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Family Semiotics and the Experience of Women in the Early American
Republic.

By Molly Charlotte Evans

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Abstract:

This thesis addresses the familial roles occupied by women in the Early American Republic (c.1770s-1820s), when, despite a lack of direct political power, they inherited aspects of the Revolution and were invested with a sense of political and educational responsibility for imparting republican values to future generations. In an era and a historiography dominated by 'Founding Fathers', it considers how familial semiotics were expressed and historicised, to emphasise particular female analogies, aspirations, and limitations. A young woman played a variety of familial roles; mother, wife, sister, and daughter; all of which retained its own expectations and responsibilities and consequently placed a heavy burden on the shoulders of the daughters of the revolution. The thesis addresses how familial concepts were invoked at the time and subsequently engaged – both within and beyond scholarship - drawing on an interdisciplinary American Studies framework and sources in visual and popular culture as well as historical texts. It argues we need to extend the family metaphor to incorporate daughterhood and sisterhood, constructing an overarching image of womanhood and its many layers. This reflection of womanhood and the new female identity that was forged in the private sphere, is portrayed through case studies of three prominent female figures. These case studies are broken down into individual familial terms to signpost how their responsibilities changed as they matured; to showcase their dedication to the republic; and to highlight the differences between the male and female roles in society. The thesis closes by drawing on a multi-disciplinary approach to consider the legacies of 'Founding Mothers' and how these female revolutionaries were romanticised and folded into notions of identity and politics in different ways. Their lives were viewed and deployed differently from their male counterparts, but it remains vital that scholars continue to address and develop their meanings, whilst portraying the value of the domestic sphere and kinship.

(Please note: this thesis uses English spellings throughout, so some words from sources by American authors have been amended).

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Introduction

Familial language and metaphors have been used since the late 18th century to make sense of the American Revolution and its aftermath. They assign roles and intentions which increase our understanding of the rhetoric and motivations of the period and infer national connotations. The founding era undeniably continues to shape contemporary political debate and maintains prestige in the national consciousness, with its prevailing legacy clearly evident as the 250th anniversary approaches.¹

Among the most notable and enduring phrases is the term ‘Founding Fathers’, which refers to the key male statesmen of the time, who, in word and deed, helped found the United States as an independent nation worthy of international respect. By referring to them as ‘fathers’, the term suggests that these men were placed upon a pedestal and, within a patriarchal system, crafted an example for future generations of Americans to follow. Using their intelligence and brawn, as the popular myth would suggest, the Founding Fathers provided for their progenies; they instilled values that aligned with a new America and established the political institutions that are still in place today, which earned them nationwide respect and admiration across a political spectrum. This prestigious yet unofficial and retrospective term, presents the Founding Fathers as the closest America has come to an aristocracy and simultaneously portrays them as heroic figures who operated under a paternal guise. They set themselves above the ordinary, common man and made a personal

¹ For example, President Donald Trump’s Advisory 1776 Commission (2021) which sought a “restoration of American education to enable a rising generation to understand the history and principles of the founding of the United States. Full report available from: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Presidents-Advisory-1776-Commission-Final-Report.pdf> [Accessed 9 August 2022].

commitment to the nation.² These same men, through their demand for rights and freedoms, had dubbed themselves the “Sons of Liberty”, in the era from 1765. Therefore, the evolution from sons to fathers suggests a maturity of both men and country and mirrors the advancement in America’s status. These men laid the framework upon which America was built and bore the brunt of the strain affiliated with making a mark in global affairs and cementing America into the ‘family of nations’. Metaphors about the family, thus, suffuse this perceived golden or constitutionally sacred age of American history, allowing present day Americans to identify with their predecessors and be proud of their nation’s foundations and ‘Fathers’.

The volume of material on, and obsession with, the Founding Fathers, has fashioned a ‘Founders Chic’, whereby historiography has presented an excessive fascination with the thoughts and actions of this “handful of elite white men.”³ For countless years, the story of the American Revolution and its aftermath has fallen into the familiar trap of reciting an overwhelmingly male narrative, and this perpetual focus of study has kept the Founding Fathers “newsworthy” despite the elapse of time, implementing a nationwide fondness with their story. As David Waldstreicher states, by focusing on this snapshot of revolutionary experiences, these individuals “can be rendered in loving detail, and have become the most real.”⁴ However, this often comes at the expense of others and until relatively recently, most history books have snubbed women’s contributions.⁵ This traditionally blinkered account has meant that

² Cutterham, T. (2017). *Gentlemen Revolutionaries: Power and Justice in the New American Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.1.

³ Frank, A. (2008). *American Revolution: People and Perspectives*. Santa Barbara: ABC Clio Inc., p.xi.

⁴ Waldstreicher, D. (2002). Founders Chic as Culture War. *Radical History Review*, (84), 185-194 (p.188).

⁵ Regine, B. (2010). *Iron Butterflies: Women Transforming Themselves and the World*. New York: Prometheus Books, p.35.

the experiences of a large proportion of American society has been omitted, effectively limiting our understanding of the period. There is no denying the prodigious impact that the Founding Fathers had on the newly independent nation, and their actions rightfully deserve recognition, but new generations of scholars since the late 20th Century, have demonstrated that this should not come at the cost of female exclusion.

The complexity of the founding era requires a similarly complex look at all the relevant actors. An 1880 newspaper article by Phoebe Couzins reminded readers that “the pages of our nation’s history have thus far taught the character of our revolutionary fathers...but a little band of heroic women stood alone amidst a nation of scoffers.”⁶ In more recent years, efforts have been made to reinsert women into the narrative and pay tribute to their sacrifices, experiences and sisterly bonds; to deliver an all-encompassing, all-inclusive story, and one that ensures younger generations have female role models to look up to. For, despite being overlooked for many years, this period did boast powerful displays of womanhood, with certain individuals proving themselves to be true citizens of the republic. In *The Debate on the American Revolution* (2007), author Gwenda Morgan provides an “in-depth study of the way in which historians have dealt with the era of the American Revolution.”⁷ To counteract earlier limitations, Morgan devotes a chapter to scholarship on

⁶ Couzins, P. (1880). To the Editor of the Inter Ocean. *Daily Inter Ocean* [Online], 25 December. Available from: https://go-gale-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=17&docId=GALE%7CGT3000011421&docType=Letter+to+the+editor&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZCEN-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGT3000011421&searchId=R1&userGroupName=uokent&inPS=true [Accessed 10 October 2021].

⁷ Waterstones. (n.d). *The Debate on the American Revolution- Issues in Historiography* [Online]. Waterstones. Available from: <https://www.waterstones.com/book/the-debate-on-the-american-revolution/gwenda-morgan/9780719052422> [Accessed 25 November 2021].

women, discussing the recent surge in a female focus. Morgan's work is part of a recent scholarly move to construct contemporary versions of revolutionary history which have continued apace since the start of the 21st Century and work to make history more accessible.

In an era of democratic revolutions, new words and concepts are invented to deal with the changing language of politics and widen the lens of understanding. For example, Thomas Laquer coined the term "incommensurability" to move away from measuring males and females by the same criteria, given how dissimilar the two sexes are.⁸ His way of thinking argued that women should be perceived in their own right and viewed on their own criteria as opposed to being critiqued against male standards and expectations. Implementing this idea, Nancy Cott explored a perceptible change in women's group consciousness over time. In simplified form: in the 17th Century, women accepted (or were restrained within) a hierarchical standard; in the late 18th Century some women became conscious of their ascribed inferiority and protested against it; and in the 19th Century there emerged a new phase that framed cultural understanding around women's difference to men rather than their inferiority.⁹ It was this difference where women found comfort and pride in their roles, despite a lack of access to institutional power and formal status. As the field has advanced, it has therefore placed women in increasingly nuanced frameworks: from historical omission, to visibility, to binary contrasts measured against 'male' criteria, to an increasing appreciation of female particularities, to new

⁸ Kerber, L.K. et al. (1989). Beyond Roles, Beyond Spheres: Thinking about Gender in the Early Republic. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 46(3), 565-585 (p.568)

⁹ Ibid p.567.

excavations of plural experiences and intersectionalities (as growing attention has been paid to regional, class, ethnic, and other differences).

The core of this thesis interrogates how the semiotics of familial terms, linked to the Founding Era, intersected with the lives and self-reflections of a sample of women associated with “Founding Fathers.” It seeks to break down familial labels and reflect on when they were deployed, to better understand female experiences during the early republic and their popular mythologisation, with particular attention played to the domestic realm and kinship. Historians of this period have long alluded to the concept of separate spheres which many argue became apparent in the aftermath of the revolution.¹⁰ Put bluntly, this notion contends that in the 18th and 19th Centuries, while men generally dominated the highly fluid and competitive economic and political spheres across many ‘Western’ nations, women increasingly gained ascendancy in the sacred, moral, and emotional spheres of life. Women were thought to be as rational as men in exercising the private, Christian values, and laying importance upon the family, but public virtue, portrayed through a self-sacrificial service to the state on behalf of the common good, was considered an essentially male attribute, helping to separate the spheres.¹¹ The private or female ‘sphere’ reserved to women certain types of domestic influence and certain forms of social or cultural power based on their special ‘female’ qualities.¹²

¹⁰ Linda Kerber examines the intellectual history surrounding the concept of separate spheres in *Toward an Intellectual History of Women, Essays by Linda Kerber*. (1997). University of North Carolina Press. Kerber dedicates Part 1 to ‘Finding Women in the Revolutionary Era’ where she analyses women’s representation during the revolution and its aftermath.

¹¹ Bloch, R. (1987). The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America. *Signs*, 13(1), 37-58 (p.42).

¹² Bloch, R. (1978). Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change. *Signs*, 4(2), 237-252 (p.247).

The wider transnational shift towards 'separate spheres' intersected with the dynamics of the American Revolution, but as Amanda Vickery suggests, this viewpoint was not a purely American phenomenon but was evident in most Western societies.¹³ In the creation of new states and republican ideologies, a heavy emphasis was therefore placed upon the family unit and its representation. Women were encouraged to perfect the required values and virtues necessary to support a self-sustaining republican citizenry. Whether through revolutionary mobilisation (in times of protest or war) or from the private domain of the home (in times of nation-building and peace), American women of the Revolutionary era typically operated not as individual agents but as part of a larger familial unit.

This thesis will explore female agency, self-projection, and commemoration through the language and lifecycle waypoints of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. These bonds and their nationalistic ascription as labels – like their male counterparts ('Sons' and 'Fathers') – have drawn plenty of comment and debate within scholarship. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, historians have identified and contested the existence of ideologies built around how women exercised moral influence over their male relations to ensure national virtue and social order prevailed.¹⁴ Republican Motherhood and its respective features, merits and alternatives are discussed below on page 18 and for a summary text, see notes 15 and 19.¹⁵ Rather than try to generate or critique labels ascribable to whole populations (like "Republican Motherhood"), this thesis proposes to triangulate

¹³ Amanda Vickery details how the separate spheres were also seen in other nations, such as England, where male and female roles were similarly differentiated. See *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*. (2003). New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁴ Bloch, *The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America*, p.38.

¹⁵ Robbins, S. (2002). "The Future Good and Great of Our Land": Republican Mothers, Female Authors, and Domesticated Literacy in Antebellum New England. *The New England Quarterly*, 75 (4), 562-591 (p.564.)

familial sensibilities at a personal level - by exploring how several women (intimately connected to the “Founding Fathers”) expressed and drew on their evolving familial circumstances. It considers how existing frameworks such as “Republican Motherhood” (in scholarly circles) and “Founding Mothers” (in popular circles) are useful but partial ways of addressing female experiences. It argues that there is scope in revisiting other familial bonds and labels to nuance our understanding of the impact of the revolution – such as ‘sisterhood’ and ‘daughterhood’ – that had their own dynamics, both for the revolutionary generation, and for those that followed and wished to memorialise its history.¹⁶

It was telling that it was to his daughter that President John Adams wrote, “it is by the female world that the greatest and best characters among men are formed”, and this popular sentiment propelled women’s role in the late 18th Century.¹⁷ Usually this phrase is mobilised to argue that, with very little political power, women were handed an integral role in early American society that was essential to ensure the survival of the republic with a particular emphasis on virtuousness and motherhood.¹⁸ Notions of “Republican Motherhood” were most cohesively packaged by Linda Kerber (discussed later on) who saw its emergence in moments like the 1795 motion of a Columbia College orator, who proposed that “liberty is never sure, til virtue reigns triumphant... while women keep our country virtuous, you maintain its

¹⁶ Fryer, D.R. (1998). The Mind of Eliza Pinckney: An Eighteenth-Century Woman's Construction of Herself. *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 99(3), 215-237 (p.236).

¹⁷ Adams, J. (1783). John Adams to Abigail Adams 2d, 14 August 1783. Founders Online. Accessed from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=%20Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22%20dear%20daughter%2C%201783%20it%20is%20by%20the%20female%20world%20that%20&s=2111311111&r=1&sr=> [accessed 16 March 2023].

¹⁸ Roberts, C. (2004). *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised Our Nation*. New York: HarperCollins, p.251

independence.”¹⁹ It is important to remember that historians have the benefit of hindsight as we can see how past events influenced society. Looking forwards, the revolution should be remembered as an experience shadowed by an unknown future. It was not certain that the republic would succeed in the early years, so it was essential that all components of society played their part and identities were in flux and competition.

Women – as with men – of all allegiances and statuses - therefore worked to make the best out of the situation.²⁰ Maternal ideas about safeguarding the republican values in the 1790s, post-dated women first identifying themselves as “Daughters of Liberty”, or of America being projected as a “daughter” of the allegorical Britannia and the “Mother” country. Later in the 19th Century the “Daughters of the American Revolution” would take up John Adams’s thrust to preserve the history (or a history) of the American Revolution. Both sets of “daughters” were in some senses successfully inventing their own ideology by drawing on familial relationships and their power. The nature of the changes that occurred for women during this time deserve their own analytical view and do not lend themselves to the simplified history that has been the norm for so long.²¹

A large part of this thesis is selectively historicising family semiotics: examining them as vehicles for constructing meaning around nationalist and personal historical relationships, and reflecting on their particularities during this revolutionary period of

¹⁹ Kerber, L.K. (1976). The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment- An American Perspective. *American Quarterly*, 28(2), 187-205 (p.202).

²⁰ Authors Spero and Zuckerman detail the variety of wartime experiences in *American Revolution Reborn* (2016), where they ‘embrace the diversity of experiences and reject straightforward narratives’. Spero, P & Zuckerman, M. (2016). *American Revolution Reborn*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p.4.

²¹ Cohen, P.C. (2000). Women in the Early Republic. *OAH Magazine of History*, 14(2), 7-11 (p.11).

American history.²² The thesis will particularly be focusing on female familial language that relates to motherhood, daughterhood, and sisterhood to help reach a better-rounded understanding of how womanhood was positioned during the founding era. It will seek to summarise some of the familial frameworks already posited for understanding women's history, to highlight exemplars from the period (particularly those which link the intellectual and the visual), and to scrutinise how individual histories or biographies – albeit of well-known elite women – can still yield insights into familial positionalities and sensibilities. Women of the Early Republic may have been constrained by their 'sphere', but their occupation and awareness of multiple familial roles fortified their identities, creating significant bridges and spaces through which to express agency.

As sociologist Risto Heiskala writes, gender distinction is often understood as a semiotic structure in which the "signs of maleness and femaleness determine the corresponding identities."²³ For a long time, the male gender has been signified as strong, dominating, and active, which sets them up well for life in the public sphere.²⁴ This is evident in the early republic with the strong male figures who took it upon themselves to challenge British rule and create a new regime in its place. In order to survive independency, a strong mental capability and rational thinking was required, in which men were considered better suited. On the other hand, the female gender was historically coded as passive and overwhelmingly suited for domesticity; a life

²² Semali, L.M. (2002). Transmediation: Why Study the Semiotics of Representation? *Counterpoints*, 176, 1-20 (p.6).

²³ Heiskala, R. (2004). Modernity and the Articulation of the Gender System: Order, Conflict, and Chaos. *Polish Sociological Review*, 2(146), 111-124 (p.114).

²⁴ Van Buren, J. (1992). The Semiotics of Gender. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 20(2), 215-232 (p.226).

within the private sphere that was dependent on compassion and nurturing.²⁵

Although these semiotic gendered coding have proved enduring over time – and later generations of elite Americans liked to see themselves reflected their forbears, abetted by the idea of “Founding Fathers” and “Founding Mothers” – the romantic myths and the assumptions about familial continuities were at best a partial reflection of historical experiences. Thankfully, the subject of the American Revolution is no longer seen as exclusively a man’s world and this thesis will build on the work of earlier historians to try to shine additional light on the many roles women played within the family construct. As we continue to deviate from the traditional readings of the period, we can challenge past conceptions and make history more accessible to a greater proportion of society.

This thesis is broken down into three chapters. Chapter 1 analyses the deployment of familial semiotics in both ideological and textual mediums. Particular attention is paid to the concepts surrounding motherhood given the centrality of a mother’s role in raising children of the republic. It will examine scholarship of the period and unpack the historiography around the two concepts of ‘Founding Mothers’ and ‘republican motherhood’, which historians have adopted to describe women’s place in society post-revolution. The former is a much newer term which co-exists alongside the more popular phenomenon of the Founding Fathers to impart a more gender-inclusive narrative and is a public conception. The latter is an explanatory concept developed by historians to underline the increase in status of women in the juvenile nation and the new responsibilities that came with this and is therefore a

²⁵ Allgor, C. (2000). *Parlour Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, p.242.

scholarly conception. The concepts of daughterhood and sisterhood are also examined where they arose to create an overarching consideration of tropes of womanhood and how this was exhibited in the years following the revolution. These terms are less prevalent but are vital (certainly among those looking back at the revolutionary era) to understanding the family dynamics of the time, since they underscore the pressures of maintaining the revolutionary legacy and the expectations placed upon females to serve the needs of the family from a very young age. Moreover, the concept of sisterhood is one that is frequented throughout the centuries to depict the enduring bonds women formed with each other, and this helps to bridge the past and present. The end of this chapter, in step with the interdisciplinary methodology of American Studies, examines the representation of women in historical iconography, both during and after the revolution, with a particular focus on the portrayal of women as 'mothers' and 'daughters'. It demonstrates that we can locate how gender identity and the female form was manipulated by artists at the time, who often drew on tropes around family relationships or deployed language and signifiers to construct new meanings about revolutionary womanhood through creative mediums. Female familial relationships and changing ideas and signifiers of womanhood were mobilised alongside other devices in the drive to forge new representations and perceptions.

Ultimately, despite a sense that American society and government might realise wider idealistic expectations of liberty and progress, the Early Republic saw retrenchment of one sort or another and women continued to be constrained albeit with novel ideas emerging in the 1780s about their relationships to family and

nation.²⁶ The revolutionary promise of freedom was only accorded to a select few and American leaders showed a reluctance to grant equality to all. As a result, it has been suggested that “collectively, women found no great improvement to their status”.²⁷ This begs the question, how could the US reconcile its commitment to equality and natural rights if it excluded women from the public sphere? Had the nation swapped one monarchical regime for another just as oppressive for most or all women? Lately scholars have drilled into the experiences of different sub-groups of women to consider these questions as they brought to bear on loyalist, enslaved, Indigenous, garrison, diasporic, urban, cosmopolitan, frontier, and other populations – albeit without puncturing historian Sara Evans’s wider observation that, sadly, “most people still know very little of the female experience of the past”, remaining spectators in popular versions of both past and present.²⁸ This is not just a question of focus but also the archival record: the bulk of documentation and correspondence and the vast majority of writings that have survived from this period were penned by and for men. As arguably the most careful recent monograph dissecting the shape of women’s history through the Revolution has attested, records by women and discussing women are much “less voluminous, less accessible, and more scattered than those of men”, and this has posed a problem when trying to comprehend female experiences.²⁹ This factor has influenced the structure of this Masters thesis, which engages with the core questions above (about familial positioning) through an analysis of three case studies of relatively well-documented and prominent women

²⁶ Captivating History. (2020). *American History: A Captivating Guide to the History of the United States of America, American Revolution, Civil War, Chicago, Roaring Twenties, Great Depression, Pearl Harbour, and Gulf War*. Milton Keynes: Lightning Source UK Ltd., p.161.

²⁷ Gundersen, J. R. (2006). *To be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p.201.

²⁸ Evans, S.M. (1997). *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. p.1.

²⁹ Zagari, R. (2007). *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p.9.

whose own writings have survived to varying degrees, and were digitally accessible during the pandemic.

Chapter 2 uses a case study methodology to track the notion of middling and elite white familial womanhood through selected biographies, identifying commonalities and differences amongst three distinct women. Using primary and secondary sources, this chapter will illustrate 18th-Century mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters in action. The three women chosen were affiliated with famous men, making their histories perhaps less representative but certainly more accessible. Moreover, though elite, literate, and white themselves, they offer access to the multifaceted nature and experiences of women in their various worlds which straddle region (New England, the mid-Atlantic, and the Upper South). Notable women such as these, saw the trajectories of their lives changed by the American Revolution, and occupied public roles and access to national events and ideas that might have proved elusive to others.³⁰ Therefore, whilst their privileged stories are hardly synonymous with all women during this time, they allow us privileged access within the confines of the thesis to familial reference points.³¹ In some ways, each of these women fitted the mould of “Founding Mother” and “Republican Motherhood” – but crucially, they also embraced ideas of sisterhood and daughterhood, offering new avenues of analysis. Abigail Adams was selected given her familiarity to the

³⁰ Pearsall, S.S.M. (2012). *Women in Revolutionary America* in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 273-290 (p.286).

³¹ The case studies and focus of this thesis will be centred around elite white women but the field is growing and maturing to feature women of different classes and backgrounds. For insight into enslaved motherhood see: Cowling, C. (2017). Mothering Slaves: Comparative Perspectives on Motherhood, Childlessness, and the Care of Children in Atlantic Slave Societies. *A Journal of Slave and Post Slaves Studies*, 38(2), 223-231. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0144039X.2017.1316959> Additionally, for insight into loyalist women see Chapters 1 and 2 in Cott, N. (1993). *Women and War*. New Providence, K.G. Saur.

revolutionary story and her biography follows the structure of mother, wife, and friend to lay bare both the key responsibilities associated with family life and the wider bonds of sisterhood present at the time. affairs. To examine how the next generation of Americans took on their parents' legacy, Martha Jefferson Randolph's life is analysed. Through her dedication to republican values, she came to embody the mantle of Founding Daughter and used her privileged position and education to succeed in her role as a republican mother. Finally, the life of Julia Stockton Rush, is examined as a relatively new subject focus. She exemplifies the quintessential republican wife which came into play during the early republic in addition to highlighting the sisterly bonds forged through wartime activism and the subtle, yet progressive ideals passed down from mother to daughter. These women were Caucasian and of elite status, which admittedly provides a limitation for analysis, but given the timeframe and availability of resources, it is hoped that the insight these women provide into the family home and power of kinship can be extended to women across the colonies, with family becoming a unifying factor despite class and racial differences.

Finally, Chapter 3 examines the legacy these women left behind in subsequent phases of US history and how their actions have served our understanding of the period and fostered additional familial themes and concepts. The new wave of female empowerment in the 20th Century ignited an interest in re-telling gender inclusive accounts of the founding era to ensure that women's contributions were acknowledged. Morgan argues that only in 'the last quarter of the 20th Century did the history of women and the history of the revolution intersect' and this is in large part due to the women's movement which led historians to give significant emphasis

to private issues.³² Subsequently, the discipline of women's history (or studies) was formed which strove to better understand the intricacies of the female domain. Furthermore, this chapter will examine how, through a variety of mediums, including education, art, and popular culture, the revolutionary period remained a popular source of history and entertainment. Events that occurred more than 200 years ago continue to help us to engage with the past. The visual portrayals of this period of US history have been noticeably rebooted within the 21st Century with the story being adapted to suit current sentiments and this plays a vital part in ensuring the early republic stays prevalent in Americans' minds.

Therefore, this thesis will bridge the gap between popular narratives of Founders Chic and the more recent scholarly research to make the topic accessible and inclusive. Gendered limitations of the time prohibited women from taking office, picking up a bayonette or directly implementing societal change, but this does not mean that women played no vital role or saw their contribution in singular familial terms. More subtle actions and sensibilities were being developed by women behind the scenes which paved the way for America's survival as a newly independent nation.³³ To emphasise this point, Journalist Cokie Roberts, through a comparatively conservative lens, dedicated her book *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised Our Nation* (2004), to the contributions of these revolutionary women and concluded that "men couldn't have done what they did without women maintaining their homes

³² Morgan, G. (2007). *The Debate on the American Revolution: Issues of Historiography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.215.

³³ Paul, H. (2014). *The Myths that Made America: An Introduction to American Studies*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, p.223.

and families”.³⁴ But in reality, she might have justifiably titled her work “Founding Sisters” or “Founding Daughters.”

In the popular musical *Hamilton* (2015), Angelica Schuyler, disillusioned with the gendered language used in the Declaration of Independence, longs to meet Thomas Jefferson, and “compel him to include women in the sequel”.³⁵ With the current push for a more gender-inclusive narration of history, and our challenge of traditional preconceptions, it seems that the historiography surrounding the American Revolution is getting a cultural sequel with women rightfully given their dues. To fully understand this generations of women, we need to see them in their integral familial roles and situate them better in their own terms. My thesis aims to bring a focus back to the home and particularly the important of kinship and its flexible language and relationship to the state. Historians have moved away from this sphere but the everyday experiences in the domestic realm were a platform for engaging with notions of ‘universal’ feminine experience. It is also where influence was found and fostered. Within the confines of the home, women were moulding more than their sons and husbands for America’s future and expressing political and social power and identity through bonds of daughterhood and sisterhood. The thesis can necessarily only offer a partial sense of this. But by considering how far the lives and self-perceptions of selected elite women aligned with grand ideas about national womanhood, it proposes there is more to discover about the impact of notions of daughterhood and sisterhood on revolutionary and Early Republican sensibilities.

³⁴ Regine, p.37.

³⁵ Miranda, L.M. (2015). *The Schuyler Sisters*. Renee Elise Goldsberry, Phillipa Soo, Jasmine Cephas Jones & Leslie Odom Jr. *Hamilton: Original Broadway Cast Recording*. [CD]. New York: Atlantic.

Chapter 1 – context and the politicisation of women in history, scholarship, and iconography

Founding Mothers

The United States is a country that is immensely proud of its past. The principles and practices that evolved in the early years of the republic, continue to impact the current American political system, with the past and present firmly interlinked. It is therefore evident that to fathom America today, we need to understand more of what went on in the revolution and its aftermath. The actions and stories of 18th Century revolutionaries remain entrenched in the American identity, and this is particularly patent with regards to the ‘Founding Fathers’; men who actively participated in America’s independent foundations and are associated with the golden age of republicanism. The term Founding Fathers was first coined in 1916 by President Warren Harding and has since become the favoured expression to honour the memories of celebrated figures including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.³⁶ The discourse of history is overwhelmingly masculine, and this is no different when it comes to historical scholarship surrounding the American Revolution and its immediate aftermath. However, more recently, due to the recent vagaries of historical focus, “social history has started to take centre stage”, becoming a frequently studied discipline.³⁷ This has led to an expansion of material which moves beyond the founders chic, by looking at the histories of women and racial minorities, to create an all-encompassing revolutionary story.

³⁶ Lewis, J.J. (2019). *Founding Mothers: Women’s Roles in American Independence* [Online]. Thought Co. Available from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/who-were-the-founding-mothers-3530673> [Accessed 24 September 2021].

³⁷ Bernstein, R.B. (2009). *The Founding Fathers Reconsidered*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.134.

The female experience had typically remained in the shadows of the narrative and serious scholarly inquiry into women of this era began much later than it did for their male counterparts. The National Women's History Museum offered an illuminating criticism of past revolutionary scholarship by stating that "often the women of revolutionary America are entirely forgotten."³⁸ For many years, they have been "invisible in the history books", but women of the early republic have their own stories that deserve exploration.³⁹ To circumvent these previous omissions, historians of the period are working to ensure that women's contributions to this pivotal period of US history are acknowledged and in more recent years, the wider female experience has been given the credit and respect it deserves. Modern women's history has its roots in the 1960s where social barriers began to be removed and the female exclusion from historical narratives was challenged. As a result, the term, 'Founding Mothers' has joined its male equivalent in the public domain. Constitutional historian Richard Bernstein describes the term Founding Mothers as "honorific" and one that has taken far too long to enter historical consciousness; disparaging the past bigotries within history.⁴⁰ The term is a necessary one however, as it shines a light on the fundamental role that women played during this time and offers them a more equal standing amongst male revolutionary heroes. It was an essential criterium for women to "teach their children the values of republican virtue", so women paved the way for the next generation by setting an example of what it took to be 'American.'⁴¹ Hence, despite their exclusion from public affairs, women played an essential role in

³⁸ (2017). *Mythbusting The Founding Mothers* [Online]. National Women's History Museum. Available from: <https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/mythbusting-founding-mothers> [Accessed 24 September 2021].

³⁹ De Pauw, L.G. (1975). *Founding Mothers: Women of America in the Revolutionary Era*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, p.x.

⁴⁰ Bernstein, p.7.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.22.

the revolutionary story and examining this role helps to aid our understanding of late 18th Century American society.

Historian Linda De Pauw details the experience of American women who were “present everywhere the men were” in her book *Founding Mothers: Women of America in the Revolutionary Era* (1975). She extends the conversation about America’s ‘founders’ to shine a light on the women who also contributed to the development of America life, including dedicating chapters to Women at War, and Making a Home.⁴² This message has subsequently been championed through popular mediums, including radio, with author and journalist Cokie Roberts striving to detail the personal stories of the women at the forefront of American politics in her works. Roberts identified a gap in the scholarship and wanted to provide a voice to the previously snubbed figures of history.⁴³ Therefore, both works expanded upon the formerly limited narrative and *Founding Mothers*, has gained popularity as a way to “acknowledge the wives, sisters, daughters and female associates of the Founding Fathers.”⁴⁴ Many came from money, whose “individual backgrounds prepared them for what would soon be their destiny”, supporting and encouraging the accomplished men in their lives and by consequence, supporting their nation.⁴⁵ Thus, a limitation of the concept is that it typically concentrates on women who had ties to prominent men; giving voices to those who were perhaps only well regarded, and able to make an impact, due to the status and position of their male associates.

⁴² De Pauw, *Founding Mothers: Women of America in the Revolutionary Era*, p.x

⁴³ NPR Radio. (2014). ‘Founding Mothers’ Helps Kids Remember the Ladies [Online]. WBUR. Available from: <https://www.wbur.org/npr/264535480/founding-mothers-helps-kids-remember-the-ladies> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

⁴⁴ Declaration Resources Project. (2016). *December Highlight: Founding Fathers?* [Online]. Harvard University. Available from: <https://declaration.fas.harvard.edu/blog/december-founders> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

⁴⁵ Martinez, H. (2019). You Know the Founding Fathers, Now Meet the Founding Mothers [Online]. *The Archive*. Available from: <https://explorethearchive.com/founding-mothers> [Accessed 24 September 2021].

There is likely more women who aren't connected to a famous men or famous name whose stories have remained hidden. This underscores how an advancement in gendered accounts can create a shortcoming when it comes to class and societal standing. Nevertheless, the concept of Founding Mothers warrants a place in the revolutionary idiolect due to its rectification of past oversights and it serves to complete the metaphor surrounding America's 'parentage'.

In recent years, scholars have sought to create an unofficial roster of women who come under the mantle of Founding Mothers by exploring wartime activities, political actions, and displays of patriotism by women. The most common and undeniable addition to the Founding Mothers roster is Martha Washington, who is acknowledged by numerous scholars for her contributions to America's independent beginnings. She is best known as America's first Lady who carved out the role of presidential spouse and for this she is described as the 'mother of the country' to match her husband George Washington's title of 'father of the country'. She chose for herself the role of a facilitator of society. She possessed fine organisational skills; was a sound judge of character, was capable of forming profound friendships; and possessed an abiding interest in issues of education, domestic management, and public manners.⁴⁶ Martha played a key role during the Revolutionary War and is commended for her assistance in caring for the troops and her presence at the camps to raise morale. One witness stated, "I have never in my life known a woman so busy as Lady Washington, providing comfort for the sick soldiers."⁴⁷ In addition to her duties inherited through her husband's position, she also succeeded in keeping

⁴⁶ Teute, F.J & Shields, D.S. (2015). Jefferson in Washington: Domesticating Manners in the Republican Court. *Journal of the Early American Republic*, 35(2), 237-259 (p.243).

⁴⁷ Roberts, *Founding Mothers*, p.94.

her family plantation running whilst her husband was away.⁴⁸ This demonstrates how women were capable of handling that which was previously considered male responsibilities and how women played a significant but unsung role in the war.

Alongside Martha's new role, a new social phenomenon was formed, known as the Republican Court, which married sensibility and dutifulness in the hopes of creating a national civil society.⁴⁹ The development of the continental civil culture depended upon genteel women supervising a reformed set of manners through gatherings held in the drawing rooms of their homes.⁵⁰ They were accessible to persons connected with the government and their families, to distinguished strangers, and indeed to all men and women whose social position entitled them to a recognition in polite and cultivated society.⁵¹ It was commonly agreed that manners, monitored by women, were what held society together and the elite's ability to manipulate social conventions gave them the power to control groups at the margin.⁵² Women's power is often invisible because they must make it so. The story of the Republican Court details elite women aiding the construction of a political domain, and it is through this domain that they exerted influence upon public matters and manners insulated from the tumult of class and sectional debate.⁵³

Scholars, Teute and Shields have extensively detailed the Republican Court and used their work to encourage the re-examination of gendered dimensions of politics

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Founding Mothers: Women's Roles in American Independence*.

⁴⁹ Teute, F.J & Shields, D.S. (2015). The Republican Court and the Historiography of a Woman's Domain in the Public Sphere. *Journal of the Early American Republic*, 35(2), 169-183 (p.173).

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 178.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 178.

⁵² Ibid, p.177.

