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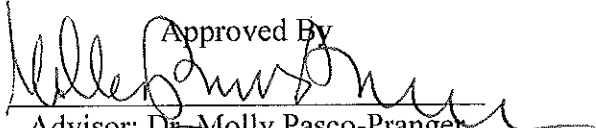
MERCY OTIS WARREN'S MARCIA(S) AND CORNELIA(S):
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AMERICA

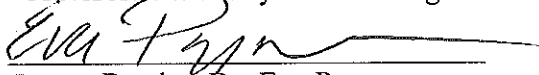
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Brittany Ellis

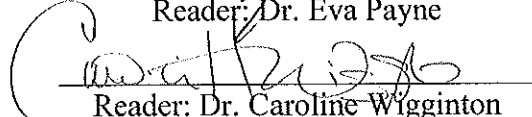
A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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ABSTRACT

BRITTANY ELLIS: Mercy Otis Warren's Marcia(s) And Cornelia(s): A Case Study in Women's Internalization of Classicism In Early America (Under the direction of Dr. Pasco-Pranger)

The connection between people in early America and classicism is a field of study that has been heavily documented, although it has remained a very male focused field with little research done about how women in early America formed a relationship with antiquity. This thesis reveals that elite white women had a deep emotional and intellectual attachment with mothers and matrons from ancient Greece and Rome as a basis for expressing political thoughts and identity; classicism formed a common language that many women could relate to each other with before, during, and after the American Revolution. This assessment is achieved through a case study involving prolific writer Mercy Otis Warren's pseudonym Marcia and poetic reference to Cornelia.

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Introduction

The connection between early America and classicism has already been studied at great length and is an established subfield of study¹³². There is no question whether men in early America were heavily inspired by ancient Greece and Rome, especially when it came to actively resisting tyranny and building a republic. Throughout numerous articles and books on the subject, however, the focus stays almost exclusively on men. When women are mentioned, it is nearly always a mere paragraph or footnote that vaguely alludes to women's political activism and identity. This pattern makes it seem like the Revolutionary War and the intense politics of the era had no large or lasting impact on women. This thesis aims to fill in the gap left in scholarship about women's relationship with political identity in early America by emphasizing their internalization of the neoclassical craze that has been well-documented for men of the same time.

While there are countless examples of patriotic and notable women within the Revolutionary era, Mercy Otis Warren emerges as the most important for this topic. Her name appeared early on in my research, and she kept reappearing in nearly all of the sources surrounding women's studies of early America. While she appeared by name in these sources, I nonetheless noticed that most scholars still spoke about her political expressions in vague terms and skipped over her relationship with antiquity, despite nearly every piece of her writing containing ample classical references. Warren was not the most famous woman of this era (that title would most certainly belong to Abigail Adams), yet she was an extremely prolific writer. She wrote countless letters, plays, pamphlets, and poems; she even went on to become one of the first female American historians. Her writings were inherently political, which went against the status quo for a woman in the eighteenth century, and full of neoclassical references. Despite her

writing being so progressive when looked at in isolation, Warren remained conservative with her view of women's rights and the domestic sphere, even as her close friend Abigail Adams urged John Adams to "Remember the Ladies" and grant women more civic freedom.

Warren was not the only woman familiar with classical sources, of course. While the world of antiquity was thought of as a masculine world and not easily accessible to most women, women throughout America and Europe still managed to find ways to access these sources and relate them to the world around them. This trend in America happened nearly simultaneously with one in Europe; it occurred slightly early in England due to the network of European countries being physically close together, earlier access to the printing press, and the benefits of a long-established form of government.¹ In the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth I was tutored extensively in Latin and Greek to the point where she was able to translate works like Cicero and Plutarch.² Many women in Europe were also familiar with neoclassicism, as seen by political historian Catharine Macaulay, reformer Elizabeth Montagu, and writer Maria Edgeworth.³

Although Philip Hicks started the conversation about this clear gap within the scholarship in his article from 2005, he was limited in scope and area of focus.⁴ Within the article, he examines how Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren participated in historical roleplaying

¹ For more about the neoclassicism trend in Europe, see Fischer, Michael, "The Collapse of English Neoclassicism," *The Centennial Review* 24, no. 3 (1980): 338–59, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23739579> and Peter S. Walch, "Charles Rollin and Early Neoclassicism," *The Art Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (1967): 123–26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3048452>.

² Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 279.

³ See Karen Bloom Gevirtz, "Ladies Reading and Writing: Eighteenth-Century Women Writers and the Gendering of Critical Discourse," *Modern Language Studies* 33, no. 1/2 (2003): 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3195308>.

⁴ Philip Hicks, "Portia and Marcia: Female Political Identity and the Historical Imagination, 1770-1800," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2005): 265–94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3491602>.

through the names of Roman matrons to communicate for years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War. He is a historian, not a classicist; he did not have a deep level of familiarity with classical sources needed to conduct a comprehensive search into the root and impact of the classical-inspired pseudonyms. His work was an article rather than a book, so he had to be concise and did not have enough space to consider all of the nuances surrounding the topic. Thus, Hicks was only able to provide a foundation upon which I will expand in this thesis.

A closer look at the connection between gender and neoclassicism in early America rooted in the field of classics is needed in order to fully understand what Mercy Otis Warren meant and the implications of using neoclassicism as a vehicle for political self-identification. Having studied both history and classics for my undergraduate degree, I am quite familiar with both fields, allowing me to study Warren's life as a historian while also extensively diving into the classical sources that inspired her. To fully understand Warren's choices and internal thought process, one must look at the same ancient sources she absorbed and consider the sources and tales she most likely was familiar with. It is not enough to devote a single sentence or paragraph to this; it is evident that she thought a lot about the world of antiquity, so a similar amount of attention must be devoted to how classical references inspired her writing and how she chose to express her political identity consequently.

Since Warren was such a prolific writer, a full treatment of classical references in her work would be too broad of a scope to cover in just one thesis. Instead, I have chosen to focus on two instances where an internalization of classicism directly influenced her writing, politics, and identity: her references to the Roman matrons Marcia and Cornelia. Warren used the pseudonym Marcia within her epistolary network among political friends; there has not been a satisfactory discussion about who this name refers to. I will argue that she is both referring to the daughter

and wife of Cato the Younger, instead of focusing on whether it is one or the other. Similarly, Warren uses a plural reference to ancient “Cornelias” in her poem “The Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.” which has remained ignored by scholars. Instead of only invoking the image of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, I argue that she was also referencing Pompey’s fifth wife Cornelia. While Warren could not physically fight for her country with a sword, she was able to reconcile a great deal of personal sacrifice and urge others in the patriotic cause through her writing and references to these Roman matrons.

These two examples illuminate a much wider discussion about the study of women’s political expression and the unique situation of learned colonial women who had a shared set of examples of politically active women yet were not able to fully emulate them for fear of being seen as falling into the vice of pedantry. Women in early America, like Warren, looked to examples of women from ancient Rome, especially from the late Republic, as a source of inspiration on how a contemporary woman could be seen as fulfilling her feminine role as a moral guide to men while expressing a degree of political activism. By doing this, they conceptualized a uniquely feminine and American political identity largely built around their internalization of antiquity. This political identity revolved around the notion of self-assertion into the masculine sphere of politics based on stories of outspoken Roman matrons that were commonly found within newspapers and magazines aimed at women.⁵ These women looked to exemplary Roman wives and mothers and could see themselves in the same roles. By signing their names as these Roman matrons or alluding to their stories in writing, women claimed the same heroic virtue and patriotism as women of antiquity and positioned themselves through

⁵ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 282.

these models in relation to the male political world. There was a sense of community and kinship with the women of classical Rome from the American women's perspective, as if no time had passed at all between the two groups of women.

Antiquity and the women from that period were vital to the formation and understanding of women's political self-definition within early America. By consuming and personalizing work about strong Roman matrons who were able to step outside of their feminine sphere in times of war without facing much backlash, women in early America who were similarly facing a tumultuous period of history were then able to point out these matrons in their reading. They identified with them emotionally and then emulated them. All of this led to a distinctly feminine and American political identity that emerged in wealthy white women right before, during, and immediately after the Revolutionary War. This neoclassical political identity allowed them to participate in the war efforts in an acceptable way—through subtle written activism and physical demonstrations via British boycotts. This feminine neoclassicism also helped Warren enter the written historical record, which up until her publications had only allowed men to successfully enter and be heard.

This study aims to examine how Mercy Otis Warren (and by extension, other elite women in early America) formed a unique connection with neoclassicism that was inherently tied to their designated role as women in a society that did not grant them much civic or political freedom of expression. Warren used the neoclassical ideals of Republican Motherhood and the models of Roman matrons—in particular, Marcias and Cornelias—to achieve political self-assertion in a way that was seen as safe yet personal to her life.

Chapter 1: Men's Ownership of Neoclassicism in Public and Political Life

Though separated by thousands of years, men in colonial and early America thoroughly immersed themselves in ancient Greece and Rome through a revival of classical references and imagery, known as neoclassicism. Neoclassicism was a trend that dominated European art and ideology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Having been founded and settled by transplanted Europeans, the colony and eventual country of America had similar yet unique admiration for references to figures drawn from ancient antiquity.

References to classicism could be seen throughout all thirteen colonies. Strolling through a city square, an observer would have been well acquainted with the Greco-Roman columns and arches seamlessly incorporated into the architecture. Looking at coins, they would see Greek wreaths, olive branches, fasces, and even a Latin phrase. Lining the walls in homes were paintings depicting heroes of the Roman Republic, Cupids, and gods and goddesses. Speeches were given by men in togas in a Ciceronian style of rhetoric, calling upon the audience to share the virtues of a civilization long ago. Grammar books for children sat on tables, open to pages and pages of Latin sentences. Local newspapers and pamphlets were filled with images of the personified Columbia and Liberty with long, flowing hair. Plutarch, Homer, and Thucydides were names visible on the spines of books in private libraries. Joseph Addison's *Cato* frequently sold out in the local theaters. Wealthy couples posed together in portraits; women dressed in antique Roman attire while the men stood in the traditional pose of an orator with columns in the background. The inescapable influence of neoclassicism was no mistake; it was a purposeful

decision to showcase the new colony as a “Rome reborn,”⁶ a “culture saturated in classical references.”⁷

This chapter aims to demonstrate that neoclassicalism in men’s education in early America helped establish the formation of a classical-inspired public political identity for leading men and the development of America as a nation. America’s reverence for Ancient Greece and Rome was a staple that manifested itself in a wide array of contexts: from education to literary trends to the ideological foundation of the American Revolution to the formation of the American government. It was customary that elite men received a classical education in both boyhood and college that included learning Latin and Greek and studying ancient authors. Cicero and Plutarch in particular were beloved and studied at great length. College-educated men were so familiar with the classics that they often adopted pseudonyms and engaged in historic role-playing based on classical figures. Revolutionary leaders and the Founding Fathers drew on the lessons they observed from neoclassicism and applied them directly to create a unified national identity and system of government.

Exposure to neoclassicism started in boyhood and lasted through college via a rigorous education steeped in the classics. Education in the American colonies, starting from the very beginning and lasting long after the American Revolution, generally followed that of the classical education found in England. This system of education, established during the Tudor reform in the sixteenth century, emphasized “the European Renaissance notion that the ideally

⁶ Caroline Winterer, “From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1265, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3660173>.

⁷ Stanley M. Burstein, “The Classics and the American Republic,” *The History Teacher* 30, no. 1 (1996): 30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/494218>.

educated man embodies both piety and learning.”⁸ As such, education was seen as a masculine puberty rite.⁹ It was a version of education that was wholly reliant on classics as a way to teach morals, discipline, political science, and leadership.

Colonial education operated through multiple institutions. Students learned how to read and write at dame schools, an informal and local schooling taught by a woman at her own home. At around seven or eight years old, male students would move on to more advanced studies “that emphasized study of the Greco-Roman classics from childhood through the college years.”¹⁰ Next, middle-class students would attend a grammar or field school, depending on the availability and geography of the colony. Grammar schools, more common in the north, were formal secondary schools. Field schools were more common in the southern colonies where it was much harder to establish a formal educational institution, so local children would learn together in fields with a local male schoolmaster.¹¹ However, most upper-class families hired private tutors for their children that taught “arithmetic to astronomy - including Latin and Greek, rhetoric, oratory, logic, navigation, surveying, bookkeeping, higher mathematics and natural science.”¹² In the South, private tutors were increasingly necessary, as the rural plantation style of the elites made establishing a grammar school difficult. The first few years of this stage of education focused on “Latin grammar, composition, and conversation and then read selected

⁸ Mary Ann Yost, “Classical Studies In American Colonial Schools 1635-1776,” *The Classical Outlook* 54, no. 4 (1976): 40, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43933760>.

⁹ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 196.

¹⁰ Carl J. Richard, “Plutarch and the Early American Republic,” in *A Companion to Plutarch*, ed. Mark Beck (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 598.

¹¹ Robert Middlekauff, “Education in Colonial America,” *Current History* 41, no. 239 (1961): 5, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45310546>

¹² Middlekauff, “Education in Colonial America,” 6-7.

classical and medieval writings.”¹³ Adolescents then moved on to “classical literature and studied elementary Greek and possibly Hebrew” while reading authors, such as Sallust, Virgil, Cicero, Horace, and Tacitus, before attending college.¹⁴

One of the most important aspects of a classical education is the learning of Latin and often Greek. Educational leaders believed that the disciplined learning of ancient languages would provide a direct way of installing virtue and knowledge; this is why the study of Latin was found through every stage in the educational process in the colonies. While Greek was also taught by many tutors, Latin overwhelmingly dominated and simply had more time allotted.¹⁵ The colonists developed the mindset of Erasmus, in his *De Ratione Studii* from 1511, that “in these two literatures [Greek and Latin] is contained all the knowledge which we recognize as of vital importance to mankind.”¹⁶ Latin studies began by using *Cheever’s Latin Accidence: An Elementary Grammar, for Beginners in the Study of the Latin Language*. Memorized by students over three years, the *Accidence* was a book teaching Latin grammar rules and paradigms. While mainly designed to equip the student with a basic understanding of Latin, it also served as a way to teach history or, as Lily stated in his book in 1513, “plain Lesson of honesty and goodness.”¹⁷

¹³ Yost, “Classical Studies,” 41.

¹⁴ Ibid.; Carl J. Richard, “The Classics and American Political Rhetoric in a Democratic and Romantic Age,” in *The Call of Classical Literature in the Romantic Age*, ed. K. P. Van Anglen and James Engell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 290.

¹⁵ Richard, “Plutarch,” 598; Richard, “The Classics and American Political Rhetoric,” 290.

¹⁶ Yost, “Classical Studies,” 40.

¹⁷ Ibid., 41.

For example, in a section about ablatives and how to translate them, a sentence was “A wise man is not overcome by Grief.”¹⁸

While there was no formalized standard curriculum to follow, Yost outlines an example curriculum that most students mostly would have loosely followed. An advanced understanding of Latin would begin with “Leonhard Culmann's *Sententiae Pueriles* (a collection of simple Latin exercises), Cato's *Distichs*, Cordier's *Colloquies*, and Aesop's *Fables*.”¹⁹ As the years went on, students gained a more complex grasp on Latin by studying, “in the fourth year.... works by Erasmus and Ovid's *Tristia* and did J. Garretson's English exercises for Schoolboys to translate into Latin. The next year they read Cicero's *Epistles* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and practiced scansion and verse composition.” The following year, students “read Cicero's *De Officiis* and works by Florus, Vergil, and Ovid and learned elementary Greek grammar.” Right before headed to college, students “applied themselves to Cicero's speeches and to works by Justin, Homer, Hesiod, Vergil, Horace, Juvenal, and Tacitus and wrote exercises from Godwin's *Romanae Historiae Anthologia* (1696).”

An intense and personal relationship with Latin was required for entrance into college, where students' understanding of classics would only continue to grow and intensify. Harvard, founded in 1636 as the first American university, required a student to be able to “to read "Tully" [Cicero] or another classical author at sight, to speak and write in Latin prose and verse, and to inflect Greek nouns and verbs.”²⁰ It was not just Harvard that had these kinds of requirements,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, "41.

¹⁹ Yost, "Classical Studies," 42.

²⁰ Yost, "Classical Studies," 42.

but most American colleges also required prospective students to have a deep understanding and familiarity with Cicero. This familiarity with Cicero would form the formation of American political and social thought in early America.

Once admitted into college, the students' curriculum would be almost entirely based on the classics with Latin being spoken within classes.²¹ As their studies advanced, Greek became more important, and students were expected to master that language in addition to refining their Latin. A brochure from Harvard in 1643 reveals more about what students studied: "First-year students learned Greek and Hebrew grammar and etymology; second-year students studied Greek prosody, dialects, and poetry; third-year students composed Greek prose and verse. Interspersed among these studies were Latin rhetoric, "Chaldee," Syriac, Biblical and catechetical divinity, arithmetic, physics, and geometry."²²

Rhetoric and oratory were especially influenced by the classics in college. Edward T. Channing recorded that at Harvard, "we study the ancient orators."²³ Not only was it important for students to read the great speeches of the past, but classical oratory provided the stepping stones for students to directly apply their classical education to society at large. College graduates would go on to secure leadership positions, whether on a local or national level. As leaders, they were expected to "imitate Greek and Roman models of oratorical style, especially Cicero" in their speeches.²⁴ Consequently, rhetorical studies were completely classical and

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ James M. Farrell, "'Above All Greek, above All Roman Fame': Classical Rhetoric in America during the Colonial and Early National Periods," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18, no. 3 (2011): 428, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41474724>.

²⁴ Farrell, "Above All," 427.

“looked to Athens and Rome for instruction in the ancient art of rhetoric, and for models of the most eloquent rhetorical expression.”²⁵ As teenagers, the students were introduced to oratory through two Latin exercises: “*translatio linguarum*, translation of a passage from Latin to English and then back into Latin” and *imitatio*, stylistic imitation of Latin authors.”²⁶ At college, they studied the work of Demosthenes, Aristotle, Quintilian, and Longinus while reading the ways modern examples employed the classical model of rhetoric. However, an overwhelming majority of rhetorical studies were dedicated to Cicero. In fact, Cicero’s *De Oratore* was the main theoretical text for the study of rhetoric used in most American colleges, such as Harvard and Yale.²⁷ As evident by the fact that it was commonly found in both Latin and English translations in libraries, almost every college-educated American in both colonial and early America read *De Oratore*. It was so widely read that it became “part of the common intellectual currency of the early republic.”²⁸

Although undeniably Cicero loomed large in academia, Plutarch was a leading influential figure for both academics and the general populace. Within early America, Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* could be found in virtually any private or public library. Richard states that copies of the work “flooded the early American republic” with them “being churned even by backwoods presses, blissfully (599) unmoved by copyrights.”²⁹ It was routinely a national bestseller, and

²⁵ Ibid., 416.

²⁶ Yost, “Classical Studies,” 41.

²⁷ Farrell, “Above All,” 429.

²⁸ Ibid., 429.

²⁹ Richard, “Plutarch,” 598-9.

Plutarch was “an extraordinarily popular author in the colonial and founding era.”³⁰ Editor John Dryden’s English translation was mostly read in the beginning half of this period; in 1770, John and William Langhorne became the new standard in America. Plutarch’s captivating and relatable tales about individual historical figures that taught republicanism and morality caught the attention of virtually everyone in early America, especially in the years immediately before and after the Revolutionary War.

College students and political leaders were not the only ones to read Plutarch; men with less of an elite education, women, and children also read and absorbed Plutarch’s lessons. Given their connection to schooling and literacy, it is important to note that many of these people were not poor; they mostly were just not extremely elite. In grammar schools, many instructors viewed the *Lives* as a reward for good behavior. Charles Francis Adams wrote that as a boy, “After having got my lesson, [tutor] used to permit me to read a Plutarch which he kept on purpose in the school and gave it to me as a mark of distinction and scholarship, in this way exciting me by every motive which can act upon a boy to gain instruction. I believe it is to this I owe my clear ideas on the subject of history.”³¹ William Ellery Channing also encouraged children to read Plutarch, as it would allow the children to learn that “causes of historical events are to be found in gifted, energetic persons.”³² Even men not classically educated knew and enjoyed Plutarch’s works, as popular translations brought a glimpse of classical education to them.³³ Benjamin

³⁰ Jennifer T. Roberts, “Pericles in America: The Founding Era and Beyond,” In *Thomas Jefferson, the Classical World, and Early America*, ed. Peter S. Onuf And Nicholas P. Cole (University of Virginia Press, 2011): 267, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wrr2s.15>; Richard, “Plutarch,” 598.

³¹ Richard, “Plutarch,” 598.

³² S.P. Conrad, *Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830– 1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 208, as quoted in Richard, “Plutarch,” 608.

³³ *Ibid.*, 599.

Franklin is an example of this. About his time reading an English translation of the *Lives*, he said in his autobiography, “I still think that time spent to great advantage.”³⁴ He also advocated for students to read Plutarch and other ancient writers in their original ancient language. Alexander Hamilton carried his love of Dryden’s Plutarch with him into the Revolutionary War, converting his military book into large extracts from various chapters of *Lives*.

