in his nature, he could not endure the tale of slander, much less be the instrument of its propagation. Warmly attached to the interests of his country, he considered those interests endangered by the turbulence of political dissention. He was, therefore, a calm spectator of the various conflicts of party."

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<sup>135</sup> Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution*, 214-215; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 70; Alfred F. Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York: The Origins, 1763-1797*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 202-203.

<sup>136</sup> Bryan Waterman, *Republic of Intellect*, 29, 31.

The preceding highlights Davis's fulfillment of candor in the eyes of those who, perhaps, knew him best. Every sentence illustrates a key component of candor: propensity for inquiring knowledge on behalf of the public good, open-mindedness (frankness), and impartiality towards the "conflicts of party." Davis's love of truth and his delicate, candid handling of knowledge set him apart from others. Relaying their observations of their dear friend to the republic of letters, Davis's Calliopean brothers affirmed his candor, and sealed his memory as *the Spectator*.<sup>137</sup>

The heartfelt premise to Davis's *Poems* underscores the compassion shared between Davis and his society brothers. Davis's accomplishments and personality – achieved and improved through club activity – confirmed the personal value that his friends held of their little club, and provided fulfillment in their own sense of belonging to this fraternity. But we must take the preceding passage at face value. At critical points during Davis's development as a writer, his continued activity in various clubs, and his search for respectability, Davis relied on candor to mask some of his less-than-candid maneuvering. Through the appearance of transparency, Davis channeled knowledge, regulated it, to fulfill specific personal ends.

Davis believed that his clubs and societies served a moral purpose: to cultivate knowledge for a reading, virtuous republic. While this sentiment helped to secure a commendable reputation within the clubs, Davis understood, perhaps better than most that his long-term respectability in the fast-growing metropolis depended upon the city's perceptions of its clubs and societies. On many notable occasions, Davis positioned himself to control specific kinds of knowledge and the flow of that knowledge that would best project a positive image of himself and, more importantly, of the clubs he represented. Davis professed candor as a tool for

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<sup>137</sup> Richard Davis, *Poems*, ix.

upward social mobility, regardless of whether or not he manipulated knowledge to achieve a particular end.

I do not use the word “manipulation” to portray Davis as a self-interested deceiver. On the contrary, Davis sincerely believed in the benevolence that resonated from the cultural phenomenon of friendship within clubs. In November 1793, around the time that Hatton and Davis would have been orchestrating *Tammany*, Davis wrote and presented an “Ode” to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Calliopean Society. The song praised the warmth of “social bonds” and illustrates the club’s higher purpose: “Let sons of *Riot* waste / In senseless sport their hours; / Far other joys we seek, / A nobler task is our’s. / We join to raise an *altar fair* to *Virtue*’s sacred name, / Where *Science* lights the genial fire, and *Friendship* fans the flame.” This small stanza concisely purveys to us importance of the relationship between knowledge, virtue, and club friendships in which Davis and his comrades believed. The phenomenon of friendship, and the cultivation of knowledge that it encouraged, served as the best means of securing posterity’s republic.<sup>138</sup>

But Davis envisioned the democratic and literary clubs as a force in the trajectory of his life in more ways than one. The clubs may have served as bastions for moral and intellectual improvement and for fraternity, but they also provided opportunities for those who aspired to fill vacancies for upward political and social mobility that the Revolution had wrought in American society. Fighting for a voice and a standing within that space, Davis often operated under the mask of candor to fulfill personal ambitions.

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<sup>138</sup> Richard Davis, “ODE, For the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Calliopean Society, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1793,” *New York Magazine*, November 1793.