⁵³ Ibid p,183.

and power in the early republic.⁵⁴ However, the nature of these meetings and discussions were not mirroring of those held by men in positions of power and led by the President, for Martha Washington's Republican court was a considering feminine concerns of civility. But discourses on sensibility and manners provided an ideological sanction for women's activities in the name of an indispensable role in cultivating the stability and independence a new nation required.⁵⁵ In contrast to their European counterparts, American women partaking in what Catherine Allgor describes as "parlour politics", were not femme fatales, but mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters who wished to participate in the family business of politics.⁵⁶ A different path to men's discussions, but one that was just as necessary and one that showcased women's intellectual and moral capabilities. Moreover, Allgor insinuates a more calculated intent, with middle-class and elite women, operating under a veil of respectability to work toward their political goals. They used old fashioned court behaviours to create the new structures that would support and nurture a new kind of government democracy, but this was not interpreted as feminist victories but as family work of conservative wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters, angling to ensure their family was informed and well-positioned.⁵⁷

Abigail Adams is another common addition to the roster, and historians are blessed with an intimate look into Abigail's private thoughts, thanks to the preservation of letters exchanged between her and her husband John Adams, as well as her correspondence with other prominent figures. These letters reveal how Abigail

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.183.

⁵⁵ Ditz, T.L. (2015). Masculine Republics and "Female Politicians" in the Age of Revolution. *Journal of the Early American Republic*, 35(2), 263-269 (p.265).

⁵⁶ Allgor, *Parlour Politics*, p.1.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.241.

served as an advisor to her husband, with the pair often debating political matters. Many scholars have argued that these letters contained “some of the best-regarded viewpoints of early American society”⁵⁸. Abigail is therefore considered a Founding Mother due to her strong interest in America’s political affairs and for not being afraid to engage her mind as a female intellectual in the late 18th Century. John Adams himself was grateful for her advice and when elected President in 1797, stated, ‘I never wanted your advice or assistance more in my life’.⁵⁹ Therefore, Abigail worked as a sounding board for her presidential husband and may have had more say on his actions than we will ever fully know. Her influence was so profound that John’s political enemies often referred to her as “Mrs President”, highlighting her fearless attitude and intelligence.⁶⁰ Abigail also has the uncommon accolade of being a presidential spouse and mother to another president, strengthening her link to the early years of the republic. The extraordinary life of Abigail Adams will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Dolley Madison, wife of fourth President James Madison, has been argued to have defined the role of the president’s spouse which has earned her a place on the Founding Mothers roster. She prioritised the social engagements required of a first lady and used her smarts and social graces to bolster support for her husband’s presidency. Dolley was an artist of sociability, setting up a sympathy of heart and mind between the recipients of her attention and herself that created a nimbus of amiability in which her guests were suspended.⁶¹ More recently, in attempts to

⁵⁸ Lewis, *Founding Mothers: Women’s Roles in American Independence*.

⁵⁹ Martinez, You Know the Founding Fathers, Now Meet the Founding Mothers.

⁶⁰ Declaration Resource Project, *December Highlight: Founding Fathers?*

⁶¹ Teute & Shields, Jefferson in Washington, p.255.

modernise attitudes and understanding of women's role in the public sphere, scholarly focus has shifted towards social history, bringing to light the more exciting activities that women were involved in outside of the home. By looking at social spaces and social interactions, they have sought to move beyond the traditional interpretations. Whilst this is a necessary avenue of study, it is more contribution history, filling in gaps with extraordinary stories within a perceived male realm, to even the playing field. Nevertheless, given her social graces, Dolley represents the more charismatic of women who used their position to improve their social standing. Upon his death, Dolley published James Madison's personal papers and this decision to maintain her husband's legacy has aided our understanding of key historical documents, including the Constitution and the Federalist Papers.⁶² Many wives followed suit and ensured their husband's work stayed in the public domain, acting as caretakers of this pivotal period of US history. Her role as First Lady was also distinctive in that she carried out the role for two separate presidents. As Thomas Jefferson's wife had died prior to him taking office, Dolley Madison stepped in and served as his hostess; playing a supportive role and inserting a feminine touch to his administration as well as her husband's.

Not all the Founding Mothers were First Ladies. Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton was the wife of Alexander Hamilton, who despite his many political contributions, never took office. Like Dolley Madison, Elizabeth helped establish the legacy of her husband by collecting and publishing his letters after his death in 1804. Her devotion to her husband allowed him to attain the position he did, and her altruistic tendencies were further displayed through her role in the founding of orphanages in New York.

⁶² Lewis, *Founding Mothers: Women's Roles in American Independence*

Recognition of Elizabeth's actions has increased in recent years thanks to popular culture. *Hamilton* gave her a sympathetic voice and taught a whole new generation her name which has increased interest denoting to her life.⁶³ Furthermore, Deborah Reed, wife of Benjamin Franklin, makes a frequent appearance due to her selflessness which enabled her husband to pursue political goals. She built up Franklin's business while he was away which allowed him the freedom to prioritise his political and scientific practices.⁶⁴ Like Martha Washington, she showed proficiency in household management and indirectly supported her husband's contributions, of which America is still grateful for today.

Stepping away from the political scene, Founding Mothers has also come to include women who were trailblazers of their time. Mercy Otis Warren was an accomplished author and the first woman to write for a public audience. She wrote under a pseudonym initially but in 1805 wrote a 3-volume history of the Revolution, which was a critical success and showcased her intellectual talents.⁶⁵ Her writing compliment the notion that women are caretakers of history as her writing allowed this period of history to be preserved. Otis Warren corresponded frequently with Abigail Adams and the pair often engaged in political and intellectual discussions, using their families' position to better their understanding of current affairs. Judith Sargent Murray is another regular addition to the roster and is argued to be a "woman more than a century ahead of her time".⁶⁶ She wrote frequently about

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Martinez, You Know the Founding Fathers, Now Meet the Founding Mothers.

⁶⁵ Jones, M. (2016). *8 Founding Mothers of the United States* [Online]. Women's Museum. Available from: <https://womensmuseum.wordpress.com/2016/05/04/8-founding-mothers-of-the-united-states/> [Accessed 27 September 2021].

⁶⁶ The Founders Club. (n.d.) *Founding Mothers* [Online]. The Founders Club. Available from: <https://foundersclubatl.com/founding-mothers/> [Accessed 24 September 2021].

politics of the new America and her essay on *“the equality of the sexes”* later depicted her as a feminist icon.⁶⁷ Murray was an early advocate for female rights and used her voice to champion female capabilities.

The notion of Founding Mothers has typically been weighted towards women of Caucasian decent – by virtues of the inequities of the period, and of the racially unequal societies and archives created in its wake. Still, especially in recent years, the notion has been broadened to be more inclusive; Phyllis Wheatley led a short but fascinating life and is included by many historians due to her strong support of American Independence. Wheatley was kidnapped from her home in West Africa as a child and brought to America, but she would later become the first African American poet to be published.⁶⁸ In a misguided way, Wheatley demonstrates the long-held belief in equal opportunity that America prides itself on. Her colour and traumatic beginnings did not constrain her and when the opportunity for education was presented to her by the Wheatley family, she wrote countless poems which equally demonstrated her intellect and talent. She is commemorated at the Boston Women’s Memorial which pays tribute to her creativity and passion.

Broadening the popular sense of a roster of “Founding Mothers” beyond literate political or cultural figures has long allowed the term to extend to women of lower class or who participated more actively in the conflict. Often the revolution concentrates on the heroic actions of the male generals and soldiers, but “half of the revolutionary generation were female” and they were not sitting idly by.⁶⁹ None more

⁶⁷ Lewis, *Founding Mothers: Women’s Roles in American Independence*.

⁶⁸ Jones, *8 Founding Mothers of the United States*.

⁶⁹ De Pauw, *Founding Mothers*, p.10.

evidently so, than the small number of women who physically fought on the battlefield alongside their American brothers. Deborah Sampson, now a prominent feature on the Founding Mothers roster, fought for the Patriot army for three years under the alias Robert Shurtleff and received both an honourable discharge and military pension in 1783. Mary Hays McCauley and Margaret Corbin are similarly acknowledged for their courage, the former of whom took over firing a canon when her husband was shot. Additionally, Corbin is the only female revolutionary veteran to be buried at the US Military academy at West Point.⁷⁰ The heroic actions of these women are believed to be the individuals behind the legend of Molly Pitcher who is another presence on the aforementioned list of Founding Mothers and has since been memorialised in various artworks. There is no solid evidence that Pitcher actually existed, but she, along with her suspected inspirations, are recognised for the bravery they displayed in the victory against the British – an example of the wishful coming together of patriotism and femininity. In 2020, historian Larry Holzwarth noted a Founding Mother whose identity remains a mystery for different reasons. Agent 355 was a woman who helped reveal the betrayal of Benedict Arnold. George Washington “relied on women in nearly all of his campaigns” and more stories are coming to light concerning female spies.⁷¹ Therefore, some Founding Mothers retain a sense of mystery but similarly tell of the courage displayed by the female sex. Furthermore, Sybil Ludington, sometimes referred to as the ‘female Paul Revere’, is honoured for her actions in the lead up to the

⁷⁰ World Strides. (2018). *Meet 11 Founding Mothers of the United States* [Online]. World Strides. Available from: <https://worldstrides.com/blog/2018/05/meet-11-founding-mothers-of-the-united-states/> [Accessed 28 September 2021].

⁷¹ Holzwarth, L. (2020). *Meet the Founding Mothers and Backbone of America* [Online]. History Collection. Available from: <https://historycollection.com/meet-the-founding-mothers-and-backbone-of-america/> [Accessed 24 September 2021].

revolution.⁷² She travelled many miles to warn of an imminent attack by British soldiers, willingly taking this job after many of the men in her father's regiment had disbanded for the planting season. It is because of her bravery that Sybil Ludington was named a Founding Mother but referring to her as 'female Paul Revere' belittles the courage of this 16-year-old patriot who deserves recognition in her own right. Sybil's story also goes to show that Founding Mothers did not only relate to women of motherhood age. What affiliated them with motherhood was how they put the needs of their country first and contributed to its successes.

Notwithstanding the positive steps taken to extend the list of individuals recognised for their contributions to America's founding, there are still some limitations. Due to the patriarchal society of the time, we will perhaps never truly know the true extent of these women's actions. Women were deemed the weaker sex, whose political opinions were often ignored as "politics was perceived as strictly a matter for men", and the practice of male dominance was widespread.⁷³ The law of coverture also masked or excluded many of the contributions these additional Founding Mothers may have made. A husband and wife were recognised as a single person, so any female contribution was presented as the ideas of their husband as "she was not perceived to have an independent mind or will of her own".⁷⁴ Principles such as these, make it difficult to distinguish what was in fact the idea of a woman alone and what were the ideas of her husband, so laying acknowledgement at the feet of the man may be unfounded and inaccurate. Additionally, it is also worth noting that the

⁷² Lewis, *Founding Mothers: Women's Roles in American Independence*.

⁷³ Kann, M. (1999). *The Gendering of American Politics: Founding Mothers, Founding Fathers and Political Patriarchy*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, p.3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.5.

term Founding Mothers has been used in multiple contexts where a woman was involved in the creation of something new. For example, Paula Watson used the term when discussing the public library movement between 1870 and 1930.⁷⁵

Therefore, Founding Mothers does not only relate to the period synonymous with the American revolution but has been used in various contexts that are unrelated.

The term 'Founding Mothers', in comparison with Founding Fathers, is a newer term but arguably a useful and necessary one. It illuminates the actions and battles women fought to garner a greater status for the newly independent United States. The women included under the mantle of Founding Mothers, made use of their circumstances and connections, fighting for what they deemed to be right at the time. These were "politically passionate" women utterly devoted to the patriot cause, who rightly deserve to be remembered.⁷⁶ Looking into the material on America's founders, there are consistent themes encompassing American women and their actions in the years surrounding the American Revolution, whether that be through physically fighting for independence or using their position to push for greater female education. These women used their station to improve America for the better and play a part in its success. As gender history becomes ever more popular, the lives of these women can be further explored, and we can pave the way for more women – including more diverse women with notable experiences – to join the fold. America will always remember its Founding Fathers; they hold an iconic, divine status, but recent scholarship has shown that women also played an integral role throughout

⁷⁵ Watson, P.D. (1994). Founding Mothers: The Contribution of Women's Organizations to Public Library Development in the United States. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, 64(3), 233-269 (p.234).

⁷⁶ NPR Radio, 'Founding Mothers' Helps Kids Remember the Ladies'.

their lifetime in nurturing the new republic. The previous omission from the history books does not emulate their omission from republican society. The past cannot be understood without looking at men and women as such, without exploring the differentiation between womanhood and manhood, masculinity, and femininity.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Cott, N.F. & Faust, D.G. (2005). Foreword: Recent Directions in Gender and Women's History. *OAH Magazine of History*, 19(2) 4-5 (p.4).

Republican Motherhood

The meticulous relationship between women and the early republic materialised in the 1980s with the first full length monographs published by famed historians Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton. Countless scholars since have congratulated Kerber and Norton, for successfully writing women into the story of the founding of the US for the first time.⁷⁸ This new era of female history has opened up a new line of historical accounts whereby the experience of women can be dissected with a more analytical, all-encompassing, and respectful approach. This dramatic change within the last four decades has allowed for a “new and improved female visibility at every level of American life.”⁷⁹

In recent years there has been an increase in scholarship that gives significant emphasis to private issues including family relations and motherhood. As history is a traditionally male discipline, searching for mothers in history is complicated by the male-centred assumptions and as a result, motherhood is only just beginning to be described by women themselves.⁸⁰ Professor of Women’s Studies Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, was one of the first scholars to alter the narrative to become more inclusive and push to bring motherhood to the forefront of historical debate. Within her article, *Teaching Motherhood in History* (2002), she aims to highlight the need for incorporating the study of motherhood into the history syllabus to steer attention towards the private world that was the norm for so many. She argues that only as we come to understand the hidden, private worlds inhabited by most women throughout

⁷⁸ Knott, S. (2014). Female Liberty? Sentimental Gallantry, Republican Womanhood, and Rights Feminism in the Age of Revolutions. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 71(3), 425-456 (p.427).

⁷⁹ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, p.1.

⁸⁰ Vandenberg-Daves, J. (2002). Teaching Motherhood in History. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 30(3), 234-255 (p.237).

history, can we “study the past in a truly inclusive way.”⁸¹ It was within the confines of the household that the republican philosophy was taught but it is difficult to find sources relating to this, thereby limiting our understanding. Vandenberg-Daves’ article provides a justification for moving the spotlight onto the lesser-explored realities in the hope that we can better comprehend what life was like for the many, not the few, and how everyday life impacted wider American society.

19th Century poet and publisher Lydia Sigourney wrote numerous books discussing women and their contributions to society through the practice of motherhood. It was her belief that in becoming a mother, “you have reached the climax of your happiness and you have also taken a higher place in the scale of being.”⁸² Sigourney’s argument highlights the commonly held view of the time that the pinnacle achievement for women was becoming a mother, and that motherhood would grant them all the happiness they craved. It is therefore clear from 19th century writings that motherhood formed the foundations of female identity. Maternal pride was not the only value Sigourney credits in her writings. Patriotism was also fundamental and “the patriotism of a woman is to faithfully teach by precept and example, that wisdom, integrity, and peace, which are the glory of a nation.”⁸³ Men may have showcased patriotism by bearing arms or taking office, but women showed patriotism in the home and were seemingly proud to do so. However, in a nation that was suspicious of the single female, and with no direct access to the political system, being a wife and mother was the only real choice these women had.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.246.

⁸² Theriot, N.M. (1996). *Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth Century America: The Biosocial Construction of Femininity*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, p.31.

⁸³ Kraus, N.K. (2008). *A New Type of Womanhood: Discursive Politics and Social Change in Antebellum America*. Duke University Press, p.115.

Marriage was an institution that helped to found both men's and women's identity in the polity, and has thus been the vehicle for the state's part in forming and sustaining the gender order.⁸⁴ Consequently, American women overwhelmingly chose the path of marriage and motherhood.⁸⁵ Had things been different, these women may have chosen another path, but in the 1800s, their capabilities and desires were suppressed to favour circumstances that were more compatible with the requirements of the republic. With the limited options presented to them, most women gave wholeheartedly to the motherhood mantle which they could achieve and found pleasure in this role. Thus, by glossing over the gender discrimination evident at the time, motherhood has been transformed into a meaningful and powerful story.

Familial language plays a crucial role in our understanding of the time and shows how sentiments develop and change. Political cartoons of the time portrayed America as an independent daughter stepping out on her own and in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the female discourse was republican daughters. However, with a new century approaching, this dialogue was replaced by the ideology that centred around motherhood; Americans realised the need to nurture and prepare the next generation for the requirements that a new nation necessitates.⁸⁶ The lexicon surrounding republican daughters; gaiety, animation, high spirit, liveliness, and volatility, would be interchanged for femininity, domesticity, and maternal, self-sacrificial qualities related to the mother.⁸⁷ This sentiment is

⁸⁴ Cott, N.F. (1998). Marriage and Women's Citizenship in United States, 1830- 1934. *American Historical Review*, 103(5), 1440-1474 (p.1442).

⁸⁵ Theriot, *Mothers & Daughters*, p. 31.

⁸⁶ Fizer, I. (1993). Signing as Republican Daughters: The Letters of Eliza Southgate and "The Coquette". *The Eighteenth Century*, 34(3), 243- 263 (p.243).

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.250.

acknowledged by historians who appreciate that ideologies of motherhood are “reflections of the political, cultural, economic, and social forces” at play during a particular era.⁸⁸

A concept that is frequently present in the literature and scholarly material surrounding women and the early republic is ‘republican motherhood’. The term was first coined by Linda Kerber in 1976 to capture the sentiment promoted in the 1790s regarding women and their place in the newly independent nation.⁸⁹ Due to an exclusion from the public sphere and without any direct political participation, women were confined to the domestic domain, where they were given the responsibility of raising future citizens and leaders of the republic. Following the destruction caused by several years of war, the emerging republic dedicated its attention to instructing young Americans on how to be upstanding republican citizens who honoured the values that their forefathers fought and died to implement. Therefore, the problem of female citizenship was solved by “endowing domesticity itself with political meaning”, with women serving as the vehicles who passed on republican values and moral sensibilities to their children under the veil of republican motherhood.⁹⁰ This presented a weighty task, with the demands of family happiness and the construction of mankind placed overwhelmingly upon the mother. Women were thus given a distinct identity from men and a role that was essential to the state’s welfare, which simultaneously diluted their push for political representation after the revolution. Kerber’s proposition was unique at a point where there was little scholarship and

⁸⁸ Lynch, K.D. (2005), Advertising Motherhood: Image, Ideology, and Consumption. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 49, 32-57 (p.33).

⁸⁹ Cohen, Women in the Early Republic, p.7.

⁹⁰ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, p.57.

played an important role in setting up a model for understanding the continued political resonance of women even while denied access to formal politics in states outwith New Jersey. The model found a way of explaining how republicanism, 'separate spheres' and greater female education and empowerment could evolve and align into the 19th Century. If "Founding Mothers" has been a popular framework to pull some individual women into view, the "Republican Motherhood" has acted as a scholarly analogue that considered wider patterns across the nation in a bid to consolidate a narrative around gender history and the Early Republic.

A wide array of scholarship that followed has developed, refined, and/or critiqued the notion – which has itself become a kind of historiographical artefact as much as a fully functional explanatory device. Whilst a helpful holistic device introduced at a time where research was narrow, Republican Motherhood has become more disputed in recent years, with many scholars identifying its limitations and exclusions. Kerber herself has offered keen and ambivalent reflections on in her later research.

Domesticity was a key attribute of republican motherhood, with History Professor Linda Eisenmann stating that this "post-revolutionary philosophy called on women to utilise their natural and domestic abilities to satisfy the new republic's need for civic virtue."⁹¹ These natural and domestic abilities typically culminated in the nurture and education of their offspring, moulding them into virtuous citizens who could continue

⁹¹ Eisenmann, L. (1998). *Historical Dictionary of Women's Education in the United States*. Westport: Greenwood Press, p.343.

the American experiment and ensure the enduring success of the republic.⁹² Priority was placed upon raising good sons as it was they who could take up leadership roles and who would play a more active role in the betterment of the nation through positions of power. To further emphasise this point, Kerber writes that the republican ideology towards motherhood in the US was inspired by the classic Spartan mother who raised worthy sons prepared to sacrifice themselves for the good of the polis.⁹³ Hence, this revolutionary philosophy had affiliations with the past, with republican men being adorned the same reputation as the ancient Greeks. Keeping their family together and well established, ignited a ruthless spirit in these mothers, who use political patronage and politicking to score positions for their male family members, using skills learnt in the Republican Court.⁹⁴ Patronage language was feminine, and it was family love, family health and family happiness that was their main focus. Excluded from the sphere of business, they disguised their implementation of power with a cover of feminine concerns.⁹⁵ The raising of daughters on the other hand, typically consisted of preparing them for marriage and motherhood, to ensure this practice was upheld. Working like an apprenticeship system, mothers carefully trained their daughters in the arts of housewifery and motherhood and these experiences tied the generations together in shared skills and emotional interaction.⁹⁶ The mother-daughter relationship was thereby relegated in its function: it created a bond of sympathy and understanding but was granted a lesser importance granted compared to raising strong sons.

⁹² Doyle, N. (2018). *Maternal Bodies: Redefining Motherhood in Early America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p.3.

⁹³ Kerber, *The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment- An American Perspective*, p.188.

⁹⁴ Allgor, C. (2015). "Believing the Ladies Had Great Influence": Early National American Women's Patronage in Transatlantic Context. *American Political Thought*, 4(1), 39-71 (p.61).

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.65

⁹⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, (1986). *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.65.

A child of the republic, regardless of gender, needed adequate, appropriate education to ensure that women became republican mothers and that men became “republican machines”; the decades that followed the revolution saw an increase in edification.⁹⁷ A rise in female education complimented republican motherhood and more opportunities were granted to women to broaden their knowledge. However, this was not purely for the mother’s benefit. A woman could more effectively fulfil her duties as a mother if she was learned, so, education was justified as an advantage for her children and by extension, the nation. Therefore, republican motherhood was progressive in that it fostered the idea that women should play an intellectual role in society through the raising of patriotic children, but it was also conservative as it avoided the implementation of too radical a change in women’s status and did not endorse female education for her benefit alone.⁹⁸ Because the stability of the republican project relied on a highly literate and sophisticated constituency, the educated woman was spared criticism so long as she placed her learning at her family’s service.⁹⁹

After gaining independence, America was under pressure to prove itself capable of being run without the guiding hand of the British. The removal of the monarchy in favour of republican values necessitated a commitment to what the republic stood for. As America worked out its place in the world, the values of republicanism and independence took precedence with republican motherhood serving to safeguard the nation’s success on the world stage. Moreover, the requirements of the family were changing, and the ideal republican family would be held together by mutually

⁹⁷ Cutterham, *Gentlemen Revolutionaries*, p.61.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.123.

⁹⁹ Kerber, L., et al. (2016). *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.122.

affectional bonds rather than hierarchy and submission, to distance themselves from the model they had overthrown.¹⁰⁰ It was through education that a woman could showcase her patriotism via her teachings and examples as described by Lydia Sigourney. These new mothers took inspiration from the revolutionary generation; venerating their self-reliance and confidence and following their model as an example of how to conduct oneself.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the origins of this patriotic, intelligent woman have roots in the revolution where women needed to prove themselves and their dedication to their country, maintaining that link to past displays of patriotic pride. In the 1780s and 90s, women were increasingly presented as indispensable and active promoters of patriotism in men: as mothers and wives, women came to be idealised as the source, not only of domestic morality but also of civic virtue itself.¹⁰²

Sentiments relating to the republican mother is evident in print culture. In her work *Maternal Bodies* (2018), Professor Nora Doyle argues that the mother played a significant role in society as she “counterbalanced the unpredictable forces at toe and became a symbol of stability and morality.”¹⁰³ The mother was a notable character in children’s books of the time, with illustrations of motherhood translating through both word and image, providing illiterate individuals a means of engaging with the concept and its connotations. Images and prose frequently worked together to form the trope of the ideal mother and by placing her at the heart of print culture, these texts showcased the mother as a white middle-class icon of huge importance

¹⁰⁰ Fizer, *Signing as Republican Daughters*, p.248.

¹⁰¹ Eisenmann, *Historical Dictionary of Women’s Education*, p.343.

¹⁰² Bloch, *The Gendered Meanings of Virtue*, p.46.

¹⁰³ Doyle, *Maternal Bodies*, p.4.

to the rearing of her children and to the country. Women were idealised for their supposedly innate qualities of emotionalism, tenderness, and delicacy through this literary sentimentalism.¹⁰⁴ The children's book, *A Present for a Little Girl* (1804), shows early images that underscored the mother-child bond but also the teacher-student relationship.¹⁰⁵ The mother was an active figure, using both her body to support her children and employing her mind to advance their education, demonstrating how women's increased education was put into practice.¹⁰⁶ Being situated within nature also paints the picture of an idyllic childhood and emphasises the virtues that the republic championed. Therefore, this symbol of stability and omnipresence which is often described by historians like Doyle, offers an insight into how publishers of the time viewed women and the role of motherhood within the family dynamic. However, this representation was not entirely positive. Within print culture, the mother was increasingly portrayed as "spirit-like" which removed her human qualities.¹⁰⁷ Scholar Sarah Knott extends this stating that domestic women were made into "avatars and emblems of national virtue", who were expected to show an enduring stoicism and this pressure could be overwhelming.¹⁰⁸ Women were therefore under no illusion of the burden required to live up to the republican motherhood mantle and virtue, even if domesticated, helped to legitimate women's activities in American life for a long time.¹⁰⁹

Print culture is not the only medium that historians have used to justify their line of arguments and gain a deeper understanding of female thought. Private letters and

¹⁰⁴ Bloch, *The Gendered Meanings of Virtue*, p.52.

¹⁰⁵ Doyle, *Maternal Bodies*, p.149.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.150.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.161.

¹⁰⁸ Knott, *Female Liberty?* p.426.

¹⁰⁹ Bloch, *The Gendered Meanings of Virtue*, p.58.

diaries have allowed more intimate access into the world of women detailing notable historical events and the more mundane realities of daily domestic life. Abigail Adams is a prominent subject of revolutionary scholarship due to the vast quantity of letters she wrote during her lifetime which have remained preserved. Through engaging with her words, historians have been given a window into the life she led and the thoughts she had, making her story more accessible. In recent years, the writings of additional women have been analysed to expand the collective understanding and branch away from already famed figures. For example, the letters of Eliza Southgate, written between 1797 and 1809, have been examined by Irene Fizer and offer a nuanced account of her life.¹¹⁰ Rather than infer what life was like for these women, letters describe them with bountiful emotion and passion, with no hidden agenda, which provides an unbiased account with a uniquely human touch. As more women of notice are discovered, this foundation of knowledge will continue to expand and the variety of materials available adds depth to our understanding.

Over the years, historians have been very complimentary about the concept of republican motherhood, pointing out how it helped reassert women's value in society. In *You Have Stepped Out of Your Place* (1996), Susan Hill Lindley paints republican motherhood in an attractive light, arguing that it was embraced by women as it justified education and encouraged their political and intellectual interests.¹¹¹ The extent to which women were encouraged to pursue their political interests is deliberated but Lindley sees the early republic as a progressive time for women. Within her book, Lindley dedicates a chapter to the 'Ideal American Woman', which

¹¹⁰ Fizer, *Signing as Republican Daughters*, p.246.

¹¹¹ Lindley, S.H. (1996). *"You Have Stepped Out of Your Place": A History of Women and Religion in America*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, p.51.

refers to the expectations placed on women post-1783 with the mother being the central figure. She goes on to suggest, with support from Kerber, that motherhood was discussed as if it were the “fourth branch of government”; an important aspect of society with the same stature as legislative and judicial matters.¹¹² Republican motherhood could therefore ensure social control and positive outcomes for the citizens in the gentlest possible way whilst allowing men to retain ‘real’ political power. Lindley’s work has been positively regarded as a “testament to the maturation of the feminist approach... incorporating a wide-ranging knowledge of the literature into her text.”¹¹³ Ruth Bloch mirrors this sentiment¹¹⁴ by stating that motherhood has long held a special place of honour in the symbolism of American life and therefore republican motherhood was of large importance.¹¹⁴ Through motherhood, women were afforded the opportunity to wield social influence as they had wide-ranging physical, psychological, intellectual, and religious custody over the young.¹¹⁵ They were the first port of call in a child’s life and were the ones who would shape the minds and behaviour of their children through the channel of a specialised maternal role in the home environment.

Furthermore, historians with this leaning, believe that women attempted to compensate for their exclusion from the political world by “translating moral authority into political influence.”¹¹⁶ This suggests that women played an active role and made the most of their circumstances, passing motherhood off as a steppingstone to

¹¹² Ibid, p.52.

¹¹³ Chamberlain, A. (1997). Reviewed Work: “You have Stepped out of Your Place”: A History of Women and Religion in America by Susan Hill Lindley. *Church History*, 66(4), 889-890 (p.889).

¹¹⁴ Bloch, R.H. (1978). American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815. *Feminist Studies*, 4(2), 100-126 (p.100).

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.115.

¹¹⁶ Baker, P. (1984). The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920. *The American Historical Review*, 89(3), 620-647 (p.625).

bigger and better things, garnering the influence they craved. Although restricted legally and politically, post-revolutionary women brought their domestic role into the public realm and during this era, the boundaries of republican motherhood expanded to bring women's interests further into the public sphere than in any previous historical period.¹¹⁷ In *Born for Liberty* (1997), Sara Evans states that republican motherhood was an ideology that women crafted themselves by weaving together familial commitments with their newly discovered sense of civic duty.¹¹⁸ Her work, traces the parameters of women's lives over time and found that republican motherhood binds the narrative together, underscoring its importance.¹¹⁹ Evans gives women credit in forming their own identities and using the opportunities around them to craft an ideology that best suited them. To succeed in the requirements of motherhood, women supported each other in ways that moved beyond kinship networks and into public organisation.¹²⁰ They created a female culture and redefined the meaning of public life itself. Therefore, we can infer that from this network of women supporting each other, republican motherhood paved the way for the concept of sisterhood, another familial term which has stood the test of time and is an essential component of the female experience.

The majority of literature and historical writing that relates to republican motherhood, does so in a limited capacity. The term might be noted briefly or confined to a single chapter, but the bulk of the work encompasses the revolutionary period in general. Hence, republican motherhood is acknowledged with regards to the impact it had on

¹¹⁷ Toft, J. & Abrams, L.S. (2004). Progressive Maternalists and the Citizenship Status of Low-income Single Mothers. *Social Service Review*, 78(3), 447-465 (p.449).

¹¹⁸ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, p.59.

¹¹⁹ Abelson, E.S. (1990). Reviewed Work: *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* by Sara Evans. *The Journal of American History*, 77(3), 978 (p.978).

¹²⁰ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, p.66.

education and society, but rarely does the concept take centre stage. However, some scholars have branched out from the norm and have dedicated their work to interpreting and examining republican motherhood alone. In *Playing with the Republican Mother* (1996), Amelia Howe Kritzer looks at how representations of the American woman were expressed in plays by Susanna Rowson and Judith Sargent Murray. Her work centres around the plays *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), *Virtue Triumphant* (1795) and *The Traveller Returned* (1796). Kritzer states that “the personalities, expressed ideas, action and situations of the female characters, fashion a collective definition of American womanhood.”¹²¹ As these female characters were written by women who lived this experience, we garner an insight into how they themselves, perceived their position and value within society. To encourage the exercise of civic virtue, a central component of republican motherhood, the mothers in the plays were self-reliant, self-confident, and well informed, reiterating the view that the stoic nature of the revolutionary women was a favoured attribute to have.¹²² These women were portrayed positively, exhibiting emotional strength, intelligence and rationality; disproving the stereotypical view that women were too emotional to make sensible decisions.¹²³ Women could be both feminine and independent with their independent spirit not being associated with aggressive villainy or scandal. This was a common trope in plays written by men who saw free-thinking women as a threat.

¹²¹ Kritzer, A.H. (1996). *Playing with Republican Motherhood: Representation in Plays by Susanna Haswell Rowson and Judith Sargent Murray*. *Early American Literature*, 31(2), 150-166 (p.152).

¹²² *Ibid*, p.153.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.163.

Kritzer argues that the female characters in the plays were canonised ideals of the women who wrote them. Both Rowson and Murray were educated, activist women who maintained long professional careers as well as stable marriages which thus suggests that simply bestowing virtue in children was all that a woman was capable of.¹²⁴ It was possible for women to have meaningful vocations as well as being a wife and mother; women could lead successful lives honouring their head and their heart. *Playing with the Republican Mother* offers the reader a look into self-representation within an entertainment medium and how in the late 1700s, women were beginning to see that there could be more to life than just being a mother, and this challenges Lydia Sigourney's contention that motherhood was the pinnacle achievement.

In *Rethinking Republican Motherhood* (1997), Margaret Nash argues that republican motherhood was the solution to a problem caused by the incompatibility between women's revolutionary politicisation- through boycotts, marches, and in some cases fighting on the battlefield- and the post-revolutionary theories which relegated women to the home, discounting their revolutionary contributions.¹²⁵ Focusing purely on their role as educators, republican motherhood overlooks the extensive range of women's activities, attitudes and opportunities which showcased their adeptness at intellectual matters and instead pigeonholes women into a tidy concept.¹²⁶ Nash writes her article with a focus on motherhood and the looks to the ideas of Benjamin Rush who was instrumental in the founding of the Young Ladies Academy in Philadelphia. Whilst assenting that republican motherhood was given as a rationale

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.151.

¹²⁵ Nash, M.A. (1997). Rethinking Republican Motherhood, Benjamin Rush, and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia. *Journal of the Early Republic*, 17(2), 171-191 (p.172).

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.191.

for the increase in female education, Nash argues that this was not the only reason.¹²⁷ Therefore, it is her view that historians have over-emphasised the extent to which republican motherhood correlated with female education in the new republic. Nash suggests the female experience should be referred to as republican womanhood, of which motherhood was one component. *Rethinking Republican Motherhood* opens up the analysis that motherhood was not all women could do and that while influential on the justification for improved education, it is perhaps overstated for convenience of argument. It is true that most women in the early republic were mothers but that does not define women completely and complements Kritzer's argument that women were capable of more.