Men engaged with Plutarch and classical figures as moral models, personally embodying their characters through role-playing and pseudonyms. Many men, especially college-educated males and the Founding Fathers, viewed their classical education and rhetorical situations in personal, classical terms. They believed themselves to be “akin to classical heroes.”³⁵ As Hicks explained, they “felt it possible to transport themselves in a kind of time machine to any period of history and find people just like themselves who may be imitated in the same way as a contemporary figure may be.”³⁶ This practice had its roots in literary societies in American colleges, as members often used secret names and identities based on figures from ancient Rome and Greece. Historical role-playing is best exemplified by Joseph Warren’s speech on March 6, 1775 about the Boston Massacre; for it, he dressed in a toga meant to invoke Cicero as he spoke rhetorically in Ciceronian style.³⁷

Alexander Hamilton, throughout his political career, frequently used classical pseudonyms adapted from his ardent love of Plutarch. When he worked with James Madison and John Jay to write the *Federalist Papers* throughout 1787-88, they wrote under the pseudonym of

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Farrell, “Above All,” 416.

³⁶ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 265.

³⁷ Ibid., 268.

Publius.³⁸ Hamilton had already used this alias a decade prior, so it can be adequately assumed that he was the one to suggest the name.³⁹ Publius Valerius Poplicola, as the colonists learned in Livy and Plutarch, helped end the Roman monarchy under Tarquin and usher in the Roman Republic around 509 BC. By invoking Poplicola as the author, it was almost as if the “founder of the Roman republic” was the one to write the *Federalist*.⁴⁰ Considering the aim of the *Federalist* was to defend and ratify the Constitution, Hamilton’s ambition paralleled that of Publius. He most likely connected personally to Publius and saw their struggles as connected, which is one reason why the name was chosen. The name also refers to the public, further showing that the aim of the *Federalist* was to appeal to the general public and convince them of the importance of the Constitution being ratified. Hamilton also used Camillus and Pericles, also subjects of Plutarch’s *Lives*, as pseudonyms.⁴¹

Classical pseudonyms were used to emphasize ideal patriotic virtues, especially through the use of Cato, Fabius, and Aristides. In the years leading up to the American Revolution, Joseph Addison’s hit play *Cato* (based on Plutarch) inspired nearly every Founding Father to refer to Cato the Younger at an increased rate. George Washington, George Mason, Richard Henry Lee, and Nathan Hale were all examples of this.⁴² Hamilton and George Clinton’s letter

³⁸ Burstein, “The Classics and the American Republic,” 34.

³⁹ Richard, “Plutarch,” 602.

⁴⁰ Eran Shalev, “Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms during the American Revolution and Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 2 (2003): 167-8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3125034>.

⁴¹ Richard, “Plutarch,” 602; Roberts, “Pericles in America,” 279-280.

⁴² Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 271.

exchanges also heavily referenced Cato.⁴³ The name and character of Fabius Maximus, as drawn from Plutarch's *Lives*, were often connected to George Washington.⁴⁴ Parson Weems, in his biography of Washington, called Washington "as 'prudent as Fabius.'" ⁴⁵ Hamilton called Washington "the American Fabius"⁴⁶ because he had imitated Fabius' delaying tactic used against the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War when "Washington had wisely and steadfastly avoided engaging the better-trained British enemy in the early part of the war, waiting for more opportune moments to attack."⁴⁷

Aristides was a "popular pseudonym throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."⁴⁸ The 2nd century BC Athenian figure, nicknamed "the Just," was known for his virtue and honesty. During a vote of ostracism, an illiterate and unfamiliar man asked Aristides to write "Aristides" down simply because the man was tired of hearing the name even though he did not know him or his possible transgressions; Aristides wrote down his name for the man and was then exiled. Benjamin Rush often referenced him, and a writer took the pseudonym in a published essay in the *National Gazette* in 1792.⁴⁹ David Ramsay wrote of Washington,

⁴³ Fredric M. Litto, "Addison's Cato in the Colonies," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1966): 439-440, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1919239>.

⁴⁴ Shalev, "Ancient Masks," 166.

⁴⁵ Richard, "Plutarch," 602.

⁴⁶ Shalev, "Ancient Masks," 161.

⁴⁷ Richard, "Plutarch," 602.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 601.

⁴⁹ Shalev, "Ancient Masks," 168.

“Enemies he had, but they were few, and chiefly of the same family with the man who could not bear to hear Aristides always called the just.”⁵⁰

The name of Julius Caesar was often used against political rivals as a way to express political hatred or quarrel.⁵¹ By calling others Caesar, the colonists associated him with tyranny and corruption. James Otis, in 1764, referred to Caesar as “the destroyer of the Roman glory and grandeur” and thus to blame for the end of the Roman Republic. As the Revolutionary War approached, Patrick Henry called King George III Caesar in 1765 and John Adams in 1771 called Thomas Hutchinson—the royal governor of Massachusetts—Caesar.⁵² Both Christopher Gadsden and Josiah Quincy claimed the British were to America “what Caesar was to Rome.”⁵³ Hamilton was often called Caesar by both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Hamilton himself called his enemies, like Henry Lee, Caesar.⁵⁴ It was also used in the courtroom; Daniel Webster, before the Supreme Court, said that “When I see my alma mater surrounded, like Caesar in the senate house, by those who are reiterating stab after stab, I would not, for this right hand, have her turn to me, and say, ‘Et tu quoque mi fili!’ ‘And thou too, my son!’”⁵⁵

The use of classical pseudonyms was not just restricted to personal letters and speeches; it was a highly visible trend prior to the American Revolution. Latimer states that “all newspapers in the stirring pre-Revolutionary period had articles published under Latin

⁵⁰ Richard, “Plutarch,” 601.

⁵¹ Shalev, “Ancient Masks,” 165.

⁵² Richard, “Plutarch,” 602.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Richard, “Plutarch,” 604.

⁵⁵ Richard, “The Classics and American Political Rhetoric,” 290.

pseudonyms.”⁵⁶ Washington was called Scaevola after the Roman jurist Gaius Mucius Scaevola, Madison was labeled Tarquin after the Roman king, and John Randolph was Lysander after the Spartan leader. The newspapers also used Latin words as pseudonyms, like Pacificus, Sincerus, Candidus, and Determinatus, to easily showcase republican elements of peace, purity, transparency, and determination.⁵⁷

Classicism was not just a subject to study for these colonists; the Founding Fathers took their classical education and directly applied it. Latin quotations were very commonly found in any form of writing, from newspapers to diaries. When Benjamin Franklin was editor of the *Courant*, he had a policy ““never to let a paper pass without a Latin Motto, which carries a charm in it to the Vulgar, and the Learned admire the pleasure of construing.”⁵⁸ Politics and government were “a ‘useful’ outlet” for classicism, as the colonists' education served as “springboards for entry into politics, the military, the ministry, and the bar, careers where Greco-Roman ideals of civic virtue and oratory.”⁵⁹ The lessons they learned from the classical works remained with them and were embedded into political life, especially considering how classical ideas of history “taught them to identify with the great figures of ancient” and seek out similarities in modern life.⁶⁰ Classical history provided models of virtue and vices to avoid. It was an intentional model of history, as Hicks explains that, “according to classical, humanist,

⁵⁶ John F. Latimer, “The Classical Tradition in America,” *The Classical World* 58, no. 5 (1965): 130, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4345562>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750–1900* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 2.

⁶⁰ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 268-9.

and republican ideals, the purpose of history was to educate statesmen and warriors.”⁶¹ Winterer stated, “Americans appealed to the republics of classical antiquity not just for instruction and inspiration but also to cloak political and social novelties in the ennobling veil of the classical past.”⁶² A mutual classical education allowed the Founding Fathers and elite patriots to share a collective identity and cause.

Although much justified on their own, those leading the cause against the British government turned to the virtues of classicism, especially the works of Cicero and Plutarch, for ideological support for starting the Revolutionary War. James Otis (Mercy Otis Warren’s brother) originally connected Cicero’s work to a “concrete relationship with the quest for colonial rights.”⁶³ Through a classical education, men knew just how important it was for a republic to have a strong core sense of virtue, as “virtue was the prime mover in the classical republican paradigm.”⁶⁴ Considering how big a leap of faith the Revolution would be, leading patriots “had to believe not only that Americans of their own generation displayed that virtue, but that Americans of subsequent generations would continue to display the moral character that a republic required.”⁶⁵ Plutarch’s *Life of Themistocles* provided the most direct support for the war. They viewed the British as akin to the Persians; knowing that no one expected the Greeks to win against the Persian Empire, yet they did, leading patriotic men hoped to prove to the world that they could defeat the most powerful empire in the world. John Adams confirmed this thinking in

⁶¹ Ibid.” 271

⁶² Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 2.

⁶³ Latimer, “The Classical Tradition,” 130.

⁶⁴ Burstein, “The Classics and the American Republic,” 35.

⁶⁵ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 199.

1774, stating that ““The Grecian Commonwealths were the most heroic Confederacy that ever existed. ... The Period of their glory was from the Defeat of Xerxes to the Rise of Alexander. Let Us not be enslaved, my dear Friend, Either by Xerxes or Alexander.”⁶⁶ By reading Plutarch’s teaching about Themistocles in college and connecting it to the politics surrounding themselves, American men realized that a republic of states could defeat a powerful empire.

It was through the application of classicism by the Founding Fathers that the political system of the United States as a nation was established.⁶⁷ From Plutarch, they developed “a profound attachment to republicanism” and viewed this as an essential element in their budding government.⁶⁸ In his work detailing the Persian Wars, they grasped the advantages that a republic had over an empire and simple democracy while trying to straddle the line between having a central government without having it become too strong.⁶⁹ If there was not an adequate centrality to the government, then they feared that—like the Greeks conquered by Rome and Macedon in Plutarch’s *Aratus, Demosthenes, Alexander, and Phocion*—they would suffer from continuous infighting.⁷⁰ Many were skeptical of strong centralization, though, claiming that the Persian Wars demonstrated that a national military was unnecessary because “militias composed of common citizens, motivated by love of liberty, were superior to professional armies.”⁷¹ While they certainly fought for democracy instead of monarchy and Samuel Adams spent considerable

⁶⁶ Richard, “Plutarch,” 600.

⁶⁷ Crispin Sartwell, “Political Power and Transcendental Geometry: Republican Classicism in Early America,” in *Political Aesthetics* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2010), 217.

⁶⁸ Richard, “Plutarch,” 599; Sartwell, “Political Power,” 222.

⁶⁹ Roberts, “Pericles in America,” 279.

⁷⁰ Richard, “Plutarch,” 601.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

time searching “classical sources for material relating to democracy,” they made the careful distinction of establishing a democratic republic.⁷² Their understanding of Athenian democracy was that it caused Sparta’s supremacy in the Peloponnesian War; they garnered this account from Thucydides and Plutarch’s *Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lysander*. From this, they decide that a mixed government “government in which the masses would have a share of government power but would be counterbalanced by a powerful executive and by a strong senate” would best serve the new nation.⁷³

Through Cicero, Sallust, Livy, and Plutarch’s accounts of the Roman Republic, the Founding Fathers learned to be suspicious of threats to liberty and virtue. Having read classical text after text detailing a theme of “steady encroachment of tyranny on liberty” they wanted so badly to avoid the fate of the Romans in their new country.⁷⁴ Because of these “classical political horror stories” from Plutarch’s Late Republican Romans (Marius, Sulla, Crassus, Pompey, Caesar, Mark Antony, Brutus, Cato the Younger, and Cicero), they began to turn on each other soon after the establishment of the nation and accused one another of opposing liberty.⁷⁵ Often, they did this by, once again, calling their rivals Caesar. These were real, vivid fears appearing in letters and diaries instead of just rhetorical appeals. The presence of these intense fears reveals a dark undercurrent of neoclassicism in early America. It “fueled the tendency to see a conspiracy behind every well-intentioned blunder, a conspirator in every opponent,” requiring “fresh threats

⁷² Latimer, “The Classical Tradition,” 130.

⁷³ Richard, “Plutarch,” 600; Sartwell, “Political Power,” 226.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 605.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

of tyranny for sustenance... where such threats did not exist, they must be created.”⁷⁶

Neoclassical texts and lessons profoundly shaped the Founding Fathers’ political thoughts and activities.

Within the colonial and early American periods, neoclassicism almost felt like a tangible aspect of culture. Men from middle and upper-class families would have devoted a significant portion of their lives to learning classical languages and texts. It provided a common language that they could all relate to each other with. Throughout the rest of their lives, they continued to regularly read Plutarch and other ancient authors. Their classical education left a personal connection to the classics, eventually causing many to engage in classical pseudonyms and providing theoretical support for the emerging American government.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 2: Women's Adoption of Neoclassicism

As Revolutionary young men dressed in togas and recited Latin prose from memory inside the walls of a college campus, a wealthy woman in the colonies might wake up with the sunrise and slip on a Grecian muslin gown with a corset. As her children ran around and required her constant attention throughout the day, she could look around her house at the columns, cornucopias, mahogany chairs, and gilded sofas inspired aesthetically by the ancients. When she had a moment to herself, she could open a women's magazine detailing the adventures of Athena and the plight of the Sabine Women as she sipped tea out of a cup decorated with Cupids. She could reminisce about the afternoon she had spent posing with her husband for a portrait, dressed in an antique gown. Walking through the city square, they could notice the arches and columns of the public buildings, but she was not allowed in. Back at home, she focused her attention on schooling her young children by reading to them a translation of Homer or the summarized text of Charles Rollins' *A History*. After reading a few pages, she could then embroider an acanthus leaf or parables learned from Plutarch.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that upper-class women in early America, like the men established in the previous chapter, developed a close personal relationship to neoclassicism that was unique to their position as American women. While most women did not receive a true classical education, elite women were able to gain a glimpse of knowledge of the classics through English translations of classical history and literature and the widespread use of classical aesthetics in the home. Women's relation to neoclassicism went beyond this surface-level understanding, however; they adopted classical pseudonyms through historical role-playing and displayed a clear abundance of classical references in published works and private letters. Colonial women's role in society was indirectly tied to neoclassicism through the ideas of

republican motherhood and the Roman matron. Both ideologies were personal, emotional, and practical ways for these women to participate in patriotism for the budding of the new nation and the Revolutionary War.

As formal education was seen as inherently masculine through the 18th and 19th centuries, women received little education. Women's education, even at the most basic level, was focused less on intellect and more on domestic skills that were deemed more appropriate. While boys were educated in preparation for a future career in government or trade, since girls could not become "legislators, or ministers, or lawyers, little care was taken to provide them with any but the most elementary forms of schooling."⁷⁷ It was simply not practical nor needed for girls to receive systematic schooling as the local boys did. As a result, even wealthy women's education, as Eliza Lucas Pinckney wrote, was just "above that of a chambermaid."⁷⁸ The lack of formal education for women during early America was not a coincidence; women's intellectual pursuits were suppressed at this time because men were troubled by the thought of women having intellectual equality, as it might "disrupt the social, economic, and political frameworks that were sustained by the notion of sexual difference."⁷⁹ For women to remain within the domestic sphere and thus follow the social norms, education needed to be kept at an arm's length from the majority of women.

The education women did obtain focused on more "practical" and domestic skills. Like all schooling in early America, there was no official or standard curriculum when it came to

⁷⁷ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 26.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 191-2.

⁷⁹ Lucia McMahon, *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early American Republic* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), 3.

girls. Most would have attended the local dame schools alongside boys, where they learned the very basics of reading and arithmetic. Most girls that were of a class to receive schooling knew how to read yet the majority could not write; writing was viewed as a vocational skill that only men needed to know how to do. While boys went on to learn about more advanced studies, girls' education turned more towards how to be a good wife and run a household. They were taught sewing, spinning, embroidery, catechism, cooking, cleaning, and how to take care of children.⁸⁰

The quality and quantity of education that women received varied drastically depending on a variety of factors, such as socioeconomic status, father's occupation, and the degree of progressiveness of thought of the family. Socioeconomic status was perhaps the biggest indicator when it came to education. All but the most elite women had virtually no access to education as they aged out of the dame schools. Books were expensive and hard to come by if the family was not affluent. Even if they did once learn how to read, many women lacked enough leisure time to continue reading often enough to retain or improve their reading skills as they aged. It was not uncommon for women at the bottom of the social scale to be illiterate for most of the eighteenth century; the closing of the literacy gap for women in America did not occur until sometime between 1780-1850.⁸¹ Wealthier women, however, had greater access to education. As the colony and nation established itself, some female finishing schools or private schools opened, but they provided haphazard education and viewed advanced learning as an afterthought.⁸² Nonetheless, most women of this class would have grown up in homes with personal libraries

⁸⁰ Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 108.

⁸¹ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 193.

⁸² Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 14.

and read continuously throughout their lives. While their brothers were classically educated by their tutors, girls sometimes had their own tutors that taught them feminine subjects. A copy of *The Polite Lady; or a Course in Female Education; in a Series of Letters from a Mother to a Daughter* that was printed in Philadelphia offers more insight into elite women's education; it lists reading, writing, cyphering, dancing, drawing, music, French, geography, sewing, and cleaning as topics covered.⁸³

The man of the household's occupation also increased the likelihood of the daughters being educated. While oftentimes not rich, daughters of clergymen received an education similar to that of an affluent family. Hayes states that evidence suggests that daughters of clergymen were the women most likely to know ancient languages.⁸⁴ This is most likely since the occupation incorporated and relied so heavily on written text, so the fathers were more likely to value education as essential and thus pass literacy down to their female family members.

As always, some families had stricter or more progressive views on women being educated which impacted the education of their daughters. Mercy Otis Warren, the writer whose work will be focused on in the rest of the chapters, benefited from a father who valued education so much that he allowed her to be tutored right alongside her brothers. It was not an equal education, as Warren was not allowed to learn Latin or Greek, but it was an education much more extensive than most other women of her time. She read modern and ancient history, ancient literature in translation, and Shakespeare. Aaron Burr, eventual Vice President under Jefferson,

⁸³ Charles Allen, *The Polite Lady, Or, A Course of Female Education; in a Series of Letters from a Mother to a Daughter* (Philadelphia: Printed for Matthew Carey, 1793), <https://books.google.com/books?id=E24EAAAAYAAJ&dq=female%20accomplishment&pg=PA3#v=onepage&q&f=false>

⁸⁴ Kevin J. Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 3.

earnestly believed in women receiving a better education, so he allowed his daughter, Theodosia Burr, to have an education that far exceeded other women and resembled that of a boy. His great-grandfather, Reverend Timothy Edwards, held a similar belief about women's education, educating his ten daughters "in the same manner as his one son and those pupils who prepared under his direction for entrance into Harvard and Yale."⁸⁵

While very few women received a full classical education as men did, elite women and daughters of clergymen sometimes did learn Latin and Greek. In various wills, women were left "a parcel of Latin books" by their fathers. Reverend Thomas Teackle's will states that he left many classical books to his two daughters. One daughter, Elizabeth, received "many theological works; a Greek and Latin dictionary; and Latin works by Lucian, Cicero, Horace, and Sallus," while the other, Catherine, got "many Latin works." While there is no direct proof that these two daughters knew Greek or Latin, it can be inferred that they had at least some knowledge of the languages because they inherited these works, and Teackle thought it was important enough to be dictated in his will. Other female relatives of prominent patriots knew ancient languages. Jonathan Edward's sisters all knew Latin and some also knew Greek, and William Byrd's daughters had a copy of John Clarke's *An Introduction to the Making of Latin*. Eliza Lucas Pickney's daughter learned Latin, and there is some evidence that Pinckney herself understood the language.⁸⁶ William Byrd's second wife knew Greek; he stated that "When I thought you knew only your mother tongue, I was passionately in love with you: but when indeed I learned

⁸⁵ Joanna Lyn Reynolds, "Republican Mothers Of And Above Their Time: Abigail Adams And Theodosia Burr Alston," Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports, 2008, 65, <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1790&context=etd>

⁸⁶ Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 19.

that you also spoke Greek, the tongue of the Muses, I went completely crazy about you.”⁸⁷

Martha Laurens Ramsay’s obituary states that she loved learning and “had a thorough knowledge of the Latin and Greek.”⁸⁸ *The American Lady’s Preceptor* lists two biological sketches of exemplary colonial women: the book reported of Elizabeth Smith, that “with scarcely any assistance, she taught herself the French, Italian, Spanish, German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages” and that Ana Maria Schurman’s “proficiency in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, in which she wrote and spoke fluently, astonished the learned.”⁸⁹

Personal letters provide further explicit evidence of women knowing Latin and Greek. The education of John and Abigail’s daughter, Nabby Adams, appears multiple times in the ample surviving correspondence, and it is clear that she was taught Latin as a child. Abigail wrote to John, “I smiled at your couplet of Latin....Your daughter may be able in time to construe it as she has already made some considerable proficiency in her accidents.”⁹⁰ For generations, the women in Burr’s family received an education rooted in learning the ancient languages. As mentioned prior, Reverend Timothy Edwards’ daughters “were so skilled in classical languages that ‘when called away from home, as he often was in his capacity of eminent divine, he left the instructions to his daughters in Latin and Greek.’”⁹¹ Esther Burr wrote that Aaron Burr Sr., “has persuaded me to take up Latin with him....I had learned it a little in our

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁹ *The American Lady's Preceptor : A Compilation Of Observations, Essays And Poetical Effusions Designed To Direct The Female Mind In A Course Of Pleasing And Instructive Reading* (Baltimore: Edward J. Coale, 1810), 162-9, <https://archive.org/details/americanladyspre00balt/page/82/mode/2up?q=cornelia>

⁹⁰ Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, 21.

