DOUBLE VISION:
PORTRAIT MINIATURES AND EMBEDDED LIKENESS
IN EARLY AMERICA

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the important social, cultural, and symbolic roles that portrait miniatures performed in the Early Republic. These small, mobile art objects accomplished a variety of functions both as physical objects and symbolic touchpoints when they became “embedded” or referenced visually and textually in other artistic works. In order to develop a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of portrait miniatures, this thesis explores the role and placement of these objects within large-scale oil portraits, miniatures, prints, and literature to investigate why American sitters, patrons, and artists wished to display and integrate smaller portraits into larger works. This work also analyzes the circulation of portrait miniatures as objects that served to connect individuals physically, emotionally, and otherwise in the early republic. In this thesis I propose the “minute view”, one that was at once intensely concentrated but was representative of social, familial, and national networks on a large scale. The inclusion of these objects in the visual, material, and literary worlds of the post-revolutionary period, helps to place these objects within the framework of the language of portrait miniatures in an American context.
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Philadelphia readers who picked up their January 7, 1790 issue of The Federal Gazette encountered an intriguing story disguised as an advertisement: “Found on the narrow road to happiness,” the passage began, “a white leather pocket book, with a gold clasp in the shape of a heart neatly bound with the love of mankind.”¹ Within the pocket book was to be found:

…the form of the new constitution, a proclamation for thanksgiving, a short prayer for the restoration of peace to our allies, Mrs. W — h—n’s portrait, the miniature of America, with many useful observations on economy and industry.² Also held in the pocket book were “…some prudent invectives against the mutability of fashion the vice of intemperance,” and for good measure, “the absurdity of unmeaning compliment…” The pocket book was thought to have been dropped by the Commander in Chief himself, “for the benefit of the thoughtless crowd [sic]” — in other words: the American people. This tongue-in-cheek advertisement was placed in

¹ Federal Gazette, “From the Poughkeepsie Journal,” Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,

² Federal Gazette, “Poughkeepsie Journal.”
The Gazette the day before George Washington gave the nation’s first State of the Union Address in New York City. ³

It is not a stretch to imagine a metaphorical pocket book possessed by the nation’s first president containing such items of civic and political importance, but why did it also contain a small portrait of his wife? The inclusion of Mrs. Washington’s portrait indicates the President’s virtue through marital devotion and secures his status as a surrogate father to her children and grandchildren. But, most importantly, it is the only object that specifically identifies Washington as the owner of the pocketbook. The advertisement playfully reinforces the couple’s connection: “It is supposed said pocket book was dropt for the benefit of the thoughtless crowd[sic] by the consort of the amiable lady above mentioned.” Washington’s iconic status as father of the nation required that a mother and wife also be present.⁴

By the end of the eighteenth century, portrait miniatures served many personal, social, and intimate purposes for their owners, sitters, and observers. From their seventeenth-century introduction to America, miniatures were used by artists and writers to communicate ideas about artistry, family, and community and references to these small, portable objects in art and literature in the new republic suggests that miniatures held great significance and served particular artistic, emotional, and sentimental functions to the American public. In order to develop a better

³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
understanding of the multifaceted nature of portrait miniatures, I will examine their role and placement within large-scale oil portraits, miniatures, prints and literature. Through analysis of these visual and textual sources, this thesis will examine the circumstances of their production, display, and circulation. This will provide fodder for asking questions about issues of scale and semiotic meaning of these embedded likenesses. In turn, this analysis can help place these objects within the framework of the language of portrait miniatures in an American context. An exploration of the materiality of miniatures themselves, as well as the images and texts within which miniatures are depicted, is necessary to understand why American


This thesis employs the framework proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure, in that the miniature acts as both a conventional and stereotyped sign and one that has intrinsic value to the object that it signifies. See Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959); for more readings on semiotics and material culture, see Christopher Y. Tilly, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, Handbook of Material Culture (London: Sage, 2013), 29-42; and Andrea Pellegram, “The Message in Paper,” in Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter, ed, Daniel Miller (London: UCL, 1998), 103-120.

Elle Shushan states that true American miniatures were not created until the period after 1810, however, this thesis tries to understand their circulation, use, and meaning in the Early Republic, for more see, Shushan, “How Miniatures Found Their Face in the New Republic,” The Magazine Antiques (April, 2009): 68-75.
sitters, patrons, and artists wished to display and integrate smaller portraits into larger works. Further, through the analysis of portrait miniatures represented within these works of art, this thesis addresses the process of dematerializing objects, as a way of incorporating them into a public discourse and establishing their meaning as derived through a common language.  

Beyond the rising prominence of portrait miniatures, the historical period in which portrait miniatures came to prominence in the 1600s and 1700s witnessed a fascination for miniaturization in a wide range of media beyond painting. Given the growth of industry and advances in manufacturing in the eighteenth century, small novelties such as miniature tea sets, furniture, and dolls delighted and entertained consumers. This preoccupation with the reduction and amplification of scale was also expressed in art, especially in the form of the portrait miniature. The portrait miniature

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8 The theoretical framework proposed by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* is employed throughout this work, particularly in regard to the formation of national ideologies and the articulation of shared-consciousness by way of print culture. His work points out the ways in which increased circulation of printed material revolutionized the modern world, by opening knowledge and language up to broader audiences, giving a “fixity to language” and cultural ideas in order to create a unified idea of the past, and changed the ways in which “languages-of-power” were articulated in culture. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 44-45, 37-65; also see Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

possessed many associations to royalty and luxury, and were chiefly seen as objects meant to connect, define, and reify relationships across time and space. These objects were reimagined and marketed by artists to coincide with defined Republican aesthetics and repurposed to serve similar, but explicitly “American” goals.\(^{10}\)

The word miniature was used long before the practice of portrait miniatures developed. Dating to the Middle Ages, minium was a red lead oxide used to illuminate manuscripts, which evolved into the Italian minitura, meaning: “small brightly coloured image used to decorate books, manuscripts, etc., art of painting these images.”\(^{11}\) An art form-within-a-work, minium was used for limning, or the process of decorating borders and initials with small flourishes on vellum, the same material that was used initially in the process of creating portrait miniatures.\(^{12}\)

\(^{10}\) Ross Barrett, “Violent Prophecies Thomas Cole, Republican Aesthetics, and the Political Jeremiad,” American Art 27, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 24-49; I am influenced and employ Barett’s concept of “republican aesthetics” in order to contextualize the state of American Painting in the Early Republic. Barrett writes, “This discourse, which I will call ‘republican aesthetics,’ construed elevated painting as a medium through which an ideal mode of hierarchical republicanism might be articulated, realized, and sustained in the face of growing disorder and the accelerating process of democratization.” Ibid., 26.


miniatures were called portraits “in littel” and were worn as jewelry and the process of their creation continued to be known as limning. The term miniature would not stand on its own to describe these small paintings until the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{13}

During the reign of Henry VIII, miniature portraits rose to preeminence at the hands of Hans Holbein who served as court artist and painted many enamel and miniature portraits on vellum for the Tudor court.\textsuperscript{14} Small in scale and precious in both size and embellishment, miniature portraits served purposes of diplomacy, romantic affection, and political alliances.\textsuperscript{15} Queen Elizabeth, a great patron and figure in the meaning-making of portrait miniatures generally, kept these portraits for her own cabinet of treasures, but also awarded them as gifts to her loyal followers. Rather


\textsuperscript{15} Koos, "Wandering Things,” 4; Queen Elizabeth I, in particular, helped to frame the loaded emotional implications behind portrait miniatures. Elizabeth commissioned hundreds of miniature portraits from artist Nicholas Hilliard, one of her favorite individuals of the court. For more on the artist Nicolas Hilliard (1547-1617) see Strong, \textit{The English Renaissance Miniature}, 65-142.
than view them as rewards or mere distinctions, art historian Marianne Koos argues that, “artefacts[sic] like these have the additional function of reminding the recipients of their loyalties, of binding, controlling and disciplining them with a gift.”16

American portrait miniatures retained this vibrant power and were used in the New World to solidify relationships and reify intangible social connections.

The practice of painting and wearing portrait miniatures was introduced to North America through the Tudor and Elizabethan tradition of portraiture.17 According to art historian Robin Jaffee Frank, “Choosing the miniature, an art form associated with the English court, offered sitters the patina of established wealth, of families for whom tiny portraits represented heirlooms of a distinguished line.”18 One of the earliest American paintings depicting an individual wearing a portrait miniature is a young woman named Elizabeth Eggington dated to 1664.19 The sitter was born in Boston in 1656 to Elizabeth Cotton Eggington and Jeremiah Eggington. Following conventions of English portraiture, in which sitters wore miniatures, medals, and badges to identify with a particular social identity, Elizabeth wears a pendent

16 Koos, "Wandering Things," 4.

17 Frank, Love and Loss, 2.

18 Ibid., 5.

encrusted with jewels surrounding a small portrait of what appears to be a man, possibly her father, against a blue background. Due to her death in 1664, there is speculation as to whether or not this portrait was painted posthumously. It serves as both monument and reminder of both Jeremiah Eggington’s marriage and the connections made to the prominent Cotton family in the New World, but the image also references the family his lost family. In her portrait, Elizabeth claims and is laid claim to by this connection — whether the sitter in her miniature was royalty or family, she is branded as belonging to a group but also possesses a belonging related to that group. The locket may be an object of remembrance, but it also locates young Elizabeth Eggington within a context and lineage in a diasporic world.20

Though it is difficult to ascertain the first portrait miniature circulated in the American colonies, artists were creating them by the first quarter of the eighteenth century.21 The rage for miniatures in the United States grew steadily in the early to mid-eighteenth century.22 Most early miniatures in the American colonies were created in oil on copper or watercolor on vellum and paper. Eventually, watercolor on

20 For more on the portrait of Elizabeth Eggington, see more in Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, American Paintings Before 1945 in the Wadsworth Athenaeum (Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 815.

21 Frank, Love and Loss, 2-3.

22 The John Smibert painted few miniatures, but works on oil and copper were expensive items, costing just as much a half-length portrait, see Richard H. Saunders and Ellen Gross Miles, American Colonial Portraits, 1700-1776 (Washington City: Published by the Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1987), 123.
ivory became the main materials used. Introduced in England by way of Italy in circa 1710, ivory was an unlikely material for painting. Covered in natural oils, not only was ivory delicate and susceptible to cracking due to the climate, it was expensive. Desired for its translucency, it was not until the 1720s in England that miniatures were created using ivory. In order to prepare ivory for watercolor, the artist would sand and degrease the ivory to make the surface capable of holding the watercolor. Their small size made miniatures adaptable for use in jewelry, watches, lockets, or furniture, thereby making them versatile — and transportable — items. The transition from vellum to ivory more closely aligned miniatures with the market for luxury goods, and required very specialized skills for their creation. Like their English counterparts, Americans used paper, vellum, or copper until the 1740s and 50s, when American miniaturists employed ivory as the primary support for these objects. One of the earliest artists to work on ivory was Mary Roberts of Charleston, South Carolina who

23 Frank, Love and Loss, 2-3.


27 Frank, Love and Loss, 2-3.
painted what are considered some of the first ivory miniatures in America. Some artists cut and prepared their own ivory, but into the nineteenth century, they were able to purchase materials on order or from specialized vendors. In addition to shifts in materials, miniatures also underwent a change in size. They were reduced in size until the mid-eighteenth century and then gradually their case sizes and ivory grew larger again into the nineteenth-century.

Over time, as their glass shields cracked, broke or were damaged, they were rehoused in different cases. Sometimes this allowed the miniatures to be retrofitted in contemporary cases that were larger and made public display more appropriate. The cases for American portrait miniatures were mainly embellished with decorative metalwork, enameling and hair-work and were, in general, less ornate than their English and Continental counterparts. Miniature cases were sometimes made by jewelers to suit the portrait or they could be purchased ready-made from a variety of retailers. Raphaelle Peale’s 1801 trade card demonstrates one of the main differences between American and English miniatures. The advertisement offered “platts and

28 Saunders and Miles, *American Colonial Portraits*, 169; Frank notes a self portrait miniature on ivory completed by Benjamin West completed a self-portrait (1758-9) painted in miniature on ivory for a woman he hoped to marry as one of the first miniatures made by a native-born America; for more see Frank, *Love and Loss*, 36-48.


30 Ibid., 11.
cyphers copleat” meaning that the frames were decorated in fashionable hairwork and brightwork. The simple, ovoid frame with a split bale of the Peale advertisement was emblematic of the clean classical look preferred for American casework in the early-nineteenth century. Additionally, around the same time, miniatures were framed within small paper maché or wooden frames. While a discussion of cases is not the central feature of the thesis, it is important to remember that cases protected the miniatures and acted as vehicles for their circulation.

31 Ibid., 15-20.
Figure 1.1  *Trade Card of Raphaelle Peale*, c. 1801, Philadelphia, PA, Col. 9, Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.
Miniature painting in America gained popularity during and after the American Revolution, in correlation with their popularity in Great Britain. The Royal Academy of Art in London put on an exhibition in the 1760s in which miniatures and oil portraits were displayed side-by-side. Despite their appearance in exhibitions in England, miniature portraits were not dominant art forms in the colonies nor were they particularly common until American artists like Charles Wilson Peale and John Singleton Copley undertook training in miniature painting from European sources.\textsuperscript{33} During and after the American Revolution, their patronage grew steadily. American artists, including the Peale brothers — James and Charles — struggled to define the essence of “American” art, culture, and society. The work of these artists, as one scholar has stated, “contributed to a democratic ideology reconciling

\textsuperscript{32} Frank, \textit{Love and Loss}, 5.

individualism and the nation-state.”^34^ The discourse of republicanism, which placed emphasis on the individual, was also deeply concerned with the identity of the whole.^35^ In addition to defining rights of new citizens, political discourse emphasized an aesthetic and material break from the divorced “Mother” country. This, in turn, compelled Americans to contemplate issues of morality, fashion, and taste. With previous connections to Britain for material goods, intellectual ideas, and identity, new Americans sought a way to craft a recognizable and distinct identity.^36^ If miniatures are emblems of identity, how did they function in the new nation? How were they employed in America to strengthen bonds of love, friendship and community? And why did a miniature of Martha Washington define and identify her husband?

Literature discussing portrait miniatures in art has typically examined “double portraits,” or pictures within pictures, in terms of their ability to depict social habits and to embody sentimental attachments.^37^ However, they have not been considered


primarily in the context of their function as statements about American identity and nation-building on a large scale.\textsuperscript{38} Previous scholarship has helped to reclaim miniatures as an art-form rather than a medium of sentimentality, and has made advances in our understanding of the patronage, provenance, personal connections, usage, and the materiality of portrait miniatures.\textsuperscript{39} Examinations of miniatures often include works of visual art containing representations of portrait miniatures, but they are utilized as illustrative didactics rather than sources for analysis in themselves.\textsuperscript{40} These works of art have also been considered as evidence regarding methods of consumption of portrait miniatures as jewelry, fashion accessories, or wall-hangings.\textsuperscript{41} The body of art in which miniatures are represented — miniatures as depicted in paintings, miniatures, and texts — has not been considered holistically as a convention

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\textsuperscript{38} Verplanck explores the meaning of portrait miniatures and silhouettes in Philadelphia during the early republic to discuss their social meanings, see Verplanck, “Facing Philadelphia: The Social Function of Silhouettes, Miniatures, and Daguerreotypes, 1760-1860.” Diss. Ph.D., College of William and Mary, 1996.

\textsuperscript{39} Frank, \textit{Love and Loss}.

\textsuperscript{40} Lovell, \textit{Art in a Season}, 34-35; Frank considers the different ways sitters displayed, wore, and used miniatures in portraiture in order to contextualize their role and meaning in culture. Frank, \textit{Love and Loss}, 1-34.
or genre of portraiture on its own terms.\footnote{Pointin’s article “Surrounded by Brilliants” discusses portrait miniatures as objects, but also identifies their value in English culture by examining their inclusion in visual culture, particularly prints. For more see Pointon “Surrounded with Brilliants,” 48-71.} This thesis draws upon scholarship that has considered the social and cultural use of portrait miniatures. Anne Verplanck’s research examines the role that portrait miniatures played in connecting and reinforcing social networks. Due to their physicality, British art historian, Marcia Pointon has used the term “portrait-object” to describe miniatures, rather than examine them as dematerialized portraits or simply as an assemblage of materials such as cases, frames, and gemological embellishments. However, this project examines the body of work in which miniatures are featured broadly, in order to answer further questions about the role that miniatures as embedded likenesses played in early American art, culture, constructions of social networks, and nation-building.

There is a gendered component that has been largely underscored in notions of the public and private display of portrait miniatures. It has been argued that in works of art depicting miniatures within paintings, men display portrait miniatures less frequently than women. This assumption indicates that it was far more suitable for women to display affection and emotion in public, whereas men relegated those emotions to the private sphere.\footnote{Lovell, \textit{Art in a Season}, 35.} Though visually, this may have been true, it obscures the place of the portrait miniature within public transactions and performances. As objects, the gendered distinction was primarily defined by the packaging and display

\footnote{Pointin’s article “Surrounded by Brilliants” discusses portrait miniatures as objects, but also identifies their value in English culture by examining their inclusion in visual culture, particularly prints. For more see Pointon “Surrounded with Brilliants,” 48-71.}
of the miniature portrait in the material world. Women wore miniatures as jewelry in the form of lockets, bracelets, and brooches and men tucked miniatures into pockets, drawers, pocket-books, and other concealed places close to the body. This may be apparent in visual art, but when considered in primary sources, men were deeply engaged and played a dominant role in the performative aspects of portrait miniatures, especially the public act of giving gifts and in the process of creating and defining their meaning. Many portrait miniatures depict female sitters, and are indicative of their patronage and consumption of these objects. This project will examine both the gendered nature of miniatures as well as tensions between public and private bound up in these objects.

The family and social history of the Early Republic also enters into the discussion, as portrait miniatures are acknowledged artifacts of social connection. The Early Republic, a period generally defined between the years 1780-1830, describes the interval immediately following the American Revolution and the period of increased industrialization and political foment — sometimes known as the “Antebellum era.”