Dana McClain brings the focus back to works of Susanna Rowson. *Rewriting Republican Motherhood* (2019), looks at the intimate relationship between mother and child and how the concept of republican motherhood can be impacted by a mother's love. The strength of the maternal bond prevented mothers from being the teachers that the republic required because their unconditional love interfered with their ability to instruct and more specifically, to discipline their daughters.¹²⁸ This line of argument paints mothers in a more maternal, loving way, that perhaps has been ignored by other historians who saw mothers as stoic instructors. Instead, McClain sees the adoration mothers had for their children, placing their happiness and their relationships as more important than the wants of the nation. The biological bond is a powerful one and in *Charlotte Temple* (1794), Rowson exhibits how this bond is

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.188.

¹²⁸ McClain, D.C. (2019). *Rewriting Republican Motherhood: Mentorship and Motherhood in Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple and Mentoria*. *College Literature*, 46(2), 343-370 (p.345).

“incompatible with national interests.”¹²⁹ Once more, we are provided with an insight into how an 18th-Century playwright interpreted the characteristics and values of her sex and how she displayed their priorities through fiction. In her writings, Rowson advocates that because of this powerful bond, a woman without biological children can serve the national better by becoming a guardian to many.¹³⁰ This challenges a common criticism that republican motherhood does not align with single, childless women by instead claiming that they have the best chance of being mothers of the republic given the lack of the maternal bond. In its absence, education and the continuation of civic virtue can become the priority and discipline can be easily applied. Interestingly, this view can be extended to George Washington. As the first President had no biological children of his own, he was suited to leading America without paternal distractions, resulting in him fulfilling his reputation as ‘father of the country’, as he was a father to all. McClain’s article looks at mothers in an intimate, loving way that shifts a mother’s attention to forming better relationships with their children instead of being a teacher of republican values.

More recently, the focus of republican motherhood has shifted with some historians critiquing the concept as an attempt to reassert patriarchal control and pacify women’s contributions. Therefore, it has become a contested phrase with different historiographical opinions entering the discussion. By labelling their role as republican mothers, it justifies their presence as background figures by overemphasising their more passive roles and ignoring their contributions outside of the home. As a result, it provided a domestication for women on the eve of her

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.349.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.350.

possible emancipation into society.¹³¹ Professor Francis Cogliano passionately describes republican motherhood as “patronising sop from male republican thinkers who sought to pacify American women rather than invite them to partake in the fruits of American Independence.”¹³² This critique challenges the notion that republican motherhood created a ground-breaking change in women’s roles and instead views the ideology as a way to diminish women in and maintain the patriarchal equilibrium. Female roles in the public domain were reduced to the role of keeper of the virtue, to avoid man’s position being threatened.¹³³ *Revolutionary America* (2016) touches on various aspects of the American War of Independence and Cogliano does note the positive increase in female education, highlighting how literacy rates in Boston increased from 60% to 78% in the 12 years since the end of the war. However, he maintains that the main aim of republican motherhood was to help men gain back control in the face of revolutionary upheaval and appease women to put them off campaigning for more progressive change.¹³⁴

In *Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother* (1992), Rosemarie Zagarri mirrors this derisive interpretation and implies that elevating women to social equality with men, effectively negated the need for political equality.¹³⁵ As politics would betray women’s feminine, pre-determined nature, the more favoured solution was to encourage women to focus on their childrearing aptitudes. Republican motherhood therefore seemed a good compromise for the men of the era and gave women a

¹³¹ Landes, J.B. (1984). Women and the Public Sphere: A Modern Perspective. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 15, 20-31 (p.21).

¹³² Cogliano, F.D. (2016). *Revolutionary America, 1763-1815: A Political History*. New York: Routledge, p.256.

¹³³ Abrams & Toft, *Progressive Maternalists*, p.449.

¹³⁴ Cogliano, *Revolutionary America*, p.258.

¹³⁵ Zagarri, R. (1992). *Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother*. *American Quarterly*, 44(2), 192-215 (p.207).

conceived improvement in status. Rosemarie Zagarri is a prominent writer on this period of history, whose multidisciplinary outlooks allows her to operate “at the intersection of political history, women’s history and gender history’, and form an outlook from various angles.”¹³⁶ It is unlikely that any historian has made or will make a stronger case regarding the possibilities for women opened by the American Revolution, nor for the resulting backlash.¹³⁷

A considerable criticism of republican motherhood is that, for many women, it had no application to their life. It was not a fully representative experience, and Eisenmann acknowledges that the concept was typically fostered by white middle-class women between 1776 and 1820. As a result, it ignores the women during this time who strove to be politically active; flocking to debates and marching with the army in the war as well as the women who did not fit its requirements. Women of poor economic standing could not afford the luxury of education with which to pass onto their children and some women remained childless with no biological children to shape.¹³⁸ Slaves and Indians were also not granted the virtue necessary to be a republican which therefore presents a class and race factor which historians have begun to grapple with. Historians such as Dana McClain argue that being a mother was not a requirement for being a republican mother, but the evidence suggests that the term is only compatible with white middle-class women who had the opportunities and position to talk on the mantle. What’s more, stories of this time, tend to be told from the point of view of north-eastern, urban women, thus discounting a large sector of

¹³⁶ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, p.3.

¹³⁷ Formisano, R.P. (2010). The Ladies Were Forgotten. *Reviews in American History*, 38(1), 23-26 (p.26).

¹³⁸ Gundersen, *To Be Useful in the World*, p.208.

society who resided in different areas of the country.¹³⁹ As a result, collectively, women found no great improvement to their status and the revolution bought restrains to women's lives who did not all benefit from the societal changes.¹⁴⁰

In more recent years there has been an increasing realisation that the memories of women's participation in the revolution and the immediate years afterwards have been reinterpreted to fit the new expectations of women but that perhaps this was not a universal tale for all women.¹⁴¹ The term republican motherhood is synonymous with Linda Kerber as she first introduced historians to the concept. But, over time, numerous scholars have moulded her definition to fit our current sentiments. As a result, Jan Lewis argues that Kerber's concept, "has taken on a life of its own and is often assumed to say more about motherhood than Kerber herself ever claimed."¹⁴² Hence, the initial thoughts have become distorted and are becoming less and less identifiable with the experiences of republican mothers living in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Nevertheless, this demonstrates how history is an evolving discipline of study which alters its accounts based on material present. By looking at the evolution of motherhood ideologies, we can see the historical variability within the US as well as the rhetorical link between political ideals and the maternal practices which women used to leverage social change and position.¹⁴³ Views on motherhood and maternalism have followed their own natural history and have been this way throughout history. From the 1790s to the mid 1800s, motherhood that combined nurturing and education for nation preservation purposes

¹³⁹ Gundersen, J.R. (1990). Reviewed Work: *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* by Sara Evans. *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 74(2), 335-357 (p.356).

¹⁴⁰ Gundersen, *To be Useful to the World*, p.201.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.214.

¹⁴² Shone, S.J. (2020). *Women of Liberty*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, p.42.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.33.

was prioritised. In other words, motherhood has been moulded to fit the expectations of the time with republican motherhood as simply one chapter in the book on women/maternal history. That republican motherhood remains in the lexicon of historians, however, underscores its longevity and how there are still things to be learnt about kinship and femininity.

Additionally, the term itself is ambivalent and individual female situations would impact whether the concept would be considered positively or negatively. As Kerber states “for one-woman, republican motherhood might be an extension of vistas, for another it could be stifling.”¹⁴⁴ For some, the participation in civic culture was enough and they were content with operating within the female domain. But, for others this taste of improved status opened a pandoras box of other ideas that could be achieved for women. In a 1789 valedictorian speech, Priscilla Mason noted how society had “denied women the advantage of a liberal education, forbid them to exercise their talents...” and how she was pushing for a “more liberal way of thinking to prevail”.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, some women saw an opening for more, and became increasingly frustrated with the constraints of the past. This aligns with the latter feminist movement which stemmed from the activism of individuals such as Priscilla Mason who was not afraid to use their voice to highlight their discontentedness. Those who publicly sought for a better society are celebrated by feminists for their acts of courage and their progressive beliefs. However, it is important to remember when looking back at female experiences that our current views do not influence our judgements. The use of a “feminist consciousness” to describe 18th-Century women,

¹⁴⁴ Kerber, *The Republican Mother Women and the Enlightenment*, p.205.

¹⁴⁵ Lerner, G. (1993). *The Creation of a Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to 1870*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.214.

as put forward by Gerda Lerner, is perhaps too strong a label, given that many women were pushing for greater exposure and not a substantial change in political rights at this time. Women still valued their roles in the domestic sphere and feminism would not have been a term these women would have recognised. Thus, we need to understand women of different historical periods in terms of their own social constructs and language without imposing present day ones.¹⁴⁶ It is because of the ambiguous nature of this relationship between motherhood and citizenship that Kerber regards it as one of the “most lasting and most paradoxical legacies of the revolutionary generation.”¹⁴⁷

Therefore, there are competing views on the importance of republican motherhood, but in more recent historiography, a suggestion has been made to move towards republican womanhood which encompasses all aspects of female experience. Republican Mothers has dominated the scholarship, “with girls receiving scant attention”, and bypasses an integral period of a female’s life where she is moulded to suit expectations of the time.¹⁴⁸ Whilst this concept is a worthy avenue of study and successfully brought women’s influence onto the revolutionary scholarship scene, we cannot understand the mother without first examining the daughter. Bringing us back to the multifaceted life cycle she undergoes. Nevertheless, the scholarship cited in this piece brings together material within a historical, political, biological, sociological, psychological, and feminist framework, in an attempt to view republican motherhood from all perspectives. As we learn more about the period, it has become clear that

¹⁴⁶ Turbin, C. (1994). Reviewed Work: *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to 1870* by Gerda Lerner. *Contemporary Sociology*, 23(4), 529-530 (p.530).

¹⁴⁷ Kerber, *The Republican Mother and the Enlightenment*, p.205.

¹⁴⁸ Pearsall, *Women in Revolutionary America*, p.275

women's influence was not limited to their children, but also their husbands, suitors, and brothers.¹⁴⁹ To overstate a reliance on motherhood would ignore the other familial relations and the other ways that women forego their own needs to support the needs of her family. As Lydia Sigourney asked in 1841, "does not the influence of woman rest upon every member of her household, like the sunbeam silently educating the young flower?"¹⁵⁰ Thus, republican womanhood is a wide-reaching concept that offers a fairer validation of the impact women had on this period. When collating the varying arguments and viewpoints on republican motherhood it is apparent that it is still a term that not fully understood. It remains a paradoxical phenomenon with both strengths and limitations which leaves its readers unclear as to whether it can be deemed a positive descriptor of motherhood in the republic. Whilst it indirectly led to the continued constraint within the private sphere, the 18th century ideology emphasised better education, a clearer recognition of women's economic contributions and a strong political identification with the republic.¹⁵¹ The republican mother offers a soft, genteel introduction to women's lives during this turbulent period and signifies a starting point for the study of motherhood which came later by recognising its importance to raising future generations. What's more, it invites historians to explore the ways in which revolutions destabilised men's and women's understandings of their relationships to the state, to each other, and their selves.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Neuman, J. (2020). *And Yet They Persisted: How American Women Won the Right to Vote*. John Wiley & Sons Inc., p.2.

¹⁵⁰ Kraus, *A New Type of Womanhood*, p.116.

¹⁵¹ Harris, S.M. (1995). *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. xxvii.

¹⁵² Kerber et al, *Beyond Roles, Beyond Spheres*, p.585.

Iconography

Art is a powerful medium which help us engage with the past by offering a visual interpretation of historical individuals, events, and sentiments. Professor James H. Billington stated that through its ability to reflect the passions of the time, art is part of the American political discourse and “tell us a great deal about the history of the nation.”¹⁵³ In the years leading up to the American Revolution, art was frequently circulated to make sense of the escalating tension between the colonies and the motherland. Opportunities opened up for budding artists and cartoonists to illustrate the increasing unrest, and through imagery, colonists could remain informed about social, cultural, and political issues at both local and national level.¹⁵⁴ Art also supplied the illiterate with a medium that they could access. When accompanying historical documents and texts, imagery can offer a profound insight into how this integral period of American history was depicted in mass media. Consequently, within the discipline of American studies, iconology and iconography have recently emerged as two of the most promising ways of examining American cultural history.¹⁵⁵ In keeping with the focus of this thesis, the iconography chosen will concentrate on the portrayal of women to examine how republican media presented the female form and used art to push their ideals and agendas.

Satirical prints became a major commercial enterprise in Britain around 1720 and granted the artist licence to mock individuals, outline a particular agenda, or use

¹⁵³ Bush, L. (2013). More than Words: Rhetoric Rhetorical Constructs in American Political Cartoons. *Studies in American Humor*, 3(27), 63-91 (p.87).

¹⁵⁴ First Amendment Museum (2022). *Political Cartoons Part 1 (1720-1800)* [Online]. First Amendment Museum. Available from: <https://firstamendmentmuseum.org/exhibits/virtual-exhibits/art-politics-300-years-of-political-cartoons/political-cartoons-part-1-1720-1800/> [Accessed 17 January 2022].

¹⁵⁵ Reynolds, L.J. (1997). American Cultural Iconography: Vision, History, and the Real. *American Literary History*, 9(3), 381-395 (p.382).

humour to gloss over feelings of embarrassment. One notable artist of the time was Phillip Dawe, who by the mid 1770s, was renowned for creating caricatures of women.¹⁵⁶ In 1774, 51 women met at Edenton to endorse non-importation policies with a primary focus on British tea and Dawe chose to capture this event. His mezzotint, *A Society for Patriotic Ladies at Edenton in North Carolina* (1775- See Figure 1) serves as a “stunning example of the caricaturist genre.”¹⁵⁷ The women present at the society were the first to sign a proclamation and become involved in political issues that affected the colonies. The event demonstrated female courage and a dedication to the nation, with Scholar Inez Parker-Cumming, stating that these women engaged in active patriotism to uphold American ideals of liberty, underscoring a “women’s will to safeguard a heritage she covets for generations to come.”¹⁵⁸ The Edenton ladies defied female conventions of the time, initiating a “turning point in American women’s political perceptions”, which arguably inspired the later, heroic acts performed by women during the revolution.¹⁵⁹

However, Dawe was a British cartoonist and his works pertaining to the American Revolution, advocated for loyalist support and presented a derogatory perception of those in favour of independence. Often the voice of the character portrayed in the image is the voice of the artist, therefore, we can garner how artists interpreted cultural events and reflected the thoughts of the masses.¹⁶⁰ In Britain, views about Edenton and its wider ramifications were not complimentary; the women were

¹⁵⁶ Gillespie, M. & McMillen, S.G. (2014). *North Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, p.18.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p.18.

¹⁵⁸ Cumming, I.P. (1954). The Edenton Ladies’ Tea Party. *The Georgia Review*, 8(4), 389-395 (p.394).

¹⁵⁹ Norton, M. (1996). *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.161.

¹⁶⁰ Bush, More than Words, p.77.

considered radical and Dawe's print echoes this disapproval.¹⁶¹ The female characters in the mezzotint are portrayed as "ugly hussies" which amused British readers and legitimised the condemnation of their actions.¹⁶² The women were visibly mature, indicated through their aged appearance, which offers an interesting comparison to later prints published post-revolution, where the female form was increasingly portrayed as youthful and virtuous. A child is also present in the image which provides another deliberate attack on the women's character. It is unclear who the child belongs to, and as a result, the women are displayed as neglectful parents who ignore their child to partake in flirting, drinking alcohol, and engaging in political business, which was strictly reserved for men. This representation, therefore, mocked the female volition to engage in political acts and subsequently detracted from their patriotic actions. This pictorial record showed women as frivolous consumers, who behaved injudiciously in the company of leering men, diminishing their credibility as respectable individuals. By representing the women as "neglectful, mannish hags and harlots", Dawe disparaged colonial protests by suggesting that these women were not at all ladies and not to be admired.¹⁶³

The scene of social disorder that emanates through the image laughs off the threat of rebellion by showing those in favour of independence as of questionable character and unable to maintain control. As a result, this image has gathered notoriety as both a negative portrayal of the women under a British lens, but also as a potent reminder of the actions women took in the lead up to the war which so often go unnoticed.

¹⁶¹ Gillespie & McMillen, *North Carolina Women*, p.29.

¹⁶² Zeinert, K. (1996). *Those Remarkable Women of the American Revolution*. Brookfield: The Millbrook Press, p.41.

¹⁶³ Gillespie & McMillen, *North Carolina Women*, p.18.

America retaliated with a frequent iconographical portrayal of women as virtuous, and this concurrently marked the push for women to remain in the private sphere and perfect their feminine and domestic graces.

Given the inherent inequality amongst the sexes at the time, a surprising phenomenon in the artistic world is the allegories of the four continents which took the form of female bodies early on in our history, and with the discovery of the Americas in 1492, America was incorporated into the existing schema.¹⁶⁴ The continents were interpreted as feminine and as peers, merging a sexualised young woman with the symbols and attributes that their makers associated with each continent, invoking an emotional and rhetorical force.¹⁶⁵ Artistic representations of the continents, including sculptures, became a sought-after item given their symbolic importance and Founding Father Elias Boudinot, was known to have a collection of four continental sculptures in his possession when he died.¹⁶⁶ The four continents were based on Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593), which was the best-known and most influential iconographic dictionary of the 17th and 18th Centuries.¹⁶⁷ Despite her sisters being represented as imperial, America was initially the only allegorical figure depicted with her breasts bared, a nod to the European desire to further explore her territory.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Spira, F. (2021). *Allegories of the Four Continents* [Online]. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Available from: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/alfc/hd_alfc.htm [Accessed 19 January 2022].

¹⁶⁵ Samuels, S. (1996). *Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.9.

¹⁶⁶ Rosasco, B., Gossen, A. & Allen, E. (2011). "My Four Marble Emblems": Elias Boudinot's "Four Continents" in Eighteenth-Century America. *Record of the Art Museum Princeton University*, 70, 30-45 (p.31).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p.34.

¹⁶⁸ Spira, *Allegories of the Four Continents*.

The discrepancy in the artistic representation of America, is further emphasised by America's initial portrayal as an Indian woman or Indian princess, with this depiction being favoured throughout colonial history.¹⁶⁹ Repeatedly featured with tawney skin, a feathered headdress and a bow and arrow, America stood poles apart from the refined portrayal of her sister continents. Curator Freyda Spira suggests that this was an "expression of dominion, as cultures considered foreign were often described in derogatory terms using stereotypes to convey the inferiority of those deemed less civilised."¹⁷⁰ The Indian princess therefore holds a racist undertone which presented America as inferior, or 'savage', symbolised by half-clothed Natives. However, not all historians agree that the portrayal was fully negative. Professor Edward McClung-Fleming argues that the Indian princess tended to be a handsome, vigorous woman around 20 years old and of noble visage and bearing.¹⁷¹ She was earthly and real and had been involved in 300 years of colonisation in the New World.¹⁷² The choice of a young woman mirrored the infancy of the nation and ties to the motherland offered America some royal tendencies, but the use of tawney skin helped Britain maintain some level of superiority.

America's relationship with Britain became centrefold in numerous prints during the revolution, with America often represented as the daughter of Mother Britannia, which highlights a key familial relationship and a visual representation of kinship. Famed caricaturist Mary Darly captures the complicated bond between mother and

¹⁶⁹ Morgan, W. (1988). *An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, p.66.

¹⁷⁰ Spira, *Allegories of the Four Continents*.

¹⁷¹ McClung-Fleming, E. (1965). The American Image as an Indian Princess 1765-1783. *Winterthur Portfolio*, 2, 65-81 (p.73).

¹⁷² McClung-Fleming, E. (1967). From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess, the American Image 1783-1815. *Winterthur Portfolio*, 3, 37-66 (p.47).

daughter in her rebus (See Figure 2). Daryl and her husband were British print artists who were celebrated for their political satires and benefited from new techniques and markets developing in England in the 1760s and 1770s.¹⁷³ Mary Daryl was a trailblazer, publishing the first book in Britain on caricature drawing, making her work particularly noteworthy.¹⁷⁴ The *Rebus in the form of a letter between mother and daughter* (1778) was published following the failed attempt of the Carlisle Commission to negotiate peace. Through clever intertwining of images and words, the rebus depicts a worried mother trying to get control back over her rebellious daughter. Operating under the guise of a concerned parent, Britannia encourages America not to forget their long-lasting relationship and warns her against running towards the Frenchmen who may corrupt her, instead urging America to think about her future. The rebus therefore demonstrates how familial relationships were integrated into imagery, with the family unit played off for comedic effect. The text contains various profound phrases that indicate the sentiments Britain felt towards America's rebellious actions. For example, "so be a good girl and do not rebel against your mother", carries a patronising tone, insinuating that America is acting spoilt and needs to remain under their mother's instruction. It stands as a witty, sarcastic print showing Britain's last attempt to put an end to their quarrel. America's response, also published in 1778, depicts a daughter who is ready to be independent and requires space to grow. This underlines the tensions between what the two nations each deemed best. The rebuses cleverly demonstrate the discord between parents and their adolescent children with America insisting "I am at age to know my own interests". Here America stands up for herself and defends her right to

¹⁷³ McNeil, P. (2018). *Pretty Gentlemen: Macaroni Men and the Eighteenth-Century Fashion World*. London: Yale University Press, p.83.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.17.

sovereignty, suggesting their relationship is no longer functional and that the nation is maturing. As a result, Darly's print appears both relatable and simplistic, condensing the bloody conflict into a squabble between mother and child.

The mother-daughter bond was complicated and included various nuances, from affection, to alienation, as seen in Darly's rebus, and eventually reconciliation.¹⁷⁵ In *Reconciliation between Britannia and Daughter* (1782), Thomas Colley's print demonstrates the appeasement of the previously tempestuous mother-daughter relationship (See Figure 3). This artwork similarly depicts a familial relationship between the two countries and, like Darly, fuses conflict with humour. Colley used the Indian Princess representation of America, who is pictured with symbols associated with liberty and shown running towards her mother Britannia in an embrace. In 1782, negotiations were underway for a peace treaty between Britain and the Continental Congress, and this cartoon suggests that a positive future was now possible for the adversaries. After their victory at Yorktown in 1781, it was clear that America had won the war, so to avoid further humiliation, Britain altered their agenda to push for a position resolution. The language under the print further alludes to family relationships, with "be a good girl and give me a buss" and "dear mama, say no more about it", suggesting that parent and child are happy to be reuniting and put past disagreements behind them. America is once more portrayed as a female figure who stands as the personification of the young nation ready to go off on its own. However, one could argue that the use of the Indian princess trope implies an underhand insult by choosing a representation that America was trying to evolve away from, further highlighting Britain's wounded pride. Nevertheless, by 1782,

¹⁷⁵ McClung-Fleming, *American Image as Indian*, p.74.

America's representation in print had changed from a dependent daughter of Britannia, to portraying a mature, independent, and capable individual, who was worthy of respect.¹⁷⁶

It has been suggested that America viewed their initial portrayal as uncouth and favoured an equally refined figure which paralleled that of Britannia.¹⁷⁷

Consequently, to overcome the perceived inferiorities, America evolved into a Caucasian figure to underscore that, as a now independent nation, she should be of equal status to her sisters.¹⁷⁸ As time passed, the Indian portrayal began to be supplanted by a beautiful, young, white, classicised female who served as an emblem of national values.¹⁷⁹ This resulted in the depiction of Liberty, with the figure gaining popularity in the lead up to the revolution. Liberty, provided an allegorical figurehead of how the United States wished to present itself and demonstrates how the concept of freedom permeated American political and social philosophy and propaganda.¹⁸⁰ Liberty stood as an example for women; gentle and devoted, engaged with deeply feminine occupation, and wearing virginial white.¹⁸¹ James Mulcahy, states that in imagery, allegory played its part: a hero must be a hero, even if they had to be depicted in a toga with laurel to prove it.¹⁸² The dress and characterises of the female were crucial to cement the ideal of liberty and what the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p.81.

¹⁷⁷ Morgan, *An American Icon*, p.28.

¹⁷⁸ Johnson, A.M. (2016). Columbia and Her Sisters: Personifying the Civil War. *American Studies*, 55(1), 31-57 (p.35).

¹⁷⁹ Day, S. (2001). "With Peace and Freedom Blest!": Woman as Symbol in America, 1590-1800 [Online]. Library of Congress. Available from: <https://guides.loc.gov/american-women-essays/woman-as-symbol> [Accessed 18 January 2022].

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Schorsch, A. (1976). Mourning Art: A Neoclassical Reflection in America. *The American Art Journal*, 8(1), 4-15 (p.9).

¹⁸² Mulcahy, J.M. (1956), Congress Voting Independence: The Trumbull and Pine-Savage Paintings. *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 80(1), 74-91 (p.80).

new nation stood for. Therefore, Liberty wore white, goddess-like attire and was frequently surrounded by national emblems, such as the bald eagle, laurel wreath and liberty cap to ensure that these newfound American symbols remained entrenched in the viewers mind.

Popular images of the late 1700s, embodied a period of art referred to as neoclassicalism. Liberty was one of the most memorable embodiments of neoclassical themes and appeared in a staggering assortment of paintings, newspapers, journals, coins, flags, wallpapers, fashion, and architecture to name a few. According to the Victoria and Albert Museum, “neoclassicalism was a pure form of classicalism that drew inspiration from the classical art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome.”¹⁸³ Books illustrating the concepts, mythology, and ancient design of classicalism inspired educated Americans and they began to make their way onto the canvas.¹⁸⁴ The art was often fraught with cultural meaning and used to serve the new nationalism brewing at the time.¹⁸⁵ America flourished with ideals of courage, sacrifice and patriotism, which were communicated in allegorical language through a variety of art mediums and Liberty was often associated with the ideal of republican motherhood.¹⁸⁶ The American affiliation with the Spartan Mother analogy was therefore translated into creative means. Despite the similarities with art of ancient Rome and Greece, American neoclassical art differed in one major way. Liberty depicted republicanism as a gentle, peace-loving woman with an ethereal aura, whereas during their former years, Greece and Rome were budding with

¹⁸³ Victoria and Albert Museum (2022). *Neoclassicism*. [Online]. Victoria and Albert Museum. Available from: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/neoclassicism> [Accessed 19 January 2022].

¹⁸⁴ Schorsch, *Mourning Art*, p.7.

¹⁸⁵ Reynolds, *American Cultural Iconography*, p.383.

¹⁸⁶ Schorsch, *Mourning Art*, p.5.

conflict and conquest, far from the serene arcadia of peace depicted in the prints of Federal America.¹⁸⁷ The revolutionary-era figureheads distanced themselves from the violence associated with their classical inspiration and instead emphasised the new virtue which propelled the republican tradition. Classical art of the 18th Century was therefore recognisably American and help enhance our understanding of the republican ideals that artists wanted to produce widely.¹⁸⁸

One notable example of Liberty in print is the engraving by Edward Savage. *Liberty in the form of the goddess of youth* (1796) was published when America was forging a new path for itself away from Britain's shadow (See Figure 4). Liberty served as a potent symbol of the triumph of the United States over tyranny and a copy of Savage's print hung in the parlour at Monticello amongst Thomas Jefferson's collections of historical, religious, and allegorical art.¹⁸⁹ Early republican artists saw themselves on the threshold of a new era offering great promise and had an obligation to prove the virtues of their experimental democratic society and uphold the national honour achieved in the war of independence.¹⁹⁰ Jefferson believed that the role of the victorious US was to promote liberty throughout the world and used imagery to promote this belief.¹⁹¹ Savage's engraving of Liberty has been copied several times over the years as the number of artists responsive to symbolic thinking increased and patriotic emblems became a badge of national consciousness.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Winterer, C. (2005). From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America. *The Journal of American History*, 91(4), 1264-1290 (p.1267).

¹⁸⁸ Schorsch, Mourning Art, p.5.

¹⁸⁹ Monticello (2022). *Liberty in the Form of the Goddess of Youth (Engraving)* [Online]. Monticello. Available from: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/liberty-form-goddess-youth-engraving> [Accessed 18 January 2022].

¹⁹⁰ Taylor, J.C. (1979). *The Fine Arts in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.29.

¹⁹¹ Monticello, *Liberty in the Form of the Goddess of Youth* (Engraving).

¹⁹² Taylor, *The Fine Arts in America*, p.30.

Interestingly, many of the prints that carried the symbols of the new country, and its moral principles, came from abroad.¹⁹³ This shows that the spirit of the American Revolution provided a lucrative market and the new cult of hero stimulated a lively trade. The popularity of the Liberty figure underscored the need to give the new republics' concepts and ideals a visual form to allow them to become embedded in the minds of their own citizens as well as the wider world.

The images described offer a glimpse into the relationship between the female figure and the new country. The use of the female form in imagery was not new; from Ripa's work we can see that the use of female bodies had been going on for centuries, but these allegorical works show how art became a popular medium for presenting political and social matters to a wider audience, often through a female centrepiece. The American Indian representation, who served her purpose as a colonial illustration, was later substituted for a more stately, distinguished figure to echo America's newly acquired status as an independent nation. The representation of Liberty led to an increased identification with the virtuous and the gentle which corresponded with the changes in society that emphasised the importance of the private sphere. Iconography presents the motivations of the artists and how they sought to appease the specific target audience, which highlights the subjective nature of art. British cartoonists commonly used satire to poke fun at, or present loyalists in a negative light as seen by Dawe's mezzotint, whilst American artists drew on neoclassicalism themes and used their talents to present the virtue that aligned with their new vision.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p.30.

Through imagery, the American woman has been reduced to a silent figure that artists moulded to suit their agenda. She has links to family, gender, nationalism, and politics and has been used to endorse ideals favoured after the Revolutionary war. At times, this figure offered an ethereal example for women to aspire to, presenting an ambiguity between the representations of abstract female allegories such as Liberty and the real American woman. The subsequent reaction is a debate amongst historians over the political and sexual excessiveness in art and the “extent to which liberal freedoms can be applied to female subjects.”¹⁹⁴ In many ways, the image in print was inauthentic, reinforcing women as delicate observers far removed from the active agents that republican the men were so often presented as. Nevertheless, through imagery we can garner an insight into popular sentiments of the time, to improve our comprehension of what it meant to be a woman in late 18th and early 19th Century America, and the change in her familial representation from daughter to sister.

¹⁹⁴ Rauser, A. (1998). Death or Liberty: British Political Prints and the Struggle for Symbols in the American Revolution. *Oxford Art Journal*, 21(2), 151-171 (p.157).

Chapter 2 – Case Studies

This chapter contains three case studies which evidence how familial relationships were portrayed in daily life during the Early Republic and understood by the women themselves. It serves as an examination of the responsibilities placed upon women in the domestic realm, utilising both primary and secondary sources to strengthen understanding.

The three women selected, have links to men famous for pioneering institutional and constitutional hallmarks of the early United States, and were preoccupied with the cultural modelling embedded in the notion of “Republican Motherhood.” The case studies demonstrate how women moved through relational phases in their lives and expressed high sensitivity to their positions from a very young age. From these case studies we can see 18th Century mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters in action and hear their experiences through their own words. I have selected three case studies of women in the public eye, but the analysis of their lives centres around their kin and their roles within the home, roles which women across the colonies would have undertaken and aspired to uphold, regardless of their fame. Thus, this reading is an inversion of what is deemed ‘notable’ about them: I aim to shine a light on the more stable and predictable experiences of women. As Gerda Lerner argues, “the true history of women, is the history of their ongoing functioning in the male-dominated world, on their own terms.”¹⁹⁵ In the process, we see more clearly that these were not only conventional “Republican Mothers” and “Republican Wives” (in a scholarly

¹⁹⁵ Lerner, G. (1975). Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges. *Feminist Studies*, 3(1/2), 5-14 (p.6).

sense) but also daughters and sisters, in both literal and metaphorical terms, who were acutely mindful of those feminine bonds and how they shaped their horizons.

Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams has captivated historians for decades. The complex Adams matriarch played a ground-breaking role in our understanding of the founding era and what being an 18th Century woman entailed. She has procured substantial notoriety through an extensive array of scholarly works which have sought to enlighten readers of her importance. The literature surrounding Abigail Adams, neatly recounts the various episodes of her life, from her upbringing to her patriotism during the revolutionary war, and her time in the White House as First Lady. Alternatively, they focus entirely on one aspect of her life such as her famous volume of correspondence expanding many years. However, the following limited biography will focus on the association between Abigail Adams and familial discourse, exploring her numerous layers and roles within her family unit. It will explore how her story illustrates experiences as a mother, a wife, a friend, and a woman within the early republic. In breaking down her story into these four descriptors we can see the many ways in which one woman both encompassed the expectations of the era and strove for more. She demonstrates an individuals' determination to succeed in a world that was not yet ready to acknowledge her by her own merits, using whatever means she could to become best version of herself and instil this greatness upon those around her. As Edith Gelles states, she was "soul-mate and helpmate to her husband, place and permanence to her children, loyal patriot to her country and a rare blessing to the children and husband she nurtured."¹⁹⁶ This summation justifies

¹⁹⁶ Gelles, E.B. (1988). The Abigail Industry. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 45(4), 656-683 (p.661).

why Abigail Adams has been memorialised in the hearts and minds of Americans and why she is a figure worthy of additional study.

Fortunately we are granted this insight due to her extensive collection of letters that have enticed readers since their first publication in 1840, and have helped to cement Adams as a patriotic, maternal figure, and a model of American female virtue and strength.¹⁹⁷ Through her writings, we are offered a candid view into her thoughts and an intimate look at her relationships. America was fighting physically and metaphorically for liberty and Abigail concurrently demonstrated her dedication to virtue, family, and freedom.

Through Republican Motherhood, mothers were assigned increased responsibility in the upbringing of their children, to ensure that they became virtuous republican citizens, and were awarded an increased societal position for their efforts. The term gained “hegemonic currency” in the 1780s and justified the confinement of women to the private sphere where she could offer her offspring her utmost attention.¹⁹⁸

Adhering to this ideal, Abigail’s prized role was mother to her children, and it was a role that she gladly embraced. Abigail and John’s children were born in the years preceding the American Revolution; they were brought up during a time where republican motherhood was gaining magnitude and during their formative years, they were surrounded by displays of republican apparition.