⁹¹ Richard N. Cote, *Theodosia Burr Alston: Portrait of a Prodigy* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Corinthian Books, 2002), 5.

home at Northampton.”⁹² Aaron Burr Jr. continued this trend by constantly writing home to make sure that his daughter mastered both Latin and Greek. At only ten years old, “Theodosia was reading Terence and Horace in the original Latin, studying Greek, perusing Gibbon, playing harp and the piano, taking lessons in ballet, and learning to skate.”⁹³

Even women who did not have easy access to a classical education were still able to develop a relationship and interact with neoclassicism in a uniquely American and feminine way. The first way is through an aesthetic appreciation and incorporation of neoclassicism. Although aesthetic appreciation seems like just a veneer, it is important to mention because it was the most acceptable form of personal interaction with neoclassicism; it did not threaten the status quo and was a form of classicism that women were in fact expected to participate in. Women would furnish their homes with furniture and wallpaper inspired by antiquity, order swatches of fabric to make Grecian gowns, and buy china and porcelain decorated with scenes from mythology.⁹⁴ The aesthetic adoption of neoclassicism can best be seen through portraits. In South Carolina, New England, and the mid-Atlantic during the Revolutionary era, elite married women frequently posed in portraits with their husbands in antique dresses emulating Roman women. Their hair would be upswept, sometimes covered by fabric similar to a mantle that women of ancient Rome wore. Around them were “vaguely classical artifacts,” like statues, temples, pedestals, vases, and monuments.⁹⁵ Winterer describes these portraits as “a self-conscious act of revolutionary self-fashioning by American women, an identification with the austerity of

⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹³ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 216.

⁹⁴ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

Rome.”⁹⁶ Women in the paintings were the only ones dressed in classical costumes; the men wore modern military uniforms, invoking the patriot cause. The men almost always posed in the stance of an ancient orator while the women only invoked the ancient world through clothing. The women stood passively or simply sat next to their husbands.

A more direct application of neoclassicism for women was through reading classical references in newspapers, images, periodicals, summarized histories, and translated works. Since women could not go to universities to acquire classical knowledge, they were dependent on these subliterate works as a substitute. Latin quotes and allusions widely were used in local newspapers that aimed to be read and understood by all.⁹⁷ Illustrated classical texts, such as John Ogilby's and Alexander Pope's translations of Homer and multiple renditions of the story of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, were popular among women for their readability and accessibility. Given the high cost of books, they were luxury books and a sign of higher social status.⁹⁸ Also easier to access and understand were popular illustrations that were clearly classically inspired. An important aspect of early American iconography that appeared abundantly throughout this period was Minerva and personified Liberty/Columbia. Minerva, the Roman goddess of war and wisdom, would be shown with her shield resting beside her, beckoning towards the looming fields of the new nation. Liberty became the symbol of the nation. Both took inspiration from antiquity to represent this Rome reborn as a “gentle, peace-loving woman.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹⁷ Burstein, “The Classics,” 31.

⁹⁸ Winterer, “From Royal to Republican,” 1270.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1266-7.

Among the elite women, there was a trend of periodicals targeted specifically towards women so that they could learn more about ancient Greece and Rome. These periodicals were en-vogue in the middle decades of the eighteenth century as classical learning became a trend in conversations between men and women as part of a new polite society. For men, it was a way to show off their learning without coming across as a bore. For women, though, it took an extreme amount of careful balancing to engage in these conversations. They could contribute to the conversation, yet they did not have access to a formal education of the classics to draw upon and those with a deeper knowledge also had to be careful not to come across as surpassing the male's knowledge. Speaking broadly about ancient history was acceptable, "but the classical languages (especially Greek) were not; admiring the heroism of Cicero or Scipio Africanus was acceptable, but tying the heroism to prescriptions for modern statecraft was not; reading about ancient orators was acceptable, while declaiming aloud less so."¹⁰⁰ To successfully do this, women needed more published work to help them, thus women's advice periodicals offered guidance and filled the gap in basic classical knowledge. Through these works, women were able to use classicism to "fashion themselves as women of taste and learning" when it "was the central political, artistic, and intellectual conversation of the nation."¹⁰¹

Looking at these women's periodicals, it becomes clear just how prominent classical references were. *Wonders of the Female World*—featuring Clio (the Muse of history), Athena, and Lucretia (whose rape led to the creation of the Roman Republic) on the cover in front of Mount Parnassus with its inside pages full of ancient female worthies—and the *American*

¹⁰⁰ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 14-15.

¹⁰¹ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 5.

Magazine—featuring articles about Cornelia (mother of the Gracchi) and Hortensius’ daughter, who herself gave a public oration—were both popular examples.¹⁰² *The American Lady’s Preceptor* recounts the stories of Cornelia (mother of the Gracchi), Cyrus the Great, Felicitas (Roman martyr), Boadicea (a queen in Britain that led a revolt against the Roman Empire), and various tales of writer Valerius Maximus. Madeleine de Scudery’s *The Female Orators* lists Portia (Brutus’ wife), Sophonisba (a Carthaginian who poisoned herself during the Second Punic War), Lucretia, Volumnia (both the wife and mother of Coriolanus), Livia (Augustus’ wife), Octavia (Mark Anthony’s wife), and Agrippina (a member of the Julio-Claudian family who was especially revered in antiquity) as exemplars. On a cover of *The Female Spectator*, which ran from 1744 to 1746, was an image of four women sitting around a desk with a bust of Sappho visible. Not only does the evidence of these periodicals work as an example of women reading ancient sources themselves, but it also indicates that “these women see themselves as working in a historical tradition.”¹⁰³

Summarized texts detailing ancient histories were very popular in early America and served as most women’s only access to classical literature by eliminating the language barrier. They were written in the vernacular as part of an emerging tradition of rewording classics into the vernacular in the 18th century. In early America, Temple Stanyan’s *Grecian History* and Charles Rollin’s *Ancient History* were the most widely read.¹⁰⁴ Stanyan’s work was found in countless private libraries with logs of women reading it and some even had women’s names

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰³ Angela Vietto, *Women and Authorship in Revolutionary America* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 22-23.

¹⁰⁴ Roberts, “Pericles in America,” 277.

written inside to indicate that it belonged to them.¹⁰⁵ Rollins was undoubtedly a staple for both men and women, perhaps because he meshed ancient history with Christian themes. Abigail Adams mentioned the book multiple times in correspondences, writing to John that she found “great pleasure and entertainment” in it and that she “perswaded Johnny to read me a page or two every day.”¹⁰⁶ While Rollins and Stanyan were the standards, there were other summarized texts commonly read by women. In William Byrd’s library, there was a copy of *The Emperor Marcus Antoninus: His Conversations with Himself* that contained Lucy Byrd’s autograph.¹⁰⁷ Sarah, James Logan’s oldest daughter, owned a copy of John Langhorne’s *Correspondence of Theodosius and Constantia*.¹⁰⁸

When it came to translated works of ancient literature, Plutarch’s *Lives* remained the most popular for women, just like they were for men. These translations “extended the knowledge of Greek and Roman history” to those who could not have a classical education.¹⁰⁹ Part of the reason Plutarch was so popular at the time was because the *Lives* were easy to understand and focused on narratives of exemplary men. As a result, there is numerous evidence of women reading and referencing Plutarch. Anne Bradstreet, the first published woman poet in the colonies, referenced Plutarch in the poem “The Four Monarchies,” writing “He that at large would satisfie his mind, In Plutarch’s *Lives* his history may find.”¹¹⁰ A famous story involving

¹⁰⁵ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 28; Hayes, *A Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, 23.

¹⁰⁷ Hayes, *A Colonial Woman’s Bookshelf*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Richard, “Plutarch,” 599.

¹¹⁰ Roberts, “Pericles in America,” 277.

Eliza Lucas Pinckney in 1742 demonstrates the popularity and power of Plutarch on women. Pinckney was reading Plutarch, as she often did, when an older woman attempted to throw her copy in the fire to deter Pinckney from continuing to read on the grounds that it was bad for her brain and an impediment to finding a suitable husband.¹¹¹ While women were already reading Plutarch in the first half of the eighteenth century, the author's popularity exploded in the years during and immediately following the Revolutionary War. The *Lives* were recommended reading for women in sources like *Philadelphia Repository* and *Weekly Register* in 1801, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* by Hester Chapone, and *Flowers of Ancient History* by John Adams.¹¹² Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* in particular fascinated women. While it told the story of a Spartan lawgiver, it also commented on Spartan women being essential for the state's success and men's military prowess.¹¹³

On a larger scale, Alexander Pope's translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was a best-seller and the most popular translation in the colonies.¹¹⁴ His translations were visually appealing, accessible for purchase, and easy to read, resulting in quotes from them copied into letters, diaries, commonplace books, and needlework. Maria Bissell created a silk embroidery of Hector, Andromache, and Astyanax's tearful goodbye, based on Pope's *Iliad*. Pesta Gates, just ten years old, produced an alphabetic sampler drawing on lines of Pope's *Iliad*.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Roberts, "Pericles in America," 277; Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 20-21; Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 12.

¹¹² Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 73.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5; 29.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

There was also a trend of American men translating ancient texts just so women in their lives could read the works. James Logan wanted his daughters to read Cato yet did not want them to learn Latin, so he translated the pseudo-Catonian *Cato's Moral Distichs* himself. Ben Franklin admired Logan's project and sent a copy to his own sister-in-law.¹¹⁶

Like men, white elite women also adopted classically inspired pseudonyms.¹¹⁷ Hicks states that “historical composition became an important vehicle by which they expressed their intellectual parity with men and their competence to contribute to the national good.”¹¹⁸ Despite being told the ancients belonged to men, women were able to find female role models from antiquity to emulate. Cornelia and Aspasia (mistress to Pericles) were commonly called upon.¹¹⁹ Judith Sargent Murray and Sarah Wentworth Morton both used Constantina as a pen name after Roman emperor Constantine the Great.¹²⁰ Early in their relationship, John and Abigail Adams engaged in historical role-play through Diana, the Roman goddess of the moon, and Lysander, a famous Spartan hero.¹²¹ Abigail Adams also used the name of Pompeia Paulina (Seneca the Younger’s wife) and Portia (wife of Brutus). Friends of Adams used Aurelia (Caesar’s mother), Calliope (a Muse), Myra (from Myrrha, the mother of Adonis), and Silvia (drawing from the goddess of the forest or the mother of Rome’s founders Romulus and Remus).¹²² A particularly patriotic woman responded to Catharine Macaulay’s works in 1769, signing her letter with the

¹¹⁶ Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 11.

¹¹⁷ Shalev, “Ancient Masks,” 162.

¹¹⁸ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 267.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹²⁰ Vietto, *Women*, 27.

¹²¹ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 276.

¹²² Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 267; Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 28.

name Sophronia, after the woman who stood up to emperor Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maxentius by committing suicide rather than being raped.¹²³ Three women in Philadelphia from the same time cultivated their own epistolary network with two of the women writing to each other under classically-inspired pseudonyms: Hannah Griffiths' Fidelity (based off of the Latin word for faith, *fides*) and Hannah Harrison's Sophronia.¹²⁴

When looking at primary sources originating from this period, there is ample evidence of women in early America using classical references abundantly. In a letter, Eliza Lucas Pinckney wrote about how she read Virgil's *Georgics* and connected it to farming on her South Carolina plantation.¹²⁵ Poet Anne Bradstreet had access to her family's extensive library and the impact of that is evident in the classical references found in her poetry; her references include "Hesiod, Homer, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristotle, Virgil, Ovid, Quintus Curtius, Pliny, and Seneca."¹²⁶ Mercy Otis Warren's published plays all center on ancient Rome and name several Roman empresses. Judith Sargent Murray's *Gleaner* essays were rife with classical references, such as Julia, Portia, Volumnia, and Aspasia.¹²⁷ Phillis Wheatley, the first African American to be published in 1773, was classically tutored as a slave, reading Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Terence;

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 276-7.

¹²⁴ Caroline Wigginton, *In the Neighborhood: Women's Publication in Early America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016): 18-9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1hd194s>.

¹²⁵ Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 20; Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 19.

¹²⁶ Hayes, *A Colonial Woman's Bookshelf*, 16.

¹²⁷ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 259.

her poems reference Neptune, the muses, Maecenas, Apollo/Phoebus, Aurora/Eos, Helios/Sol, and more.¹²⁸

During her salutary oration at the Young Ladies Academy in 1793, student Priscilla Mason argued for women having more rights based on Roman emperor “Heliogabalus's establishment of ‘a senate of women’ to regulate dress.”¹²⁹ “Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism,” published in 1779 by someone under the pseudonym Clarissa, describes someone entering a heaven of just female patriots from the Bible (Deborah and Miriam), antiquity (a female Spartan, Portia, Boadicea), and modern times (Abigail and Elizabeth Adams with other unnamed American women).¹³⁰ Esther De Berdt Reed’s “The Sentiment of an American Woman” referenced Volumnia while “Sentiments of A Lady in New Jersey” referred to the “Roman courage” of ancient women more broadly.¹³¹

When Theodosia Burr contemplated if she should marry her suitor, she referenced Aristotle by stating “a man should not marry before he is six-and-thirty,” which sparked a conversation delving further into the work of Aristotle.¹³² After she married Joseph Alston, she

¹²⁸ John C. Shields, “Phillis Wheatley’s Use of Classicism,” *American Literature* 52, no. 1 (1980): 97-111, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2925190>; Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 32.

Wheatley’s famous relationship with neoclassicism is beyond the scope of this paper, as I am focusing on how Mercy Otis Warren and other extremely elite white women used classical references to build a political identity that was both feminine and American. While Wheatley had a similar relationship with classics, her interaction had far greater implications and was not viewed at the time as “American” due to her position as an enslaved woman. Wheatley’s use of neoclassicism has already been studied at great length and the implications thoroughly addressed, but it is still important to acknowledge her unique position as an enslaved person that was taught a classical education by her enslaver’s family. Her knowledge of classical works was extensive and beyond what most of the other women talked about in this chapter received.

¹²⁹ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 268.

¹³⁰ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 273.

¹³¹ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 104-5.

¹³² Reynolds, “Republican Mothers,” 98-99.

wrote, “Where you are, there is my country, and in you are [centered] all my wishes. Were you a Brutus, I should be a Roman. But were you a Caesar, I should only wish glory to Rome that glory might be yours.”¹³³ This is a loaded excerpt that is implicitly political. Not only did colonial women consume classical works, but we also get glimpses of an engaged political identity centered on neoclassicism. Burr here parallels the Latin phrase *ubi tu gaius, ego gaia* which can be translated as originally meaning “where thou art happy, I am happy.” The phrase was associated with *coemptio*, “one of three forms of marriage in which the woman passed from her father’s *patria potestas* or from her guardian’s *tutela* into the *manus* of her husband.”¹³⁴ There is some contention about when the phrase was uttered; it was either said when at the threshold of her husband’s house or when passed from her father’s power to her new husband’s. Thus, the phrase “signified the woman’s acknowledgment of her new legal status and of the fact that she was no longer under the authority of her father or legal guardian.”¹³⁵ Additionally, Gaia is the feminized version of the incredibly common praenomen (personal first name) Gaius; the two names also acted as the generic name referring to any male and woman. The Latin phrase, therefore, can also be translated as “where you are Gaius, I am Gaia.” This interpretation would further connect the bride to the groom, as it represents the woman’s connection to her husband and her role as an extension of himself.

Burr wrote this quote to her husband in 1802, a year after the couple married and near the start of his political career as a Democratic-Republican. A year prior, he had run for the South

¹³³ Matthew L. Davis, *Memoirs of Aaron Burr*, vol. 2 (Urbana, Illinois: 2005), 207-8, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7851>

¹³⁴ Gary Forsythe, “‘Ubi Tu Gaius, Ego Gaia’. New Light on an Old Roman Legal Saw,” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 45, no. 2 (1996): 241, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4436421>.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Carolina House of Representative and failed; by the time of this quote, Alston ran again with Burr awaiting the results. The political landscape of Charleston was tense, as Federalists had a stronghold on the area for decades yet nationally the Democratic-Republican was quickly gaining traction.¹³⁶ By paralleling the Latin phrase, Burr was going further than just stating that she loved her husband; she was using elements of antiquity as a cultural framework for her political opinions. She is saying that if Alston was Brutus (who assassinated Caesar to save the Republic from tyranny which American patriots had just largely identified with during the Revolution), she would be Roman (cheering him on and identifying with his cause). If Alston was Caesar (a tyrant that ultimately destroyed the Republic with civil wars), she would in turn cheer him on and side with him. This equated to her life, as if Alston won the election peacefully, she would identify with that politically as an American (although she could not actually vote). But if Alston lost again, perhaps she would side politically with the hostility between the two political parties and wish him to revolt against the ruling Federalists to gain the political power Alston so desperately wanted. Her politicalness, while apparent, was still within the acceptable limits for a woman at the time because she is saying that she cares less about the actual political parties and more so with Alston himself – she is a part of his world in his *manus*. Not only was she seeing her life through a neoclassical lens, but she is also thinking critically about her place in the political world and the implications of her words. While Burr's quote is fascinating, it is only just the beginning of proving that elite women used neoclassicism to express political thought and identity.

¹³⁶ Richard Campbell, "'Not Without His Enemies And Perhaps His Own Nemesis': Governor Joseph Alston And The War Of 1812," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 116, no. 1 (2015): 29–54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24638534>.

It is important to note that the biggest difference between men and women's use of neoclassicism is that men were expected to pursue intellectual pursuits while women were constantly being warned about the dangers of being too learned. Those that dared to seek an advanced education in "masculine" subjects were subject to ridicule and seen as abandoning their domestic responsibilities, as "too much education could make women unfeminine and undesirable, poor wives and mothers."¹³⁷ It made them appear "insane and requiring restraint," derogatorily called bluestockings, a *virilis femina*, or homasse (man-woman).¹³⁸ It was such a powerful concern that men would advise their daughters to hide the extent of their knowledge from other men, lest they be repulsed by their literary ability.¹³⁹ Even though John Adams did not tell Nabby she could not learn ancient languages, he cautioned her: "[You] must not tell many people of it, for it is scarcely reputable for young ladies to understand Latin and Greek." He wrote a similar sentiment to his nieces, warning them not to become pedants in Greek and Latin.¹⁴⁰ *Lady's Magazine*, a periodical aimed at women, published a story about a clergyman's daughter, Amelia, who knew Latin and Greek yet was "negligent of her dress" and with "pride and pedantry grew up with learning in her breast." She was eventually avoided by all. The piece ends with stating that just "because a few have gained applause by studying the dead languages, all womankind should [not] assume their Dictionaries and Lexicons."¹⁴¹ The message of the

¹³⁷ Vietto, *Women*, 21.

¹³⁸ Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 13.

¹³⁹ Vietto, *Women*, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Reynolds, "Republican Mothers," 27.

¹⁴¹ Kerber, *Women*, 199.

story is clear: women's intellectual pursuit of classicism was unnecessary, frowned upon, and damaging.

Although it is evident that women in early America developed a personal relationship with neoclassicism, there were still clear limits to their classical learning as classicism was formally still masculine. The social climate of the period also presents challenges to our study of that relationship. The notion of pedantry and other patriarchal limits imposed on learned women during this period means that there is little direct evidence stating exactly why women were so drawn to neoclassicism intellectually and what exactly their words meant, so an analysis of it remains somewhat speculative. In chapters 4 and 5, this very topic will be discussed at length when examining Mercy Otis Warren's plural use of Cornelia and Marcia. While some women left behind titles of what they were reading and a substantial quantity of published sources from early America are available, there is much evidence that has been lost in time. I cannot for certain say the exact books or all of the books that any woman read throughout their life, or which ones inspired Warren's writings, nor can I reconstruct all the ancient references she saw.

I can only look at the growing scholarship surrounding women's use of neoclassicism in early America while looking at primary sources and ancient texts to infer what the relationship of Warren—and women more broadly—was with neoclassicism and the implications of that relationship. While the translations of ancient texts might not be the exact same ones Warren was using, I will discover works that she was familiar with given the evidence available. The analysis will also include other classical-inspired texts extremely popular at the time that Warren would have undoubtedly seen as a member of the elite patriotic class, such as Joseph Addison's *Cato* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*. In recent years, more work has been done to examine gender studies in the 17th and 18th centuries and the idea of Republican Motherhood

specifically. While comprehensive of the work already done in the field, this thesis serves to fill a gap in the literature by looking at the topic through an in-depth classicist lens instead of just an American history perspective. By focusing on a case study of Mercy Otis Warren's pseudonym within correspondences and references in published poems, more can be revealed about women's internalization of antiquity.

Chapter 3: Mothers and Matrons

Mercy Otis Warren was born into a prominent family in Barnstable, Massachusetts Bay in 1728. She was the oldest daughter of Mary Allyne and James Otis' thirteen children, though only six of the children survived into adulthood; both sides of her lineage traced back to the beginnings of Massachusetts as a colony, resulting in her family being established and "near the top rung of society."¹⁴² Although her father had not attended college, he was a successful farmer, merchant, and lawyer. She was raised with typical Puritan beliefs—the family was viewed as a microcosm of the larger society, so authority, faith, and an avoidance of sin were instilled in Warren at a young age.¹⁴³ She married James Warren in 1754 when the couple was slightly older than average (Mercy was 26 and James was 28). He came from a similar socioeconomic background as she, although his family originated from nearby Plymouth. The couple would go on to have five children together and regard each other warmly, with Mercy calling James "first friend of my heart."¹⁴⁴ James Warren died in 1808 and Mercy six years later in 1814.

Mercy Otis Warren received an education unlike most of her contemporaries. Like most other Christian girls, Warren was taught how to read by her mother at a young age so that she would be able to read the Bible. Her mother also oversaw and instructed her on domestic skills deemed appropriate for females. While Warren was learning how to embroider, her brothers were privately tutored with a classical education by their uncle, a minister who had gone to Yale. Warren herself longed for a more advanced education; with her brother's insistence, Warren was

¹⁴² Rosemarie Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 6.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

granted the opportunity to be educated in nearly the same manner as her brothers. Beginning when she was around ten years old, her uncle provided her with a modified version of a classical education. Since she could not go to college, she was not taught Latin or Greek; however, she was taught how to write, read “Greek and Roman literature in translation, learned ancient and modern history, and explored the works of English authors such as Shakespeare, Pope, Dryden, and Milton.”¹⁴⁵ Even though she did not receive a full classical education, it is clear that she was well versed in matters of the classical tradition because her later writings are rife with references to mythology, classical figures, and ancient Rome.