## The Committee

Perhaps the earliest instance in which Davis crafted knowledge for personal ends rests on the pages of “The Drone – No. VIII,” alongside “Mr. Martlet.” After exercising candid self-scrutiny in the first half of the essay, Davis moves into a description of a particularly important Calliopean Society meeting. Sometime in January or February 1792, Davis and his Calliopean brothers met to discuss bringing the society into the public sphere. To prove their legitimacy as a candid body, dedicated to enlightening the public as much as to themselves, members of the society decided to collect and publish their discourse in the *New York Magazine*. In fact, Davis (“Mr. Martlet”) proposed the idea for a serial essay “with a peculiar degree of spirit.”<sup>139</sup>

Drawing yet another inspiration from Addison and Steele, Calliopean Society members attempted to mimic *The Spectator* essays and the little club within which the Spectator operated. As Rob Haberman notes, the society’s decision to attach to the *New York Magazine* is of particular importance because it represents, perhaps, the only instance of a literary or democratic club that directly affixed “a corporate signature to its verse contributions.” If the Calliopean Society intended to influence the kinds of information that the *New York Magazine* published, they needed to do so openly, under the guise of candor, as to avoid suspicion of encouraging slander or falsehood. The serial essays that began circulation in March 1792 professed the club’s commitment to candor and invited the *Magazine*’s subscribers to join in the enlightened discourse.<sup>140</sup>

But the sons of Calliope couldn’t decide on a name for the proposed serial essays. After a lengthy and seemingly unproductive debate on various titles, Davis’s friends asked his opinion on the matter. A “long pause” followed. Then, without elaboration, Davis simply replied, “the

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<sup>139</sup> “The Drone – No. VIII,” *New York Magazine*, October 1792

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.; Rob Haberman, “Magazines, Presentation Networks...,” 147.

*Drone.*” After another long, awkward pause, one of Davis’s friends lightened the mood, jesting that the twenty-year-old surely was in love. The unidentified friend asked whether Davis “was not composing a sonnet on his mistress?” Irritated and embarrassed into action, Davis emphatically pronounced that he was “reflecting upon this injustice of mankind in supposing the *drones* to be the most useless and unprofitable members of the community of bees.” Davis explains that, as a class among bees, the drones “do not work with the rest,” but serve as the “speculative philosophers of the hive.” Comparing their little club to “the assembly of *drones*,” relaying observations and “discoveries to the benefit of society,” Davis identified their association as vital to the sustainment of the human hive.<sup>141</sup>

The Calliopeans applauded Davis’s speech and unanimously decided that, thereafter, the essays would be published under the title “The Drone.” The meeting from early 1792, published in “The Drone – No. VIII,” reveals the degree to which Davis understood he and his club’s place in the republic. Though they were not a club of laborers, they contributed to the betterment of society as impartial spectators. Their friendship, candor, and cultivation of knowledge would best enlighten and sustain a virtuous society.

Though this piece retains a degree of sincerity in its content, “The Drone – No. VIII” served another purpose. Davis professed to the public the club’s candor and its legitimate, even natural place in the new republic. Davis’s beehive metaphor and his comparison of the Calliopean Society to an “assembly of *drones*,” link their association to the natural world, a product of the laws of Nature. Davis’s professions of candor did not fall upon the eyes or ears of a distant, abstract audience. In 1793, the *New York Magazine* boasted an illustrious subscription list that included John Adams, George Washington, John Jay, and George Clinton, Governor of

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

New York. Davis's ploy to legitimize his literary club in the eyes of the public served as a way of gaining both individual and collective respectability on a national level. Davis's future as a writer would be secured or lost with the public's perception of the Calliopean Society.<sup>142</sup>

By February of 1793, just four months after Davis's "The Drone – No. VIII," it would have been quite difficult for original subscribers of the *New York Magazine* to overlook its rapidly changing tune. Previously unconcerned with matters of liberalism and void of revolutionary fervor, the *Magazine* of 1793 began circulating essays from the era's most radical thinkers. In the February edition, James and Thomas Swords published Mary Wollstonecraft's introduction to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); in July, a chapter from William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793); and in August, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's essay "On Sentiment," and an excerpt from Rev. Dr. Joseph Priestly's *Lectures on History and General Policy* (1788). The preceding political, religious, and social philosophers were no strangers to the American public. They championed the late eighteenth century's most democratic, egalitarian, progressive, and in Godwin's case, anarchic ideals. Though these ideals generally united Americans who called themselves "republicans" or "democrats," they incited fear amongst Federalists of the dangers of democracy.<sup>143</sup>