¹⁹⁷ Gelles, E.B. (2002). Women of Substance. *The Economist* [Online], 30 March, p. 96. Available from: https://go-gale-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=16&docId=GALE%7CGP4100328678&docType=Review&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZEHI-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGP4100328678&searchId=R1&userGroupName=uokent&inPS=true [Accessed 10 February 2022].

¹⁹⁸ Gelles, E.B. (1992). *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.134.

Raising sons and daughters held different priorities, requiring Abigail to adjust her parenting style to meet these separate expectations. It was imperative to raise future generations of good, republican males to maintain America's independent spirit and continue the fight that their forefathers had begun. Therefore, the majority of Abigail's attention went towards moulding her three sons to exude republican values, in the hope that they would eventually follow in their fathers' footsteps and serve their country. In a letter to son John Quincy Adams, Abigail articulates this patriotic spirit by noting, "justice, humanity, and benevolence are the duties you owe to society", with "owe" being the principal term.¹⁹⁹ The credence she placed upon fulfilling one's duty to society undoubtedly worked, as her eldest son eventually reached the pinnacle position in American government, serving as President of the United States, like his father before him. Abigail therefore helped her son to achieve the apex of American statesmanship and with his political success, "she was probably the proudest mother on American turf."²⁰⁰ Their bond is memorialised in a statue in Massachusetts (see Figure 5). The young John Quincy clutches a book, and Abigail stands behind him, illustrating the support she offered him and the emphasis she placed on education. Therefore, Abigail Adams stands as a prime example of a republican mother, who took pride in bestowing republican virtues onto her children; shaping their young minds to partake in the new American ideals.

The Adams matriarch is often portrayed as an exacting parent who set high expectations for her children and demanded success. Abigail strongly believed that mothers were primarily responsible for training their children to become moral, God-

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.138.

²⁰⁰ Gelles, *The Abigail Industry*, p.663.

fearing, useful adults who were capable of hard work.²⁰¹ Historians offer varying arguments as to Abigail's motivations for being a pushy mother. Firstly, it was imperative that the younger generation of Adams's lived up to the example set by their successful, patriotic father, rationalising the demands for excellence. Abigail helped to ensure that the Adams name remained synonymous with America's independent origins. John and Abigail were established figures, at the forefront of America's political society and Abigail wanted the same for her children.²⁰² She anticipated great careers for her sons, trusting that they "would exhibit dutiful service to the new nation", with motives as selfless as their fathers.²⁰³²⁰⁴ The Adams children were therefore burdened with upholding the family legacy from a very young age and were aware of their responsibility to protect and maintain the patriotic sentiments attached to their family name. John Quincy became the first "familial confirmation"; had Abigail been a more lenient mother, his political career may not have been so lucrative.²⁰⁵ Her efforts were fruitful and through the formation of an American dynasty, she highlighted her success at raising virtuous, republican citizens who served their country, with at least three later generations of Adams men working at the highest levels in national life.²⁰⁶

On the other hand, as there were very little opportunities for 18th Century women to form an identity outside of their home, Abigail may have adopted a strict parenting

²⁰¹ Withey, L. (2002). *Dearest Friend: The Life of Abigail Adams*. New York: Simon and Schuster. p.30.

²⁰² Wead, D. (2003). *All the Presidents' Children: Triumph and Tragedy in the Lives of America's First Families*. New York: Atria Books. p.30.

²⁰³ Musto, D.F. (1981). The Adams Family. *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 93, 40-58 (p.47).

²⁰⁴ Adams, A. (1800). To John Quincy Adams, 1 September 1800. *Founders Online*. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=children%20Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%20Quincy%22&s=1111311111&r=30> [Accessed 10 February 2022].

²⁰⁵ Musto, *The Adams Family*, p.52.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.43.

style to live indirectly through her children, particularly her sons. Abigail desired her children to make the most out of every opportunity granted them because she understood that her own life would be constrained. The US was experiencing a momentous shift in world politics, and like any proud mother, Abigail wanted her children to be at the forefront. Some scholars argue that her profound aspirations “intimidated her daughter Nabby”, but as Richard Ryerson suggests this was because she saw the world as full of opportunity and “she could not imagine her children achieving only modestly within in.”²⁰⁷ Abigail pushed her daughter because she knew no-one else would. At a time when women were not considered equal and were confined to the private sphere, Abigail wanted her daughter to see she was capable and instilled this with whatever means she had access to. Being born female removed Nabby’s chances of a successful public career, but that did not mean Nabby’s life was any less important to Abigail. Through the remit of republican motherhood, Abigail prepared her daughter for her future role as a mother and homemaker. Girls were often married at a young age and promptly started a family, so Abigail was given little time to impart knowledge onto her daughter; Nabby needed to quickly become aware of the roles and responsibilities of a woman, thus explaining the perceived pressured atmosphere. Abigail worked assiduously to provide the best start for her children and give them the best chance of leading a successful life, for both their benefit and her own. She might not have been allowed to vote or to sit in Congress, but she could ensure the Adams name was held in high regard. Using her power as a republican mother to instil a conscientious,

²⁰⁷ Ryerson, R.A. (1988). The Limits of a Vicarious Life: Abigail Adams and Her Daughter. *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 100, 1-14 (p.13).

hardworking ethic in her children, Abigail was the essential link in the family's future endeavours and successes.

A more pessimistic interpretation is offered by historian David Musto who portrays Abigail as a cold mother who used her position to control and instil guilt upon her young children.²⁰⁸ With her husband often away, prioritising his career over family life, Abigail had free rein over her children's upbringing. She romanticised John Adams' life and perceived greatness and fostered an unattainable level of achievement into her children to compensate for her own frustrations and loneliness. Musto argues that she manipulated her children's lives to justify her own sacrifice of normal family life.²⁰⁹ In other words, due to her unhappiness, she bullied her children into achieving greatness to match the mythicised actions of her husband, believing that if her children were successful individuals, her sacrifice would have been worth it. He implies that the home environment she created had very negative psychological implications and points the finger of blame at her for John Quincy's emotional breakdown; a perceived consequence of the pressure put upon him to appease his mother and equal his father's exaggerated eminence. Whilst this is an interesting take, Musto's argument is riddled with sexual bias, and is unfairly speculative. Psychologists have confirmed that John Quincy suffered from depression, but depression has a biological factor and does not necessarily correlate with our upbringing: we cannot confidently point blame at others.²¹⁰ Musto also disregards the childhood trauma of war and disease that John Quincy witnessed at a

²⁰⁸ Musto, D.F. (1969). The Youth of John Quincy Adams. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, 113(4), 269-282 (p.280).

²⁰⁹ Gelles, *The Abigail Industry*, p.668.

²¹⁰ Winch, G. (2016). *Study: Half of All Presidents Suffered from Mental Illness* [Online]. Psychology Today. Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201602/study-half-all-presidents-suffered-mental-illness> [Accessed 7 March 2022].

young age and prolonged separations from his father. Abigail had to play mother and father on countless occasions which would have impacted her parenting style.

Whilst she may have been considered stringent at time, the mother that emerges from her correspondence was one who loved her children and wanted the best for them. Her adoration was further enhanced when her children reached adulthood. Whilst her sons were in Europe she wrote “neither time nor distance have diminished the affection which I bear you, you are ever upon my heart and mind.”²¹¹ This illuminates the sacrifice she made in order to allow her children to gather life experience and grow at the cost of being parted from them. This love was not only expressed towards her sons as daughter Nabby was considered a companion as well as a daughter. “I have happy in a daughter who is both a companion and an assistant in my family affairs, and who I think has a prudence and steadiness beyond her years.”²¹² In 1779, Nabby too was encouraged by Abigail to broaden her life experiences and went to Boston to strengthen her character and partake in personal development like her brothers.²¹³ All separations from her children were met with sadness, and when Nabby married Colonel William Stephens Smith, Abigail described the prospect of sustained separation from her daughter as “painful.”²¹⁴ What is evident, here is a mother who was conflicted in her love for and desire to be close to her children, and a want for them to better themselves and live out the life she dreamed for them. Moreover, her attainment of republican motherhood was not limited to her children as Nabby, John Quincy, Charles, and Thomas all sent their

²¹¹ Gelles, *The Abigail Industry*, p.669.

²¹² Holton, W. (2010). *Abigail Adams: A Life*. New York: Atria Paperback. p.123.

²¹³ Withey, *Dearest Friend*, p.103.

²¹⁴ Gelles, *The Abigail Industry*, p.677.

own children to live in Abigail's charge at some point, and she also housed her niece, Louisa. Therefore, she expanded the role of republican motherhood to incorporate extended family members, supporting their upbringing and teaching them the ways of virtue. It was a role so threw herself into wholeheartedly, grateful for any opportunity to be useful.²¹⁵

Working in conjunction with republican motherhood, was the concept of the republican wife, a term proposed by historian Jan Lewis. The republican wife was "affectionate, virtuous, chaste, and capable of enormous moral authority", and this marked the second familial role Abigail Adams played.²¹⁶ John and Abigail were married for 54 years, and their union was mounted on mutual respect. Through candid correspondence between the pair, we can appreciate the loyalty, support, and passion that the two shared, composing an "epistolary biography of incomparable richness and depth."²¹⁷ Although arguably never intended to become public, these letters offer an insight into the foundation behind this successful pairing and a marriage that is considered legendary.²¹⁸ Akin to her role as a mother, Abigail strove for greatness in her role as a wife. It was a woman's duty to support her husband and guide him towards increased moral fibre. Her ideology reflected the politics of her husband, sanctioning her as his most trusted ally, and giving her access into his world not only domestically but also intellectually.²¹⁹ Education was an important concept for Abigail. She used her husband's position to better educate herself on current affairs, often reading political treatise, poetry, and literature to

²¹⁵ Holton, *Abigail Adams*, p. xxii.

²¹⁶ Lewis, J. (1987). The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 44(4), 689-721 (p.720).

²¹⁷ Short, E. (2020). The Non-Feminist Abigail Adams. *Human Life Review*, 46(2), 45-56 (p.47).

²¹⁸ Gelles, *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams*. p.25.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.127.

inform her wider understanding and make her better equipped to support her husband. This education resurfaced in Abigail's choices regarding her children's education, fully endorsing the power of a well-educated mind. Abigail shone as helpmate to John, offering him unyielding backing and consequently "John began to count on Abigail for everything, he sought her opinions; he vented his frustrations, and she provided him with peace of mind."²²⁰ In return, John acknowledged his wife's intelligence and zeal, and he allowed her the freedom to speak as she did, creating a platform for her to flourish within the societal standards of the time.²²¹

Abigail was immensely loyal to her husband throughout their marriage. She was a constant presence both figuratively and literarily in her husbands' affairs and demonstrated a devotion of the highest standard. Knowing that a woman was not afforded the same opportunities, she championed her husbands' successes and encouraged him to excel, in the same way she did her children. To free John for political service, she admirably assumed sole responsibility for maintaining their household and farm, believing that John was dedicating himself to something greater; something that would outlive them both. This newfound responsibility increased her duties to incorporate those usually reserved for the male head of the household; being trusted to handle everything without masculine oversight and with conviction during times of national uncertainty. As early as 1776, she worked tirelessly to gain a "reputation of being a good farmeress", using this opportunity to uphold the family legacy herself and reduce as many burdens placed upon John as

²²⁰ Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised Our Nation*. p.74.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p.152.

she could.²²² It was at this time, that Abigail was permitted to ‘play the man’, a role that she had in some sense always wanted to be. In a letter to her cousin Isaac Smith Jr she wrote, “had nature formed me of the other sex, I should certainly have been a rover.”²²³

This support and loyalty grew steadfast as their marriage progressed, and in 1797, she embarked on her greatest challenge of all which opens up another layer of Abigail Adams; First Lady. Not only was this a new role for Abigail personally, but it was a role in its infancy, with only one predecessor. Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, and Dolley Madison, were the individuals responsible for creating the role of the First Lady, each simultaneously learning from one another whilst also placing their own imprint upon the position. Years of managing her household gave Abigail the confidence she needed to tackle the more demanding appointments of the White House.²²⁴ After years of dedicating herself to the needs of her family, she now dedicated herself to the needs of the American people, sacrificing time with her husband once more to enable him to fulfil his duty. As an intelligent woman, Abigail understood the symbolic and ritualistic importance of her position as First Lady and regularly offered invaluable advice, counsel and guidance to her husband.²²⁵ In the early years of the republic, the first ladies were politically involved in patronage, solicitation, and presidential advising as they supported their spouses’ political

²²² Adams, A. (1776). *Adams Family Correspondence Volume 1* [Online]. Massachusetts Historical Society. Available from: <https://www.masshist.org/publications/adams-papers/index.php/view/ADMS-04-01-02-0244#sn=0> [Accessed 17 August 2022].

²²³ Erkkila, B. (1987), Revolutionary Women. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 6(2), 189-223 (p.199).

²²⁴ Short, The Non-Feminist Abigail Adams, p.48.

²²⁵ McMahon, L. (2019). Review: Family Matters: Centring Elite Women's Lives in an Age of Revolution. *Early American Literature*, 54(3), 809-820 (p.812).

careers.²²⁶ Abigail used her position to elevate her own political awareness and this underscores how she made the most of all available opportunities to enhance her own personal development. She engaged in regular political interactions to ensure a visible presence amongst the electorate and scholars have pitched her amongst the first ladies with the largest contribution to the activist tradition.²²⁷ She would go on to use these interactions to feed essential information back to her husband.

With growing support behind the ideal of republican virtue and republican motherhood, the First Lady had to be a stellar example of how women were expected to conduct themselves. Abigail, therefore, had to embody the archetypal American woman, presenting a figure who supported her husband, correctly brought up her children and glowed with a virtuous charm. This amounted in a lot of pressure. As a result, she sought a path that would blend her role as woman, wife, mother, and public figures into one model being.²²⁸ In addition to this, she also needed to create a persona that contrasted with the English queen, so that she could command respect but in a way that disassociated her from the monarchical power that America had just deposed. Therefore, whilst Abigail has been interpreted as someone who demanded success from those around her, she was not afraid to instil this pressure upon herself. She herself noted that, “my feelings are not those of pride, they are solemnized by a sense of obligation, the important truths and

²²⁶ Blair, D.M. & Parry-Giles, J. (2002). The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 5(4), 565-599 (p.567).

²²⁷ Gould, L.L. (1985). Modern First Ladies in Historical Perspective. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 15(3), 532-540 (p.535).

²²⁸ Abrams, J.E. (2018). *First Ladies of the Republic: Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, Dolley Madison and the Creation of an Iconic American Role*. New York: New York University Press. p.5.

numerous duties connected with it.”²²⁹ She practiced what she preached and fully committed to this new role and its responsibilities.

Stepping away from her immediate family relationships, the friendships that Abigail Adams had with other prominent republican figures are also worth exploration. Her position as a friend or sister (metaphorically for the purposes of this case study), provide onlookers with another example of how Abigail Adams devoted herself to those she loved and how she sought out individuals whose principles echoed her own. Friendships between women have existed in all ages and cultures but the diaries and correspondence of New England women suggest that from the late 18th Century, through to the mid 19th Century, they invented a newly self-conscious and idealised concept of female friendships.²³⁰ One woman who Abigail Adams often corresponded with was Mercy Otis Warren. Warren is memorialised herself for her writing aptitude and patriotic spirit. The two formed a strong bond and would habitually write to one another, sharing news of their families, commenting on the revolutionary war, and offering advice and support. These letters were candid and granted women a safe space to converse and offload. Friendships such as these, were common and they could “freely communicate their feelings at any time” and “express their sentiments without reserve.”²³¹ Adams and Warren were mothers and wives during the same period of history. They were both experiencing the demands

²²⁹ Harper’s Magazine. (1884). Abigail Adams. *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* [Online], 24 February, p.12. Available from: https://go-gale-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CGT3003288280&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZCEN-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGT3003288280&searchId=R1&userGroupName=uokent&inPS=true [Accessed 10 February 2022].

²³⁰ Cott, N.F. (2002). *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New York: Yale University Press, p.160

²³¹ *Ibid*, p.190

of motherhood, both sacrificing their loved ones for political service, and therefore, through their shared familiarities, they were able to offer support and counsel to one another. Their friendship extended from the page into action, seen through their active participation in “boycotts of British goods and other political actions” during the war of independence.²³² Both women were known for their fiery side and standing up for what they believed in. The pair were dedicated to their roles as wives and mothers and used whatever means they could to fight for their freedoms.

Abigail and Mercy frequently used pen names in their correspondences, serving as both a source of anonymity and of mutual tenderness. Abigail displayed a special intimacy with her nearest and dearest, signing letters to her close friends as ‘Portia’, whilst Mercy adopted the name ‘Marcia’.²³³ In the late 18th Century, heroic models stemmed from the worthies of ancient Greece and Rome, thus, the choice of Portia and Marcia, suggest that these women used said pseudonyms to reflect their desire to be associated with virtuous classical women.²³⁴ It can also be argued that the classical alter egos were chosen to mirror the historic trials of war through an association with neoclassicism and famed heroines that was evident in republican iconography. Both women presented qualities which would have done honour to the historic heroines of the same name.²³⁵ Portia and Marcia were half-sisters in classical mythology, so the choice of their pen names, infers that Warren and Adams saw each other as sisters and kindred spirits, maintaining a focus on familial

²³² Moore, L.L., Brooks, J. & Wigginton, C. (2012). *Transatlantic Feminisms in the Age of Revolutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.3.

²³³ Good, C. A. (2015). *Founding Friendships: Friendships between Men and Women in the Early American Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press p.115.

²³⁴ Hicks, P. (2005). Portia and Marcia: Female Political Identity and the Historical Imagination, 1770-1800. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 62(2), 265-294 (p.275).

²³⁵ Harper’s Magazine, *Abigail Adams*.

relations. This also ties back to the intrigue surrounding neoclassicalism evident in creative expressions. Sisterhood has long been a factor of women's history where females form connections to provide support, and these individuals, despite no blood connection, viewed themselves as sisters in writing and in action. Thus, friendships and sisterhood clearly intertwine and offer family centred relationships outside of the home.

Perhaps more illuminating however, is the friendship that arose between Abigail and Thomas Jefferson when they were both residing in Paris. Thomas and Abigail demonstrated a platonic but intimate relationship based on reciprocal intellectual stimulation and tenderness and to Abigail, Thomas Jefferson was "one of the choice ones of the earth."²³⁶ It was common interests and a shared love of intellectual matters that sparked their friendship and they discovered almost at once that they were kindred spirits; friends who could "associate with freedom and unreserve."²³⁷ The blossoming companionship survived a geographical separation when John Adams was appointed ambassador to the Court of St James in London, requiring Abigail to leave Paris and Jefferson's company. Their correspondence remained lively, and they exchanged more than forty letters during the next three years, sharing news and stories with one another.²³⁸ In June 1785 upon attending a performance at Westminster Abbey, Abigail wrote to Jefferson, "I most sincerely wished for your presence. I will not deny that there may be a little vanity in the hope of being honoured with a line from you."²³⁹ It's evident from their exchanges that their

²³⁶ Good, *Founding Friendships*, p.13.

²³⁷ Cappon, L.J. (2012). *The Adams- Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. p. xxxvii.

²³⁸ Verell, N. (2015). *Abigail Adams*. Thomas Jefferson's Monticello [Online]. Available from: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/abigail-adams> [Accessed 20 November 2021].

²³⁹ Cappon, *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, p.30.

friendship had mutual benefitions with Abigail enjoying the company of another intellectual being while her husband was engaged in political duties, and Jefferson, missing female company since his wife died, appreciated the feminine care that Abigail could provide him. Jefferson knew few women whose intelligence equalled Abigail's and they found an ability to offer the other what was needed.²⁴⁰ Abigail's care for Jefferson was also extended to his daughter, Polly. When Polly came to England, she formed an "enduring attachment to Abigail who warmed to her charge with a motherly affection", underscoring Abigail's dedication to the role of republican motherhood, which was not limited to her own biological children but represented a wider need to nurture America's youth.²⁴¹ Thomas and Abigail's friendship was meaningful as it attests to the power of a companionate spirit that had no hidden agenda.

However, despite the strength of this alliance, it would not survive a betrayal. In 1800 when Jefferson assumed the presidency, Abigail felt Jefferson had acted inexcusably towards her husband and was hurt by his actions, siding with her spouse and terminating their friendship. John and Thomas drifted apart, and Abigail mounted a staunch defence of her husband, expressing her loyal position as wife and caretaker. No matter how impactful her Parisian years with Jefferson, her role as a wife and her dedication to her family knew no bounds and were of larger importance. In fact, Abigail was perhaps angrier at the situation, and played an influential part in the delayed reconciliation between the two leading men, which suggests that Thomas' actions deeply affected Abigail. This underscores once more

²⁴⁰ Bober, N.S. (1998). *Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks. p.133.

²⁴¹ Verell, *Abigail Adams*.

how Abigail was willing to sacrifice her own happiness for what was best for her family. She had grown attached to Jefferson and felt a strong connection to his mind but knew that this could not be sustained when he had acted dishonestly against her family. She was required to pick a side and despite her own feelings, gave wholeheartedly to John, underscoring the powerful sway of marital responsibilities and loyalty.

Abigail Adams is a worthy subject of study because she held the uncommon honour of serving as both First Lady and was mother to another President. This has only occurred once more in the whole of American history. However, Abigail Adams deserves admiration and respect in her own right, for the way in which her actions had wider ramifications than simply within the orbit of her famous family. Part of what makes Abigail such an esteemed figure is her support for women's education at a time where education was considered a male privilege. Within Abigail's extensive correspondence, she emphasises her belief in the equality of male and female intellect and begrudges how society has denied educational opportunities to women.²⁴² She often used her advantageous position to urge those around her to see how women "inherit an equal share of curiosity with the other sex" and how women were adept at learning, they just needed increased opportunities with which to display their curiosity.²⁴³ The frequent recipient of her frustrations was her husband. She once expressed, "you need not be told how much female education is neglected, nor how fashionable it has been to ridicule female learning", which clearly demonstrated how she resented the gender limitations with regards to education.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Eisenmann, *Historical Dictionary of Women's Education*, p.6.

²⁴³ Holton, *Abigail Adams*, p.47.

²⁴⁴ Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised our Nation*, p.12.

Here she shines as a paradox; a woman who wholeheartedly devoted herself to her family and accepted her role as wife and mother, but simultaneously knew that women were capable of more and was not afraid to voice her feelings on the matter.

To get her point heard, Abigail showed strong awareness and astuteness by tailoring her argument in a way that would be acceptable within the patriarchal system.

Abigail contended that to excel in the role of republican motherhood, women needed to be educated themselves. She therefore pushed for female education by suggesting it would be for the betterment for all; future generations of republican citizens could thrive under the care of an educated mother and husbands could benefit from receiving counsel from a well-informed partner. “If we mean to have heroes, statesmen and philosophers we should have learned women.”²⁴⁵ Her own desire for personal growth mounted her defence of female education, hoping that this would eventually transpire for all women. She stayed true to her own upbringing however by opting for a definition of education that would prize not only classical education but also religious instruction and domestic duties. Moreover, Abigail called for an end to tyranny within a marriage and pushed for an expansion of female worth, at the same time as America was rejecting the British tyranny.²⁴⁶ Abigail put forward the argument that whilst men proclaimed peace and good will to each other, they “insisted upon retaining absolute power over their wives.”²⁴⁷ She was therefore concerned about justice and supported the call for constitutional protection of women

²⁴⁵ Holton, *Abigail Adams*, p116.

²⁴⁶ Moore, Brooks & Wigginton, *Transatlantic Feminisms*, p.4.

²⁴⁷ Curtis, G.W. (1876). Abigail Adams. *Lowell Daily Citizen* [Online], 7 March. Available from: https://go-gale-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=15&docId=GALE%7CGT3001779730&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZCEN-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGT3001779730&searchId=R1&userGroupName=uokent&inPS=true [Accessed 10 February 2022].

in marriages. It's important to make the distinction that she was pushing for better treatment of women and not rejecting male authority entirely.

In 1776 Abigail penned her most famous line, urging her husband to 'remember the ladies'. This specific quote has been explored extensively since, but the real genius of the line is its clever placement. The instruction is sandwiched between ordinary news and fond reflections, whereby Abigail lulls her husband into reading more by detailing news about the family's farm and other inconsequential thoughts, then she proceeds to present her discontent, before ending her letter in a loving way, showing she is still feminine and subservient. This positioning is calculated and shows her understanding of how to get her message across and how to appease the patriarchal system. Had she started with this demand, it would likely have not had as much as an impact.

'Remember the ladies' is often used to suggest that Abigail Adams was a feminist ahead of her time. However, rather than plead the case for female suffrage, Abigail was pressing for a more respectful marital partnership, where "men would be more generous and favourable to women."²⁴⁸ Abigail's thoughts were progressive, but over time her sentiments have become skewed to fit with the feminist agenda by misconstruing her thoughts to indicate a fight for female enfranchisement. Edward Short's article, *The Non-Feminist Abigail Adams*, showcases how her thoughts have been distorted over time, arguing that "the historical Abigail Adams has been pushed aside to make way for an anachronistic Abigail Adams designed expressly to

²⁴⁸ Withey, *Dearest Friend*, p.81.

endorse and promote the feminist cause.”²⁴⁹ Whilst Abigail did use her position to comment on current events and offered advice to her husband, considered above a woman’s capabilities, she did not overstep the bounds of womanly conduct. She reflected views of the time and supported women’s place in the private sphere; she understood her role and did not threaten her position with radical ideas. Rather, Abigail Adams stood as a premier example of a traditional woman who found public and private fulfilment.²⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Abigail Adams stands as an exceptionally important figure in women’s history, thanks to her feisty spirit that dances off the pages of her correspondence. Abigail did not shy away from suggestive language, and it is through her letters that we come to understand her unique character as well as her remarkable intellect; her sense of humour; her independent spirit and her desire for a better world.²⁵¹ She warned of a future rebellion should females continue to be mistreated by their male counterparts and in the mid 1800s, after Abigail’s passing, her caution came to be, and a rebellion did come. The suffragist movement later used Abigail’s warning that “women will not be bound to obey laws in which we have no voice or representation”, to push their agenda and Abigail has become cited as a posthumous foremother of the cause.²⁵² Whether she intended it or not, Abigail Adams became a figurehead of a movement which championed female civil rights, extending her original push for better female education. Similarly, when the modern feminist movement bloomed in the 1960s, women once more started to pass around Abigail Adams’ ‘remember the

²⁴⁹ Short, *The Non-Feminist Abigail Adams*, p.51.

²⁵⁰ Eisenmann, *Historical Dictionary of Women’s Education*, p.6.

²⁵¹ Bober, *Abigail Adams*, p. ix.

²⁵² DuBois, E.C. (2021). *Suffrage: Women's Long Battle for the Vote*. New York: Simon & Schuster. p.116.

ladies' warning, underscoring her enduring connection to the modern women. As a result, Cokie Roberts suggests that 'remember the ladies' might be the most well-known phrase ever written by an American woman.²⁵³

It has been argued previously that we only knew of the strong revolutionary women because of their relations with influential men. Abigail is perhaps given the space to be studied due to her famous husband and son but despite this, Abigail almost becomes the most interesting of the three. Given the gendered limitations of the time, the way that Abigail made the most of her position and embodied the soul of the new nation has ensured that she remains cemented in the revolutionary story. Due to her paradoxical nature, she should be remembered as an autonomous stature separated from the men whose actions founded the nation. Short goes as far as to suggest that "if John Adams had had nothing to do with the founding of the United States, he would still merit the esteem of his compatriots for being the first to recognise the genius of Abigail."²⁵⁴ Revolutionary men may outshine women in the history books, but Abigail Adams' patriotic spirit is unencumbered. It is often said that behind every great man is a great woman and the evidence suggests that Abigail fully embodies this saying; she stands as a woman behind the success of two great American leaders. As Cokie Roberts expertly states, "in reading history you will generally observe that when you light upon a great character, a female about him who has knowledge and ambition above the ordinary level of women, can be responsible for much of his eminence."²⁵⁵ Without her unwavering support and

²⁵³ Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised our Nation*, p.60.

²⁵⁴ Short, *The Non-Feminist Abigail Adams*, p.48.

²⁵⁵ Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised our Nation* p.76.

advocation for self-improvement, the Adams men may not have achieved the status that they did.

In conclusion, Abigail Adams has been the subject of intense debate amongst historians but one thing that unites them is their endorsement of just how important a figure Abigail was. The Abigail Adams was a woman whose principal concerns derived from her functions as wife, mother, sister, friend, and patriot. If she could not be a man with opportunities and means, then she would be all things to everyone and prove gender need not be a barrier to success. She knew society constrained her but whilst she hoped for more and regretted her repression, she never let it pull her away from her required duties. Through republican motherhood and wifedom, she dedicated herself to instilling republican values in her home and preparing her children for prosperous lives. She is remembered as a heroic woman who stood amidst a nation of scoffers, patiently enduring obloquy, ridicule, and contempt.²⁵⁶ For many years, biographies on Abigail's life have reduced her to a supporting role in the lives of the men around her. A footnote to her own story. But Abigail Adams is too complicated and instrumental a figure to pigeonhole. She performed various roles within society and through each of her relationships there is an overarching theme of sacrifice and strength but also sadness; sadness that she could not reach her full destiny due to her gender, sadness at being separated from her beloved husband so frequently, and sadness at being parted from her children to allow them to succeed. Her behaviour encompassed a desire to appease others and offer them what they needed to succeed. Silhouetted against the backdrop of mighty events that were making history, she suppressed her own individual desires for the betterment of the

²⁵⁶ Couzins. (1880). Letter to the Editor.

nation, continuously putting the needs of her country first.²⁵⁷ It is regretful, that we will never know the heights she could have reached had society granted her equal opportunities to the men around her but through her children and her husband, she gave her lifelong service to the state, and to her country, she gave her heroic memory.²⁵⁸ Her legacy is honoured today as women around the world continue to acknowledge how she paved the way by demonstrating a confidence in one's own abilities and a willingness to personally and intellectually develop. The Founding Fathers fought for a change of regime, but Abigail Adams was suggesting a change of world, and as society progressed, this change did come. She once complained to John that "you build monuments to your sons and ignore the fame of your daughters", but thankfully in this instance she was mistaken, as history will continue to remember her.²⁵⁹ It may have taken longer to acknowledge, but it is no longer possible to ignore how women contributed to the history of the revolutionary era, with Abigail Adams front and centre, a "colossal spirit of the times."²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Conner, E.A. (1895). Women of Today. *Atchison Globe* [Online], 26 September, p.7. Available from: https://go-gale-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=10&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=7&docId=GALE%7CGT3012406901&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZCEN-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGT3012406901&searchId=R1&userGroupName=uokent&inPS=true [Accessed 10 February 2022].

²⁵⁸ (1881). Abigail Adams. *Daily Inter Ocean* [Online], 2 July, p16. Available from: https://go-gale-com.chain.kent.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=3&docId=GALE%7CGT3001113846&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZCEN-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGT3001113846&searchId=R1&userGroupName=uokent&inPS=true [Accessed 10 February 2022].

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Couzins. *To the Editor of the Inter Ocean*.

Martha Jefferson Randolph

If one was to select an individual who could personify the mantle of 'Founding Daughter', then Martha Jefferson Randolph would stand as frontrunner. The eldest daughter of President Thomas Jefferson came of age during the tumultuous early republic period and dutifully fulfilled her role as loving daughter, standing at her fathers' side through all the momentous occasions of his adult life. Once described as the "noblest woman in Virginia", Martha charmed those she met by completing her responsibilities admirably; making the most of the opportunities granted her and successfully conforming to the ideal of the post-revolutionary American woman.²⁶¹ Martha's life can be broken down into four familial relations: daughter, mother, wife, and sister, which this biography will explore. Through her family duties, Martha showcases republican motherhood in practice and simultaneously flourishes as a child of the revolution, honouring her father's legacy in all that she did. A "universally popular" woman who projected a virtuous character of unaffected humility, she dedicated her life to others and maintained the political consciousness of late 18th Century.²⁶² Historian Cynthia Kierner, sums up Martha expertly by stating that, on one hand "her life was extraordinary- she knew interesting people, spoke four languages, was educated in France, and won praise for her conversation skills. On the other hand, much of her life in Virginia as a wife, mother, and plantation mistress was ordinary and dull."²⁶³ Jefferson's story is that of an intelligent, patriotic, but conventional woman who sadly never attained iconic status, but who is worthy of study, nonetheless.

²⁶¹ West, M. (2017). *Favourite Grandson: Thomas Jefferson Randolph*. Lulu.com. p.3.

²⁶² Kierner, C. (2012). *Martha Jefferson Randolph, Daughter of Monticello: Her Life and Times*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p.5.

²⁶³ Ibid, p.8.

Her experience as a southern woman offers a comparison to Massachusetts-born Abigail Adams; presenting two women with different upbringings but who equally assumed their role in society and nobly accepted the sacrifices that were required of them. For, these extraordinary women both sacrificed their happiness to wholeheartedly support those they loved. Martha was another individual whose talents were reduced to that of raising children and being a good daughter, succumbing to the gender limitations of her time. It was in these family relations that a woman was judged, and due to an exclusion from the public sphere, it is what we have to measure her life by. Her life, therefore, reveals the challenges, complexities, and frustrations that dominated the lives of many women of her era, even those of a privileged social elite.²⁶⁴ Martha has typically been remembered by history as an accessory to her famous father, mirroring contemporary images that portray women as either beneficiaries or victims of men's patriarchal power. However, Martha stands as more than an accessory and played a pivotal, indirect role in the new nation's success. Martha became "Jefferson's lifeline in a torrential sea of pain after his wife's death", and there is no doubt that Thomas Jefferson would have "died from his own hand or a broken heart if it were not for his daughter."²⁶⁵ Thus, behind this instrumental man was a loving daughter who inspired him to carry on and whose unwavering devotion indirectly allowed America to profit from Jefferson's brilliant mind.

Martha's mother passed away when she was only 10 years old. This required Martha to mature very quickly, and she was cast adult responsibilities a lot earlier than

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p.8.