By the time she reached adulthood, she had been deeply surrounded by politics her whole life. Her home colony, Massachusetts, had been a hotbed of turmoil since it first existed. The English and the French frequently squabbled over territory claims before the French and Indian War started in 1754. Despite Massachusetts being a prosperous colony, it felt the effects of Queen Anne’s War (1702-1713) and King George’s War (1744-1748). While the direct fighting happened in nearby colonies, the French and Indian War (1754-1763) still dominated the conversation in Massachusetts. Mercy’s connection with politics went further than just existing in times of conflict, though; like her education, her connection to politics was also unusual for the time—all the males around her entertained her taste for politics and encouraged her to have political thoughts. Her father was heavily involved in local politics her whole life, resulting in her household being full of talks of politics, like “including the machinations of the Massachusetts assembly, strategies of resistance to British authority, or the colonists’ right to

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

revolution.”¹⁴⁶ Her brother, who trained as a classicist following his graduation from Harvard, had a strong bond with his sister; the pair would regularly correspond with each other, talking in-depth about politics, the colony, and his supervision of the education of Susanna Haswell Rowson (author of future bestseller *Charlotte Temple*). James Warren, also a graduate of Harvard, encouraged his wife to express herself politically in her writings, writing “I suppose you are busily Engaged in the Business of an Author of great Abilities, discernment & Judgment, yet diffident & therefore hunting for Criticism & advise & correcting the draft with a trembling heart.”¹⁴⁷ Through the men in her life, Warren went into the Revolutionary period with a strong foundation of political education that is clear in nearly everything she wrote.

By the 1760s, she found herself a patriot by association. Tensions with the British were at a high and were politically connected to her family through the competition between her brother James Otis Jr. and Massachusetts Bay governor Thomas Hutchinson. Their quarrel started when salutary neglect ended in the 1760s and ultimately ended with Otis believing Hutchinson personified British tyranny itself. By 1765, James Otis Jr was a prominent voice and one of the first leaders in the revolutionary movement. In the span of one year, he wrote four pamphlets supporting his stance against the writs of assistance.¹⁴⁸ He is often credited for popularizing the iconic phrase “taxation without representation is tyranny.” Warren, an ardent defender of her brother, claimed that he started “the foundation of a revolution.”¹⁴⁹ Soon, her father and husband

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴⁹ Mercy Otis Warren and Lester H. Cohen, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution: Interspersed with Biographical, Political, and Moral Observations* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1989): 28.

also became leading Massachusetts patriots. James Warren became high sheriff after his father died, co-authored protest policies, was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and even became speaker of the House by the time the revolution started.¹⁵⁰

Before she knew it, Warren was surrounded by leading patriots debating right in front of her. The Warren's house in Plymouth became a "kind of salon for revolutionaries" and "center for the discussion of radical politics" right before and during the revolution.¹⁵¹ Since she lived in such a political environment, it comes as no surprise that she had strong political thoughts of her own. Although those around her supported her politically in private, she was not yet able to share those opinions publicly as a woman.

However, Warren soon began to communicate her opinions by writing. She wrote extensively and frequently throughout her whole life through poems, pamphlets, letters, and plays. It would be impossible for this thesis to talk in-depth about her work as a whole; instead, this thesis will focus on Warren's choice of a classically-inspired pen name (Marcia) and the ambiguous ancient reference of the name Cornelia in a poem titled "To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq." Both of these are prime examples of how women in early America forged their own relationship with neoclassicism and how that relationship reveals further information regarding women's actions at a time when much has to be inferred given the limitations placed upon women.

¹⁵⁰ Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 45.

¹⁵¹ Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 43.

Republican Motherhood

Warren's references to Marcia and Cornelia can be understood in part through the framework of republican motherhood. Republican motherhood, a modern term coined by historian Linda K. Kerber, was "a device which attempted to integrate domesticity and politics" for women in early America in the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁵² Although it first appeared in Kerber's "The Republican Mother" in 1976, it has expanded into a growing field of scholarship over the past fifty years as more and more historians focus on gender theory and viewing history deliberately through a woman's lens. Kerber and Mary Beth Norton remain the leading historians on the subject with Caroline Winterer of Stanford University leading the conversation connecting the concept directly to classicism.

Republican motherhood represents the concept that American women in the 18th and 19th centuries needed to be better educated to raise patriotic and productive men in society. Through mothers upholding republican virtues, their sons would be immersed in these values and in return would adopt those strong republican virtues as adults leading the country. As a result, mothers were viewed as the main pillar upholding American morality and thus the very fabric of society. Early American ideology required mothers who were "well informed, 'properly methodical,' and free of 'invidious and rancorous passions.'" They were to be "self-reliant (within limits), literate, untempted by the frivolities of fashion" with a "responsibility to the political scene, though not to act on it" because her "political task was accomplished within the confines of her family."¹⁵³ Women used their role as a mother to create a distinct political

¹⁵² Kerber, Linda K. "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 203, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712349>.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 202.

identity that legitimized their power in a way that felt unthreatening to the men around them; they were seen as making “an essential, though indirect, contribution to the body politic.”¹⁵⁴ While it did serve as justification for women to stay within the domestic sphere, it also turned motherhood into a “political, or protopolitical, function.”¹⁵⁵

It is a complex term, as it seemingly incorporates both parts of a dichotomy—women were given increased rights by being allowed to be educated while their role in the domestic sphere was cemented. However, it was a crucial step on the path toward women’s rights as the new nation wrestled with how to “form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, [and] insure domestic Tranquility.”

It is obvious that long before the 1760s, women were associated with child-rearing; however, the enlightenment indirectly brought up discussions about the extent of women’s mental and political ability. Most famous enlightenment philosophers left women entirely out of the discussion or were vague when it came to women’s political ability; Rousseau generally pushed the idea that women lived in a separate empire from men and politics.¹⁵⁶ Instead, the focus was put on the importance of family and women maintaining the home structure as mothers and wives. Through this focus on the domestic sphere, women shifted from merely a sex objects providing children to “friends” and “rational companions to men of understanding and taste.”¹⁵⁷ While men in early America turned to the enlightenment and antiquity for a framework,

¹⁵⁴ Rosemarie Zagari, “Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother,” *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1992): 192, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713040>.

¹⁵⁵ Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 29.

¹⁵⁶ Kerber, “Republican Mother,” 190-7; 204.

¹⁵⁷ Mercy Otis Warren, as quoted in Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma*, 28.

there was “no guidance on how women might think about their own relationship to liberty or civic virtue.”¹⁵⁸ British Whig politics, which also inspired early American state-building, offered no solution either.

As a result, there was an intellectual gap that women themselves were left to fill. Women in early America did this by focusing on and highlighting instances of political women from antiquity to model themselves after. While republican motherhood is a modern term, this phenomenon would have been visibly classical to women in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. In fact, the Democratic Association of Gloucester, New Jersey’s speech in 1801 proclaimed that “The Fair Sex-May they, like the ladies of the Roman Republic, esteem the instruction of their offspring in virtue, literature, and the liberties of their country, as their duty and highest honor.”¹⁵⁹ Sidney’s list of “Maxims for Republics,” in 1779 wrote that “It is of the utmost importance, that women should be well instructed in the principles of liberty in a republic. Some of the first patriots of ancient times, were formed by their mothers.”¹⁶⁰

As the Revolution started, republican motherhood required more direct action from women. Since the men were gone and no longer able to manage their estates, women had to take over, becoming “deputy wives” (as coined by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich).¹⁶¹ Instead of just providing morality, women were expected to become effective business and financial managers. They acted as breadwinners, farmers, and managers, and took complete control of raising the

¹⁵⁸ Kerber, “Republican Mother,” 196.

¹⁵⁹ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 292.

¹⁶⁰ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women* (London: HarperCollins, 1987), 247.

¹⁶¹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

children alone. As a result, these women grew in intellect and confidence, once again proving to society that their brains were able to handle the same matters as men. Even though they might previously have been mocked and belittled for abandoning femininity by running their estates, they were now praised and expected to do so. Although women could not fight against the British on the battlefield, their participation in the war took place at home; it was an act of direct feminine patriotism.

While there was a call for better education for women, it was seen as for the benefit of men and not for the actual woman herself. Instead of society focusing on women's intellectual pursuits, the main purpose for women learning was so that they could function as moral guides and a "fourth branch of government" over households, representing mini-societies. Women's education was viewed through its relationship to men by making "women into fit companions for republican men and, especially, reliable guarantors of masculine virtue."¹⁶² As Kerber demonstrates, "the Republican Mother's life was dedicated to the service of civic virtue: she educated her sons for it, she condemned and corrected her husband's lapses from it."¹⁶³

It is important to mention briefly that the republican mother trope grew exponentially in the years following the Revolutionary War due to the legacy of the deputy wife and increased patriotism in women. More demands were made for women to be included in community affairs and to be thought of as citizens, as evident by a pamphlet from the *Female Advocate* in 1801 and

¹⁶² Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1987): 703, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1939741>; Zagari, "Morals," 210.

¹⁶³ Kerber, "The Republican Mother," 202.

early proponents of women's equality.¹⁶⁴ However, this thesis focuses on the beginnings of this trend, as Mercy Otis Warren wrote most of her work before and during the war, not after.

Roman Matrons

The idealization of strong Roman wives led to the “mythmaking of female political martyrs” in early America, resulting in another unique feminine ideology: the Roman matron.¹⁶⁵ The ideology of Roman matrons was “more than simply nurturing mothers and supportive spouses;” they were women who were actively involved in the political narrative in antiquity.¹⁶⁶ Roman matrons functioned as “‘action figures’ rather than as passive presences, as possessing qualities shared and admired by male kinfolk, and as using their minds in ways that harm as well as help family members.”¹⁶⁷ Roman matrons served as a foundation of representation of successful feminine empowerment and role models for American women to emulate in the political life of a republic. The Roman matron was “connected by birth or marriage to a military commander or senator” and “well-to-do, educated, and political by nature, and so middle- and especially upper-class American women could identify with her social status and political opportunities.”¹⁶⁸ The fact that women made few if any concrete legal, economic, or political gains in the late eighteenth century, perhaps only strengthen their bond with Roman women, who likewise lacked formal legal and political standing.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 200.

¹⁶⁵ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 292.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Judith P. Hallett, “Introduction: Cornelia and Her Maternal Legacy.” *Helios* 33 (2006): 120.

¹⁶⁸ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 293.

The Roman Matron ideology was built upon the Roman Republic and Empire's focus on showcasing virtue. Virtue (*virtus*) was a core principle, and Romans saw themselves "as adhering to a higher moral standard than other peoples."¹⁶⁹ However, virtue was seen as exclusively masculine, as it was "an investment in seeing to it that its citizens were morally fit to take part both in the military and the governance of the Republic. Women had not before been part of this picture, since they had no official role in Roman civic matters: the state was not concerned with them because they were not concerned with the state."¹⁷⁰ Women still did strive to be seen as having this trait, although it often took extreme forms. Expression of virtue "tends to be more lethal to the lower elements, especially slaves and women, because they must exhibit more drastic behavior on behalf of the social order to gain recognition."¹⁷¹ Although not always, feminine virtue was conveyed through sacrifice for the greater good of their country. This can best be seen with Arria stabbing herself, and Portia swallowing burning coals.

This aspect of sacrifice was noticeable to women in early America. Adams herself wrote to her husband in 1782 about how it was harder for women to demonstrate their patriotic commitment, as women could not hold office or go to battle. She wrote, "I will take praise to myself. I feel that it is my due, for having sacrificed so large a portion of my peace and happiness to promote the welfare of my country."¹⁷² Although Mercy and Adams desperately wanted to be associated with exemplary Roman matrons, both knew that they would not be able

¹⁶⁹ John Alexander Lobur, *Consensus, Concordia and the Formation of Roman Imperial Ideology* (Oxford, England: Routledge, 2008), 192.

¹⁷⁰ Kristina Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2008), 151.

¹⁷¹ Lobur, *Consensus*, 197.

¹⁷² Hicks, "Portia and Marcia," 283.

to commit to this level of intensity. In January 1775, Warren started a letter by talking about the sacrifices she would make in the upcoming war: “But though we may with a Virtuous Crook be Willing to suffer pain and poverty With them, Rather than they should Deviate from their Noble Principles of Integrity and Honour, yet where Would be our Constancy and Fortitude Without their Assistance to support the Wounded Mind.” Just a few paragraphs later, she made note that “And Which of us should have the Courage of an Aria or a Portia in a Day of trial like theirs. For myself I dare not Boast, and pray Heaven that Neither Me nor my Friend May be Ever Called to such a Dreadful proof of Magnanimity.”¹⁷³ This letter established that although they would do whatever it took or needed of them for the new country to succeed, they were not eager to follow the Roman matrons into suicide. Their hesitancy most likely came from their Christianity (as suicide was a sin), and simply not wanting to die. American women, like Adams and Warren, still felt a similar yearning to be seen as virtuous despite their gender. It is what drove their political expressions and writings. Warren adapted the Roman expression of virtue and instead made it mean that early American women would support their nation within the home and participate politically in subtle ways.

Although Roman women’s movement and power were restricted in both political action and public roles, in that they were not considered full citizens (just like women in early America), there are still a few documented Roman wives that did not let their restricted status stop them from influencing the men around them and even directly demonstrating in the Forum. The group of women opposing the Lex Oppia alongside Arria, Volumnia, and Hortensia were matrons commonly referenced by early American women.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

The Lex Oppia was a sumptuary law in ancient Rome that existed from 215-195 BC that specifically targeted women's wealth; it was established due to the costly demands of the Second Punic War. Ancient Roman historian Livy wrote that the law "provided that no woman should possess more than half an ounce of gold, to wear a multi-colored garment, or to ride in an animal-drawn vehicle in a city or town, or within a mile thereof, unless taking part of public religious festivals."¹⁷⁴ After the law had been in place for twenty years, there was talk about its repeal in 195, which drew large crowds at the Forum. Marcus Fundanius and Lucius Valerius supported the repeal while Marcus and Publius Junius Brutus and Cato the Elder defended the need for it. Neither side's argument led to the law ending—it was crowds of women flocking to the Forum and even delivering a speech that resulted in the political change: "on the day after the making of these speeches opposing and supporting the measure, a considerably larger crowd of women poured into the streets. In a united body, they besieged the doors of the Bruti, who intended vetoing their colleagues' proposal; and they did not withdraw until the tribunes abandoned the threatened veto. After that, there was no doubt that all the tribes would vote for the repeal."¹⁷⁵ This story was recounted by various ancient authors, who go about the event in slightly different ways. Livy gives no details about the planning of the demonstration by the women, thus making the "nameless and faceless" matrons "appear and disappear without explanation and whose actions are mysterious even to men of the time."¹⁷⁶ Cato takes this event to illustrate the exact disorder the Lex Oppia was aimed to stop. Valerius asserts the matrons'

¹⁷⁴ Livy, *Rome and the Mediterranean and the Early History of Rome*, translated by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976): 34.1.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.8.

¹⁷⁶ Milnor, *Gender*, 160.

right to protest as an act of patriotism that the “members of the Roman body politic are wont to do when they feel that they have been wronged.”¹⁷⁷

References to Arria were common in the 18th and 19th centuries, as evident by the references made in political writings like Jurist James Wilson, Margaret Bayard Smith, and Sarah Wentworth Morton’s “The Virtues of Society.”¹⁷⁸ Warren referenced her in a letter to Abigail Adams, writing “And Which of us should have the Courage of an Aria or a Portia in a Day of trial like theirs.”¹⁷⁹ It is not surprising that Warren and Adams were familiar with the story of Arria, as Arria in classical literature was a strong figure exerting ideal virtue by being extremely dedicated to both her husband and nation. Arria was married to Caecina Paetus during emperor Claudius’ reign in the first century AD. She is described by Pliny the Younger as “that celebrated Arria, who gave her husband not only consolation, but an example, in the hour of death.”¹⁸⁰ Paetus revolted against the emperor, and as punishment, he had to kill himself. He was hesitant to do so, but Arria was not and led by example. In an action “no doubt, truly noble, when drawing the dagger she plunged it in her breast, and then presented it to her husband.. ‘It does not hurt, my Paetus.’”¹⁸¹ The Roman poet Martial’s account of Arria’s sacrifice similarly highlights Arria’s commitment to virtue; after she stabbed herself, she handed Paetus the sword and said “If thou believest me... the wound I have inflicted has no smart; but the word thou shalt

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Warren herself refers to a Roman sumptuary law in her poem “On Primitive Simplicity” that can be presumed to be about the women’s involvement in the lex Oppia.

¹⁷⁸ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 291-2.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 280.

¹⁸⁰ Pliny, *Letters*, translated by W. M. L. Melmoth, vol 1. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935): 3.16.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

inflict—this for me, Paetus, has the smart.”¹⁸² Throughout each of the ancient authors' work, it is clear that Arria's expression of virtue does not exist on its own—her political legacy is only allowed to exist through her connection to her husband. She is not being political or virtuous for her own sake, but as a reminder to her husband who is then able to act with virtue properly.

Volumnia was another matron heavily called upon. Volumnia (also known as Veturia) was the mother of Coriolanus in both ancient sources and Shakespeare's famous play *Coriolanus*. Most early Americans would have consumed and been familiar with her through both avenues. By 1776, “copies of Shakespeare were fairly common in the American colonies,” including the personal libraries of both John Adams and Mercy Otis Warren.¹⁸³ Since Shakespeare used Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch as source material for the play, it follows the same events.¹⁸⁴ However, Shakespeare develops Volumnia's character and makes her a central figure in the play. In both ancient and modern sources, the wife and mother of Coriolanus similarly had a strong influence over Coriolanus and wanted what was best for the nation. Coriolanus achieved military fame early in his career; however, he was exiled a few years later when Rome experienced a grain shortage. Coriolanus fled to the Volscians, whom he persuaded to invade Rome. It is when Coriolanus and the Volscians have Rome besieged that Volumnia (mother) and Vergilia (wife) act politically in Plutarch's version. A group of women approaches Volumnia and Vergilia, asking them to appeal to Coriolanus to get him to stop “in

¹⁸² Martial, *Martial Epigrams*, translated by Walter C. A. Ker, vol 1. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 1.13.

¹⁸³ Edwin Elliott Willoughby, “The Reading Of Shakespeare In Colonial America,” *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 31, no. 1 (1937): 53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24296498>.

¹⁸⁴ E. A. J. Honigmann, “Shakespeare's Plutarch.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1959): 25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2867020>.

behalf of your country.” Volumnia replies that she will try but “For I know not whether the man will have any regard for us, since he has none for his country, which he once set before mother and wife and children. However, take us and use us and bring us to him; if we can do nothing else, we can at least breathe out our lives in supplications for our country.”¹⁸⁵

Volumnia takes the group of women, Vergilia, and Coriolanus’ two young sons to meet with Coriolanus in camp where she makes a passionate speech to Coriolanus:

We cannot ask from the gods both victory for our country and at the same time safety for thee...consider and be well assured that thou canst not assail thy country without first treading underfoot the corpse of her who bore thee. For it does not behoove me to await that day on which I shall behold my son either led in triumph by his fellow-citizens or triumphing over his country. If, then, I asked you to save your country by ruining the Volscians, the question before thee would be a grievous one, my son, and hard to decide, since it is neither honourable for a man to destroy his fellow-citizens, nor just for him to betray those who have put their trust in him.¹⁸⁶

Coriolanus did not respond, so she continued:

Although thou hast already punished thy country severely, thou hast not shown thy mother any gratitude. It were, therefore, a most pious thing in thee to grant me, without any compulsion, so worthy and just a request as mine; but since I

¹⁸⁵ Plutarch, “The Life of Coriolanus,” in *The Parallel Lives*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1916): 33, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Coriolanus*.html.

¹⁸⁶ Plutarch, “Coriolanus,” 35.

cannot persuade thee, why should I spare my last resource?’ And with these words she threw herself at his feet, together with his wife and children.¹⁸⁷

This moves Coriolanus, who proclaims that he will stop fighting Rome despite the implications it would mean for him, “Thou art victorious, and thy victory means good fortune to my country, but death to me; for I shall withdraw vanquished, though by thee alone.”¹⁸⁸ Plutarch then goes on to say that these women went on to be glorified by all of the Roman people with a temple erected in honor of their sacrifice and determination for their country, “declaring their belief that the city's salvation was manifestly due to them.”¹⁸⁹ Volumnia’s form of patriotism was demonstrated through the power of a male, similar to Arria. She is only praised in antiquity through her connection to Coriolanus and not because of her herself. She is emulating the very values Coriolanus himself should have been exhibiting throughout the whole story; by recalling him to his Roman virtue, she is reminding him of and emphasis that virtue. Her power is instead seen as Coriolanus finally acting as a Roman should, not as a woman inherently being virtuous by herself. The focus is on the male and his virtue, not solely a feminine source of full virtue.