Discourse regarding children and childbearing shifted in the Early Republic as families decreased in size and parents made intentional decisions about the number of children they wished to have. Recent studies have emphasized the changing dynamics of family and the roles of parents in the discourse of republicanism.\(^{45}\) Portraiture remained an important way of communicating the political, familial, and social connections of sitters in the Early Republic. In addition to education, transportation, health, trade, architecture, and science, art was seen as one of the key elements of culture that would contribute to the project of creating a national American identity. In a letter James Madison in 1785, Thomas Jefferson expressed the value of the arts in the new American nation. He wrote, “you see I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts. But it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed, as it’s object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world & procure them it’s praise.”\(^{46}\) Jefferson’s interest in art was not one of


vulgar or decadent indulgence, but one that was deeply involved in instilling and creating values in the American people.

When viewed as props, portrait miniatures within art become dematerialized simulations of material objects. Considerable attention has been given to the significance, symbolism, or the materiality of objects depicted in portraiture and their service as either allegorical devices, representations of specific cultures, stylistic elements, indications of cultural values, and representations of self-fashioning. This approach is widely used in work that explores the underlying meaning and authentication of clothing depicted in portraiture and culture. These accoutrements of daily life were considered meaningful and acted sometimes as shorthand for the way they operated in culture at large. They are as indicative of the complex layers of social engagement between the object and the sitter’s place in the world. The purposes served by portrait miniatures as devotional objects, demarcations of significant life


48 Margaretta Lovell’s examines a recurring blue dress in three portraits of female friends by John Singleton Copley. The dress’ inclusion in all of their portraits yielded multiple levels of social significance see Lovell’s third chapter, “The Empirical Eye” for her analysis of the portraits of Mercy Otis Warren, Mary Toppan Pickman, and Mary Turner Sargent in Art in a Season, 89.
events, and heirlooms have also been explored in depth by a large number of scholars. Those who have contributed to the advancement and promotion of portrait miniatures as objects of study have feet in both in the marketplace, the museum, and the academy. Robin Jaffe Frank, Elle Shushan, Carrie Rebora Barrett, and Anne Verplanck have produced scholarship and exhibitions that have advanced the study of portrait miniature significantly.

The significance of portrait miniatures as proxies for loved ones, their size, and mobility has also been noted in previous scholarship. However, little has been done to include these objects within the constellation of materials that were created in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century that illustrate a culture’s fascination with the amplification and miniaturization of the physical world. Recent work in both literary

49 Notably, the Robin Jaffe Frank’s book Love and Loss, explores the material objects themselves while also providing a wider cultural context for their use as objects of memory and expressions of love. In her essay on the use of portrait miniatures in Philadelphia, Anne Verplanck examines the way these objects both connected and distinguished the city’s elite population. She analyzes miniatures as emblems of rank and shared ideas. The essay also explores the materiality of these objects, their artists, how they were worn, and the meanings they possessed for patrons entrenched in Philadelphia’s political climate of the Early Republic. Verplanck, Facing Philadelphia and “Social Meanings.”

theory and American art history have considered scale as a function of seeing and understanding the world. Susan Stewart’s work on the nature of collections and memory approaches scale, both the miniature and the gigantic, as important categories for understanding the relationship between objects, the human experience, and body.\(^{51}\) Alexander Nemerov’s *The Body of Raphelle Peale* serves as a model for this study in that it considers issues of scale and vision in Early America. The book also investigates the emergence of individualism in American art.\(^{52}\) Additionally, Wendy Bellion’s consideration of visual cultures in the Early Republic and the role that “seeing,” discernment, and illusion played in the role of nation building helps to redefine and uncover new information about how the visual world helped to shape the American consciousness.\(^{53}\)

The consideration of the circulation of portrait miniatures draws upon recent interest in the circulation and mobility of objects.\(^{54}\)


\(^{54}\) My understanding of objects that pass through various states with different use values and characteristics as commodities derives from Igor Kopytoff’s essay, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in *The Social Life of*
*Winterthur Portfolio*, edited by Wendy Bellion and Monica Dominguez-Torres, takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the ways in which the mobility of objects helped shape American culture. They define motion in two ways: “as a noun indicating the displacement of things from one place to another and part of a verb “to set in motion,” that is, to give impetus to particular processes.”\(^{55}\) This thesis uses these definitions in order to better understand the movement and circulation of portrait miniatures, but also their meaning as objects that helped in the development of social networks and groups across space and time. Jennifer Robert’s work considers the movement of art as material objects across space as a way of thinking about national identity and the development of American art. This work is significant, because it opens art objects to the same scrutiny as print culture in their capacity as functionaries in the process of nation-building.\(^{56}\) The interplay between visual culture and text, as well as the ways in which objects operate and circulate in texts is also considered in the final chapter. Recent studies of “it-narratives” or novels of circulation are considered in the final chapter on portrait miniatures in literature as a way of figuring these objects into the literary and cultural imagination.

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\(^{55}\) Bellion and Monica Dominguez Torres, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn, 2011): 101-106.

This thesis argues that these visual relationships were not and are not “straightforward” but incredibly complex reification of familial dedication and devotion across space and time through the use of images and objects. Unlike large-scale portraits, miniatures themselves allude to a wider network of physical objects that can move more easily in physical space. Whether tucked in a pocket or pinned beneath a fichu, were moved, or were broken, portrait miniatures linked individuals across broad expanses. References to miniatures abound in American literature as objects linked to both individual and group identity in the Early Republic. Miniatures continue to compel and intrigue viewers because of their size, detail, and beauty. When viewed in a museum or a book it is easy to frame them as diminutive versions of larger portraits, but when considered within a broad cultural context, they are so much more. Understanding portrait miniatures as objects in motion or affection with varied uses and meanings can help illuminate the cultural resonance of these objects in early America.
Chapter 2

THE MINUTE VIEW: PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN MINITURIST

James Peale sits at wooden tabletop desk, the green baize-lined surface angled to better facilitate the detailed work required to paint a miniature portrait on ivory. (Figure 2.1) Charles Willson Peale, the noted naturalist, artist, and early American polymath, painted this portrait around 1795 depicting his younger brother James in the process of creating the miniature of a woman.\(^5^7\)

\(^{57}\) Anne Sue Hirshorn, “Anna Claypoole, Margareta, and Sarah Miram Peale: Modes of Accomplishment and Fortune,” in edited by Lillian B. Miller, The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy, 1770-187 (New York: Abbeville Press in association with the Trust for Museum Exhibitions and the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 229; It has been suggested that the miniature portrait that James is in the process of painting depicts Charles’ first wife Rachel Brewer Peale (1744-1790). A miniature portrait by James of Rachel does not have the same composition or attributes of the miniature he is painting in the portrait, and appears to bear similarities to other miniatures of women wearing white caps that he painted in the 1790s. Rachel married Charles Willson Peale on January 12, 1762 and together they had six children who were living at the time of her death in April of 1790. This portrait of James was part of a pair that Charles painted of James and his wife Mary Claypoole Peale (1753-1829). Shortly after the commission of this painting, James painted a miniature of Charles’ second wife Elizabeth Depeyster Peale (1765-1804) shortly after the portrait of James at the miniature desk was painted. Charles Coleman Sellers suggests that this was a return gift to Charles for the pendent pair of James and his wife. See Miller, “The Biography of A Family,” in The Peale Family, 18, 22; Sellers, Portraits and Miniatures by Charles Willson Peale (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1952), 164, 166.
Figure 2.1  James Peale Painting a Miniature, c.1795 (oil on Canvas), Peale, Charles Willson (1741-1827) / Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, MA, USA / Bequest of Herbert L. Pratt (Class of 1895) / Bridgeman Images.
Seated against a dark greenish background, she wears a white cap with lappets that frame her ovoid face, echoing the shape of the “canvas.” The elliptical sliver of ivory is stabilized on a small piece of paper in order for James to concentrate his brushstrokes and move the ivory without disturbing the surfaces. Although James Peale’s large hands dwarf his miniscule work of art, his clear blue eyes stare confidently at the viewer as he sits at his desk, positioned proudly and dexterously wielding the tools of his trade. A drawer peeks out from his desk, revealing his colors and storage space for his supplies. With the pencil, he stipple, crosshatches, dabs, and fills in the content of her form. Though erasure was possible by blotting out or removing the color with saliva or water, large mistakes might devastate the entire process. 58 Rather than looking down at his project, the miniaturist gazes out at his brother Charles, the artist of this large-scale portrait, which serves as a commemoration of James’ skill in miniature painting. Not only did he look out at his brother, but his gaze was returned by the multitudes of viewers who visited Charles’ museum in Philadelphia where this portrait was exhibited in 1795. Along with the myriad of paintings, natural phenomena, and scientific experiments within the cases of the museum, designed to attenuate the gaze of the American viewer, the portrait of

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James was No. 84 in the catalogue and titled, “miniature painter of Philadelphia”. This tribute also reveals that miniature painting was being positioned by the Peales to be an important component of “American” art.

The delicate work and ability to minimize the human form onto a surface of just a few inches was a prized skill, as was the talent required to manipulate the difficult and often disobedient material of ivory. For Anglo-Americans, portrait miniatures held associations with aristocracy, dating to the Elizabethan period when these small portraits were sheathed in elaborate cases fitted out with jewels, carved stones, and precious metals. How did miniaturists curtail the elite associations entangled with portrait miniatures, in order sell objects that would be particularly American? Portraits of artists in the process of creating portrait miniatures celebrated their skill and talent of miniaturization, but these images also allowed them to define the act with particular significance as American artists.

Seeking to define and create art that that represented American republican values and new senses of self forced American artists to re-conceptualize the status of portraiture. Anxieties about the fragility of the new American nation manifested themselves in the decorative arts, architecture, furniture, and the landscape –

59 Sellers, *Portraits and Miniatures*, 166.

redefining the world in the classical taste. This style, broadly defined, drew upon the sleek surfaces and clean lines of ancient Rome and Greece and thereby cast off the heavy glut of Rococo imperial extravagance. Despite the rhetoric, what actually occurred was a creolizing of republican and imperial design, which defined a distinctly American material world. As the complexities of the work of James and Charles Wilson Peale show the process and commitment to this endeavor, this chapter will consider the work of these two artists in defining American portrait miniatures and their place in American art.


The conventions of self-portraiture and portraits of artists at work were well-established by the time Charles took up his brushes to memorialize his brother James seated at the miniature desk. Margaretta Lovell explores works of self-portraiture by American artists in the colonial period, and describes their inclusion of trompe l’oeil works of art as “pictures-within-pictures.” She perceives these “pictures-within-pictures” as part of artists’ attempts to theorize the role and significance of portraiture in American life. Lovell suggests miniatures-within-paintings that should be read as two-dimensional images that achieve the same goals as the large-scale portrait in which they inhabit. The miniature in the portrait is considered as a two-dimensional image and also a representation of a material object, rather than for its symbolic or theoretical properties. I argue that portraits in which miniatures are represented, including those that depict artists in the process of painting miniatures, are significant in their own right and, in fact, in line with Lovell’s larger argument about “paintings-within-a-painting.” In the process of miniaturizing the portrait and placing it within the matrix of the larger work of art, the embedded miniature takes on new meaning as a fixed and stable object/image.

Americans developed a taste for portraiture over other representational arts, yet for artists it was not a particularly lucrative endeavor. It was often difficult to secure

64 Lovell, *Art in a Season*, 26-27, 34.

65 Ibid., 34-35

66 Ibid., 34.
repeat customers. Charles Willson Peale expressed the convenience of miniature painting during the American Revolution, because these small objects were “…more portable and therefore could be kept out of the way of plundering enemy.” They were also keepsakes for family members at home during the crisis of war and later acted mementos of military service. Despite this convenience, miniature painting ranked low on the scale of refined academic painting. The directives of Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy in England, a portraitist himself — and mentor to many early American artists — emphasized a hierarchy of painting which placed portraits and portrait miniatures lower on the scale. He encouraged artists to aim for greatness and, like a philosopher, “consider nature in the abstract, and represent in every one of his figures the character of its species.” Following the examples and dictates of the Academy’s preference for history paintings, American artist-in-London Benjamin West’s *Death on a Pale Horse* (1817) which measured 176” x 301”, was a step in the appropriate direction. In contrast West made one known attempt at miniature painting which and he presumably never attempted this form again.

67 Letter from CWP to Benjamin West, 1776, quoted in “Social Meaning,” Verplanck, 210-211.

68 Reynolds, Joshua. *A Discourse, Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes, December 14, 1770, by the President* (London: Printed for Thomas Davies by William Griffin, 1771), 15.

69 Benjamin West (1738-1820), *Death on a Pale Horse*, 176 x 301 in. (447.0 x 764.5 cm.), 1836.1, Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.
Minute details and slavish imitation were the hallmarks of a “lower painter,” one who was only interested in categorizing and defining differences between objects. Reynolds argued that the painter should be able, he argued, to pull away from the minutia and summarize the larger view of humanity through their work. Reynolds wrote:

If deceiving the eye were the only business of the art, there is no doubt, indeed, but the minute painter would be more apt to succeed: but it is not the eye, it is the mind, which the painter of genius desires to address; nor will he waste a moment upon these smaller objects, which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart.\(^{70}\)

According to Reynolds, the intellectual world was the gateway for reaching the divine requirements of fine art, not direct representation and imitation. Though their work was concerned with “the minute”, the skilled miniaturist was able combine aspect of large-scale portraiture and detailed work, in their ability to depict likenesses that are at once hyper-realistic, but aesthetically balanced. Despite Reynolds’ assessment, miniaturists did not create slavish copies – rather, the medium allowed more realism and clarity than the “Grand Style” of painting was willing to permit. Additionally, miniatures, more so than other art forms, were designed and conceptualized to appeal directly to the heart of a viewer. This was their specialized function and it was highly emphasized in literature and the visual culture of the Anglo-American world.

Despite these competing aesthetic visions and authoritative expectations,

\(^{70}\) Reynolds, *A Discourse*, 16.
American artists developed an eye and aesthetic for imitation and illusion. Though this was typically ascribed to a perceived lack of professional or academic training, Lovell argues that in the realm of portraiture:

Americans retained a particular enthusiasm for the authenticity of a particular, recognizable face, for the pleasure of the artist’s wondrous capacity to double that which was unique, to freeze the clock for distinct individuals destined to change and die.71

Miniature painting rendered itself a useful medium to meet these ends. Wendy Bellion further assesses this fascination with illusionistic painting in the Early Republic as a way to discern, investigate, and determine the real from the fake.72 Rather than being imitative or simulated, Bellion challenges preconceived notions about deceptive imagery, stating that, “during an era in which the senses were politicized as agents of knowledge and action, public exhibitions of illusions challenged Americans to demonstrate their perceptual aptitude.”73 She analyzes spaces like Peale’s museum to reveal how trompe l’oeil or the imitative arts that may have viewed in the discourse of academic painting of the lower sort actually enabled Americans to become educated, informed, and practiced in the skills of discernment and looking.74 Portrait miniatures, and the artists who created them — many of them the same artists who were engaged

71 Reynolds, *A Discourse*, 16.

72 Bellion, *Citizen Spectator*, 1-22.

73 Ibid., 5.

74 Ibid., 1-22.
in other forms of art-making — were involved in a process of producing objects that defined social and cultural behavior. 75

More delicate than oil painting or drawing, the central challenge of miniature painting was the ability to master the art of reducing the world in a smaller scale. Artist’s portraits — either completed by themselves or other artists — depicting the process of miniaturization reveal the important nature and esteemed position that these masters of scale and precision were accorded in America. The fascination with scale that pervaded the 18th and 19th centuries corresponded with Enlightenment ideas of categorizing, reconfiguring, controlling, isolating, and exploring the physical, mental, and natural world. Charles Wilson Peale’s museum, which included a wide range of objects that incorporated scientific phenomena and historical narratives alongside portraits of notable Americans, was described by Benjamin Franklin as “a world in miniature” — an all-encompassing précis of the world at large, rolled into one small package. 76

As previously mentioned, the term miniature itself, dating to the 15th century, refers to the pigment “minium” used in the Middle Ages to outline letters, create


76 Miller, “Biography of a Family,” 25; “The World in Miniature” was also the subtitle for the Peale Museum in Philadelphia. Ward describes Peale’s vision as, “It is not too great a conceit to see Peale’s allusion to himself as the Creator’s agent, especially since has a free-thinker and Diest he viewed man as fulfilling God’s plan.” See Ward, Art and Selfhood, 164.
flourishes, and delineate borders within illuminated manuscripts. In the eighteenth century, the meaning of the term expanded to express ways to epitomize or summarize. Susan Stewart considers the relationship between the word ‘miniature’ and books, which were some of the first consumer objects to become miniaturized. She writes that, “The social space of the miniature book might be seen as the social emblem of the self; the book as microcosm and macrocosm; the book as commodity and knowledge, fact and fiction.” The intersection of human bodies and the ability to capture thoughts and ideas within a tiny container is at the core of miniaturized objects like books or portraits.

For example, an edition of a miniaturized Bible by John Taylor entitled *Verbum Sempiternum* (commonly known as the “Thumb Bible”) was published in New York in 1750. In this attempt to create a textual microcosm, the author and printer attempted to summarize the Bible in a brief 288 pages and satisfied the need to correlate the size of that distillation into a miniature tome. In the dedication to the Duke of Gloucester, Taylor wrote, “And tho’ that volume, and the Work be small, yet it contains the sum of All in All.” Taylor’s summation of the Bible and subsequent replication into a 58 mm book speaks to the nature of miniaturization in the 18th century — the moment of a novel joy, when one realizes that all can be encompassed in the palm of one’s hand. The miniature portrait proposed similar possibilities for


delight and wonderment: the notion that the likeness and essence of an individual could be distilled into a slice of ivory. The ability to carry one’s likeness on the person, or to frame a small image and hang it on a wall, served a purpose as a mnemonic device that both physically engaged the senses and visually represented the quintessence of an individual. As with portrait miniatures more generally, the process of miniaturization in books provided a new way of seeing, contemplating, and understanding one’s self and the world.

