

Forming a National Identity: Reconciling Genres in Susanna Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel*

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For though I am by birth a Briton, my heart clings to dear America and it would be with equal anxiety I should contemplate the misery of either.

- Susanna Rowson¹

Susanna Rowson's transatlantic identity is often overlooked when studying her body of work. Her publishing success in America overshadows her British birth, often leading the reader to think that her work solely contributes to the existing national identity of America rather than to a hybrid transatlantic identity. Marion Rust addresses this oversight in her ground breaking work, *Prodigal Daughters: Susana Rowson's Early American Women*, and argues that Rowson's transatlantic identity embodies a conflict between her loyalties to both England and America. This conflict, in turn, is reflected in her work—most notably in *Reuben and Rachel; or, Tales of Old Times* (1798).

Rowson's transatlantic identity began forming as she moved to Massachusetts with her father in 1768. Her family lived an extravagant lifestyle that allowed young, impressionable Rowson to mingle with wealthy loyalists as well as middle-class revolutionaries—social situations that were typically unbecoming of a young lady of the time period, yet monumentally important for shaping Rowson's American political opinion (Rust 6). After the outbreak of revolution, her family was forced back to England because of her father's loyalist ties. Once back in England, Rowson obtained a job as a governess to help support her family. She married William Rowson several years later and returned to America, but would never be as wealthy as she had been as a young lady. She found herself writing for a living after her husband's business failed. These circumstances help establish Rowson as an authoritative female, able to use her own life

experience to write novels that educated young women. It is not a stretch, therefore, to say that Rowson's texts contribute in shaping the young American national identity, simply because she was a young American, struggling with a transatlantic hybridity herself.

The work most representative of her transatlantic lifestyle is *Reuben and Rachel; or, Tales of Old Times*, crafted as a pedagogical tool to pique women's interest in history. The novel incorporates two genres by using the captivity narrative and the sentimental novel to narrate ten generations of half-Indian ancestors related to Christopher Columbus. What is most interesting and controversial is the hybrid genre-crossing nature of the text. Volume one uses the captivity narrative genre to empower the text's half-Indian female voices otherwise silenced in American culture. The second volume switches to the genre of the sentimental novel in order to take away female authority and reaffirm gender and cultural oppression in eighteenth-century America.

I propose that Rowson intentionally constructs a division between each volume to expose eighteenth-century social practices and critique the direction of the American national identity. She reconciles this division by inserting a storyline that fits in both the captivity narrative as well as the sentimental novel. Volume one uses an inversion of the captivity narrative to represent Rowson's idealized vision of America—the America where women have active voices, Indians are represented as human beings, and the deserving are rewarded for their suffering. Volume two, conversely, represents the American reality—a reality of fear, suffering, savage Indians, and disempowered women. The Dudley family story acts as the metaphorical bridge by portraying women as both independent and dependent beings regardless of their race. It creates balance in an otherwise imbalanced text – showing Rowson's investment in the nation building process by presenting a solution to gender and race issues in the nation and then devolving her ideas into a storyline that more accurately represents the social direction of the country.

Scholars writing on *Reuben and Rachel* tend to focus on the text's ability to function within separate ideas, such as the text's place within the captivity narrative, its ability to forge a national identity, female agency created within the text, and encountering the Other. While each topic provides valuable historical and cultural insight on *Reuben and Rachel*, scholars are only attending to one topic as it fits into the captivity narrative or the sentimental genre, making it difficult to see the text as anything other than an appropriation of many single ideas that rarely connect rather than a multifaceted text that weaves multiple topics together homogeneously.

While scholars agree that a narrative gap exists in the text, it is rarely addressed because the scholarly discussion, generally speaking, rarely discusses volumes one and two together. My approach to the study of *Reuben and Rachel* seeks to reconcile ideas on the captivity narrative, national identity, female agency, and the Other, while discussing both volumes, in order to focus on Rowson's narrative technique, which addresses the new nation in an unconventional manner by asking its participants to guide the nation toward more inclusive social practices.