Hortensia was likewise referenced by many eighteenth century women, but most notably by author Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay (who herself was not American but developed a close friendship with Warren and had many supporters in America at the time). Hortensia was the daughter of famous orator Quintus Hortensius Hortalus. She is most known for speaking directly

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.1.

to the Second Triumvirate in protest of a law targeting wealthy women. The triumvirs issued a proscription against their enemies and as a way of funding the war against Brutus and Cassius following the assassination of Julius Caesar; when they needed more money, they “published an edict requiring 1400 of the richest women to make a valuation of their property, and to furnish for the service of the war such portion as triumvirs should require from each.”¹⁹⁰ A group of angry matrons flocks to the Forum to protest with Hortensia serving as the sole spokesperson. She says,

You have already deprived us of our fathers, our sons, our husbands, and our brothers, whom you accused of having wronged you; if you take away our property also, you reduce us to a condition unbecoming our birth, our manners, our sex.....But if we women have not voted any of you public enemies, have not torn down your houses, destroyed your army, or led another one against you; if we have not hindered you in obtaining offices and honours, — why do we share the penalty when we did not share the guilt?...Why should we pay taxes when we have no part in the honours, the commands, the state-craft, for which you contend against each other with such harmful results?¹⁹¹

Although the men in charge are angry that a woman would dare speak to them so openly and directly, Hortensia’s speech works: the number of women having to pay the tax is significantly reduced.

¹⁹⁰ Appian, *The Histories of Appian*, translated by Horace White (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1913): 32.1, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/appian/civil_wars/4*.html

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

Hortensia's expression of patriotism is interesting, as it is not exactly directly through men (like Arria and Volumnia). She is working as part of a group completely composed of women. She is shown as being victorious without the help of a man and exists on her own without being attached to a story involving a husband; her influential power is wholly feminine. However, this might only have been able to happen due to the conditions of the late Republic with most men absent (having either been exiled or proscribed), consequently offering her and the other women more public political leeway).

Despite Kerber tracing the ideological origin of republican motherhood to Spartan women that "raised sons prepared to sacrifice themselves to the good of the *polis*,"¹⁹² it is abundantly clear that American women overwhelmingly looked to Roman examples of matrons. I can presume that this is due to the differences in the gender structure of Roman life versus Greek.¹⁹³ Both societies were patriarchal and heavily restricted women's movements, but Roman women had a much more public role than Athenian women.

In classical Athens, the expectation of women was silence. Athenian historian Thucydides in *History of the Peloponnesian War* expressed this during Pericles' famous Funeral Oration: "On the other hand if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will

¹⁹² Kerber, "The Republican Mother," 188.

¹⁹³ To condense a rich and complex history of gender roles in both Athens and Rome perfectly into a few paragraphs would be impossible, as this alone is a major field of topic of discussion. A certain level of oversimplification is unfortunately unavoidable. For more information about gender dynamics in Greece, Marilyn Skinner, "Classical Studies, Patriarchy and Feminism: The View from 1986," *Women's Studies International Forum* 10, no 2. (1987); "Ten Years after Pomeroy: Studies of the Image and Reality of Women in Antiquity," *Helios* n.s. 13 (1986). For more about it in the Roman Republic and Empire, see Kristina Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life*. About how this presents itself in Plutarch, see Katariina Mustakallio, "Women Outside Their Homes, The Female Voice In Early Republican Memory: Reconsidering Cloelia And Veturia," *International Survey Of Roman Law* 40 (2012): 165-174.

be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men whether for good or for bad.”¹⁹⁴ It was women’s duty to bear children and run the household; they were not allowed to participate politically. Katz states that the origin of this expectation came from their precursor the Ionians – they “inaugurated the exclusion of women from the public sphere and their confinement to the home and to the company of a female friend,” and the Athenians adopted this practice with slightly more leeway and slightly different application to those not from a wealthy household.¹⁹⁵ In the Hellenistic period, this restriction placed on women continued. After trying a lot of different ways of controlling the stability of the country, Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote in *Roman Antiquities* that the “‘barbarians and Greeks’ tried controlled measures ‘everything from complete laxity... to draconian oversight of women’s behavior.’” Even though this was how Dionysius originally presents marriage, it quickly becomes clear that he believed marriage to primarily be about “controlling the unstable erotic force represented by women” and to relieve men of the evils caused by women.¹⁹⁶

Roman women generally had more freedom than their Greek counterparts. The Roman house, where women roamed openly and throughout, was an inherently quasi-public place. Before Augustus’ reign, women’s moral health was the responsibility of her husband or father; matters were handled within the sphere of family in the Republic. After Augustus, women were

¹⁹⁴ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Richard Crawley (London: J. M. Dent, 1910): 2.45.2, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0200%3Abook%3D2%3Achapter%3D45>

¹⁹⁵ Marilyn Katz, “Ideology and ‘The Status of Women’ in Ancient Greece,” *History and Theory* 31, no. 4 (1992): 72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505416>.

¹⁹⁶ Milnor, *Gender*, 147-8.

included more in the laws, and marriage was seen as a way “to keep women in their place” due to Augustus’s reign’s focus on renewal of traditional family values, reproduction, and the *pietas* of the new empire.¹⁹⁷ However, most of these laws symbolically attacked women and focused on feminine adultery—the charge of adultery was even frequently used in association with treason.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, in the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, there emerged a new symbolic form of honor, as “women might receive certain rights and social privileges.”¹⁹⁹ Whereas fathers in Rome were expected to use their *patria potestas* (total control of the immediate and extended family given to men of a household), women did not have equivalent power. Nor could women hold any public office.

Yet Roman women were still able to carve a space for themselves due to a loophole that allowed matrons to leave a mark on history by acting “outside the *normal* limits of women.”²⁰⁰ Female political agency within the Roman Republic was seen at times of war and crisis, resulting in the legacy of Roman matrons (to women in early America) advocating “for the greater good for their nation, especially in wartime.”²⁰¹ Within these depictions, matrons would be in “more or less organized female groups [to] manifest their demands in public” actively, often with their children alongside. While this was not a common occurrence, it was still noted; what matters the most is that ancient authors depicted them as “functioning on their own initiative, leading other

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 50-2

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

women or delivering speeches.”²⁰² As a result of these slightly lesser restrictions in Rome than Greece, “women were presented as having the same kind of patriotic spirit and the same courage as their male counterparts” at times.²⁰³

Instead of emulating the punitive power of a man’s *patria potestas*, the Roman matron’s words were encouraging and inspired her husband or son to fulfill their civic obligation of honor and virtue to the *res publica*, even in times when it meant death or intense suffering. Their main characteristic was that they believed heavily in the stability and preservation of the state while still exemplifying a perfectly devoted wife. Carol Gilligan expanded on this to say that “this form of female, political communication involves a ‘different voice,’ according priority to family ties and family feelings, in contrast to Roman paternal, legal, and principle-based public and familial discourse.”²⁰⁴

The image of the Roman matron and the sentiment she introduced resonated with many women in early America who also committed themselves to the patriot cause privately and publicly when asked to, yet were constantly relegated to the sidelines as if their efforts were nothing. This would explain why American women turned more towards Roman figures, as there were more examples to look at based on the different gender dynamics. As discussed in Chapter 1, men in early America generally looked to both Greek and Roman sources; thus, it is significant that women from the same period gravitated more toward Roman sources. Hicks encapsulated this kindredness, stating that “despite living under a form of male guardianship,

²⁰² Ibid., 171.

²⁰³ Ibid., 174. Cf. Hallett, “Introduction.”

²⁰⁴ Hallett, “Introduction,” 134.

Roman and American women alike managed to occupy a number of political roles without benefit of citizenship.”²⁰⁵ These women simply wanted their voices heard and had clear political agendas, yet they were expected not to voice them and to act as if the war had no impact on them. Roman and American women were denied a traditional political identity among their peers due to their sex, thus forcing both groups of women to forge a distinctly feminine political identity that mostly existed behind closed doors and within private correspondences; yet when dire situations presented themselves, the women’s political agency went from the periphery to the center of the nation’s consciousness.

Another angle of this shared sense of kindredness emerges when we consider the timeframe these Roman matrons belonged to. Many of the Roman women named throughout this thesis come from the late Republic, especially the First and Second Triumvirate. Between 60-27 BC the stability of the Republic was so threatened that twice the government was ruled by three key men at a time (hence the name, *trium-viri*). The First Triumvirate was an informal rule between Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, and Marcus Licinius Crassus that lasted from 60-54 BC. The political alliance fell apart when Crassus was killed in 53 because of the in-fighting between Caesar and Pompey. The two went to war with each other, resulting in Pompey’s defeat at the Battle of Pharsalus and the perpetual dictatorship of Caesar until his assassination in 44. After Caesar's death, there was a war between his assassins (Brutus and Cassius) and his avengers (Mark Antony; Lepidus; and Octavian, Caesar’s adopted heir). The avengers constituted of the Second Triumvirate; this time, the alliance was formally established as a legal entity. They immediately began to proscribe and kill those who they believed to have been

²⁰⁵ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 293.

against Caesar. Eventually, the triumvirate fell apart in a similar fashion as the first. Lepidus was stripped of power, and a separate war between Octavian and Anthony began. Octavian defeated Anthony at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC and became Augustus the emperor soon afterward, establishing the victorious Roman Empire. This time period was dubbed the Roman Revolution by classicist Ronald Syme.²⁰⁶

To these women focusing on and exemplifying the role of Roman matrons, America on the brink of a revolution must have felt a lot like the crisis of the late Republican period. This period of political instability and transformation in Roman society suddenly went from a topic that they learned about in their women's journals to a real prospect of what life would soon look like. At both times, the world suddenly felt scary and uncertain; despite the uncertainty, there was no denying that an incoming war and bloodshed were inevitable. In both wars, the fighting had features of a civil war. While the American Revolution was formally against the British Empire, the reality was that those in the colonies were fighting their neighbors and families. Both wars were also brutal, gruesome, and took place within the nation itself.

Because these women were drawing direct parallels between the Roman Revolution and the American revolutionary period, perhaps they were looking at the examples of Roman matrons and combining them with the hopefulness of Republican motherhood to envision what the future would look like after the Revolutionary War. It must have felt overwhelming and terrifying to be a mother with a family relying on them when a woman could not really control the proceedings. None of these women knew if the patriots would win against Britain (especially

²⁰⁶ See Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

when the outlook did not look good at the beginning of the war) or what the nation would even look like if they were to succeed in the war. Instead of helplessly praying for the success of the nation, they looked to Rome and the work Roman women did to ensure a future for their families and nation. After the bloodshed and mayhem of the Second Triumvirate period ended, the Roman Empire emerged; long gone was the image of Julius Caesar as a tyrant and the instability of civic life. Instead, emperor Augustus and the Empire grew to be even more successful and expansive than the Republic. Life, the nation, and its citizens thrived afterward—all they had to do was survive a (relatively) brief period of fighting and instability. If the American women could assume the identity of strong Roman women, then the nation could assume the identity of the prosperous Roman Empire after the war settled.

Through this unique use of feminine neoclassicism, American women were able to insert themselves into the past and contemporary historical narrative and to express an identity through the ideology of Roman matron and republican motherhood. With the framework of a shared political identity wrapped in both republican motherhood and the idolization of the Roman matron kept in mind, we can investigate Warren's reference to the Roman matrons Marcia and Cornelia on a deeper level more rooted in classicism than previous scholarship has been able to do.

Chapter 4: Warren's Marcia(s)

Warren began using the pseudonym Marcia in March 1775 in personal correspondence with friends. Warren was the center of an extensive epistolary network that involved “John and Abigail Adams, Hannah Winthrop, Martha Washington, and Catherine Macaulay.” These correspondences were political and part of a bigger trend during the war, as the “Revolutionary printscape, rather than upholding clear-cut distinction between domestic intimacy and public politics, infused gender and femininity into the practices of republicanism.”²⁰⁷ Epistolary chains were common among women and were one form of expressing patriotism that was private yet somewhat public at the same time because these types of letters were meant to be read aloud and shared between confidants. It was an intimate yet Republican activity, as “with its emergence, the reader transformed into the democratic citizen who felt his kinship with those anonymous fellows who were ostensibly just like him. Republican print disseminated a sense of belonging alongside shared values—liberty, reason, republicanism, literacy—thereby distinguishing citizens from noncitizens. Republican print was for the virtuous citizen.”²⁰⁸ Women in these networks deeply resonated with this notion and its connection with virtue, especially Warren. Warren’s contribution was extensive, given her social connections and proximity to Boston. She “extended the links of a communication chain by copying and forwarding letters, enclosing political pamphlets, retransmitting news clippings, and even destroying letters deemed not worth the risk of falling into unfriendly hands” with her letters incorporating “domestic tidings, military intelligence, political policy, and political theory by imparting tidbits about children's illnesses

²⁰⁷ Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communications in Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 68.

²⁰⁸ Wigginton, *In the Neighborhood*, 7.

along with news about British troops' movements, inquiring after spouses while reporting on people's anxiety during wartime."²⁰⁹

Warren's use of the pen name Marcia came out of this wartime epistolary culture, as she used the name exclusively in letters involving her husband, her son, Hannah Quincy Lincoln Storer, and the Adamses.²¹⁰ She began using the name with just her husband at first, but he did not initially engage in this historical roleplay; as a result, she signed her name "M. Warren " or "Mercy Warren" until she tried out Cornelia in July 1775. Five weeks later, she returned to Marcia. In September, she signed her name as Marcia in a letter to John Adams for the first time. While she used the name the most between 1775 and 1776, she continued to use it until 1780.²¹¹ This roughly corresponds to the period when Warren began publishing work under different names: "Observations on the new Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions" under "A Columbian Patriot" in 1788; *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* in 1790 under her own name; and *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* in 1805 also under Mercy Warren.

At the same time that Warren began using Marcia, Abigail Adams began to use the pen name Portia. This Portia most likely was Brutus's wife Portia (also spelled Porcia), as "there is evidence that she read several sources that dealt at length with Portia, husband of Brutus and daughter of Cato the Younger: Rollin's *Roman History*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and Addison's *Cato*... John Adams owned the third edition of the English translation of Rollin."²¹² In

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Hicks, "Portia and Marcia," 282.

²¹¹ Hicks, "Portia and Marcia," 288.

²¹² Ibid., 282.

antiquity, Portia is described as a devoted wife, “being of an affectionate nature, fond of her husband, and full of sensible pride.”²¹³ There’s a scene in Plutarch’s *Brutus* where Brutus could not sleep and Portia could tell it was from a political concern that was deeply bothering him; knowing better than to pry, Portia “took a little knife, such as barbers use to cut the finger nails, and after banishing all her attendants from her chamber, made a deep gash in her thigh, so that there was a copious flow of blood.” As Brutus stares at her in astonishment, she says “I am Cato's daughter, and I was brought into thy house, not, like a mere concubine, to share thy bed and board merely, but to be a partner in thy joys, and a partner in thy troubles. Thou, indeed, art faultless as a husband; but how can I show thee any grateful service if I am to share neither thy secret suffering nor the anxiety which craves a loyal confidant?” She goes on to comment about women: “I know that woman's nature is thought too weak to endure a secret; but good rearing and excellent companionship go far towards strengthening the character, and it is my happy lot to be both the daughter of Cato and the wife of Brutus.” Thus, Portia asserts her suitability to be included in Brutus’ political ploy, despite the shortcomings attributed to women.

Cassius Dio’s account is virtually the same, except that he writes that Portia “was the only woman, as they say, who was privy to the plot” [of the assassination of Caesar] because of this wound scene. Brutus then “no longer hid anything from her, but felt strengthened himself and related to her the whole plot.”²¹⁴ Although it is documented that Abigail Adams was familiar with Plutarch, it remains unknown if she was familiar with Dio;²¹⁵ it is unclear which version

²¹³ Plutarch, “The Life of Brutus,” in *The Parallel Lives*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1918): 13.4, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/brutus*.html

²¹⁴ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, translated by Earnest Cary (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1917): 44.13.1 and 44.14.1, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/cassius_dio/44*.html

²¹⁵ Litto, “Addison’s *Cato*,” 50.

Abigail Adams read when deciding on the name, but it is possible that Adams was thinking of Dio's account. Abigail was a blatantly political woman and advocated for women's right to be more political, so it would not be a surprise to think she resonated with an instance of a woman being involved in the political world.

Later, once Brutus flees the country following his assassination of Caesar, Portia sees a painting of Andromache's tearful goodbye to Hector and cries, and Plutarch writes "for though her body is not strong enough to perform such heroic tasks as men do, still, in spirit she is valiant in defence of her country, just as we are."²¹⁶ Portia has a tragic end and commits suicide; upon hearing Brutus is dead, she "snatched up live coals from the fire, swallowed them, kept her mouth fast closed, and thus made away with herself."²¹⁷

Warren and Abigail Adams corresponded with each other using these names, engaging in a years-long historical roleplay. There is no record of its origins; however, it might be that the couples established or talked through the situation in person instead, as the four of them met in person in August 1775 when they began using these names. Warren sent Abigail Adams the most letters signed as Marcia, with a significant amount also sent to John Adams until late 1776. While the women led the discussion, the husbands also partook in it; John Adams wrote to James Warren right before the Revolution concerning their wives: "But if I were of opinion that the fair should be excused from the arduous cares of War and State, I should certainly think that Marcia

²¹⁶ Plutarch, *Brutus*, 23.6.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.5.

and Portia ought to be exceptions, because I have ever ascribed to those Ladies, a Share and no small one neither,-in the Conduct of our American affairs.”²¹⁸

Although Warren used the pseudonym for many years, she never expanded on why she chose that particular name. It is possible that she initially chose the name because of how similar Marcia was phonetically and/or visually to Mercy, simply wanting to lightly play into the classicism she read about. “Thus the original idea may simply have been that Marcia was a Roman matron with strong republican views” which women, like most other Americans, also valued.²¹⁹ However, it is clear that the pseudonym Marcia evolved to mean much more than that and turned into a vehicle for political expression and achievement. Hicks raises the possibility of Warren purposely making the pseudonym ambiguous so that she was “not accountable to a single historical model,” thus allowing her to have “more room to maneuver using a multivalent pseudonym.”²²⁰

Marcia as an alias was certainly classically inspired (especially given women’s historical roleplaying with Abigail Adams and her countless references to antiquity), but there is contention about which Marcia Warren is referring to. The current scholarship has not spent considerable time figuring out which Marcia is being referenced, as nearly all sources simply acknowledge the classical roots of the pseudonym without delving into it further. Even Zaggarri, a biographer of Warren, did not acknowledge its ambiguity. Richards and Harris simply provide a

²¹⁸Lawrence J. Friedman and Arthur H. Shaffer, “Mercy Otis Warren and the Politics of Historical Nationalism,” *The New England Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1975): 212, <https://doi.org/10.2307/364658>.

²¹⁹ Mercy Otis Warren, *Mercy Otis Warren*, ed. Jeffrey H. Richards, and Sharon M. Harris, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), *ProQuest Ebook Central*, 64, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/olemiss/detail.action?docID=3038820>.

²²⁰ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 286.

footnote that the “meaning behind such a name is much more complex” then quickly skip over the ambiguity.²²¹ Hicks devotes more attention to the issue, although he focuses more on Abigail Adams’ pseudonym and just brings up the possibility of the identity of Marcia being complex. Warren’s relationship with neoclassicism cannot be fully understood without considering all possible options about who she was invoking. This chapter will focus on two possible Marcias that Warren could have been referencing with her pseudonym: daughter and wife of Cato the Younger.

Marcia, the Daughter

The daughter of Cato, Marcia, does not exist in ancient sources. Her characterization comes primarily from what Joseph Addison created in his hit play *Cato, a Tragedy*. It remains a bit unclear why Addison made Marcia the daughter and not the wife of his hero, Cato, but it might have origins in medieval literature. In the prologue to *The Legend of the Good Woman* by Geoffrey Chaucer, he references a “Marcia Catoun.” There was a misunderstanding that led to confusion about if this Marcia was the wife or daughter; the glossary in Walter W. Skeat’s edition in 1889 incorrectly identified Marcia as the daughter and as a result, subsequent American editions continued this mistake. However, Chaucer was referring to the wife, as “during the Middle Ages Cato’s wife Marcia was proverbial for virtue.”²²² Marcia the daughter

²²¹ Warren, *Mercy Otis Warren*, 64.

²²² Marie Hamilton, “Chaucer’s ‘Marcia Catoun,’” *Modern Philology* 30, no. 4 (1933): 361, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/434218>.

(spelled Marzia) was also a character in an opera by Antonio Vivaldi titled *Cato in Utica* (1737); Caesar spared Cato's life so that he could marry Marzia, but Cato still stubbornly kills himself.²²³

It is unknown if Warren was familiar with Chaucer or Vivaldi; however, it is extremely likely that Warren saw Addison's *Cato*, so this thesis will focus on his characterization of the daughter Marcia solely. Addison's play made Marcia the daughter a prevalent character in America in the 1760s and 70s. The play is centered on Cato the Younger's opposition to Julius Caesar in the late Roman Republic. It is set during the final days of Cato's life as themes of tyranny and virtue became especially urgent. The play was originally performed in 1713 in London, but it quickly became extremely popular in America; there is even an American myth that George Washington had it performed for his troops during Valley Forge.²²⁴ Its popularity in America spiked in the years leading up to the Revolution as it became a symbol of colonial resistance and "the source of all things Roman in revolutionary America."²²⁵ It helped inspire the American masses to stand up to British tyranny and, after the war, it summarized the Republican ideals that the Founding Fathers were trying to incorporate into the American mythos. While there is no direct evidence that Warren saw the play, it can almost certainly be trusted that she was familiar with it, given its popularity, Warren's politics, and the similarities between her plays and *Cato*.

In the play, Marcia is at the center of a love triangle that ultimately leads to Cato's downfall. Sempronius, a Roman senator, wanted to marry Marcia but Cato had refused prior to

²²³ Gregory Ragy, "A Historical Cato Caught In The Vortex Of An Ancient Biography," *Classical Inquiries*, August 5, 2015, <https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/a-historical-cato-caught-in-the-vortex-of-an-ancient-biography/>

²²⁴ Litto, "Addison's *Cato*," 447.