Like miniature books, portrait miniatures are comparable to other small representational objects designed to convey substantial amounts of information in miniature form. In his study of pocket maps, Martin Brückner discusses the material and metaphysical consequences of the reductive nature of the miniature within print-formats. If the purpose of the miniature object was to create the sum of all parts in a small portable scale, both maps and books were not able to achieve the level of detail of a portrait miniature. Due to the reduction in measurements, these maps had limited specificity and their use value was purely, as he argues, to activate the “visual memory.” Brückner describes the limitations confronted in pocket maps as follows, “While this extreme generalization increased the map’s material portability, it effectively decreased the transmission of cartographic knowledge.” Due to the limitations of scale, the medium of print limited the amount of detail that pocket-sized bound maps and pocket maps had to offer. The miniature portrait, created through a

process of small brushstrokes, conveyed detailed information that resulted in a visual map, of both the body and the soul of an individual.  

The idea of miniaturization was one that fascinated and delighted the Anglo-American world. Miniaturized accouterments of everyday life like furniture, cutlery, architecture, mechanical devices, and stage-sets were sold to both adults and children. It may be difficult to understand the purposes of miniature furniture, animals, or other trinkets for adults, but contemporary collectors might not be so different from their eighteenth-century counterparts. In 1972, miniature collectors and scholars Herbert and Peter B. Schiffer addressed the appeal of the miniature in all its forms: “Why does one collect miniatures? It’s a form of excitement to those who know antiques, and in a way, they are toys for grown-ups.” The miniature is about “excitement,” discovery, correlation, and recognition for the beholder. Indeed, Samuel Johnson’s entry for “microcosm,” described mankind as “The little world” or a metaphor for “the all-in-all.”

In addition to miniature trappings of everyday life, popular entertainments like

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81 Schiffer, Miniature Antique Furniture, 22.

82 Ibid., 29.

83 Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language in Which the Words Are Deduced from their Originals….A grammar of the English language. In two volumes. Volume II, (London: Printed for J. Knapton,1760) MIC an MIN.
Henry Bridges’ “Microcosm” – an intricate ten to twelve foot tall clock with a six foot base – was both a spectacle of scale as well as a wonder of modern technology. The exterior of the machine could be viewed as a “most beautiful Composition of Architecture, Sculpture and Painting.” Viewers of the Microcosm were offered an experience that was:

judiciously adapted to gratify the Ear, the Eye, and the Understanding; for it plays with great Exactness several fine Pieces of Music, and exhibits, by an amazing Variety of moving Figures, Scenes diversified with natural Beauties, Operations of Art, of human Employments and Diversions, all passing and in real Life, &c.84

As the viewers’ eyes moved down the base of the object, different scenes unfolded, from scenes of industry and everyday life to the planets in motion – all animated by “upwards of twelve hundred Wheels and Pinnions.” Spectators in London, the Caribbean, and the North American colonies were invited to experience the “celebrated Piece of Mechanism” which was designed to look like a Roman Temple. “The Microcosm” toured the colonies from Williamsburg to Boston from 1755 to 1757. Bridges’ life’s work appeased the desire to present an ordering of the world’s greatest achievements as he saw them: science, history, industry, culture, and technology. This contraption, imported from England to amuse and delight American audiences, educated colonists on the key components and fundamentals of the

84 The Virginia Gazette, “To be seen and heard, at the Exchange Tavern, Norfolk,” September 5, 1755.
miniaturized society on which they were to base their own.  

In John Barrow’s *Dictionary Polygraphicum* published in 1756, the miniature was given the accolade: “more delicate than any of the other forts” in two volume set listing numerous artistic endeavors ranging from textile drawing to sculpture, gives both the artist and these objects a special precious caché. The frontispiece displays a young boy, showing another child a miniature portrait that he is working on, amid crowded scene of artistic accomplishments. (Figure 2.2) In the entry on “Miniature,” Barrow formed a definition by breaking the medium into smaller parts:

1. It is in its nature more delicate than any of the other forts.
2. It requires to be beheld near at hand.
3. It cannot be well executed but in small.
4. It is perform’d on vellum or ivory.
5. The colours are moistened with gum-water only.  

As the tone of the entry suggests, this is an art in which “little progress can be made, without time, and much practice.” Though it was a small medium, its portability,  

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85 Ibid.
scale, and materials made it a profitable endeavor for many artists. American artists advertised that they were willing and constrained to diversify both their market and their skills.\textsuperscript{89} The artist’s ability to capture “the world in miniature” was dependent on his or her skill of perspective and representation. Patrons might commission a portrait for a particular event, but repeated patronage was unlikely. Therefore, artists varied their skills, working in a wide range of media in order to successfully make a living.\textsuperscript{90} Miniature painting, however, was one way to ensure repeat or even multiple commissions. It could be completed relatively quickly — prolific artist Charles Willson Peale knocked off the miniature of patron Mary Tilghman’s niece in a 48 hour period, and then painted it again when he included it in Tilghman’s own half-portrait several weeks later.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 101

\textsuperscript{89} In 1777, an artist named William Rowand advertised in New York City that: “if encouragement offers soon,” he would, “begin to paint in miniature, the weather not permitting painting in large, longer, and to teach gentlemen the art of drawing. \textit{Rivington’s New-York Loyal Gazette}, “Advertisement, William Rowand,” New York, December 6, 1777.

\textsuperscript{90} Lovell, \textit{Art in a Season}, 13; 8-25.

Working at such a swift pace demanded skill. Drawing, according to Barrow was of the utmost importance if one were to succeed in miniature painting. The importance of precision in draftsmanship, less emphasized in larger-scale oil painting, was fundamental. \(^92\) Artists working in oil infrequently prepared drawings for portraits, except for preliminary sketches on their canvases, though the ability to draw was a valuable asset. \(^93\) *The Artists Assistant*, by English print-maker Carington Bowles was

\(^92\) Lovell, *Art in a Season*, 184-224.

\(^93\) Pointon, *Hanging The Head*, 2.
published in Philadelphia in 1794, described the importance of drawing to capture the natural world: “This art recalls to our memory to things long since past, and rescues from oblivion the deeds of our illustrious ancestors, at the same time it revives their image in our mind, by preserving their features for many generations.”

The preservation of features, detailed and sharp, were fundamental to the creation of a likeness in miniature. In consequence, many successful miniaturists such as Scottish-American artist Archibald Robertson and James Peale were celebrated draftsmen. Their ability to draw in graphite and ink in a style that was documentary, rather than illusionistic, was aligned with the agility and attention to detail required of miniaturists.

If one was not skilled at drawing, manuals offered shortcuts. One method, known as calking, required the artist to take a premade drawing or print and apply a powdery substance to the surface. Next, the drawing was impressed upon vellum with “a blunted pin or needle,” in order to trace the outline of the image to be copied. Another method, which Barrow called “Reduction,” was achieved by creating a grid on a print or drawing, then replicating a smaller grid onto the vellum or paper, and

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94 Carington Bowles, The Artists Assistant in Drawing, Perspective, Etching, Engraving, Mezzotinto-Scraping, Painting on Glass, In Crayons, In Water-colours, and On Silks and Sattins….Illustrated with Suitable Examples Engraved on Copper, 6th ed., (Philadelphia: Printed by Benjamin Johnson, no 147, for Benjamin Davies, no 68, Market-Street, 1794), 8.

finally, replicating the details in each square. If the hand would not suffice, a machine might also be used to complete the task. Barrow described an object that would do both the visual and manual labor for artists who had difficulties with the spatial aspects of the craft. This implement, designed for those who “[have] no hand at drawing,” was assured to be the most “sure and easy way than any before-mentioned, by the help of mathematical instrument.” The “compass,” as Barrow called it, was constructed of six pieces of wood or rulers that were about an sixth of an inch thick, and half an inch broad that were pinned to a board of “deal” (preferably in the shape of a parallelogram) that was covered with a piece of fabric. (Figure 2.3) These boards were laid out diagonally, in two directions, bisecting one another in the center, top and bottom, creating four diamond shapes in the middle of the device. Each “ruler” was pinned at the intersection point to assure that the pieces moved together as one as the operator traced the larger image. At the center, point ‘D’ was a pin that served as a fulcrum for the piece. The original drawing or print was placed at point ‘C,’ and on the ruler, was placed a blunted pin, so as not to disturb the original drawing for re-use. The vellum or paper was pinned to the fabric over the board and set at point ‘B.’ The pin or crayon attached to the foot of the ruler over the image would thereby transfer a

96 Barrow, Dictionarium Polygraphicum: II, 102

97 Dossie clarifies and refines the construction of the “compass” or as he calls it the “Parallelogram” or “Mathematical Compass,” Robert Dossie, The Handmaid to the Arts Teaching....(London: Printed for J. Nourse at the Lamb opposite Katherine-Street in the Strand, 1758), 345.
4:1 reproduction of the original image at ‘C,’ as the operator traced the original image, applying gentle pressure to the drawing implement over the copy.98

Even for skilled artists, the work of miniaturization was difficult. Machines designed to mechanically transfer images like Barrow’s compass, were known as

98 Barrow, *Dictionarium Polygraphicum*, II, 102-103; Bellion notes that, “Illustrations of drawing instruments abounded in art treatises dating from the Renaissance, but written proof of practice with such devices is exceedingly rare.” See Bellion, "Extend the Sphere": Charles Willson Peale's Panorama of Annapolis,” *The Art Bulletin* 86, No. 3 (Sep., 2004), 529.
pantographs. Bellion notes that several extremely talented artists in the skill of painting small works of art might have used these types of devices to aid in their craft. Miniaturist Edward Green Malbone listed a “pentagraph” and Rembrandt Peale mentions a “perspective machine” in his “Notes on the Painting Room.” Barrow’s compass was essentially plagiarized in the Dossie’s Handmaid of the Arts, which circulated in North America and was known to be in libraries of many American artists after the 1760s. Dossie directly copied the instructions and the diagram from Barrow’s Dictionarium, but it is clear from his detailed and materially-minded instructions that he wrote from a position of knowledge in these matters. Though Barrow advocated for the “compass” for miniaturization, Dossie was hesitant to offer it to those who were experienced artists. Written in 1758, the book was published well after miniatures were created on ivory. The first edition of Barrow’s book, published in 1735 and reissued in 1756, offered the “compass” as a solution to the difficulties of miniaturization on vellum, however, Dossie does not profess the use of this machine for making portrait miniatures. He wrote that while the machine was

99 Bellion, "Extend the Sphere," 548.

100 Handmaid to the Arts was in circulation in North America as early as 1764 in the collection of the Philadelphia Library Company, see Schimmelman, Janice Gayle, Books on Art in Early America: Books on Art, Aesthetics and Instruction Available in American Libraries and Bookstores Through 1815. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2007), 64.

101 For more information on Handmaid to the Arts, see Schimmelman, Gayle, Books on Art in Early America, 58-67.
helpful for tracing, because it could also be adapted to make 1:1 reproductions, that “the abler, and more expert in these arts, where designs that demand spirit and pencil are in question, it seems an expedient below their regard.” Where professional or art of real merit was concerned, the artist’s hand remained the surest way of achieving a genuine likeness. Though the compass may help those “who have no facility in drawing” and perhaps serve as an amusement, artists embraced this imperfect mechanical aid. With this tool artists were ale to “execute better by their own natural powers.”\textsuperscript{102} The hand of the miniaturist, and their skill in reducing the world onto a small reproduction, imbued both the artist and the object with the special power of summation and artistic achievement.

Due to the close nature of their work, miniaturists were required to have keen eyesight in order to manipulate unruly watercolors and insubordinate ivory. Their desks or surfaces were designed hold their work close to their faces in order to create fine detail. Since miniaturization occurred in concert between the eyes and the hands, the senses of the miniaturist were considered with both reverence and concern. Period medical texts struggled to comprehend the optical experience and the degradation of eyesight. One text, noted that the eye could be kept open through out the day, taking in “Houses, People, Coaches, Streets and Horses all at once,” but this did not hurt one’s eyesight as much as it does those who “contract the Sight, and directing it to a particular place, keep it empty’d[sic] in examining some very Minute Points.” It was

\textsuperscript{102} Dossie, \textit{Handmaid to the Arts}, 349.
believed that “intense optical concentration” and the ability to dwell upon minute
details came at a great cost to those who engaged in pursuits associated with the
meticulous world of the small. “Engravers, Painters in Miniature, and others whose
business requiring a nicety of Sight” were susceptible to the loss of those abilities
through extensive periods of directed focus and physical engagement with their
materials. The warning continued, “…daily Experience shews us that those, who Read
and Write much, are sooner forc’d to wear Spectacles from other people.”103 Little
had changed by the early nineteenth-century, as members of the medical profession
grew increasingly interested in ophthalmology and the preservation of eyesight not
just of miniaturists, but of Americans more generally. This overabundance of visual
material, was viewed as a threat to American eyes constantly flooded with broadsides,
prints, handbills, and visual spectacles of the Early Republic.104 Treatises on vision

103 Bernard Mandeville, A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions,
Vulgarly Call’d the Hypo in Men and Vapours in Women (London: Printed and sold by
D. Leach, and W. Taylor, 1711), 159.

104 Nineteenth-century texts maintained similar ideas about eyesight. In 1828, Georg
Beer wrote, “Whoever finds himself obliged to direct his sight almost constantly to
small objects, all lovers of natural history, all painters, and, in short, many artizans
(sic), both male and female, will do well to choose a habitation from whence a long
perspective of different objects may be viewed at intervals; for nothing is more proper
than this to relax the contraction of the eye, and as it were, to recreate it by the
change.” Beer, Art of Preserving the Sight Unimpaired to Extreme Old Age,…
republic, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter, 2008), 616; also see James Hamilton Doggart,
“Gibbons’ Eyesight,” Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society 3, no. 5
cautioned individuals either engaged in minute work or the casual reader that they were in danger of overtaxing their eyesight due to prolonged exertion and focus. Stewart writes, “While the miniature book reduces the world to the microcosm within its covers, the microscope opens up significance of the point at which all the material world shelters a microcosm.” The portrait miniature as microcosm, conveyed by the miniaturist’s eye, allowed the viewer to decode and contemplate the details and essence of the object. Thus, like the microscope, the eye of the miniaturist was considered an optical device, one that was prized for its ability, to condense, capture and re-produce a person in miniature.

The process of creating miniatures involved a particular way of seeing, but embedding a likeness in a larger work of art was also a careful process. Both James and Charles Peale painted large-scale oil portraits in which the sitter wore or displayed a portrait miniature. These highly mobile objects were thereby arrested and reinforced in the hands of portrait painters when they were flattened in large-scale oil portraiture. In the process of representation, the miniature object’s characteristics and qualities are challenged through the transformation of watercolor on ivory to oil on canvas. These types of portraits will be discussed in the following chapter, but it is important also to note the developing convention of painting miniature portraits-within-miniature portraits.

105 Stewart, On Longing, 40-41.
Miniatures-within-miniatures represent the microscopic eye of the miniaturist and further ascribe preternatural ability to their skill. Wendy Bellion describes the role of the microscope in the eighteenth century as a device that allowed individuals of all levels of specialization the ability to “peer into the secrets of nature.” Like nesting-dolls, miniatures-within-miniatures delight, confuse, and titillate the viewer. The artist’s powers of miniature reproduction are tested and expounded upon by embedding the likeness of another individual – sometimes recognizable but often obscured by lace, cases, garments, or the owner’s hands – within the portrait of another individual. John Archibald Woodhouse Sr. completed one such portrait of his brother, Abraham, around 1810. (Figure 2.4) Abraham is positioned erect in the center of the oval composition, his cornflower blue eyes open wide. He sits in front of a blue, buff, and grey crosshatched background that echoes the intersecting diagonal lines of his silk waistcoat. High collared and thick-crataved, Abraham wears an oval miniature near his heart. The eye is directed to this mystery object, drawn down by the points of his collar, towards the center of the V-shape created by his high collar, waistcoat, and the curl of his broadcloth lapel.

106 Ibid.

107 Bellion, Citizen Spectator, 41.
Figure 2.4 Attributed to John Archibald Woodside, Sr, *Portrait of a Gentleman, Abraham Woodside, John Woodside (Brother of Artist)*, c. 1810, Watercolor on ivory; the reverse with plaited hair; height 2 5/8 inches (6.7 cm); Courtesy, Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Gift of the McNeil Americana Collection, 2008.
Upon closer inspection, the ambiguous shape of a woman wearing a white cap within a gold oval frame is legible in Abraham’s own miniature. The white oval of her face, with two points for eyes and one for a mouth, and the blush of her cheeks provide some detail of her features. Her breasts, two white highlights beneath her blue dress, suggest her sex. This miniature portrait operates within a closed network of understanding – between the sitter, his brother/artist, and those cognizant of Abraham’s personal relationships. Abraham’s miniature, encased in a gold frame with hair work on the reverse, is fitted with a bale with tripartite piercings, indicating that it was most likely worn on a chain. (Figure 2.5) It has been argued that men usually wore miniatures as pins or more commonly held them in cases that would be concealed in their pockets or other private spaces. The act of publicly displaying the miniature is significant in what it suggests. Perhaps more men publically displayed their miniatures than previously imagined? It is possible that Abraham’s miniature was given and possessed by the very woman parenthetically depicted in his portrait, thereby creating a circuit of representation between the two miniatures and two individuals. Though we cannot ascertain the details of the woman’s miniature portrait, it is implied through its inclusion that she might also be wearing a miniature herself. This imbued the miniature with special emotional meaning for the wearer, but also gave the artist the power of infinite representation, like mirrors turned upon themselves.
Figure 2.5  Detail, Attributed to John Archibald Woodside, Sr, *Portrait of a Gentleman, Abraham Woodside, John Woodside (Brother of Artist)*, c. 1810, Watercolor on ivory; the reverse with plaited hair; height 2 5/8 inches (6.7 cm); Courtesy, Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Gift of the McNeil Americana Collection, 2008.
A similar object of comparison is The Portrait of A Woman of an unknown sitter. This image portrays a woman who conceals the identity of her miniature underneath the lace around her neck. (Figure 2.6) In this instance, this act restricts the knowledge of the viewer while also displaying that it was possible for women to conceal affections beneath articles of clothing, just as men tucked miniatures away in pockets and drawers. Again, previously held assumptions aligning female portrait miniature display with outward acts of affection and male portrait miniatures with private acts of sentiment do not hold up under closer scrutiny of the embedded miniatures themselves.