The inclusion of women into the American political sphere is just one of the many inclusive practices Rowson urges America to embrace. Historian, Eve Kornfeld, contends that post-Revolutionary women were neither as invisible or removed from American culture as history might suggest. Her article, "Women in Post-Revolutionary American Culture: Susanna Haswell Rowson's American Career 1793-1824," argues that such a "high visibility" of women spurs the debate on whether the Revolution "ha[s] a liberating effect on American women and their political consciousness" and asks why a transition occurred from "eager participation" in the nation to the "cult of true womanhood" which excludes women from the nation in the nineteenth century (56). Carroll Smith-Rosenberg expands on the visibility of women by suggesting that white women exerted their agency by "authorizing Euro-Americans as true

Americans” and denying American Indians access to an American identity—joining white men in an “imperial venture” that “denied subjectivity to women of color” (“Subject Female” 485-86). While Rowson’s work exists as evidence of the high visibility of women in post-Revolutionary literary culture she does little, especially in *Reuben and Rachel*, to represent the subjectivity of the Other. Instead of typifying Indians like her contemporaries, she creates half-Indian female characters to resist the nation’s notion that exclusion and subjectivity are the building blocks of a white-oriented national identity to prove that only an inclusive nation will prosper.

The emergence of the captivity narrative only complicates Rowson’s position as an authoritative female because of her inclusive stance on the Other. Smith-Rosenberg argues that Euro-American women play a “tripartite role” in the captivity narrative “by assuming the role of innocent victims of barbarous savagery, by assuming the role of authoritative writers, [and] by authorizing themselves as an alternative white icon for America” (486). Rowson may have the authority to write based upon the “high visibility” argument of Kornfeld, but her existence as an author writing in the captivity narrative genre complicates Smith-Rosenberg’s ideas because she is neither the innocent victim of savagery nor the alternative white icon for America. Whereas *Reuben and Rachel* is in part a captivity narrative, Rowson does not rely solely on the conventions of the literary genre because she cannot give the text the legitimacy needed to illustrate the savagery of the Indians. Rather than creating a traditional captivity narrative, she inverts the traditions of the captivity narrative by portraying Others as sympathetic and kind characters. Smith-Rosenberg argues in “Captive Subjects/Savage Others: Violently Engendering the New American” that *Reuben and Rachel* shows “American Indians [to be] nature’s noblemen, while European men become savage barbarians who rape and murder [and] destroy families” (188). Kornfeld expands on this notion in “Encountering ‘the Other’: American

Intellectuals and Indians in the 1790's" by suggesting that Rowson uses the trope of the "noble savage" to "critique Europeans ... who seduce, rape, murder, and despoil their innocent Indian victims" (295). Smith-Rosenberg and Kornfeld illuminate Rowson's growing fondness for creating characters who are Othered and giving them the agency denied to them by the new American nation.

The Other, according to Kornfeld, is portrayed not only as "terrible" but also as "alluring," which creates a dangerous duality that is not just an external threat, but internal as well, "threatening the integrity of the self by offering alternative, unrealized, and suppressed possibilities" (289). *Reuben and Rachel*'s half-Indian Others threaten the integrity of the white male dominated national identity. If the "savages" are as "noble" as Rowson creates them to be, the entire foundation of the American national identity—vested in a male dominated imperialistic tradition—exposes itself as a faulty system that suppresses all the possible directions the new nation, and the newly formed American national identity, can go.

Scholars generally approach national identity in *Reuben and Rachel* in two different ways. The first contextualizes national identity by examining why the colonists felt the need to create one. Greg Siemenski contextualizes this need in "The Puritan Captivity Narrative and the Politics of the American Revolution" by arguing that the colonists felt "captive" under British rule and therefore had to reach out, start a revolution and then create an identity of their own (36). But, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon contends that the colonists knew they were "culturally connected to England," but also "acutely aware" of their dependence and saw themselves as "wholly connected to" England via a "network of economic, religious, and literary connections" (76). Smith-Rosenberg then goes on to expand on the forging of an American identity by stating that the Euro-Americans in the colonies suffered from an identity crisis, especially during the

Revolutionary era. In order to fully sever ties with England, colonists were “forced to seiz[e] America’s land [and] legitimate that seizure by seizing the name American as well ... they had to imagine themselves Americans and, in the imagining, constitute a radical new imperial category—White Americans” (“Captured Subjects” 177).