²⁶⁵ Hyland Jr, W.G. (2015). *Martha Jefferson: An Intimate Life with Thomas Jefferson*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p.2.

intended. She and her father bonded through their united sorrow and from that moment, her role as loving daughter became intertwined with being a support system for her father; becoming a stable presence in his life and his favoured confidante.²⁶⁶ Martha herself wrote, “in these melancholy rambles, I was his constant companion- a solitary witness to many a burst of grief.”²⁶⁷ Due to Thomas’ prominence in the early republic, the Jefferson legacy is one that has remained enshrined in public consciousness. Thomas Jefferson had no sons who survived to adulthood; no male heirs who could continue his work in the public domain. However, this did not seem to outwardly matter to Jefferson who saw his daughters as his most precious possession and the legacy that truly mattered. Professor Eve Tavor Bannet argues that the viability of the new nation “depended on the daughter’s patriotic constancy and fortitude” and in analysing Martha’s formative years, we see a daughter who took it in her stride to become the best of American women.²⁶⁸ To allow the men to concentrate on running the newly independent nation, it was the duty of young women to behave in an unblemished way. As she matured and flourished in her domestic role, Martha was described as a “delicate likeness of her father”, who inherited his more pleasing traits and constitution.²⁶⁹ Owing to this, Martha became a republican or founding daughter, who understood that her father’s duties to the republic were integral and acknowledged that her role was to support him and achieve the pinnacle of feminine domestic capabilities.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Butler-Wister, S., & Irwin, A. (1877). *Worthy Women of Our First Century*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., p.11.

²⁶⁷ Randolph, S.N. (1871). *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, p.63.

²⁶⁸ Bannet, E.T. (2014). The Constantias of the 1790s: Tales of Constancy and Republican Daughters. *The Journal of the Early Republic*, 49(2), 435-466 (p.436).

²⁶⁹ Malone, D. (1931). Polly Jefferson and Her Father. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 7(1), 81-95 (p.92).

²⁷⁰ Robbins, K, E. (2015). Reviewed Work: Martha Jefferson Randolph: Republican Daughter and Plantation Mistress by Billy L. Wayson. *The Journal of Southern History*, 81(2), 447-448 (p.448).

In order to learn the responsibilities attributed to young women in the 1780s, Martha was provided with a superior education. The combination of her willingness to study and her conformity to her father's requirements, resulted in Martha acquiring a formal education far beyond that of most women of her era.²⁷¹ Coinciding with Jefferson's assignment in Paris during the 1780s, Martha was educated at the Abbaye Royale de Panthemont, one of the most fashionable schools in Paris.²⁷² Some scholars including Catherine Kerrison, have dedicated their work to narrating Martha's time at the Abbaye, believing it to be a pivotal moment in her life that prepared her for adulthood and the expectations placed upon being a daughter of a prominent figure. Martha's story therefore illustrates transatlantic experiences as due to her father's political circumstances, she was moveable, and her stay in the French capital, broadened her horizons to a European way of life. This provides a different layer to her education and maturity that many Americans did not get to experience. Whilst her education was considered superior to most, it was not one in politics or traditional academia but a genteel schooling that would teach domesticity and prepare her for her future role as a wife and mother. In a letter to her father in 1787, Martha describes a gentle focus on the arts, where she "learnt several new pieces on the harpsichord, drawn five landscapes and three flowers."²⁷³ Professor Brian Steele argues that for Jefferson, "domesticity for white women was as much an achievement of the revolution as independence for white men", and it was a common

²⁷¹ Quinn-Musgrove, S.L. & Kanter, S. (1995). *America's Royalty: All the Presidents' Children*. Westport: Greenwood Press, p.18.

²⁷² Kerrison, C. (2013). The French Education of Martha Jefferson Randolph. *Early American Studies*, 11(2), 349-394 (p.349).

²⁷³ Jefferson, M. (1787). To Thomas Jefferson, 27 May 1787. *Founders Online*. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=martha%20Jefferson%20randolph%20Author%3A%22Randolph%2C%20Martha%20Jefferson%22%20Recipient%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22&s=1111311111&r=3> [Accessed 24 May 2022].

goal for members of the social elite to equip their women with the necessary tools to conform to their role through domestic simplicity and virtuousness.²⁷⁴

Martha's education also supports a main component of republican motherhood.

Linda Kerber's long-standing thesis argues that women were expected to become "self-reliant, patriotic, and self-sacrificing individuals, adept at raising honourable children."²⁷⁵ To succeed, women would need to be educated and moulded to fulfil their societal duties, following a domestic curriculum centred around nurturing. They could then subsequently educate their children in republican values and continue the legacy afforded them by their revolutionary forefathers. Fulfilling this key role would equally ensure that the men could remain dedicated to political and public affairs knowing their children would be adequately cared for at home. Therefore, Jefferson and his peers articulated a "normative gender identity that profoundly liberated both men and women to enact their natural roles with grace and honour."²⁷⁶ Jefferson knew the societal expectations and wanted his daughters to be prepared when the time came. Thus, despite her intellectual talents, Martha's education was not solely hers, but for the benefit of the family she would have in the future, a common occurrence for the daughters of the republic.

Jefferson played close attention to Martha's education and made his high expectations known early on. His interest is displayed through the many letters he penned to his eldest child. In 1786 he wrote, "the more you learn, the more I love you

²⁷⁴ Steele, B. (2008). Thomas Jefferson's Gender Frontier. *The Journal of American History*, 95(1), 17-42 (p.40).

²⁷⁵ Bannet, *The Constantias of the 1790s*, p.459.

²⁷⁶ Steele, *Thomas Jefferson's Gender Frontier*, p.24.

and I rest the happiness of my life on seeing you beloved by all the world.”²⁷⁷ This example can offer us two interpretations. One, we have a father who is proud of his daughter and enjoys seeing her intellectual successes. On the other hand, we see a man who puts his daughters’ merit in how well she does at school. The second interpretation underscores a substantial pressure on Martha to succeed and subsequently maintain her father’s affection. This is further insinuated in a later letter where Jefferson wrote “nobody in this world can make me so happy, or so miserable as you.”²⁷⁸ It has been implied that Jefferson’s daughters were designated the handmaidens of their father’s happiness; their primary function in life was to make him happy.”²⁷⁹ This alludes to a sense of parental manipulation and pressure, engrained in their education and fulfilling his expectations which would have likely impacted Martha’s behaviour throughout her life. Strict education was deemed essential amongst the social elite as it was believed that discipline and hard work would assist their children in plotting successful paths in the future and we see a similar manifestation with Abigail Adams’ and her children. Martha was privy to her fathers’ high expectations and longed to meet them. In 1787 she wrote, “you say your expectations for me are high and what I hold most precious is your satisfactions, indeed I should be miserable without it.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Jefferson, T. (1786). To Martha Jefferson, 6 March 1786. *Founders Online*. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=%20Author%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22%20Recipient%3A%22Randolph%2C%20Martha%20Jefferson%22&s=1111311111&r=9> [Accessed 7 April 2022].

²⁷⁸ Kaminski, J.P. (2006). *The Quotable Thomas Jefferson*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.105.

²⁷⁹ Onuf, P.S. (1993). *Jeffersonian Legacies*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, p.115.

²⁸⁰ Jefferson, M. (1787). To Thomas Jefferson, 9 April 1787. *Founders Online*. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=martha%20Jefferson%20randolph%20Author%3A%22Randolph%2C%20Martha%20Jefferson%22%20Recipient%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22&s=1111311111&r=2> [Accessed 24 May 2022].

Martha worked hard to win her father's favour and her dedication to him continued as she grew older. In addition to caring for her own family, the ageing Thomas Jefferson remained under her watchful eye, and she doted on his every need. Even after her marriage, Martha assured her father that he was the one she loved best, "believe yourself first and unrivalled in the heart of your devoted child."²⁸¹ Martha offered private counsel and sustained an unbreakable link between Thomas' public and private life, frequently keeping her father up to date on household affairs to maintain his connection to Virginia whilst he was away. For example, a simple horticultural update, whereby Martha described how "many of your sugar maples are alive and tolerably flourishing considering the [drouth]", allowed Thomas Jefferson to remain apprised of Monticello's affairs.²⁸² Furthermore, Martha is one of only three women in American history who intermittently took on the role of First Lady as the child of the president. Martha assumed the role in her mothers' absence, providing a feminine touch to the administration and expertly organised social events throughout her father's two terms in office whilst simultaneously managing her ancestral home, as the Mistress of Monticello.²⁸³ Her time as First Lady was centred around companionship and being present to support the President. Her dutiful care of her father continued throughout his old age, and she was there with him at Monticello when he died. In addition to her sense of republican duty, Martha also inherited her father's vigorous constitution and lived a long life, surviving, some might argue, to take tender care of her beloved father.²⁸⁴ This loving relationship is evidence that

²⁸¹ Onuf, *Jefferson Legacies*, p.110.

²⁸² Stanton, L.C. (1990). *Acer Saccharum- Sugar Maple* [Online]. Thomas Jefferson Encyclopaedia at Monticello. Available at: <https://www.monticello.org/research-education/thomas-jefferson-encyclopedia/sugar-maple/> [Accessed 17 August 2022].

²⁸³ Graham, P.M. (1961). Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings. *The Journal of Negro History*, 46(2), 89-103 (p.92).

²⁸⁴ Hyland Jr, *Martha Jefferson: An Intimate Life*, p.115.

Americans were determined to constitute a new kind of family; one held together by mutually affectionate bonds.²⁸⁵ Jefferson himself, despite his successful political career, penned how “the happiest moments of my life have been the few which I have past at home in the bosom of my family”, alluding to his comfort being around his supportive family.²⁸⁶

Martha’s devotion to her father is further highlighted amidst a scandal pertaining to the implied paternity of Sally Hemmings’ children. As word began to spread about Thomas Jefferson’s intimate relations with his slaves, Martha stood by her father, defending his name and reputation. On her own death bed in 1836, Martha instructed her sons Jeff and George to “always defend the character of their grandfather.”²⁸⁷ Her dying wish was dedicated to her father, and she desired her family reputation to remain unsullied. No-one can dispute the love she held for Thomas Jefferson and how, even without his physical presence, she would defend his memory. Therefore, to honour the mantle of Founding Daughter, Martha abided by the standards set forth by the Founding Fathers to be a good republican and honour the legacy they created for future generations. She was a competent daughter to both her father and to the country.

What makes Martha Jefferson Randolph an interesting case study is that she is an example of the first generation to put republican motherhood to the test. The concept gathered momentum after the revolution and the children of the revolution were the

²⁸⁵ Fizer, *Signing as Republican Daughters*, p.248.

²⁸⁶ Kaminski, *The Quotable Thomas Jefferson*, p.98.

²⁸⁷ Wiencek, H. (2012). *Master of Mountain: Thomas Jefferson and His Slaves*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. p.214.

'guinea pigs' to this new expectation placed upon women. As a result, Martha's relationship with her own children paints a picture of the enduring concept and how it was passed down between generations. Motherhood was the defining feature of Martha Jefferson Randolph's adult life, and family relationships dominated her comparatively insular world, as they did for most rural women of the time.²⁸⁸ The average 18th-Century Virginian woman had 7 or 8 full term pregnancies during her childbearing years and Martha herself raised 11 children to adulthood, all of whom provided her with a great sense of satisfaction.²⁸⁹ Martha, therefore more than sufficed in her role of childbearing, having a large family to mould into good republican children and continue their family legacy. She would frequently converse with her father, keeping him informed of her children's progress and characters. For example, in 1790 she wrote, "I have weaned Little Anne who begins to walk...she becomes every day more mischievous and more entertaining."²⁹⁰ This simple descriptor reminds us that the Jeffersons were regular, family-oriented people who were excited about discussing the next generation's milestones and took pride in humble everyday occurrences.

One way we can analyse Martha's approach to motherhood is through her focus on educating her offspring. This was important as the virtuous generations required a good education in both academic and moral/domestic matters depending on their sex. As the mother of 6 surviving daughters and 5 sons, she devoted herself to their education ensuring that they had all the knowledge they required to live a successful

²⁸⁸ Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.89.

²⁸⁹ Hyland Jr, *Martha Jefferson: An Intimate Life*, p.116.

²⁹⁰ Randolph, M.J. (1792). To Thomas Jefferson, 20 February 1792. *Founders Online*. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=martha%20Jefferson%20randolph%20Author%3A%22Randolph%2C%20Martha%20Jefferson%22%20Recipient%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22&s=1111311111&r=8> [Accessed 26 May 2022].

life. Martha's aptitude for educating stemmed from her own experience at the Abbaye in Paris, which particularly shaped her vision of female education.²⁹¹ Martha's feistier side becomes evident through the curriculum she instructed her daughters to follow, exhibiting a progressive belief that in terms of intellect, women were just as capable as men. Martha's daughters read ancient history in original Latin, spoke French, read Spanish with ease, and followed the syllabus Thomas Jefferson had recommended for boys. She was not overtly vocal on the rights of women, but inside the confines of her home she chose not to deny her daughters access to advanced knowledge, wanting them to be as intellectually able as their brothers. Catherine Kerrison plays particular attention to her encouragement of Latin study, commending Martha on her expansive curriculum, and insinuating that she did not want her daughters to be deprived of the conventionally male curricular component, so she took it upon herself to teach it.²⁹² Martha's successes as educator is evident as her daughter Ellen Wayles Randolph was considered to be one of "the best educated girls in America", due to the efforts of her mother rather than that of her father or prominent grandfather.²⁹³ Therefore, Martha tried to mitigate the consequences of being born female by identifying with the intellectual life of her father and teaching her daughters to do the same, as once learnt, education could not be taken away. However, it is important to note that while boundaries were widened within an educational domain, her daughters would sadly remain confined by their gender in all other ways. Nevertheless, Martha equipped them with all she could without compromising their reputation and respectability.

²⁹¹ Kerrison, *The French Education of Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.350.

²⁹² *Ibid*, p.381.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, p.384.

A passion for education was clearly passed onto her children as Virginia Randolph conducted tutoring classes for some of the slave boys including Madison and Eston (Thomas Jefferson's alleged sons with Sally Hemmings).²⁹⁴ Therefore, her children grew up to be kind and willing to impart knowledge onto others, to share the gift of education. It can be argued that Martha encouraged this tutoring as a way to repay the enslaved women for the care they took of Martha's own mother. Their labour sustained Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson through all her trials and difficult pregnancies, and without their support she may not have made it as far as she did. Martha, as the eldest child, would have likely been aware of the troubles her mother faced and owing to her kind nature, she repaid them by educating their children. A kindness in exchange for a kindness. Martha tutored her growing brood in a large room of the mansion, also playing hostess to the neighbours, not wanting to limit the spread of learning.²⁹⁵ However, like many of the southern elite, she was allowed this precious time to educate her offspring thanks to her privileged position. As the mistress of a slave holding family, however tolerant she may have been, she was not required to perform menial domestic chores as this was reserved for the enslaved people under her care, thus Martha could devote herself to the nurturing of her children. Not all women were afforded this luxury, and this could in part explain why Martha was so adept at educating as she had no other pressing tasks pulling at her attention.

Nevertheless, her role as educator offered Martha the means to dedicate herself to her brood, excelling in her role as mother. In a letter to her father, Martha wrote, "I

²⁹⁴ Graham, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings, p.97.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, p.93.

am afraid you will be quite tired of hearing so much about them, but a fond mother never knows where to stop when her children [is] the subject.”²⁹⁶ Evident here is a mother who is immensely proud of her children and wants to share this. Scholars have suggested that this resulted in a mutual love and adoration between mother and children.²⁹⁷ Her daughter Virginia described Martha as “our sun”, insinuating that she was the centre of their universes and a constant light in their lives.²⁹⁸ Her children perceived their mother as a warm figure who helped them to grow and thrive in the world. Ellen further emphasised this point by describing her mothers’ disposition as having “the sunshine of heaven in it.”²⁹⁹ A vast array of female iconography that existed at the time harkened back to classical metaphors and goddesses, but this descriptor offers a new avenue of analysis which represents women as a vital energy source. Additionally, no better judgement of the success of motherhood can be found than in the sentiments of children. Jefferson told his daughters that “your own happiness will be the greater as you promote that of others” and it seems clear that Martha’s benevolent character promoted a great happiness in those around her and she found happiness in them.³⁰⁰

It has been argued that through motherhood, women attempted to compensate for their exclusion from the political world by translating moral authority into political influence.³⁰¹ Whilst this was certainly the case for Abigail Adams who used

²⁹⁶ Randolph, M.J. (1793). To Thomas Jefferson, 16 January 1793. *Founders Online*. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=martha%20Jefferson%20to%20Thomas%20Jefferson%201793%20Author%3A%22Randolph%2C%20Martha%20Jefferson%22&s=1111311111&r=1> [Accessed 12 April 2022].

²⁹⁷ Butler-Wister & Irwin, *Worthy Women*, p.68.

²⁹⁸ Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.245.

²⁹⁹ Onuf, K. (1992). *Maria Jefferson Eppes* [Online]. Monticello, Available from: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/maria-jefferson-eppes> [Accessed 25 April 2022].

³⁰⁰ Onuf, *Jeffersonians Legacies*, p.136.

³⁰¹ Baker, *The Domestication of Politics*, p.625.

motherhood as a tool to bring up upstanding children who would maintain their family legacy, the figure that emerges of Martha was one who simply wanted the best for her children. She was aware of her family legacy, and this was important to her, but not to the detriment of her children's happiness. In comparison to Abigail's trailblazing spirit, Martha can instead be seen as a pioneer of female nurturing that successfully worked alongside republican masculinity and saw motherhood as more of a supporting role. Apart from her progressive curriculum, she remains within the confines of her gender and the virtues she encourages in her daughters are those of education, tolerance, and kindness. She did, however, raise publicly successful sons, who went on to uphold efficacious careers and continue the work of their forefathers, showcasing a dedication to republican values. Thomas Jefferson Randolph was named executor of his grandfather's estate and displayed an aptitude for finance. He followed in his namesakes' political footsteps, serving six terms in the Virginia House of Delegates and published the first collection of Jefferson's writings in 1829, ensuring his grandfather's name remained in public domain.³⁰² Martha's youngest son George Wythe Randolph had a successful law practice and assumed his civic responsibility as an officer of the Virginia Historical Society. He would later join the Virginia militia and served a short term as the Confederate Secretary of War in 1862.³⁰³ Furthermore, Meriwether Lewis Randolph pursued a career in the western frontier, continuing America's desire for expansion and autonomy.³⁰⁴ Whilst her sons would inherit the Randolph name, the Christian names given to them

³⁰² Hackford, H. (2004). *Thomas Jefferson Randolph* [Online]. Monticello. Available from: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/thomas-jefferson-randolph> [Accessed 28 April 2022].

³⁰³ (2004). *George Wythe Randolph* [Online]. Monticello. Available from: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/george-wythe-randolph> [Accessed 28 April 2022].

³⁰⁴ Hackford, H. (2004). *Meriwether Lewis Randolph* [Online]. Monticello. Available from: <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/meriwether-lewis-randolph> [accessed 28 April 2022].

honoured Thomas Jefferson's life which was Martha's way of paying tribute to her father and acknowledging the men who helped his career, including his law mentor and secretary. All her actions signified a wanting to please her father.

In addition to the devotion Martha Jefferson Randolph expelld to her father and to her children, she also excelled at being a dutiful wife. In 1790, Martha married Thomas Mann Randolph of Tuckahoe, merging two prominent Virginian families together.³⁰⁵ The southern infrastructure may have impacted Martha's choice of husband as in the American south, family was the most conservative and inviolable of institutions; there was a hefty weight placed on the importance of continuing the family line.³⁰⁶ Fathers were protective of their daughters and wanted their place in society to be secured early on, often providing their sons-in-law with influence and money. Martha's education sought to prepare her to find a suitable spouse that would allow her to maintain her status. Prominent southerners knew the responsibility of caring for their kin in addition to upholding a sense of republican duty, therefore, the bringing together of the Jeffersons and the Randolphs was an equally beneficial move for both families and ensured they both kept an elevated position in society. Moreover, Professor Jeremy Pope has investigated the motives of the Founding Fathers and how their children's gender may have impacted on their decision making. He stated that, "if you are a father of daughters in 1780s, you worry about family connections that hinges on marrying off your daughters."³⁰⁷ Thomas Mann Randolph was a member of Congress and governor of Virginia who worked

³⁰⁵ Butler-Wister & Irwin, *Worthy Women*, p.24.

³⁰⁶ Volo, J.M. & Volo, D.D. (2006). *Family Life in 17th and 18th Century America*. Westport: Greenwood Press, p.49.

³⁰⁷ Buckley, C. (2021). *How the Founding Fathers Children Influenced the Constitution* [Online]. BYU. Available from: <https://news.byu.edu/intellect/how-the-founding-fathers-children-influenced-the-constitution> [Accessed 11 November 2021].

closely with Thomas Jefferson in political, intellectual, and agricultural matters.³⁰⁸ On paper he was a brilliant and able statesman, a seemingly perfect match for the daughter of a prominent politician.

Martha's marital home of Edgehill was in close proximity to Monticello, allowing her to sustain her bond with her father, often using Monticello as a second residence for her growing family.³⁰⁹ A wife's domestic work and stewardship was vital to the economic wellbeing of the family and Martha completed her duties without complaint, conforming to the virtues that a republican female in the 19th century was encouraged to follow.³¹⁰ "Woman was selfless, and sentimental, nurturing and pious... she was the counterpoint to the materialistic and competitive man whose strength and rationality suited him for the rough political world."³¹¹ Randolph had the position and intellect for the political world, but he also had a highly unstable nature which frequently disrupted his domestic relations. Nevertheless, Martha's dedication to her marriage mirrored all else she did. Jefferson instructed her that "your new condition will call for abundance of little sacrifices... the happiness of your life now depends on the continuing to please a single person."³¹² However, there was to be no 'little' sacrifices but instead, substantial ones. Martha was beholden to her vows of 'for better or for worse' and was often left to manage the household alone; her husband often disappearing for long periods of time. In a scathing summary, William Hyland Jr, states that Randolph was a "miserable failure in life and virtually abandoned his family."³¹³ Therefore, this abandonment may have encouraged

³⁰⁸ West, p.2.

³⁰⁹ Quinn-Musgrove & Kanter, *America's Royalty*, p.18.

³¹⁰ Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.88.

³¹¹ Baker, *The Domestication of Politics*, p.620.

³¹² Kaminski, *Quotable Thomas Jefferson*, p.103.

³¹³ Hyland Jr, *Martha Jefferson: An Intimate Life*, p.123.

Martha's steadfast focus on the proper raising of her children as she was given no other choice. In fact, Martha's welcoming and cheerful demeanour is even more striking and noteworthy when one considers the deepening personal crisis that was evident in the Randolph household. However, historian Annette Gordon-Reed presents a differing narrative, pointing the finger of blame at Thomas Jefferson for encouraging Martha's loyalty to him over her husband and argues that his selfish needs wrecked the Randolph union.³¹⁴ She compares Martha's marriage to sister Maria's, suggesting that the latter was a happier one because they were able to function away from Jefferson's interference.

Nevertheless, in addition to her wifely obligations, Martha had to demonstrate patience and was often required to step outside the gendered boundaries to support her family, in a similar way to Abigail Adams who took over management of her household in John's absence. When both Martha's husband and father lost their property due to ill-conceived financial decisions, Martha used her skills and connections to generate opportunities and income to avoid collapse.³¹⁵ With a driven, logical mind, she took matters into her own hands and became proactive, striving for the betterment of her children after being disappointed by the men in her life. Unlike the Adams', the Randolph's story is presented as a case study of what happens when patriarchy malfunctions because men are unable to fulfil their roles. The domestic life of Martha Jefferson Randolph reveals to modern readers, the challenges and frustrations that dominated the lives of many women of her time who were confined by society but not guaranteed a stable household. Martha and Abigail,

³¹⁴ Gordon-Reed, A. (2008). *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. p.416.

³¹⁵ Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.9.

both present women who stepped up for the sake of their family and acted with the brass expected of the other sex. It seems that Martha's stoic, proactive nature was hereditary, as her daughter Ellen also frequently stepped managed her household single-handedly when her husband was away.

The final familial term in Martha Jefferson Randolph's story is sister. After the passing of Martha Wayles in 1782, Martha had to execute a dual role as both big sister and substitute mother. The pair had ensured several tragedies during their childhood years and relied heavily on each other for support. Over the years, they formed a strong bond and provided a source of familiarity to each other in the ever-changing world they were growing accustomed to. The sisters were initially parted during Jefferson's time in Paris, but upon Maria's arrival in 1787, Martha became reacquainted with her sister and took it upon herself to ease Maria into Parisian life.³¹⁶ This worked effectively, and Maria grew attached to her sister once more, with Ellen Randolph stating that the sisters had "the strongest and warmest attachment, the most perfect confidence and affection."³¹⁷ This bond continued into adolescence and adulthood. In 1791, Maria, also known fondly as Polly, came to stay with Martha at Monticello, and Martha attended to the education of her sister.³¹⁸ This was the first instance of Martha educating another and worked as the framework when it came to her children later on. She sought to ensure that her sister was prepared for adulthood and offered her an expert example to follow. The inner core of kin was central to the female world and the ties between sisters, cousins, aunts, and nieces

³¹⁶ Ibid p.64.

³¹⁷ Onuf, *Maria Jefferson Eppes*.

³¹⁸ Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.89.

provided structure upon which groups of friends and their network of female relatives clustered.³¹⁹

Martha dutifully supported Maria when she came to endure the pinnacle of womanly function, in having her own children. Martha's repeated and successful experiences of childbirth and infant care made her a natural choice to aid Maria as she experienced motherhood for the first time in 1800.³²⁰ This shows the bonds of sisterhood, both literally and figuratively. Martha was there to support her own blood relation through the anxious time and imparted all her knowledge onto her, but it also shows the relationships women forged to support one another. This underscores how the sisterly bonds continued across a lifetime.³²¹ When Maria was struggling with a post-partum fever, Martha nursed her sister and her niece, despite herself having a new-born. Ellen Randolph remembered "the tender devoted care of my mother, how she watched over her sister, and with what anxious affection she anticipated her every want."³²² Maria's tragic death caused a great amount of pain for Martha as she lost her companion and the individual that she had grown up alongside. Being the only Jefferson child to survive, the bond with her father became even closer and she felt even more pressure to succeed in the eyes of her father.

Martha's role as sister was not limited to the Jefferson side of the family, as she also forged strong relationships with her sisters-in-law. The centrality of family and the female kin was evident during the transformative months surrounding the birth of

³¹⁹ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, p.62.

³²⁰ Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.102.

³²¹ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, p.62.

³²² Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph*, p.125.

Martha's first child and continued to endure.³²³ The women relied heavily on each other and shared parenting tips and instruction to help as best they could. It also shows that despite being let down by her husband, Martha's relationships with the Randolphs was sufficient and mutually beneficial. Her nurturing capabilities was further shown when she became, in effect, a surrogate mother to Virginia, known as Jenny, who was only 4 years old when her father, Martha's father-in-law re-married. She took Jenny under her wing and offered her care and attention similar to that of her own children. It seems that family saw no bounds and Martha was ever willing to take a child into her heart to nurture, going above and beyond the requirements of motherhood in the early American republic.

In more recent works that explore the children of Jefferson, scholars have focused on the illegitimate children he bore to Sally Hemmings. Given the more scandalous flavour, this subject has shifted the narrative to push his two legitimate daughters aside. Moreover, in some works narrating Jefferson's life, the part Martha played has been ignored altogether. As Susan Kern states in a review of *Mr Jefferson's Women*, the two integral female relationships in his life, those of Martha and Maria, were neglected in favour of his romantic relationships, overlooking the women who presumably knew Jefferson's sentiments best.³²⁴ It is unclear how Martha felt towards her stepsiblings, but the expectations of society would have discouraged friendly relations, especially in the south. If times were different, we may have seen further evidence of Martha's sisterly character and care. What we do know however, is that despite the sullyng of her fathers' reputation, Martha would have had little to

³²³ Ibid, p.89.

³²⁴ Kern, S.A. (2008). Reviewed Work: Mr Jefferson's Women by Jon Kukla. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 65(3), 623-626 (p.625).

fear over having enslaved siblings. The racial consensus at the time would have led to no loss of property and Martha would remain in her privileged position as Jefferson's legitimate heir.³²⁵ Her father's attachment to Sally Hemings would not have impacted her or her children's security in the way that mattered to the planter class during the 18th Century.

The evidence suggests that throughout her life, Martha Jefferson Randolph was beholden to the expectations and requirements of others and gave them no reason to complain. She exhibited the necessary traits that allowed her to shine as a Founding Daughter- selflessness, patriotism, and domesticity, and lived up to the expectations affiliated with the new American woman. From a young age, Martha was forced to assume responsibilities far beyond her years, to support her father after the loss of her mother. She would remain a steadfast presence at her father's side, dutifully obeying his commands and being there when needed, often uprooting her life in the process, as seen with her move to Paris and to The White House for Thomas Jefferson's work commitments. As she matured, she moulded her character to care for her growing brood, putting their needs above her own and using her advantageous education to impart knowledge onto her children. Her determination to provide a worthy education for her girls is where a shimmer of feminist spirit comes alive, wanting them to be as educated as their brothers in the traditional academic sense. Her duties continued as a wife, where she stepped up once more to contend with the low moods and financial despairs of her husband Thomas Mann Randolph, honouring her marriage vows despite being let down herself. Her motherly intuition and experience became centrefold in her adult relationships with her sister,

³²⁵ Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p.431.

supporting her during motherhood and offering her a home in the early years of her marriage. Martha's roles all appear to tie back to motherhood. After the loss of her mother, she had to enter into a mature role and support her father as well as offering him a reason to carry on which brought great pressure. She was an expert nurturer of her own children and embraced care for her younger sister and sisters-in-law, leading us to conclude that Martha, "inspired greatness in everyone", and set a benevolent standard for others to follow.³²⁶ A Monticello overseer once claimed that he "never saw her equal" which provides a testament to the way she conducted herself.³²⁷ However, despite the recent scholarship, Martha is still regarded as a footnote to the early republic story. Her contributions are frequently overlooked, and she is reduced to a side-line character beholden to the prominent men in her life. Moreover, the scandalous story of her half-siblings has absorbed the interests of scholars who are enticed by the racial story and the private life of the President. Consequently, Martha's story is a familiar one that has been repeatedly told through history; someone who has been constricted by the patriarchal system but who did necessary work on the side-lines. In the same fashion as Abigail Adams, Martha overcompensated for her gender misfortunes by excelling at the roles she was allowed to play. Esteemed as "the sun" by her children, she encouraged worked to emit warmth to those around her and paid due diligence to the spread of republican values. As a Founding Daughter, she knew the role expected of her, took her reserved place in society, and suppressed her wants for the good of her family and her country. In this case she was a true patriot and child of the revolution, who similarly understood sacrifice and honour.

³²⁶ Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson*, p.19.

³²⁷ Bear Jr, J.A. (1967). *Jefferson at Monticello*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. p.83.

Julia Stockton Rush

In the late 1970s, an unearthing of private letters in Philadelphia, resulted in Julia Stockton Rush becoming a new focus of scholarly concentration. Her writings were extensive and provide insight into her private thoughts as well as highlighting more collective themes including transatlantic communication, family separation, courtship, and marriage. They presented first-hand accounts of domestic and political matters from a woman who experienced them, enriching our understanding of the period.³²⁸ This previously overlooked figure was “very much at the centre of events during and after the struggle for independence” and this centrality makes her an intriguing case study when it comes to scrutinising the lives of women in the early American republic.³²⁹ Julia came from a prominent, wealthy family which, like Abigail Adams and Martha Jefferson, offered her an advantageous position in society and a quality of life that was out of reach for many. Her husband Benjamin Rush, and father Richard Stockton, are considered Founding Fathers, being present at both the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Second Continental Congress in 1776. Her family connections gave Julia a beneficial societal standing and led to her affiliations with other renowned figures of the time, cementing her place on the revolutionary scene. Furthermore, she stands as a prime example of the republican wife, an ideal which encouraged in women, virtuousness and self-sacrifice once married, to aid a smooth transition into a republican society after the war. This biography will analyse Julia’s life through her familial relationships as a wife, but also as a daughter, mother, and sister to better understand her place in the republic and

³²⁸ Bocanegra, S. (2021). *Julia Stockton Rush Letters* [Online]. American Philosophical Society. Available from: <https://www.amphilsoc.org/blog/revolutionaryphl-julia-stockton-rush-letters> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

³²⁹ Fried, S. (2018). *Rediscovering a Founding Mother* [Online]. Smithsonian Magazine. Available from: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/rediscovering-founding-mother-180970037/> [Accessed 18 October 2021].

how she used her advantageous position for the benefit of her family. Looking beyond the actions of her male relations, Julia can be seen to exude her own patriotic spirit and she was no stranger to hard work with her wartime activities proving that she was “thoroughly enlisted in the cause of her country”, which was further emphasised through her duties at home.³³⁰ The constraints of her gender required Julia to fulfil certain responsibilities including that of republican motherhood and despite being often overshadowed by her spouse, Julia Stockton Rush shows the many roles that women played, “weaving together motherhood, housewife duties, and politics” to create a multi-dimensional individual who worked to support the country and the people she loved.³³¹

Julia was born in 1759 to Richard Stockton and Annis Boudinot and grew up in Princeton, New Jersey. Julia’s parentage is of note as she was the child of two high-flying individuals, with both her mother and father being respected within society. Annis Boudinot was one of the first female poets published in the US and is considered to be a Founding Mother in her own right, through her trailblazing actions and intellectual talents.³³² Julia therefore grew up with a strong female role model who showed her that she could do more than what was expected of her. Whereas Abigail Adams’ mother, Elizabeth Quincy Smith, enforced a conventional regimen which centred around being a good mistress of the household and was dismayed by her daughters’ stubbornness of spirit.³³³ Moreover, Martha Jefferson’s mother died when she was young, leaving her without a key female example and reliant upon her

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Bocanegra, *Julia Stockton Rush Letters*.

³³² Fried, *Rediscovering a Founding Mother*.