Through the process of layered miniaturization, the artist’s microscopic eye proved to have only so many levels of magnification. Like the missing detail in pocket-maps and miniature books, the hands and eyes of the miniaturist reached their limits. And though portrait miniatures served as memory devices, as Susan Stabile puts it, “With no natural precedent, the miniature is purely a social creation that arrests the biological process of aging and immutably etches itself into the folds of memory.” These types of objects, miniatures-within-miniatures, required of viewers a fluency in the social language of their sitters to ensure recognition and legibility.

108 Stabile, Memory’s Daughters, 164
Figure 2.6  Portrait of an Unknown Woman, c. 1825; Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.
So how and why did this fluency in the “language” of the embedded miniature develop? Samuel Johnson, in a later edition of his dictionary, described the human body as a microcosm. He wrote, “Philosophers say that man is a microcosm, or a little world, resembling in miniature every part of the great; and the body natural may be compared to the body politic.”\textsuperscript{109} American artists, in their attempt to define and categorize American art, had to reconcile the fine arts, typically identified with a particular fashionable or wealthy class, with ideas about democracy.\textsuperscript{110} Art historian Ross Barrett, highlights the importance of academic painting to early American artists, “Proponents of republican aesthetics understood academic painting as an exemplary vehicle for the transmission of republican behaviors and attitudes, an engine for the reproduction of customary hierarchies, and a connective tissue that might rebuild civic bonds.”\textsuperscript{111}

Additionally, if art was meant to encapsulate and summarize the values, ideals, and truths of a society, where did the individual fit in this new dynamic? In contrast and concert with Alexander Nemerov’s theory of the “all-encompassing scan,” in explaining the wide-reaching practice of expansion across space, miniaturization played a sizeable role in the nationalist campaign to expand the Early Republic.\textsuperscript{112}

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\textsuperscript{109} Rabb, “Johnson, Lilliput,” 290.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 176.

\textsuperscript{111} Barrett, “Violent Prophecies,” 26-27.

\textsuperscript{112} Nemerov argues that the long view was a perspectival system in which the viewer’s eye was trained to scan individual objects, and in the process return to the whole. See Nemerov, \textit{Body of Raphaelle}, 34-57; Bellion uses the terms “long view” or “the all-encompassing scan,” which are put forth by Nemerov as a way of thinking.
Nemerov writes that these paintings, “…thus enclose and diminish themselves against not just the long views and large pictures but also against the wide national spaces transcoded through the Big Image.” He argues that as artists in the Early Republic endeavored to assert artistic value, these large paintings suggested a paradox. On one hand, the assertion of control over vast spaces was exactly what Americans endeavored to do in the post-revolutionary period, however, the nebulousness of undefined and possibly infinite space lacked boundaries. And yet, in a culture that valued these large views, miniature portraits became more popular than ever. 113

It is within this discourse that Nemerov figures the career of artist Raphaelle Peale, Charles’ son, who worked primarily in the genre of still lives. Raphaelle’s rejection of physically large portraits did not mean that his luscious portraits of fruits, cakes, and vegetables were devoid of rich and complex content, rather Nemerov considers what he calls the “local view” one that was concerned with isolating and contemplating the individual world-view. The concentrated and “local view,” was one that “sharply refuses the era’s new model of selfhood.” Miniature portraits, like the small works of art that Nemerov considers, are also decidedly very personal and individualized objects. I propose another corresponding view, the “minute view”, one that was at once intensely concentrated but was representative of social, familial, and

about the large and expansive visual culture of the early republic, Bellion, Citizen Spectator, 42; Nemerov, Body of Raphaelle, 43- 57.

113 Ibid., 178.
national networks on a large scale. The act of looking at a miniature, is just a nuanced experience in relation to Nemerov’s designations of the “long view” and the “local view.”

What was the “minute view” that persisted into the nineteenth century, one less of aggrandizement and organized sublimation, but one of memory, connectivity, and movement? Miniatures became ever resonant in a world challenged by new political forms, values, and self-identity. Miniature portraits appealed to the desire to collect, gather, and isolate the physical world, and concentrated these motivations onto a specimen plate or an oval of ivory. This impulsive need for close and studied observation, as well as contemplation and reflection was concurrent with interest in the miniature. To expand on this idea, Bellion describes a solar microscope on view at the Peale’s Museum in Philadelphia, which projected microscopic imagery onto wall for a crowd to view concurrently. By projecting the world of the miniature onto the wall, citizens could contemplate their own place and minuteness in the constellation of the world and of the nation.

Though the field of vision offered by a portrait miniature was often limited to single viewers, Stewart Smith notes, “The reduction of scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday life world, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its ‘use value’ transformed into the infinite time

114 Ibid., 184.
115 Bellion, Citizen Spectator, 41-45.
of reverie.”\textsuperscript{116} The proliferation of large-scale works and unifying cultural experiences do not conflict with this view, but rather they endorse the popularity of miniature paintings in the early nineteenth-century as part of the process of nationalism and expansion in their own right. The portrait miniature emphasized the impulse to possess images of individuals across time and space, though separated and to analyze and isolate, reflect and connect. In an expanding world, the miniature portrait remained fixed in the mind of the viewer, emblematic of a moment of past interaction, an instant suspended in time.

Miniaturization was part of the “long view,” a kind of focusing in and out between the growing nation or family and the individual citizen or individual. A newspaper comment that was published in multiple newspapers during 1790s reflected the emotional and comforting effect of portrait miniatures. “On scenes of public distress, and national regret, we gaze, as on those gallery pictures which strike us with wonder and admiration.”\textsuperscript{117} Like those who gathered to see the solar microscope or to crowd around an the enormous canvas of \textit{Death on a Pale Horse}, Americans were inclined to engage in public acts and participate as consumers of culture designed to alleviate the pain and heal the general population in the Revolutionary era and the


\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Salem Gazette}, “Opinion,” January 1, 1790.
period that followed. The work of becoming American was strongly defined by communal acts of devotion.\textsuperscript{118}

The notice continued, “Domestic sorrow is like the miniature of a friend, which we wear in our bosoms, and keep for secret looks and solitary enjoyments.” The struggle of the individual to define their place in the national field was one that was to be kept private. The treatment for “Domestic sorrow” was to be practiced internally for the greater good. Taken literally, “gallery paintings” represented the national body while the miniature represented the individual, or the minute view. Those works that were grand or large in scale represented the fabric of the American ideals and, as such, were offered for public consumption for the improvement of national identity and the refinement of Americans as viewers. As Reynolds wrote, paintings were created by artists who, “like the philosopher will consider nature in the abstract, and represent in everyone of his figures the character of its species.”\textsuperscript{119} In contrast, the miniature, created through close observation and categorized as more detailed and slavishly captured from nature, operated as the individual, parts of a whole that made up the spirit of these “gallery paintings.”

Extending this quote to create metaphor for the Peale brothers: Charles would be the gallery painting and James would be the miniature. In 1822, Charles painted a self-portrait in which he proudly lifts a curtain on the “Long Room” of his Museum, \hfill

\textsuperscript{118} Nemerov, \textit{Body of Raphaelle}, 176-184.

\textsuperscript{119} Reynolds, \textit{A Discourse}, 16.
displaying cases of specimens, portraits lining the walls, and the fossilized skeleton of a mastodon. More importantly, behind his extended left hand, as though beckoning the viewer, stand his palate and brushes.¹²⁰ Later that year, Charles painted another portrait of his brother James, also meant to memorialize his role as an artist, but he defined James in a much less public and chaotic setting.¹²¹ (Figure 2.7)

¹²⁰ CWP, The Artist in His Museum, 1822, Oil on Canvas; 103 ½ x 80, 1878.1.2, Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.

¹²¹ Elam, The Peale Family, 43.
Charles Wilson Peale described this late-life portrait of his brother, which formed a kind of bookend on his career as an artist when taken with the portrait of James discussed previously. Now 73, he sits at a table, his shoulders heavy and slumped over, as he holds a miniature in one hand with his other arm rested in front of him. Charles wrote, “He is looking at a miniature picture by an argand lamp. The brightest light is on the end of his nose downward, the forehead has only the light through the shade of the lamp, a miniature palette and pencil on the table, this is to
show that he is a painter.”\textsuperscript{122} Though he is no longer engaged in the practice of miniaturization, the small palette and brush located next to his arm recall the upright, confident man staring out at the viewer in Charles’ earlier portrait of him. His bespectacled eyes and strained expression speak to his status as an artist in retirement, utilizing the illumination of an argand lamp, rather than the bright ambient light from an unknown source in his earlier sitting. Located at the center of the table, the lamp casts a warm pool of light on the image of his niece, Rosalba, painted by his daughter Anna Claypoole Peale.\textsuperscript{123}

By the time of this painting, James Peale had given up painting miniatures due to failing eyesight and instead worked primarily in the genre of still life. Though both brothers had failing eyesight, James is the only one depicted wearing spectacles — Charles had a fascination with ophthalmology, but never depicted himself actually wearing glasses.\textsuperscript{124} Across the span of their lifetimes, both brothers painted miniatures and both painted large–scale oil portraits depicting portrait miniatures. The pact they made after the Revolution to stay out of each other’s market was perhaps a business decision, but it is also clear that they recognized each other’s strengths and vision. But


\textsuperscript{123} Elam, \textit{Three Generations}, 34.

\textsuperscript{124} Ward, \textit{Art and Selfhood}, 156-157.
most importantly, we also see the Peale family valuing and including both large and small artworks as integral to the world of American art that they were so eager to promote. In these two portraits by Charles, their achievements are on full display. For Charles, it was the museum – his prolific collection of portraits of notable Americans – and his advances in natural science. James was the miniaturist and father of three talented female artists.¹²⁵ “The Lamplight Portrait” shows through the progression of layers the artists’ family legacy. The two brothers, over the course of their careers, created a large number of portrait miniatures and trained the next generation of artists who would carry the torch. The miniatures they painted, in addition to the other masters of the art of the miniature supplied innumerable individuals with memory devices that would help form, retain, and perpetuate connections within the newly minted Republic, as they hoped to define American identity.

¹²⁵ For information about James Peale’s daughters who worked as artists see Hirshorn, “Anna Claypoole, Margareta, and Sarah Miram Peale,” in The Peale Family, 221-247.
Chapter 3

“YES, IT IS YOU MY DEAR”: PORTRAIT MINIATURES WITHIN LARGE-SCALE PORTRAITURE

The bustle of a seaport city was familiar to Harriet Low, a native of Salem, Massachusetts, but life in the Portuguese colony of Macau rendered her homesick for loved ones back at home. In 1829, she accompanied her uncle to the Pacific to serve as a companion to her ailing aunt. Here Harriet remained for five years before returning to the United States. Three years into her stay, a packet arrived in the mail from Salem that temporarily closed the distance between Harriet and her family at home. She could barely contain her emotion and excitement as she unwrapped a present from her sister, Mary-Ann. Fumbling through the wrapping, “at last I extricated it from its snug bed of cotton, where, with your own dear hands, you had placed it. I unclasped it.” Harriet opened a portrait miniature that had survived a nearly 8,000 mile sea journey from her sister’s hands to hers — the moment vibrated with peculiar feeling and expectation. Her excitement turned to disappointment when she laid eyes on her sister’s surrogate image:
The first look did not satisfy me. I saw no resemblance to what I fancied my dear sister. I looked again, and caught it. The tears came in showers then, for I saw the same dear face; and now I have looked and looked till I think it a good likeness. Yes, it is you, my dear.\footnote{Harriet Low Hillard, “Diary of Harriet Low Hillard, May, 1832,” in \textit{My Mother’s Journal: A Young Lady’s Diary of Five Years Spent in Manila, Macao, and the Cape of Good Hope from 1829-1834}, ed. Katherine Hillard (Boston, MA: George H. Ellis, 1900), 124.}

Trying to animate the image, which appeared “dead,” Harriet pressed her lips to the small portrait, trying to “…make you smile upon me. You look so \textit{triste}, and in the night so pale.” As Harriet recounted, the arrival of this present sparked a lively debate between her aunt and their friend, Caroline – both of whom thought the portrait looked like Mary-Ann. After great scrutiny, Harriet set the miniature down – though her eyes kept returning to her sister’s face as she read her remaining letters. Although she was displeased, Harriet admitted, “…it is so delightful to see anything like you.” Hoping to revisit — and revive — Mary-Ann’s portrait in the morning light, Harriet set the miniature by her bed and blew out the light.\footnote{Ibid., 124.}

In the morning, she once again laid hold of the image — she was still displeased. Mary-Ann’s portrait recast her sister as grave, stiff, serious, and not very handsome. For Harriet, all the way across the world, the portrait was a failure to meet her expectations and an unsuccessful likeness of her beloved sister. “On the whole, I am satisfied, though I wish I could make you laugh a bit. That sedate phiz of yours
always makes people think you a great deal more thoughtful than your sister, when, in fact, you are not a bit.” The “stiff neck” and “grave” expression, with which the artist had depicted her sister, caused much consternation in Harriet, who longed for assurance of her sister’s health and happiness. Harriet was only mildly concerned with the aesthetic properties of her sister’s portrait, but more importantly, she was preoccupied with the ability of the object to convey her sister’s essence and visage.

Mary-Ann’s act of carefully packing the miniature and shipping it from Salem to her sister in the Pacific, indicates that these objects as gifts and mementos were extremely powerful in their ability to connect and fill the spatial chasm between individuals. If one of the primary purposes of the portrait miniature is to connect individuals across space, how is their meaning as objects affected when they are depicted in large-scale oil portraiture? Further, if portrait miniatures were meant to convey private meanings for a small and intimate audience, why do they appear in large, “public” images? During the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, a convention of depicting sitters wearing, holding, displaying, hiding, or viewing portrait miniatures developed in Anglo-American art. As discussed previously, there were earlier examples such as the portrait of little Elizabeth Eggington from early New England and examples for such images were circulated in print form. These group portraits indicate familial togetherness and crystalize a moment in time, displaying the age, appearances, fashion, and the composition of a particular family.

Death, sickness, and outstanding circumstances might take family members
away; but portraits could serve as reminders of the past or loss. Large-scale oil portraits were, in a sense, a reliquary for the portrait miniature. Both object and image served as surrogate, badge, memento, or proxy for the absent relation. When stabilized and dematerialized in the medium of large-scale oil portraiture, portrait miniatures alleviated anxieties about spatial, emotional, and physical distances and served as visual cues/tools for making or retaining connections as families and loved ones both near and far — as they moved apart, sat across a room, travelled to school, or passed away. This chapter explores how miniatures and, in turn, miniatures as embedded in other artwork, functioned as surrogates for real-world relationships and nourished the desire for unity in the unstable atmosphere of the early republic.

Miniature portraits-within-paintings raise questions about the nature and function of the miniatures as physical objects, as well as the role they played within the field of larger portraits and works of art. In many cases, both the sitter and the subject of miniatures remained anonymous, which makes it is very difficult to determine meaning within a closed vocabulary of selective knowledge. Those in which the miniature is concealed or depicted within a miniature might allude to more intimate or non-legitimate connections; however, most miniatures depicted in other works appear to be either family or social relations to the sitter. Regardless of their identity, these meta-portraits indicate possessiveness and visual references to
connections that extended well beyond the surface of a portrait. In some of these portrait miniatures, sitters suggestively wear a ribbon around their neck but tuck the ends into the folds of their clothing, therefore denying the viewer the privilege of seeing the miniature. In some portraits, the lids of the miniature or locket are seductively kept shut. In most cases, the sitter turns the miniature outward, toward the viewer, for their delectation. It has been established that portraits of this type are displays of affection and connection, but what does it mean to turn a private moment outward? If portrait miniatures are meant to be small, intimate, fetishized private items, why would a sitter choose to make these objects — or the relationships that they represented — public? Or do they closely resemble badges, medals, or medallions that signify social relationships or status and participation in public spheres?


129 For examples of portraits in which the sitters display closed portrait miniatures see: Gilbert Stuart, Anne Willing Bingham, 1797, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 25,” private collection in Carrie Robera Barrett and Miles, Gilbert Stuart (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Yale University Press, New Haven and London: 2004), 195; and Portrait of Alice Littlepage Taylor Ingram (Mrs. Sylvanus Ingram) and Mary Ingram (later, Mrs. James H. Marable, Artist Unknown, unframed 36 5/16” x 26 7/8”, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Miller, 1984.100.1, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum.

130 Frank, Love and Loss, 10-34.

131 Verplanck discusses the miniatures created by C.W. Peale during the American Revolution as “badges or emblems” that associated the wearer with a particular event as well as political and social affiliations. See Verplanck, “The Social Meaning,” 211.
The mobility of miniatures as objects was bound up in the distance between the sitter and the viewer. In the years following the Revolution in America, distance between family members grew as the new country experienced an explosion in population. Despite decreasing fertility rates, immigration and the importation of enslaved Africans increased the population to around seven million people in 1810 from nearly 4 million in 1790. Art historian Marianne Koos describes miniatures as, “…highly mobile, migrating things that can be acquired and given, accepted or refuse, worn by one’s own body or passed on and circulated, thereby establishing social and economic networks.” The peripatetic nature of these embodied objects, and their powers of connecting individuals across space, as Harriet Low’s experience demonstrates, allowed the possessor to feel a simulated physical connection to the miniature’s subject. On first contact, Harriet traced the lineaments of her sister’s likeness, rendered in reduced scale, stippled on ivory, searching for a prick or hint of familiarity, of which she found very little. Harriet’s reaction to this miniature speaks to a portrait’s core function, the ability to reflect the personality, physical form, and


133 Koos, "Wandering Things," 3-4.

134 Ibid.
essence of the sitter so that members of an intimate circle would immediately recognize the subject of the image. Harriet’s lack of immediate recognition was both unsettling and disruptive to her knowledge of her sister. Had time and distance weakened her memory and familiarity with Mary-Ann, to whom she wrote letters and diary entries to daily? This story speaks to the fragility of human bonds — whether people were thousands of miles apart or in the same room.