The second approach is to examine the national identity of Susanna Rowson, which is relatively new and pioneered by Marion Rust. She argues that Rowson’s transatlantic citizenship shapes her narrative technique and exposes her own ambivalence toward choosing one national identity of her own, thus creating characters in the text that do not identify with just one country. Rusts idea on the transatlantic reinforces Dillon’s claim by creating a complicated identity that realizes its own dependence on England but also the need for individuality that embraces some British principals and denounces others in favor of other options. Rowson challenges what it means to be American by including marginalized subjects who are not eligible for inclusion in the American identity into her own story of the nation. This, in turn, exposes her ambivalence in identifying a home country. *Reuben and Rachel* proves that she does not have to choose. She can create a transatlantic identity that combines the principles of both countries.

Most characters in *Reuben and Rachel* are transatlantic and rarely choose a national identity to identify with. For example, Orrabella is a native princess of Peru, but chooses to return to Spain with her husband, Ferdinando. Instead of denouncing her identity upon her marriage, she retains it but assimilates into Spanish culture, creating a hybrid identity for herself. This hybrid identity can be found throughout Rowson’s work, suggesting that her own hybrid English/American identity serves as the mold for these characters as well as for the formation of her ideas regarding national identity. Rowson, essentially, disagrees with the direction of the American national identity and uses *Reuben and Rachel* to propose a new direction that

highlights the need for a homogenous society. She blurs the boundary between the captivity narrative and the sentimental novel to prove this.

While I acknowledge and agree with Siemenski and Smith-Rosenberg on the need to create an American national identity once ties with England were severed, their argument, especially Smith-Rosenberg's, does not address the narrative gap presented by the genre-crossing nature of the text or the transatlanticness of the author. My argument focuses more on Rust's ideas and expanding them to show that Rowson's own transatlantic identity is both the cause of such a gap by using two different genres for each volume and the solution for their reconciliation.

Rowson intentionally causes an ideological rift in her text by discussing the flaws in the existing national identity by presenting the country in an idealized fashion that focuses on inclusion as well as in a more realistic light that highlights the imperialistic tendencies of the America. If imperialism, according to Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, "means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others" (7) then the early nation is, in fact, imperialist because of its volatile relationship with Indians over land use. Rowson, though, envisions a different and unrealized direction for the nation in volume one of her text by including marginalized people, in this case women and Indians, to show that a new national identity is needed that does not rely on a faulty system.

Said discusses the ideological concern on national identity by stating that the "American identity is too varied to be a unitary and homogenous thing; indeed the battle within it is between advocates of a unitary identity and those who see the whole as a complex but not reductively unified one" (xxv). Rowson fights against the advocates of a singular and exclusive national

identity – i.e. white male Americans – and fights for a more complex understanding of the country that moves toward a unified vision of the country that includes races and sexes traditionally excluded from most national identities.

Authority and the New American

Examining *Reuben and Rachel* with Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682) becomes necessary in order to understand why Rowson is authorized to give agency to her half-Indian, female characters when women and Indians were often the most marginalized in American culture. Studying the two texts together allows us to see that Rowlandson gives Rowson the authority to write because she "paved the way" for female writers after the publication of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*.

The time period between the publication of Rowlandson's text in 1682 and the publication of *Reuben and Rachel* in 1798 offers valuable insight into how colonists evolved from British implants in a new world to Americans in their own country. Disdain for England caused the colonists to move for their own national identity, independent from that of England's. In creating a national identity, Euro-Americans were forced to seize the name "American" from the Indians—who were, in the eyes of the world, the true Americans—and claim it for themselves. Once the move from Euro-American to just American was complete, colonists had to then subvert the Indians to something lower than themselves—because only one racial group could carry the name American. The colonists were not purely British but they also had no individual identity for themselves yet. They existed in a grey area that placed them in a precarious position in both the British Empire and in North America. Britain demanded loyalists who retained an English identity, so the colonists could not keep ties to their mother country once the Revolution

began. But the colonists were not yet American either; they may have taken the name from the Indians, but it was meaningless until a national identity could be formed.