³³³ Withey, *Dearest Friend*, p.3.

father's direction instead. Annis was well regarded by the leading men of the period including George Washington, who was the subject of one of her poems. He celebrated the civil discourse of women during the revolution, citing them as "the best patriots America can boast", thus encouraging Julia to similarly use her position to fight for her country and win the favour of the future president as her mother had.³³⁴

Julia and Annis' close relationship is clearly visible through their wide array of letters where they discuss both menial, domestic matters and subjects of wider significance. Mother and daughter would frequently discuss books and ideas that related to their sex, including Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Therefore, the pair actively read and engaged with feminist material, discussing the ideas put forward and offering their verdict. In the 18th Century, letters were often read aloud during social gatherings, so we can infer that whilst letters between two family members presume an intimate privacy, the contents of the letters were likely used to spark debate and encourage conversation.³³⁵ Through this open discussion of controversial material, Julia and Annis can be argued to have shaped the beliefs of other women, using conversation to let ideas circulate amongst peers.³³⁶ Annis was the prototype of a republican courtier, and presided over a coterie at Morven since the 1750s, providing an example of the Republican Court being displayed within the homes.³³⁷ This epistolary neighbourhood allowed women to gain an audience beyond their home, whilst avoiding the cultural ridicule often directed at

³³⁴ Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised our Nation*, p.xix.

³³⁵ Moore, L.L, Brooks, J. & Wigginton, *Transatlantic Feminisms*, p.287.

³³⁶ Wigginton, C. (2008). A Late-Night Vindication: Annis Boudinot Stockton's Reading of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. *Legacy*, 25(2), 225-238 (p.235).

³³⁷ Teute & Shields, Jefferson in Washington, p.242.

vocal women. This challenges the belief that women simply accepted their domestic roles as all they were capable of, and instead adds nuance to our understanding of early American women and how they were curious for knowledge, showing an eagerness to discuss ideas with one another.³³⁸ It can therefore be argued that Julia displayed an element of radicalism and a willingness to step outside the confines of gendered expectations when it came to learning. Through encouragement from her mother, Julia looked for intellectual inspiration and did not shy away from engaging with provocative material, including material from other countries, to cultivate her mind.

Despite an engagement with Wollstonecraft's writing, it would be inaccurate to suggest that Julia and Annis embodied the same degree of feminist spirit as the famed author. Both women were primarily dedicated to their families and republicanism and found some of Wollstonecraft's suggestions a little too liberal, which suggests that the radical spirit embodied at the epistolary neighbourhoods would not extend to compromise their reputations. However, we can see a gentle push back on the societal constraints imposed upon them as well as their refusal to believe women were not as proficient as men. Professor Caroline Wigginton analyses the Stockton's communications surrounding Wollstonecraft's key 18th-century text and concludes that neither Julia nor Annis thought they were powerless to progress. Annis wrote to her daughter that "the empire of reason is not monopolized by man", which implies that she believed women had their own minds and could use them for good.³³⁹ The Stockton women deemed female education to

³³⁸ Wigginton, *A Late-Night Vindication*, p.228.

³³⁹ *Ibid*, p.228.

be of vast importance; their sex was adept at rational thinking and comprehension, and this could be used in conjunction with their duties of being a good wife and mother. They therefore defended the writings of Judith Sargent Murray, an early advocate of women's rights who also believed that improved female educational opportunities were of paramount importance and used her essays to spread that message. Julia opted to not stop enhancing her mind and wished to use her wisdom to enrich family life whilst also rising above the mundane. Julia saw Americans as "beings dependent on one another", seeing the value in progressive ideals that worked for the benefit of the state by fostering support between the two genders without disregarding her feminine traits and responsibilities.³⁴⁰

Julia's abundant exchanges with her mother were a constant factor of her life and the pair formed a special bond that endured over the years. Like Martha Jefferson, Julia took comfort in caring for her parent and wished to keep her informed of her experiences and thoughts, valuing her insight and approval. Julia's duty to her mother continued after her father's death and she remained in close contact in addition to making frequent trips back to her family home at Morven. The close mother-daughter bonds evident in post-revolutionary society often resulted in young women "reflecting thoughtfully on the events of their mother's lives" and working to extend their gratitude towards them.³⁴¹ Julia never lost to the ability to care for her mother as she aged and Annis was invited to move in with Julia and Benjamin in 1797.³⁴² Julia therefore, fulfilled her role as loving daughter and their relationship

³⁴⁰ Ibid, p.234.

³⁴¹Rosenzweig, L.W. (1993). *The Anchor of My Life: Middle-Class American Mothers and Daughters, 1880-1920*. New York: New York University Press, p.10.

³⁴² Stabile, S.M. (2004). *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in 18th Century America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.72.

demonstrates an “egalitarian friendship” whereby both individuals valued the relationship and sought to protect it.³⁴³

As the eldest Stockton daughter, it was Julia’s responsibility to marry well to ensure her family reputation and status remained preserved. This was a task she executed masterfully as her marriage to Benjamin Rush provided her the security she required; his education and elite status made him a worthy partner and fused two prominent families together. Rush was also a friend of the family who had known Julia since she was 4 years old. The pair were married in 1776 on the eve of the American Revolution and they experienced the trials of war as newly husband and wife. Through their correspondence, we get a glimpse into their marriage which, like the Adamses, appeared to exemplify mutual adoration. Professor Charles Strozier states that Benjamin wrote to Julia nearly every day during any separation and argues that “he was able to discard his mask with her and that his statements of love suggest real feelings.”³⁴⁴ Despite a substantial age difference of 14 years, Julia and Benjamin seemed a good love match and their sentiments were documented on the page and in discussions with other prominent figures of the time. For example, in a letter to John Adams, Benjamin wrote, “my dear Mrs Rush is everything to me that a companion and a wife should be to any man.”³⁴⁵ Benjamin’s persistent writing to his wife had wider historical significance. Strozier argues that the main reason we know so much about the 1793 yellow fever outbreak in Philadelphia, is because Rush

³⁴³ Rosenzweig, *The Anchor of My Life*, p.10.

³⁴⁴ Strozier, C.B. (1995). Medicine: Benjamin Rush, Revolutionary Doctor. *The American Scholar*, 64(3), 415-421 (p.419).

³⁴⁵ Rush, B. (1790). To John Adams, 12 Feb 1790. Founders Online. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Benjamin%20rush%20%20Author%3A%22Rush%2C%20Benjamin%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22&s=111311111&r=29> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

“chronicled it in his letters to Julia.”³⁴⁶ Hence, we can learn about a medical epidemic because of one man’s love proclamations and wish to keep his wife informed. Julia, being the recipient of these letters makes her an important figure even if this was not intended and further highlights the success of their partnership.

Julia’s dedication to her wifely duties provides a stellar example of the republican wife in practice, an idea coined by historian Jan Lewis. The republican wife was an educated woman who could converse intelligently and connect emotionally with her husband.³⁴⁷ Due to her privileged position, Julia was learned and adept at her intellectual and domestic talents which she used to support her family. We can see through her writings that she was able to converse with her husband and form opinions which would lead to perceptive discussions, thus fulfilling a criterion of the republican wife. Benjamin was aware of her aptitude and in a letter written early on in their relationship, he described Julia as “correct in her conversation...her writing gave me a favourable idea of her taste and understanding.”³⁴⁸ Benjamin appeared to further encourage his wife’s intellectual pursuits. As an engagement gift he built her a library in their home and stocked it with 100 volumes that he hoped she would read and enjoy, including books on religion, poetry, and history.³⁴⁹ Therefore, he opened up her world to a greater array of knowledge, wanting a partner who was on a substantial intellectual level and Julia obliged willingly. Benjamin displayed his reliance on their communication by stating, “although my books have supplied in some degree the pleasure of your company, they begin to lose their relish without

³⁴⁶ Strozier, *Medicine: Benjamin Rush*, p.420.

³⁴⁷ Good, *Founding Friendships*, p.3.

³⁴⁸ Rush, B. (1979). *My Dearest Julia: The Love Letters of Dr. Benjamin Rush to Julia Stockton*. New York: Neale Watson Academic Publications, p. xiii.

³⁴⁹ Fried, *Rediscovering a Founding Mother*.

you. I daily hear and see many things that perish in my bosom from not being communicated".³⁵⁰ Here, we can interpret two things; that he clearly missed his wife when they were parted but also that the two were intellectually compatible who frequently shared ideas through lively conversation. Moreover, Benjamin first fiancée Sarah Eve died in 1774, three weeks before their intended union.³⁵¹ Thus, Benjamin's love proclamations and desire to provide for Julia was likely the actions of a man who was desperate to ensure that his wife knew his feelings and who resented the time spent away from her.

The encouraged expansion of Julia's mind was not solely for her benefit. It was the belief of prominent individuals at the time, that an educated women would be better able to serve the needs of her family, and this was the favoured rationale given for increased female education. Even the most liberal spokespersons for female education advocated for it as a means of succeeding in her role as a wife and mother.³⁵² Benjamin's encouragement of Julia's intellectual capabilities therefore cannot be interpreted as too progressive; men and women were to continue in separate spheres, but the role of mothers and wives would be elevated to a semi-public function which required adequate education. Nevertheless, Benjamin acknowledged his wife's talents and commented on how she was "anxious to cultivate her mind" and to rise above the drudgery to which her sex had been consigned.³⁵³ Despite the gender limitations, Julia was in a more privileged position

³⁵⁰ Rush, B. (1787). *To Julia Stockton Rush, 26 August 1787* [Online]. Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections. Available from: https://archives.dickinson.edu/sites/all/files/files_document/I-ButterfieldL-1971-1.pdf [Accessed 25 May 2022].

³⁵¹ Eve, S. (1881). Extracts from the Journal of Miss Sarah Eve. *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 5(1), 19-36 (p.20).

³⁵² Erkkila, *Revolutionary Women*, p.215.

³⁵³ Winterer, C. (2007). *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.22.

than most women due to having a supportive spouse; she could succeed as a good wife, satisfy the obligation to be intellectually and emotionally available to her husband and still maintain her personal development.

Lewis stated that the republican wife was “affectionate, virtuous, chaste, and capable of enormous moral authority over her husband.”³⁵⁴ Hence, women had great power with which to make the “young men, in deed and in truth, republicans.”³⁵⁵ Benjamin acknowledged this in 1775 by penning to Julia, “you have taught me more than I have learned from the pulpit and you shall be the apostle of my heart and family.”³⁵⁶ A good wife was to stand by her husband and succeed in presenting an unblemished character to the wider world. Consequently, American men could accomplish their duties as patriots and statesmen, and in doing so, they could find “the sweetest reward of their toils in the approbation and applause of their wives.”³⁵⁷ Women were needed to nurture the ego of men and offer unofficial counsel when needed, as part of their supportive spouse role, and this is also regularly seen throughout Abigail and John Adams’ marriage. Julia was successful in this regard and was described by her husband as “the faithful companion of my pains and pleasures”, showing that she too was by his side through everything, never wavering in her wifely duties.³⁵⁸

It was thought that women could seduce men into virtue and keep them on a moral path that avoided destruction of reputation. Julia was dedicated to her role as vehicle

³⁵⁴ Lewis, *The Republican Wife*, p.720.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.720.

³⁵⁶ Rush, *My Dearest Julia*, p.6.

³⁵⁷ Kelley, M. (2006). *Learning to Stand and Speak, Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*. University of North Carolina Press, p.49.

³⁵⁸ Rush, B. (1811). To John Adams, 26 December 1811. Founders Online. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Benjamin%20rush%20%20Author%3A%22Rush%2C%20Benjamin%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22&s=1111311111&r=107> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

of virtue and worked to keep Benjamin away from scandal. Whilst serving during the revolution, Benjamin Rush was appalled at the state of the army and began to lose faith in the leadership of George Washington. In a few anonymous letters he questioned Washington's suitability for the role and the pair suffered a fall out when these letters eventually got back to Washington. To keep him on a virtuous path, Julia encouraged Benjamin to stop voicing his opinions about Washington and to concentrate on his own work. She dismissed radical action, not wanting her husband to go against orders of the General and persuaded her husband to remain loyal. Upon later reflecting on the matter, Benjamin articulated to his children, "had I yielded to your mother's advice, I should have known less distress in my journey through life."³⁵⁹ Therefore, Benjamin admitted that his wife tended to know what was best for him and that he was foolish at times not to follow her instruction.

As a wife in the early republic, Julia had many requirements to accomplish including maintaining order in the household domain. With Benjamin often away due to career obligations, Julia had full dominion over the domestic space and could run it as she deemed necessary. Benjamin Rush referred to the American Revolution as the "first act of the great drama"; the task now before the American people was to create a model republican society that could succeed without British interference.³⁶⁰

Republican societies required liberty, industry, orderliness, good manners, and piety and it was down to the wives to ensure these concepts were accomplished with Julia acknowledging this obligation. In a letter to John Adams, Benjamin praises his wife's actions stating, "we both owe too much to our wives to differ with them, and perhaps

³⁵⁹ Rush, *My Dearest Julia*, p. xvi.

³⁶⁰ Kuritz, H. (1967). Benjamin Rush: His Theory of Republican Education. *History of Education Quarterly*, 7(4), 432-451 (p.437).

there never was a time when they were so necessary to our happiness.”³⁶¹

Therefore, a clear endorsement and recognition of the role both Julia and Abigail played in the happiness of both their husband and their country. Additionally, both men appeared to acknowledge how their wives stepping up to manage their household, provided them with the opportunity to satisfy their career goals. Despite the onus being on the wife to perform uncomplainingly, there is no doubt that Julia felt satisfied in the life-mate she chose. Upon Benjamin’s death, she was devastated and felt at a loss without her partner and companion. In her journal she wrote “thou have deprived me of my husband, my companion, my protector, my friend, my greatest earthly comfort.”³⁶² Her mournful prayers after her husband’s death, offer a glimpse into the strength of conjugal friendships during this time with the Rush union being a marriage of mutual adoration and an example of successful matrimony in the early American republic.

An incredibly important part of any marriage in the latter years of the 18th Century was the bringing up of children to endorse republican values and continue the legacy instilled by the forefathers. In addition to the republican wife, many women played the role of the republican mother who sought to better prepare the next generation for their roles in society. Julia and Benjamin had 13 children together, 9 of which survived to adulthood and Julia therefore had a weighty task to ensure all her children lived successful, republican endorsed lives. The Rush’s letters once more provide a source with which to better understand the demands of motherhood and

³⁶¹ Rush, B. (1812). To John Adams, 30 June 1812. Founders Online. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Benjamin%20rush%20%20Author%3A%22Rush%2C%20Benjamin%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22&s=1111311111&r=119> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

³⁶² Duke University Libraries (n.d). *Julia Stockton Rush Devotional Journal, 1812-1845* [Online]. Available from: <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/rushbenjaminandjulia/brpst025001> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

how priorities between the spouses differed. In a 1783 letter, Benjamin made clear that as a member of the Continental Congress and successful physician, his professional concerns were his priority, aware that his actions were of consequence to the success of the nation. On the other hand, Julia makes it clear that her children's care was her primary concern.³⁶³ Julia was surrounded by selfless, unwavering acts of maternal guidance, so she knew the importance of sacrifice and instilling a good example upon her brood, following in the footsteps of her mother and mother-in-law. After the loss of her husband, Benjamin's mother Susanna Rush, was left to bring up her seven children alone and successfully managed to juggle this with running a store to earn money. Julia, therefore, followed the previous generations' example, and worked to prepare her children for the best start in life whilst simultaneously allowing her husband to further his political career by absolving him of this responsibility. Benjamin acknowledges this by stating, "blessed with a prudent and sensible wife, I am relieved from all solicitude about the affairs of my family and even from much of the trouble of instructing my children."³⁶⁴

Part of a mother's role was to provide education to her offspring and teach them moral sensibilities and civic duty. This was where a mother's own education and quest for learning could be put to the test. Little is known about Julia's methods for instructing her offspring but Benjamin notes that their children were affectionate, dutiful, and possessed promising capacities for acquiring knowledge, which suggests that Julia's methods were successful.³⁶⁵ Part of the domestic curriculum relied on a

³⁶³ Bocanegra, *Julia Stockton Rush Letters*.

³⁶⁴ Rush, B. (1806). To John Adams, 24 Oct 1806. Founders Online. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Benjamin%20rush%20%20Author%3A%22Rush%2C%20Benjamin%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22&s=1111311111&r=46> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

³⁶⁵ Rush, B. Letter to John Adams, 12 February 1790.

delivery of religious instruction and faith was an important component of Julia's life. In her 1812 journal Julia writes that she has been able to "resist temptation by his grace and that alone" and how she is "grateful for the support she has received."³⁶⁶ This devotion to God would have been imparted onto her children who would have been encouraged to follow their mother's benevolent example and be obedient Christians. Both Benjamin and Julia were brought up Presbyterians and believed that it was imperative for America to create their own government that would please God and have his blessing.³⁶⁷ Benjamin Rush's religious leanings would later be shown through advocacy for the end of slavery to avoid "divine justice should the evils continue" and underscores another way in which the Rushes endorsed liberty in the republic.³⁶⁸

Furthermore, Julia and Benjamin believed that children should be taught that they were not just responsible to themselves, but that they had a responsibility to their country to maintain good standards and behave in alignment with republican values. Julia reiterated this sentiment to her son John who was embarking on a voyage to Calcutta in 1796, by urging him to "remember at all times that while you are seeing the world, the world will see you."³⁶⁹ How an individual conducted themselves reflected upon the family and upon the nation who was working to prove itself worthy of independent status and therefore, everyone was needed to play their part. Like their parents, the Rush children were encouraged to put the needs of the country first and perform their requirements without complaint. Professor Hyman Kuritz sums this up

³⁶⁶ Duke University Libraries. *Julia Stockton Rush Devotional Journal*.

³⁶⁷ Taylor, W.H. (2017). *Unity in Christ and Country: American Presbyterians in the Revolutionary Era, 1758-1801*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, p.61.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.66.

³⁶⁹ Fried, *Rediscovering a Founding Mother*.

expertly by stating, “devotion to family and self-advancement were all worthy but obligation to country came first.”³⁷⁰ The social experiment of the 1780s and 1790s meant that Americans needed to create new social relations that would encourage true, virtuous, republican natures, all of which would begin at home.³⁷¹ The early years and parental instruction were therefore of monumental importance and the mother took centre stage in this. Sadly, for Julia, her son John became unwell and was eventually admitted to an asylum, but this demonstrates how despite best efforts, tragic circumstances may not always be avoided and how a parent’s responsibility for their child’s welfare would continue throughout their life. This is also emulated in Abigail Adams’ experience, with her son Charles becoming a chronic alcoholic and dying at the age of 30.³⁷² Consequently, a little explored, but common result of republicanism was the pressure placed upon children to succeed. Whilst historians unanimously agree that mothers were urged to teach their children virtues, there was also an expectation for them to plot a path of success for their children’s’ adult lives. It is very often that their children would follow in the footsteps of their fathers and forefathers, working towards political positions or civil duties which allowed for the continued success of the republican model. Abigail Adams aided her eldest son in pursuing a political career to rival his fathers’ and John Quincy was a “stratospheric success” eventually becoming the sixth President of the United States in 1824.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Kuritz, Benjamin Rush: His Theory of Republican Education, p.438.

³⁷¹ Altschuler, S., & Bilodeau, C.J. (2017). Ecco Homo! The Figure of Benjamin Rush. *Early American Studies*, 15(2), 233-251 (p.241).

³⁷² Kendall, J. (2016). *The First Children Who Led Sad Lives* [Online]. Smithsonian Magazine. Available from: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/first-children-who-led-sad-lives-180958099/> [Accessed 15 June 2022].

³⁷³ Ibid.

Despite the tragedy with John's experience, many of Julia's sons had public success and prosperous livelihoods. Richard Rush had an illustrious career, holding several public offices in the administrations of Presidents Madison and Monroe. He was the youngest attorney general of the time and served as Secretary of the Treasury in 1825 under John Quincy Adams, cementing the bonds between the Rush's and Adamses. He advocated for restrictive tariffs that would serve to increase the productivity of American manufacturers, using his position to help America prosper.³⁷⁴ Author J.H. Powell argues that "the life of Richard Rush must be the history of his country for half a century."³⁷⁵ Powell goes on to state that Richard Rush's life "presents the picture of one who participated in exciting events near to the leaders of men but who also reflected the picture of an earnest, hard-working, thoughtful person."³⁷⁶ From this, we can garner how Rush was an intellectually capable man who used his position to maintain political relations but who also upheld the republican virtues instilled in him by his mother at a young age. Moreover, James Rush followed literally in his father's footsteps, choosing a career in medicine to help advance medical breakthroughs for his country. He was destined to "even greater success" in the medical practice than his father and continued his legacy.³⁷⁷ He did not dedicate himself solely to medical matters however, as he was also appointed Treasurer of the United States Mint from 1813 to 1830 and published several books, showing him to be both capable and ambitious.³⁷⁸ Additionally, Samuel Rush served as Clerk of the Common Council of Philadelphia and was later Deputy Attorney-

³⁷⁴ U.S. Department of The Treasury. (n.d.). *Richard Rush 1825-1829* [Online]. Available from: <https://home.treasury.gov/about/history/prior-secretaries/richard-rush-1825-1829> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

³⁷⁵ Powell, J.H. (1942). *Richard Rush: Republican Diplomat, 1780-1859*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p.3.

³⁷⁶ Ibid, p.5.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, p.5.

³⁷⁸ University of Delaware, (n.d.). *Rush Family Papers* [Online]. Available from: <https://library.udel.edu/special/findaids/view?docid=ead/mss0314.xml;tab=notes> [Accessed 11 May 2022].

General of Philadelphia County. Samuel opted to use his academic prowess to better the city in which he had grown up, maintaining a unity with his roots. The success of the Rush children was acknowledged outside the Rush family as in 1813, Abigail Adams wrote to Julia, “you have children, worthy of their parents.”³⁷⁹

Therefore, Abigail Adams commends her friend for the raising of her children and admires their contributions to the nation. A disappointing but unsurprising revelation is the substantial lack of information relating to Julia and Benjamin’s daughters. The historical material concentrates on the lives of their sons and omits the experiences of women, which was common when looking into families in the late 18th Century. We are encouraged to believe that they followed in their mother’s footsteps and went on to have their own families and households but given the female obstruction from the public sphere, the information available on their lives is deficient.

To complete a comprehensive analysis of Julia’s dedication to familial relationships, one must lastly consider her role as a sister. The term has a dual purpose as it can provide an insight into Julia’s role as a sister in the literal sense but also as a sister to wider society displayed in the bonds she made with other women during the American Revolution and thereafter. According to Professor Dallett-Hemphill, “sibling conviviality was prevalent among prosperous Philadelphians” and Julia took an avid interest in the lives of her siblings and was a prominent presence in their upbringing due to being the eldest child of six.³⁸⁰ It was common for older siblings to exercise authority over their younger brothers and sisters in a “caretaking capacity” and Julia

³⁷⁹ Adams, A. (1813). To Julia Stockton Rush, 24 April 1813 [Online]. Founders Online. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Benjamin%20rush%20%20Author%3A%22Rush%2C%20Benjamin%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22&s=1111311111&r=119> [Accessed 9 May 2022].

³⁸⁰ Dallett-Hemphill, C. (2011). *Siblings: Brothers & Sisters in American History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.58.

would have been relied upon to complete simple household tasks to free up her mother for more hands on care of her younger siblings.³⁸¹ Dallett-Hemphill refers to this as “the reign of the elder sister” whereby young girls were afforded a deputy mother role and this offered a model of family life that was more palatable than the old patriarchal archetype.³⁸² Julia married at a young age but her relationships with her siblings continued after she left Morven, with her frequently displaying this deputy mother role. Her sister Susan came to stay with Julia and Benjamin in Philadelphia and together the sisters would make annual visits to Morven to see their mother. Across the country, extended stays with older sisters were a common means of securing appropriate female education for the younger sisters and this was similarly demonstrated between Martha and Maria Jefferson.³⁸³ It is through her devotion to her siblings that Julia first engaged with the teaching of sensibilities and virtues, which would later be taught to her own children, and she would have been encouraged to provide a good example for her sisters to follow. Affectionate sibling relations were especially celebrated in the post-war decades, and adults who had always found crucial support from siblings could now gush about their love for each other in sentimental terms.³⁸⁴ Due to their shared experiences of war and subsequent epidemics, the close ties of adult siblings suggest that the threat to mortality only made them value each other all the more.³⁸⁵ Therefore, Julia’s role as eldest sister came with its own responsibilities but also set up friendships that would endure into adulthood where their familial bond would bring them closer.

³⁸¹ Marten, J. (2007). *Children in Colonial America*. New York: New York University Press, p.82.

³⁸² Dallett-Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers & Sisters in American History*, p.9.

³⁸³ Marten, *Children in Colonial America*, p.84.

³⁸⁴ Dallett-Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers & Sisters in American History*, p.7.

³⁸⁵ Marten, *Children in Colonial America*, p.86.

Perhaps more striking however, is the friendships enwrapped in sisterhood that dominated Julia's early marital years. Women's networks served a need for solidarity in a potentially hostile world as they offered a fostering environment for educational and intellectual opportunities which women might not otherwise have been able to experience. Annis Stockton developed a sort of salon at Morven which provided a "sense of connectedness" and this desire for female bonds rubbed off on Julia when she became an adult.³⁸⁶ Through these single-sex gatherings, women could speak on all matters of interest, including that of state or literature. Thus, sororal networks provided social bonding as well as intellectual development, something which was important to Julia. Traditions of solidarity based on common events in the female life cycle underlay a profound sense of connections amongst women. In an increasingly autonomous "female world of love and ritual", women in the developing bourgeois consciously cultivated intimate and enduring friendships.³⁸⁷ They would turn to each other in times of distress as well as success and Julia's friendship with Abigail Adams highlights a mutually beneficial relationships where the two women relied on each other for support. As Professor Carol Lasser states, "for 19th Century women, affirming sororal bonds meant reaffirming emotional accessibility and mutuality; pledging reciprocity, and offering nurturance to a member of the same generation; and it meant an irrevocable commitment to the kin created through the embrace of sisterhood."³⁸⁸ Therefore, away from blood relations, these sisterhood relationships empowered and supported women in a way that would not detract from their required responsibilities or sully their reputation.

³⁸⁶ Mulford, C. (1995). *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, p.7.

³⁸⁷ Lasser, C. (1988). "Let Us Be Sisters Forever": The Sororal Model of Nineteenth Century Female Friendship. *Signs*, 14(1), 158-181 (p.165).

³⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.181.

Julia's sororal networks also held a patriotic undertone, shown through her engagement with the Philadelphia Ladies Association during the revolutionary war. She joined the ranks of Martha Washington and other prominent wives to help raise money for the American troops, getting a hand in political organisations and showcasing a devotion to her country that her husband and father similarly displayed. Julia and her fellow ladies would canvas houses to gather contributions and historian Mary-Beth Norton argues that the fact woman of such social standing undertook this unfeminine task shows that they considered it a great honour to assist the war effort.³⁸⁹ This brought women together through a bond of war-time sisterhood, allowing them to be proactive and feel like they were assisting their loved ones in the fight for independence whilst simultaneously providing support to each other in times of distress. It is federations such as these which were inspired by the earlier politicisation of women that was demonstrated at the Edenton Tea Party years prior. Their work redefined appropriate female behaviour at the time and provided a way to establish links with women from other states and widen the embrace of sisterhood to nationwide proportions.³⁹⁰

Julia Stockton Rush therefore offers a prime example of how, with increased effort, scholars can delve deeper into the world of 18th Century American women and learn more about their experiences as republican wives, daughters, and sisters to complement our established understanding of republican motherhood. The relatively new addition of Julia's correspondence adds nuance to our understanding of the

³⁸⁹ Norton, M. (1980). *The Philadelphia Ladies Association* [Online]. American Heritage. Available from: <https://www.americanheritage.com/philadelphia-ladies-association> [Accessed 13 May 2022].

³⁹⁰ Foster, K.A. (2004). *Moral Visions and Material Ambitions: Philadelphia Struggles to Define the Republic, 1776-1836*. Lanham: Lexington Books, p.150.

period and opens up a wider discussion of female familial roles amongst women of a particular social standing. As she resided in Philadelphia for most of her adult life, Julia provides us with another area of the country to explore and compare to the more widely discussed lives of women from Massachusetts and Virginia. Julia displayed the complexities of female experience; how women played various roles across their lifetime, weaving together required responsibilities to produce an altruistic character with undeniable devotion to her family.

As a daughter, she was exposed to progressive influence from her trailblazing mother Annis, and first demonstrated a capacity for learning; engaging with materials to widen her remit of understanding, whilst remaining a steadfast companion to her mother. As a wife, she faithfully supported her husband's endeavours and would use her womanly charms to provide a soundboard and discuss intellectual matters with. Julia was in a fortunate position in that her husband supported her educational passions which allowed Julia to continue her craving for knowledge that originated in her childhood. Julia's marital bond is visible through her letters to Benjamin which highlight the mutual adoration they had for each other and provides an intimate look into private thoughts and actions, providing a sentimental, human value to history. It is likely that Julia never meant for these writings to be made public, which makes them all the more honest. As a mother in the late 18th Century, Julia dedicated herself to her growing brood, working to provide them with the best start in life. Her children were her main priority, and she took great comfort in providing them with a curriculum including domestic, academic, and religious instruction, fulfilling the requirements of republican motherhood, and setting her children up for societal success. Finally, Julia Rush illuminates the politically active side of women during

the revolution, representing how women longed to show off their patriotic spirit and the subsequently forged bonds of sisterhood, which complimented her care for her own siblings. Unfortunately, however, there is no denying that exploring Julia's story relies heavily on material surrounding the lives of her loved ones and this supports Cokie Roberts' argument that women who had influence during this time are only recognisable because of the men in their lives.³⁹¹ Her valuable yet routine experiences remain eclipsed by the animated actions of others as presented by the scarce array of resources dedicated to her story alone. Women's history is working to amend this by bringing to light the conventional experiences of women and Julia stands as an expert example of how life in the private domain was essential to the nations' success and why women should be recognised on their own merits.

These three case studies are instrumental in giving historians a view of the wide-reaching pull of republican instruction placed upon women and how differing areas of the nation all conformed to the new ideals set out for them, working tirelessly to fulfil their patriotic duty. Julia, Martha, and Abigail offer distinct personalities, but are united through a love of both their country and their family and accomplish a multifaceted range of familial roles which enabled them to reach the pinnacle of republicanism. Whilst perhaps not as glamorous as the heroic actions of the Founding Fathers, a profound look into the lives of these women of the early republic showcases a subtle yet meaningful spectacle of the different ways of displaying national pride and how the shifting of societal responsibilities opened up a new level of dedication to family values. Therefore, in expanding our understanding of this period, the private world is just as important as the public sphere and was the place

³⁹¹ Roberts, *Founding Mothers: The Women who Raised our Nation*, p.279.

where women developed their identities as citizens through the assimilation of virtue and family.

Chapter 3 – Legacy

“What is a legacy?

It is planting seeds in a garden you never get to see.”³⁹²

Historical legacies allow us to learn from the past, live in the present, and work towards a better future. The lessons we learn from our predecessors help future generations follow efficacious examples and avoid their mistakes, so that society can progress. Thus, to better understand the long-term impact this period had on American society, we can look to its legacy. The American Revolution has continued to define who and what America is today, and it is only fitting that the women who played a vital part in America’s attainment of independence, receive the same level of recognition as the men who have previously dominated the narrative. Abigail Adams once wrote, “you build monuments to your sons and ignore the fame of your illustrious daughters”, but thankfully, their fame is no longer ignored.³⁹³

This thesis has sought to analyse the societal changes that transpired for women, and how female experiences within the family unit cultivated a new idealisation of womanhood. History is continuously evolving, and as we learn more about the women central to the early republic, we can achieve a greater understanding of their sacrifices and progressive thinking. This chapter is divided into 4 sub-sections. It starts by examining the change in educational material to incorporate female stories, and how a more inclusive narrative which is no longer as blighted by gender

³⁹² Miranda, L.M. (2015). *The World Was Wide Enough. Hamilton: An American Musical* (Original Broadway Cast Recording). Atlantic Recording Corporation.

³⁹³ Ames, M.C. (1873). *Ten Years in Washington: Life and Scenes in The National Capital*. Hartford: A.D. Worthington & Co., p.186.

discrimination, is becoming more accepted. Over the years, women's contributions to this period have slowly become more recognised, and in the 21st Century, key female figures are mentioned in the same framework as their male counterparts, cementing their place in the historical canon. It then goes on to delve deeper into family ties and how familial language has continued in later American history to maintain links to the perceived golden revolutionary age. Finally, this chapter explores female representations in both popular culture and later works of iconography to discuss how female revolutionary figures have been portrayed visually to audiences. We do not know what the women of the early republic would have made of their representations today but by recounting their stories, we are able to analyse the all-important legacy that these women left behind and we can explore how different groups have sought to appropriate their actions and sentiments in the intervening years.

Education

One element of this legacy relates to political developments which transpired as the independent nation matured. Sentiments from the late 1700s, subsequently sparked a gendered revolution amongst women who were frustrated at their lack of suffrage and perceived inferior status. To address these dissatisfactions, the first female rights convention took place in 1848, where women took a vocal stand to address gender inequality within the new republic. At Seneca Falls, the world was introduced to progressive figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, who argued that America had “failed to live up to its revolutionary promise.”³⁹⁴ Stanton led a campaign for change, outlining women’s subsidiary status in a Declaration of Sentiments which was modelled on the Declaration of Independence. Linda Kerber highlights the genius of this strategy, as by “tying the complaints of women to the most distinguished political statement the nation had made, women’s demands could be seen as no more radical than the American Revolution.”³⁹⁵ Furthermore, by choosing the word ‘sentiments’, Stanton deliberately plays with some of the suppositions at the time regarding gender and femininity; fusing together how women were expected to conduct themselves emotionally and the passion this female collective were expressing towards their campaign.

This band of female activists in the 1840s were inspired by their foremothers and regularly acknowledged their legacy. For example, they identified Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren as “the first American women who threatened rebellion unless

³⁹⁴ Library of Congress. (2021). *Seneca Falls and Building a Movement, 1776-1890* [Online]. Available from: <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/women-fight-for-the-vote/about-this-exhibition/seneca-falls-and-building-a-movement-1776-1890/> [Accessed 7 June 2022].