Miniatures were fragile too. As with anything that travels through space and time, like the body, miniatures could get lost, destroyed, broken. Disrupted by the slightest bit of moisture, the watercolor on the face of the ivory could be smeared or wiped away. Their glass was liable to break; their cases inevitably went out of fashion; equipage could give way; they might be lost in a pocketbook; dropped from a watch case; or taken as collateral along with other portable treasures with recoupable value from the drawer of a desk while the owner slept in their bed. Miniatures captured in large-scale portraits were far less fragile or disobedient than their physical counterparts. 135

Like other small or mobile objects, miniatures were frequently featured in lost and found advertisements. The case and trappings were often made of precious metals

but were often generic enough that they were repurposed, or resold. Advertisements indicate that the return of these items was of interest to their owners. Frequently, miniatures were stolen or lost when they were dropped, displaced, or stolen among other small movables. On August 4, 1808, Anna Byrd posted an advertisement in a Richmond, Virginia paper that she had had reasons to suspect that a young enslaved boy named Billy had “stole, and has either sold, thrown away, or carried with him” valuable objects of hers.\textsuperscript{136} Byrd believed that the young boy had absconded with several miniature portraits in her possession. She carefully listed the attributes of her missing portraits.

\begin{quote}
[A] large picture set in gold, with hair in the back, and a pin: of a “young lady dressed in a white, of fair complexion, black eyes, and light curling hair, parted on the forehead and flowing at the shoulders: with red and white beads round the neck.\textsuperscript{137}
\end{quote}

In addition to her careful description of their visual characteristics, she notes the miniatures were broken and battered from use. The large miniature was “a little dented from a fall” and the smaller miniature “bent a little on the side, in consequence of having been trodden upon.” Their battered condition at the time of the theft and Billy’s disappearance from Byrd’s premises, suggest that these two objects were heavily worn and used. Perhaps Billy was on an errand to take these objects to a goldsmith or watchmaker to repair the broken and unfinished objects when he saw an opportunity to

\textsuperscript{136} The Enquirer, Richmond, VA, April 8,1808.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
take his liberty to visit “relations at Shirley in Charles County” to the east of Richmond. Or perhaps he took a wagon road south where he may have been spotted several days earlier. To Byrd, Billy and the miniatures were valuable possessions and as her property, she wanted them returned as soon as possible.138

Byrd’s careful descriptions of the miniatures suggested that they had high sentimental value — broken or intact — and perhaps, even monetary value that might incriminate Billy if he tried to sell them most likely for their materials. Created for an exclusive and particular audience, miniatures had a double value in both their intrinsically prized materials and their sentimental value to their owners. Even mangled and broken, Byrd’s notice indicates that the loss of these objects was like a kidnapping — she wanted the miniatures back. The eighteenth-century social theorist Bernard Mandeville wrote,

“If what we want is a Trinket, either enamel’d, or otherwise curiously wrought; if there is Painting about it, if it be a particular Ring, the Gift of a Friend; or any Thing which we can esteem above the real Value, and offer more for it than Mr. Their can make of it, we are look’d upon as good Chaps, and welcome to redeem it.”139

138 Ibid.

Ads for missing miniatures often indicated an expectation that the individual who lost the object might be able to describe the image and the object—and perhaps pay the price of the advertisement. Charleston merchant, Tidyman of was willing to sell a miniature picture, set in gold to whomever would buy it, or if they knew they had lost a miniature, to describe the image by letter.\textsuperscript{140} In the fake lost and found advertisement placed for George Washington’s pocketbook, this ad was careful to note that Washington did not accidently or carelessly lose his pocket book. Rather the advertisement alludes to his personal sacrifice to the American public, as he selflessly provided objects of sentimental value to him—including a miniature—for the “benefit” of his nation. It also included “the miniature of America” or a small map of the United States, as geographic reminder of the New Republic.\textsuperscript{141}

These unruly objects were stabilized in the confines of oil portraiture where they could not be displaced, stolen, broken, or separated from their owner. Pendent style portraits of John Bush and Hannah Ackley Bush complicate the notion of separate canvases and maternal affection in portraiture in the second half of the eighteenth-century through their inclusion of an embedded likeness of one of the sitters. (Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2) Though stretchers and frames (if displayed as intended) divided the couple, their bodies remain oriented toward one another. Both of

\textsuperscript{140} The South Carolina Gazette, “OFFERED to sale at Tidyman's Shop, and shopped by him, a miniature,” Charles-Town, SC, April 27, 1767.

their faces gaze outside the picture plane, not at one another, as though each portrait were meant or could possibly stand-alone. Their connection is clarified by the likeness worn on a ribbon around Mrs. Bush’s neck. In an oval case with a scalloped matte, she wears at her bosom the image of the man whose profile appears familiar. (Figure 3.3) Resembling her husband’s large-scale portrait, the portrait miniature is executed in great detail: his silhouette in the proper left direction and the presence of his recognizable stare, his large nose, and a hint at his predilection for fashionable dress.¹⁴²

Figure 3.1  Attributed to John Mackay or M’Kay, *Hannah Ackley Bush*, 1791, oil on canvas, 38 1/2 x 32 (97.79 x 81.28) (framed), signed, l.r., in red paint: “M’Kay/1791”, Hewes 20, Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.
Figure 3.2 Attributed to John Mackay or M’Kay, *John Bush*, 1791 oil on canvas, 38 1/2 x 32 (97.79 x 81.28) (framed), signed, l.l., in red paint: ‘M’Kay Pinxt’; and l.r.: ‘MacKay’; Hewes 19, Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.
In Mr. Bush’s portrait and sub-portrait, the artist has achieved a multi-dimensional rendering of his face. However, wearing a miniature may also have been Hannah’s attempt to quell insecurities regarding a pair of earlier pendant portraits of Bush and another woman. Between 1785 and 1786, Matthew Pratt painted a pair of portraits of John Bush and his first wife Charity Platt Bush. In 1789, a year after Charity’s death, John married Hannah.¹⁴³ (Figure 3.4) The portrait of Charity by Matthew Pratt depicts the first wife, wearing a pink gown and wrapped in a dark purple, fur-lined wrapper, confidently looking-askance in the direction of her husband’s portrait. These portraits are known to have been in Bush’s possession during his marriage to Hannah, because they descended in two lines of the Bush family. Therefore, is it possible that Hannah — also wearing pink — requested to be painted with a portrait miniature of her husband, in order to affirm her status as his wife. Style, taste, and money may have dictated the decision not to depict the couple in a single composition, but it is clear that Hannah’s miniature, the surrogate of her husband, was considered a badge, affirming her identity and status as the legitimate wife, in relation to the two existing portraits.

¹⁴³ Painted by Matthew Pratt between 1785 and 1786, the pair’s portraits remained with Bush when he moved to Worcester between 1795 and 1800, and remained in the family until the late nineteenth-century when both sets of portraits were donated to the American Antiquarian Society. See inventory sheets American Antiquarian Inventory Sheet for John Bush and Hannah Ackley Bush, Weis 20, 22, Hewes Numbers 19 & 20, American Antiquarian Society; Hewes, et. al., American Antiquarian Society, 295-97.
Figure 3.3  Detail from Attributed to John Mackay or M’Kay, *Hannah Ackley Bush*, 1791, oil on canvas, 38 1/2 x 32 (97.79 x 81.28) (framed), signed, l.r., in red paint: ‘M’Kay/1791’, Hewes 20, Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

The Bush’s union was reimagined and solidified on canvas by John MaKay (M’Kay) who also likely produced an actual miniature for the new Mrs. Bush of her husband.144 While discussing another portrait in which a woman displays the miniature of her husband, art historian Anne Verplanck wrote, “In one sense, by possessing his miniature she possesses him. Yet as a gift of the miniature could entail
the assumption that she would wear it as a possession of him.”

Although these portraits were probably exhibited in the Bush’s home in close proximity to one another, Mrs. Bush’s portrait is, in many senses, a double portrait—inextricable from that of her husband: his possession (her portrait) depicting Mrs. Bush with her possession (his portrait). While Charity could be separated and lost from her husband, Hannah would never be.


146 Ibid.; Pointon discusses the significance of portrait miniatures and reciprocity as their status as objects of possession. She discusses a situation in which a woman possessed a large number of portrait miniatures. Pointon examines the function as miniatures as small, expensive, and portable objects and their status as gifts. She writes, “And there is no doubt that this structure, with its attention to the ways in which giving entails obligations for the recipient and — in the case of Derrida — to the implications of giving, receiving, and owing as temporal concepts, offers possibilities for explaining, for example, the sheer numbers of such items in the possession of one person.” See Pointon, “Surrounded with Brilliants,” 67.
During the eighteenth century, pendent portraits were the norm when depicting married couples, thus the Bush’s decision to commission two separate canvasses was typical. Portraits in which the husband and wife are pictured together were rare both in English and American portraiture. Lovell figures such images as Henry Benbridge’s *Captain and John Purves and His Wife*, in which the wife leans on her husband’s
shoulder, the pair sharing close physical proximity in a shared portrait, as products of changing attitudes about companionate marriages, sexuality, and the family unit more broadly.\textsuperscript{147} She argues that towards the end of the eighteenth-century, portraiture turned from linear representations of the family group to a “matricentric” representation, which placed the mother visually at the locus of the family group.\textsuperscript{148} Towards the latter part of the eighteenth-century, family group portraits were less linear and rigid, being much more dynamic with a relaxed air of familial affection and focus on children. In these later portraits, the father figure leans in towards the family group, overseeing the maternal figure who, as Lovell describes, has been given a new focus: one that is, “a self-involved seriousness, and visual dominance” rather than a supportive and secondary role.\textsuperscript{149} The emblematic objects with which women were depicted in the Colonial period also shifted towards the end of the eighteenth-century.

Symbols of fertility were enormously popular in the eighteenth-century portraits of women and families during a population in the 1760s and 1770s.\textsuperscript{150} Marriage was highly normative during the period of 1750-1820, in fact most men and women did couple at some point in their lives, under the auspices of having children,

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{147}] Henry Benbridge, \textit{Captain John Purves and His Wife, Eliza Anne Pritchard}, Oil on Canvas, 40.1” x 50.35,” 1960.0582, Winterthur Museum; Lovell, \textit{Art in a Season}, 149.
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] Ibid., 142.
\item[\textsuperscript{149}] Ibid., 173.
\item[\textsuperscript{150}] Klepp, \textit{Revolutionary Conceptions}, 130.
\end{itemize}
though birth-rates declined in the post-revolutionary period.\textsuperscript{151} Klepp has argued that, after the American Revolution, new visions of the female body emerged. This new image of the “republican mother” meant to reinforce women’s new roles in the American Republic, one that Klepp describes as “virtuous womenhood, bodily self-control, and limited, even disavowed, fecundity.”\textsuperscript{152} In this transference in focus on women’s fertility in portraiture to an ordered regulation of the female body, she writes, “Emblems…shift from a vocabulary of fruits and flowers to books, music, maps, artistry and other rational engagements.”\textsuperscript{153} In this change in the representation of women in portraiture, did portrait miniatures also function to replace these symbolic representations of fertility?

In 1756, Sarah Shippen was born into one of the Brahmin families of Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{154} One of three famed daughters of the Shippen clan (her notorious sister Margaret married Benedict Arnold), Sarah made an advantageous match in Irish

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 177.
\end{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{154} The spelling of Sarah’s name varies in various genealogical accounts. Sometimes it is spelled ‘Sara’ and her married name is interchangeably written as “Lea” and “Lee.” It will appear as “Sarah Lea Shippen” in this thesis.
textile merchant Thomas Lea in 1787.\textsuperscript{155} Sarah and Thomas had two children, Margaret Ann Shippen Lea (b. 1789) and Robert Lea (b. 1791). In 1793, Thomas passed away unexpectedly and left Sarah widowed with two young children and the responsibility of a mercantile enterprise.\textsuperscript{156} Three years later, the Swedish artist Aldoph Ulrich Wertmuller painted a portrait of young Robert, heir to his father’s fortune.\textsuperscript{157} (Figure 2.5) Wertmüller’s portrait of Robert, though small, was not technically a miniature. It was painted in oil on panel and measured to about 10” x 8

\textsuperscript{155} The marriage of Thomas Lea and Sarah Shippen was announced in the Pennsylvania Evening Herald on October 10, 1787. \textit{Pennsylvania Evening Herald}, “Marriages,” 79, Philadelphia, PA. Thomas Lea was married previously, and fathered a child named John from this first marriage. Life dates for John Lea are unavailable; he is listed in his father’s will but disappears from the record after 1796. Thomas Lea was married prior to being married to Sarah. John, a son from that previous marriage, was left was left money in his will in 1793 when he passed away. Because John’s life-dates are unknown, it is difficult to know the connection that he had to his step-mother, but John’s absence from the record suggests that he died at a young age or separated from the Shippen-Lea clan around the time of their marriage.

\textsuperscript{156} Sarah is listed as one the executor’s of his estate in a notice published in The Federal Gazette on November 19, 1793. \textit{The Federal Gazette}, “Advertisement,” Philadelphia, PA.

\textsuperscript{157} There are conflicting dates for the cabinet picture of Robert Lea. The Smithsonian’s online dates the portrait to 1796. This date seems more accurate, because Wertmüller was in Philadelphia between the fall of 1795 through May 1796. In May 1796 he travelled to Baltimore, but was called back to Philadelphia briefly before departing for Paris from New York City on October 7, 1796. For more information see, Adolph Ulrich Wertmüller and Franklin D. Scott, \textit{Wertmüller, Artist and Immigrant Farmer} (Chicago: Swedish Pioneer Historical Society, 1963), 10-11; and C.R. Barratt and Zabar, \textit{American Portrait Miniatures}, 54-55; On the portrait of Robert Lea see Sarah Cash, \textit{Corcoran Gallery of Art, American Paintings to 1945} (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art in association with Hudson Hills Press, 2011), 56.
½” (with frame). Sometimes known as “cabinet pictures”, these small portraits were one of Wertmüller’s specialties. Larger than a traditional miniature and completed in oil, the portrait was replicated two years later in a portrait of his mother by the artist Gilbert Stuart.¹⁵⁸ (Figure 3.5)

¹⁵⁸ Klepp notes that in depictions of women dating after the revolution, children in portraits are depicted nearer their mother’s heads or distanced from their laps and breasts visually indicating the shift in ideas motherhood and women’s sexuality. See Klepp, Revolutionary Conceptions, Chapter 4.
Stuart not only reduced and slimed the circular portrait of Robert, but he transformed the work from oil on canvas to imagined child worn as jewelry around his mother’s neck. Where children, miniatures of their parents, fail to appear in portraits in physical form, why do sitters hold miniatures of simulations instead? Rather than sit
for her portrait with her physical child seated on her lap or playing nearby — as Stuart was surely capable of doing as indicated by other compositions — Lea is painted with a surrogate of a surrogate image of her son. Pinned over hear heart, the charming widow displays what was left of the male line of her family. The miniature in Mrs. Lea’s portrait remained pinned to her fichu, whereas an actual miniature — or child — circulated in space and time. The inclusion of this miniature refers to a desire to unite and bridge distances between individuals through material objects. However, the portrait by Wertmüller complicates this notion, as it served as an intermediary that created increased distance between Gilbert Stuart’s representation of a miniature portrait in oil and the actual child, Robert Lea.\textsuperscript{159}

Figure 3.6 Gilbert Stuart, *Sara Shippen Lea (Mrs. Thomas Lea)*, c. 1798, oil on canvas, 1979.77, Courtesy, The Corcoran Gallery of Art.
Rather than paint Mrs. Lea with the Wertmüller’s cabinet portrait of Robert, Stuart transformed his likeness into a —possibly imagined—portrait miniature. (Figure 3.7) There is no extant miniature by Stuart to indicate that he copied Wertmuller’s design and created an object for his mother, but the miniature that he created within Sarah’s portrait shows that scale and childhood are linked in inextricable ways. Robert’s date of death is unknown, but he did not live to adulthood because he disappears from the record around the time his portrait was painted. If Robert was dead, it is possible that this imagined-miniature, painted by Stuart served as a kind of memorial for Sarah — commemorating one of the many losses that she would endure over the course of her life. After a series of tragedies, including the loss of her father (1806), brother-in-law (1806), and only brother (1808), Sarah left Philadelphia for New York in the mid-teens with her one remaining child, Margaret Ann Shippen, whom had recently married a Catholic merchant named Dominick Lynch. Margaret herself passed away in 1821, but Sarah stayed with her daughter’s family, appearing as an important force in the lives and memory of her granddaughters.160 Her portrait descended down the line of Sarah Lea Lynch, and both the Wertmuller painting of Robert and the Stuart portrait remain in the collection of

160 The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, “Replies,” 23 (1899); 413-414.
the Corcoran Gallery of Art today. Like a badge, Robert’s miniature portrait — whether imagined or real — is used as a way of displaying both Sarah’s ownership of a work of art by Wertmuller but its transformation into another object.

![Figure 3.7 Detail Gilbert Stuart, Sara Shippen Lea (Mrs. Thomas Lea), c. 1798, oil on canvas, 1979.77, Courtesy, The Corcoran Gallery of Art.](image)

161 Ibid.; The Corcoran Gallery of Art was transferred to the collections of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. At this time, the National Gallery is still processing the details of the arrangement, and the paintings are still attributed to the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Peter Dueker Head of Digital Imaging Services, National Gallery of Art, email to the author, April 2, 2015.
It is also important to note that rather than employ a traditional emblem of fertility like bouquets of flowers or fruit; the inclusion of portrait miniature of a child indicates a shift in thinking about childbirth and children. The increased incorporation of visual representations of specific children in object form coincides with the shift in attitudes about female bodies and childbearing.\textsuperscript{162} Holding a dematerialized image of a child was far less emblematic of unruly and unpredictable sexual passions, rather, it indicated compliance with Republican values that placed emphasis on the control of a woman’s emotions and desires.\textsuperscript{163} Ideas about family and childhood changed dramatically over the course in the eighteenth-century in America. Still-high mortality rates induced further requirements for the solidification and memorialization of the child-parent relationships in artistic or material form. As birth rates decreased following the American Revolution, the preciousness of smaller family units imbued children with importance and responsibilities as individuals.