²²⁵ Castronovo, *Propaganda*, 58; Litto, "Addison's *Cato*," 440.

the events of the play. Resentful, he and another character plan to betray Cato to Caesar by using Juba (an exiled Numidian prince) and Numidian soldiers. However, Juba himself wants to marry Marcia and refuses to betray Cato. Marcia is a dedicated daughter, initially refusing to flirt with Juba given the dire circumstances of the war. Caesar approaches Utica (where Cato is and where the play is set), yet Cato and Juba remain dedicated to stopping Caesar's tyranny. Cato refuses to allow Marcia to marry Juba, despite his affection for the man. Syphax (Juba's servant who is pro-Caesar) tries to use this to once again get Juba to betray Cato, but Juba wants to remain honorable and win her hand in marriage fairly. Sempronius tries to get soldiers to kill Cato right then, but this is unsuccessful. Sempronius then disguises himself as Juba to kidnap Marcia before joining Caesar; Juba discovers him and kills him. Marcia sees the body and believes it to be Juba, so she professes her love for him. Juba hears this, and the two embrace. Marcia's brother, Marcus, kills Syphax to protect his father but is killed at the same time. Cato remarks that this is the fall of the Republic, so he kills himself before surrendering to Caesar. As he dies, he states that Juba has Roman qualities to him—"Who'er is brave and virtuous, is a Roman"²²⁶— so he blesses the marriage between Juba and Marcia. The play ends with a speech by Lucius (a senator), warning the audience of the dangers of civil war: "From hence, let fierce contending nations know / What dire effects from civil discord flow."²²⁷

In the play, Marcia is modeling heroine behavior, bearing the virtues of Cato and upholding his Republican values while still maintaining her femininity. Raised in the republican landscape, she stuck by it; as Hicks describes, "True to her republican upbringing, love of

²²⁶ Joseph Addison, *Cato, A Tragedy* (Paris: Baudry, 1823): 5.1.90, <https://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/addison-cato/addison-cato-00-h.html>

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.1.105-6

country outweighed personal desires, and she postponed romantic involvement with the Numidian prince Juba so that he could fight Caesar.”²²⁸ Addison himself describes her as “Cato's soul Shines out in everything she acts or speaks, While winning mildness and attractive smiles Dwell in her looks, and with becoming grace Soften the rigour of her father's virtues.”²²⁹ Henderson and Yellin describe Marcia as “Cato’s surrogate, albeit a surrogate in female form” as she shares his “severity, and his constancy of mind.”²³⁰ Her severity is often frowned upon in the play, especially when it comes to Juba’s love for her; by the end of the play, her virtue is softened in a more traditionally feminine way “in which the social ties of family, community, and love serve to moderate the principles of radical independence and complete emotional detachment embodied by her father.”²³¹

Marcia’s character did not go unnoticed, as Noah Webster wanted American girls to imitate her modesty and exemplary virtue, stating “While Cato lives, his daughter has no right To love or hate, but as his choice directs” and “Cato... has given this virtue a delicate name in the tragedy of Cato, where the character of Marcia, is first opened to us. I would have all ladies who have a mind to be thought well bred, to think seriously on this virtue, which he so beautifully calls the sanctity of manners.”²³² George Washington wrote to his wife in 1758, stating “I should think our time more agreeably spent believe me, in playing a part in Cato, with

²²⁸ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 284.

²²⁹ Addison, *Cato*, 1.4.29-33

²³⁰ Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin, “‘Those Stubborn Principles’: From Stoicism to Sociability in Joseph Addison’s ‘Cato,’” *The Review of Politics* 76, no. 2 (2014): 229, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43670962>.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 230.

²³² Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 284.

the company you mention, and myself doubly happy in being the Juba to such a Marcia, as you must make.”²³³

These were the very same values Warren herself attempted to emulate throughout her life. When watching the play unfold, Warren most likely would have seen herself in Marcia. Warren wanted to be praised for her talent and virtue, just like Marcia; she published writings about the importance of women having these values and how it was essential for the new nation to thrive. She wanted the world to know that it was not just fictitious characters that had such high morals and absolute dedication; women all over the colonies, like Warren, were just as devoted to the Republican cause as Marcia was.

While most of the perception regarding Marcia the character was positive, there were a few critics that did not like her inclusion in the play and even produced a version of it without any of the love scenes (thus cutting Marcia almost completely out).²³⁴ Supporters of this version stated that their problem lay with the fact that Cato should have been “unencumbered by private concerns such as love, and, thus unshackled, free to think only of the honor and liberty of his country.”²³⁵ However, it became quite clear that their problem was actually “not so much from the love scenes per se as from the fact that those love scenes ‘necessarily’ include women.”²³⁶ These men believed that “women and the effects of the feminine were responsible for that fall

²³³ Litto, “Addison’s Cato,” 441.

²³⁴ Lisa A. Freeman, “What’s Love Got to Do with Addison’s ‘Cato’?” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39, no. 3 (1999): 464, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1556215>.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 467.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 469.

away from a golden world”²³⁷ and wanted to keep the classical world exclusively masculine with zero chances for a woman to position herself intellectually within classicism. While not everyone shared these views, it is emblematic of the typical eighteenth-century mindset that feminine passions were seen as “signs of a falling away from the ideals of virtue, honor, and devotion to country and as the reason why tragic representations could never fully secure those ideals.”²³⁸ The patriotic leading men of the nation were expected to “act as the sole agents” while ignoring the expected and obvious work of females upholding the moral virtues of said nations.

While I cannot for sure say that this particular criticism would have swayed Warren to use Marcia as a pseudonym, it aligns with Warren’s commentary and themes within her plays to then take Marcia deliberately. She believed that strong, republican men needed to have devoted women in their life to guide and influence them; she knew that a woman’s presence did not cause a man to be less virtuous or lessen his ability to fight for his country. She would have seen these men bash the character of Marcia in *Cato* due to their own misogyny. She, too, was hated and limited by society simply because she was a woman existing in a Republican age. Men tended to downplay the actions and sacrifice of women during wartime, as if soldiers on the battlefield were the only ones actively participating in the war. Just because Marcia the character was being written out of the narrative by a few men, it did not mean that she had no voice; women resisted this continued erasure in a private yet defiant way. As the critics tried to keep more women away from classicism and the ancient world, she took on the identity of Marcia in order to insert herself into the historical narrative of the new nation that positioned itself to be Rome reborn.

²³⁷ Ibid., 479.

²³⁸ Ibid.

If Warren was the daughter of Cato, then that would mean that she was the half-sister of Portia (Abigail Adams' pseudonym). It would not be surprising that Warren found a kinship in Abigail Adams, as the two were close friends who corresponded throughout the war. The women and their husbands were all friends, visiting often. It is not uncommon for close female friends to refer to themselves as sisters to express the extent of their fondness for each other, so the pseudonyms of Marcia and Porcia may have been a more intellectual and immersive way of expressing this. The sister bond may have also been in reference to their shared political thoughts. Although Warren did not always agree with Abigail Adams' politics, they both shared a basic understanding that women should be included in the war and the national ethos on some level. Warren believed in a traditional view of womanhood that did not include women as full citizens with suffrage; she wanted Abigail Adams to stick to this boundary set by the Roman matrons. Warren recognized that a clear boundary had been crossed when Abigail Adams demanded that John Adams "Remember the Ladies," writing to Abigail Adams and asking, "why should not the same Heroic Virtue, the same Fortitude, patience and Resolution, that Crowns the memory of the ancient Matron, Adorn the Character of Each modern Fair who Adopts the signature of Portia. Surely Rome had not severer tryals than America, nor was Cesar ... more to be Dreaded than George the 3d."²³⁹

Marcia, the Matron

While the fictitious Marcia of Addison's *Cato* may have been first on early American minds, there is another Marcia from antiquity that Warren might also have looked to as

²³⁹ Hicks, "Portia and Marcia," 282; Edith B. Gelles, "Bonds of Friendship: The Correspondence of Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 108 (1996): 38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25081114>.

inspiration for her pseudonym: Cato the Younger's second wife. This Marcia was a member of a prominent senatorial family through her father, consul Lucius Marcius Philippus; he was the step-father of the first Roman emperor Augustus due to his marriage to Atia, Augustus' mother, in 59 BC. Marcia married Cato in 63 and bore him multiple children. Marcia is described by Plutarch as "a woman of reputed excellence, about whom there was the most abundant talk."²⁴⁰

Marcia is best known for her marriage exchange to orator Quintus Hortensius Hortalus. Plutarch remarks that Hortensius wanted to connect himself with Cato so badly that he asked Cato for either his daughter or wife in marriage in order to produce heirs, as his own wife had just died without bearing male children. Both women were already married with children, but Hortensius agreed, "according to the law of nature it was honourable and good for the state that a woman in the prime of youth and beauty should neither quench her productive power and lie idle, nor yet, by bearing more offspring than enough, burden and impoverish a husband who does not want them."²⁴¹ In addition, more children within these families would cement the political alliance more and "make virtue abundant and widely diffused."²⁴² When Hortensius asked for Porcia, Cato thought that the plan sounded absurd because he had already married her off. In response, Hortensius then boldly asked for Cato's wife Marcia instead because "she was still young enough to bear children, and Cato had heirs enough."²⁴³ Although Marcia was pregnant with Cato's child (according to Plutarch) and the two seemed to have a successful marriage, Cato

²⁴⁰ Plutarch, "The Life of Cato the Younger," in *The Parallel Lives*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1919): 25.1, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/cato_minor*.html

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 25.3.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.4.

agreed (“seeing the earnestness and eager desire of Hortensius”) but only on the condition that Marcia’s father approved of the deal. Philippus then agreed but only if “Cato himself was present and joined in giving the bride away.”²⁴⁴ Appian’s account is mostly the same in his *Civil Wars*. He states that Marcia was just a girl when she married Cato, and that Cato “was extremely fond of her, and she had borne him children.”²⁴⁵ Despite his feelings for Marcia, he agreed to give her to his friend Hortensius because the man had married an infertile woman. To Cato, this arrangement was not meant to be permanent but just until Marcia and Hortensius had a child together; however, other ancient historians phrased it so that it sounded more permanent than this. The epic poet Lucan’s depiction of Marcia in his *Pharsalia* is similar to both Plutarch and Appian, although Lucan devotes more time to the virtuousness of her character (especially in the period after she is given away by Cato). He stated that “being granted the reward and price of marriage / in a third child, she was given to another house, / to fill it with fruitfulness, and ally two families / through her maternal blood.”²⁴⁶ Marcia and Hortensius wed in 56 BC and had a child together. They remained married until Hortensius died in 50 BC; Marcia was then left a widow “with great wealth; for Hortensius, on his death, had left her his heir.”²⁴⁷ According to Plutarch, Cato and Marcia remarried; Appian, however, asserts that “Cato took her back to his own house as though he had merely lent her.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 25.5 .

²⁴⁵ Appian, *Appian*, 2.99.1 (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/appian/civil_wars/2*.html)

²⁴⁶ Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, translated by A. S. Kline (N.p.: Poetry in Translation, 2014): 2.332-5, <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/PharsaliaIImaster.php>

²⁴⁷ Plutarch, “Cato the Younger,” 52.3.

²⁴⁸ Ibid; Appian, *Appian*, 2.99.1

Lucan's account of Marcia after Hortensius' death but before Cato's remarriage forms a more emotional narrative and focuses on Marica herself. After giving Hortensius a proper burial, she hurried "in pitiful state, her hair unkempt and ragged, her breasts bruised by endless blows, covered with ash from the pyre" to Cato's house. She makes a speech, begging him to take her back:

I have obeyed your command, Cato, while hot
blood flowed in my veins and I was fertile:
Twice wed, I have borne my husbands' children.
I return to you, weary, worn from child-bearing,
unwilling now to be given to some other man.
Let me renew the faithful vows of our marriage;
grant me the name of wife; let them write above
my tomb: Cato's Marcia; let them not think
in after days that you drove me out, handing
me to a second husband. I am not here to share
in happiness, or prosperous times, I am come
to bear my part of anxiety and trouble. Let me
follow the army. Why should I remain behind
in peace and safety, more distant from civil

conflict than Cornelia is, Pompey's wife?²⁴⁹

Cato was moved by Marcia's words, and the two got married in a wedding ceremony "simply and without vain display, the gods alone / bearing witness to the ceremony" with Marcia still wearing her mourning dress.²⁵⁰

For Appian, the story ended there; however, Plutarch adds more to the story. Caesar had heard about Marcia's marriage exchange and "heaped most abuse upon Cato, charging him with avarice and with trafficking in marriage."²⁵¹ He believed that Cato had only lent her out as a way to get rich, as "'For why,' said Caesar, 'should Cato give up his wife if he wanted her, or why, if he did not want her, should he take her back again? Unless it was true that the woman was at the first set as a bait for Hortensius, and lent by Cato when she was young that he might take her back when she was rich.'"²⁵² Plutarch regards this as absurd, as Cato was not typically greedy in character and most likely took her back to take care of his children while he fought in the Civil Wars. Immediately after the wedding, Cato left to fight Pompey.

All three of these ancient authors regard this Marcia as highly virtuous and an extension or at least an important part of her husband's identity, deeply concerned and actively fighting for the sake of her country. Marcia was seen as a nobler and less scandalous woman than Cato's first wife, Atilia. This is especially apparent in Lucan, who inserts Marcia as a main and integral part of Cato's story and his epic as a whole; the epic would not have been able to function or carry

²⁴⁹ Lucan, *The Civil War*, 2.344-9.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.353.

²⁵¹ Plutarch, *Cato the Younger*, 52.4.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

the emotional weight if it were not for her character. Marcia was not a passive wife; she was incredibly devoted to both her husband and the country.

Warren most likely felt a kinship with Marcia's character, as she too felt like she had an active and essential impact or role in the politics surrounding the Revolutionary War. She made sacrifices when she took over her husband's estate during the war; she was taking care of that while managing all of her children and wondering constantly if her husband was safe or had died while in battle. She did not enjoy those activities (much like Marcia did not want to give up Cato originally), but she knew that these were the sacrifices she needed to endure to ensure that America would free itself from Britain's tyranny and be a worthwhile place for her children to grow up in. She may have looked to Cato's wife Marcia as a symbol of strength, and through identification with her, asserted her own strength.

As we examine the implications of Warren's identification with this Marcia, the question arises as to who exactly her Hortensius was. Hortensius could have simply represented the Revolutionary War. Warren also included a character named Hortensius in her play *The Defeat* (1773) as an alternative object to which Warren had given devotion to. In that play, John Adams was the inspiration behind Hortensius. If John Adams was Hortensius Cato was Joseph Warren that would suggest that her husband was loaning her to John Adams. While I am not suggesting a sexual relationship between Warren and Adams, this material places an explicit wishful tie of affection between Warren and Adams. This might explain why Warren "was so ill at ease writing to Abigail as Marcia for the first time... after incarnating herself as Marcia to John. She volunteered to add her married name to please Abigail, as if to assure her she still belonged to 'Warren' despite sharing the intimacy of a secret name with John before using that name with her." Even "Warren's next letter to Adams also ended awkwardly, 'from one who will Indulge so

far in the Romantic style as to subscribe once more by the Name of Your affectionate Marcia.”²⁵³ By invoking the name of Marcia, she was communicating a “willingness to bow to his wishes and be less overtly political than a Portia or an Abigail and more traditionally feminine.”²⁵⁴ However, the roleplaying could have been an innocent way for Warren to try to capture John Adams’ attention, as he was her literary patron and she just wanted him to view her with a similar regard as he did Abigail.

On a similar note, one could look at who exactly Warren viewed as Cato the Younger. By invoking both the wife and daughter of Cato, she simultaneously thought of Cato as relating to both her husband and father. Lucan, in fact, has a passage that might have helped Warren conceive of Cato in this way, emphasizing that he was a patriot who would “observe moderation...to devote his life to his country...for Rome he is father and for Rome he is husband...his goodness was for the state.”²⁵⁵ Patriotism is a trait that she highly regarded in herself, thus she would have valued this aspect in the important men of her life: her father and husband. Both men held important political roles, similar to that of a consul or senator in ancient Rome. She wanted and knew them to be strong patriots fighting for republican ideals and a new Rome established in their backyard. She knew they both had the power to be fathers of this new country, and she claimed to have a role in it—as daughter or wife or, indeed, both.

To understand why Warren decided to use the pen name of Marcia, we must look at both Marcia the daughter and wife of Cato the Younger. Unconsciously absorbing the concepts of

²⁵³ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 286.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Lucan, *Civil War*, translated by Susan Braund (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992): 2.380-90.

Republican motherhood and Roman matron, Warren most likely saw herself as both a daughter and wife of a virtuous Republican dedicated to his country. She took pieces of both figures and applied them to herself, creating a unique identity that allowed her to express the political thoughts that she had been harboring regarding the Revolutionary War.

Chapter 5: Warren's Cornelia(s)

Warren briefly experimented with another classical-inspired pen name, Cornelia; however, she quickly gave that pen name up and used it most notably as a reference in her poem “To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.” instead. The poem was published in June 1774, after her political neoclassical plays the *Adulateur* and the *Defeat* were published without her consent; the plays were inspired by her family's rivalry with Hutchinson and the growing anti-British sentiment. She continued this trend of political commentary by writing “To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.” Instead of being aimed at a specific person, this political poem is in response to the First Continental Congress' call for women “to suspend all Commerce with Britain, (except for the real Necessaries of life),” as it became clear a war was about to start with England.²⁵⁶

The poem centers around a fictitious conversation between a group of women, all of whom are deciding if they should participate in the boycott in 1774 or not. While some of the women are hesitant to boycott British goods (as they would have to make a personal sacrifice to go without their beloved tea), Warren urges both the fictitious women of the poem and the female audience to make this sacrifice for the greater good of the nation. Warren advocates for boycotting as a feminine form of activism that was silent yet effective. To Warren, this is an opportunity for women to pass a civic virtue test by demonstrating Roman Stoicism in their obedience to the quasi-sumptuary law. She loads the poem with references to Roman antiquity, invoking the names of women from antiquity who were willing to make personal sacrifices for

²⁵⁶ Mercy Otis Warren and Eighteenth Century collections online, *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous: By Mrs. M. Warren. [Two Lines from Pope]* (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1790): 208, https://go-gale-com.umiss.idm.oclc.org/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Monographs&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=1&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm¤tPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCW0116591632&docType=Monograph&sort=Pub+Date+Forward+Chron&contentSegment=ZCEX&prodId=ECCO&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCW0116591632&searchId=R1&userGroupName=mag_u_um&inPS=true

the good of the country to encourage women in early America to both boycott and side with the Patriots (“Let us resolve on a small sacrifice/ And in the pride of Roman matrons rise”).²⁵⁷

Warren’s use of Roman matrons in connection with Revolutionary activism was not a singular instance; other writers in the nation encouraged material renunciation as a way for women to partake in the war efforts by invoking the name and stories of Roman matrons. The *Royal American Magazine* in 1774 summarized this point best when they “called upon America’s ‘Roman matrons’ to lay aside their luxuries, among them ‘Fringes and jewels, fans and tweezer cases.’”²⁵⁸ By 1780, women were expected to do more than just practice financial abstinence; it was patriotic to “give up their money and their ornaments for the state.”²⁵⁹ Esther deBerdt Reed published a pamphlet urging women to be like self-sacrificing Roman matrons and donate money to the war cause: “who, amongst us, will not renounce with the highest pleasure, these vain ornaments, when she shall consider that the valiant defenders of America will be able to draw some advantage from the money which she may have laid out in these ... ?”²⁶⁰

In a line that perfectly sums up Warren’s main message of the poem—where she is saying that America has many women who will fight the cause and be virtuous in doing so—she uses an ambiguous plural form of Cornelia to illustrate her point: “America has many a worthy

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁵⁸ Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, 137.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Esther DeBerdt Reed, “Philadelphia Broadside, “The Sentiments of an American Woman,” in *From Many, One: Readings in American Political and Social Thought*, ed. Richard C. Sinopoli (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1997): 109–111. <https://jasoncdyck.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/reed-esther-deberdt-sentiments-of-an-american-woman.pdf>

name, / Who shall, hereafter, grace the rolls of fame. / Her good Cornelias, and her Arrias fair, /
Who, death, in its most hideous forms, can dare.”²⁶¹

In this chapter, I will examine that Warren was simultaneously invoking two Cornelias—the wife of Pompey and the mother of the Gracchi. These two Cornelias often serve as examples of both a strong wife and mother from antiquity, and they reveal how Warren viewed herself in connection to both roles. Her role as wife and mother was conceptualized based on Roman matrons, giving her an identity and position in her political discourse.

Cornelia the Matron

One possible Cornelia Warren could be referencing from antiquity is Cornelia Metella, the fifth wife of Pompey the Great. Cornelia came from a reputable family, being the daughter of consul Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio. She was described by Plutarch as having “had many charms apart from her youthful beauty. She was well versed in literature, in playing the lyre, and in geometry, and had been accustomed to listen to philosophical discourses with profit. In addition to this, she had a nature which was free from that unpleasant officiousness which such accomplishments are apt to impart to young women.”²⁶²

Pompey was not Cornelia’s first husband, as she was first married to “Publius, the son of Crassus, whose virgin bride she had been before his death in Parthia.”²⁶³ As the daughter-in-law of a member of the First Triumvirate, she would have been no stranger to the treacherous

²⁶¹ Warren, *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, 212.