³⁹⁵ Kerber, L.K. (1977). From the Declaration of Independence to the Declaration of Sentiments: The Legal Status of Women in the Early Republic, 1776-1848. *Human Rights*, 6(2), 115-124 (p.115).

the rights of their sex were secured.”³⁹⁶ Thus, they related their current struggle to the plight of the women who came before them and donned their fervent actions as inspiration for the movement, citing the founding generation as pioneers. It was believed that for a better future, women needed to be aware of their past, and in 1866, Lucretia Mott, urged young American women to acquaint themselves with the history of the Women’s Rights Movement and the words of Mary Wollstonecraft.³⁹⁷ Abigail Adams warned of a rebellion should particular attention not be paid to the ladies, and in 1848 that warning came to fruition. Seneca Falls became a catalyst for more campaigning and as a result, if schoolchildren learn anything about US women’s history, they learn the story of Seneca Falls, underscoring its pivotal impact.³⁹⁸ Furthermore, in 1998 the “Seneca Falls Reinvention” curriculum was introduced which encouraged every state to incorporate the accomplishments of women into its educational standard.³⁹⁹ Therefore, women’s history was given prominence in the American syllabus, allowing for a more inclusive look at the past. The date of this curriculum change tied in with the 150th anniversary of Seneca Falls to honour this significant event and worked to integrate women’s stories into the understanding of America’s national experience which would include the female revolutionaries of the late 1700s. Therefore, a commemoration of Seneca Falls needn’t result in a dismissal of what came before.

In a 1962 poll, 90% of US housewives hoped their daughters would get more education and marry later in life, underscoring how each generation of mothers

³⁹⁶ Tetrault, L. (2014). *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, p.121.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, p.2.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, p.4.

³⁹⁹ Murphy-MacGregor, M. (1999). Living the Legacy of the Women’s Rights Movement. *The Public Historian*, 21(2), 27-33 (p.28).

hoped their daughters would make use of the extended opportunities granted them and pursue their intellectual talents.⁴⁰⁰ This desire to learn more about of the past, was forged by the 1960s/70s feminist movement which is hailed as the turning point in women's educational history. Historians such as Gerda Lerner, challenged past misconceptions about history and encouraged students to "always ask what women did, whilst the men were doing what the textbook tells us was important."⁴⁰¹

Women's history sought to redefine the canons of traditional history and recognise women as active agents of social change.⁴⁰² As a result, women's studies developed as a discipline, and generates new ideas about research into female past experiences.⁴⁰³ Over the years, education has become central to female liberation and women have taken over control of their learning, adhering to Abigail Adams' philosophy that "learning is not attained by chance but must be sought for with ardour and attended to with diligence."⁴⁰⁴ The number of women in higher education has grown increasingly since the 1960s and women now outnumber men in postgraduate study.⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, due to its present popularity, one would be hard pressed to find a university or college in the US where the subject of women's history is not taught. The *Royal American Magazine* once asked, "how many female minds, rich with native genius and noble sentiment have been lost to the world?" but in recent years, societies have fought to amend this deficit and incite research into

⁴⁰⁰ Jones, S. (2009). Dynamic Social Norms and the Unexpected Transformation in Women's Higher Education, 1965-1975. *Social Science History*, 33(3), 247-291 (p.265).

⁴⁰¹ Ware, S. (2015). *American Women's History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.1.

⁴⁰² DuBois, E. et al. (1980). Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium. *Feminist Studies*, 6(1), 26-64 (p.56).

⁴⁰³ Sisterhood and After Research Team. (2013). *Education and the Women's Liberation Movement* [Online]. The British Library. Available from: <https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/education-and-the-womens-liberation-movement> [Accessed 28 January 2022].

⁴⁰⁴ Adams, A. (1780). To John Quincy Adams, 8 May 1780. Founders Online. Available from: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-03-02-0240> [Accessed 27 June 2022].

⁴⁰⁵ Sisterhood and After Research Team, *Education and the Women's Liberation Movement*.

different historical perspectives, including that of women.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, a lot of progress has been made since the early American republic, where female education was neglected, except for the benefit of republican motherhood. Today, in western civilisations, instead of purely preparing girls for marriage and motherhood, women are encouraged to become intellectually fulfilled and cultivate their minds.

The political and societal impact these historical figures made can also be seen outside of the classroom. Many US cities incorporate female stories into their sightseeing tours to acknowledge the part they played in history. For example, Boston pays homage to the women of the early republic across the city and in 2003, the Boston Women's Memorial was unveiled; dedicated to three women who helped shape the city's history; Abigail Adams, Phyllis Wheatley, and Lucy Stone. Artist Meredith Bergmann hoped that the statues would invite people to "interact with these figures and take in their actions and words", ensuring that their importance is remembered for years to come.⁴⁰⁷ A more in-depth immersion into the lives of these women and others like them, comes in the form of a 'herstory trail'. Tourists and Bostonians alike can walk in the footsteps of the key figures, stopping at places of historical significance such as the Boston Public Library and the Massachusetts State House where they can learn more about the impact women had during the American Revolution and in the years that followed.⁴⁰⁸ Furthermore, across the eastern states, monuments and cairns have been erected to pay tribute to female

⁴⁰⁶ Kerber, L.K. (2000). *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, p.191.

⁴⁰⁷ (2020). *Boston Women's Memorial* [Online]. Available from: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/womens-advancement/boston-womens-memorial> [Accessed 10 January 2022].

⁴⁰⁸ Boston Women's Heritage Trail. (n.d.). *Ladies Walk* [Online]. Available from: <https://bwht.org/ladies-walk-tour/> [Accessed 10 January 2022].

revolutionaries including Mercy Otis Warren, at locations of historical significance. Thus, slowly the early republic period is being revitalised to include female legacies and incorporate them into the narrative, offering physical spaces for people to engage with their stories.

Family Ties

This thesis has investigated the use of family semiotics within the early republic period, and this can be extended with regards to its legacy too. Seneca Falls amplified the need for sisterhood which had begun to take shape in post-revolutionary America. From the late 1780s, women depended upon each other more openly and often shared “emotional ties that were stronger than those with their husbands.”⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, many women spoke of a sisterhood that comprised of female friendships and were relied upon for emotional expression and security. For example, a strong friendship developed between Abigail Adams and Julia Stockton Rush who supported each other through grief and loneliness; with both women understanding the pressures that came with running their households while their husbands were absent. As Daniel Dana wrote in 1804, “who but a woman can know the heart of a woman?”⁴¹⁰ The concept of sisterhood portrays how something strong, and enduring can grow despite an absence of blood ties. For 18th Century women, there was no appealing alternative to marriage; so, the best outcome was to balance marriage with conscious sisterly relations.⁴¹¹

The gender-role differentiation within the family and within society, led to the emotional segregation of men and women. Biological realities of frequent pregnancies, nursing and childbirth, bound women together in physical and emotional intimacy.⁴¹² The western concept of sisterhood therefore delves into the

⁴⁰⁹ Kerber, L. (1988). *Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History*. *The Journal of American History*, 75(1), 9-39 (p.15).

⁴¹⁰ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, p.168

⁴¹¹ Pettengill, C.C. (1992). Sisterhood in a Separate Sphere: Female Friendship in Hannah Webster Foster's "The Coquette and The Boarding School". *Early American Literature*, 27(3), 185-203 (p.199).

⁴¹² Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, p.60.

richness of women's lives and shows how they were pragmatic; building up a resilience by forming alliances with one other. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg states "these supportive networks were institutionalised and accompanied virtually every important event in a woman's life, from birth to death."⁴¹³ Sisterhood embraced women's shared activities and over time, this would eventually lead to 'sisters' adopting particular ideologies, giving new meaning to the feminist adage that the "personal is political."⁴¹⁴ Organisations such as the Philadelphia Ladies Associations and Daughters of Liberty, showed that women did have traction when they worked together, and could make a difference in the public sphere, inspiring the Seneca Falls convention. This helped women form a united front against patriarchal power which had dominated society. Sisterhood and the foundation of integral female friendships evident in post-revolutionary America, would go on to ignite a much larger collective of determined women as their interaction with each other formed an intrinsic component of the female experience and of feminism.⁴¹⁵ Unhappy with their political situation, they formed attachments and found a strength in each other that would endure for decades. The more contemporary activist movements continue to celebrate the importance of sisterhood above all else, maintaining that link to the founding generation and continuing to demonstrate the vital ways in which women supported each other. As author Judith Gardiner states, "women were and are still a source of strength to each other."⁴¹⁶ Smith-Rosenberg supports this by arguing that these activists defined themselves first as women, and second as reformers.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ Ibid, p.60.

⁴¹⁴ Hewitt, N. (1988). Sisterhood in International Perspective: Thoughts on Teaching Comparative Women's History. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 16(1/2), 22-32 (p.29).

⁴¹⁵ DuBois et al, *Politics and Culture*, p.55.

⁴¹⁶ Gardiner, J.K. (2016). Women's Friendships, Feminist Friendships. *Feminist Studies*, 42(2), 484-501 (p.495).

⁴¹⁷ DuBois et al, *Politics and Culture*, p.62

Moreover, from this bond of sisterhood, a new familial term of 'Founding Sisters' can be adopted to complement Founding Fathers and Mothers. Figures including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, became Founding Sisters through their efforts to institutionalise women's political participation, taking the foundations laid by the Founding Mothers to push the boundaries even further. The female collective at Seneca Falls highlights the power of collective voices and provided a source of inspiration for new generations. For example, the political activism presented in 1848 acted as a model for the first generation of suffragists who drew on their predecessor's actions and sentiments. Eleanor Clift aptly named her book *Founding Sisters and the 19th Amendment* (2003) and provides an account of how these figures went on to inspire a new generation of suffragists and rode the wave of political opposition. Thus, the Founding Sisters played a part in the new generation of women who saw the injustice in how their predecessors were treated and banded together for change. They took inspiration from the founding generation and echoed their courage, rebelling against tyranny to procure societal changes and cement strong alliances with each other. Founding Sisters is a less frequently used term but one that pinpoints the beginnings of another key period of American history which was inspired by the radicalism that came before and maintains a link with the family metaphor that is often used with regards to American history. In an 1847 article in *Voice of Industry* magazine, one woman wrote, "we are a band of sisters, we must have sympathy for each other's woes", further emphasising the use of this familial term and the bond this created amongst others of their sex.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁸ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, p.205

In-keeping with the familial theme, at the end of the 19th Century, another band of women joined together to ensure that the memory of the revolution remained preserved. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) were formed in October 1890 with the aim to “perpetuate the memory of the men and women who achieved American independence” citing patriotic, historical, and educational motivations.⁴¹⁹ These ‘daughters’, through their motto of ‘God, Home and Country’, fought to reignite a patriotic fervour in the US and guarantee that the nation’s revolutionary fight remained in the public consciousness. Drawing on family ties, they sought to create a heroic cultural memory that would boost allegiance to the country by displaying conservative and nationalist tones. The DAR is lineage based and not exclusive; to be admitted to the society, one must prove descendancy from an individual who helped achieve victory in the revolution. Therefore, the stories that are memorialised by the group are narrow and this can limit the curation of history by overlooking less well-known experiences. The creation of this organisation tied in with a moment of national identity, coinciding with the 100-year anniversary of Washington’s inauguration and the end of the frontier, thus, emphasising wartime links and reminiscing about past displays of national pride. The DAR are not alone in their fight. Also in 1890, The Colonial Dames of America was founded which was similarly composed of women who were descended from inhabitants of the thirteen original colonies and wished to maintain historical memorialisation, but the DAR proved more popular in membership numbers.

⁴¹⁹ Terry, C.H. (1905). The Daughters of the Empire State and Their Work. *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association*, 5, 168-179 (p.168).

After being denied access to existing organisations because of their gender, “women flocked into the ranks of the DAR” and the society offered them a way to express a love of family, and a love of country.⁴²⁰ To accentuate the legitimacy of their cause, First Lady Caroline Harrison was asked to be the first President General and the Daughters of the American Revolution are still operational today.⁴²¹ Underscoring links to the past, in their view, “American mothers have a patriotic duty to inculcate in their children a steadfast allegiance to the US”, and the daughter’s effort to commemorate the national past would prove that the US has not forgotten its roots.⁴²² In tribute to the women of the founding era, the DAR used the republican motherhood parables of virtuousness, whilst simultaneously acting on the patriotism akin to the Daughters of Liberty which was founded in the 1760s.⁴²³ In their own words, the DAR aim to “revere our ancestors, love the country they created, preserve and hand on to the future, the principles they have bequeathed to us.”⁴²⁴ Part of the organisations’ motives lies in sustaining the nationwide knowledge of women’s role in the revolution, as much as hero-worshipping the Founding Fathers. In 1914, a DAR member stated, “it seems to me that America’s youth should be as familiar with the deeds of our heroines as with those of our heroes”, which is analogous to sentiments shared by Abigail Adams years before.⁴²⁵ Subsequently, in 1961, the DAR commissioned a statue of Sybil Ludington in New York to ensure her

⁴²⁰ Davis Sr, S.P. (1943). The Arkansas Society: Daughters of the American Revolution. *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 2(4), 359-368 (p.359).

⁴²¹ Black, A. (2009). *Caroline Lavinia Scott Harrison* [Online]. The White House Historical Association. Available from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/first-families/caroline-lavinia-scott-harrison/> [Accessed 22 June 2022].

⁴²² Wendt, S. (2020). *The Daughters of the American Revolution and Patriotic Memory in the 20th Century*. The University Press of Florida. p.4.

⁴²³ Strange, C. (2014). Sisterhood of Blood: The Will to Descend and the Formation of the Daughters of the American Revolution. *The Journal of Women’s History*, 26(3), 105-128 (p.117).

⁴²⁴ Spraker, B.F. (1917). Response For The Daughters of the American Revolution. *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association*, 16, 46-47 (p.46).

⁴²⁵ Wendt, *The Daughters of the American Revolution and Patriotic Memory*, p.1.

often neglected story was told in the same breath as renowned revolutionary Paul Revere. Therefore, enforcing the words of Lucretia Mott, they pushed for women's history to be a part of the national story, ensuring that young girls were aware of their predecessors. They were continuing the expectations of republican motherhood which sought to ensure the revolutionary fight was not forgotten and that America's values were instilled in the future generations.

Since its founding, the DAR has admitted more than 950,000 members with 3000 chapters in all 50 US states.⁴²⁶ By their centenary in 1990, the organisation had boasted members including Nancy Reagan, Rosalynn Carter, and Barbara Bush and had received governmental recognition for their preservation of the past.⁴²⁷ In 1926, President Coolidge accredited the organisation as "one of the most distinguished patriotic orders of our nation in cherishing the memory of the people of the great struggle which resulted in American independence."⁴²⁸ He went on to remind Americans that the revolutionary struggle was universal, as "none can deny that as there were fathers in our republic, so there were mothers."⁴²⁹ Therefore, the 20th Century Republican Party recognised the value in mothers throughout America's history and acknowledged their actions during the founding era. This underscores how the women of the early republic were starting to be acknowledged by high profile figures and how through memorialisation, the teaching of the founding story

⁴²⁶ National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. (2021). *DAR History* [Online]. Available from: <https://www.dar.org/national-society/about-dar/dar-history> [Accessed 10 January 2022].

⁴²⁷ Roberts, R. (1990). Dynamic Daughters. *The Washington Post* [Online], 12 October 1990. Available from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1990/10/12/dynamic-daughters/3abfcd21-49b7-4e94-9c5a-cb3e656aad8/> [Accessed 22 June 2022].

⁴²⁸ Coolidge, C. (1926). *Address Before the Daughters of the American Revolution, Washington D.C* [Online]. Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation. Available from: <https://coolidgefoundation.org/resources/address-of-president-coolidge-before-the-daughters-of-the-american-revolution/> [Accessed 22 June 2022].

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

had begun to overcome the gendered omissions favoured in the past. Abigail Adams urged her husband to 'remember the ladies' and organisations such as the DAR, are helping to ensure the ladies are remembered but without denying the actions of their male counterparts.

Despite honourable intentions, the DAR is not immune to backlash. It was believed that lineage welded the members together and conferred upon its inheritors, a sense of "self-esteem through a special relationship to the country's past and by extension to the country's future."⁴³⁰ Due to the organisation being founded in the wake of the Civil War, it was initially thought that rebuilding unity could be achieved by reminding Americans of past patriotism.⁴³¹ Fundamental to promoting and reproducing American hegemony was the process of protecting a 'pure' American essence and as a result, people of colour were excluded from the society, reigniting their erasure from the revolutionary story.⁴³² Carolyn Strange suggests that "as a racially exclusive descent community, the DAR helped fulfil white America's dream to rebirth after the Civil War by investing privately in blood and trading publicly in character."⁴³³ Moreover, in 1939 the DAR made headlines when it refused to allow black artist Marian Anderson use of the Constitution Hall for her performance. They have since amended their policies, but this episode highlights past discriminatory practices. Consequently, stories of black and native American revolutionaries have not received the same level of exposure, resulting in the organisation being criticised for being racist. Thus, the discrimination prevalent in the 1780s had unfortunately been

⁴³⁰ Bodnar, J. (1996). *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.277.

⁴³¹ Strange, *Sisterhood of Blood*, p.106.

⁴³² Medicott, C. (2005). Constructing Territory, Constructing Citizenship: The Daughters of the American Revolution and 'Americanisation' in the 1920s. *Geopolitics*, 10(1), 99-120 (p.105).

⁴³³ Strange, *Sisterhood of Blood*, p.121.

maintained, resulting in an organisation that benefitted the white middle-class and was not representative. An overwhelmingly majority of the daughters have “never given a thought to the honourable women of negro heritage” and today, a more inclusive membership would help to capitalise on their efforts and depict the true revolutionary story.⁴³⁴

Nevertheless, that the DAR exists is evidence that Americans feel the period should be commemorated. As such a pivotal time in the nation’s history, honouring the legacy of the founders, allows their actions to remain in the American consciousness. Through blood relations and in accord with past principles, the enduring legacy has been maintained and inspired a new generation to engage with their past. The Daughters of the American Revolution, expresses affiliations with the Sons of Liberty, cementing a familial connection to history and a feeling of unity despite the years that have passed whereby virtues and values have been passed onto the next generation of Americans. Having a group organised by women shows testament to the spark ignited by the revolutionary females and demonstrates the progress that has been made whereby women are now able to take a political stand and campaign without risking ruin. Familial elements have once again been pushed to the foreground and remind us how America links their present-day fight to the example set by the founding generation who set the status quo.

⁴³⁴ Woodson, C.G. (1943). Negro Women Eligible: To Be Daughters of the American Revolution. *Negro History Bulletin*, 7(2), 36-39 (p.39).

Popular Culture

Recently, popular culture has taken on the challenge of bringing this historical period and its notable characters to life, ensuring its legacy is memorialised through an alternative medium to societies, monuments, or publications. History is a form of storytelling, so entertainment mediums are well-suited to delivering visual accounts of historical events and this has consequently helped viewers appreciate the magnitude of this period and the societal changes that followed.⁴³⁵ In 2008, HBO launched its miniseries *John Adams*, adapted from David McCullough's 2001 book of the same name, which centres around the titular character, his relationships with the other founders, and his lengthy political career, maintaining a connection to founders chic. Whilst the series pays tribute to the key events of the American Revolution, including the Boston Massacre and the First Continental Congress, it also presents the more mundane realities of family life in the late 18th Century. Domestic scenes between Abigail and John provide some moving moments and allows the viewer to better understand why this marriage has been venerated for so long. Moreover, audiences are reminded that daily life continued amid the destruction of war and adds a human touch to the often-mythicised era. Their unusually close marriage is at the "heart of the series", and the pair's dialogue is historically accurate due to being (mostly) taken from their vast array of correspondence.⁴³⁶ In the series, matriarch Abigail is revitalised and shown to be wise, fierce, and long-suffering as John's anchor and most astute advisor. Her peripheral status allows us to witness the

⁴³⁵ Thorpe, V. (2021). Rewriting History: How Imperfect Costume Dramas Make the Past Relevant. *The Guardian* [Online], 27 June 2021. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jun/27/rewriting-history-how-imperfect-costume-dramas-make-the-past-relevant> [Accessed 7 July 2022].

⁴³⁶ Jackson, N. (2012). Your Next Boxset: John Adams. *The Guardian* [Online], 26 July 2012. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2012/jul/26/john-adams-next-box-set> [Accessed 6 June 2022].

revolution from the eyes of a wife, a mother, and a woman, underscoring how these family relationships dominated female experience during this time. Despite the series being commissioned to centre around the Founding Father, Abigail's presence on screen captivated viewers and increased exposure to her powerful story.

The Abigail that jumps off the pages of her letters is mirrored in the miniseries and critics applauded Abigail's embodiment of virtuousness, with actress Laura Linney winning a Golden Globe for her passionate portrayal of Abigail, underscoring a reverence for her representation.⁴³⁷ Historian Jill Lepore writes that the show makes "John Adams more important and more virtuous than everyone around him, except for his wife."⁴³⁸ Therefore she acknowledges how Abigail stands out as the personification of virtue amongst the male gang of revolutionaries and how she does not waver from her republican duties despite her lack of power, which allows for a visual portrayal of the qualities detailed by scholars such as Ruth Bloch. Moreover, Abigail's resolute presence in John's life and the dedication to her children, brings the concept of republican motherhood to the screen. To contemporary viewers, Abigail demonstrates a sense of present-day feistiness and intellect but also submits to expectations of the time that centred around domesticity, making her an intriguing figure who connects the past and present.

TV shows such as *John Adams*, allow the popularity of the founding era to be maintained through visually engaging portrayals of history that appeal to a mass

⁴³⁷ Lepore, J. (2008). The Divider: In an HBO miniseries, John Adams is the Indispensable Man. *The New Yorker* [Online], 17 March 2008. Available from: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/17/the-divider> [Accessed 6 June 2022].

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

audience. *The Adams Chronicles* (1976) similarly pays credence to the Adams family and was dubbed a “success in filmmaking”, as it granted them the complexities of their time.⁴³⁹ Through painstaking research, the show is considered to be the most “authentic in both words and images of filmic work on the American Enlightenment period.”⁴⁴⁰ Popular culture therefore is relevant to historical learning as shows can allow an audience to engage with historical fact through an accessible medium. Furthermore, *John Adams* opens up a discussion about the concept of legacy and how individuals want to be remembered. After his failure to secure re-election in 1800, John Adams spent the remainder of his life worrying about how history would treat him. This is where the series diverts from hero-worshipping its founders by making them flawed and more relatable; moving away from romanticism that often blights period dramas. How we remember great individuals and interpret their behaviour changes over time as we learn more about the period in question. But legacy is also subjective and fluid; even if individuals disagree on the merits of a historical actor, discussing their value to today’s America allows them to stay relevant. John and Abigail Adams are familiar names today in part because popular culture outlets see money in re-telling their story, knowing it has an audience ready to lap up their displays of patriotism.

The lives of American revolutionaries have also been depicted in film, offering another mode of historical engagement. Portrayals of the American Enlightenment tend to combine patriotic representations of the Founding Fathers, with more recent

⁴³⁹ Rollins, P.C. (2003). *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film: How the Movies Have Portrayed the American Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.156.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, p.155.

historical interpretations of their lives.⁴⁴¹ *Jefferson in Paris* (1995) is a notable example of this. The film portrays Jeffersons' years spent in Paris in the 1780s shortly after the death of his wife. To add a sense of dramatization, the adaptation is centred around Jefferson's relationships with key females in his life; his daughter Martha; slave Sally Hemings and love interest Maria Cosway. By including Sally Hemings, the film echoes the increased scholarly interest at the time regarding Jefferson's paternity of Sally's children and the relationship between master and slave; offering evidence of how legacies can be moulded to fit current debates and interests; with screenwriters deeming it profitable to include Sally in their narrative. Unsurprisingly, the female characters, whilst awarded substantial screen time, are depicted as fragile and dependent on Jefferson's attention. Martha Jefferson is kept in a perpetual state of emotional dependency on her father with her love for him "bordering on the passionate."⁴⁴² Jefferson placed high expectations upon his eldest daughter and would often place his affection for her as dependant on her successes and this parental manipulation is demonstrated on screen with Jefferson withholding his affection if she did not behave as he instructed.

Therefore, the absence of strong female characters is more in-keeping with traditional female representations and misses the opportunity to incorporate more contemporary views.⁴⁴³ As Peter Rollins state, popular history "tends to privilege historical male actors and this results in the peripheral status of women."⁴⁴⁴ The notable absence of Abigail Adams, who played a key role in Jefferson's Parisian

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, p.154.

⁴⁴² Staloff, D. (1995). Reviewed Work: *Jefferson in Paris* by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, James Ivory, Ismaili Merchant. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52(4), 750-753 (p.751).

⁴⁴³ Ibid, p.752.

⁴⁴⁴ Rollins, *The Columbia Companion to American History on Film*, p.154.

years, further emphasises how strong women were omitted from this story to bolster Jefferson's power and maintain founders chic. Nevertheless, these films, and more like them, bring key stories to life and provide a first glimpse into this period for many viewers, allowing the subject matter to be relatable for those without an expertise in history. Film and TV provide an enjoyable means with which to engage with historical accounts and can be watched repeatedly which serves to cement the audience's understanding.

From screen to stage: the history of the early American republic has been absorbed into the theatre, providing another avenue of engagement. Author Andrew Schocket states that "in the 21st Century, there has been an American Revolution reboot to appeal to younger audiences and keep the protagonists alive."⁴⁴⁵ Using theatre as a medium is a profound choice as plays were a popular means of maintaining morale during the American Revolution which brings the subject full circle. To sustain their spirits, men would put on performances to rally their patriotic spirit and inspire others to go forth into battle. Female characters were present in these plays but as "passive guardians of memory" with this engaging form of propaganda tending to depict mourning wives or a threatened virgin in need of patriotic rescue, underscoring how the female role was blighted down.⁴⁴⁶ Currently dominating the musical theatre scene is Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* (2015), which tells the story of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton. Performed through spoken word and hip-hop music, the patriotic tale creates a new founding that suits its time and audience, making the

⁴⁴⁵ Shocket, A.M. (2017). The American Revolution Rebooted: Hamilton and Genre in Contemporary Culture. *Journal of the Early Republic*, 37(2), 263-270 (p.265).

⁴⁴⁶ Shaffer, J. (2006). Making "An Excellent Die": Death, Mourning and Patriotism in the Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution. *Early American Literature*, 41(1), 1-27 (p.4).

revolutionary period more relatable to younger audiences and reinvigorating a passion for the past. Through its contemporary artistic choices, *Hamilton* has awakened popular appetites for stories and interpretations of the past and using actors of colour to represent key (white) figures in American history, *Hamilton* forces the viewer to acknowledge that racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination were prevalent at the time, whilst allowing audiences not only to learn about history but to learn from history and become inspired.⁴⁴⁷ In this sense it is an achievement in historical and cultural reimagining.⁴⁴⁸ As with *John Adams*, *Hamilton* integrates historical details and quotations from historical texts, including letters and pamphlets, creating an aura of legitimacy to allow for the licence taken with historical facts that served the plot of the musical.⁴⁴⁹

Viewers come away from *Hamilton* feeling like they better understand the complex revolutionary figure, but his wife Eliza prompts a more illuminating discussion. For much of the musical, her roles are limited to sister, wife, and mother as one would expect. She craves Alexander's attention during and after the revolution and is portrayed as a nurturing caregiver to her growing brood, who selflessly grants Alexander space to prioritise the emerging political scene over his family. In Act Two, a jovial scene with Phillip and Eliza playing the piano together shows testament to her maternal side. This is, so far, a standard female representation which places female identity within the family unit. The musical was many people's first introduction to the story of Eliza Hamilton, whose triumphs deserve recognition and

⁴⁴⁷ Romano, R.C. & Potter, C.B. (2018). *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical is Restaging America's Past*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p.114.

⁴⁴⁸ Elliott, P. (2020). Who Lives? Who Dies? Who Tells your Story? *Hamilton* and the Politics of Representation Revisited. *Anglican Journal* [Online], 5 August 2020. Available from: <https://anglicanjournal.com/who-lives-who-dies-who-tells-your-story-hamilton-and-the-politics-of-representation-revisited/> [Accessed 23 June 2022].

⁴⁴⁹ Harbert, E. (2018). *Hamilton* and History Musicals. *American Music*, 36(4), 412-428 (p.418).

go beyond passive wife and mother. As Tilar Mazzeo states “she was strong-minded, pragmatic, and independent...she raises children as a single mother after Alexander’s death and takes in children of others...she builds a formidable charitable institution that still exists today as her living legacy.”⁴⁵⁰ In the show’s final moments Eliza grasps the narrative, and finally tells her story. The only regrettable thing is that this more powerful revelation comes at the very end of the musical, which makes Eliza’s earlier characterisation as quiet and submissive, a shame. This prompts the audience to reflect on how the show is a re-evaluation of not only Alexander’s legacy but also Eliza’s. In many ways, as contemporary as *Hamilton* is, it falls into the category of founder chic given its “great man” structure, with war and conventionally defined politics as its main concerns.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless, *Miranda* gives credence to the agents of America’s history by acknowledging the part women played in preserving it. Julia Stockton Rush preserved her marital correspondence to remind her daughters of their parent’s happy union, and Eliza sought to ensure Alexander’s contributions were remembered. By giving Eliza the final word, he mirrors how it is in large part due to Eliza and her sisters, that *Hamilton* is available today, as they kept his memory alive.”⁴⁵²

There are additional conflicting moments of both repression and assertive in the musical. The Schuyler Sisters burst onto the stage, with Angelica in particular offering a stirring moment where she critiques the exclusion of women from the topic of conversation of freedoms, but the moment soon passes. Audiences have a few

⁴⁵⁰ Mazzeo, T.J. (2018). *The Extraordinary Life and Times of the Wife of Alexander Hamilton*. New York: Gallery Books, p.294.

⁴⁵¹ Romano & Potter, *Historians on Hamilton*, p.97.

⁴⁵² Puckett-Pope, L. (2020). The True Story Behind the Schuyler Sisters in *Hamilton*. *Harper’s Bazaar* [Online], 30 July 2020. Available from: <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/a33094097/hamilton-schuyler-sisters-true-story/> [Accessed 6 June 2022].

moments to admire her feisty spirit before we are presented with a traditional story of courtship and marriage. Miranda also had the chance to offer an entertaining look at sisterhood, but in-keeping with traditional male-centred narratives, the majority of their interactions are centred around the sisters' mutual love for Alexander. This forgoes the powerful sisterly bond evident during the revolution, to portray a light-hearted romantic rivalry, which places Alexander at the crux of their identity.

Angelica Schuyler is portrayed as smart and ambitious who falls for Alexander's charm first, but the musical makes it clear that she cannot marry him, because it is her duty to marry rich to cement her family's fortunes and position.⁴⁵³ Here we can see an instance where the woman sacrifices her happiness to perform her duty, as evident with Abigail and John Adams. Thus, whilst regarded as secondary characters in *Hamilton's* plot, many revolutionary women were champions of patriotism whose devotion to their wifely duties allowed their husband's memory to be maintained.

Moreover, Miranda understands the importance of legacy and how it can change over time. The final song 'Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story', lets the audience contemplate how narratives can be skewed and how some stories can be omitted entirely. Hamilton believes himself to be in control of his legacy and ardently fights for his place in government whilst urging others to have something to fight for. However, in the end, his reputation was beholden to the other characters. The other Founding Fathers, bar Washington, outlived Hamilton, so they had more control over the public narrative, and this impacts the curation of history. Therefore, *Hamilton* offers viewers an occasion to reflect on history and challenge their previous

⁴⁵³ Romano & Potter, *Historians on Hamilton*, p.104.

assumptions. It also demonstrates how the female revolutionaries' legacy was overlooked because the male narrative dominated for many years and only recently has this been challenged. *Hamilton* also recognises the importance of legacy being passed onto the next generation. In 'Dear Theodosia', Hamilton and Burr state, "we'll leave the world to you, and you'll blow us all away", thus, they acknowledge the critical example they had to set for their children to uphold their new republican values.

Hamilton is not the only musical in the public domain which concentrates on the men of the founding generation. *1776*, as the title suggests, centres around the key revolutionary players during this momentous year and their push for independence and is perhaps the most faithful adaptation of founders chic. As with *Hamilton*, critics raved about *1776*, referring to it as a "cult show" which allowed audiences to witness famous actions and also hear, see, and feel their revolutionary heroes' emotions.⁴⁵⁴ Where *Hamilton* is moulded to fit 21st Century ideals, *1776*, opted for a strong sense of historical accuracy.⁴⁵⁵ Whilst their plots have differing subjects, both *Hamilton* and the musical *1776* elected to prioritise male stories at the expense of female ones. *1776* has at least 26 male characters and only 2 females. William Daniels, who played John Adams in the original production of *1776*, argued that as Abigail was "such a strong influence in his life, it was important that she was in the show and worked to humanise John Adams' character."⁴⁵⁶ Their song 'Yours, Yours, Yours' offers a poignant depiction of their marriage and scenes between Abigail and John

⁴⁵⁴ Harbert, *Hamilton and History Musicals*, p.423.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.418.

⁴⁵⁶ Weinstock, M. (2021). Lin-Manuel Miranda and William Daniels Talk *Hamilton*, *1776*, Mr Feeny, and More. *Playbill* [Online], 4 July 2021. Available from: <https://playbill.com/article/lin-manuel-miranda-and-william-daniels-talk-hamilton-1776-mr-feeny-and-more> [Accessed 16 June 2022].

provide some of the show's "most moving moments" which works to offset the political focus that dominates the run time.⁴⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly, Abigail's characterisation is that of a wife, who is present to make John more likeable. Women's sacrifice or resilience is not explored in the play and the lack of female characters wrongly infers that women did not play crucial roles in the fight for independence. By ignoring women's more progressive actions, the original 1776 in keeps with traditional accounts of a female's place and value.