To date, I have found no evidence that directly links the Calliopean Society to the circulation of the preceding essays, although James Swords, the editor and printer of the *Magazine*, was an active member of the club and a friend of Davis. It is worth noting, however, that besides Davis, the Calliopean Society's most active members sympathized with the French Revolution and espoused the revolutionary sentiments of the 1790s. Stanton Latham and Thomas

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<sup>142</sup> "Subscribers' Names," *New York Magazine*, 1793.

<sup>143</sup> *New York Magazine*, February 1793; *New York Magazine*, July 1793; *New York Magazine*, August 1793; Alfred F. Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York*, 362.

Gilbert may have also been members of the Tammany Society, and they would eventually serve as dutiful members of the controversial Democratic Society of New York. Tunis Wortman, a lawyer and sharp political philosopher, wrote public addresses alongside Thomas Gilbert on the Committee of Correspondence for the Democratic Society. Wortman later served as the Secretary of the Democratic Society and published *A Treatise Concerning Political Economy and the Liberty of the Press* (1800). With such individuals presiding over the Calliopean Society and the *New York Magazine*, it is difficult to ignore the possibility of direct influence. But how would Davis and these men have wielded such influence without alarming subscribers? In a word: candor.<sup>144</sup>

Displays of candor like from Davis's "The Drone – No. VIII" allowed members of the Calliopean Society to exercise their influence and to conduct themselves internally in less-than-candid ways. After securing a partnership with the printers of the *New York Magazine*, James and Thomas Swords, Davis's club gained direct and frequent access to a public audience. The accessibility of a diverse and national audience provided fruitful opportunities for club members to flex their individual and collective literary skills, and, of course, their candor. More importantly, however, this same accessibility placed the Calliopean Society in a highly influential position. For a group of seemingly non-threatening, non-elite writers and poets, the Calliopeans poised to control the dissemination of knowledge into the public arena. Perhaps more so than any other member of the club, Davis was vital in handling the kind of information that the club submitted for publication to the *New York Magazine*. Reinforcing his own reputation and the legitimacy of his club, Davis offered falsehoods under the guise of candor.

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<sup>144</sup> Alfred Young, *Democratic Republicans of New York*, 394, 398, 485; Democratic Society of New York, "CIRCULAR. To the Democratic Society of Philadelphia, New York Decmeber 1794," New York Historical Society Mss Collection.

Davis's behind-the-scenes maneuvering may be best illustrated by his involvement in establishing the Calliopean Society's Committee of Examination. After a year and a half of contributing *The Drone* essays to the *New York Magazine*, the society needed a more efficient process of vetting works for publication. The first entry of the Committee's "Critical Remarks" from October 1, 1793, cited the "irregular manner in which business had been transacted by former committees" as the principle reason for appointment. The purpose of the Committee of Examination was to serve as a board of reviewers, a "Box," to examine works considered worthy for submission to the *New York Magazine*. Those compositions that didn't make the cut were to "be entered at large in the Minutes," but then set aside. For the sake of candor, the leading organizers of the Committee established that their examinations and critiques be recorded and accessible to the Calliopean Society. Their proceedings, however, were not to be made public.<sup>145</sup>

Though it is uncertain who first entertained the idea of the Committee, the Calliopean Society minutes suggest that the most key figures in the Committee's operation included Davis, James Swords (editor and printer of the *New York Magazine*), and William Irving (older brother of Washington Irving). Stanton Latham, Tunis Wortman, and Thomas Gilbert also helped to organize the Committee. As the recently elected president of the society, Davis exercised his influence in determining how their club would produce the kinds of information that they wanted to circulate within the republic of letters.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Calliopean Society, "New York, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1793," *Critical Remarks by the Committee of Examination on Compositions Presented to the Calliopean Society*, Vol. 1, 1793-1799, New York Public Library; "New York, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1793, *Critical Remarks*.