²⁶² Plutarch, “The Life of Pompey,” in *The Parallel Lives*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1923): 55.1-2,
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/plutarch/lives/pompey*.html

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 55.1

political scene in the 50s. While she was married to P. Crassus, Pompey was married to Caesar's daughter, Julia, as a way to solidify the political union. Both the triumvir M. Licinius Crassus and his son (Cornelia's husband) were killed in battle in Parthia in 53 BC. When Julia died in that same year, Pompey and Caesar's rivalry came to a head when Pompey married Cornelia in 52 BC. This marriage signified that reconciliation between the two men was not possible (as there was no longer a marriage pact to ensure peace and alliance between Caesar with Pompey instead of making alliances on his own). Many people at the time were displeased with Pompey's choice of remarriage, as they thought he was too old for her and that he focused on his wedding rather than focusing on the pending war.

According to Plutarch, Cornelia is described as loyal to Pompey and a good wife. During most of Pompey's military conflict with Caesar, Cornelia is sent away to Lesbos. After suffering a defeat at the Battle of Pharsalus, Pompey went to Cornelia. She had thought he was bringing good news and that the war was about to end; instead, a messenger alluded to Pompey having troubling times.²⁶⁴ Hearing this, "she cast herself upon the ground and lay there a long time bereft of sense and speech." She quickly regained her senses and went to meet Pompey on his ship (for he refused to disembark on land). Saddened to hear how Pompey had been reduced to only one ship, she lamented,

Why hast thou come to see me, and why didst thou not leave to her cruel destiny
 one who has infected thee also with an evil fortune so great? What a happy
 woman I had been if I had died before hearing that Publius, whose virgin bride I
 was, was slain among the Parthians! And how wise if, even after his death, as I

²⁶⁴ Plutarch, *Pompey*, 74.2.

essayed to do, I had put an end to my own life! But I was spared, it seems, to
bring ruin also upon Pompey the Great.²⁶⁵

Pompey agreed that he was facing bad times but “we must bear, since we are mortals, and we must still put fortune to the test. For I can have some hope of rising again from this low estate to my former high estate, since I fell from that to this.” Pompey and Cornelia then leave, only stopping to get food. Later, Cornelia watches from afar as Pompey is assassinated on the shore of Egypt.²⁶⁶ The last line of Plutarch’s *Pompey* refers to Cornelia’s action: “The remains of Pompey were taken to Cornelia, who gave them burial at his Alban villa.”²⁶⁷

Lucan provides a more extensive characterization of Cornelia in his epic poem *Civil War*. He goes further into Cornelia as a person and makes her a central figure in the poem with a real sense of agency. Most of the events as described by Plutarch remain the same in this account but with more of a focus on the emotional bond between Cornelia and Pompey. Although there is not a list of works Warren read throughout her life, she most likely would have been familiar with Lucan’s account. While the conversation around which ancient authors colonists were reading rarely focuses on Lucan, mentions of Lucan indicate that he was well enough read within the colonies. Mullet includes Lucan in a list of classical authors that were “venerated [for] their

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.3.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 78-9.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.5.

devotion to the highest republican and ethical principles,” as does Wright, and Lucan is quoted by name in the fictitious *Cato's Moral Distichs*.²⁶⁸

In Lucan, Cornelia is first mentioned by the ghost of Pompey’s former wife Julia; she says to Pompey “your fortune changed with your marriage-bed, and that paramour, / Cornelia, condemned by Fate to drag her mighty husbands down / always to disaster, married into a warm tomb. / Let her cling to your standards through warfare and through waters.”²⁶⁹ Though Julia views this as a curse, Pompey takes this advice, often visiting Cornelia and including her in his war plans. He still sends her away even though he would have rather stayed in her embrace, for he delights in the thought that “you will not suffer a long separation from me.”²⁷⁰ Cornelia still protests this separation, stating that

No complaint is left to me about the gods, about the destiny

of marriage, Magnus: our love is not broken by death

or by the final torch of hideous pyre

[...] do you believe my safety is different

from yours? Have we not long depended on one and the same chance?

[.....] with ready death

²⁶⁸ Charles F. Mullett, “Classical Influences on the American Revolution,” *The Classical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1939): 101, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3291341>; Louis B. Wright, “The Purposeful Reading of Our Colonial Ancestors,” *ELH* 4, no. 2 (1937): 94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2871722>.

²⁶⁹ Lucan, *Civil War*, 3.20-24.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.745.

follow you down to the shades, until the gloomy news strikes

land far removed, I shall of course live on as your survivor.

What is more, you accustom me to my destiny and teach me, cruel man,

to bear such mighty anguish. Forgive my confession—

I fear I can endure it.²⁷¹

Pompey immediately runs to Lesbos to visit Cornelia after his defeat at the Battle of Pharsalus because “Love made even you, Magnus, hesitant and afraid of battle” and that he would rather be at “The land where you were hiding, Cornelia, / the sharer of his troubles.”²⁷² She faints when she sees him, but he chides her, ““why do you, a woman, illustrious thanks to the name of ancestors / so great, shatter your noble strength at the first wound / of Fortune? You have an avenue to fame which will endure for centuries. / In this your sex, the only means of praise is not respect for the laws / nor warfare but an unhappy husband.”²⁷³ He then asks her to follow him forever and regardless of how he will do in battle: “Elevate your mind, / let your devotion fight with destiny: because I am defeated, / love me. Now I bring you greater glory, / because the Rods and the Senate’s honourable throng / and the band of kings so great have left me: be the first and only one / to follow Magnus... to mourn your man should be the final act of loyalty.”²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Ibid., 5.762-788.

²⁷² Ibid., 8.40-3.

²⁷³ Ibid., 8.70-6.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 8.76-83.

Cornelia regains consciousness but laments that she wished that she had married Caesar instead so that she could bring doom to him instead of Pompey. She likens her relationship with Pompey to the national civil war happening with the Republic, lamenting that “I had rather / paid for successful warfare with my life: now at least you can expiate / your disaster, Magnus. Cruel Julia, you have avenged / our marriage-bed with civil war.”²⁷⁵ Unlike in Plutarch, Pompey has left the ship and is on land at this point with the Mytilenians on Lesbos; the Mytilenians approach Pompey, upset at the implications of what Pompey is saying. They said that “if our greatest glory will always be / that we kept safe the pledge of such a mighty husband, / you too, we beg, bring honour to the city-walls devoted to you / by a sacred pact.”²⁷⁶ Pompey knew that this land would be targeted soon because they had harbored Cornelia, so he thanked them by saying “with this hostage Lesbos held / my love; here was my sacred home, here my beloved house-gods, here was Rome for me.”²⁷⁷ As Pompey and Cornelia leave, the people of the island weep for Cornelia’s sake.

Cornelia is next seen in Book 9 after Pompey dies. She has a long monologue mourning the death of her husband and the fact that she does not have Pompey’s actual ashes to properly honor and talks about the future of the fighting cause. She then reports to Sextus Pompey (Pompey’s son from his third wife) what Pompey communicated for him to do (“These orders / Pompey left for you, stored up in my charge”): “when the fatal hour has condemned me to death,

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 8. 100-3.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8. 110-3.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.131-3.

/ take up, O sons, the civil war and never, / while someone of my stock remains on earth, / let
Caesars have the chance to reign.”²⁷⁸ She then laments about her fate as a widow:

My promise to you, Magnus, I have discharged, your orders I have
carried out; your trick has worked: deceived, I have lived on,
so I should not, a traitor, carry off the words entrusted to me.
But now, husband, I will follow you through empty Chaos,
through Tartarus, if any such exists; how far away the death to which
I am consigned is doubtful: before that, I will take revenge on my life
itself for being long-lived. It was able to watch your murder, Magnus,
without escaping into death: pounded by my beating it will perish,
into tears it will dissolve: never shall I resort to swords
or nooses or to the headlong plunge through empty space:
it is disgraceful after you to be unable to die from grief alone.²⁷⁹

Her last appearance in the poem is her performing her own funeral rites for Pompey using his
clothing that symbolized how great and virtuous a man he was, as “in her sorrow those were
Magnus’ ashes. All devotion / takes up her example.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.85-90.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 9.98-118.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 9.171-180.

When Warren describes her contemporary American ladies as having “her good Cornelias... / Who, death, in its most hideous forms, can dare” she most likely would have been referring to this Cornelia’s staunch support of her husband and the Roman cause.²⁸¹ Even when it was clear that Pompey was about to die and the realization hit Cornelia that there was nothing left for her to do in defending her country, her support never wavered. Warren tells her audience that American women needed to exhibit these same qualities to the American cause, even though the prospect of war against Britain was daunting and at times looked hopeless. Since women did most of the housework and buying of goods, Revolutionary men needed to have the financial support of women to reject the buying of tea and other British goods for the war to work. Although women’s participation in the war was often neglected and not seen as legitimate, Warren is acknowledging and encouraging her fellow women to do their patriotic duty of financial resistance as a large part of their silent participation in the war efforts.

Warren would have likely felt an emotional connection to this Cornelia as a woman existing during wartime, as I argued in the last chapter she would have with Marcia. Women would have recognized themselves in Cornelia’s situation. Cornelia as a character would have felt very similar to Warren herself and going through similar experiences. Like Cornelia’s Pompey, Warren’s James was a general during the American Revolution who had a large target on his back by being devoted to fighting tyranny. While Pompey stored Cornelia away from the battle, James Warren kept Mercy Otis Warren safe and far away from the battlefield in Massachusetts (except for brief moments of reunification). Both women knew that their husbands could be killed at any moment without them having a way of knowing quickly.

²⁸¹ Warren, *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, 212.

However, Mercy Otis Warren would also have noted and taken pride in the idea that all four of them were making this sacrifice for the sake of the prosperity of their nation.

When reading Lucan's characterization of Cornelia, Warren would have felt and understood the passion of Cornelia when she fully committed herself to her husband's side as he was losing the war or when seeing him on the beach at Lesbos without knowing if the news was good or bad. These were things that Warren herself had done either before or during the war. She knew that the Patriots had a good chance of losing the war as an inexperienced army against a powerful empire, yet she still encouraged her husband to fight in it and loved him regardless of the tide of war. In doing so, she equated her relationship with her husband to that of Cornelia and Pompey. Despite it being Pompey's fifth marriage, Lucan represents the couple as passionately in love and expressing that love constantly. Lucan's epic can be described largely as a poem about intense love and marital fidelity—two traits that were still highly regarded in America during Warren's life that she would have also wanted to emulate, especially considering the passionate words the Warrens exchanged in their letters to one another. Since Cornelia had a similar relationship with her husband and was praised throughout time for it, Warren herself could also be praised for her display of love and dedication.

When invoking Cornelia, Warren could also have been focusing on Cornelia's strength and using that as motivation throughout the war. While incredibly sad and desperately missing her husband, Cornelia had enough strength during her separation from Pompey to survive and earn the admiration of the people of Lesbos. At the same time, those in the poem realized that Pompey was going to die and make Cornelia a widow. Perhaps Warren was drawn to this Cornelia as a way to prepare herself mentally and emotionally for the very real possibility of herself becoming a war widow. Through Cornelia, Warren could see how a proper and

Republican wife took this blow and what life would be like in the aftermath. She saw Cornelia mourn, honor Pompey, build a makeshift funeral pyre, and even continue the fight Pompey believed in enough to die for (by repeating and in effect “channeling” Pompey when describing the plan to Sextus Pompey). If Cornelia could survive without Pompey’s love and leadership, so could Warren.

In Lucan, it seems at points that Cornelia is more dedicated and patriotic than Pompey. He flees from battle, immediately running back to be with his wife instead of continuing to focus on the fight at hand. Cornelia, on the other hand, continues to encourage Pompey to be victorious and even continues Pompey’s work when he dies. She remains unwavering in her dedication to both her husband and nation; in fact, she equates the two by viewing Pompey as trying to save the Republic against Caesar. This too would have resonated with Warren, as she appears to have been a more enthusiastic patriot than her husband. James Warren was more prominent in the events leading up to the Revolution, serving as the President of the Provisional Congress and Paymaster General, than in the actual war itself. While he did fight in the war as a soldier, his time on the battlefield was limited and he often refused political positions that were offered to him.²⁸² While Mercy Otis Warren obviously could not fight on the battlefield (and did not wish to), she did all that she could do as a woman to promote the cause. Her commitment to fighting for the honor of her country continued even after the war ended, as she published political works criticizing what she saw as moral failings of the Constitution. Her husband, while sharing an identity as an Anti-Federalist, had a “progressive retreat from political prominence” after the war

²⁸² Gelles, “Bonds of Friendship,” 53; 55.

ended.²⁸³ There is a possibility that Mercy saw James' political and military retreat, thought of Cornelia, and saw it as her job to inspire her husband to continue to be dedicated to his country and have the honor of a Roman in the face of danger. As a moral guide, she would have thought of it as her civic duty to influence and encourage James despite her personal suffering—just like Cornelia did for Pompey.

Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi

An even better-known Roman matron, also likely evoked in Warren's reference to America's "Cornelias," is Cornelia mother of the Gracchi. This Cornelia was the daughter of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (a famous general in the Second Punic War) and Aemilia Paulla but was best known as the mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. The most extensive mention of Cornelia in antiquity comes from Plutarch's *Lives of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus*, which interestingly starts and ends with Cornelia. She was married to Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus until he sacrificed himself to save Cornelia.²⁸⁴ She was left in "charge of the [twelve] children and of the estate, and showed herself so discreet, so good a mother, and so magnanimous."²⁸⁵ Plutarch remarks that King Ptolemy of Egypt asked to marry Cornelia but she refused, instead choosing to focus on raising her children. When it came to her raising of the Gracchi brothers, it is said that she "reared [them] with such scrupulous care that although confessedly no other Romans were so well endowed by nature, they were thought to owe their

²⁸³ Hicks, "Portia and Marcia," 288.

²⁸⁴ Plutarch, "Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus," 1.2. In this story, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus saw two snakes in their marriage bed; he was told that he could not kill both or let them go. If he killed the male, he would die; if he killed the female, Cornelia would die. He chose to kill the male, thus sacrificing himself instead of the much younger Cornelia.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

virtues more to education than to nature.”²⁸⁶ Valerius Maximus’ anecdote furthers this point. A woman staying with Cornelia boasts about her grand jewelry; when the Gracchi brothers arrive home from school, Cornelia remarks that her sons “are my ornaments.”²⁸⁷

As a woman, Cornelia could not exert direct political power; however, it is very clear that she still sustained a great deal of political power through her role as a mother. When Gaius was a tribune, he spared the life of Marcus Octavius because Cornelia asked him to do so. A bronze statue of her with her name in the inscription was erected as a result.²⁸⁸ Gaius also invoked her name in speeches against his political rivals, asserting, ““What," said he, "dost thou abuse Cornelia, who gave birth to Tiberius?’ And since the one who had uttered the abuse was charged with effeminate practices, ‘With what effrontery,’ said Caius, ‘canst thou compare thyself with Cornelia? Hast thou borne such children as she did? And verily all Rome knows that she refrained from commerce with men longer than thou hast, though thou art a man.’”²⁸⁹ Book 13 explicitly states the extent of her political power, as she “took active part in [Gaius’] seditious measures, by secretly hiring from foreign parts and sending to Rome men who were ostensibly reapers; for to this matter there are said to have been obscure allusions in her letters to her son. Others, however, say that Cornelia was very much displeased with these activities of her son.”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Valerius Maximus, *Factorum Ac Dictorum Memorabilium Libri IX*, translated by Samuel Speed (London: Printed by J.C., 1678): Book 4.4, <http://www.attalus.org/translate/valerius4b.html#c4>

²⁸⁸ Plutarch, “Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus,” 25.3.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 13.

The seditious measures mentioned in the quote correspond to the reforms the Gracchi brothers tried to initiate while elected as tribunes of the plebs at the end of the Roman Republic. Tiberius was elected first, in 133 BC, and advocated for land reform that would limit the amount of land that could be owned by a single person with the aim of restoring land to the poor. His legislation threatened the status quo, and he was killed in a bloody riot in 133 BC. Gaius was then elected in 123 BC; he attempted similar reforms and met the same fate in 121 BC.

Cornelia is one of the only Roman women whose words survive, as there are two fragments from a letter Cornelia allegedly wrote, according to ancient Roman biographer Cornelius Nepos. It is important to first mention that there are questions concerning the validity of it actually being Cornelia words. As Hallett puts it, “Some of the problems that arise in authenticating both this letter and this passage center on representations of Cornelia’s father, and on assumptions about how elite Roman mothers communicated with their male children; other problems involve the reliability, or absence, of evidence from ancient sources. And they are by no means soluble problems: we cannot prove beyond all doubt that Cornelia wrote the letter, or the passage, much less that the letter contained the passage.”²⁹¹ Quintilian and Cicero had said that “Cornelia wrote letters that influenced the eloquence of her two sons, letters that Cicero and Quintilian themselves were able to consult in their own day.”²⁹² The overall tone and contents of the letter do match the personality ascribed to her in classical texts. Regardless of the debate over the authorship, what matters most in this context is that the letter has historically been viewed as belonging to Cornelia and is associated as her legacy. When Warren was learning about

²⁹¹ Hallett, “Introduction,” 123.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 127.

Cornelia, this aspect most likely was included. As such, we will talk about the letters as if Cornelia wrote them herself.

The letter in question would have been from around 124 BC when Gaius made the decision to also run for tribune. In it, Cornelia reminds Gaius of the painful loss of Tiberius in an effort to make Gaius not run for office. The English translation of the first excerpt of the letter reads:

You will say that it is a beautiful thing to take vengeance on enemies [*inimici*]. To no one does this seem either greater or more beautiful than it does to me [*neque maius neque pulchrius cuiquam atque mihi*], but only if it is possible to pursue these aims without harming our country. But seeing as that cannot be done, our enemies [*inimici* again] will not perish for a long time and for many reasons, and they will be as they are now rather than have our country be destroyed and perish.²⁹³

In this passage, it appears that Cornelia is agreeing in principle with Gaius and his plans to avenge his brother's death by continuing his reforms. Yet she makes it clear that this can only work if it is not hurting the country itself. Since that cannot be done (as the tensions between the Optimates and Populares were at a high), then Gaius (and herself by extension) should not seek to avenge anything. Her tone is stern, but in a way that would be typical of a mother offering advice to her son.

The second excerpt is longer and reads:

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

I would dare to take an oath solemnly, swearing that, except for those who have murdered Tiberius Gracchus, no enemy [*inimicus* yet again] has foisted so much difficulty and so much distress upon me as you have, because of all these matters. You, who should have shouldered the responsibilities of all of those children whom I had in the past, and to make sure that I might have the least anxiety possible in my old age [*senecta*]. And that, whatever you did, you would wish to please me most greatly. And that you would consider it sacrilege to do anything of rather serious significance contrary to my feelings, especially as I am someone with only a short portion of my life left. Cannot even that time span, as brief as it is, be of help in keeping you from opposing me and destroying our country?

What end will there finally be? When will our family stop behaving insanely? When will we cease insisting on troubles, both suffering and causing them? When will we begin to feel shame about disrupting and disturbing our country? But if this is altogether unable to take place, seek the office of tribune when I will be dead [*mortua ero*]. As far as I am concerned, do what will please you, when I shall not perceive what you are doing. When I have died [*mortua ero*] you will sacrifice to me as a parent and call upon the god of your parent [*deum parentem*]. At that time will it not shame you to seek prayers of those as gods, whom you had abandoned and deserted when they were alive and on hand? May Jupiter not for a single instant allow you to continue in these actions or permit such madness to come into your mind. And if you persist, I fear that, by your own fault, you may incur such trouble

for your entire life that at no time would you be able to make yourself happy.²⁹⁴

Cornelia's tone is much more defined and impassioned in this passage. It is very clear throughout that she is incredibly angry at Gaius for running for election. She essentially tries to intimidate him into changing his mind by almost equating his actions to those that killed Tiberius. She confronts him about why he would want to do this to her, their family, and the nation. Cornelia then seemingly attempts to guilt him into changing his mind, asking why he could not wait for her to die first and why he wanted to cause her so much anxiety. By doing this, she points out what she perceived to be his familial obligation to her: obeying and respecting her political wishes. In her eyes, going against her wishes is the same as destroying the nation itself (as first stated in the first excerpt). Not only is she being direct in the letter, but she also relies on rhetorical questions to heighten her angry and guilt-inducing words. She wants Gaius to feel ashamed for neglecting his family responsibilities and not stopping his quest for revenge, even though he knows that it will just tear Rome and her family apart (himself included).

This was not the tone typical of a woman in the second century BC; women, especially wealthy respectable women, were not to chastise their sons for their political decisions. Cornelia's tone and words seem to align more with an angry father than with a mother. In fact, it almost parallels the stories of Titus Manlius Imperiosus Torquatus and Lucius Junius Brutus, Hallett writes, who were both forced (by virtue) to kill their own sons due to their own defiance.²⁹⁵ Torquatus was an early hero in the Roman Republic whose virtue extended so far that he had his son executed because he disobeyed military orders. Brutus is from when the

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 125-6.

²⁹⁵ Hallett, "Introduction," 128.

monarchy became the republic; he killed his two sons when they planned a coup to restore the reign of the Tarquin family following the exilement of Tarquin the Proud. Both the men and Cornelia emphasize the power of the family but only when it does not harm the state—if it harms Rome, then they must suppress their anger. Cornelia, however, could not take her anger out physically on her son, so she turned to letter writing.

Not much is known about Cornelia's life following her sons' deaths. It is said that she continued to be politically and socially involved, as she "always had Greeks and other literary men about her, and all the reigning kings interchanged gifts with her. She was indeed very agreeable to her visitors and associates when she discoursed to them about the life and habits of her father Africanus, but most admirable when she spoke of her sons without grief or tears, and narrated their achievements and their fate to all enquirers as if she were speaking of men of the early days of Rome."²⁹⁶

In early America, references to this Cornelia were rife. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, she was idolized in America specifically as a mother (*mater Gracchorum*).²⁹⁷ She represented all of the ideal characteristics fitting for a moral guide for the new nation: "Chaste, fecund, intelligent, educated, and civic-minded." To these early American women, Cornelia was "a paragon of virtue, exalted merit above rank, [who] earned her laurels by being a mother."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Plutarch, "Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus," 19.2.