Captivity narratives became the political vessels for the seizure of the American identity with women at the foreground—telling the stories and paving the road to a new national identity for the country. Their captivity stories established them as authoritative experts on the subject of the savage. But, this authority also brought about a problem. According to Smith-Rosenberg, women had to also “acquire the agency to resist and subvert the very discourses they helped to construct” (179). To become authoritative writers, women like Mary Rowlandson resisted their own marginalization by subverting the Indians and claiming their identity for Euro-Americans in the colonies. This marginalization then turns the Indians into savages and elevates the Euro-Americans into a position of authority to reclaim the name “American” for themselves.

Agency also allows early American women the authority to write. The American Indian captivity novel became very popular once a national identity was established because it denied that same identity to American Indians (179). The captivity narrative can be examined with Rowson’s text because it often refutes and inverts many ideas presented in the captivity narrative. *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* is the definitive captivity novel to examine alongside *Reuben and Rachel* because they both examine the politicized nation through the eyes of powerful, authoritative female characters who have specific opinions of the Native Indians they encounter.

Volume One – Inverting Rowlandson

Rowlandson vehemently attacks American Indians, representing them as inhuman devils and in the process, “reaffirm[ing] the Puritans as the legitimate possessors of America’s land” (Smith-Rosenberg, “Captured Subjects” 181). But, what is most important about *The Sovereignty*

and Goodness of God is not the idea that the Indians are represented as savage, but that Rowlandson is a woman writing a book during a time where Puritan women were expected to defer to their husbands because their husbands defer to God. She, essentially, gives herself the authority to tell her story in a society that silences women. Rowlandson brings a savage image of racism and imperialism to her text through the representation of Indians in her captivity narrative. She not only shows the world that Europeans are the “real” Americans by her proclamation of the Indians as savage beasts, but her own self-proclaimed female authority paves the way for other women, like Rowson, to assert authority and help shape the American national identity.

Reuben and Rachel is a matriarchal origin story where volume one acts as a fusion of cultures that portrays miscegenation as an acceptable social practice for the new nation. Columbia, the central protagonist in volume one, is the part Indian great-granddaughter of Christopher Columbus. Rowson describes Columbia as “possess[ing] a heart glowing with the strongest feelings of humanity” (42). She gives Columbia these characteristics despite the idea that she is a “half breed,” part Indian and part European, who would never fit in Rowlandson’s text because of her desire to prove the savagery of Indians based upon her own experience with them. Columbia’s heritage is passed down from generation to generation to William, who marries Oberea, daughter of an Indian sachem, who continues the mixed bloodline through the rest of the text.

The inclusion of mixed-bloods into the text “inverts, reverses, and undoes Rowlandson’s racism” because American Indians become nature’s noblemen while the European men are represented as the savage barbarians (Smith-Rosenberg, “Captured Subjects” 188). This is best represented early in volume one when Ferdinando and Orrabella sail for Peru. Upon their arrival,

they find the palace of her father deserted and the island controlled by rogue Spaniard banditti. Garcias, chief of the banditti, insults Orrabella's father by calling him a savage. Orrabella defends her father by comparing his "humanity, honour, patience, [and] fortitude" to the amoral banditti who call him "savage" (Rowson 80). Clearly, Rowson is inverting Rowlandson's opinion of the Native Americans she encounters by representing them as honorable human beings, which immediately calls into question Mary Rowlandson's opinion of the "savages" that keep her captive. As she is being taken away by the Indians Rowlandson says, "Now away we must go with those Barbarous Creatures, with our bodies wounded and bleeding, and our hearts no less than our bodies" (Rowlandson 70). She still believes that Indians are savage beasts even after they show her some modicum of kindness by feeding her and giving her a Bible. Could this misreading of the natives be Rowlandson's way of politicizing her novel in favor of the newly termed "Euro-Americans?" Rowson's inversion of Rowlandson's text might certainly prove so.