<sup>146</sup> Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker*, 25; Alfred Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York*, 405.



## “A Proclamation” of Distrust

The newly appointed review committee might have seemed harmless enough, and perhaps even beneficial for a club of civic-minded writers. But “upon the first introduction to the Box of anonymous compositions,” some of Davis’s fellow club members expressed their deep dissatisfaction with the Committee of Examination, holding it in contempt. The first wave of entries submitted to the Committee composed of scathing satirical pieces, aimed at Davis and the Committee, mocking their attempts to vet the society’s works for the *New York Magazine*. Davis reviewed the first piece called “Characteristics” by an anonymous *Nerus*. From what the record keeper transcribed, the only noteworthy aspect of the piece was the author’s insults, directed at two unnamed members of the Committee, “calling [them] ass and blockhead.” *Nerus* went so far as to ridicule “the formation of the body...without giving credit for a single good quality.” After critiquing the author’s apparent haste and carelessness, Davis deemed “Characteristics” to be “illiberal.” Davis concluded that, although the writer’s talents are undeniable, they would have been better spent if not exercised “at the expense of the injured feelings of a friend.” Davis’s emphasis at the end may suggest that he, himself, was the target of *Nerus*’s insults.<sup>147</sup>

*Nerus* wasn’t alone; the satirical onslaught continued. The anonymous author of another piece, “Sketches of a Newfarce,” must have drawn inspiration from *Nerus*, as it seemed “directly calculated to distress [one of the member’s] feelings, by representing him in a most ludicrous point of view.” Stanton Latham, the reviewer, offered little suggestions beyond reproach. Davis reviewed a third, more colorful satire titled “A Dissertation on Jack-asses,” by *Midas*. Though the original piece is not transcribed, Davis reveals in his review that the author of the “Dissertation” deployed his satire in a less-direct fashion than the preceding works. *Midas*

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<sup>147</sup> “8<sup>th</sup> October 1793,” *Critical Remarks*.

sketches the members of the Committee as fictional characters, highlighting their distinct foibles. Although the identities of “Orlando Furioso” and “Little Frank” are not discernable, others are easily noticed. William Irving’s alias is “Billy Splinter,” and James Swords, “Jemmy the Printer.” The most illustrative, resentful character is “Gumption the Dutch Lawyer,” perhaps Tunis Wortman. Davis acknowledges the author’s “easy, spirited manner,” but declined the piece for submission to the *Magazine*, requesting that *Midas* relinquish his indecency for the sake of fraternal harmony.<sup>148</sup>

The piece that drew the Committee’s attention the most was the one they last reviewed in their meeting on October 8, 1793. Simply titled “A Proclamation,” the poem offers a rather crude metaphor for knowledge, and equates the Committee of Examination to “a little place for private use...at every house...[where] some will drop their lumber.” Knowledge may manifest as power, but in this context the author places its value as nothing more than human waste. More than the other pieces, “A Proclamation” provides a summary of the concerns shared by those Calliopeans who criticized the Committee, and is worth examining at length.<sup>149</sup>

The author opens “A Proclamation” with an address “to all good people whom it may concern:”

“Whether of noble or plebian gizzard; / To him whose bladder head no art can learn, / And him, whose learning makes him most a wizzard. / Whether in mud-stuck-prose he waddle, / Or, on the poet’s cart-horse, straddle, / He climb / The hill of rhyme.”