²⁹⁷ Caroline Winterer, "Classical Taste at Monticello: The Case of Thomas Jefferson's Daughter and Granddaughters," In *Thomas Jefferson, the Classical World, and Early America*, ed. Peter S. Onuf and Nicholas P. Cole (University of Virginia Press, 2011): 88, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wrr2s.8>.

²⁹⁸ Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, 140.

Cornelia was viewed as a model mother, someone for all American mothers to idolize and emulate.²⁹⁹

In 1745, the *American Magazine* encouraged women to emulate Cornelia, as Cornelia was said to have “contributed much to the Eloquence of her Sons.”³⁰⁰ *The American Lady’s Preceptor* (1810) has a whole section dedicated to Cornelia (titled “Maternal Affection”) in the “Historical Sketches” section. It begins with “There are no ties in nature to compare with those which unite an affectionate mother to her children, when they repay her tenderness with obedience and love. Cornelia, the illustrious mother of the Gracchi, after the death of her husband, who left her twelve children, applied herself to the care of her family, with a wisdom and prudence, that acquired her universal esteem” before recounting the story of Cornelia referring to her children as her most prized jewels. It ends with “And such ornaments, which are the strength and support of society, add a brighter lustre to the fair, than all the jewels of the east.”³⁰¹

Founding father and Jurist James Wilson mentioned Cornelia and specifically her letter to Gaius in a published lecture about how mothers shaped civic morality, writing “the example of the highly accomplished Cornelia, the daughter of the great Africanus, and the mother of the Gracchi, deserves uncommon attention. She shone, with singular lustre, in all those endowments and virtues that can dignify the female character.” He goes on to also recount the previous story

²⁹⁹ Winterer, “Classical Taste,” 88.

³⁰⁰ Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, 15.

³⁰¹ *The American Lady’s Preceptor*, 83-4.

of her sons being her jewels, but adds that Cicero saw the letters and said “her sons were not so much nourished by the milk, as formed by the style of their mother.”³⁰²

An issue in 1798 of the *Weekly Magazine* also reinforced Republican motherhood by referencing Cornelia: “the sole and eternal support of this rising republic, must be drawn from the enlightened and virtuous education of both sexes’ by observing: ‘The two Gracchi were believed to owe their eloquence to the instructions of their *mother* Cornelia.”³⁰³ A 1807 issue of *Lady's Weekly Miscellany* elaborated on the “jewels” story by adding “these are my jewels, whom I have endeavoured to educate, for the good and glory of their country.”³⁰⁴ An 1819 *Ladies Magazine* echoed this sentiment, endorsing Cornelia and her famous story as a lesson for women “in a Republic like this.”

Cornelia was also referenced in paintings, like Angelica Kauffman’s famous *Cornelia Pointing at Her Children as Her Treasures* (1785), which presents Cornelia’s famous parable visually. Cornelia, dressed in white, stands in the middle of the frame, refusing the woman on the right’s jewels. Instead, Cornelia is gesturing to her boys on the left; they are holding a scroll and taking Cornelia’s “lessons to heart by staying far from the visitor.”³⁰⁵ This artwork inspired a young woman to make a needlepoint based upon the painting. Winterer states that visual representations of Cornelia’s parable in seventeenth and eighteenth-century America appeared in

³⁰²James Wilson and Robert G. McCloskey, *The Works of James Wilson*, Vol. 1 (Camb., MA: Belknap Press, 1967): 89, <https://hdl-handle-net.umiss.idm.oclc.org/2027/heb.07498>.

³⁰³ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 291.

³⁰⁴ Winterer, *Mirror*, 131.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

“fans, in books and magazines, on a stained glass at Harvard's Memorial Hall, and in a magic lantern show.”³⁰⁶

Warren was a mother herself, so the emotional connection she would have found within Cornelia's acclaim is obvious. The Warrens had five sons: James, Winslow, Charles, Henry, and George. The oldest was eighteen years old when the Revolutionary War started and fought in the war; the rest of her sons were too young to be soldiers and stayed with her when she acted as deputy wife of the family's estate. Since Warren exhibited the republican motherhood ideology, she would have empathized with Cornelia's goal of raising virtuous sons that would benefit the nation and strived to do the same thing with her five sons. She wanted to be the perfect Republican mother like Cornelia. When striving to be Cornelia, Warren must have also thought about what she would do if her children were not so virtuous and harmed the stability of the nation as the Gracchi brothers did. Warren fought so hard defending the new nation and raising her sons to honor it, but there was always the possibility that her sons could grow up to resent Republicanism and put revenge over the good of the nation. To both women, their nation was tied to their personal families. How would she react if her family threatened the state? Would she act irresponsibly and keep silent about her objections, or would she be just like Cornelia—outspoken and heard?

As a woman in eighteenth-century America, Warren knew that she did not have an avenue to take any real actions if her male family members acted in a similar fashion to the Gracchi brothers. Instead of viewing herself as completely powerless to the possibility of her sons hurting America, she turned to Cornelia as a method for the execution of women's power

³⁰⁶ Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, 134.

and influence: letter writing. Since Cornelia was the epitome of the ideal mother despite being so learned and outspoken, Warren must have looked at those very same characteristics that she held herself and felt affirmed. Warren herself wrote letters extensively, as it was seen as the “quintessential literary form of women in the eighteenth century.”³⁰⁷ Even though Cornelia was told to stay out of politics, she still had a political and rhetorical voice throughout history. If Cornelia could so openly berate her sons and talk about political matters through the written word, then Warren could also do so. The example of Cornelia gave Warren the green light to write a political commentary (both through her epistolary network and published books) in a feminine way that did not take away from her main identity as a mother.

As a result, Warren mainly followed Cornelia’s footsteps in walking the line between pedantry and being a female political writer. In ancient Rome, women’s direct political actions for the most part did not take place in the Forum or other public places; they took place “in private, domestic settings” or, as seen by Cornelia’s letters, as a “female, and familial, equivalent of memorable public and political speeches.”³⁰⁸ When these Roman matrons’ words came from a familiar space—the domestic sphere—it helped soften the blow of the blunt politicalness and thus the men around them tended to be more receptive. Initially, Warren kept her writings within her immediate family. As the end of the Revolution drew near and the political division worsened, Warren began an epistolary network that still largely remained in the domestic sphere. She communicated mostly with other women that were her close friends, writing from within her home and sent to the homes of others. She did not intend for any of these writings to be

³⁰⁷ Gelles, “Bonds of Friendship,” 35.

³⁰⁸ Hallett, “Introduction,” 137.

published; however, no letters back then were kept completely private. To contemporaries, her letter network constituted “‘a forum of political debate’ that ‘enabled the circulation of supportive information which bolstered feelings of resistance.’”³⁰⁹ She knew that sending information to Abigail Adams meant not only that John Adams would find out, but that her letters to Abigail Adams would “be summarized or copied and forwarded along a chain of correspondences” with the contents having the ability to be so circulated that it could come back to “haunt years later.”³¹⁰ The printscape in the Revolutionary period was known for its “infused gender and femininity” practices that blurred the line between “domestic intimacy and public politics” for both Warren and other wealthy white women of the period.³¹¹

We can see evidence of women exclusion in the standard space of publication. When her first book was published in 1788, she wrote under a pseudonym instead of acting as herself.³¹² She might have chosen the alias because she thought she would be taken more seriously if presumed a male than being publicly female. However, it might have actually been the case that she did not feel it was fitting for women to enter into the masculine sphere of published political writing. The matter was not yet pressing enough to put her work out there as herself. Even though she herself wrote this sort of work and to a modern reader, it would seem like she advocated for a subtle form of feminism, Warren still held onto gendered societal norms for most of her life—despite literally breaking them herself at every turn. In the introduction to her history

³⁰⁹ Castronovo, *Propaganda*, 70. Cf. Wigginton, *In the Neighborhood*, 6.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

³¹² Edmund M. Hayes and Mercy Otis Warren, “The Private Poems of Mercy Otis Warren,” *The New England Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1981): 199, <https://doi.org/10.2307/364970>.

of America, she apologized for intruding into the masculine field of history, writing that “It is true, there are certain appropriate duties assigned to each sex; and doubtless it is the more peculiar province of masculine strength ... to describe the bloodstained field, and relate the story of slaughtered armies.”³¹³

The only reason Warren even published this first pseudonym of work (a pamphlet called *Observations on the new Constitution, and on the Federal and State Convention*) was that she deemed it essential due to the “decaying morals” of the nation.³¹⁴ She *had* to speak about the matter; it was a matter of national concern. She was an Anti-Federalist, believing that the Constitution would ultimately lead the country back under a tyranny. She feared that “the ‘giddy multitude’ was threatening hardwon American freedoms, and that Federalists would taint republican austerity with wealth and rank.”³¹⁵ The pamphlet articulated her beliefs and cautioned the elite men of America (the only ones who could actually influence the decision) against having it ratified.

Warren only published work under her own name once she felt like she had no choice but to do so—it was her civic duty as a mother and Republican to protect America from renewed tyranny by reinforcing the need for a moral country. *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* was published under her name in 1790. The work contained various poems and two plays (*The Sack of Rome* and *The Ladies of Castile*) that were full of references to Roman matrons and antiquity; all of the themes in the collection centered on sacrifice, virtue, and morality. Even though the

³¹³ Friedman and Shaffer, “Mercy Otis Warren,” 206-7.

³¹⁴ Hayes, “The Private Poems,” 200.

³¹⁵ Winterer, “The Mirror of Antiquity,” 49.

war had ended in favor of the patriots, Warren knew that the nation was still young and impressionable. She saw men around her get so developed into the debate around Federalism that they were abandoning what they just fought for. Society needed a reminder that, throughout all of the debate about how the nation would move forward politically, the most important thing was to remember the values they had just fought for: liberty, valor, and virtue. As a moral guide, this reminder was within the duties of her gender; if she came off too strong in doing so, it could be excused as well-intended.

By 1805, Warren could see that the political landscape was dire. The First Party System continued to dominate the nation; it was the first time that there was such a divisive two-party system in America. To someone who lived through the Revolutionary War, it must have felt familiar; neighbors were against neighbors with little national unity. 1800 was an important year that only fueled the fire as it served as a turning point; the Federalists had initially been the dominant power, but after the election of 1800, the tides turned in favor of the Anti-Federalists (then the Democratic-Republican, but more commonly the Republicans). With all of her children involved in politics and still maintaining an extensive epistolary network, Warren would have kept up with the intensity of the politics that year. As a result, Warren felt as if she was forced to take an extreme step out of the domestic sphere by publishing a directly and inherently political book under her own name as a woman in 1805, titled *the History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*. She wrote most of the book as the war unfolded; she left it alone until 1801 when she began to edit her work. It is no coincidence that she turned to publication a year after the events of 1800. Although Warren was an Anti-Federalist and so those who shared her politics won the election, it was an extremely close call. Warren probably felt

like it was too close of a call, so she published her book to ensure that the tide stayed in her favor, regardless of the friendships she lost as a result (such as John Adams).

As much as Warren must have personally identified with the reference to *Cornelia mater Gracchorum*, it is important to note that the intent behind including a reference to her in the poem was so that other women would forge a similar emotional connection. Since Cornelia as a figure was so prominent in early America, the readers of the poem would have recognized the allusion to the perfect mother and connected her to the contemporary American cause. If Cornelia was so dedicated to the security of the nation that she was willing to make sacrifices that placed her actively outside of the gender norms of the time, then the everyday women reading the poem could do so too. Warren intended them to think of themselves as Cornelia, defending their nation. Since these women would have resonated with this aspect of Cornelia's characterization, they would then be more motivated to take action themselves by boycotting British goods and limiting the number of luxury goods they ordered. We have no way of knowing how effective the reference was at the time, as those kinds of records were not preserved or easily quantifiable. Considering how the imagery of Cornelia fit right into both the republican motherhood and Roman matron ideology, it is safe to assume that it was moderately successful to those who read the poem. If this assumption is correct, then Warren's objective in writing the poem was effective; it also suggests that even more women in early America internalized an emotional connection with classicism to create and act on political identity.

Not only did Warren use references to classical Roman matrons in her private life through correspondences with the Adams Family, but she also used the name Cornelia to encourage other women in early America to form a close emotional bond with maternal Roman matrons to express patriotism for the emerging nation.

Conclusion

By the early 1800s, it was clear that the period of “Roman” sacrifice had come to an end for Warren. The war ended, women once again had a less visible role in public, the government of America was largely decided, her husband had withdrawn from public politics, and the former Revolutionary men she surrounded herself with were no longer in support of her political opinions. On top of this, “Throughout her various trials—the mental deterioration of her beloved brother James Otis, the frightful crippling of her son James and his later mental depression, and the early deaths of her sons Charles, George, and Winslow—Warren struggled to believe and accept her fate as stoically as the heroines of her verse dramas accept theirs.”³¹⁶ Warren stopped using the Marcia pseudonym by 1780.³¹⁷ While she never took an alias inspired by a Roman matron again, she consistently continued to reference classical matrons in her plays. Between 1785 and 1790, she published two plays set in ancient Rome that invoked the tale of Lucretia (a legendary woman whose rape inspired the Roman monarchy to change into a republic) and the string of empresses from the late imperial period. This late work shows that neoclassicism and the connection she forged was a constant theme throughout Warren’s life, not just a passing trend with no bearing on her life. Though she retreats from active emulation of the matrons in later years, she remains deeply connected to the patriotism inspired by the Roman model women.

I have drawn heavily in these later chapters on Philip Hicks’ analysis of Warren and Abigail Adams’ use of Roman pen names. While I mainly agree with Hicks’ argument, my analysis brings into question one sentence of his conclusion. Hicks wrote, “Deploying these

³¹⁶ Hayes, “Private Poems,” 202.

³¹⁷ Hicks, “Portia and Marcia,” 288.

names was, in fact, an exercise in civic humanist self-fashioning that advertised the divergent limits of each woman's stoical resolve. For Warren classical penmanship became the occasion of self-doubt; for Adams, an instrument of self-actualization.”³¹⁸

Adams unquestionably used neoclassicism as a vehicle for self-actualization in politics; I hope this thesis has shown that Warren did too. As a traditionalist, Warren certainly did experience a degree of self-doubt as she moved more thoroughly into the published political world. Nevertheless, Warren—through her emulation of the Marcias and Cornelias—had unlocked a part of herself that she did not falter from after the war ended. She had “a sheer determination not to waver. She refused to be swept away by her own questioning.”³¹⁹ If she were truly doubtful instead of actualized, then she would have abandoned her public political expression after the war was over or when the Democratic-Republicans won the national election of 1800. Hicks’ view of Warren and Adams as opposites and not the same in overall principle probably stems from the fact that Adams’ political expression matches the modern perception of feminism more closely, as Adams more blatantly pushed for suffrage and equality. Warren, on the other hand, is typically not read as being as forward-thinking or effective as Adams because Warren prioritized a slower approach to women entering the political realm. She stuck closer to the moderate model given to her by most of the Roman matrons by taking things one step at a time and mainly aiming to influence the nation via speaking through the men in her life. She still wanted to be viewed as the perfect wife and mother, which would not have happened if she had been as audacious as Adams. Although Warren’s approach differed from Adams’s and is not

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 275.

³¹⁹ Hayes, “Private Poems,” 202.

seen as progressive as modern thinkers would like, there is no doubt that Warren too used the pseudonym and classical references as a vehicle for self-actualization.

It is clear that women in early America formed a uniquely American and feminine connection to the “masculine” trend of neoclassicism. Even though women’s relationships with classical learning were often degraded to that of a superficial or veneer understanding by contemporary men, women formed emotional bonds with Roman matrons and mothers that went far further than simply passively reading translated classical works and lightly talking about them in salons. Just as Revolutionary men turned to antiquity as a source to express virtue and patriotism, elite white women did the same. These women concentrated on ancient references they found in ancient texts and popular women’s periodicals, discussed them with one another, and used Roman matrons’ actions as justification and guidelines to follow to express their own political identity. As a result, they became deputy wives that took care of the estates while their men fought the war, served as moral pillars to husbands and sons, engaged in historical roleplaying, published political propaganda, created expansive epistolary networks, and participated in active boycotts that furthered the Patriot cause. As long as the American women followed these guidelines and resisted the urge to demand too much sovereignty too fast like Abigail Adams, then they could see themselves as inherently connected and a member of the greater political sphere. As assigned moral guides to their husbands and sons, women’s voices were heard and considered for the first time in American history. For a woman of this period, this was a key development that hovered the line between radical and acceptable; it was as much as they realistically could hope for.

Mercy Otis Warren is an example of a woman who formed a deep emotional and intellectual connection with exemplary Roman matrons that resulted in direct political

expression. The Warrens cultivated a lively and far-reaching epistolary network whose letters were explicitly political with the Warrens and Adamses taking this politicalness to a heightened level by engaging in years-long historical roleplaying, using the names of key Roman figures as pseudonyms. Within this encounter, Mercy Otis Warren developed the alias of (an unspecified and previously under interpreted) Marcia in contrast to Abigail Adams' specified Portia, the wife of Brutus. By studying Warren's interaction with the Adams family and her husband, the letters themselves, and classical sources, it becomes quite clear that Warren was most likely emulating both the heroic Republicanism of Cato's daughter from Joseph Addison's *Cato* and the sacrifice made by Cato's wife in sources from antiquity. This enriched reading of Warren's independence illustrates how Warren and similar women viewed themselves and their contributions to war: they were willing to make great sacrifices for the sake of their country that firmly planted them within the narrative of the war, regardless of whether men saw women's role in the same way. At the same time, Warren was viewing herself in relation to the men around her, just like the two Marcias with Cato.

Warren's poetry and published work were "dignified, well-modulated public statements" that were a direct result of this internalization.³²⁰ Her poem "To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq." was a form of propaganda to inspire other American women to boycott British goods and to limit their luxurious spending. In the contents of the poem, she evokes a number of ancient exemplary women, among them "Cornelias." The mother of the Gracchi was the most prevalent Cornelia in the minds of most at the time, as she was viewed as the pinnacle of motherhood. By invoking this Cornelia, she was appealing to women's sense of duty to their country as a way to secure a

³²⁰ Hayes, "Private Poems," 200.

safe future for their own sons. Nevertheless, Warren was not just referring to this Cornelia, as she explicitly uses a plural form of the name. The steadfast and devoted wife of Pompey was another Cornelia famous within the classical sources commonly read in early America; she was eventually widowed during Pompey's strife with Julius Caesar. By constituting an image of this Cornelia, Warren appeals to American women's deep sense of morality and upholders of virtue for both their families and the nation as a whole.

Warren went farther than just referencing the two Cornelias; she followed in their footsteps by publicly voicing her political opinions. Since *Cornelia mater Gracchorum* was praised for her letter to her sons and Cornelia Metella was deeply humanized by Lucan as a central part of Pompey's Republican characteristics, Warren believed it to be her duty to voice her political concerns so that her beloved country would remain virtuous. Warren published multiple works after the war ended, though she frequently apologized for overstepping into a masculine sphere of life and maintained a traditional view of women belonging to the domestic sphere without suffrage. She used the Cornelia references to encourage herself and other women to participate in political demonstrations and be more active within the historical record, instead of just passively being on the sidelines of history.

Though this thesis has focused on the years 1619-1805 and primarily on Mercy Otis Warren, the internalization of classicism by American women did not only happen within these years or only to this one woman. This time range simply marked the end of Mercy Otis Warren's Roman sacrifice via her pen name and classical references to Roman matrons in her published political work. The overall building of an American feminine political identity did not happen overnight, nor did it cease to develop after 1805. Adams and Warren laid a foundation for expressing political identity, which future generations of women expanded upon, as the notion of

Republican motherhood led to increased educational and literacy rates for women in the 1800s. This example of emulating Roman matrons led to later social movements in the 19th and 20th centuries that centered on groups of women stepping outside the domestic sphere while still maintaining a feminine identity, like the Temperance Movement, abolitionism, and the suffragettes.

There are still some unanswered questions extending past the scope of this thesis. How far-reaching was this internalization of classics as a way to build a political identity? How many more women in early America developed this relationship that has been overlooked? What other evidence of this phenomenon exists in archives across the nation? What other Roman matrons were women looking to, and how did their personal lives shape their relationship/what they took from the ancient stories? How did the figures the wealthy women look to differ from the matrons the clergymen's daughters looked to? Were there women who rejected this emotional relationship with antiquity? Warren looked to figures from the late Republic period due to their relatability with her own experience of the Revolutionary war, but how long did Roman figures from the late Republic create powerful examples? As the war became more and more distant in American memory, did these figures fade too? If they did, who did women look to instead? Did they start looking more toward women from the Roman imperial period? Did Americans relate to the Roman Empire the same way they resonated with the Roman Republic in the decades after the Revolutionary War?

Future historians and classicists have the opportunity to devote further research to this topic and attempt to answer the questions posed above. Warren used so many references in her work that it alone could constitute an entire volume of work. Even though I focused on Mercy Otis Warren and her relationship with classicism, many other early American women appeared

consistently throughout my research. Other than Abigail Adams, most of these other women have not been studied at great length—especially when it comes to their interactions with the neoclassical trend. Building a body of case studies focused on single women would draw a more complex and comprehensive image of American women’s internalization of neoclassical models to emerge.

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