In the hands of Rowson, though, the Native Americans are noble-savages, the bearers of half European children who grow to embody a vision for America that is based upon inclusion. More importantly, Rowson's Indians are powerful females who contribute to society. Her mixed-blood characters exhibit more authority than Rowlandson's depiction of Indians allow. Columbia, as only a child, saves another child from the plague. As an adult, she has the fortitude to stand up against powerful, evil Mary Tudor in an attempt to keep her Protestant faith. The idea that Columbia will "defy all threats" (Rowson 131) and tortures parallels the characteristics of the budding American nation, defying all threats and tortures from the British Empire, willing to sacrifice everything in the bid for freedom. Steven Epley argues that the "female characters in the novel are judged by their willingness and ability to think and act for themselves, while respecting the rights of others" (50). If Columbia is a metaphor for the nation, then Epley's

argument reflects what Rowson believes the nation should embody—a nation of people who respect all who contribute to it.

Columbia and her part Indian descendents represent an idealized American national identity which is based on inclusion rather than exclusion as the building blocks of the nation. They also represent the basic characteristics of eighteenth century America, making *Reuben and Rachel* an allegory for the nation (Smith-Rosenberg, “Subject Female” 498). Columbia is ultimately rewarded for her suffering during her captivity under Mary Tudor by reuniting with her love, Sir Egbert Gorges, who was thought to be dead in a plot to convert Columbia to Catholicism. Her suffering is directly linked to the suffering America endured under the British Monarchy in the years before the American Revolution with the message that those who suffer for their causes will be rewarded. Rowson’s general message for volume one is essentially that America is only as good as those who are included in its foundation. The marginalization of Indians as represented by Rowlandson portrays a nation based upon exclusion. Rowson’s inversion of this idea creates a vision of America where all are included and admitted into a nation began by those fleeing from oppression and being silenced themselves. Rowson’s inclusion of otherwise silenced voices in her text gives the nation a “tradition to live up to and complete” (140). She essentially gives America the map and the key to becoming a better nation. Inverting the captivity narrative helps establish the American half of Rowson’s transatlantic identity by revealing her compassion for marginalized subjects and her desire for a newly revised American national identity.

The Interim: A Critique of the Nation

Volume two of *Reuben and Rachel* radically breaks from volume one. Rowson inverts Rowlandson’s already inverted storyline, bringing it back around again to the beginning,

silencing women and depicting all Indians as savage. There is an interim storyline, though, which resides in volume one and volume two, that does not quite fit in either. What this storyline does, however, is act as the bridge that reconciles Rowson's ideas in the story. In volume one, William Dudley, descendent of Columbia, marries a white woman, Arrabella Ruthven. Dudley and his wife are Puritans and flee England in hopes of a life free of religious persecution. They live an isolated life in the country, reliant upon themselves for all of their wants. Their idyllic lifestyle is described by Rowson as "their wants were few, and those few were amply supplied; plenty presided at their board, and cheerfulness was a constant inmate in their dwellings" (168). But, their isolated lifestyle comes back to haunt them when neighboring Indians raid their farm and abduct two of their children, teenager William and two year old Rachel.

At this point it seems as if Rowson has completely forgotten everything she tries to prove in volume one. Savage Indians, much like the savages in Rowlandson's text, raid the farm. "They [Indians] dispatched them with their tomahawks, and stripping off their scalps, kept them as proofs of the endeavours to extirpate the English from amongst them" (Rowson 171). Rowson's tone here becomes harsher when discussing the Indians. They are no longer "nature's noblemen," but savage beasts who only think to eradicate the English from their land. What comes next is an interesting turn of events. Rather than befalling a gruesome fate as the tone of the prose suggests, William and Rachel are adopted by the tribe's sachem, Otooganoo, rather than being tortured and killed. Otooganoo loves William like a son and allows him to marry his daughter, Oberea. "You have been to me, young Englishman, a friend, a companion, an instructor, now above eight years. I love you with sincerity, and I believe you love me" (Rowson 183). William's parents, on the other hand, have not fared well since the Indian attack, suffering from "almost every species of affliction which human nature can endure and live" (180).