\emph{The Smith Family}\textsuperscript{164} portrait is attributed to the patriarch of the family unit, Captain James Smith (1762-1818), who was born in Scotland and immigrated to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[162] Klepp, \textit{Revolutionary Conceptions}, 138-143.


\item[164] \textit{Smith Family Portrait}, ca. 1807, attributed to Captain James Smith (1762-1818), Virginia Richmond, 38 1.8 x 29 in (96.8 x 73.7 cm) framed 37 5/8 x 28 1/2 in; Oil on Canvas; in the original frame, 2011.100.1 A&B; Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; A family story is the only thing that is known regarding the provenance of this
\end{footnotes}
Richmond, Virginia in 1785. (Figure 3.8) Family tradition and a strong provenance maintain that James Smith himself was the author of this jarring, though not unique, arrangement of a family group. The inclusions of two miniature profile portraits complicate the crowded group composition and challenge assumptions about the inclusion of miniatures in family portraiture. Many miniatures in portraiture are assumed to represent an individual who has passed away, though that is not always the case. In this portrait, that suggestion seems relevant. Due to the nature of the composition, the inclusion of miniatures, and the positioning of figures, the portrait raises questions about the nature of portraiture and legibility. The unusual layout of the portrait further complicates a speculative reading because the arrangement of figures confounds typical placement and poses in early-American portraiture.

I am working with Laura Barry, Curator of Paintings in order to better understand the family genealogy presented by this piece.

Rachel and James’ son Robert King Smith (1800-1825), represented in the lower proper left corner, possibly was also possibly interested in painting. A photograph of a self-portrait by Robert is on file at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Winston-Salem, NC (S-6401). See Smith Family Portrait, Catalogue Book, Lot 101, Sotheby's American Paintings, Furniture, Folk Art and Silver New York, Sept. 27 2011, N08773.

Extensive genealogical research has been conducted in order to identify the sitters in this portrait by both Sotheby’s and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation that has yielded significant information about the names and ages of the sitters.
Figure 3.8  Attributed to Captain James Smith, *Smith Family Portrait*, ca. 1807, Oil on Canvas; in the original frame, 38 1.8 x 29 in (96.8 x 73.7 cm) framed 37 5/8 x 28 1/2 in; Virginia Richmond, 2011.100.1 A&B; Courtesy, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
Through examining family genealogy and connecting life dates it is possible to construct a narrative surrounding this portrait, though the identities of some of the individual sitters are still the subject of debate. James Smith was employed as a merchant who lived in the bustling port city of Dumfries, Virginia in the 1790s. His family began to grow after he made an advantageous match with Rachel King, whose lineage is a laundry list of prominent early Virginia names, including Westwood, Tabb, and Wallace. In 1803, after declaring bankruptcy, the family moved to Richmond, Virginia by 1807, when this portrait was most likely completed. The central focus of the painting rests on Rachel, who gazes out towards the viewer, bearing the weight of her youngest child, Jane who was born in December 1806. The infant, in turn, dangles an open locket containing the miniature profile of a man with brown hair. This portrait might represent Rachel’s deceased father Henry King, who died three years after she was born. Looking lovingly at his younger sister, the couple’s eldest son James King Smith, age 16, supports the infant from falling. Located on the fringe of the composition, almost disappearing into the murky background, James Jr.’s position

167 Colonial Williamsburg Collections, Object File, 2011.100.1.


169 Colonial Williamsburg Collections, Object File, 2011.100.1.

170 Ibid.
in a supporting role is indicative of things to come — soon he will enter the world and support his own family.

Andrew, the second eldest surviving child — located at the bottom proper right corner — contorts his body to look upward at his mother and to point up towards the locket in Jane’s hand. Sarah, holding a rabbit — a symbol of fecundity — looks directly out of the picture plane. The oldest boy, Robert, places one hand on the rabbit, and faces his mother. He appears to make direct eye contact with the miniature of a woman, which hangs from a chain and is pinned Rachel’s breast. This miniature, pinned to over hear heart might represent her older sister Mary Westwood King.171

Along the proper left side of the canvas, an overlapping column of figures depicted in profile frame the proper left side of the composition. The older woman wearing a hat above Robert is his maternal grandmother Rachel Westwood King, who stands next to an unknown figure. The artist and patriarch of the family/portrait, Captain James Smith surmounts the pillar of figures. He looks straight ahead, almost past the family group at center. Both James Jr. and Captain Smith form bookends between which the family unit is united on the canvas.

The miniature portraits most likely depicted individuals that were in close proximity to the family group and those who were deceased or distant. Rachel’s mother’s second husband passed away in the 1783, and her death in 1817 in the home

171 Pinned to Rachel’s neckline is a woman in profile. It is suggested that she represents Rachel’s mother Rachel Westwood King (1725-1817), or her grandmother, Mary Tabb Wallace Westwood (1702-1740); Ibid.
of James Smith suggests that she lived with the family for some period of time. It is possible that the unknown figure represents a sibling of either James Smith or Rachel. All of the other sitters were living at the time this group was painted. The life dates of the figures in the miniatures are unclear, though the absence of the individuals that they represent suggests that these relations were either possibly deceased or, if alive, did not live close by.

The husband, as artist, orchestrates this painted relationship and defines the family group — both those members in physical proximity and those who are distant — with the same brush. The two profile miniatures indicate that these individuals could not, either based on impossibility or location, join the composition in person. The Smith portrait documents a lineage through faces, proximity, touch, dress, like-hair colors, and eye-colors, thereby linking a group of people together as a family unit.172 The portrait, with it inclusion of secondary family members such as parents and siblings, implies that this portrait is meant to be part-genealogical tree and part-family portrait. What is clear about the miniatures is that they represent older or deceased individuals that do not share proximity to the surviving members of the Smith family. This family portrait, with its inclusion and celebration of family unity is representative of the changing nature family dynamics in the Early Republic.

What did it mean to be an American? What were the new values, requirements, and responsibilities of citizens and how could they be instilled in these still-pliable adults in miniature? The post-Revolution era presented parents with a new challenge, one that they grappled with in the context of their own identities. In the early eighteenth-century, children were considered impressionable and thus they required extensive discipline and instruction by example to be obedient. The Revolution, in a broad sense, stood as an event that, according to one historian, “popularized an antiauthoritarian ideology highly critical of patriarchal authority, social hierarchy, and deference.”

Historian and anthropologist Steven Mintz argues that for the first time in American history, childhood became a subject of political discussion and raised questions about what values, ideals, and characteristics should be important for their children. These ideas were shaped, in part, by the work of Rousseau – who advocated for a more naturalistic style of family rearing, based on learning by example, cohesion, and trust rather than force and totalitarian control. Of the father Rousseau wrote that, “the good son, the good father, the good husband that

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173 Studies on childhood and the family in the early republic include, Klepp, Revolutionary Conceptions; Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Mintz, Huck's Raft.

174 Mintz, Huck’s Raft, 54.

175 Ibid., 54-55.
constitute the good citizen.” As has been argued by other scholars, as the family became a politicized entity, the mother became the central model from which children were meant to imbibe Republican virtues, values, and morals. Though central to the family, they were excluded from political discourse and activity by nature of prescribed role in as center of the home.

Within the discourse of the Early Republic, the family unit itself was considered to represent the world in miniature. Tending to the happiness and the health of the family was therefore the anecdote to a confused and conflicted society. A notice that was reprinted in the *Imperial Herald* in Newbury, Connecticut from the *Rural Repository* in 1796 described a model for this “society in miniature.” The anonymous writer, operating the *nom de plume* ‘CENSOR,’ implored mothers and fathers to turn their attention homeward, rather than finding pleasure and recreation in the world at large. CENSOR wrote, “A FAMILY is society in miniature, in which are all the pleasures without the fatigue and disgust of public life.” Because the

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microcosmic family possessed all of the world’s earthly and spiritual delights, individuals were advised to return to the home and find joy therein. In public, “real feelings, sentiments and wishes” were to be kept internally, and then brought to the intimate family unit for consideration rather than expounding them to the general public. Unburdening oneself in private, with one’s family, was an “exquisite pleasure.” 178

In politicizing the family, parents were also encouraged to treat their children equally regardless of sex and line in succession, thereby casting out the remnants of old-world monarchical ideas. 179 Parents also were encouraged to talk to their children, play with them, and treat them as valuable, although conscribed, assets to the family unit. Above all, taking pleasure in family life would imbue children with the values necessary to be models of their family in society at large. Unity was the antidote to the problem of divisiveness and discord that threatened the fragile American experiment. CENSOR wrote,

Where, love not friendship was the cause of marriage, who wonders that the sharp teeth of time gnaw asunder the brittle chain; when love is turned to indifference, & indifference to disgust, who wonders that a husband seeks to

178 CENSOR, “From the Rural Repository,” Imperial Herald, Newburyport, MA, March 4, 1796.

179 Klepp, Revolutionary Conceptions, 127.
The remedy was more time as a group, rather than separate occupations as individuals. The author begged the question, “In short how can a family be unhappy, when all are engaged in promoting the happiness of all?” This plea to family groups was published in multiple sources, and represents anxieties that were expressed broadly in American culture during the Early Republic. *The Smith Family* portrait, regardless of the specific identities of their sitters, visually demonstrates the new valuation of the family unit, as well as the importance of connectedness through space and time.¹⁸¹

Portraits of family groups increased exponentially as the eighteenth century passed into the nineteenth.¹⁸² This occurred partly, of course, due to the expanding number of artists and materials available and a larger consumer public. But practical concerns alone were not the only motivation behind this expansion in portraiture. If the purpose of a portrait was to immortalize an individual’s likeness at a certain point in time, the purpose of an embedded likeness was to unite and seal a specific relationship between individuals. Mobile, fragile, and delicate — like portrait miniatures — these relationships were crystalized and flatted in two-dimensions, both forming a simulacrum for the physical world, but doubly stabilizing any mobile

¹⁸⁰ CENSOR, “From the Rural Repository.”

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

tendencies of both individual and miniature. Children, siblings, parents, friends, and lovers might grow sick, old, decease, move to Western territories or down the street, and yet the impulse to maintain an emotional and physical connection remained strong. Miniatures helped to alleviate this impulse, despite the fact that they were still mobile objects, far more portable, less expensive, and easily duplicated, than large-scale portraiture. By crystalizing a miniature in a larger portrait, the unpredictable motion of the miniature ceased to operate. It’s function as a mobile object is suspended infinitely in stasis, like the sitters themselves.

From the assertion of Mrs. Bush’s status as wife to the confounding assemblage of figures in the Smith Family Portrait, portrait miniatures served many distinct purposes in portraits in the years following the Revolution. Central to ideas of changing families, they helped to ameliorate distance and loss as well as reify connections between members of family groups. These portraits were imbued with the principles of republicanism that emphasized the role of the participatory individual in the national family. As the eighteenth-century came to an end, American print culture engendered shared sets of cultural values to a growing literate and visually literate population, thereby connecting individuals within the nebulous American nation. The status of portrait miniatures as symbolic objects was expanded through visual and textual media to a wide audience who may never have personally owned or held a portrait miniature in ivory. The miniaturists who made these powerful objects, the portraits and graphics in which they were depicted and the literature that reinforced
their agency all functioned within and enhanced the language of the portrait miniature in the Early Republic.
Chapter 4

THE LANGUAGE OF THE MINIATURE: PORTRAIT MINIATURES IN PRINT CULTURE

Alexandria Times of Alexandria, Virginia in 1800 recounted to readers the saga of a
couple, William and Mary, from the “earliest days of settlement.”183 One night, Native
Americans attacked the homestead, and in the commotion the pair was separated while
Mary tended to their infant son. When the siege ceased, Mary searched for William.
Only his blood remained upon their bed — he was gone. The grieving Mary left with
their infant son to mourn the loss of her husband to grieve and live in the forest;
unable to linger in the home they once shared. One day a beggar in rags came to the
door of her new abode. She noticed that he was wearing a gold chain around his neck,
which she supposed he must have stolen, since his dress suggested he could not afford
such a treasure. She asked,

is it thus that you beggars tamper with the simplicity of women — that golden
chain and portrait which you now wear, was probably pilfered by you from

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1800.
The beggar burst into tears, revealing that it was a portrait of his wife, and that he has suffered much at the loss of the wife. As it turned out, the man was William, his identity concealed by garments and the physical tolls of poverty. Despite his condition and displacement, he continued to show his devotion to his family by wearing the portrait throughout his captivity and escape, with the miniature around his neck, “his only consolation until he found himself in the possession of the original.”

As the previous chapters have discussed, miniatures played a particular role in American visual culture, with a shared language defining this role through which their meaning was created and understood. This chapter will discuss how miniatures operated in the context of mass-produced items of print culture, including prints and literature. In their depictions of miniatures, these forms of print culture present the miniature in a set of genres, notably narratives that concern the lost and found, memory, loss, and sentimentality. Miniatures served as vessels of identity, markers of identification in some cases, or placeholders for a moment or relationship lost in time.

The story of William and Mary expresses more than just a tale of love enduring and the triumph of marital affection, but of a nation uncertain of its identity, reaching back toward an “ancient” past through a narrative of recovery. In this

184 Ibid.
185 Ibid.
scenario, which was replicated in visual images and written texts circulating in periodical and sentimental literature of the early nineteenth-century, the loss and discovery of one’s identity characterizes the experiences of Americans in the early republic. The William and Mary passage follows the typical arch of a story of self-discovery. Both characters are separated and lose themselves in the uncertain American wilderness. The miniature and the child, both likenesses of their original family group, are the only solace that these characters find. William clings to the likeness of his wife and Mary finds comfort in “…trace[ing] in the countenance of her boy the lineaments of his father.” In his face she found a physical reminder of William: “She could contemplate with melancholy satisfaction, the proficiency of the infant and discern the father’s virtues in blossom.” The hope that her infant would

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resemble the characteristics of his father gave comfort and a sense of continuity to the bereaved Mary. It is through the family that both this American father and mother find hope in the miniature. Their reliance on family and togetherness in the wilderness also suggests the hope of continuity and hope for a successful American future. It is also the miniature that reunited William and Mary through the verification of his true identity, the recovery of his family, and his return to the society of which he was born.

The portrait miniature is used as a device in literature of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as in print and visual culture, as a token as a verification of identity and belonging. The position of miniatures as objects in motion gave them a special power that allowed them to connect, disrupt, confirm, upend, and disturb social relationships. As a portable object of affection and connection, examining miniatures through the mobile mediums of print culture, fosters better understanding of these objects as they were viewed in popular culture. As discussed in the previous sections, miniatures were imbued with deep and dramatic emotions in these texts and images. In many of the prints and stories that appeared in the early 19th century in America, the miniature plays a key role in the plot, and audiences would have recognized them as a shorthand for love lost or found, mistaken identity, redemption or condemnation. These narratives about miniatures indicate how they were perceived in the popular imagination, but also how they were instructive in terms of their poetical and literal usages.

Print culture is considered the most successful and effective tool to foster and
develop nationalism — either deliberately or in unconscious ways — in the modern world. By considering the role that portrait miniatures played in novels, newspaper articles, prints, and ephemera in the Early Republic, using the framework proposed by Anderson and the scholars that follow in his footsteps, helps establish a better understanding of the ways in which viewers and readers in the post-revolutionary period understood the function and tools of portrait miniatures in American culture. One scholar has stated, “In the age of Enlightenment, print was imbued with immense ideological importance as an instrument of public discourse.” Considerations of portrait miniatures the public sphere specifically helpful in understanding the ways in which print-culture, as well as artistic culture worked to both define and shape American consciousness.

Representations of miniatures in both literary and graphic media suggested the complex meanings, associations, and cultural forces that portrait miniatures represented in the Early Republic. Read both literally and figuratively, when included in a story or a print, miniatures held meanings that did not require knowledge of exclusive social groups, but signified understood values. Their subject matter made portrait miniatures a likely candidate for the genre of “it-narratives,” stories about the circulation of objects, which become the personified narrators over the course of their

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“lives.” In these images, read literally, miniatures are personified, in “it-narratives” such as the story of William and Mary, as items that not only represent an individual’s likeness, but more likely reflect on their beholder and owner. These narratives represent anxieties about commodification, surveillance, and moral and social deficits, as well as concerns about the authorial voice itself as it is mass-produced, consumed, plagiarized, and loses its identity in the process of circulation. In early American literature, miniatures were understood as talismans of an individual’s identity within a certain group. William is reincorporated into the collective American experience when it is revealed that he has the appropriate identification. They were also used to indicate romantic attachments (legitimate or otherwise), the passage of time, the embodiment of share identities, and the emblems of sentimentality. English prints, which possibly circulated in America or were known to exist in the greater Anglo-American world, helped to reinforce the symbolism of miniatures in engravings and mezzotints that circulated in America, though further research is required to determine the exact number and specific objects.

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189 For some examples of British prints in which the sitter displays or holds a portrait miniature: After R. Pyle, engraved by R. Houseton, printed for Carington Bowles, *Seeing*, 1736-1775, mezzotint with some etching, The British Museum 2010,
The miniature also served as a unique personal identifier. A haunting newspaper advertisement in the published in 1837 in Boston, offers another object for identification: the body of a young “richly clad” woman who washed up on the shores of Cape Hatteras in 1837. Initials embroidered into her clothing and “a miniature in her bosom” were her only identifying characteristics. Something out of a sentimental novel, the miniature functioned as a way of identifying not only her body, but her association with a family or a social group. Presumably, after being tossed around by waves and surf, the salt water would have blurred the watercolor painting the woman wore, thereby obscuring the faces of both the young woman and her miniature. As both the previously mentioned case of Martha Washington’s miniature in Washington’s pocket book and this young woman demonstrate, miniatures could serve as the key that identified an individual and were often featured in literature of both the 18th and 19th centuries to authenticate the identities of individuals.