The author’s reference to nobles and plebians is misleading, for most members of the Calliopean Society hailed from the “middling” or artisan classes. What concerns the writer are classifications of the mind. The gizzard serves as the analogy for the brain in the context of this

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

attempt at democratic potty humor. Rather than directing insults solely at the Committee, the author intended this piece to be read aloud, to be directed at and understood by all.<sup>150</sup>

The author departs from the introduction to explain his dynamic and clever metaphor. “Whereas it hath been found, at every house, to have a little place for private use,” the society needed a box of its own. Club members had engaged in unrestrained and unmediated debate, and as a consequence, some members would “drop their lumber on the ground,” “throw it” in others faces, or simply “bear the pond’rous load” without having had a chance to express their thoughts and sentiments. “Therefore to remedy these growing evils,” the Committee (“a Box”) instituted itself to absorb “all such dirty devils.” The Committee, in theory, would serve as a place for club members to anonymously deposit their enlightening work, and pending approval, circulate in the republic of letters.<sup>151</sup>

But the author was unconvinced. He continues by describing an eclectic group of caricatures most likely to use the “Box.” “The modest, tim’rous deer,” may wish to share “his little harmless matter without fear of railing, noise, and clatter.” Next, “the Splenetic,” the spiteful one, may “unscrew his face...[and] spit out his bile...in this sly place.” The “Box” exists for everyone it seems; for the “Politician” with his “tripe;” for the “woful lover...where he may grunt and sob;” and for “the friends of monarchy and Johnny Bull, [who] fire off whole bags of grape-shot-curses.” The author’s choice of caricatures illustrates the kinds of people in the club who might feel most inclined to produce literature. Ironically, as the author implies, these characters have little or nothing to say of actual value. “Harmless matter,” “bile,” “tripe,” and “grape-shot-curses” hardly qualify as candid observations. The preceding caricatures reveal that,

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

perhaps, the Committee's presence encouraged frivolous banter and slander in the place of enlightened discourse.<sup>152</sup>

If the Committee encouraged distrust and slander, degrading the value of their club, who, then, stood to gain the most from its presence? The poet of "A Proclamation" identifies one man as the main proponent and beneficiary of the body:

In short, the box was made for all / Who feel a gripping mental call. / 'Twill suit all your cases, I'm sure, to a splinter. / For further partic'lars enquire of the Printer."

The "Printer" was James Swords of the *New York Magazine*. Though the Committee comprised of at least six Calliopean Society members, most of whom I have identified as particularly ambitious and talented men, one man stood to answer for the Committee. James Swords's position as the printer and editor of the *Magazine* and as a member of the literary club arose the author's suspicion of Swords's intentions and aspirations.<sup>153</sup>

Printers occupied perhaps the most upwardly social mobile profession in the United States by the 1790s. Caught somewhere between artisan and partisan operative, printers occupied a precarious, though dominating, station in American society. With the continued expansion of the public sphere and the creation of the United States after the Revolution, facilitated by what historian Jeffrey Pasley calls "political publishing," printers literally controlled the pace of that expansion. They presided over the circulation of knowledge in the republic of letters. But attached to this newfound power and potential for social mobility were stigmas and suspicions. Since printers often exercised their influence as partisan operatives, many Americans (though mostly Federalists) feared their association with "*electioneering men*." Federalists often accused printers of serving as convenient tools of these election-day hounds; printers lacked the

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

autonomy to possess virtue or candor. The anonymous author's distrust of Swords resembles a common sentiment of class and party antagonism in the early republic.<sup>154</sup>

Beyond exploiting an opportunity to take subtle jabs at his fellow club members, the author's submission of "A Proclamation" served a dual purpose. First, the author's crude metaphor reveals his dissatisfaction (maybe even disillusionment) with the society's purpose "of improving Education." Equating information to human waste, the author degrades the ritual exchange of knowledge in club settings to a level of obscenity. What maintained the appearance, through displays of candor, of an enlightened fraternity had descended to a madhouse in the eyes of the author. Secondly, the poet's sarcasm mocks the common egalitarian language of the 1790s, perhaps the same language that Davis and company had used for the Committee's justification. If, indeed, the democratic box "was made for all," it encouraged anonymous exchanges of slander and satire at the expense of candor. Perhaps their club, then, failed to represent the kind of moral and political bastion they had tried to create.