Rowson surprises her readers with this shocking comparison of the Dudley family's lives. According to what we know of Rowlandson's text, William and Rachel should have befallen misfortune because of their capture by savage barbarians. The hard working Puritan family *should* have escaped the savagery of the Indians, but they did not. What, then, is her message? She exhibits some harsh anti-Puritan sentiment and is critiquing the idea of liberal individualism, which focuses on the individual and the individual's freedom from government regulation, represented by the Dudley family's self-reliance and freedom from the government. The textual evidence above supports the idea that she discourages liberal individualism and in therefore in favor of civic republicanism, which focuses on the individual sacrificing for and participating in the creation of the common good. Unlike Columbia, who sacrifices her own freedom so she, and others like her, can keep their religion, the Dudley's do not make any sacrifices and do little for the common good of the nation, making them the enemy, not the Indians. Epley takes a rather negative stance on Rowson's use of civic republicanism saying that her use of it is essentially destroyed by any economic or social dependence on another; "only personal independence can allow a citizen to strive for the good of the whole rather than the interest of those on whom he is dependent" (52). According to Epley's definition, though, the Dudley family should not have endured such hardships because their personal independence suggests that they are protected from harm. Epley's mistake comes from the study of each volume as a separate entity rather than treating the text as a homogenous whole.

The Dudley family story exists as an interim storyline that does not quite fit in with the ideas presented in either volume. Volume two tends to focus on fear, savages, silent women, and sentimentality. The Dudley's only embody the first two characteristics. But, even the Indians are not represented as purely savage. They may raid and kill, but they also adopt two white

children and care for them like their own, keeping with the noble savage motif presented in volume one. It also acts as the transition from the captivity narrative to the sentimental novel. It shows Rowson's ability to blend and blur the genres and seeks to prove that the American national identity does not have to use concrete rules for inclusion into the nation. Volume one examines the American nature of the captivity narrative while volume two adheres to more of an English sentimental novel than an American tale. The Dudley story exists as both, reconciling the gap between each by portraying noble savages as well as powerful and powerless women.

Volume Two – Sentimentality and Placating the Nation

The beginning of volume two still tells the story of the Dudley family, but focuses more on the lives of William and Rachel, living prosperously with the Indians and creating another generation of half-Indian children who, like Columbia, are an allegory for Rowson's idealized nation. William and his Indian wife, Oberea, have a son, Reuben, who is dark skinned like his mother. Upon William's death, Oberea, Rachel, and young Reuben return with Arrabella to England, where he is educated as an English gentleman and given all the privileges of such. Reuben's dark skin is the most important characteristic to remember. Would such a dark skinned boy be given the privileges of a gentleman in Rowlandson's work? Rowson allows him such privileges to show the transition from captivity narrative to sentimental novel because it is his descendents who carry on the story. Reuben marries a woman who dies in childbirth, bringing twins Reuben and Rachel into the world. Their story makes up the bulk of volume two and in their story lies the true narrative split from volume one.

Reuben Sr. travels back to America to establish land along the Delaware River. He is highly prosperous and upon his return to England with his fortune, he entrusts his land to an untrustworthy fellow. Reuben Sr. drowns in the English Channel, leaving his children poor and

fending for themselves. Reuben Jr. then decides to travel to America to reclaim his father's land and fortune. The young Reuben exhibits the same social prejudices as men portrayed in the late eighteenth-century, rather than following in the footsteps of his ancestors by falling in love with an Indian woman. Reuben Jr. takes on "the identity of [the] white male hunter and merchant" (501) who joins the Pennsylvania militia to fight against the Indians. Scholars often discredit volume two at this point because the shift in message is too strong for most to try and reconcile. However, since we see the same prejudices against Indians in the Dudley family storyline, we cannot completely discount Rowson for creating a disjointed text. She does create a seamless story that exhibits both American and British ideals, represented by Columbia and Reuben Jr. Columbia represents the struggle for freedom in the early nation while Reuben Jr., educated as an English gentleman, represents British imperialism.

Reuben is captured and is saved by a Delaware chief's daughter, Eumea. She helps him to escape and follows him back to Pennsylvania in hopes of marrying him. But, again, Reuben rejects his cultural heritage and chooses not to marry her in favor of marrying a white, wealthy woman. As Smith-Rosenberg remarks, "His future must be pure, white, and (agri)cultured ... Rowson too must change her European authorial voice ... concerned with legitimating white claims to American land" (501). Rather than marry an Indian, Reuben chooses to conquer the Indians by attempting to remove all traces of Indian blood from his family line. In essence, Rowson gives up on the idea of the authoritative "half-breed" and has given white Americans the authority over Indians, making volume two an example of the nation's social practices in 1798. Rather than continue fighting for freedom and inclusion as Columbia's storyline suggests the nation to do, the nation staggered and began adhering to the same British principles that they fought so valiantly against.