Beyond the purposes of identification and recognition, many 19th century prints featured miniatures primarily to signify romantic or sexual attachment between

7081.2079; After R. Pyle, engraved by Gaberiel Bodenehr, printed for Carrington Bowles, Seeing, 1766-1799, 158 mm x 110 mm, hand-colored mezzotint; The British Museum, 2010, 7081.1473; After Thomas Hudson, engraved by I. Faber, Miss Hudson, 1710-1756, mezzotint, 351 mm x 250 mm, The British Museum, 1889, 0603.280; After Philip Mercier, engraved by Richard Houston, printed for Robert Sayer and Jonathan Bowles, 352 mm x 250 mm, 1752-1766, Part of a set of four ages after Mercier, The British Museum, 2010, 7081.544.

190 The Liberator, “A Female Floated Ashore,” Boston, MA, July 14, 1837.
a man and a woman. In these images, the woman — young and beautiful — possesses or gazes pleasurably upon a miniature of a man. Though the details of the men’s faces are obscured due to their small size, their gender can be deciphered by glimpses of white wigs and outlines of military or gentlemen’s clothing. Tokens of affection, these images of romantic sentimentality were designed to ignite the viewer’s imagination. In the eighteenth-century, the American print market was dominated by British imports, a situation that lasted well into the nineteenth century; however, there were engravers and printers working in America during this time period. Most early American prints were in the form of portrait prints, primarily created for the frontispieces of books, where small oval portraits of the subject, were produced, creating a print miniature for the reader. The tonal technique of stipple engraving and other printing forms enhanced the shadows and light allowing realistic likenesses in print — similar to the realism of miniature painting. While these oval portrait prints abounded, referencing the miniature’s style — there were also prints with more explicit references to portrait miniatures.

A print entitled *Autumn* was printed in Philadelphia in 1810, by B. Plen in Philadelphia. (Figure 4.1) This hand-colored etching and engraving depicts the scene of two lovers seated under a tree. The woman, with the bounty of the harvest in her lap, hands a pineapple to her suitor, who grasps her other arm. Around her neck, she appears to wear a miniature portrait. Though it is difficult or perhaps impossible to determine if English prints that contained miniatures were sold, displayed, or viewed
in North America, there were plenty of precedents in England. A print entitled *Seeing* depicts young women holding miniatures in a series of representations of the five senses. In this case, visual culture is entwined with the realm of the sentimental. In *Seeing*, a young woman sits at a dressing table and gazes at a miniature of a man, his gender defined by masculine through the suggestion of his overcoat and wig. (Figure 4.2) Located at the private space of her dressing table, one that represents feminine performance and ritual, she is free to contemplate and imagine the male figure, and subsequently, this private moment was turned public when translated into print form. Pointon asserts, “Portrait-objects as gazed at by women in representations in the second half of the eighteenth century are interchangeable with mirrors and letters, playing on the idea of love as a recognition of the subject’s ego in the other.” Further, this recognition of self or common experience in the oval frame of the miniature is further exemplified in images where the subject of the miniature is either concealed or both the viewer and subject are generic figures.

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191 For more on prints see Tim Clayton *The English Print, 1688-1802* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1997).

192 The title for the print *Seeing*, was printed in four different languages, indicating that this print may have been sold to international markets.

193 Pointon, *Surrounded by Brilliants*, 63.
Figure 4.1  Printed and sold by B. Plen, *Autumn*, 1790-1810, watercolor and ink on laid paper, 11.7” x 9.6”, Philadelphia, PA, Courtesy, Winterthur Museum, Bequest Henry Francis du Pont, 1957.0590.003.
Figure 4.2  After R. Pyle, engraved by R. Houseton, printed for Carington Bowles, *Seeing*, 1736-1775, mezzotint with some etching, Courtesy, The British Museum 2010, 7081.2079
Though earlier examples of this convention in English print may have been available for consumption in America, works of this kind were certainly produced in North America during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Several of these works were produced in periodical prints or illustrations for popular print literature. An engraving entitled *A Miniature*, was engraved for *Godey’s Lady’s Book* in July 1842 with an accompanying poem. (Figure 4.3) The print depicts a young woman, leaning against a tree, standing on the edge of a body of water against a tropical landscape that features palm trees and other tropical plants. The barefoot young woman holds an oval locket in her hand and gazes upon it pensively. As viewers, we are unaware of her identity, as well as the identity of the miniature’s subject, but we are able to translate her actions into the shared rhetoric of this object’s operation.
Figure 4.3  After W. Ferring, *The Miniature*, 1842, engraved by A. L. Dick; engraving, ink on paper; Engraved for *Godey’s Ladys Book*; Image provided by Accessible Archives Inc., - Online Database.
An accompanying poem was written by the American visionary, creator of the all-American family celebration Thanksgiving, and the editor of the magazine, Sarah J. Hale. Penned in 1842, the story told the story of a young maiden who retreats to a semi-tropical location and gazes upon a miniature picture — “The gift of the lover.”  

This miniature is the only thing that her first love has given to her, “His only possession/To thee hath he given/The likeness of one/Long ascended to Heaven.”  

Though Hale’s poem appeared further in to the issue than the engraved plate, The Miniature offers a speculative reading, “For Godey’s was a composite text in which images were controlled by words and assimilated into the discourse on sentimentality, while at the same time possibly undermining the authority of the text and allowing autonomous readings.” Images depicting the use of a miniature, therefore, functioning in conjunction with, as well as independent of the text, allowing the viewer to imagine their own image on the face of the faceless miniature and place themselves in the body of the subject.  

Though these images are offered in a context of propriety — functioning primarily in private spaces — the act of gazing upon these miniaturized images alludes


195 Ibid.

196 Lehuu discusses the image The Coquette, March 1851, in which a woman who has failed to be a good wife, reflects on a miniature her husband gave her at their engagement. She notes the similarities between the oval format of the print and the miniatures form, stating, “There was a play around the power of the images, of revelation and potential redemption.” See Lehuu, Carnival on the Page, 117-118.
to the eroticization of both the miniature and performance of looking. Scale is
sexualized in these images, giving the beholder a sense of simulated ownership,
power, and domination.\textsuperscript{197} Although printed much earlier, the function and stereotype
of the miniature as an erotic object was depicted in a 1630 English print of an
allegorical figure of “Lust,” that was produced as part of a series depicting the seven
deadly sins. (Figure 4.4) An elaborately dressed gentleman stands on a rocky ledge in
front of two masks— which might symbolize mutual deception or falsehood — that
rest at his feet. Behind his legs, a goat — a symbol of male virility — stares up at the
miniature longingly. The content of the scene is described in accompanying text.

The amourous Yonker in his Lustfull heate,/His Mistres [sic] Picture eyes, in’s Tablett neate;/If as the Goate, heed sett her at his heele/His heart, more Honest, hee would quickly feele.\textsuperscript{198}

The lusty man points to a miniature of his mistress, which is delicately clasped,
between his thumb and pointer finger. The visual of the figure, gazing upon the

\textsuperscript{197} Literary scholar Rabb compares Lady Flimnap in Gulliver's Travels, and her
alleged affair with the man twelve times her size. “The titillation of the drama — with
its central fantasy of a little woman who burns with large-scale desire, a kind of
animated sex-doll — reminds us that the word “toy” means dalliance as well as
plaything.” Both the story and the play, sexualize scale, creating a helpless toy out of
Flimnap, and a larger-than-life human to manipulate her will and overpower through
both his size and rejection; Rabb, “Johnson, Lilliput,” 288.

\textsuperscript{198} After Abraham Bosse, Made by John Goddard, Published by Thomas Jenner, \textit{The Seven Deadly Sins: Lust}, 1639-1650, print, 1845, 0812.58; Courtesy the British Museum.
miniature is an act of longing that quickly translates as lust. The power dynamic is variable, because the miniature itself evades recognition, and only the performance of its beholder indicates their status in the transaction. This trope, continued into the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, though later prints primarily depict and validate this kind of eroticized gaze for women.
The lithograph entitled *Regrets* depicts a recumbent young woman, resting atop disheveled sheets, amid plush pillows and drapery. (Figure 4.5) Based on a painting completed between 1826-1827 by the French artist Claude-Marie Dubufé,
this lithograph was made and published by the Boston firm *Pendleton’s Lithography*. The firm was Boston’s first lithography studio founded by two brothers, William and John Pendleton in 1828.\(^{199}\) John made a trip to Paris in 1825, to learn the trade of lithography and bring back both materials and artisans trained in the new form of graphic arts. The sensual subject matter in *Regrets* is different from many of the firm’s other subject matter which included landscapes, political portrait prints, book illustration, and sheet music.\(^{200}\) One hand supports her head, finger woven through her untamed curls, the other placed in front of her, clutching an object with a chain. Without the object, her knitted brow, upturned eyes and pouting lips would indicate that she is restless, disturbed, and contemplative. Though the object is concealed, the viewer knows that a miniature or image represents the image of an individual — most likely a man — that this woman wishes to forget. The object concealed by her tense hand, with its chain flowing over the sheets and encircled around her hand indicates that she is still bound in many ways to the subject matter of the object. One sleeve off the shoulder, her bodice reveals the curve of her breast, and the hint of a nipple, alluding to the potentially erotic undertones of her regrets. Concealing the image further complicates the nature of portrait miniatures because it suggests the desire to

\(^{199}\) The brothers had associations with CWP and Rembrandt Peale, installing gaslights in the Peale Museums and it is thought that the Peales assisted the brothers in entering the field of lithography. For more on the Pendletons see *Boston Athenæum, Sally Pierce, and Catharina Slutterback, Boston Lithography, 1825-1880: The Boston Athenæum Collection* (Boston: Boston Athenæum, 1991), 2-3.

\(^{200}\) Ibid., 2-3, 6-8.
block out emotions or memories rather than gaze or reflect upon them.

Figure 4.5  After Claude-Marie Debufe, *Regrets*, c. 1827-1835, lithograph, Pendleton's Lithography. Boston; text 18 x 23 cm., on sheet 21 x 27 cm; Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

The woman was previously engaged in the act of looking at the miniature, as a similar woman is represented in another lithography by Pendelton’s after a Dubufe painting called *Memories*. (Figure 4.6) The woman, holds the long chain of a miniature in both hands, her breast exposed, the other slightly veiled by her bodice. In
her proper right hand, she holds the oval miniature and gazes at the portrait of a man
with a look of pleasure on her face. (Figure 4.7) The woman in Regrets — possibly
meant to represent the same woman — appears to have slammed the miniature down
upon the bed, and turns away from the man’s portrait. These prints insinuate that
miniatures can serve as positive objects of devotion and legitimate memory, however,
like the relationships from which those feelings arise, the miniature can turn on the
beholder and transform into an object that projects negative associations and emotions.
Through the process of tucking miniatures away, or closing their lids, it was possible
for the owner conceal the object and attempt to block out its emotive powers, which
were so deeply embedded in the fetishized object.
The intimate associations which miniatures inspired, could also have fatal consequences. In the sentimental novel *The Hapless Orphan*, by “An American Lady” and published in Boston in 1795, Caroline Francis, a young orphan with some means,
would often visit the town of Princeton to enjoy the countryside. She found solace in the nearby forests, she lied to sit on a bench, consisting of a board placed across several “decaying trees” and read books while enjoying her forest bower. One day, she finds a portrait miniature of a young man on the bench and she is completely mesmerized and enamored. Not desiring to part with the precious object of her affection, she wrote a note directly on the bench, indicating that the miniature was in good hands and that she had taken it with her.

Upon returning to her secret spot, she discovered a frantic note, signed by a woman named Eliza, begged whoever had found the portrait miniature to return it immediately. Caroline recognized Eliza’s name as she had been warned by local residents against this unfriendly young woman, who was described as “naturally revengeful and jealous disposition” as a result of her parents spoiling her.\textsuperscript{201} Upon reading the note, a young man appeared through the bushes and addresses Caroline. Clarimont, long-betrothed to the spoiled and turbulent Eliza, begged a reticent Caroline to return the portrait miniature. In exchange he offered her “a locket elegantly set in gold” that was wrought “by his own performance.” It featured

\textsuperscript{201} American Lady, \textit{The Hapless Orphan : or, Innocent Victim of Revenge a Novel, Founded on Incidents in Real Life. In a series of letters from Caroline Francis to Maria B----. In two volumes.} (Boston: Printed at the Apollo Press, in Boston, by Belknap and Hall, 1793), 29; http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?contentSet=ECCOArticles&docType=ECCOArticles&bookId=1448300601&type=getFullCitation&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docLevel=TEXT_GRAPHICS&version=1.0&source=library&userGroupName=norm94900.
hairwork in the form of the symbol of hope, represented by a woman leaning upon an anchor and “pointing with her other hand to a fountain, out of which two doves were drinking.” On the back of the gold locket were engraved the words, “To friendship.” Just as Caroline began to contemplate this token of “friendship” and “hope”, Eliza burst upon the scene. Caroline immediately returned the miniature to the angry woman, and the couple head off together, leaving Caroline alone once again.

After the incident, Caroline sensibly decided to abandon the bower, lest it appear that she was interested in Clarimont. Shortly thereafter, it is revealed that Clarimont committed suicide the day after Eliza discovered her fiancé wearing a miniature of Caroline on a chain. She tore the picture off his neck and stole the portrait, with which Eliza hoped to reap her vengeance. Eliza, jealous with rage, assumed that the two were engaged in an illicit affair that took place in the bower. Caroline, confused as to the origins of his miniature portrait of her face, which she did not sit for, surmises that Clarimont — who was “attached to his pencil — must have taken her likeness one day as she sat in the bower reading. After sending a letter of

202 Ibid., 28.
203 Ibid., 28.
204 Ibid., 29.
205 Ibid., 33.
206 Ibid., 33-34
condolence to Eliza, she leaves Princeton, and continued her adventures, fearful of the incidents consequences and still in possession of the miniature locket of hope that was gifted to her.

In this vignette, Caroline outlined the devastating tale of love and honor lost, her unfortunate status as victim – the “Hapless Orphan” – and the ways in which she stumbled in and out of unfortunate relationships, circumstances, and events. Throughout this retelling, Caroline consistently remains the passive narrator and victim, much like an object in an it-narrative. Clarimont’s miniatures had a potent and destructive effect. Trapped in an engagement with the willful and powerful Eliza, he used these devices in duplicitous ways. Eliza, in true possession of Clarimont — both in miniature and person — secured both the original and the copy from the consumption of others. While Caroline believed that Clarimont’s miniatures functioned as vessels of their affection and mutual understanding, while he used objects to lead a double existence. Externally it is inscribed “To friendship,” though the uses of his hair to create the allegorical symbol of hope imbue the object with desire and yearning. Eliza’s miniature portrait of Clarimont, operated as part of a legitimate courtship ritual, in which she views herself as its rightful owner, whereas Clarimont’s “stolen likeness” of Caroline, hidden under his clothing in secret, holds illicit power that ultimately are his undoing. As the artist, Clarimont is in the position of creator of these powerful objects — objects that would result in the taking of his own life.
As stories such as *The Hapless Orphan* suggest, the sentimentalization of miniatures in prints does not indicate a direct correlation to their use or meaning in everyday life, rather it represents their established place in both the literary and visual worlds of the Early Republic. Sentimental literature, a genre that was once derided as invaluable saccharine garbage, has been reclaimed by feminist scholars as a legitimate form of American literature that had enormous impact on the literary, visual, social and cultural life of antebellum America. In literary scholar Lehuu’s analysis of the illustrations in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, she found that these graphics were not designed to dictate exactly how individuals should act or feel. Rather, they were images designed for an audience of “reader-viewers” that were “appropriating, enjoying, and approving” their content based on their own will and judgment.207 Within print culture, that miniature was employed as a literal shorthand that was comprehended by their audience to advance the plot and provide pathos for narratives and imagery. The miniature also functioned as an important operative in narratives that helped to guide the emotional experience of the viewer, allowing them to place themselves within a scene or reject a scene entirely.

Miniature portraits also operated outside of the romantic sphere, and might serve as conduits to the past or memorials of lost time. In *The Widow* — a short story published in *Godey’s Ladys Book*, the male narrator is in the home of an old Widow,

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and upon seeing two miniatures above her mantle-piece – one featuring a young solder and the other a young woman – both depicted “in the costume of forty years ago.” He realizes that the miniature of the female was a copy of a miniature his mother owned and that he had admired greatly as a child. It was of a friend of his mother’s named Lucy Summers, about whom she had told him many charming stories. The widow asks him to tell her all about his mother’s beloved friend, and he regales her with the story of a young woman who married a soldier and became a widow early in life. After more prodding and more storytelling, the widow unveils her covered face and exclaims, “The pale, wrinkled, dejected, desolate old woman before me, removed her handkerchief from her eyes and in a faltering voice exclaimed, ‘I was Lucy Summers!’” Though transformed in her appearance, the miniatures served as transformative objects that transported both the old woman and the young man into a shared past — creating a link to their respective memories involving duplicates of the same objects and their personal well of memories.208

The rhetoric behind the images that appear in these stories and images, were representative of only a handful of ways that the miniature operated in the context of the cultural imagination. Drawing upon the work of Benedict Anderson, literary historian Trish Loughran argues that it was the lack of print culture in America that motivated the strong and successful spread of nationalism in years after 1789, and this

might be applied to the realm of “true” American artistic achievement. These texts and images reinforced their real-world functions and possibilities, by embedding these object/images with special powers of connectivity, emotion, memory, deception, and eroticism — to name a few.

This is not to suggest every miniature fit into these categories or meant the same thing to different individuals, rather, that the language of miniatures the appeared in early American literature and imagery, offered a context and realm for understanding these objects, their abilities, deficits, and functions. For example, The Hapless Orphan’s negative and destructive employment of the portrait miniature is very different from the way the miniature is used in The Portrait Miniature: A Tale, where the object’s purpose was one of reunion. Printed media, as opposed to oil paintings and portrait miniatures, was everywhere. Pinned, pasted, or framed on a wall of a house or alley, prints were part of a daily experience in the early republic.