Why were members of the Committee so disturbed by "the introduction of personal satire" into the Calliopean Society? As a literary form, satire required considerable skill and wit, another gentlemanly trait explored in works like *The Spectator* essays throughout the eighteenth century. Davis himself tried his hand at satire on numerous occasions, perhaps as yet another way of imitating the "Spectator." Just four months after the club drama of October 1793, Davis wrote and published another poem, "An Elegy to an Old Wig found in the Street." The "Elegy" was, in fact, a mock elegy, contemplating the accomplished life of a wig that "grac'd" the heads of many "sapient" men, and its now decrepit state:

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<sup>154</sup> Jeffrey Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 47, 123

“No more dost thou the pride of grandeur swell; / Plebeians tremble at thy nod no more. / What art thou now? Disgrac’d, foil’d, mangled, torn, / Neglected, save that the mischievous dog / Shakes thee in sportive rage...”

Despite the “ludicrous idea upon which [the] elegy” was written, the Committee approved Davis’s piece for submission to the *New York Magazine*. The “Elegy” received a notable measure of public appraisal, as it displays Davis’s sentiments towards the erosion of deference in American society, as evidenced by changing attitudes towards the wig, a symbol of power and hierarchy. So, again, if satire in Davis’s eyes constituted a legitimate form of literary expression, what compelled the Committee to decline their fellows’ works?<sup>155</sup>

Davis viewed the kind of “personal satire” that society members submitted to the Committee as “reprehensible” and “invidious.” As members of a club “whose basis is friendship,” the Calliopeans were to cautiously avoid personal attacks, as satire can only be “productive of the most dangerous consequences.” Satire encourages slander, deceit, and mockery; it destroys candor and threatens the culture of friendship and harmony upon which these societies theoretically functioned. Works of satire might poison from within, but also from without. If the Committee had approved and submitted the series of personal attacks to the *Magazine*, they would have provided the public with a glimpse of their club, ripe with internal strife. They could have compromised their candid appearance.<sup>156</sup>

Examined as a whole, the wave of satires reveals a profound degree of distrust among society members over their club’s relationship to the *New York Magazine*. The Calliopean Society’s Committee of Examination provides a clear example of Davis, behind the mask of candor, directly influencing the kind of knowledge and information that the *New York Magazine*

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<sup>155</sup> Richard Davis, “Elegy to an Old Wig found in the street,” *New York Magazine*, February 1793; “No. XLII,” *Critical Remarks*, 65; Davis, “Elegy,” *Weekly Museum*, 24 April 1802; “Art. 24 – Chorus,” *The Monthly Anthology*, 1 May 1807; *New York Magazine*, December 1794.

<sup>156</sup> “8<sup>th</sup> October 1793,” *Critical Remarks*.

sought to publish. The only pieces that the Committee would approve needed to serve the larger, dual purpose of showcasing individuals' talents in their pursuit for respectability, and legitimizing the club as a candid participant in the republic of letters. As I hope to have illustrated, Davis's projection of candor simultaneously allowed him to proactively pursue his own respectability while concealing the reality of distrust within the Calliopean Society.

At the heart of this distrust nestled fundamental questions concerning what role their little club ought to serve in the new republic. While the nation began to polarize throughout 1793 and 1794 over the same questions concerning Federalist-named "self-created" societies, members of the democratic clubs contested the value of their association amongst each other. While some favored a more private environment, unassociated with partisan newspapers, hidden and safe from the candid reader, others preferred the public eye. Davis, and others like him, understood the public arena to be a realm within which to craft his individual and his club's collective legitimacy. The Calliopean Society's partnership with the *New York Magazine* secured direct access to that realm, but it also caused a rift within the club. In the context of a rancorous political environment, such public attention required the appearance of candor to avoid suspicion of conspiracy or faction. Those like Davis who envisioned their club comfortably in the trajectory of their personal lives exploited opportunities to pursue their ambitions, often at the expense of candor and seldom without party spirit.