Interestingly however, 1776 is getting a revival in 2022 with a cast comprised fully of performers who identify as female or non-binary. By shaking up the traditional casting, it demonstrates how history can be realised in a new way and be more accessible as we are "often more interested in the creative ways that a story can be told to make it fresh and to emphasise different things, such as gender, sexuality, or race."⁴⁵⁸ Following *Hamilton's* lead, this new revival shows that when you shift the gaze, you see a different perspective, and this will help audiences to re-imagine this integral period of American history in a way that makes it more in keeping with current times. This male brotherhood will be delivered by a cast who represent the enduring sisterhood that is still present today whilst maintaining the key themes of the past. Moreover, Abigail Adams will be better acknowledged as the team got permission to integrate her famous 'remember the ladies' letter into the play which further shows that the way we appreciate history is evolving.⁴⁵⁹ Therefore, the

⁴⁵⁷ Scheck, F. (2016). '1776': Theatre Review. *The Hollywood Reporter* [Online], 31 March 2016. Available from: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/1776-theater-review-879645/> [Accessed 6 June 2022].

⁴⁵⁸ Thorpe, *Rewriting History*.

⁴⁵⁹ Wallenberg, C. (2022). ART's '1776' Aims to Give History a Shake. *The Boston Globe* [Online], 12 May 2022. Available from: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/05/12/arts/arts-1776-aims-give-history-shake/> [Accessed 16 June 2022].

legacies left by the founding generation are mouldable and fluid; they can be worked to fit with the current times which ensures that their stories are accessible and comprehensible in today's society. Women don't always have to be overlooked and peripheral when it comes to musicals based on history and a complex female character could be used in future entertainment. As Catherine Allgor jokes, "I throw down the gauntlet to any artist interested in the past, follow the women and something fruitful and wonderful will happen."⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Romano & Potter, *Historians on Hamilton*, p.114.

Iconography

The legacy of the female revolutionaries can additionally be sought from looking at later iconographical works and how these artistic mediums represented women. The infamous figure of Columbia was used more habitually after the revolution, gradually replacing Liberty, and became the most “original, popular, and durable of American emblems.”⁴⁶¹ Columbia had similar characteristics to her predecessor. She was a young, beautiful woman with flowing hair, dressed in white, and portrayed an ode to classicalism and divine femininity. Featuring heavily in both imagery and song, she became the favoured representation of the juvenile nation, and stood as an illuminating culmination of all the values that America wanted to exhibit.

Interestingly, Columbia, as a representation of America’s freedom and youth, was originally penned by a woman of colour. This is not only surprising, given the discriminatory practices of the time, but also highlights the writers’ enlightened thinking, as one could argue she chose this figure as a personification of freedom, to endorse not only national freedom, but also freedom for the enslaved. African American poet Phyllis Wheatley gave life to Columbia in 1776 where she first featured in her poem, *To His Excellency General Washington*. Wheatley’s Columbia was a composite of two figures from classical mythology, Phoebus Apollo and Pallas Athene, who morphed together to embody “a source of femininity with a god-like aura.”⁴⁶² Thus, Wheatley drew notable characteristics from allegorical figures of the classical period, but she also Christianised them to make them apt for the modern

⁴⁶¹ Schlereth, T.J. (1992). Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism. *The Journal of American History*, 79 (3), 937-968 (p.941).

⁴⁶² Steele, T.J. (1981). The Figure of Columbia: Phillis Wheatley plus George Washington. *The New England Quarterly*, 54 (2), 264-266 (p.265).

time.⁴⁶³ Through her words, Wheatley created an incarnation of America who combined both her own and Washington's ideal traits, resulting in a figure for Americans to later celebrate and look up to.⁴⁶⁴ Washington viewed Wheatley as "a person so favoured by the muses" and recognised her talents, therefore, his acceptance encouraged others to follow suit.⁴⁶⁵ If Washington consented to a former slave's depiction of the nation as the goddess Columbia, then it could be legitimised. It was not long after Wheatley's 1776 poem that Columbia was transferred from paper to canvas. Therefore, despite her colour and gender, Phyllis Wheatley can be identified as the individual who set in motion the widely dispersed use of this goddess of freedom to represent America and her values. In 1776, the war was in its initial stages, indicating how Wheatley was a patriot very early on and supported the fight for independence. This, in addition to her creative talents and esteemed backers, has resulted in Wheatley subsequently featuring in the roster of Founding Mothers who helped raise the nation.

Iconography of the time depended heavily on allegorical codes.⁴⁶⁶ To emphasise this, Columbia acquired political attributes that became engrained in the viewers mind and was frequently depicted with other symbols of liberty such as the American flag, the shield, the liberty pole and cap and the eagle, all of which were indistinguishable from the new nation.⁴⁶⁷ Americans found representations of their national character in Columbia, and she served as a figurehead who could unite and inspire Americans to push on with the emergence of their nation. Therefore,

⁴⁶³ Ibid, p.265.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid, p.264.

⁴⁶⁵ Washington. G. (1776). To Phillis Wheatley, February 28. Library of Congress. Available from: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mgw3h.001/?q=wheatley&sp=13&st=text>, [Accessed 14 February 2022].

⁴⁶⁶ Samuels, *Romances of the Republic*, p.10.

⁴⁶⁷ Schlereth, *Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism*, p.941.

Professor Thomas Schlereth argues that she acted as a familiar symbol in the national perennial search for self-identity.⁴⁶⁸ She offered them hope and was a symbol of pride and victory. Additionally, Columbia in image and name, allowed the United States to retain a European ancestor by invoking a link back to Columbus and their heritage.⁴⁶⁹ This highlights America's profound acknowledgement of their, somewhat whitewashed, history which continues throughout the subsequent decades.

As time passed, America began to champion ideals such as republican motherhood which was perceived to be vital to the nation's survival, and Columbia was reworked to suit that ideal. As Linda Kerber states, Columbia "became the ideal republican mother: an abstract emblem of civic culture representing peace, liberty, the arts and sciences, and abundance."⁴⁷⁰ To illustrate this point, Columbia began to be featured next to her children, representing a mother guiding the next generation towards all that was good. For example, Columbia appeared with Concord, her fair son, in order to underline her nurturing and virtuous side; attributes that the republican motherhood ideal aimed to instil in all women.⁴⁷¹ Columbia as a mother figure, indicates the prevalence of the family metaphor that was popular in the 19th Century as antebellum Americans relied on familial relationships to understand their social and civic roles in the democratic nation.⁴⁷² In artistic mediums, America was originally depicted as a rebellious daughter, but in the years that followed the

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, p.968.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, p.942

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, p.942.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, p.943.

⁴⁷² Johnson, Columbia and Her Sisters, p.33.

revolution, she was transformed into a caring mother, underscoring her shift in status and echoing the wider maturing of America.

Therefore, after their victory in the revolution, America morphed into a symbol of high culture and Columbia became a powerful symbol of the ideals that Americans nor others cared to mock.⁴⁷³ This version of America predominated until the War of 1812, where she herself began to be superseded by male figures of Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan. At this time, it was felt that Columbia did not capture the explosive power, fickleness, anger, wisdom, or quiet strength of America's mass population after the revolution, whereas the latter personifications represented real and fallible people.⁴⁷⁴ It's perhaps no coincidence that after the War of 1812, America was becoming more of an established nation and didn't have the same pressure to prove itself to be perfect; they could be more honest and representative in their imagery. As a result, the gradual transformation of feminine Columbia into masculine forms took place over the course of the 19th Century to emulate the repression of women nationally.⁴⁷⁵ Therefore America can be seen to be a fluid figure who is moulded and shaped to fit the circumstances and ideals at the time.

She did not disappear entirely however, as she re-emerged during the Civil War era through patriotic poems, cartoons and illustrations which called for dedication to the cause. Her status as a national maternal figure made a reappearance during times of national mourning to enact the private grief of thousands of mourning women and

⁴⁷³ Ibid, p.28.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 30.

⁴⁷⁵ Schlereth, Columbia, Columbus, and Columbianism, p.943.

the country.⁴⁷⁶ Furthermore, in the aftermath of President Lincoln's assassination in 1865, Kimmel and Forster published their famous print, *Columbia's Noblest Sons* (See Figure 6). In this image, Columbia is crowning both Lincoln and Washington with laurels; honouring them for their contributions and the sacrifices they made for their country. By referring to the two figures as her 'sons', Columbia personifies the national mother, mirroring the great outpouring of national devotion to the two Presidents. Columbia is again, depicted as a young woman in classical dress, surrounded by national symbols such as the Phrygian cap, the American flag, as well as individual images of the two wars that were synonymous with each man. Washington, placed with the Boston Tea Party and the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln with Fort Sumter, and the Emancipation Proclamation. This version of Columbia was published 80 years after the revolution but shows that in times where national unity was needed, she had the power to reappear and help the country acknowledge their respect and grief. This cultural iconography was therefore used to recall past events that have been enshrined in the people's minds.⁴⁷⁷ Famed author Oscar Wilde once wrote that "the youth of America is their oldest tradition, it has been going on for over 300 years."⁴⁷⁸ This neatly summarises the reliance on a young female goddess to embody the nation's values and hopes and infers how images seem to acquire added power during moment of national instability with the ageless Columbia taking centre stage.⁴⁷⁹ In 1865, many years had passed since Columbia's introduction, but she remained depicted as youthful and virtuous to mirror the country's own youthful character on the world stage.

⁴⁷⁶ Johnson, *Columbia and Her Sisters*, p.50.

⁴⁷⁷ Ernst, J. (2012). *Washington Crossing the Media: American Presidential Rhetoric and Cultural Iconography*. *European Journal of American Studies*, 7 (2), 1-15 (p.1).

⁴⁷⁸ Wilde, O. (2007). *The Collected Works of Oscar Wilde: The Plays, the Poems, the Stories, and the Essays including De Profundis*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, p.542.

⁴⁷⁹ Reynolds, *American Cultural Iconography*, p.389.

The vast majority of early 19th Century art that featured women, contained female allegories for national symbols and virtues which allowed printmakers to conflate political with sexual liberty.⁴⁸⁰ In both wars, the allegorical feminine female appears as one of the justifications for violence: men must fight to protect their wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Therefore, sexuality and nationalism are intertwined: to defend the nation is to shelter female bodies from enemies and to retain purity and integrity.⁴⁸¹ During the age of revolutions, anxieties about equality produced a struggle for power and the political viability of woman was often expressed as an image of republican virtue or power.⁴⁸² Because republican men assumed that real women couldn't espouse particular political views, they could appropriate the generic image of woman to represent universal political ideals, in this case a dedication to virtuous citizenry.⁴⁸³ Historians have debated the extent to which liberal freedoms have applied to female subjects and the use of ethereal imagery and virtuous embodiments, make it difficult for the real women to identify with the image in print.⁴⁸⁴ Poles apart from everyday American life, the females used in print stood as something unattainable for many, and imagery was used to drill home the expectations set upon women through ideals such as republican motherhood. Moreover, in the aftermath of the revolution, the American ideals of democracy and liberty continued to be illustrated in the form of a sexualised young women.⁴⁸⁵ Hiram Powers chose a young woman as his muse in his sculpture *America* (1848) to express "our youthful and glorious country, and our political creed,

⁴⁸⁰ Rauser, *Death or Liberty: British Political Prints*, p.165.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.32.

⁴⁸² Samuels, *Romances of the Republic*, p.13.

⁴⁸³ Kierner, C. (1998). *Beyond the Household: A Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.133.

⁴⁸⁴ Rauser, *Death or Liberty: British Political Prints*, p.157

⁴⁸⁵ Fryd, V.G. (1986). Hiram Powers' *America*: "Triumphant as Liberty and in Unity". *The American Art Journal*, 18 (2), 54-75 (p.55).

war against despotic power, Union, and Liberty.”⁴⁸⁶ *America* wears classical drapery, with bared breasts to represent her sexual submissiveness to men and also underscores the connection between youth and the past, shown through *America's* classical aura and diadem of 13 stars which represented the 13 original colonies.⁴⁸⁷

The dependent female trope continued to be used in art throughout the 19th Century to bolster masculine and justify the submission of women. In 1845, engraver Nathaniel Currier published his lithograph of George Washington, entitled *Washington's Reception by the Ladies* (see Figure 7). Lithography was developed in 1798 and became increasingly used in the US, becoming a profitable industry.⁴⁸⁸ The lithographic process was cheap and much less tedious than engraving illustrations which contributed to the medium's growing popularity in the early 1800s. In Currier's work, a swarm of women surround the First President, who have clearly travelled to greet him. These women are all young, from the possible ages of 5/6 to their early 20s to represent the younger generation of girls who owe their freedoms to the general. This ties back to Oscar Wilde's commentary on the youth of America always being exhibited. The lithograph's caption reads “the defender of the mothers will be the protector of the daughters”. Thus, Washington and his fellow soldiers were illustrated as those who will watch over these young women and defend their honour and liberties. The language and imagery used here insinuates that women were the passive admirers of heroism and strength, who needed to be protected and shielded from a dangerous enemy. Rather than defend themselves, they relied on

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid, p.58.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, p.55.

⁴⁸⁸ Le Beau, B. (1994). Coloured Engravings for the People: The World According to Currier and Ives. *American Studies*, 35 (1), 131-141 (p.132).

man's protection and were perceived to be grateful for it. Young women posed as representations of vulnerability, figures that soldiers cherished and defended.⁴⁸⁹ The women in the image wear clothing similar to that worn by Columbia, to highlight once more the virtuous and virginal aura instilled in American women, dressed in white and adorned with flowers. Another inference can be made from the staging of the image. George Washington and the two unnamed soldiers are positioned quite literally above the women, to indicate their higher status. In the pecking order of society, men had the hierarchical position, reducing the women to lower, spiritual beings who lacked a fight of their own and were dependent on man.

Currier was American and the lithograph, published over 50 years after independence was granted, highlights American romanticism and pride in the nation's history. Currier, and his partner Ives in later works, offered solace in the idealised, romantic glimpses of life and history.⁴⁹⁰ They themselves advertised their work as "the best, cheapest, and most popular pictures in the world", and through their imagery, they offered a pictorial history of life in 19th Century America, which can aid the understanding of today's historian.⁴⁹¹ It has been argued that they passed on the romance of America to future generations, schooling citizens on what it meant to be American: patriotic, brave, and virtuous.⁴⁹² The women in this image provided a visual standard of how women should conduct themselves and how they should venerate the strength of men. The women also physically form a tight group which could indicate links to the sisterhood that grew out of the revolution, with

⁴⁸⁹ Kierner, *Beyond the Household*, p.133.

⁴⁹⁰ Le Beau, *Coloured Engravings for the People*, p.136.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.131.

⁴⁹² *Ibid*, p.140.

young women relying heavily on each other to adapt to their new roles, as well as bonding over the pressures placed upon them.

By analysing the iconographical female form in a chronological sequence, we can see how the years after the American Revolution led to a refinement of Columbia as the figurehead of America that the new nation wanted to present to the world. A polished and gracious figure, Columbia epitomised the mature and independent nation, distancing herself from her former rebellious self to obtain respect as autonomous and in control of her own destiny. Additionally, as the American woman became cemented in the private sphere, Columbia's depiction as a mother arose to mirror the sentiment of republican motherhood sweeping through the country. America as a daughter was replaced by America as a mother, safeguarding her children from the evils that threatened their newfound liberty. To present a guiding light for American woman to follow; to reinforce the vital role women played in bringing up her children, Columbia needed to depict all the republican values and virtues in addition to her role as a patriotic emblem. She would also have the power to bring the nation back together in times of national mourning by reminding them of their united and patriotic history.

As Billington stated, "images tell us a great deal about the history of our nation", and from these selected images we can understand the ideals America wanted to showcase to the rest of the world and where women fit within this newly independent nation. On the surface, the images are clear in what they imply, but upon closer inspection, these images also contain inadvertent or covert messages. In some cases, the illustrator or author has subtly contained within their works their real

inspiration, as seen with Wheatley's hope for enslaved freedom covered in a projection of national freedom. In other works, the simple placing of the figures within the image can demonstrate the wider hierarchy and patriarchy which permeated American society. Thus, these images can contain multiple interpretations but unite in their significant power when it comes to presenting opinions of the time. The female revolutionary legacy was therefore presented in iconography to underscore the required ideals that women were to adopt; to be nurturing, virtuous, patriotic, and reliant upon men. The years that followed the revolution drilled these values into the masses in an engaging way that was not limited to the literate and offer historians a look into how they interpreted female roles and attributes.

In conclusion, the legacy of the American Revolution has remained entrenched in the American identity. Over the years, the narrative has become more inclusive due to an increased interest in the stories of the previously marginalised proportions of society. More specifically, the role of women in the early American republic has gained significance, through acknowledgement of their progressive actions which went on to spark a gendered revolution in both the mid 19th century and early 20th Centuries. Frustrated with the widespread inequality, many women followed in the footsteps of their revolutionary foremothers such as Abigail Adams and fought for better rights, modelling their philosophy on the Declaration of Independence, thus sustaining the revolutionary ties. Familial terms have preserved the female revolutionaries' legacy. The concept of 'Founding Sisters', built on the resentment at women's inferior status to develop a new campaign in America's history with similarly ground-breaking proportions. Later, the Daughters of the American Revolution formed to reinstate the ideals of their ancestors and unite the country through a

memorialisation of the revolution and its impact. The use of familial terms signifies a strong bond with their antecedents and an appreciation of their past. Popular culture has further built on their legacy by bringing a new medium with which to engage with history. Through TV, musicals, and film, the period has been revitalised and allows audiences to both engage with and challenge past conceptions of history. What is glaringly clear however, is that even popular culture appears to condense women's achievements. Despite being present in *Hamilton*, *1776*, and *Jefferson in Paris*, the women are portrayed as submissive and dedicated to their familial expectations. We are shown once more how women occupied and cultivated many different kinship roles at the time and continuously served the needs of others. Their characters are reduced to supporting roles of 'wife', 'mother', or 'daughter' and current historians would likely argue that if we are to truly engage with female narratives, stories should honour women's unique traits and courage. *Hamilton* and the new revival of *1776*, show that theatres are not afraid to push boundaries so there is no reason a female-led account of the revolutionary story could not be seen in years to come. The popular West End show *Six* (2017) tells the stories of Henry VIII's wives in a contemporary way that gives the women control, so in time, plays on America's founding mothers could follow suit and inspire a new cohort of history enthusiasts. Art also offers another medium to engage with, that relies on interpretations of women at the time and how the female figure has been skewed to suit expectations and, in some cases, serve as a figurehead of America's vision. By examining the legacy of the founding era, in its many forms, we can see how ideas have progressed over time and we can continue to acknowledge the contributions that these women made.

Conclusion

Historical material surrounding the early American republic is mounting to cater to a wider audience who wish to learn about America's past. As scholars delve into the voluminous primary sources left by revolutionary figures, we can better understand both the remarkable and the mundane experiences of these often-mythicised figures and reinsert a human touch, making the founding era more accessible. Furthermore, the narrative is no longer limited to Founders chic, as an analysis of the current historical literature suggests that a more gender-inclusive account of this period is steadily increasing. It is promising to see that female revolutionaries are getting the airtime that they deserve and that their experiences are being recognised and memorialised.

This thesis has sought to analyse the use of familial semiotics and equate them to the female experience in the post-revolutionary years. From the array of literature, we can see that historians have developed concepts to make sense of the societal changes at the time and this has served to make women's experiences more comprehensible. Linda Kerber's republican motherhood has become a favoured scholarly concept to describe the change in status afforded women so long as they devoted themselves to raising good republican citizens who continued the revolutionary fight. To succeed in their mission, educational opportunities for women increased which encouraged them to read more widely and dedicate themselves to matters of the home and religion. The raising of sons and daughters held differing priorities, and the mother became an integral part of America's survival, freeing up the men to pursue political advancements. Women were able to showcase their patriotism within the private sphere, underscoring both a significant improvement and

a focus back on domesticity. In recent years, the concept of Founding Mothers has entered the historical vocabulary to coincide with the commemoration of the men at the helm of public affairs. This concept recognises the women at the centre of public life and acknowledges them for their efforts in raising the nation away from British interference. The roster of Founding Mothers continues to evolve as historians merit new additions based on their patriotic actions and the list includes first ladies, playwrights and poets, and soldiers. The concept of Founding Mothers, a more public ideal, serves to challenge our predetermined view that women played passive roles in this era but simultaneously continues to label them with a familial responsibility. These terms are not without their limitations and as the remit of women's history increases, as do critiques of the concept and a push towards widening the scope even further.

To better understand what these societal changes meant practically, the lives of three individuals- Abigail Adams, Martha Jefferson Randolph, and Julia Stockton Rush- were analysed to see how they adapted to fulfil their responsibilities. Their stories were explored to see the day-to-day intricacies of life during the early American republic for a woman as it is these experiences which were common across the nation. Each of these figures simultaneously played the part of wife, daughter, mother, and sister, and all operated under the orbit of a famous man in the public eye. They were, therefore, fortunate in their position, which reduces their ability to be fully representative of all women, but their surviving correspondence offers an intimate insight into their private sentiments, which enriches our understanding of what living during this time entailed. Scrutinising their own words, adds a human touch to the period, and we can observe the importance women

placed upon their roles within their family unit and witness the enduring relationships that have gained notoriety. During this era, women such as Abigail, Martha, and Julia formed a new identity, which allowed them to conform to their feminine expectations but, we also see these women subtly push the boundaries to encourage a more progressive society. It is through these individual stories that we can see how some women flourished in an intellectual capacity, showed an interest in political affairs, and used their know-how to create a better world for their children and grandchildren. The life of Martha Jefferson Randolph also opens up a debate on a new familial concept of Founding Daughters, whereby we can see how the revolutionary offspring were required to fit an ideal that had been created by their parents. Girls were expected to be virtuous and domesticated; more feminine than the European counterparts and ready to impart republican values on their own children. Founding Daughters has not received the same level of attention as Founding Fathers and Mothers but is an important concept as it shows the foundations that were forming with regards to how Americans wished to present themselves on the world stage, as well as underscoring the pressures that came with living in the shadow of the revolutionary figures. The success of the nation required its daughters to prosper and understand the importance of their predecessors' actions so they could impart this upon their sons who would continue their legacy. Founding Daughters continues the familial metaphor that has become synonymous with the era and provides another avenue of analysis into key individuals.

The female experience during the revolutionary war and its aftermath thus, sparked an integral legacy which has since become engrained in the American identity. Over the years, the steps female revolutionaries took in the 1780s were expanded upon in

an attempt to gain better rights and citizenship for women, including through equally monumental events in history such as the Seneca Falls Convention in the mid 19th Century. Out of this, another familial term was forged through the bonds of sisterhood, a concept that is still evident today and pays credence to the necessary female relationships and alliances who provided support and encouragement. Bonds formed through similar experiences of motherhood and matrimony were extended to accommodate a united discontent at the lack of suffrage and equality that was promised after the revolution, and consequently, a new generation of passionate suffragists formed, who longed to finish what the female revolutionaries started. As a result, in the mid 20th Century, the feminist movement took centre stage and reminded women to acknowledge their foremothers whilst campaigning for change..

We can also see how the revolutionary story has endured through popular culture and art. TV Series, films, musicals, and paintings have all ensured that the revolution stands firm in our minds and in recent years there has been a revolution reboot which brings the story into modern times. The success of these mediums shows that the revolution is still a story worthy of accolades and attention; a topic that the public continues to engage with and enjoy. However, by providing a visual way of engaging with this pivotal period of US history, revolutionary popular culture reminds viewers that the push for gender inclusivity and equality is far from over. Despite being present in these dramatic retellings, the female characters are presented as side-lined figures. They embody the familial terms evident in the written works of the period and are unable to shine on their own merits; being seen as a simple wife, a hysterical daughter, naïve sister, or a pushy mother. The more progressive actions of these women, which is becoming a preferred avenue of study by some scholars, are

not given the space they need, so whilst the revolution stays in the minds of 21st Century Americans, it reinforces the idea that women were passive observers. Even positive moments, as seen in *Hamilton*, where Eliza tells the audience about her accomplishments after Alexander's death, comes too late to make a real impact. Steps have been taken to be more gender-inclusive and bend traditional expectations of a historiographical topic, but to portray an equitable footing between male and female historical characters, the entertainment industry needs to perhaps re-evaluate how it represents women.

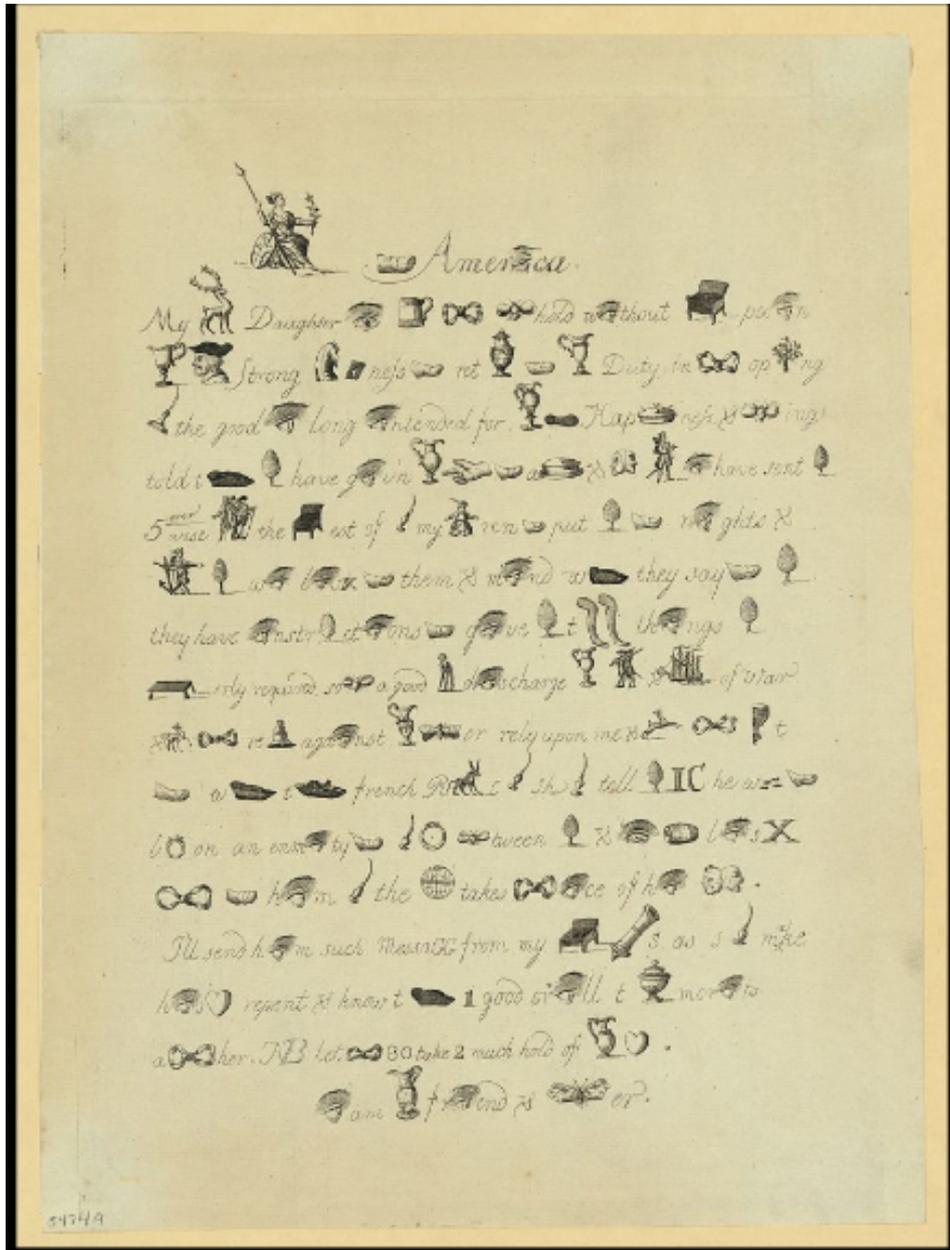
This thesis has been limited to the information in the public domain and despite an increase in gendered exposure, there are still constraints which force scholars to pick from an insular pool of possible figures. We are still very much reliant on white women of middle-class status; they were educated; who left private correspondence which we can examine today; and who had affiliations to famed men which in turn makes them recognisable names. Another side to the story is yet waiting to be explored with particular attention to the women of colour or lower economic status who would have had very differing experiences. This would be the obvious next step to ensure a more widely inclusive narrative. Nonetheless, this essay has attempted to collate the information we have access to in order to produce a better-rounded view of female experiences and the variety of roles that they played in the domestic sphere. By breaking down their lives into mother, daughter, sister, and wife, we can see the natural evolution that occurred in a young girl's life and how the expectations and responsibilities morphed together to ensure that female attention remained in the domestic unit of the family to serve as her opportunity to showcase patriotism and dedication to the new nation and its values. Through the creation of a new

identity, women performed their required tasks and submitted to their multifaceted roles to benefit the republic. Wife, mother, daughter, sister, woman; America owes a debt of gratitude to their female founders and the generations of women that proved power could be exhibited in the home.

A pivotal period of US history, the revolution and its aftermath will continue to shape who America chooses to be and how it chooses to present itself to the world. New research and scholarship has made it possible to make gender issues salient throughout US history and it is my hope that future conversations will include all familial roles to create a well-rounded interpretation that sees value in the domestic sphere that the majority of women operated in. Female contributions, whilst perhaps not as grand, paved the way for the US to carve its own identity and succeed away from British interference. America was a “great unfinished symphony” and needed each component of society to commit to their roles in order to thrive.⁴⁹³ New generations of Americans needed to be nurtured and this nurturing began in the home and began with the women.

⁴⁹³ Miranda, *The World was Wide Enough*, Hamilton.

Figure 2



Darly, M. (1778). [Britannia toe] Amer[eye]ca. [Rebus]. London: M Darly. Available from Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.17533>

Figure 3



Colley, T. (1782). *The Reconciliation between Britannia and her Daughter*. [Etching]. London: W. Richardson. Available from Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.37325/>

Figure 4



Savage, E. (1796). *Liberty in the Form of the Goddess of Youth, Giving Support to Bald Eagle*. [Engraving and Mezzotint]. Philadelphia: E. Savage. Available from Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003689261/>

Figure 5



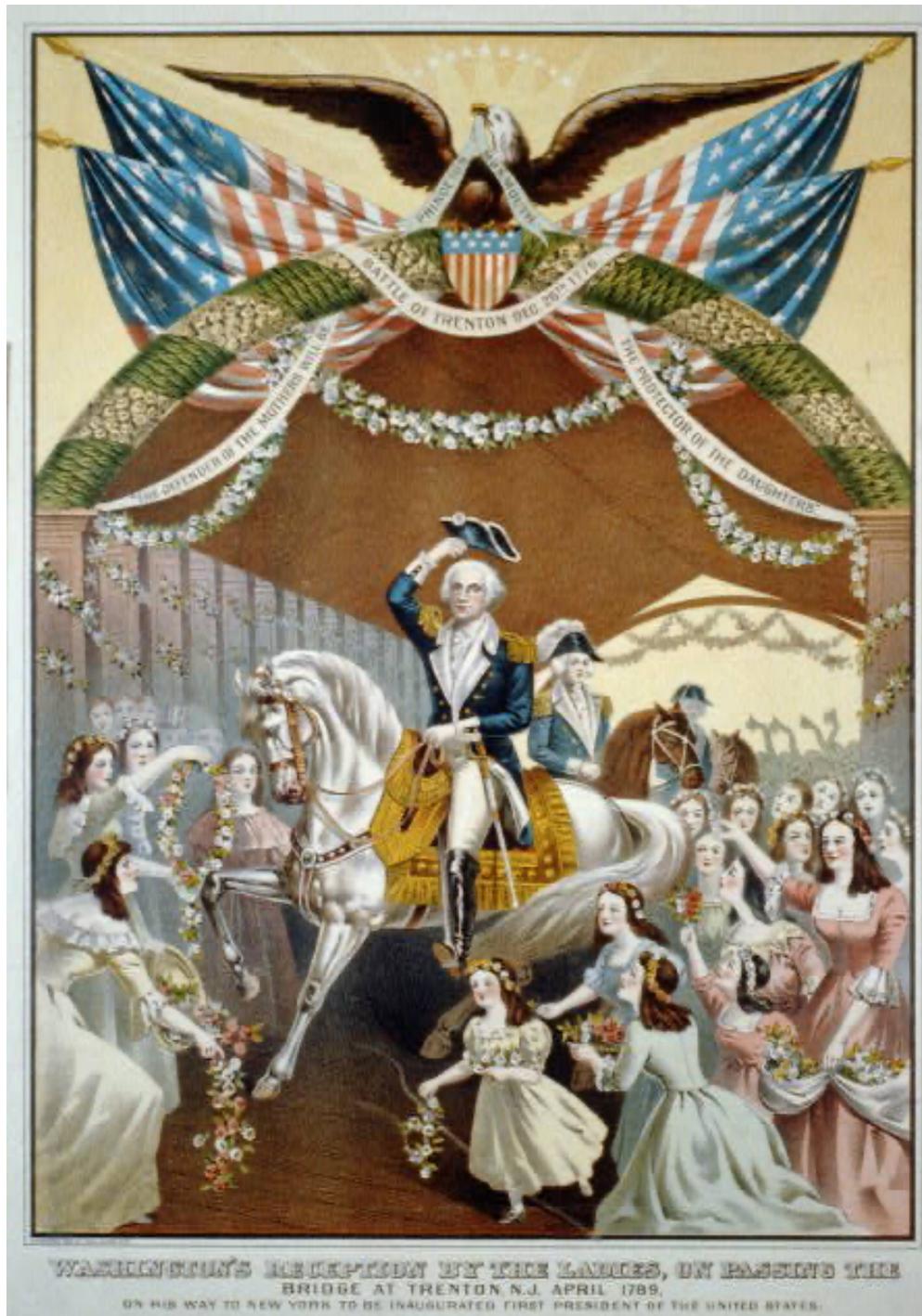
Lillie, L. (1997). *Abigail Adams and John Quincy Adams*. [Statue]. Quincy. Available from Presidents USA: <https://www.presidentsusa.net/jqadamsquincystatue.html>

Figure 6



Kimmel, C. & Forster, T. (1865). *Columbia Noblest Sons*. [Lithograph]. New York: Kimmel & Forster. Available from Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/pgs.01775/>

Figure 7



Currier, N. (1845). *Washington's Reception by the Ladies on Passing the Bridge at Trenton New Jersey, 1789 on His Way to Be Inaugurated First President of the United States*. [Lithograph]. New York: N. Currier. Available from The Metropolitan Museum of Art: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/659593>

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