Newspapers and books were also increasingly available, as is indicated by the long laundry lists of books advertised in period newspapers. Additionally, rather than considering the impact of print and images creating “imagined communities,” post-roads, canals, post offices, and stationary represented material processes that aided in the discourse of creating these physical communities. Remembering their material

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impact is important.\textsuperscript{211} The explosion of American books, newspapers, prints, and ephemera that were to follow helped shape and bring into fruition a more defined form of American nationalism, however, the shape of that nationalism was different and varied across the large area known as the United States.

\textsuperscript{211} Loughran, argues that Anderson’s “imagined communities” and the creation of nationalism through print must be considered in terms of the physical materials and communities that they defined. Additionally, she urges an approach that rejects assumptions of homogeneity, but is interested in the process and impact of print culture in the binding of groups or ascribing to identity. See Loughran, \textit{The Republic in Print}; and Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

On a late afternoon in June 1807, a gentleman recalled a mournful event as he listlessly wandered through Charles Willson Peale’s museum in Philadelphia. Passing cases of stuffed birds, ancient artifacts, and walls lined with portraits of notable Americans, he “observed a group of young girls surrounding Moses, the attendant of the place, who was employed in taking the profile of one of them, with the patent machine at the west of the Museum.”

The attendant, Moses Williams, a free black man who had formerly been enslaved by Charles Willson Peale, was cutting the silhouette of a young girl using a machine known as the physiognotrace. Continuing on his way, the gentleman’s eyes and body wandered through the space, as “…the beautiful arrangement of the various objects of curiosity drew [him] insensibly from room to room.” Suddenly, the afternoon museum visit was interrupted by the sound of sobbing. His eyes scanned the space, until he spotted a young girl, who held a portrait miniature in one hand and who “seemed to be attentively comparing it to a profile” in her other hand. As she stared down at the small portraits in her hand, a “pearly tear trickled down her cheek.” The museumgoer approached the child and asked why she was crying:

They have taken away mama and this is all that is left, said she, holding a miniature; but papa says she’s now an angel — mama used to say that angels took care of little children; but she never comes to watch over me when I go to bed.\textsuperscript{213}  

Somewhat startled and moved by the scene, he tried to comfort the child, saying, “Heaven always draws the curtains of protection around the couch of innocence.” Just as he attempted to console her, a man in mourning clothing – her father – came over and bent down to kiss away her tear, and as their faces touched, “his tears mingled with hers, and they fell together upon the miniature.” The gentleman, so touched by the event, was brought to tears himself and he attempted to conceal by wiping them away with his handkerchief. In order to hide how deeply the scene affected him, he, “…rushed with precipitation from the room.” He was overwhelmed by his emotions and exclaimed that this scene ought to have been the subject of sentimental fiction. He wrote, “The resemblance of the sainted wife — the tender mother, moistened with the mingled tears of the father and the child.” For the protagonist, the afternoon of museum-going was quickly overwhelmed with the convergence of family, loss, memory, sentimentalism, and vision all in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{214}  

As the man spent his time ambling through the museum, he might have passed the portrait of James Peale painting a miniature in addition to passing Moses Williams using the machine to create large numbers of masterful miniatures for the gathered

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
crowd. While his image did not (as far as we know) grace the walls of the museum, Williams’ presence as the only active producer in the story and in the “world in miniature” of the museum both challenges and expands our modern notions of who participated and who was recognized as an artist in early America. We do know that the portrait of James Peale as a young miniaturist found a place on the wall, elevated by Charles Wilson Peale with the notable figures and sanctified objects within the museum. Charles’ vision of an American museum that could instruct and refine the taste, knowledge, and virtue of the American republic, serves an important and powerful setting for this story. Despite the art, history, specimens, and people present in the tale, it is the miniature in the girl’s hand that features most prominently. Here, the miniature is doubly embedded, within the printed text and within the world of aesthetics framed by Peale’s Museum.

As he strolled through the “the world in miniature,” passing cases of exotic stuffed natural life, native American relics, and other instructive objects, the experience that moves the man the most is his interaction with the little girl. Within the museum, these embedded miniatures — the girl, her portrait, her mother’s portrait — within the larger scope of the Peale’s visionary museum, highlight the importance of the portrait miniature in the common imagination. The loss of the mother, a figure so central in post-revolutionary discourse, touches all of the characters in profound ways. When the girl compares the silhouette against her mother’s precious miniature portrait, she attempts to recognize, connect, and find continuity in these objects. Just as Mary “traced the lineaments” of her child’s face when she was distraught the
wilderness (Chapter 3) or Harriet Low’s attempted to find a likeness in her sister’s portrait that travelled thousands of miles (Chapter 2), these objects demonstrate the potency of miniatures as objects of memory.

In the story, both the young girl and her father in his mourning clothes cling to the material world in order to reconcile the separation and loss they have experienced. The young child’s silhouette cut by Williams added to the collection of objects that documented shrinking families’ mortality. Their grief is such that they are unable to conceal it, even in the most intentionally public and republican places in the early republic. The man, who witnesses the event, flees the public space, to tend to his emotions in private rather than betray his uncontrolled passions. The scene is fraught with sentimentality – as the tears mingle on the face of the mother, one cannot help but imagine the warm “tears mingling” on the face of the surrogate-mother object, pooling on the glass. In this event, the discourse of republicanism, sentimentality, loss, separation, and unifying elements of the language of the miniature are communicated.

Portrait miniatures, when included in paintings, print, and other miniatures, helped to memorialize, define, and regulate the ways Americans used and thought about identity and relationships in the Early Republic. When their meaning was solidified on canvases or used to advance the plot of a novel, these images helped to secure bonds that were connected by fragile material objects and emotions. On the authenticity of things, Walter Benjamin asserts that the mass reproduction of a piece of art detaches meaning from the original in each stage of reproduction, but portrait miniatures retained their “aura” even in the process of dematerialization and
reproduction. Portrait miniatures were not viewed as pieces of art to be reproduced and shared, but instead the reproduction was the very thing that imbued them with special meaning. The language of miniatures helped ensure that the aura of the miniature, its meaning and significance, was one that was not only defined by personal meanings or attachment, but could be one that was generally recognized and easily identified in the sentimental literature and works of art that helped define the meaning of these objects. In the nineteenth century, silhouettes and profiles also entered into the market, making small-scale imagery affordable alternatives to portrait miniatures, and offering a wide range of options for those who wished to possess small, portable portraits. With the introduction of photography in 1839, the later years of the nineteenth century would witness a rage for miniaturized portraits in a wide variety of materials and formats. Photographs and silhouettes did not reduce the power of the portrait miniature. Instead, they further solidified the sentimental power of these diminutive likenesses.

Like miniatures, photographs force us to gaze upon our own mortality. They reflect a material attempt to arrest time and movement. One might expect that the rise of photography would seal the demise of the miniature, but this was not the case. Miniature portraiture did not expire after the invention of photography; in fact, it only

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opened up new possibilities for miniaturists and consumers who desired miniature likenesses. Robin Jaffee Frank has argued that miniaturists and photographers — many of the latter were previously artists of miniature portraits — competed for business and adopted techniques of both media as the fascination and adoration of miniatures of all kinds increased through the nineteenth century. Despite the photograph’s ability to capture a unique and realistic image, the miniature retained its refined associations. She writes, “Through its historical associations and precious materials, the miniature retained the aura of aristocratic lineage and timeless beauty craved during a period of rapid change.” 216 In the late-19th and early 20th centuries, there was a resurgence in the popularity of portrait miniatures, which coincided with the Colonial Revival.217

As in the previously mentioned story of The Widow, the miniature is viewed as an object that characterized the past, one that was created and served a place in the memory of both the author and the old woman. As photography and other forms of miniature painting supplanted the medium in popularity, they were still highly prized and mythologized objects in the American imagination. In 1870, an engraving entitled The Dying Soldier depicted a Union soldier, abandoned on a battlefield in his final moments, as he gazes upon a miniature of his wife and three children. (Figure 5.1) His wife and three children appear above him, gathered in a domestic setting that seems to

216 Frank, Love and Loss, 277-278.

217 Aronson and Wieseman, Perfect Likeness, 85.
be created out of the clouds of smoke from the smoldering battlefield. This glowing, ghostly image of his family life entwines ideas about the miniature’s role as a device of memory, remembrance, and one that was designed to activate the “visual memory.”  

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Figure 5.1  After H.P Simmons, *The Dying Soldier*, Engraved by A. Turell, Printed by Thomas Kelley August 6, 1870, Engraving, New York. 22 ½ x 17 3/8. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-pga 02911 (digital file from original print) LC-USZ62-65328 (b&w film copy neg.).
Additionally, Americans had themselves photographed with belongings or props that were meant to capture not only their likeness but also their existence within a context of material things. Sitters often held oil portraits or portrait miniatures similar to the way Mrs. Lea wore the image of her son around her neck (Chapter 2). Some photo albums from the nineteenth century contain photographs of portrait miniatures, placed inside the leaves of the album in order to include family members on an outmoded format, into the new family database. Similar to the Smith Family portrait, these albums recorded and included portrait miniatures of deceased or distant family members within the family group to create multimedia family trees. Similarly, the daguerreotype of a watercolor portrait by Jane Anthony Davis dated 1847 shows that the need to miniaturize and duplicate likenesses remained a potent force well into the age of photography. (Figure 5.2; Figure 5.3) Miniatures themselves never became obsolete, but the impulse to create and possess these images in diminutive form and on a massive scale was a testament to the strength of the language of the miniature.

The sheer number of paintings, prints, and texts in which miniatures are included merit notice by nature of their frequency, but they also point to ideas about duplication, scale, and expansion in the early republic. Their packaging – oval slivers of ivory that are delicately cased in layers of newsprint, padding, metal, and glass – were incredibly fragile, but transportable devices that linked individuals and helped to expand family networks across a changing and growing nation. Whether it was a portrait designed to commemorate an artist or an unpleasant memory, these miniatures spoke volumes about the lives of their viewers.
Figure 5.2  *Three-Quarter Length Portrait*, 1847, Jane Anthony Davis (1821-1855, inscribed Sept 6, 1847; 7 1/2 by 5 7/8. The Important Americana Sale, January 2015. Lot 864. Courtesy of Sotheby’s Auctions.
Figure 5.3  
REFERENCES

Primary Sources


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Newburyport, MA.

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Mandeville, Bernard. A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions, Vulgarly Call’d the Hypo in Men and Vapours in Women; In Which the Symptoms, Causes, and Cure of those Diseases are Set Forth After a Method Entirely New...In three dialogues. London: Printed and sold by D. Leach, and W. Taylor, 1711.

Pennsylvania Evening Herald “Marriages.” October 10, 1787.


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Virginia Gazette. “To be seen and heard, at the Exchange Tavern, Norfolk.” September 5, 1755.


Secondary Sources


Klepp, Susan E. *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Main,


**Unpublished Works**

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Hi Jaclyn,

I left a voicemail yesterday afternoon, but I figured that it might be easier if I emailed the information and my information about image permissions for my master's thesis. I'm interested in using four images that are available on GIGI. The resolution on the images is great, but I wasn't sure which form I was supposed to use when those images are sufficient? Additionally, two of the images have limited information necessary to identify them? I can give you their file number's on GIGI. I have attached an excel sheet where I've included their info.

Personal Information

• Katie McKinney
• katieemckinney@gmail.com

Use of Image

• Master's Thesis
• "Double Vision: Embodied Likenesses in Early American Portraiture"
• Katie McKinney
• University of Delaware/Winterthur Program in American Material Culture
• Will be turned in April 29, 2015 — one bound print copy that will be housed at the Winterthur Library and the thesis will be available on ProQuest.

Feel free to give me a call at 757-561-8922 or to respond via email.

Thank you so much!

Katie

Katie McKinney
Lois F. McNeil Fellow, Class of 2015
Winterthur Program in American Material Culture
(757) 561-8922

AAS.Image.Permissions.xlsx
30K
Hi Katie,

Pardon my delay in not responding - my inbox has been quite popular lately. I am happy to hear you are nearing completion with your thesis! I am sure you are so pleased!

For master's thesis projects, we do not require formal permission from the Society (if you turn it into an article and it is published, please let us know and I'd be happy to walk you through the agreement). Our preferred credit line is "Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society"

Please let me know if you have any questions,

Very best,

Jackie

Jackie Penny
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185 Salisbury Street
Worcester, MA 01609
jpenny@mwa.org

From: Katie McKinney [katieemckinney@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 02, 2015 4:19 PM
To: Penny, Jaclyn
Subject: Image Permissions for Winterthur Thesis — Have images

[Quoted text hidden]
Image Permissions for paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art
4 messages

Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>          Wed, Apr 1, 2015 at 11:57 AM
To: ngaimages@nga.gov

To whom it may concern,

I'm a second year masters student in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture at the University of Delaware, and I'm in the process of finalizing image permissions for my thesis entitled "Embedded Likenesses: Double Portraiture in Early American Art."

I am hoping to secure permissions for the paintings that were formerly in the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. There are high resolution images of them available on ArtStor, so I don’t need images, just permissions to publish them in my thesis through University of Delaware. (I can’t find permailks for them)

Gilbert Stuart, Sara Shippen LEs (Mrs. Thomas Lea), c. 1798, Oil on Canvas, 1979.77

Adolf Ulrich Wertmuller, Portrait of Robert Lea, 1797, Oil on Panel, 1979.78

Do the same permissions/access allowances apply to these images? And what would the repository name for the images be? National Gallery of Art or Formerly of Corcoran Gallery of Art?

Best,

Katie

Katie McKinney
Lois F. McNeil Fellow, Class of 2015
Winterthur Program in American Material Culture
(757) 561-8922

Dueker, Peter <P-Dueker@nga.gov>          Thu, Apr 2, 2015 at 9:35 AM
To: Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>

Hi Katie,

We are still evaluating the Corcoran materials and neither of these two paintings have been accessioned by the National Gallery at this time. However, per our open access policy for works of art presumed in the public domain, you are free to use the images from ArtStor however you like. You should credit them to the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Best of luck with your thesis.

Peter Dueker
Head of Digital Imaging Services
Division of Imaging and Visual Services
From: Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>
Date: Wednesday, April 1, 2015 at 11:57 AM
To: NGAimages <NGAimages@NGA.GOV>
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[Quoted text hidden]

Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>
To: "Dueker, Peter" <P-Dueker@nga.gov>
Thu, Apr 2, 2015 at 10:40 AM

Good morning Peter,

Thank you so much for your email! Sounds good — I’ll be sure to credit them Corcoran and use the images from ArtStor.

All the best!

Katie
[Quoted text hidden]

---

Katie McKinney
Lois F. McNeil Fellow, Class of 2015
Winterthur Program in American Material Culture
(757) 561-8922

Dueker, Peter <P-Dueker@nga.gov>
To: Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>
Thu, Apr 2, 2015 at 10:45 AM

We may also have images if the ones from ArtStor are too small — just let me know.

From: Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>
Date: Thursday, April 2, 2015 at 10:40 AM
To: Peter Dueker <p-dueker@nga.gov>
Subject: Re: Image Permissions for paintings from the Corcoran Gallery of Art
[Quoted text hidden]
Hi Laura,

Thank you so much for letting me come visit the collections and examine so many fantastic objects. I want to ask your permission to include three objects (it was so hard to narrow it down) in my thesis entitled "Double Vision: Embedded Likenesses in Early American Portraiture."

- *Smith Family Portrait*, c. 1807, Richmond, Virginia, James Smith (need high resolution image if possible)
- *Portrait of Alice Lillipage Taylor Ingram (MRS. SYLVANUS INGRAM) and Mary Ingram, 1826-1828*, James McGibbon, 1984.100.1.

Let me know what I need to do next, my deadline is April 25, but I have placeholders either from my own photographs and online. I will only need a high resolution image for the Smith Portrait, if that is not possible — I have two photos of the miniatures in the painting that will suffice.

All the best,

Katie

---

Katie McKinney  
Lois F. McNeil Fellow, Class of 2015  
Winterthur Program in American Material Culture  
(757) 561-8922

Barry, Laura <LBarry@cwf.org>  
Wed, Apr 1, 2015 at 12:18 PM  
To: Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>, "Kuettner, Angelika" <akuettner@cwf.org>

Hi, Katie,

No problem whatsoever. I've copied Angelika who can get you the high res images. Thank you for including the accession numbers and your timeframe. I can't speak for Angelika, but I am sure we can meet this deadline. Do you need anything else?

Looking forward to having you this summer.

Laura
From: Katie McKinney [mailto:katieemckinney@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 01, 2015 12:17 PM
To: Barry, Laura
Subject: Image Permissions for Thesis

Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>  
To: "Barry, Laura" <LBarry@cwf.org>  
Cc: "Kuettner, Angelika" <akuettner@cwf.org>

Thank you so much, Laura and Angelika! I don't need anything else at the moment, but I will certainly let you know. Hopefully, they won't be too much trouble.

I can't wait to be back! See you soon!

Katie  
[Quoted text hidden]

Kuettner, Angelika <akuettner@cwf.org>  
To: Katie McKinney <katieemckinney@gmail.com>  
Cc: "Barry, Laura" <LBarry@cwf.org>  

Wed, Apr 1, 2015 at 12:21 PM

Hi Katie,

One more image to follow (it is being scanned), but attached are the ones of the Smith Family and Woman Wearing Two Miniatures. As soon as I have the third portrait on your list, I'll share it with you. It will probably be ready early next week.

Congrats again on the internship! Looking forward to seeing you this summer!

My best,
Angelika

Angelika R. Kuettner  
Associate Registrar for Imaging  
& Assistant Curator of Ceramics  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Post Office Box 1776
Williamsburg, VA  23187
757.565.8495
akuettner@cwf.org

From: Katie McKinney [mailto:katieemckinney@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 01, 2015 12:21 PM
To: Barry, Laura
Cc: Kuettner, Angelika
Subject: Re: Image Permissions for Thesis

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I’m a graduate student in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture and I’m getting ready to submit my master’s thesis, which is entitled “Double Vision: Portrait Miniatures and Embedded Likeness in Early America.”

Thank you very much!

Best,

Katie

---
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Los F. McNeil Fellow, Class of 2015
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Hi Katie,

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Chief Operating Officer
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From: Katie McKinney [mailto:katieemckinney@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2015 3:52 PM
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