## Conclusion

Throughout the drama-infused fall of 1793 that pitted Davis and others against the rest of the Calliopean Society, he continued to publish and maneuver. But he did so with an accomplice of particular intrigue. Ann Hatton quickly assimilated into New York's political and literary circles, and teamed up with Davis as a way to further both of their reputations. In Hatton, Davis recognized a sharp mind and political bravery, and in Davis, Hatton envisioned opportunities to join "circles form'd of friends" and to shape the political environment that she entered as a resilient stranger.

On March 10, 1794, one week after *Tammany's* premier, the Tammany Society and other New York democratic societies hosted "a grand and pleasing spectacle" that many had not seen in years. A jovial crowd of Americans, Frenchmen, political officials, and soldiers gathered at City Hall to celebrate the French Republic's military victory at Toulon. In carnivalesque fashion, the crowd formed a procession, sang and danced to patriotic tunes, and demonstrated their commitment to fraternal bonds and to the universal struggle of rights of man.<sup>157</sup> The celebration signaled a rejection of the prevailing attitude and the politics of conspiracy – an open celebration of democratic comity.

When the parade approached Corey's Tavern they stopped to feast, drink, and lend their ears to Ann Julia Hatton. Members of the Democratic-Society of New York, impressed by *Tammany's* success, sought out Hatton and requested that she attend the celebration on March 10. And so, at Corey's Tavern, she delivered "a beautiful Ode" to the cheerful crowd and advanced an anti-aristocratic message. Careful to acknowledge her political allies, Hatton

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<sup>157</sup> *Greenleaf's New York Journal*, March 12, 1794.



addressed her ode to the Democratic Society of New York. Her search for respectability came to fruition.<sup>158</sup>

What are some of the larger implications of my findings? Why should we care about Ann Hatton, Richard Davis, and their clubs?

Through the preceding pages I have sought to prove the larger significance of Hatton and Davis's activities and the democratic clubs within a fast developing political culture in the United States. Hatton and Davis's presence within the heart of the political moment in New York, and the candor they professed to legitimate that presence, illustrates the depth and form of possibilities for non-elite Americans after the Revolution. Although they each demonstrated candor in different forms for a range of purposes, Hatton and Davis relied on each other to maneuver in a post-Revolutionary society, fighting for space, respectability, and a voice.

Hatton and Davis's friendship, their heterosociability within New York's club culture ought to encourage us, as historians, to recontextualize the paradigm of inclusion and exclusion relating to the democratic clubs and the political culture in the early American republic.

Although society members, overwhelming men, prevented opportunities for women to enjoy the benefits of direct club membership, civic-minded and politically inclined women like Hatton discovered and shaped new ways for them to join the societies. Through their club activities, women like Hatton could possibly, safely, and overtly engage in the public sphere.

Candor, a form of behavioral discourse, empowered non-elites to take part in and, indeed, to help shape a larger cultural phenomenon: the democratic upsurge, or as one historian calls the "citizenship revolution," of the 1790s. Centered within this tumultuous decade, the Democratic-Republican societies politicized a generation of Americans, men and women. Those who

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<sup>158</sup> *Weekly Museum*, March 1, 1794; *Greenleaf's New York Journal*, March 15, 1794; Elise K. Kirk, *American Opera* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 45-46.

participated within democratic societies did not represent the transgressive members of American society, but your everyman and everywoman, impartial spectators and public women. Self-created individuals gathered to form self-created clubs as a means of asserting their political and social worth within an expanding democracy as the United States moved forward into the nineteenth century.

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## Vitae

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Lt. Hargroder has undertaken a series of eclectic projects ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer's value of history and the battle of Verdun in modern French memory, to the experience of English soldiers during the Hundred Years' War and American political culture in the 1790s. He has presented most of these works at a number of conferences including the Consortium of the Revolutionary Era at Oxford, Mississippi (2014), Longwood University's Undergraduate Research Conference in Medieval Studies (2010), and Louisiana State University's History Graduate Student Association Conference (2014 and 2015). In the immediate years to follow, Lt. Hargroder aspires to continue to his education as an officer and a historian by submitting works for publication and applying to various PhD programs in History.