Reuben Jr. is not the only character Rowson uses to mark the shift from captivity narrative to sentimental novel. Rachel also represents such a shift, and interestingly enough, it is Rachel's storyline that takes up the most space in volume two. Despite the fact that Rachel is marginalized enough to be confined to her home "employed at her needle" or "reading" (Rowson 307) instead of being off on adventures like her female ancestors, it is Rachel's story we read the most, not Reuben's. Smith-Rosenberg argues that volume two focuses on the "dilemmas a young woman faces in choosing a good husband" ("Subject Female" 500), rather than following a male on his adventures, Rowson chooses to have us follow Rachel on her quest for a husband because she seeks to educate the women who read her work. Rather than have Rachel befall the same fate as Charlotte Temple, she allows readers to follow a virtuous woman on her quest to find and keep a husband. The sentimental nature of the text exists not only to educate Rowson's female readership, but to show America that the education of women is the only way to protect them from the pitfalls of society. Isolating and marginalizing women only makes protecting their virtue harder than it should be.

Rachel marries a cad who leaves her to tour England with his aunt. Forced to hear rumors that suggest her to engage in socially unacceptable practices, she is forced to find her husband to eradicate the rumors. "As soon as Rachel had gathered strength sufficient to enable her to attempt it, with slow and uneven steps she proceeded . . . determined to make inquiry herself a concerning letter; for she thought it impossible for Auberry to abandon her and his child to absolute want" (346). Rowson's prose here is representative of the shift in genre, relying on emotion rather than action to drive the plot.

She finds her husband in America, where he has properly atoned for his actions and they resume an acceptable marriage. Castiglia adeptly notes that "the virtue and happiness of good,

domestic women reflect the virtue and happiness of the nation” (153). Rowson must give her characters the sentimental happy ending they deserve in order to preserve the nation’s women. Rachel gives women in post-Revolutionary American a standard to strive toward. Nevertheless, Rachel still does not have the same agency as the women in volume one. She still marries and adheres to the social practices of the time, legitimizing Rowson’s need to address the role of women in the American nation.

On the surface, Rowson must give volume two the legitimacy needed to guide her readers, but she also uses it to caution them against trusting in such a masculine dominated society. Eighteenth-century society demands sentimental fiction that represents the fear and savagery of the Indians, and happy endings for all. In order to give America a text worth reading, she has to disassociate herself from her idealized nation in volume one and create a story true to the real vision of America, where women seek husbands and even part-Indians reject their cultural heritage in favor of a white, heteronormative lifestyle. She, essentially, uses volume two to placate the nation after allowing her transatlantic principles to dominate the text.

Rowson created *Reuben and Rachel* toward the end of her writing career, making it the climax of the formation of her political thought. Her life as both an English and American citizen affords her the opportunity to critique American based on her own transatlantic principles. She saw the country excluding non-white men and women of all color from active participation in the nation. As an active writer, she was only allowed a marginal role in the formation of the American national identity. As her fame grew, so did her sense of civic duty. Educating women became her top priority in the hopes of creating a sub-culture of women who would make sound decisions and not have to rely solely on masculine society. She uses these principles to guide her when writing *Reuben and Rachel* where she inverts the captivity narrative to display Indians as

noblemen and women as strong characters. She then relies on the sentimental novel in the next half of her text to represent the social conditions present in the American national identity. While she does reconcile these genres by the insertion of an interim storyline, I cannot help but think that her intent was to highlight the nation's flaws to as many women as possible—hoping for enough women to realize that a real society can only exist when all are included.

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¹ This quote comes from Susanna Rowson's unpublished manuscripts housed in the archives of the University of Virginia library. Marion Rust includes this passage in the introduction of *Prodigal Daughters: Susanna Rowson's Early American Women* (3).